

APPENDIX I

SYNOPSIS

Costanza Casati's Clytemnestra offers a powerful reimagining of the legendary queen of Mycenae. The novel is structured into five parts, each portraying a different phase of Clytemnestra's life, with a deep focus on gender, power, and identity. In Part 1, readers are introduced to Clytemnestra as a strong-willed and independent young woman raised in Sparta, a society that values physical strength and discipline in both men and women. Her life takes a tragic turn when she marries King Tantalus of Maeonia. The arrival of Agamemnon and Menelaus in her husband's palace marks the beginning of her sorrow. Agamemnon, in his bid for power and alliance, kills Tantalus and her infant son before claiming Clytemnestra as his wife.

Part 2 explores Clytemnestra's life in Mycenae as Agamemnon's wife. Haunted by the trauma of her past, she is consumed by grief and anger. The looming Trojan War removes Agamemnon from the palace, offering Clytemnestra her first taste of authority as she rules Mycenae in his absence. Her leadership is shaped by emotional pain and an increasingly hostile view of Agamemnon, who represents the patriarchal force that robbed her of her autonomy and family.

In Part 3, Clytemnestra emerges as a capable and shrewd ruler. Despite societal limitations imposed on women, she commands Mycenae with strength. Her role as a mother is also central in this section. Her relationships with her daughters—particularly Electra—are marked by both affection and strain. The introduction of Aegisthus, Agamemnon's cousin and rival, marks a turning point. Their affair becomes both a personal solace and a political alliance, laying the groundwork for future conflict.

Part 4 escalates with Agamemnon's return from Troy. Clytemnestra, hardened by years of loss and political machinations, sees this as her moment of reckoning. With Aegisthus's support, she plots Agamemnon's murder, setting the stage for one of Greek mythology's most iconic acts of revenge. Her transformation into a figure of vengeance and power is complete, as she takes control of her destiny in a society that seeks to silence women like her.

Finally in Part 5, the consequences of Clytemnestra's actions unfold. Agamemnon's assassination alienates her from her children, particularly Electra and Orestes. Electra, unable to forgive her mother, represents the moral and emotional cost of Clytemnestra's rebellion. This final part underscores the

personal toll of female empowerment in a patriarchal world, ending with Clytemnestra both triumphant and tragically isolated. Through each part, Casati constructs Clytemnestra as a symbol of feminine strength and resistance, offering a compelling portrait of a woman who reclaims her voice amid violence and oppression.

APPENDIX II

BIOGRAPHY

Costanza Casati is a novelist born in Texas and raised in a village in Northern Italy, where she studied Ancient Greek and its literature through a highly demanding academic program. She holds a master's degree from the prestigious Warwick Writing MA in the UK and has worked as both a screenwriter and journalist. Her debut novel, *Clytemnestra*, became a *Saturday Times* bestseller and was shortlisted for the HWA Debut Crown Award. Her second novel, *Babylonia*, is set in the powerful Assyrian Empire, continuing her exploration of fierce historical worlds through richly drawn female characters.

APPENDIX III

Characteristics of Women Empowerment	Quotation
Autonomy	Clytemnestra once shaved her head, like a boy, and went to the gymnasium with them hoping to prepare for a hunt. (ch.1: p.17) She starts to climb the mossy rocks at the sides of the spring. Her hand throbs and slips on the surface of the cliff. Her bow is slung over her back, and the dagger hangs loose from her belt, its handle pressing against her thigh. (ch.1: p.17) For a moment, woman and lynx stare at each other. Then, swift as a striking snake, Clytemnestra throws her dagger into the animal's shoulder. The lynx shrieks, and Clytemnestra runs past it, toward the blackness of the cave. (ch.1: p.17) Clytemnestra ties the animal's paws to her quiver and starts to walk, hoping to be home by morning. Her mother will be proud of her hunt. (ch.1: p.18) "Of course, she must have liked it," Clytemnestra heard a boy say in the gymnasium once. "The queen is different . . . Her people are more barbaric." Clytemnestra hit his face with a rock but didn't tell her mother. Such rumors spread out of jealousy: Leda was beautiful, and the Spartans distrusted her. (ch.2: p.22) "Clean yourself, Timandra," Clytemnestra says. "It looks like you've been rolling in the dirt." Timandra laughs. "Well, that is what I was doing." (ch.3: p.33) She aches for contact when he is around, and when he is not, her mind drifts, and she finds herself thinking about his eyes and lean body as she has never done with anyone else. (ch.4: p.40) To Helen, all men are the same—strong, violent, excited by her beauty, but nothing more. They feel no challenge to conquer her heart; they see her only as a prize, the most precious one, but a prize still, as a cow or a sword might be. (ch.4: p.40) "He is no different from all the others," Helen tells her as they hurry down the narrow street of craftsmen's workshops and stores around the palace. The street is a shortcut to the square where textile manufacturers and dyers run their errands. "I believe he is different, but we will see," Clytemnestra replies (ch.4: p.41) Clytemnestra leans back, even though she wants to touch his face. She wants to feel his smooth skin under her hand, to press her body against his. But all good things must wait. So she leaves him empty-handed. (ch.4: p.43) A dark-haired servant steps into the room, looking at him hopefully, as if she were waiting for him to take her. He ignores her, holding out his hand for Helen. "Well, I am going too," Castor says, walking in the servant's direction. "It seems I might have company tonight after all." (ch.4: p.49) She has been with a man already, a boy not much older than her. It was during a village feast, a summer night...Helen and Polydeuces continued dancing together, while Castor vanished with the village beauty, an older girl with big eyes, like the goddess Hera. (ch.4: p.50) After, as they shivered beneath the silent moon, pleasure slowly fading, the boy asked if he could see her again. She shook her head. She could smell the odors of fig trees and mud, jasmine and sweat. The boy fell asleep quickly, and she left him there, dreaming under the trees. (ch.4: p.50) For a moment, she thinks about Helen, alone in their room. Of all those nights they have lain awake together, wondering about being with a king. She pushes away the thought and presses closer to Tantalus. (ch.4: p.51) THE WEDDING IS to be celebrated quickly, before Castor and Polydeuces leave. Tyndareus's permission is easily given. Leda is the only reluctant one. "Tantalus isn't strong," she says, eating ripe apricots in the megaron. (ch.5: p.52) "He has a different strength," Clytemnestra replies. "He is clever and curious." Leda raises her eyebrows, and Clytemnestra knows she is wondering how curiosity can equal strength. "Do you think he would be a suitable father?" her mother asks. "Much better than any Spartan." (ch.5: p.52) "Deceit runs in your family," Leda says coolly. "The house of Atreus is doomed." Agamemnon takes a step forward, as if to attack her, and Clytemnestra almost does the same. When her mother looks in her

direction, she hides behind the column. (ch.7: p.72)

"The priestess just delivered a new prophecy." "Father doesn't believe in prophecies." "Well, this time, he is annoyed." "Because he knows it is the truth," a hoarse voice behind them says. Clytemnestra turns so quickly she almost strains her neck. (ch.7: p.78)

A cruel woman, leeching off the strengths of others: that was what Leda called her when Clytemnestra asked her why she always left when the priestess entered the palace to speak to the king. (ch.7: p.78)

"You cannot give me orders, Leda, as you know," the priestess retorts. Her eyes linger on the empty wine cup on the floor, and distaste runs over her face. Leda stiffens. "You are not welcome in the palace. Go back to your temple." Anger contorts her features, and her hand runs to the jeweled dagger she keeps at her waist, though she doesn't draw it. (ch.7: p.79)

The priestess is not intimidated. She raises her chin and says, "You are the stranger here. Remember, I was in your husband's bed long before you fell for that foreigner—" Her eyes settle on Helen. "GET OUT!" Leda shouts, losing all self-control. "OUT! OR I WILL KILL YOU MYSELF. DO YOU UNDERSTAND?" (ch.7: p.79)

"I am too young to marry." "He wants to look at you, that is all." "He thinks himself the son of a god," Polydeuces snorted, "so he wants a divine wife." Helen frowned. "I am not divine," she said. Then she repeated, "And I am too young to marry." (ch.8: p.87)

"You are too young," Clytemnestra says. "I am only three years younger than you," Timandra reminds her. Though her body remains lean and athletic, like a child's, her face has grown older, more mature. Her eyes are dark as a starless night, her hair brown like hazel bark. "Just listen for now," Clytemnestra orders. "But you never listen when others tell you to keep silent," Timandra points out. (ch.8: p.91)

"Even if Helen wanted you," Tyndareus says, "her beauty is known throughout our lands. Many suitors, all over Greece, are waiting for the moment she is ready for marriage." "Summon them all, then," Menelaus says, "and let Helen choose." (ch.8: p.92)

"He is not my father," Helen says. "He has been such to you. You have grown up here, in this palace, with your brothers and sisters." With a jerk of her head, Helen seems to flick off an annoying fly. "You don't understand," she says. "I can make decisions for myself. I do not wish to live in your shadow any longer." (ch.8: p.97)

"Marriage disgusts me," Timandra says, bored. "Sometimes I wish I were a boy." Tyndareus laughs. Phoebe glares at her sister. She thinks Timandra wanted to offend her. "Is that why you were with that girl the other day?" she asks. (ch.8: p.100)

"You'd better fetch her before she does something stupid," he says. "What my sister does doesn't concern you," Clytemnestra replies. (ch.9: p.111)

"Now, Helen, choose the man you desire as your husband." Clytemnestra feels a flutter of panic in her chest, but Penelope's unflinching gaze reassures her. She has just taken a deep, calming breath when Helen speaks. "I choose Menelaus, son of Atreus." (ch.9: p.115)

The son of Laertes spends much time with Penelope and Clytemnestra, wandering around the palace, laughing and telling stories. He doesn't press Penelope about the marriage, and she doesn't give him any answer. But she studies him, her gentle eyes always on him, never missing a move. (ch.10: p.117)

Maybe that is why she chose Tantalus. His world seems much more hopeful than what she has always been forced to believe. And if everything he told her about Maeonia is true, her baby won't have to be beaten to learn, to be whipped if he disobeys. (ch.10: p.119)

Once, she would have walked into the room and shielded her sister. She would have protected Helen against anyone and anything. But now she can't. (ch.10: p.124)

"What should we call him?" Tantalus asks. They are sitting on the terrace, the baby resting on Clytemnestra's thighs, the sun gentle on their skin. Birds scatter in the sky, and the baby follows them with his big eyes. "Let us wait until we get to Maeonia," she says. "Let us wait until he meets his home." (ch.11: p.131)

"I am not afraid of him. This time he hurt me only because he caught me listening. I." Helen stops and her eyes fill with tears. "I made a mistake in marrying him. I was wrong." Tears streak her face, like rivers flooding a plain. She covers her face with her hands, shaking silently. (ch.11: p.133)

"Where are you going?" He frowns, suddenly alert. "Do not do anything stupid, Clytemnestra." She smiles and turns back to give him one last kiss. "Don't worry about me. Look after our baby." (ch.12: p.135)

Timandra rests a little in the shade. Dear gods, she thinks, let me be with Chrysanthé forever. If Clytemnestra approves, why can't everyone else? (ch.12: p.138)

"You can't go back to the palace." Her tone is sharp, but her orders mean nothing to a princess. "Leave me alone," Timandra says, walking past her. That is her mistake... Cynisca hits her head, and she falls to the ground. Her sight is blurred, her head pounding. She tries to move her arms, but a weight is keeping her down, crushing her fingers. (ch.12: p.138)

"You will wait here?" Menelaus asks. She didn't expect the question. He never asks about her. She hesitates for a moment too long. "That was not a question, Helen," Menelaus says. She grasps his hand, panic fluttering inside her. "I wanted to take some air. I am not feeling well." (ch.12: p.139)

"Someone called for help," she says. "Stay," Tyndareus says. He seems agitated, but his grip is firm. She shakes him off and runs out. (ch.12: p.141)

"Do you know the servants who went to Tantalus and brought him to Agamemnon?" Timandra nods. "Good. Bring them to me." (ch.13: p.146)

"You are a woman now. The gods have given you a taste of true sorrow. They have taught you loss. It is their divine duty to do so or else you forget you are mortal." "Your gods are cruel," Clytemnestra chokes out. The priestess lets her hand fall and shakes her head. Her hair sways gently, like seaweed underwater. "Death comes for us all, sooner or later. The moment we forget it, we become fools." (ch.13: p.153)

That night, when she is cleaned and perfumed, she walks in the darkness of the corridors, away from the gynaeceum and toward the main entrance of the palace. She steps outside into the breeze, her feet bare, and hurries along the narrow path that leads down the hill to the river. (ch.13: p.154)

A rabbit hops a few steps from her. She looks up and their eyes lock. How small it is, she thinks, and yet it isn't scared of her. Her hand finds the handle of her dagger and throws it. It sinks into the soft fur around the animal's neck. (ch.15: p.164)

"My envoys report that King Menelaus has organized one of the biggest funerals our lands have ever seen." "How typical of Menelaus," Timandra comments. (ch.15: p.167)

Timandra turns to her right, smiling at the curly-haired woman. Clytemnestra follows her stare and freezes on the bench. Eyes clear as water springs, hair as dark as obsidian... Timandra is faster than her. Before Clytemnestra can speak, her sister's features have tightened into a smile. "You remember Chrysanthé, sister?" (ch.15: p.167)

"How lucky you are that Chrysanthé keeps you company," Clytemnestra remarks. "I am the lucky one," Chrysanthé intervenes, "for I can serve my queen every day." (ch.15: p.167)

"Chrysanthé will come with us to Sparta," she says in a whisper (ch.15: p.169)

You hurt me, Father, Clytemnestra thinks. And I don't know how to forgive. (ch.16: p.172) "Our people call her mad," Helen says. "They say she murdered Jason's new wife with a dress steeped in poison." "She grew up in a place of darkness, with no mother and a tyrant as a father," Castor explains. (ch.16: p.175)

"where is the priestess?" Leda's eyes are large and foggy. "Why?" "I want to talk to her about the prophecy she made fifteen years ago." Leda's raven hair is tied in beautiful plaits, and she touches it absentmindedly. "She is gone," she finally says. "How?" "I sent her away." Clytemnestra remembers when her father used to take a woman, a helot, to his room when she was little. Leda found out and told everyone at dinner that she "sent the servant away." But one day when Clytemnestra was walking to the village, she found the helot's dead body, rotting in the mud. (ch.16: p.177)

At night, when warriors and nobles have gone to sleep, she walks down the narrow streets that run around the palace. The air is hot and moist, but she is wearing a cloak that hides her face. At her waist, she carries the small jeweled knife her mother gave her when she left for Mycenae. (ch.16: p.178)

Clytemnestra steps cautiously around the outside of the house, watching the inside from the only other window. The woman seems to be alone. She tries the door, but it is locked, so she climbs over the window ledge and lands inside the room as carefully as she can. (ch.16: p.178)

Cynisca stands. "He rewarded me. He protected my family and gave me power in Sparta." Her voice is deep and there is something like pride in it. "How generous of him." "He can be a generous man." "So you say. Although I am sure the best reward for you was to see me fall. To know I lost everything I loved and cared for. (ch.16: p.179)

The courtyard that leads to the megaron is cool and quiet. Clytemnestra half expects to see Electra there, eavesdropping on her father, but there is no one under the shadowy colonnades except the frescoed griffins, sitting proudly by every column. (ch.17: p.184)

Electra stands, smoothing her dress. "I don't want to eat in the hall tonight. I am sad and the elders are

like spiders, speaking into Father's ear, weaving their webs." Finally, Electra says, "Can I stay in the gynaeceum and eat alone?" Clytemnestra stands too. "You can't eat by yourself. You know that." Electra opens her mouth to reply, but her mother says, "I will talk to your father so you and I can eat together in your room." (ch.17: p.188)

"My queen—" they start, but Clytemnestra quiets them. She can see a door covered with a long piece of cloth at the end of the room and hears voices coming from beyond it. "No need to announce me." She turns to Leon and hands him the cloak. "You wait here." "You can't go in there alone," he remonstrates. She ignores him and moves the cloth aside, stepping into the back room. (ch.17: p.191)

The small man looks panicked, like a field mouse. A thought crosses his mind and he speaks. "What about the king?" "The king will never know of this," she says. "He will be spared from your vile behavior." (ch.17: p.192)

"Mother, I have to tell you!" he says, breathless. He stops when he sees Iphigenia, giving her a meaningful look. She narrows her eyes, suspicious. "What happened?" Clytemnestra asks. Orestes lowers his voice in a conspiratorial way. "I saw her with that man." Iphigenia's cheeks are burning. "It was nothing." "His mouth was on yours!" Orestes says, torn between anger and giddiness. "Orestes!" Iphigenia says. (ch.19: p.203)

"I still want that girl," he finally says. "I am king." She puts down her cup. "You will never touch her." "Why?" "Because if you do, I will gut you, like I did that whore Cynisca." Shock sparks in his eyes. He plants his feet on the floor and stands. "What did you do?" She throws back her head. "I found her and stabbed her until she bled to death." (ch.19: p.208)

"Timandra has deserted King Echemus, my queen." His voice is low, and for a moment, she thinks she hasn't heard correctly. The envoy looks up and, seeing that she isn't reacting, continues, "She was seen riding away in the night. They say she married King Phyleus in secret and now is pregnant by him." (ch.20: p.209)

The envoy shakes his head. "It is King Echemus who sends me. He claims Timandra went mad after he sent her friend away from the palace." Chrysanthé. "He says he wants her back." "Where is Timandra's friend now?" "No one knows." "Is Echemus looking for her?" The envoy frowns, as though Clytemnestra's questions were missing the point. "Echemus only wants Timandra back, my queen." (ch.20: p.209 210)

The servants told her that Helen isn't in the palace, so Clytemnestra takes the path that leads to the temple of Artemis. She has ordered Leon to find her brothers and tell them she is in Sparta so she can speak to her sister alone. (ch.20: p.216)

"Besides, our brothers aren't holding anyone against their will." "What do you mean?" "Phoebe and Hilaëira came here of their own accord. They love Castor and Polydeuces." (ch.20: p.218)

"It is too late," Castor says. Clytemnestra can see fever in his eyes, wildness. "Phoebe and her sister can't go back to Messenia." He walks over to Phoebe and touches her belly with the gentleness of a warrior touching the petal of a flower. "They are pregnant. Both of them." (ch.20: p.219)

"Your father is said to have fifty sons and fifty daughters," Clytemnestra says. "Why did he choose to send you here?" Helen touches her hand as if asking her to stop questioning the prince. But Paris seems neither annoyed nor affronted. Answers come to him with no hesitation. "I asked to come. I wanted to show my father that I am as worthy as his other sons." (ch.21: p.222)

"Phoebe and Hilaëira were not abducted," Castor says. "They came with us willingly." (ch.22: p.231)

"I have to tell you a secret," Helen says in one breath. But then Helen speaks again... "I slept with the Trojan prince." (ch.22: p.235)

"I have told you to tame your family!" he shouts. "And what have you done? You have let your sister fuck the enemy!"...."Helen left Sparta with Prince Paris," he says. "They are headed for Troy at this very moment." (ch.23: p.244)

Orestes hears it in the megaron and runs to his mother to tell her. Clytemnestra is practicing in the armory, and when he tumbles in, she almost throws the spear she is holding. (ch.23: p.251)

Leon takes one more step forward and touches his hand to her neck. It is rough but pleasant. She wishes she could close her eyes and enjoy the feeling of being soothed. But she can't afford that. (ch.25: p.281)

Then he leaned forward and kissed her. Her mouth opened under his. He was trembling and she tried to hold him still. She grasped his arms as hard as she could, knowing the pain would give him pleasure. She knew it because that was what she wanted too—and he gave it to her. (ch.25: p.282)

IN THE EARLY morning, the megaron is empty and quiet. She wraps her lynx skin around her shoulders and sits on Agamemnon's raised throne, waiting, as the feeble light of the hearth flickers on

the frescoed walls. (ch.26: p.281)

"I have wronged your king in the past," he says. It seems he is waiting, for scorn or punishment, it is hard to say. "Even if you have wronged my husband, you know I must allow you to stay in this palace." The man smirks. "I don't want to be killed in my sleep, my queen." The words sound mocking in his mouth, yet she likes it. "You won't be. I give you my word." (ch.26: p.284)

"You are welcome in this palace, Lord Aegisthus," she says. "No one shall harm you. Now go. I will see you at dinner." (ch.26: p.285)

There is a feeling in her she can't recognize, as if a flame has been suddenly lit, burning her from within. After nine years of pain and plotting, this is unexpected. Whether good or bad, she will find out soon enough. In both cases, she holds the sword, and she is not afraid to strike. (ch.26: p.286)

"And yet you didn't say anything," Clytemnestra says. "No, my queen. I hope you can forgive me." "He saved your life. There is nothing to forgive." Aileen nods, with a small, grateful smile. (ch.26: p.287)

She wants to ask him questions, to spill stories from him and know what lies behind that troubled face. But she doubts he would talk. A man like him probably hasn't talked in his entire life. She imagines his thoughts crawling inside him, like worms in the earth, doomed to stay in the shadows. (ch.26: p.289)

"Shouldn't you send him away, my queen?" he asks. She turns. "That is my decision, not yours." (ch.26: p.290)

She is told that he spends his time around the practice yard in the late afternoon, so she goes there alone when the boys have finished training. Sunset is painting the sky in dark-red strokes. In the middle of the yard, a torch is thrust into the ground, its light burning strongly. (ch.27: p.294)

She avoids dinner and goes to the bathhouse to clean herself. Her tunic is dusty, her hair messy and tangled. The lamps are already lit, streams of light in the quiet darkness. (ch.27: p.296)

"Come here, Leon." He stops. When he turns back, pleasure is plain on his face. He covers the steps between them and kneels next to her chair. She touches his hair, draws him to her. His lips on hers taste of home and sorrow. "Someone might come," he says, breathless, as he lifts her tunic. "Let them," she says. "I am queen. I do as I please." (ch.27: p.298)

"Your daughter came to talk to me," he says. "Which one?" "Electra." She frowns, surprised. Electra rarely goes to talk to anyone. "What did she want?" "She told me that the elders don't want me in the palace and that you are fighting them." He studies her, waiting for a reaction. When she keeps silent, he adds, "But I think she wanted me to tell her why I have come here." "That is Electra's way, yes. She talks to make you talk. You must frustrate her." (ch.28: p.304)

Clytemnestra sneaks out of the palace, enjoying the thickness of the silence. There is nothing she likes more than being awake when the city sleeps. It gives her a sense of power, an illusion of control. (ch.28: p.308)

Questions slip into her mind, tickling her like water drops. How many women have you been with? How many servants? Do you know pleasure or only pain? (ch.28: p.311)

NO MORE FEAR, she decides. No more surprises. It is her turn to follow. She starts to go after him in secret, in the early hours of the morning, before she meets the elders and petitioners in the megaron, and in the late afternoon when he practices. (ch.29: p.312)

Aegisthus moves like a shadow, his figure sharp on the pale walls, and Clytemnestra follows, a mantle pulled over her head. (ch.29: p.312)

As he walks away, Clytemnestra touches Leon's arm. "Go and find my daughters," she whispers. "Prepare them for dinner. I will come soon." (ch.29: p.315)

"You shouldn't be so scared," she says quietly. "You shouldn't be so careless." He is right, she shouldn't, but she doesn't care. She moves forward and her lips brush his. He tastes like salt. A moment passes, the span of a breath. When she looks up, he is still, barely breathing. (ch.29: p.316)

"I could have you murdered for coming in here," she says. "And yet you won't." "No. So what will you do?" He lets her go. The strength of his desire is plain on his face, and so is his fear. She doesn't like waiting, so she steps into her bedroom, unties her tunic, and lets it fall onto the floor. He follows her, barely breathing, and when his hands touch her again, she shivers for the cold. (ch.29: p.317)

SO WHAT WILL you do? She asked the question and watched the answer forming on his face. Still, she didn't know what would happen afterward. She expected wariness, fear, violence, but there is nothing of the sort. (ch.30: p.319)

When he lies in her bed at night, she can feel him watching. Maybe he thinks that if he looks away, she will disappear. She touches his scars, feels the texture under her fingers, as if to remind him, I am here. He never flinches. Pain is a constant for him, a second skin he cannot shed. (ch.30: p.319)

"What is it, Mother?" Orestes says. "Did news come from Troy?" He is studying her face, wiping his hands on a piece of cloth. "I have slept with Aegisthus," she says. Sooner or later, he would know anyway. Better from her than from someone else. (ch.30: p.323)

Someone will betray her for this, she knows it. And she will have to handle it. She thinks of Leon's hurt, disappointed face when he finds out. You are the queen. He has no say in deciding whom you sleep with. You owe him nothing. (ch.30: p.324)

"You would kill your advisers so," he says. "They were not loyal advisers. They were traitors." Their blood is still on her hands, and she tries to wipe it away with a cloth. "Then you would do the same to me if I opposed you?" "You haven't opposed me so far." (ch.31: p.331)

"You did this for Aegisthus? You plotted with a traitor?" "I plotted nothing with him." "Then why didn't you tell me of your decision? I am your guard and protector!" "I didn't know if I could trust you anymore," she says simply. "You showed me no respect when you came to my room and insulted my relationship with Aegisthus." (ch.31: p.331)

"Go on," he says. "Are you going to kill me too? Because I wasn't loyal? I almost gave my life for you!" Almost. "It wasn't enough." The words come out before she can stop them. She sees the hurt on Leon's face. He straightens up, his fists balled. (ch.31: p.332)

It is still early, and she turns to her right, expecting Leon to be there. Then Electra speaks. "You sent Leon away." Her voice is thick with accusation.... "Leon decided to leave," she says. Electra takes a few steps forward, her eyes shining with rage. "But you drove him away! You went with the traitor Aegisthus and he left us!" (ch.31: p.333)

The scout comes closer, wringing his hands. She looks at Aegisthus, waiting for him to leave, but he does not move. "I will meet you in the palace, Aegisthus," she says. She half expects him to complain, to look hurt, but his expression betrays nothing. He picks up his weapon and walks away, fallen leaves crunching under his feet. (ch.31: p.339)

"Aegisthus is not our family." She leans against the wall. "He isn't." "If he rules with you, the people will judge you, condemn you." It is her own fault, she thinks. She has trained her son too well, taught him to be distrustful. "You spend too much time worrying about the people," she says. "I've told you many times that the people do not rule. We do." (ch.31: p.341)

When she goes to her room, Aegisthus isn't there. It is already dark, so she walks to the guests' quarters, knocking on his door before she enters. (ch.31: p.341)

"Do you know what the people in the villages say about you?" "Something horrible, I imagine." "They say that you are mad with ambition and distrust. That you execute people who aren't loyal." "I can't argue with that... (ch.31: p.342)

"As you know, the king is coming back now," she says. "He will decide what to do with his prisoners." A murmur of assent, like a breeze, runs through the old men. How easily they are fooled. How trusting they become when she gives them exactly what they want. (ch.32: p.354)

Last night, as she lay on the bed sleeplessly, she told Aegisthus that he had to trust her. I trust you, he said, reaching for her, pressing his body against hers. She felt his warmth but it wasn't enough. She wanted him to tear through her skin, to hold her so tightly that she might break. (ch.32: p.354)

"Agamemnon will return and find his wife loyal and true," she says. The elders are wide-eyed, watchful. They suddenly fear this is a game or that she has gone mad. Isn't this what you wanted? For me to be no more than a watchdog, licking the mighty king's feet? "Give the news to the people in the citadel," she says. "Agamemnon is sailing back, and the queen readies to welcome him." (ch.32: p.355) Clytemnestra stands, lifting her golden cup. "A toast, then!" she says, and the hall grows quiet. The men turn to her, their faces raw and wrinkled. "To the gods who helped true heroes come home, and to the best victory of our times, a war that will be remembered for generations!" (ch.34: p.359)

"Atreus was Aegisthus's father as much as Thyestes was. He took him in and brought him up with the rest of us. And Aegisthus killed him." She passes the cloth over his shoulders, the scars carved on his skin. "That is why I threw him into a cell." His back grows tighter. "But you fucked him first. Isn't that true?"... "Aegisthus is a weak man," she says. "You have always liked weak men." (ch.34: p.367)

She crept out of her room when Aileen and Chrysothemis fell asleep. She crushed some herbs into the guards' cups of wine and looked at them as they slumped on their stools, spittle at the corners of their mouths. (ch.34: p.370-371)

It is Cadmus who speaks first, his face grave. "My queen, we ask you to execute the man who committed this hideous crime." A murmur of assent. She almost smiles. As she predicted, everyone thinks Aegisthus killed Agamemnon. (ch.35: p.374)

"You can't forgive me for killing a father who would have hurt you? A man who slaughtered your

	sister? I have loved you since the moment you were born. I have fed you at my breast, cried for you, laughed with you, understood you when no one else would.” She stops because her eyes are wet with tears. She recomposes herself. “But if you loved him so much, then kill me. It won’t bring him back.” (ch.35: p.377)
Demands for Equality	Rumors indulge in details, so the Spartans talked of how Leda fought as he seized her, his beak wounding her, his wings keeping her still. Others spoke differently: the union was so pleasurable, they said, that she was left flushed and breathless. (ch.2: p.22) Cynisca smirks. “Ah, that is your mistake. You think yourself a man, but you aren’t. Lucky women never get past the envy of the gods.” Clytemnestra could have her whipped here and now if she wanted to. But Cynisca isn’t worth her anger, so she just stares at her coldly. As she walks away, toward her loving Tantalus, she smiles. Better to be envied than to be no one. (ch.5: p.56) Leda runs onto the wrestling ground; her feet sink into the wet sand. She seizes Agamemnon’s arm and pushes him backward, shielding the Spartan with her own body. (ch.7: p.82) “I’ve heard that you’re good at wrestling,” he says. “Women aren’t trained like men where I come from.” “I’m sorry for them,” Clytemnestra replies. His jaw tightens, but he doesn’t answer. His quiet is frustrating. She wishes she could strike him or run away as he studies her, his eyes peeling off her skin. But she stays where she is. (ch.7: p.82) The girl is moaning and crying but Clytemnestra can’t see her face. She steps forward, thinking of the bruised helot. “Leave her alone,” she says, her voice loud over the rain. (ch.7: p.83) “Put that away,” she orders. He doesn’t. “It was you who interrupted us.” “This is my palace.” (ch.7: p.83) Tyndareus shook his head. “Theseus is now king of Athens. Athens is powerful, and we can’t go to war against it, not for such a reason.” Such a reason. Clytemnestra wanted to tear out her hair, but Polydeuces preceded her. “Your daughter was raped by this man for his entertainment. He didn’t even ask for her hand in marriage!” (p.8: p.89) “Aren’t you afraid of riding alone?” Clytemnestra frowns, but Penelope speaks with a friendly tone. “Would someone ask you the same question if you left Ithaca alone on a boat?” (ch.9: p.105) “And what did you think of that man, Diomedes?” “Disgusting,” Clytemnestra says. “Even worse than Menelaus.” “I thought so too.” “And Ajax the Great. He looks like an oversized boar, hairs and all.” Penelope laughs. “He does! And when he talked of women moaning—” “If I hadn’t been pregnant, I would have challenged him to a wrestle, right there in the hall.” “Oh, I wish you had. You would have kicked the arrogance out of him.” (ch.9: p.109) She is sitting in a corner of the town square, lulling the baby under the shade of an oak. She has escaped the dining hall in an effort to avoid Agamemnon and Menelaus; she doesn’t like the way they glance at the baby, with a mixture of coldness and distaste. (ch.11: p.130) “What has he done?” she asks. Helen turns, showing a small bruise on her neck. “It is nothing,” she says when Clytemnestra opens her mouth to speak. “This is not why I am here.” “Why?” Clytemnestra says. Anger is taking hold of her, and as always, she can do nothing to stop it. “Why did he do it?” (ch.11: p.133) “He will not touch you,” Clytemnestra spits out. “Do you understand? I will make sure he doesn’t touch you again.” (ch.11: p.133) At first, she wanted to talk to Menelaus, but then she understood it would be the wrong move. It is no use to clean an infected wound on the surface if a splinter remains inside, festering. You must cut through the skin and remove it before it corrupts everything else. And Menelaus is no splinter: he merely does what his brother tells him to. She must deal with Agamemnon. (ch.12: p.135) “You have something to say to me,” Agamemnon points out, half smiling. Smiles don’t look good on his hard face. “What is it?” “Your brother hurt my sister.” Her words are flat, as she has heard her father speak so many times when facing an opponent. “He won’t do it again, or he will pay.” (ch.12: p.136) Clytemnestra takes the grapes from his hands and throws them onto the floor. They splatter, purple juice staining the walls. Let him learn that I speak as I choose. “If I see another bruise on my sister’s body,” Clytemnestra says, her voice shaking with rage, “I will kill and gut you like dead fish.” (ch.12: p.136) “You must learn your place among men, Clytemnestra,” he says. His words are whips, slashing at her hurting throat. “You are too proud, too arrogant.” She feels her face become purple, air leaving her lungs. “You are the same,” she croaks, “if you kill me.” (ch.12: p.137)

"Stay away," she says. "You take no orders from him." The helot backs down. "I have to make sure you stay here," he mutters. "I have to make sure you are safe, Princess." Helen spits at him, then throws the table against the door. "LET ME OUT!" (ch.12: p.139)

She looks up into Tyndareus's eyes and sneers. "What kind of father are you?" (ch.13: p.150)

"Because you will marry the man." "I won't," she says, her voice so quiet she can barely hear herself. "You live to honor Sparta and your king." He recites the words he taught her as a child, when he wanted her to grow into a strong warrior, a free woman.Anger and grief ripple beneath her skin, and she is afraid they might tear it. "I will not marry him," she repeats. (ch.13: p.150-151)

Helen stands quickly and walks in front of her sister, her long dress fluttering around her ankles. Agamemnon looks at her as an eagle regards a mouse. "Leave us," he says. "How dare you—" Helen starts, but Clytemnestra takes her wrist. (ch.13: p.151)

"The slaves said you are to give them orders from now on," he says. "Yes." "I didn't give you permission." He seems almost amused, though Clytemnestra can't say why. "I don't need your permission. I won't take orders from you." (ch.14: p.161)

"What he did to you was unforgivable," Polydeuces says, "but he is still your father. Loyalty is a difficult thing. "It shouldn't be," Clytemnestra replies. (ch.16: p.174)

She moves toward him, covering the distance between them in a few steps. She stands on her tiptoes and kisses his cheek. Then she whispers in his ear, low enough for Orestes not to catch the words. "If you talk about my sister again, I will strangle you in your sleep." (ch.17: p.186)

"Speak." The small man speaks again for the others. "We don't take orders from a woman." "Why?" He doesn't hesitate this time. "The strongest one rules," he says. She smiles. "And who is that among you?" She lets her eyes linger on them, on the flabby stomach of one, on the golden rings of another. (ch.17: p.192)

Fathers didn't seek vengeance for their daughters. Kings didn't punish lustful young men—Clytemnestra had learned that a long time ago. But she is no king. She had the nobleman's son dragged outside under the scorching sun and before the people's eyes. He was whipped until his back was soaked. (ch.18: p.194)

Agamemnon's smile doesn't reach his eyes. "You demand punishment, Eurybates?" "He wanted to rip our clothes," Iphigenia hisses, fire in her eyes. "He chased us in the streets shouting that we would be forced to marry him after he was done with us." (ch.18: p.199)

"They pushed him down." Eurybates's words are thick with spite. "One threatened him while the other hurt him with a rock." Agamemnon opens his mouth, but Clytemnestra is quicker. "It is your son who should be punished, Eurybates. He tried to shame the king's daughters, and they defended themselves. Their bodies aren't his to take. Now leave, and do not come here again." (ch.18: p.199)

"But who?" "There are plenty of women in this citadel who would like to fuck my husband." Aileen nods, and for a moment, they are silent...."You will do nothing," Clytemnestra says. "I will deal with it." (ch.19: p.206 207)

He raises his head when she comes in. His look is hard—he is angry, though Clytemnestra can't tell why. Not that she cares. "Your red-haired servant won't come tonight," he finally says. "No." "You told her not to." "You will find someone else to fuck," she says calmly. (ch.19: p.207)

"Phoebe and Philonoe seem to be the only sane members of your family. Married off to useless kings. At least I hear they make them happy." He winks, gulping his wine. "What about your family?" Clytemnestra asks. "What about your father and your uncle? A son killed and cooked, a daughter raped by her father. Your line is cursed." (ch.20: p.215)

"That is the problem with your brother," Clytemnestra says. "He thinks only of what he wants. He forgets that there is a world around him, filled with people whose wishes he is not considering." (ch.20: p.215)

"I'm sure the king of Sparta would be happy to give back what belongs to us." "He is not here," Clytemnestra says, "so we decide." (ch.22: p.232)

"If I were your wife, I'd murder you in your sleep." Idas smiles. "Would you? Because you didn't murder your husband, and I hear he slaughtered your child. So maybe," he says and licks his lips, "you are not as strong as you think you are." "Leave," Clytemnestra orders, "or I will have you cut to pieces here and now." (ch.22: p.232)

Agamemnon walks to her. Quick as a serpent, he raises his hand to strike her, but Clytemnestra draws back, grabbing the kitchen knife. His hand slaps the air and his eyes rest on the knife, disbelieving. (ch.23: p.245)

She never talked about her own anger, yet Clytemnestra knew it was there, hidden under the layers of

goodness. She would see it at dinner sometimes, when the men's hands found their way under the servants' tunics as they passed to pour their wine. Helen would look at them as they asked for more mutton, forcing the girls to come back, and Clytemnestra would see a flicker of rage in her sister's eyes. It was always the small things that made Helen angry. (ch.23: p.246)

Odysseus. She almost chokes when she thinks of him. Every word he had the courage to utter, every smile. All lies. Every night for years, she wished him dead, though she knew very well he wouldn't die, not for a long time. Men like him are hard to kill. (ch.25: p.279)

She moves forward, grabbing a spear from the ground as she walks. In the practice yard, she smiles. A challenge. "You are good." He takes a step back, and his figure slips away from the light of the torch. "I won't fight you." She keeps moving forward. "Why? Are you afraid?" "You are my queen. And a mother." And you are a usurper. And a son. "Fight me," she says. (ch.27: p.295)

"You should send him away or imprison him," Polydamas says. "He has a claim on the throne." "My husband used to say that it is better to keep your enemies close." That is a lie. Agamemnon never said such a thing. But she has noticed that whenever she mentions him, the elders struggle to contradict her. (ch.28: p.300)

"You believe I let Aegisthus eat at my table and walk around my palace without having a plan. You do not consider that I might be trying to understand him better, to manipulate him." "Men don't manipulate their enemies. They force them into submission." She laughs bitterly. "I thought you served my husband. Who can manipulate better than Agamemnon? The king you so blindly follow has risen to power thanks to his deceptions. And what about Odysseus, king of Ithaca?" The name stings on her tongue but she speaks it nonetheless. "Is he called a hero because of his strength or because of his tricks?" (ch.28: p.301)

"It's odd that you should talk about the plague in such terms, Polydamas," she says. "Why?" "I thought you said that a woman in command can be like the plague among soldiers." She looks him straight in the eye, placing each word carefully. (ch.28: p.301)

Most of the warriors left with Agamemnon nine years ago, and Clytemnestra has been building a strong army to replace them. (ch.28: p.305)

"You wanted to flog me years ago, my queen," Kyros says. "You were right. I disrespected your daughters, and they showed me never to underestimate a woman in return. In every mistake, there is always a lesson to be learned." She can tell he has been rehearsing his little speech, though he is careful enough to look honest as he speaks. (ch.28: p.305)

Clytemnestra is considering what to do when Aegisthus comes out of his corner. The traders look at him as if they have just noticed him. "Maybe you want her, friend," Erebus hisses, annoyed at the interruption. Aegisthus shakes his head. Fast, so fast the merchants don't even see it, he yanks a dagger from his belt and sinks it into Erebus's hand, pinning it to the table. (ch.29: p.315)

"Agamemnon sleeps with young girls with no regard to the consequences that his choices have on his army and his war. Still, you bear him no ill will. You don't even speak of it." She smiles at them. "I, on the other hand, take one man to my bed for reasons you don't know and shouldn't care to know, and we have to gather here to talk about how wrong my choice is." (ch.30: p.327)

"I wonder," she says, "what a right ruler would do with traitors?" "Imprison them," Lycomedes says. "Kill them." She smiles. "I am glad we agree on this." (ch.30: p.328)

"I would love to discuss types of treason with you, Polydamas," she says. He raises his eyebrow, just slightly. She looks him straight in the eye and adds, "But unfortunately, a crowd is gathering by the Lion Gate to watch your execution." (ch.30: p.328)

"I'd never go so low as sleeping with a woman who has been in Kyros's bed," Orestes replies with a smile. "And yet you fight with him," Electra says. "A man who once tried to rape your sisters. Do you think he is different now, a better man?" (ch.32: p.346)

She feels herself growing tense, her mind sharpening like a blade. She closes her eyes and imagines killing her husband—the thought that has fed her for years, the seed that has grown into a vine. She couldn't stand if she stopped thinking about it. It is the same tightness one feels before a fight—and this is a fight for which she has been preparing for a long time. (ch.32: p.354)

A girl sits on the chariot next to Agamemnon among the gold, rugs, and vases. Her hands are bound, her skin brown as oak bark. There is an old bruise on her face, half-covered by her loose hair. A war slave. Clytemnestra would rather die than live like that. "Even a slave has a choice," her mother once said. "Slavery or death." Is that a choice? Clytemnestra isn't sure. (ch.32: p.356 357)

"I haven't introduced you," Agamemnon says. "This is my war prize and pallake." Concubine. The word, spoken aloud in front of everyone, is meant to humiliate them both, Clytemnestra knows. But the

	girl doesn't look down as a slave would. She stares back at Clytemnestra, challenge burning in her eyes, as though she is daring her to pity her. (ch.34: p.358) "But the worst fate was Andromache's," Calchas says. "Do you know what happened to her?" His eyes never leave Clytemnestra's. "I am not sure I care," she replies. She wishes she could save Cassandra from further pain. But Calchas isn't done with her. (ch.34: p.359) "Pyrrhus then took Andromache for himself." He keeps staring at her, waiting for some sort of reaction. Clytemnestra's face betrays nothing. (ch.34: p.359) "Time can play strange tricks. Often the gods pluck dead men from the shadows and carry them into the light for future generations to remember. They let others shine in their lifetime, then bury them too deep to be talked about in the future." She smiles, as guilelessly as she can. "And what do you think your fate will be, seer? Will you be forgotten, or will you be remembered as the man who sat with kings during the greatest of wars?" (ch.34: p.360) She has been eager to be alone with the seer since they sailed from Troy. Now they are walking in a garden toward a pale temple, and Calchas's footsteps in front of her make no sound, as if he were wan and fading. Cassandra tries not to stumble on the path. She has stolen a knife from the dining hall, and her hand around it is so damp she is afraid it might slip and drop to the ground. (ch.34: p.361) "Leave," Clytemnestra orders her. The girl springs up and walks to the door, but Calchas doesn't turn. Clytemnestra examines the back of his head, like an eggshell whose surface has been cracked. "I knew you would come," he says. "Did some sheep's intestines tell you so?" (ch.34: p.362) "You are an ambitious woman married to a ruthless king. In my experience, ambitious people fall quickly. But not you. You have a talent for survival." She stops close enough to touch him. "So do you. Though while I fight my way till the end, you crawl and whisper in kings' ears. Not heroic, but you do what you must to survive." (ch.34: p.363) She keeps her movements slow and controlled. "What about the Trojan princess? Did you take her?" Agamemnon's eyes never leave her. "She reminds me of you. That was why I chose her. When we took the city, all the other women were crying and cowering, but not Cassandra. She kept glaring, and when one of my men struck her, she spat at him." (ch.34: p.368) "Now I need to deal with Aegisthus. Then all our enemies will have been destroyed." Her throat is raw, but she forces herself to speak. "And what about my enemies?" (ch.34: p.369) "You do not know loyalty or affection." His eyes are wide, and for the first time since she has known him, he looks afraid. "You will die alone, as you have been all your life, killed by your own wife. You see the irony in that? You take things from people, and sometimes they take things back from you." (ch.34: p.370) Clytemnestra takes her broken hand in the other. She tries to move the fingers, pain shooting through her. I have killed the lord of men, Agamemnon. My debt is paid. (ch.35: p.373) "Vengeance is our way of life," Clytemnestra says. The men nod, their faces gray in the light of the torches. "But what about Aulis? What about Princess Iphigenia, who was sacrificed like a beast, her blood still wetting the altar stone?" No one speaks. "Did anyone avenge her? Her father murdered her, yet you didn't demand that he was banished. You didn't hunt him down, as you are ready to do with Aegisthus." (ch.35: p.374) "The princess gave her life willingly," a warrior says, "for the war." Are these the lies you have been telling yourselves all these years? "You were there," Clytemnestra says coolly. "You saw how she screamed and cried. My daughter came to Aulis for a marriage, and she never left." (ch.35: p.374) "The work is all mine. I killed your lord of men, and I did it to avenge my daughter." The silence is as deafening as when a predator passes through the forest. Then, very slowly, Cadmus says, "You exult over a fallen king." "He was no king of mine," she says. (ch.35: p.375)
Resilience	Clytemnestra used to hide and pray for all those men whose deaths would be long and painful. (ch.1: p.16) When her mother found out, she didn't feed her for two days. "Part of the training is to starve Spartan boys until they are forced to steal," she said. Clytemnestra endured the punishment—she knew she deserved it. (ch.1: p.17) "SLOW DOWN, CLYTEMNESTRA! Artemis will shoot me if I am second again!" Clytemnestra laughs, and the sound echoes like birdsong across the plain. "She won't. Mother told you that to make you run faster!" (ch.2: p.19) "You are no Spartan woman," Clytemnestra says with a smile. "Not like you. If you were a man, you'd be among the strongest fighters in Greece."

	"I'm already among the cleverest in Sparta," Clytemnestra says, grinning. (ch.2: p.20) "A husband needs to show his strength," she says, "but the wife must prove herself a worthy match." "She must submit herself to him." "Yes." "I don't think I can do that, Mother." (ch.3: p.36) When commoners walk in the megaron with their pleas, Leda speaks and gives orders, but only when Tyndareus asks for her opinion.(ch.4: p.44) She sees that her mother can be two different people and that the best version appears when her father isn't around. Is this what happens when one falls in love and marries? Clytemnestra wonders. Is this what a woman gives up? All her life, she has been taught courage, strength, resilience, but must those qualities be kept at bay with a husband? But it is also true that her father listens to her when she speaks, and Tantalus looks at her as if she were a goddess. (ch.4: p.45) The atmosphere in the gymnasium was unbearable, with groups of Spartiates whispering behind Helen's back as they trained. As soon as the dancing ended, Clytemnestra had taken her sister's arm and led her up the trail that takes them to the top of Mount Taygetus. She knew she couldn't have controlled herself if she had stayed there any longer. (ch.4: p.47) "I wasn't born to be in some other man's expedition." "What were you born for, then?" She waits a moment before replying. "My grandmother once said I was born to rule." Tantalus smiles. "All rulers must learn how to follow before they can lead." "Have you spent a long time following others? Before you were king?" (ch.4: p.48) Clytemnestra's cheeks burn, but she smiles. "You shouldn't worry, Castor. You know very well that I can fight you even after two jugs." Castor leaps closer to her and tries to lift her, jokingly, but she takes his arm and bends it behind his back. He laughs, pushes her away. (ch.4: p.49) When they were little, they spent much time together. Penelope was more like Helen, a well-behaved child, quiet, yet both found a way to say what they thought, to claim their own space. (ch.5: p.53) Her mother, Polycaste, had been a frail, gentle woman who died of a bad fever years before, when Penelope was still little. Since then, she has been the one running everything in her palace. Penelope, as Clytemnestra knows, has a talent for making people listen to her, and she can be, at the same time, a very good listener. One day, she will make a just queen. (ch.5: p.55) "Maybe you shouldn't practice." She is staring at Clytemnestra, frowning. "You are sweating." "I feel fine," Clytemnestra lies. (ch.6: p.62) She is relieved to notice that Cynisca carefully avoids her, as one does a poisoned blade. (ch.6: p.63) It goes on for longer than any other fight. They move across the courtyard in spirals, jumping back and forth, while the girls' spears flicker in and out, aiming at Clytemnestra's head, throat, and hands. "Take her down!" Lysimachos yells. "Take her down!" But Clytemnestra keeps dodging cuts from the others' spearheads. (ch.6: p.64) The short girl hurries to help Ligeia to her feet as Eupoleia takes the shaft of Clytemnestra's spear. For one moment, the two remain still, each pulling the spear. Then, Clytemnestra lets go with one hand and draws her short sword, cutting Eupoleia's cheek. (ch.6: p.64) They find Leda in the megaron, sitting on Tyndareus's throne. (ch.7: p.76) "You are famous for your wrestling skills, even in Argos." The sentence is a statement, and Clytemnestra doesn't know how to respond. Tyndareus intervenes. "She takes after her mother. Leda hunted lynxes and lions in the forests of Aetolia when she was younger." (ch.9: p.107) "Your sister is pretty, it's true," Tantalus told her once, "but something in her is tamed. You both have fire in your hearts, but she pours water over hers, while you add more logs to yours. That is beautiful." (ch.7: p.81) "Anyone would be lucky to be with a man like him." "I don't think so." Cynisca laughs, scornful. "That's because you don't see power when you have it in front of you." (ch.7: p.84) "Can we—?" she starts, but Helen interrupts her. "You should have told me the truth," she says coldly (ch.8: p.90) To keep the pain at bay, Clytemnestra would dream of taking down Theseus. How handsome he looked, how gifted, yet for what? Heroes like him are made of greed and cruelty: they take and take until the world around them is stripped of its beauty. (ch.8: p.95) "Does it hurt too much?" Helen asks. They are almost running now, Clytemnestra breathing hard and holding Helen's arm tightly. "I have felt worse," Clytemnestra manages, and her sister gives her a feeble smile. (ch.10: p.127) The blood comes from her head. She touches it, and pain makes her gasp. She finds the stone that Cynisca used to hit her and remembers. She needs to run back to the palace. Her hands sink into the mud and litter and her knees shake, but she manages to stand. (ch.12: p.142)
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The servant boy is staring at her, waiting for a reaction. He doesn't know she has long learned to school her face to dullness. Only the gods know how she is crying inside. (ch.12: p.142)

She sinks her husband's knife into the servant's knee. He shouts but she silences him, her hand clasped on his mouth. "What is happening outside?" she whispers. "What is Menelaus doing?" The servant shakes his head, and Helen shows him the blade. "Speak now." (ch.12: p.143)

The servants are staring at her, pleading and fear on their faces. She can see the marks and blood crusts on their arms, and she wonders if Timandra beat them before she brought her here or if it was someone else. "Tell my sister what you told me," Timandra orders, her voice empty of any warmth. "How you were with the king of Maeonia when he died." (ch.13: p.147)

"You are a king," she says sharply. "If you want something, you demand it." "You are young still," Tyndareus says, "and do not understand that sometimes you have to compromise. It is my fault; I have failed to teach you this. I have always given you too much freedom." "I do not need you to give me my freedom," Clytemnestra says. "I am free. But you are not. You are Agamemnon's puppet now, because you are weak." (ch.13: p.149)

"Your husband was weak," Tyndareus replies coolly. "Tantalus was a good man, a kind man. But you can't see that, because in your world, only the brutes can live, and they do so by tearing down everything else." "That is how life is. The weak have to die so that the rest may survive." "You disgust me," she says. (ch.13: p.149-150)

"And you do not fight him. You forgive him. You are no better." "There are laws to be respected," Leda says quietly. "You don't seek vengeance because you have become a coward," Clytemnestra says. Her hands are trembling, and she clutches them tightly. "But know this. I will have my justice. I swear it here and now. I swear it by the Furies and every other goddess who has known vengeance. I will stalk the Atreidai and crush everything they hold dear until only ashes remain." (ch.13: p.150)

"You may grieve for the foreigner now. But you will soon forget him and learn to love another." She gazes at Agamemnon and says, "I do not forget." (ch.13: p.152)

"You burn with rage for your father." Clytemnestra bites her tongue. Rage is not what she feels. It is hatred, raw and relentless, clawing at her heart. (ch.13: p.153)

Tyndareus raised his cup and shouted, "To the Atreidai and the Atreidai's wives!" Clytemnestra shattered her own cup against the wall. She stood while a servant hurried to clean the wine spreading on the floor. Everyone fell silent, staring at her. She looked into her father's eyes and said, "Sooner or later, you will die. And I will not mourn you. I will look at the flames consuming your body, and I will rejoice." (ch.13: p.155)

A sudden knock on the door makes Clytemnestra jump, and for a moment, she fears it is Agamemnon. Her muscles tighten. Her hand flies to her dagger when Helen comes in, the earliest sunlight glimmering on her messy hair. (ch.14: p.156)

No man can touch what isn't his to take without being punished. You will keep climbing, trampling everything and everyone, but sooner or later, you'll make a mistake. And you will fall. (ch.14: p.157)

"Eat," Agamemnon says, sitting on a chair by the side of the bed. Clytemnestra stands slowly and walks to the window. On a stool, a plate is filled with bread and goat meat. She considers smashing it on Agamemnon's head. (ch.14: p.161)

She stands with her back against the wall and lets Agamemnon kiss and bite her. As he shoves inside her again and again, she licks away the blood on her lip and keeps looking over his shoulder at the wall opposite. (ch.14: p.161)

He grabs her arm. "I have chosen you because you are strong, Clytemnestra. Stop being weak now." She shakes him away. Her nightdress flutters behind her as she walks the lit corridors, leaving her chamber far behind. (ch.14: p.162)

He desired her strength because it was a challenge to him. He wished to bend her to his own will, break her. He wanted to show he was stronger by subjugating her. Some men can be like that. She feels the flowers swaying in the wind, then plucks them. He will not break her. She will break him. (ch.14: p.162)

"Crete is not as rich as it used to be," Echemus says dismissively. "King Minos is gone, his crazy wife disappeared. Nothing worthy of attention remains." "Crete remains crucial for commerce," Clytemnestra says. "They have ships and they have gold. They trade with Phoenicians, Egyptians, and Ethiopians." (ch.15: p.168)

"It was Medea," Castor says. "Aeëtes's witch daughter. She told Jason every trick to survive his father's tasks, then took the fleece herself. She used drugs to put soldiers and animals to sleep and ran away with us when we left Colchis." (ch.16: p.174)

	"When we were leaving Colchis, she begged Jason to take her with us. Who knows what her own father did to her while she was growing up?" "She saved your lives," Clytemnestra says. "She did." Polydeuces nods. "She gave up everything for Jason. And in return, he left her for another woman." (ch.16: p.175) "You have been in my mind throughout this torture," she continues. "I have always despised people like you, who have nothing good of their own so they try to steal someone else's happiness." "I never wanted to steal anything," Cynisca says. "But you did." (ch.16: p.179) "I wanted to kill you before I left, but Agamemnon would have complained," she says. "Now he doesn't even remember you. No one cares if you die." Cynisca moans and shakes her head. Clytemnestra stabs her again; the dagger sinks deep into her chest. The sound Cynisca makes is like a sigh. "Your plots and plans haven't worked. I have power and all you have is whispers in a king's ear. I am queen of Mycenae, and you are nobody." (ch.16: p.180) "Death doesn't scare you." "It scares me, but less than it scares others, because I am used to it. Does it scare you?" "Yes. Only a fool wouldn't fear death." (ch.17: p.188) "He has lost consciousness," she says. "But he will revive in a moment. He no longer commands you. I do. And from now on, every time you hear someone complain that they have to take orders from a queen, remind them of what happened to the small trader." (ch.17: p.192) Many commoners come to speak to the queen. They walk into the bright light of the hall, kneel in front of the king, then turn to Clytemnestra with their requests on land disputes and marriage portions. They know that she listens calmly to every plea and that she gives her help to those who respect her. (ch.18: p.194) The day is sweet and rainless, with a cold breeze that carries birdsong to the yard. Clytemnestra makes the boys fight in close combat. She gives one a short sword and leaves the other without a weapon to teach him how to be quick and disarm with his bare hands. (ch.18: p.195) "Do our people fight only to defend themselves?" Clytemnestra says. "Do we harm only those who have offended us?" ...But Orestes says, "No." "Start again then," Clytemnestra says, stepping aside to make room. (ch.18: p.195-196) Her daughters may not be able to wrestle, she thinks, but they are not fools. They are fierce and clever, each in her own way, and won't have trouble ruling men and cities. (ch.19: p.204) "And who would that be?" he asks, looking as she brings the cup to her lips. "You?" "Hopefully not." ... "For someone who hates me so much," he says, "you have endured this marriage for a surprisingly long time." (ch.19: p.207) "You have to go to Sparta and fix this," he says. "Castor will listen to you." "And if he doesn't?" "Then you make him." (ch.20: p.211-212) "You are more beautiful than ever," she says. "Mycenae agrees with you." "I wouldn't say that." (ch.21: p.224) Girls may not learn to fight in Messenia, Phoebe tells Clytemnestra, but they learn other things. They know the secrets of the woods, where each mushroom grows and the deer hide. They know the names of plants and trees, of berries and fruit. And then there are the horses. Boys and girls in Messenia are riding before they can walk, and they prize their horses above anything else. (ch.22: p.229) "Each of us has her own scars, and it's our duty to bear them. I just came to say that I am grateful for what you did." Clytemnestra takes her arm. "And I am grateful that my brother was lucky enough to find you." (ch.22: p.234) "If Menelaus finds out?" "What if he does?" That her husband might be angry and Helen wouldn't be afraid: this is something new. (ch.22: p.235) "The Atreidai's line is cursed, but the king of Mycenae reveres the gods, and the gods respect him in turn." She scoffs. "My husband is an ambitious man. He wants power above all else, not to impress any gods, just for the sake of it." "He says the same of you." (ch.23: p.240) "We each serve the gods in our own ways. You kill a sheep and tear open its belly to look at the liver. I rule a city and its people." "Your husband rules." "We both do. I am sure he would agree with me." (ch.23: p.247) "If he is so needed for your victory," she says, "let us hope the great Achilles won't outshine you." She enjoys seeing the flicker of annoyance in her husband's eyes before excusing herself. (ch.23: p.250) Clytemnestra receives him in the megaron, sitting on her husband's throne. Leon is at her side, polishing his sword, yawning. It has been a boring day so far, filled with merchants' requests and noble women's gossip. (ch.24: p.255) Inside, there are two other men, with daggers at their waists. Odysseus is wide awake, sitting by a table
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and looking at some maps. They must have been discussing war tactics. (ch.24: p.264)

“As you know, there is some discontent among the men. The heat, the restlessness, the brawls . . .” He waves a hand. “I was called here for that reason, remember? To appease the army with a marriage.”

“Yes, yes,” he says. “But Agamemnon is also struggling with complicated decisions. As you pointed out last night, without the wind, we cannot sail.” (ch.24: p.265)

“There are two ways in which we can do this,” he says, and his voice is suddenly emptied of any warmth. “Give up your weapon and stay here—” “Where is Iphigenia?” she asks. “Or I am afraid I will have to knock you out.” “Where is she?” she repeats. “Tell me, or I swear I will cut you down.” (ch.24: p.266)

Clytemnestra jumps aside and yanks the sword from the wounded man. The guards are behind her, and Odysseus is in front, unarmed. On her right, his man and Leon are thrashing, moving together on the ground. Leon is choking, kicking the floor. “Let him go,” Clytemnestra says. (ch.24: p.267)

When she was young and disobedient, Leda would leave her alone in her room without food or water. When her throat started to scorch, she would convince herself that her mind was tricking her, her body really didn’t need water, and thus she would endure. Now she wills herself to do the same. She must think first, then do something. (ch.24: p.267)

...next to it, a kitchen knife. They must have overlooked it when they cleared the space. Clytemnestra looks at the shapes moving outside the tent. There seem to be just two men tasked with guarding them now. (ch.24: p.268)

She feels the skin bleeding around her wrists. The knife isn’t sharpened and the chair slows her, but she manages to cut the ropes around her wrists. The chair falls with them. Her hands freed at last, she unties the gag, gasping for air, then pours the water onto her face, licking the pitcher. (ch.24: p.268)

Then, a cry. Her daughter’s voice, fearful and desperate, calling for help. It is coming from the marketplace. Clytemnestra turns to the left, running. She stumbles in her sandals and kicks them away—the sand burns her soles. (ch.24: p.269)

Clytemnestra moves forward, as fast as a lion. Some men back away, and others come at her, trying to stop her. She cuts them down, one after another. Their bodies wriggle like insects on the ground, useless. (ch.24: p.269)

There is nothing more powerful than a strong-willed woman. That is what you have always been and must be no matter what others do to you. It is easier for a man to be strong, for we are encouraged to be so. But for a woman to be unbent, unbroken, that is admirable. (ch.25: p.272)

The women also say many things about you, things they have heard only the gods know where. They say that you rule Mycenae, that you are growing strong in the palace, that you “maneuver like a man.” I find this last one fascinating—as if women couldn’t maneuver. I know many more maneuvering women than men. I think of myself as one of them. Besides, you were born to be a ruler. (ch.25: p.273)

I wanted to come and see you, but if I leave this house, Ithaca’s sons will try to take the throne from me. They have already tried. They don’t want just a throne; they want a wife too. I sent them away as gracefully as I could, but they will come back. I will think of something to keep them at bay. I will maneuver them. (ch.25: p.273)

You should never be tamed. Your men don’t bend to you because you are someone else’s wife: they do it because they respect your power. So rule them, keep their respect, make sure they are loyal and faithful to their last day. Then you will have a city and an army at your will. (ch.25: p.275)

Sometimes at night, when he falls asleep, I watch him and think about murdering him, crushing some drug into his cup. I have a few in my quarters—they come from Egypt. They banish pain and sorrow if taken in small quantities, but if you exceed, they kill you. So I put them in his cup, mix the wine, but then I always find myself throwing it away. Paris is the reason I left everything behind. I used to love him with all my heart. Who has bewitched whom? (ch.25: p.276)

She has watched the world shift around her while her heart stayed the same, bleeding hatred. She often thinks of what her mother said all those years ago. Hate is a bad root. It takes its place in your heart and it grows and grows, letting everything rot. (ch.25: p.278)

She has done a lot of thinking in the past years. For each painful memory, a thought of revenge. It is as if she keeps burning herself, then plunges her arm into freezing water to keep the pain at bay. (ch.25: p.279)

She pretended she had moved on. The elders demanded it. If she had stayed isolated for too long, they would have taken over. They would have stolen her crown. A woman can’t afford to close her eyes for long. Now she moves around the palace, her heart as dry as a desert, her tongue poisoned with lies. No one will ever come again and take what she loves. (ch.25: p.280)

"Then you know how to address a ruler when you are in front of one." He tightens his jaw. He doesn't look angry, rather like a conflicted boy. "Isn't Agamemnon king of Mycenae now?" "Yes. And I am the queen." (ch.26: p.282)

"You are clever," he says. "And you are a fool for coming here thinking to hide your identity." "I have lived in the shadows of forests and palaces for years. Men never recognize me." "Well, I am no man," she says, smiling again. (ch.26: p.285)

"Aegisthus has no family left. No one will pay a ransom." "Then keep him in the dungeon until the king decides what to do with him." "The king has been away for nine years," she replied. "During which I have ruled this city, kept it safe. And yet you still refuse to trust my authority." (ch.27: p.292)

Clytemnestra knows Electra is talking to try to understand the man better. Stories are all she has, so she dissects them until she feels in control. (ch.27: p.293)

Clytemnestra wanted to have him killed many times, but she knows that would send the wrong message to the others. So she has tried to deal with him, however you can deal with someone else's dog. (ch.27: p.298)

"If King Agamemnon doesn't come back from the war—" Polydamas starts. She interrupts him. "Whether the king does or doesn't come back from the war makes no difference. I am queen now, and my son will be king next." (ch.28: p.300)

"You believe I let Aegisthus eat at my table and walk around my palace without having a plan. You do not consider that I might be trying to understand him better, to manipulate him." (ch.28: p.301)

"Aegisthus will try to do the same. He has come here for power, not to bend to a woman." "A queen," she corrects him. "Yes, a queen." "I will keep Aegisthus under control. And if he tries to hurt me or usurp my throne, he will pay for it." (ch.28: p.301)

"My father used to come here and watch every man, woman, and child in the village," he says after a while. "Why?" she asks. "To decide whom he would flog or kill. He would see enemies everywhere."

"I am not your father."... "No, I can see that," he says. "You're not cruel and yet you hold a kingdom together. I've never seen anything like it." (ch.28: p.304)

"Are you sure of this, Mother?" Orestes asks. Glints of fire from the torches shine on his handsome face. "I gave Kyros that position to show the elders that there is a second chance for those who are disloyal." (ch.28: p.306)

"They don't like me already, so I doubt this will change anything." "They will have a reason to plot against you now." She smiles, takes his hand in hers. "Which will finally give me a reason to get rid of them." (ch.30: p.324)

"I warned you that he is dangerous," he says, speaking of Aegisthus as if he weren't a few feet from them. "You did. And I thank you for your counsel." "You let him in here!" he shouts. "You disgrace yourself." "You will not speak to me like that," she says. "Or I will doubt your loyalty." (ch.30: p.325)

Polydamas holds his ground. "I follow the orders of the king, not yours." "That is unfortunate, because the guards do. And even if they didn't, it wouldn't matter, because I will kill you myself." (ch.30: p.328)

"Why did you go with him and send Leon away?" Electra repeats. "I didn't want to push Leon away."

"Then why didn't you tell him so?" "Queens aren't meant to beg." "So your pride sent him away." (ch.31: p.334)

Electra doesn't back down. "What about what I wanted? You took that too. The people's loyalty, Orestes's respect, Leon's adoration." Everything I have I have earned. "You think this is a challenge? A fight between me and you?" "Yes." (ch.31: p.334)

"Don't you understand?" Electra replies. "Your childhood . . . that is something else you have won. You have won games and wrestles, you have survived beatings and floggings, you have been on hunts and killed a lynx! And what have I done? Nothing." (ch.31: p.335)

Electra stares at her as if trying to pierce her skull, listen to the thoughts inside. Then she speaks the words that Clytemnestra has hoped she'd never hear: "Sometimes I think you wish I had died and Iphigenia had lived." (ch.31: p.335)

"But who will rule Mycenae?" "Our family will." This is what she has always wanted for her children—to take back control of Mycenae and Sparta, to establish a dynasty much more powerful than the Atreidai's. (ch.31: p.341)

"If he rules with you, the people will judge you, condemn you." It is her own fault, she thinks. She has trained her son too well, taught him to be distrustful. "You spend too much time worrying about the people," she says. "I've told you many times that the people do not rule. We do." (ch.31: p.341)

"I thought this was my chance to retake the city, to make those loyal to the Atreidai pay once and for

all. But then I heard that you were ruling Mycenae, far better and more efficiently than Agamemnon, and that you were both loved and feared by many. I thought I would come here and see for myself. If you were indeed to be loved, I would ask for mercy. If not, I would murder you and make my cousin pay.” (ch.31: p.343)

“I was wrong about many things,” he says. She puts the dagger down. “Before I executed him, Polydamas said that if a man sleeps with a queen, he will soon expect to be king.” “You make a far better ruler than I ever would.” (ch.31: p.343)

“Troy will fall soon,” she says. “And Agamemnon will come back.” “How do you know this?” “The scout told me today.” His face is barren. “You want to send me away, then.” “No.” She steps away from him, takes his cup to sip some wine. He looks at her, waiting. Inside her, the familiar anger, raw, relentless. (ch.31: p.343)

“You speak of your own thirst for vengeance, but what about me? What about my revenge?” His fingers tighten against the table. “You say you want to be with me and protect me,” she says. She feels a surge of emotion inside her, anticipation and exposure. “Then you will stay in the palace when my husband comes back from the war. You will hide as I welcome him and his soldiers. Then you will help me murder the man responsible for my daughter’s death.” (ch.31: p.344)

Tantalus’s empty eyes staring back at her. She couldn’t touch him. Someone was holding on to her, and no matter how much she clawed and screamed, they wouldn’t let her go. And then Agamemnon, staring at her across the corridor. He wasn’t speaking, but she knew what he thought: You are mine now. But he was wrong. She is nobody’s. (ch.32: p.352)

She walks slowly back to the bath and picks up her mother’s jeweled dagger. The first time she touched the blade, she cut herself—but her skin has long been thicker. More blood will be spilled soon, but it won’t be mine. (ch.32: p.352)

“He took my children away from me,” she says. “My perfect daughter and my baby boy. Would you not hate someone like that?” She knows “hate” is the wrong word. But in all these years, she has never found the right one. Some feelings aren’t meant to be captured. (ch.32: p.353)

The king sits at the head of the table. Clytemnestra takes the place on his left, just as she always did. To have his greedy face close to her after all these years . . . It is pressing memories to her skin like a burning blade. Yet she doesn’t flinch. (ch.34: p.358)

She has never hurt anybody. How will it feel? She is drawing the kitchen knife when she hears steps behind her. She turns just in time to see the Mycenaean queen. (ch.34: p.362)

“Your father and mother are gone. Your brother was killed, your sister abducted. Yet here you are, queen of the most powerful Greek city, with an army of men at your command. I find that admirable.” She steps closer to him, her feet light on the marble floor. Why are people so eager to remind her of her family’s fate? It must be because they wish to weaken her. (ch.34: p.362)

“You are an ambitious woman married to a ruthless king. In my experience, ambitious people fall quickly. But not you. You have a talent for survival.” (ch.34: p.362)

“You won’t spill blood in here,” he says. He doesn’t sound scared, only a little surprised. “You are not that bold.” She is amused he would say that after drawing a knife out of his vest. “You do not know how bold I am,” she says. She sticks the dagger into his eye, the very same eyes that saw her daughter must be sacrificed. He drops to his knees, screaming, and she cuts his throat quickly before anyone can hear. He falls onto the floor, his body small and decrepit in the large vest. In the shadows, it looks like an empty sack. (ch.34: p.363)

Cassandra has learned that the Greeks are two-tongued. She has watched, speechless, as Clytemnestra killed the seer by the statue of Hera, blinding him first. The queen spoke of her dead sister Polyxena, and Cassandra cried in the shadows of the columns. She thought the queen would kill her too, but she left her here. (ch.34: p.365)

Agamemnon is lying in the bath with his back to her, his large, scarred arms around the edges. There are no weapons in sight and no guards. She has made sure of that. This is it, then, she thinks. No false steps, no mistakes. She can’t afford them. (ch.34: p.366 367)

“Here comes my wife at last,” he says. “The mighty queen of Mycenae, as they call you now.” He chuckles, amused by the idea. “I am sure you have earned the name.” (ch.34: p.367)

“People like me don’t make good slaves.” He adds, “And you would have done the same.” Something tightens inside her. “I am not like you.” “You have always prided yourself on thinking so, but you are no good either. You take things from people, just like me. You lie when you don’t trust others with the truth, just like me.” She wrings the cloth. “I am not like you,” she repeats. (ch.34: p.368)

“Polydamas and Lycomedes are dead,” he says. “Did you kill them?” She knows where this is going

	but answers him anyway. “They didn’t respect me. They plotted against me.” He waves his hand. “People always plot behind a ruler’s back. They didn’t do your bidding, so you got rid of them.” (ch.34: p.368) “And I see that Leon is gone as well. Did he leave you after you lied to him about Aegisthus? He always had a soft spot for you.” She keeps her voice calm. “Leon was faithful to me because he saw that you are greedy and cruel, heartless and vicious.” (ch.34: p.368) Her eyes find his. “So my daughter was a casualty to you.” “She was my daughter too, and I mourned her.” “You murdered her!” (ch.34: p.369) “You are a murderer and a traitor!” the large warrior spits in her direction. She meets his gaze. “Yes, I murdered him, but I will not stand here and let you call me traitor—you who watched a king sacrifice a little girl and did nothing.” (ch.35: p.375) “All my life, people have wronged me. I was whipped and shipped like a cow. My own father betrayed me. I was raped and humiliated, marred and beaten. But I am still here. All the things I have done, I did to protect the ones I loved. Wouldn’t you have done the same?” (ch.35: p.375) Cadmus steps forward and kneels. His thin white hair looks like feathers on his head. “My queen,” he says, “you have made this city thrive with richness beyond imagining, and you lead us with strength and valor. What is done is done. All I can do now is choose to follow you for the rest of my days. You are the true keeper of the House of Mycenae.” (ch.35: p.376) Agamemnon’s warrior sheathes his sword. “For a woman, you are brave and worthy. But what you did cannot be forgotten.” “I don’t ask you to forget. I ask you to make a choice. Follow a queen who has proven her worth, who rewards loyalty and justice, or leave your city to the vultures.” (ch.35: p.376) “Our queen, keeper of our house,” the large leader says, “we will serve you.” The others follow his lead and repeat the words—they echo in the hall, slowly fading to silence. “Gather every man, woman, and child,” she orders. “Give the news to the citadel.” (ch.35: p.376) “You may have their love and loyalty,” Electra says quietly, “but you took a father from me.” Anger shines on her face and something else—spite. “You speak of justice, but what you did isn’t just. You are no better than him.” She turns and walks away, leaving nothing but emptiness behind her. (ch.35: p.376) Electra lifts her chin, defiant. “Why do I have to pay the consequences for something I didn’t do?” “Life is like that.” “Life isn’t as simple as you want us to believe. And there is a difference between what is and what should be.” On that, Clytemnestra agrees. But it is the spite in Electra’s voice that aches, like a rotten tooth. (ch.35: p.377)
Adaptability	Here the Spartiates, daughters of the best and noblest warriors of Sparta, train with commoners, and they will continue to do so until they start a family. Their bodies are covered with oil, old scars pale against their tanned skin. (ch.2: p.20) At sixteen, their bodies are changing, their faces growing leaner, firmer. It scares Clytemnestra to witness it, though she doesn’t speak of it. It reminds her that at their age, their mother had already married their father and left her homeland. (ch.2: p.21) “I am sure he doesn’t come for marriage. It must be some economic proposition.” Clytemnestra feels hurt. Why must Helen be the only one ready for marriage? (ch.3: p.34) “I hate kings,” she says carelessly. There is no reply, and when she turns to her sister, Helen is looking at her, her eyes dark and fierce. “No, you don’t,” Helen says. “You will marry a king.” Clytemnestra wants to say she doesn’t care about marrying a king as much as becoming a great queen. (ch.3: p.34) “I do. Do you know why marriage is called so by the Spartans?” Harpazéin is the word she uses, which also means to take with force. “The man kidnaps his wife and she needs to put up a fight,” Clytemnestra says. (ch.3: p.35 36) “When your father came to take me to his room, I struggled but he was stronger. I cried and shouted but he wouldn’t listen. So I pretended to give in, and when he relaxed, I put my arms around his neck until he choked.” (ch.3: p.36) “I told him I would never submit. When I let him go, he said I was worthier than he had expected and we made love.” (ch.3: p.36) “Are you saying I should do the same?” “I’m saying that it is hard to find a man who is really strong. Strong enough not to desire to be stronger than you.” (ch.3: p.36) “Many men of Sparta will soon ask for your hand,” Tyndareus says. “You are loved and respected.” “I know.” Because she doesn’t speak further, Tyndareus asks, “And yet you wish Tantalus to stay?” He waits for her answer patiently, popping grapes into his mouth until the bowl is emptied. “Yes, Father,”

she says finally. "I want him to stay a little longer." (ch.4: p.40)

He smiles, opens his arms. "Fight me, if you want. So we shall see if we barbaroi earn the name you have given us." He doesn't speak with anger or contempt. "But I warn you, I am afraid I am no match for you." (ch.4: p.43)

As he speaks, she is stricken by how wonderful and scary it is to hang on his every word and to wish she could listen to him forever. (ch.4: p.44)

"Tell me what you want, Clytemnestra." She bites her lip, quiet, so he adds, "I will go too, if that is what you wish." He understands that she likes power, and he is giving it to her. She wonders if it is a trick, a game he is playing. But even if it is, she doesn't care. She is good at games, and she can play this one. (ch.4: p.49-50)

Clytemnestra kneels by the throne and rests her head on her mother's lap. "You are not sure about this union," she says, "but trust me, Mother." Leda sighs. "When you are this stubborn, it is no use trying to contradict you." (ch.5: p.52)

"Congratulations. You are marrying a foreigner, I heard." "I am. King Tantalus of Maeonia." Something flickers in Penelope's eyes, like the sudden sparkle of silver under the torchlight. "You are leaving then." (ch.5: p.53)

"Soon you will marry too, I presume," Castor says. "Not before I find a man who truly respects me," replies Penelope. (ch.5: p.54)

Penelope shakes her head. "Father doesn't teach me much. Mother did, though, before she died. She liked to talk, to me especially, less to Father." Clytemnestra searches Penelope's face for a hint of sadness, but she seems calm. (ch.5: p.55)

Clytemnestra hides her hands in the sleeves of her tunic to warm them. For a moment, her brothers' departure hits her hard and she feels pain inside, as if two trees were suddenly uprooted and left large holes in the ground of her heart. (ch.5: p.59)

You will speak of this to no one, not even Helen, Clytemnestra had told her cousin, and she is sure Penelope hasn't betrayed her trust. And yet as she looks at the shadows on her sister's face, she can't help feeling that she is holding a delicate shell in her hands and that she is about to drop it. (ch.5: p.59)

Later Tyndareus told her never to trust godly people, though Clytemnestra knew that even he could do nothing against a priestess's wish. Priests and priestesses can't be hurt—their gods won't allow it—but others can. (ch.6: p.62)

"And our baby?" she asks. "Will he train and grow into a strong warrior?" At least if she is carrying a boy, she won't have to give him up for training, like every Spartan woman. "You will train him," he says. "You will be queen and free to do as you please." (ch.6: p.67)

"The gods watch us all," she says, her voice screeching like a seagull's cry. "They bless those who are loyal and punish those who aren't." She doesn't say whether Clytemnestra will be blessed or punished, but Clytemnestra doesn't care. (ch.6: p.69)

Now that she is pregnant, she isn't allowed to train in the gymnasium, so she finds other ways to keep fit while her belly expands—wrestling her sister, riding, shooting arrows and spears in the evening, when the training yard is quiet. (ch.7: p.74)

"You two also leave," Leda orders. "Now." "You always said anger was something to keep under control," Helen says, defiance in her eyes. The priestess's words are sinking in. "I don't care what I said. Leave." (ch.7: p.79)

Helen stares at her. "You don't believe in it." "When have we ever believed in prophecies?" (ch.7: p.85)

"In Sparta, it is women who choose their husbands as often as not," Tyndareus points out. Menelaus seems taken aback, though he quickly composes himself. "I have heard that. But I don't think it would be a problem." (ch.8: p.92)

"Do what you wish with Menelaus. Marry him, if you desire jewelry and rich clothes." She sees the shock on Helen's face but doesn't stop. "But do not fool yourself. He doesn't see you or love you for what you are. He is among those who only find you interesting to look at." (p.8: p.98)

Timandra knocks over her chair and runs outside. As she does so, her mother shouts, "And behave yourself! You are women now—you are expected to behave, not to do as you please!" (ch.8: p.101)

Timandra is whispering into someone's ear. Clytemnestra takes a step closer. It is a girl, with curly black hair that flows down her back and eyebrows shaped like a gull's wings. The girl laughs at whatever Timandra is saying, then kisses her lips. Timandra kisses her back, her mouth opening with pleasure, her hands cupped gently around the girl's neck. (ch.9: p.112)

Tantalus must be on his brightly painted ship by now, coming to take them with him. Each night she waits, and each morning she goes to the megaron to see if messengers have brought any news. (ch.10:

p.117-118)

"Do you think they see us now?" Helen always asked. "No," Clytemnestra said. "They are too busy watching others. How could they watch everyone at the same time?" (ch.10: p.126)

Clytemnestra has noticed that the baby sleeps better with his father. She sings and hums to him, she gives him Leda's soothing herbs, but the baby stares back at her, delighted and a bit defiant, his tiny hands reaching for her face. And when he gets tired, he cries. But when Tantalus rocks him, when he kisses him, he relaxes. (ch.11: p.129)

She walks for hours, carrying him in her arms. He is a curious child. She shows him flowers, takes each petal and holds it to his face. Crocuses, laurel, lilies, anemones. She tells him stories about them. (ch.11: p.129)

Helen walks closer to her. Her gown has only one strap, and her left breast is visible, white in the feeble light. "I needed to speak with you." Her voice is drenched with fear. Clytemnestra gives the baby to Tantalus, who rocks him. (ch.11: p.132)

"She has to care for the baby." "Can't servants do it for her?" Timandra laughs. "That is not my sister. She would never put her child in someone else's arms, let alone a servant's." (ch.12: p.137)

Behind him, the baby whines. He hasn't been nursed yet this morning. Tantalus wraps him in a piece of light cloth and puts him in the sling he prepared earlier. (ch.12: p.140)

"Give your baby to the servant, foreigner," Agamemnon orders. Something wrong is happening, Tantalus thinks. There are no guards around, no one he can call.

"Why should I?" (ch.12: p.140)

"The gods can't find you here," Clytemnestra says. They have a moment to look up at her, their mouths open to plead, their hands clasped. Then Timandra cuts their throats. (ch.13: p.148)

"You are broken now," Leda tells her, pushing a strand of hair off Clytemnestra's face. "But pain will leave you. I promise. The gods are merciful to those who deserve it." Her face is mournful, her sad green eyes fixed somewhere behind her daughter. (ch.14: p.158)

They have been following her for years. She imagines fighting them, putting her hand right into the flames until her skin becomes scorched and the figures disappear. But no one can fight fire. It is the element of the Furies, goddesses of vengeance, ancient creatures of torment. (ch.15: p.164)

So she thinks of her children—Iphigenia, Electra, Orestes, Chrysothemis—each of them a root that keeps her steady. (ch.15: p.165)

Agamemnon can't take this from her. She has carried them in her womb, nursed them, watched over them at night, their breath in her ear, their little hands fitting in hers. She has clutched her children one by one, shielded them until they have grown, and in return, they have given her her life back. (ch.15: p.165)

"You don't like him," Clytemnestra says. Timandra laughs. "Of course I like him. He is my husband."

"That doesn't mean anything." "He bores me to death," she admits without bothering to lower her voice. "But at least he lets me do what I want." (ch.15: p.166)

Clytemnestra takes a deep breath. "I said those things when you were a child. Now you are a married woman." (ch.15: p.169)

She has loved him, hated him, wished him dead. And now that he is, she has to go back to pray for him. But gods don't listen to women who curse their father, who loathe and dishonor him. For a daughter like her, there are no gods to pray to. (ch.15: p.171)

Helen stands with her back straight, her golden hair dancing in the wind, her arms around her child, Hermione, though she is old enough to stand. (ch.16: p.173)

Helen stands and walks away from her husband to sit next to her daughter. Little Hermione is eating figs with Polydeuces, and whenever her hands are sticky, he wipes them carefully with a piece of cloth, as if she were his own child. (ch.16: p.176)

"...All the time I hated the priestess, I could have spent loving my Helen. All the time I hated your father, I could have loved his children." "You do love us." "Yes, but hate is a bad root. It takes its place in your heart and it grows and grows, letting everything rot." (ch.16: p.177)

When she was young, she was scared of the Furies, the goddesses who take vengeance on all those men who have sworn a false oath. Leda had told endless stories of how the Furies found their victims and hunted them down like hounds, their scourges as painful as a thousand burning whips. Now she is standing here, a murderer and an oath breaker, yet no one comes for her. (ch.16: p.180)

When she sees her mother, Chrysothemis springs up, a sweet smile warming her face. "I chose this for you while you were gone, Mother," she says, holding out a blue stone. (ch.17: p.182)

When the boy stops playing the lyre and the dance ends, Iphigenia looks around as if waking from a

trance. She sees her mother and flings herself at her. "Mother!" she shrieks, throwing her arms around her. "I didn't know you were coming back so soon! How was Sparta? How is Aunt Helen?" (ch.17: p.183)

"This speaks of the power of our city," Agamemnon had said. "It is a lie," she replied. "It is a story. Stories draw people together; they lead armies and form alliances." As much as she hated him, she knew he was right. (ch.17: p.184)

Electra is hiding in a corner, her head resting on her knees. Her breathing is rhythmic and quiet as if she is sleeping. Clytemnestra takes a step forward, and Electra's head jerks up. A sliver of light from the lamp touches her cheek. "You always find me," she says. (ch.17: p.187)

Clytemnestra doesn't point out that Electra wasn't meant to be there by herself. Her middle child is always the most difficult to talk to—sometimes Clytemnestra wants to unspool her brain, picking through her mind one thought at a time. (ch.17: p.187)

Believing her mother has fallen asleep, Electra nestles under her arm, keeping close though the room is hot. Clytemnestra feels her shoulder growing numb but she doesn't move, afraid that her daughter might pull away. (ch.17: p.189)

"It doesn't matter," Clytemnestra says. "Next time he will fight harder, and he will defend himself better." Orestes nods. Clytemnestra doesn't touch him—she can't touch him now, not in front of all the other boys—but she will hug him later and tell him he has been brave. (ch.18: p.196)

"Do you know the story of the goddess Artemis and the hunter Actaeon?" Electra scrutinizes her mother, her eyes narrowed. "He watched her as she was bathing?" Iphigenia says. "And called the rest of his hunting party to watch too?" "He was driven by lust, as men often are. But Artemis punished him and turned him into a stag." (ch.18: p.197)

In the following days, every time boys are cut, Clytemnestra teaches them how to clean wounds and which herbs to use to stop infection. Leon helps her, and Iphigenia and Electra join the boys as they learn. (ch.18: p.197)

Orestes sits on a mossy rock. He seems confused. "You are not going to scold her? She was kissing a man!" He insists on "kissing" to make sure his mother understands. "It was wrong to spy on your sister, Orestes." (ch.19: p.203)

"You know the darkhaired girl my husband likes so much? She keeps staring at you at dinner." He seems angry but says nothing. She raises her eyebrows. "You should go to her." "I do not like her," he says. It is not up to you to decide who you like. (ch.19: p.204)

She has been talking to Orestes about trade; her son pointed to some of the swords and axes hanging on the walls, and Clytemnestra told him where the gold, crystal, and lapis lazuli came from. (ch.20: p.209)

Clytemnestra loses herself in the bright blue of the frescoed sky. It is the same shade as the summer sky beneath which she and Timandra played and wrestled. Of all her brothers and sisters, she was always the most like her. (ch.20: p.210)

She says goodbye to her children at dawn and rides out of the Lion Gate with Leon when the citadel is still waking up. Down in the village, filthy pigs are snuffling along the streets while two dogs lick some spilled milk. When she woke them before leaving, Orestes and Iphigenia yawned and kissed her. (ch.20: p.212)

"Come back soon, Mother," she said, her voice as quiet as a leaf that falls from a tree. Clytemnestra wished it were louder, so she could catch it and keep it close to her. (ch.20: p.213)

Sometimes, as night comes and they warm themselves by the fire, she would like to talk to him about Iphigenia. You kissed my daughter, she wants to say. I know you love her, but you can't be with her...Maybe it is good for him never to have what he desires. Then others can't come and take it from him. (ch.20: p.213)

"They told me you were unhappy. You look happy to me." Helen's laugh is crystal clear. "I am not sad anymore." "I am glad. Is Hermione well?" "Of course she is. She is only annoyed that her uncles don't play with her much these days." She chuckles. (ch.20: p.217)

"We can't force Sparta into civil war. These women were promised to the king of Messenia's sons." Helen stares at her, frowning. "I can't stay here and fight a war while Menelaus is away. I have a family, children to take care of." (ch.20: p.218)

"My mother couldn't kill me. She couldn't ignore the seer, but she couldn't kill her son. So she left me on Mount Ida, sure that I would die there." (ch.21: p.221)

Helen clears her throat. As if unwilling to be a part of the conversation any longer, she calls Hermione. Her child leaves her place next to Polydeuces and trots happily to her mother. (ch.21: p.222)

"I wanted to rule," Clytemnestra says, "and you wanted to go off on adventures." "You didn't want to

marry a brute.” He speaks calmly, without the amusement that once was always on his face. (ch.21: p.228)

“Mother,” Electra says, “we should pray for your brother first.” Clytemnestra’s slap makes her fly sideways. Electra hits the wall and stumbles. When she turns back to her mother, her cheek is redder than blood and her eyes are burning. Go on, Clytemnestra thinks. Provoke me again. (ch.23: p.243)

“I thought Sparta was finally at peace with Troy, Father.” It is the wrong thing to say. Agamemnon throws his cup in her direction. Iphigenia dodges it, and the bronze thunders against stone. Wine spills, spreading quickly around their feet. “Take my daughters away, Aileen,” Clytemnestra says calmly, “before the king can shame himself.” (ch.23: p.245)

She takes Electra and Iphigenia by the arms and pulls them up from the bench. Somewhere behind her, Aileen grabs Chrysothemis’s hand and follows, the child crying softly. (ch.23: p.245)

“They are leaving soon! Achilles said he’ll come!” “That is good,” she says. She puts away the spear among the axes and maces. “Can I go too?” Orestes asks, out of breath. She turns, frowning. “You are ten. It is too young.” (ch.23: p.252)

“Iphigenia should choose.” Clytemnestra stands, a weight in her chest. “Which is why I shall ask her now. No one has ever made Iphigenia do anything she didn’t want to do.” (ch.24: p.257)

Clytemnestra speaks, she realizes it almost sounds like a threat. “You will stay here,” Clytemnestra adds. “My men will advise you, so listen to them.” “Shouldn’t they advise Orestes?” “You are older. And I trust you more.” (ch.24: p.258)

“He acts as if nothing mattered to him,” Iphigenia adds. “Not even me.” Clytemnestra puts the bowl down. “You are his daughter. Of course you matter.” She feels a pang of hatred for her husband, who can make even her beautiful, generous daughter feel unloved. “There is no one in the world more special than you.” (ch.24: p.262)

“When he sent his men to Ithaca, I pretended I was mad. I didn’t want to go to war. My son was just born, and Penelope, as you well know, has a certain fear of me abandoning her.” He chuckles at the thought. “‘I am going mad,’ my clever wife said, so I decided to pretend I was mad to send Agamemnon’s men away. I stripped off my clothes, went naked in the cold, and started plowing the stony winter field. (ch.24: p.265)

Someone must be harming her daughter, or they wouldn’t have brought Clytemnestra here, to Odysseus’s tent. Iphigenia needs protection, and as long as she’s safe, Clytemnestra is safe too. (ch.24: p.268)

Hermione misses her mother, but I won’t let her hate her, no matter how hard she tries. And now that Menelaus is gone, I will teach her to rule. She might be queen one day. (ch.25: p.272)

She remembers her daughter when she came into the world, a fragile lump of mucus and flesh. Iphigenia had held up her little hands and smiled at her. This is my chance, Clytemnestra thought, my chance of a new life. (ch.25: p.278)

Now she tries to picture her sister in Troy, alone in a city of people who must hate her. She has sent two of her best scouts across the mainland to bring her any news of the war they can find, yet they have nothing about Helen. That means her sister is still alive. The comfort she takes in this is strange, for it has a bitter taste in her mouth, like ashes. (ch.26: p.291)

She has stopped calling him “Father” in Clytemnestra’s presence ever since her mother threw a cup at her years ago. Now, all her children call their father “Agamemnon.” How they refer to him when she is not there, she doesn’t know. (ch.27: p.293)

“Electra and Chrysothemis need you, my queen,” she said. “You don’t speak to them. You don’t touch them.” Clytemnestra wanted to strike her, but she kept silent—she couldn’t afford to lose Aileen. She wouldn’t trust anyone else to take care of her children. (ch.27: p.296)

“If King Agamemnon doesn’t come back from the war—” Polydamas starts. She interrupts him. “Whether the king does or doesn’t come back from the war makes no difference. I am queen now, and my son will be king next.” (ch.28: p.300)

“You should come to my meetings with the elders more,” she says. “Why? You manage them much better than I could.” “You must learn to manage them too. You will be king one day, and there are still things you need to learn. The elders are like snakes. They creep up behind you and strike you in the back if you are not ready to defend yourself.” (ch.28: p.302)

“Very well. Then I will have your sword, Kyros. You will fight for me, next to my son and the other warlords.” Silence again. Then Kyros kneels, his face warm with pride. When he stands, he and Orestes exchange a glance. “This is your chance to make your queen proud,” Clytemnestra says. “Do not waste it.” (ch.28: p.305)

Once, three or four years ago, Clytemnestra asked her daughters what kind of husband they wanted...Electra replied instantly, as if she had thought about it many times already. "I want a man who can get what he wants. One who understands me and at the same time frightens others with his brilliant mind." (ch.28: p.306 307)

"You are wearing your sister's rings," Clytemnestra says. "I polished them first." "They suit you. You have the same long fingers." It isn't easy to say, but she knows Electra needs this. (ch.28: p.307)

When the sun starts setting, dropping from the sky like a burning ball of hay, Clytemnestra runs back to the garden to think about her beloved Iphigenia...As always, the peaceful memories are stained by her daughter's calls for help. By her blood streaking the altar stone. The brutal indifference on Agamemnon's face. Every evening, she uses the thoughts to weave her net of vengeance. (ch.29: p.312-313)

She carefully avoids speaking of her life in Mycenae, because she sees that it makes him angry, as though her family here were something he didn't want. Or maybe he simply likes to pretend that she is all his, no one else's. But in truth, she likes that he does that. (ch.30: p.319)

"I have seen hundreds of men die in the worst possible ways, yet Pelopia's death I'll never forget."

"She was your mother." "I barely knew her. She left me when I was born, so she was no mother to me." (ch.30: p.319 320)

"I showed her the sword and told her it belonged to him. She looked at him, at the sword, then at me. Her eyes were like fire. She jumped forward and grabbed the sword from my hands. "When she stabbed herself in the stomach, no one did anything. We all stayed and watched as she gurgled and died in her own blood." (ch.30: p.321)

"Do you think it unwise," Clytemnestra says, "that I sleep with Aegisthus?" "Maybe," she replies. "He is a broken man." "And?" "Broken men are hard to handle." She gives her a small smile as if to excuse her boldness of judgment. "I find broken men easier to handle," Clytemnestra says. (ch.30: p.323)

"Why did you do it?" "To control him better," she lies. He pours some wine for her too. "Whatever you do, Mother, I trust you. I never listen to idle gossip." "This time you must. I want you to listen to what everyone says in the palace—servants, soldiers, children, elders. If you hear anyone speak treason, you tell me." (ch.30: p.323)

She climbs onto the throne and lets Orestes sit on the high chair next to it. Aegisthus wanted to take the place beside her, but she has forbidden it. No one will respect her if she lets a man sit there—they will look at him for a decision. And it is obvious what the elders will think of Aegisthus's decisions. With Orestes, though, she can show them that she is still queen. If the elders see that her son, strong and charming, always looks for her judgment and respects her decisions, then who are they to refuse to do the same? (ch.30: p.326)

"Leon was like a father to me, to Chrysothemis, to Orestes. He cared for us because he loved you." She stops, catching her breath. "You knew he would leave if you went with Aegisthus." (ch.31: p.334)

"You know how Electra is," Aileen says, taking her hand. "She harbors sadness in her heart and makes it come out as hatred. But she loves you." "I don't think she does." (ch.31: p.336)

"Electra has grown up in the shadows. Iphigenia was older, better than her at everything, and Orestes was a boy. They had all the attention. It has been difficult for her." Clytemnestra draws away her hand. "You know what is difficult? Losing a child. I gave my life to these children. I made them strong, fought so that they could learn how to rule." And I expect their loyalty in return. (ch.31: p.336)

"If Orestes marries her, will he become king after Menelaus?" "Your brother knew you would ask this, and he said that he will. Polydeuces has no interest in the throne." "Good. Then I will speak to my son, and I will give you an answer. Is that all from Sparta?" "Yes." (ch.31: p.338 339)

"What do you think of his proposal?" "Hermione is a good girl, strong and wise. She has endured the loss of her mother and has grown up under Polydeuces's wing, which means she will know the difference between the things that matter and those that don't. My brother has always been a very practical man." (ch.31: p.340)

"When Iphigenia was a child, merchants and envoys used to call her 'goddess.' They gazed at her with lust, and I would have clawed their eyes out if I could. But she was safe next to me. No one dared to touch her. (ch.31: p.344)

They are not playing. Aegisthus doesn't fight with anyone except her. Orestes must have challenged him, taken him by surprise. And though she knows her son is strong in close combat, Aegisthus can be dangerous. (ch.32: p.347)

Clytemnestra grabs a spear and throws it. It sinks into the ground between them, and the combatants turn to her. Orestes's smile doesn't fade, and she feels the need to slap him, to remind him that this is

	no game. The rage on Aegisthus's face is gone, and in its place, fear. He's afraid of her reaction. (ch.32: p.347) "He would have killed me if I hadn't fought back." How many times had he endured this while he was growing up, young men taunting him, forcing him to fight back? It must be exhausting. "My son would never do such a thing," she says, walking inside the hall. He follows close behind. She can feel the air around them thickening with his fury. (ch.32: p.348) "You must send him away," he says. "Or it will be the end for me when Agamemnon comes." "I won't." "So you would choose him instead of me?" "He is my son. There is no choice to be made." (ch.32: p.348) She has taught him everything he knows. She has shown him the other boys' weaknesses and told him that mercy never helps one win. She was there when he wielded his first sword, when he rode his first horse. She wanted him to grow into a strong and decent man, fierce but not savage. (ch.32: p.349) "Orestes is promised to Hermione," Clytemnestra says. "He will go to Sparta before the Atreidai come back from the war. That way, he will start to build his web of alliances. He will command respect before the king of Sparta is at home." (ch.32: p.349) "Be kind to your cousin," she says. "Treat her as your equal, not as your inferior." "I will," he says, giving her one of his handsome smiles. "Don't take other girls to your bed," she adds, and he breaks into a laugh. "That is how your uncle lost Helen in the first place." (ch.32: p.349) "Will he hurt us?" The question cracks Clytemnestra's heart open. "He will never touch you," she says. Electra sits up too, jaw set, body tense. "How do you know?" "Because I won't allow it. While he was gone, much changed." "Some things didn't," Electra replies. "You still hate him." (ch.32: p.352-353) "Father doesn't love us, does he?" Chrysothemis asks. Clytemnestra looks away, the words carrying her to a painful place. A scorching heat. A purple tent. Iphigenia's sweet voice. Her daughter had asked the same question before she died. "It doesn't matter what he feels," Clytemnestra says. "It doesn't matter what he thinks. I love you both, as I loved your sister, more than anything in the world." (ch.32: p.353) "You won't dine with us tonight," Clytemnestra says. "You will welcome your father and then disappear." Electra doesn't answer. She plays with her rings, precious stones on glittering gold. Clytemnestra looks at her daughter's arm, clean and smooth, then at her own scars. "Guards will be stationed outside your quarters. Whatever happens, do not come out." (ch.32: p.356) "You order an innocent girl to be butchered like a goat. A mistake, one might say, but no, because in Troy, you give the same order, this time sacrificing a Trojan princess, Polyxena. It was you who ordered the sacrifice, wasn't it? How brave of you. What a great use of your gift." (ch.34: p.363) Maybe it is because she has always been his favorite, the only child he actually paid attention to. Orestes was too generous, Iphigenia too competitive, Chrysothemis too shy. And after all, they already had Clytemnestra's love. But Electra has always been too quiet, selfish, defiant. It couldn't have been easy for her mother to love her. (ch.34: p.371) "You may have their love and loyalty," Electra says quietly, "but you took a father from me." Anger shines on her face and something else—spite. "You speak of justice, but what you did isn't just. You are no better than him." She turns and walks away, leaving nothing but emptiness behind her. (ch.35: p.376)
Moral Vision	To their people, Helen of Sparta may look like a goddess, but truly, she follows her sister in everything she does. (ch.2: p.19) Helen frowns. "You shouldn't say these things. You know what Mother says about hubris." "The pride that comes before a fall," Clytemnestra recites, bored. "If you're the fairest woman in all our lands and beyond, I might as well be the cleverest. I don't see why the gods should be angry with that—they'll always be cleverer and more beautiful anyway." (ch.2: p.20) But Clytemnestra knows Helen is her sister. She knows that even though as a child Helen seemed frail and gentle, her will is as strong as Clytemnestra's. (ch.2: p.22) "Mother, why don't you tell us a story?" she asks. "Father always tells the same ones." Leda smiles. "Clytemnestra will tell you a story." "Do you want to hear of the time Castor and I killed that wolf?" Clytemnestra asks. Phoebe claps her hands. "Yes, yes!" So Clytemnestra tells her stories, and her sisters listen. (ch.2: p.23) It must be because I have never killed anything," Helen says. "It is not," Clytemnestra says. "You know it is because he thinks Leda had another man." "Well, did she?" How many times have they had this conversation? Clytemnestra sighs, ready to repeat what she always tells her. "It doesn't matter. You are Leda's daughter and my sister. Now, let us rest awhile." (ch.2: p.24)

Clytemnestra wonders if kings fight their own battles in Maeonia, as they do in Sparta. It doesn't seem so, for the stranger's arms are smooth, quite different from the scarred bodies of the Spartans around him. (ch.3: p.37)

The table is laid with rare delicacies—goat and sheep meat, onions, pears and figs, honeyed flatbreads—but Clytemnestra doesn't want to eat. The king of Maeonia is talking to Helen, who is seated beside him. When he makes her laugh, he stares straight at Clytemnestra. (ch.3: p.37)

"I know what happened. Adonis was slain by a wild boar." Tantalus frowns. "The boy dies but the goddess's love for him remains. It is a reminder of beauty and resistance in times of adversity." "That is true, but Adonis is dead, and no flower can replace him." Tantalus smiles. "You truly are a strange woman." (ch.3: p.38)

"Your father says you are as wise as a mature woman can be, and when I ask your sister about you, she says you always know what you want." Clytemnestra tilts her head. "That would be enviable, even for a man." Tantalus's smile disappears and she fears he will walk away from her. But then he reaches for her hair. (ch.3: p.38)

Castor frowns. "And if the woman claims she went with another man willingly?" "Then she will have to ask for her husband's forgiveness with the man. If he raped her, he will apologize to her, not to her husband." Tyndareus nods, and Clytemnestra's face grows warm with pride. Her father rarely listens to anyone else. (ch.4: p.40)

Clytemnestra takes a deep breath. "Let's go back to the shop." Her brother is right: some people must be taught a lesson. "I thought you were in a hurry to see Tantalus," Helen replies, her voice bitter....She wishes the light would scorch her so Helen could see her pain. (ch.4: p.42)

Again, surprise. The men Clytemnestra knows don't speak of their weaknesses. She considers what he said. A life like that is hard to imagine. (ch.4: p.43)

It doesn't matter what Leda or Tyndareus does. Her grandmother told her she will be queen, and so it will be. She will bow to no one. Her destiny will be what she wants it to be. (ch.4: p.45)

"You don't sleep much," he says. "I like to think." "You like to observe."..."So tell me," he says, smiling. "What do you see?" She lies down again and stares at the bare ceiling. "A stranger who doesn't feel like one, and a Spartan who feels like a stranger in her own palace." (ch.4: p.51)

A king is always a king, even when far from home, thinks Clytemnestra. What about a queen? What makes a girl a queen? Surely she is a woman who can protect herself and her people, who gives justice to those who deserve it and punishes those who betray her. (ch.4: p.51)

Penelope smiles. "I never thought you'd be the first to marry, that's all. But I am happy for you." (ch.5: p.53)

Clytemnestra turns to the window. "I feel strange," she says. It's as if her life, as she knows it, is over. Penelope takes her wrist. "Don't." Then, as if she has read her mind, she adds, "We are taught that marriage is the end of fun and childhood, but it is just the same. Nothing changes much in your life." "How do you know?" "I am sure of it. It is one of those things men say to make sure we feel responsible, while they can be children forever." (ch.5: p.55)

"We are so different, you and I. I like to see the world from its edges while you wish to be in the center, taking part in the action." (ch.5: p.57)

She felt a sick pleasure in knowing she was about to hurt someone who wanted to hurt others, as though she were straightening something crooked. (ch.6: p.62)

"I don't like it here," Helen said after a while. "One who risks nothing is nothing," Clytemnestra recited. It was something her father often said. (ch.6: p.68)

"Why do women always have to leave?"... Clytemnestra repeats the words in her head until they lose meaning. She doesn't know the answer. She knows only that leaving doesn't feel like punishment to her but rather a blessing. (ch.6: p.70)

Helen's eyes are shiny with wonder, though there is also anxiety in the way she clings to Clytemnestra's shoulders as she scrubs them, an eagerness she puts into wringing out her sister's hair. (ch.6: p.70)

Clytemnestra sets her eyes on her sister. "You won't have to leave if you don't want to. Your future can be as you want it to be." She offers her words as reassurances, rolling them out clearly and carefully, though they seem to fade in the dim room. (ch.6: p.71)

Then, before the brothers can rise and notice her, Clytemnestra leaves the room as silently as she can. Anger is rising inside her, burning her chest, but she doesn't understand it. (ch.7: p.73)

"What is it?" "Can I sleep here tonight?" Clytemnestra asks. "Of course." Helen gives her a feeble smile. "I don't sleep much when I am alone anyway." (ch.7: p.84)

Clytemnestra stayed silent. She rolled over to Helen's side and put an arm around her. She forced herself to stay awake all night. When dawn came, she collapsed, her arm numb but still wrapped around her sister. (ch.8: p.89)

Clytemnestra thinks about his words. It shocks her that, for the Atreidai, one life is worth the same as another. In Sparta, she has grown up knowing that equality is a product of nature and that some men and women are *homoioi*, the same, while others are not. (ch.8: p.94)

Helen darted across the plain until she reached the temple of Artemis, sobbing and panting. There, close to the spring spilling water, like a cascade of tears, she sat down and hugged her knees. Clytemnestra watched her, thinking of the priestess's words, "It would be an honor for any girl to lie with Theseus." All lies. (ch.8: p.96)

"No, Polydeuces," Helen snapped back, a flicker of fury in her bright eyes. "You don't. How could you?" You're a man. She didn't say it, but Clytemnestra heard it. Sometimes she could feel Helen's pain in her own body, her sister's sadness wearing her down. It was as if their hearts were beating together, as if they'd learned to keep in rhythm after all this time spent side by side. (ch.8: p.96)

"Do you know who will come?" Timandra asks. "Ajax, cousin of the great Achilles, will be here," Tyndareus says. "He is no older than thirty and in search of a wife." "Isn't he a brute?" Clytemnestra says. "You once said so." (ch.8: p.99)

"Do you think Menelaus will come and court her?" Penelope asks. "I am afraid he will, yes." "Let me talk to her," Penelope says, confident. "I will persuade her." (ch.9: p.103)

"I like that prince," Clytemnestra says. Penelope chortles. "I do too. He sounds like your husband."

"You think so? He gave me the same impression." (ch.9: p.108)

"Did you speak to her?" she asks quietly. "I did," Penelope says. She has also plaited her hair, and the style enhances her soft lips and gentle features. "And?" "She seemed convinced. I praised Idomeneus, who is quite handsome," she says, turning quickly to her left, where the Cretan prince stands, "and Machaon, because Helen has an interest in the art of healing, does she not?" (ch.9: p.111)

"You should go to her," Clytemnestra says. "You should go now. I will cover for you." Timandra falters a little. "But you know it is not right." "I don't know what is wrong and what is right. How could I? We are young. But if you want to go to her, then go. Do it while you still can. (ch.10: p.118)

"Do you think Penelope will come?" "Yes," she says. "I am sure she will." He relaxes and his expression shifts back to the usual amusement. "Good... Maybe in another life, I would have married you," he adds carelessly. She watches him, but his smile is impenetrable. "You wouldn't have been able to handle me," she says. "I am too fierce for you." (ch.10: p.120)

"Will you go to Ithaca?" Penelope keeps silent for a while, clasping her hands to her chest as if to hold her heart. After what feels like a long time, she says, "I will go, yes." (ch.10: p.121)

Leda loves the baby very much. She takes him in her arms when Clytemnestra is too tired and lets him play with her earrings, shiny miracles in his eyes. (ch.11: p.130)

"I talked to Mother," Helen says, looking at the girls. "She told me she kept my father a secret so that Tyndareus wouldn't send me away." "I am glad you spoke to her," Clytemnestra says. (ch.11: p.131)

No one has ever hurt her sister without paying the consequences. It is strange that she, Clytemnestra, is so used to pain that it doesn't bother her, as long as it isn't Helen's. (ch.11: p.134)

Maybe I should cut myself and pretend I've been beaten, Timandra thinks. So Father won't be suspicious when I go back to the palace. (ch.12: p.137)

She cries. All she can see is the scarlet cut on Tantalus's body. A sweet voice is talking to her, far away. It must be Helen's. She can barely hear it as his dead body is carried away from her, like a puppet, broken and useless. (ch.13: p.144)

"Think of all the golden masks made for our heroes. The goldsmiths will prepare one for Tantalus, as beautiful as his face, and under it he will sink into the most peaceful sleep," Helen says. (ch.13: p.144)

"The king gave us the order," one servant whispers. His voice is broken, a croaking sound. "We had no choice." She should pity them, she knows that, their existence made of orders and suffering, their lives like rafts pushed around by the waves. But it is easy to turn to the weakest when you are racked with pain, to hurt those who can't defend themselves when you are unable to hurt those who have hurt you. (ch.13: p.147)

"Go, Helen. I will talk to him." She doesn't want to be left alone, she doesn't want her to go, but her sister isn't strong enough to face a monster, and Agamemnon has already taken too much from her. (ch.13: p.151)

Two servants come for her and Helen, ordering her sister to go back to her husband and taking Clytemnestra to the baths. The hatred in Helen's eyes as she walks toward the guest rooms is blazing

like wildfire, and Clytemnestra clings to it, feeling its warmth as she steps into the bathhouse. (ch.13: p.153)

"You are a strong woman. Whatever opposes you, you will fight it," the priestess says. "It is only death that you can't defeat, and the sooner you understand that, the better." (ch.13: p.154)

"It doesn't matter what he said. Now that I am here, you take orders from me." The slaves exchange a frightened look, and their eyes shine with uncertainty. "He will flog us," the red-haired girl whispers, her voice barely louder than a breath. "I will not allow it," Clytemnestra replies. She makes sure her voice sounds firm. The slaves hurry outside. (ch.14: p.160)

"My wife is very lively, always looking for new activities. It isn't easy to tame her." He sounds as if he was talking about a horse. "Impossible to tame her, I might say," Clytemnestra adds. Timandra laughs, her voice echoing on the walls. "I take after you." (ch.15: p.168)

Clytemnestra glances out the window, then back at her. "She should not come." Timandra frowns. "Why?" "You know why." "You were the one who helped me stay with her. You covered for me in Sparta. You said it wasn't wrong." Her tone is almost accusatory. (ch.15: p.169)

"Listen to me." Clytemnestra doesn't know how to explain, how to make her sister understand. "You must do what you want, but do it in the shadows. Don't let others see how happy you are." (ch.15: p.170)

"They are men, and you are a woman." "What difference does it make? It didn't change anything in Sparta." "We are not in Sparta anymore." (ch.15: p.170)

Helen shifts. When she turns to her right, she sees that everyone has gone except Clytemnestra. They look at each other. Sorrow is written on their faces, but they know better than to speak of it. So they take each other's hands and walk away, leaving their father behind. (ch.16: p.173)

Once, when they were little, Helen had told Clytemnestra that her brother tried to kiss her. "I told him no," she said, confusion in her eyes. "Because it's wrong, isn't it?" "I think it is," Clytemnestra said. They never spoke of it again. (ch.16: p.173)

"How did it feel to send the priestess away?" Leda puts down her wine and grabs Clytemnestra's hand. Her eyes are big and dark with grief. "Listen to me. I have let vengeance lead my thoughts and actions. Don't make the same mistake." "Vengeance is our way of life," Clytemnestra says. (ch.16: p.177)

"Never mind. I know where you were. You followed my sister in the streets—you hit her with a stone and left her to bleed." She feels the golden cup under her finger, the edge jagged, not smooth like the ones in the palace. "You did that to help Agamemnon. You helped him get what he wanted, but he didn't reward you." (ch.16: p.179)

"Promise me you won't be as vengeful as I have been," her mother has said. And she sat there and promised, knowing it was a lie, that her words were cracked, like dried mud. (ch.16: p.180)

A human's blood is fertile. Once it is spilled, it breeds new violence, but gods can't bring back a life. They can only take another. Leda must understand this. After all, she has kept secrets; she has lied and killed those who opposed her. She has stood aside as her husband betrayed her daughter. No, Clytemnestra considers. Her mother can't ask her to keep a promise. (ch.16: p.181)

"It is good to have you back, my queen," Aileen says. She has changed since they met fifteen years ago. If her eyes were once downcast and her hands trembling, now she moves in the world with certainty—Clytemnestra has made sure of that. Many servants have come and gone, but Aileen has been her most faithful. (ch.17: p.182)

"What did you do?" Clytemnestra asks, though deep down, she knows the answer. "I washed it, burned it, and buried its ashes by the back gate." "But you are still here," Clytemnestra says. "What upsets you?" "I had never seen a dead thing before," Electra says simply. (ch.17: p.187)

Clytemnestra had the gynaecium repainted when she found out she was pregnant with Iphigenia, every trace of her home scraped away. Now the walls are covered with frescoes of warrior women and goddesses, their spears sharp and precious, their skin pale and polished, like ivory. (ch.17: p.189)

The image of Cynisca's body kneeling on the floor, blood pouring through her palms, comes back to her, like balm on her skin. Did she think I would forget? That I would let her live after what she did to me? Time had passed and Cynisca had thought herself safe. (ch.17: p.189)

"Good. Then I challenge you to fight me, here and now. If you win, you will keep making decisions for the merchants. If I win, you will take your orders from your queen." He frowns. "Surely you don't want to fight a man as low as me." "The strongest one rules, you said. So let us discover who is stronger." (ch.17: p.192)

Clytemnestra wanted her daughters to train too, but Agamemnon has forbidden it. "If they start training, other women will want to train too," he said. "So? You would have a bigger army." "A weaker

one.” “I am stronger than most of your men.” (ch.18: p.195)

Clytemnestra walks closer. She studies her daughter and Leon’s adoring stare as they kneel together on the dusty earth of the yard. Agamemnon once told her that Leon desired her, but he was wrong. It is Iphigenia he wants. Rage mounts inside her, as it does every time someone wants to take away her daughter. (ch.18: p.198)

Clytemnestra’s hand flies to her dagger and the men take a step back, pushing her daughters forward. Electra is staring at the floor, tears on her cheeks, but Iphigenia’s eyes are narrowed, focused on Kyros with an expression of pure hatred. (ch.18: p.199)

“We have all been whipped several times,” Castor points out. And what good has it done to us? Clytemnestra thinks. Look at me. I am drowning in hatred. “Your hatred consumes you,” Castor says gently. “But it also keeps you alive.” (ch.18: p.201)

The way she had stepped inside quietly, unseen by the guards and the dogs, her shadow stark on the walls. Her blade flashed in the light of the lamp, and Agamemnon had opened his eyes, feeling the metal against his skin. (ch.18: p.201)

These children I cling too much to are the only reasons I didn’t rip my husband’s head off fifteen years ago. (ch.18: p.201)

“Pray to the gods,” everyone kept telling her after Tantalus and her son were murdered. But you don’t get rid of a rat by praying to the gods. You must kill it, poison it. And the gods can’t help you with that. (ch.19: p.202)

“Who will we marry, then?” she asks, unable to contain herself. Clytemnestra feels warmth creeping inside her. She loves it when her daughter loses her seriousness and composure, when she can’t keep her curiosity at bay and hangs on her every word. “A king,” Clytemnestra says. (ch.19: p.204)

“I am sorry for what he did to you,” he finally says. His voice is warm, and there is sadness in it. “I know about your other husband and what King Agamemnon did.”....“You know nothing.” “You must have loved him,” he says. She imagines sinking her palm into the blade, showing him her pain. He shouldn’t dare speak to her like this. He shouldn’t dare assume he understands her feelings. “You know nothing,” she repeats and walks away. (ch.19: p.205)

“Every day I ask the gods why you refuse to submit.” His voice sounds hoarse, though she is the one who is being strangled. When he lets go, he is panting. She clasps the back of her neck, feeling the pain where he touched her. She swallows, then says, “I’d rather die than submit to you.” (ch.19: p.208)

“You can rest here tonight,” she tells the envoy. “Leon will take you to the bathhouse. Tomorrow you will go back to your king.” “What should I tell him?” “That I grieve for his loss, but I can’t bring his wife back. Timandra is someone else’s wife now.” (ch.20: p.210)

“You heard about Timandra,” she says. He nods. “You are going to Sparta. And this time Leon is accompanying you. So in case you want to murder someone...” He lingers on the word, sneering, but Clytemnestra ignores him. (ch.20: p.211)

“But it doesn’t matter. She doesn’t love me and never will. Helen loses interest easily and can’t seem to be happy unless she has someone’s attention. It is strange: she who is such a light is always seeking someone to show her the way.” “She was happy before you came along,” Clytemnestra says. (ch.20: p.215-216)

Helen’s face is amused. “You never change. You’ve just arrived and are already planning to fix everything.” “If I don’t, who else will?” (ch.20: p.217)

Clytemnestra laughs. “And then we’ll all be deserters of our lawful husbands. Though I am not sure my experience counts as deserting.” Helen smiles, hopeful. “Maybe you’ll have one more husband. Remember, the priestess said that we’ll marry twice and thrice.” “Wouldn’t that be wonderful?” (ch.21: p.223)

“You have always been a bright child,” Leda says, “brighter than the rest. And I think you knew that. It gave you the strength to be bold and to speak freely whenever you wanted to.” She sighs, resting her head on the pillow. The golden leaves embossed on the headboard frame her head like a crown. “But it didn’t teach you to accept defeat and that to achieve what you want from the men around you, you must allow them to believe that they are in charge.” “If that is what a woman must do, I don’t want to be one.” (ch.21: p.224)

“You are one. Who else has a spirit like yours? Since the moment you were born, you were your father’s favorite. What king prefers a girl to his sons?” “A good one.” (ch.21: p.224)

“We had hopes for you, ambitions. Your father put too much pressure on you, eager for a powerful marriage. And he ruined you.” The words sting. “I am not ruined.” “But you are unhappy.” (ch.21: p.224)

“You did nothing. You knew of his plan and did nothing to protect me. You spent all those years lying for Helen, keeping her safe, yet you couldn’t find a way to protect me.” (ch.21: p.225-226)

“What about my honor?” Clytemnestra snarls. “You can’t begin to contemplate the things I have endured because of the king’s wishes. There is no honor in being raped, no honor in being beaten. If you think there is, you are a fool.” (ch.21: p.226)

“A girl once teased a tamed bear on this land, and the beast clawed out her eyes,” Clytemnestra recites. “Then the girl’s brothers killed the bear, unleashing Artemis’s rage. So now we atone for the bear’s death.” (ch.21: p.227)

They are lined up together in the megaron, Castor and Polydeuces standing at the side, Helen on the queen’s draped chair, and Clytemnestra on Menelaus’s throne. When she had tried to convince her sister that the throne was for her, Helen shook her head. “You were called here for a reason, to take care of the family. Do it.” Her eyes held urgency, which Clytemnestra had never seen in her before. (ch.22: p.229)

“You have nothing to say,” she says, her voice quivering. Clytemnestra sinks deeper into the tub, though the water is turning colder. “No.” “That is not true. You always have something to say.” “Are you happy?” Clytemnestra asks. “I was lost when you left,” Helen says. “I was unhappy until Polydeuces came back, but then I had Hermione. She cried all the time—she wouldn’t let me sleep. But I couldn’t leave her in the hands of others, not after what happened to you . . .” (ch.22: p.235)

“He understands me,” Helen says. She tortures her fingernails for a moment, then asks tentatively, “Do you think I did wrong?” Clytemnestra looks her straight in the eye. “You didn’t. But let’s not talk about this anymore or with anyone else.” (ch.22: p.236)

“If you ask the people of Mycenae who rules their city,” he asks, “what do they say?” “King Agamemnon,” she replies. “And yet you say you rule the city with your husband.” “There is the truth, and then there is the lie that keeps a kingdom together.” (ch.23: p.247)

“I will be away for a long time,” he says. “I imagine you will find yourself a lover.” “And you will find yourself some pretty slaves.” (ch.23: p.253)

Last night, before falling asleep, he told her he would return for her. “You know you can’t escape me. I always come back. So be a good wife for once and wait.” Now, as she watches him against the brightening sky, she hopes her husband will die in the war. (ch.23: p.254)

“Phthia is small but beautiful,” Clytemnestra adds. “It’s a land between the mountains and the sea.” Iphigenia smiles. “I love the sea.” Then she stands and says, very seriously, “I will marry him.” (ch.24: p.258)

For a moment, she considers trying to revive Leon. But that would only give her away. Besides, he looks too weak; he is barely breathing. So she approaches the entrance of the tent alone, the knife in her sweaty palm. (ch.24: p.268)

As her daughter disappears and everything goes to black, she wonders, How? How is someone not killed by such sorrow? (ch.24: p.270)

I haven’t met this Calchas, but he sounds like a monster. I always wonder what seers would do if someone told them to sacrifice their own family—would they abandon all their reverence for the gods? (ch.25: p.273)

Be angry with your husband, with the bloodthirsty seer. And try to forget. You have other children. Take care of them. (ch.25: p.274)

You have done everything for me; I will never forget it. You hid me when the priestess demanded I was flogged, you taught me how to beat other girls when I was weaker, you encouraged me to love whoever I wanted. That is more than anyone can claim of their own sister. And now they have hurt you and I wasn’t there to protect you. (ch.25: p.275)

These are all lies. They had a choice. The gods didn’t need Iphigenia to die for a whiff of wind. You don’t win wars by sacrificing little girls. You do it by killing your opponents. You taught me that. (ch.25: p.275)

Once, it was you or our brothers who kept me calm. I would come to you with my gnawing doubts and believed everything that came out of your mouths. Now I answer my own questions, but I don’t really believe in myself. (ch.25: p.276)

it is always what she has been taught in the gymnasium: take down your enemies and make them bleed. After all, what is a field after battle if not a stinking lake of corpses? She will fight her own battle when the time comes. And the palace will be her bloody battlefield. (ch.25: p.280)

Clytemnestra stands and paces around the hearth. “Aegisthus hasn’t come here to be friends with Mycenae’s queen. He either wants the throne his father once occupied, or he is looking for vengeance.

Whatever the case, we must be careful.” (ch.26: p.287)

“I couldn’t send him away. He is an enemy, and enemies are better kept close. Then they’re easier to control.” “Well, I pity the man. He probably thinks himself guest of the king of Mycenae’s harmless wife.” She takes Orestes’s arm. “I can be harmless.” He looks at her, eyebrows raised, and they exchange a smile. (ch.26: p.288)

He is dangerous, but she can’t get rid of him, so she has to find a way to crack him. She must dirty her hands and dig into the earth until she finds those wriggling worms. (ch.26: p.289)

“You decided to come with me instead of keeping my daughter safe. I asked you to protect her. Instead you chose to protect me, not understanding that my life without her is nothing. Do not speak of it again, or you will be the one sent away.” “Yes, my queen.” He has spoken so softly she might have imagined it. (ch.26: p.290)

“The kings of Mycenae are lions,” Agamemnon told her once, “preying on the weak.” When she pointed out that the relief sculptures were more like lionesses, her husband laughed. Would he laugh now that a lioness sits on his throne? (ch.27: p.293)

Clytemnestra looks at her face in the shadows. Aileen never had children of her own, but maybe she should have. Once, Leon suggested she was pretty, his tone casual as if to test how Clytemnestra would feel about it. She discouraged it. Two loyal servants together can’t be easily controlled. It is much more useful to pair a loyal dog with a more difficult subject to keep him under control. (ch.27: p.296)

“A woman in the kitchen told me Aegisthus visits your room every night,” Aileen says to her one day. They are in the gardens, Aileen weaving dried flowers into Clytemnestra’s hair. “What did you say?” Clytemnestra asks. “I didn’t know how to reply.” (ch.30: p.322)

“Do you think it unwise,” Clytemnestra says, “that I sleep with Aegisthus?” “Maybe,” she replies. “He is a broken man.” “And?” “Broken men are hard to handle.” She gives her a small smile as if to excuse her boldness of judgment. “I find broken men easier to handle,” Clytemnestra says. (ch.30: p.323)

Orestes is fidgety too. At night, more and more servant girls visit his chamber, and Clytemnestra worries. She doesn’t want her son to end up like Menelaus, making his wife miserable because of his stupidity. There is also Aegisthus, who seems to trouble Orestes with his presence. (ch.32: p.345)

Once, it was Leon who soothed the tension with kind words, who shielded Clytemnestra from her children’s moods. Now he is gone, and in his place, there is Aegisthus, who struggles with his own suffering. She feels she has woven a web too large and complicated, and now she is caught in it too. (ch.32: p.346)

Electra draws her knees up to her chest. “Do you think the gods are watching us? Do you think they know that you hate him?” “Listen to me,” Clytemnestra says. “Gods do not care about us. They have other concerns. That is why you should never live in the shadow of their anger. It is men you must fear. It is men who will be angry with you if you rise too high, if you are too much loved. The stronger you are, the more they will try to take you down.” (ch.32: p.353)

A girl sits on the chariot next to Agamemnon among the gold, rugs, and vases. Her hands are bound, her skin brown as oak bark. There is an old bruise on her face, half-covered by her loose hair. A war slave. Clytemnestra would rather die than live like that. “Even a slave has a choice,” her mother once said. “Slavery or death.” Is that a choice? Clytemnestra isn’t sure. (ch.32: p.356-357)

“Do it,” she says when Clytemnestra is close enough. “Do it now.” She truly is a princess. Only royalty would give orders like that. Clytemnestra reaches out and touches her arm gently. “Hide here,” she says. “No one will hurt you, I promise.” (ch.34: p.364)

Now she’d rather die than go back to him. Maybe you won’t have to. She could leave now, run to the woods. And then? She could cross the sea again and search for other survivors. She holds her kitchen knife tight. Maybe that is what the Mycenaean queen wanted to say when she told her to hide. (ch.34: p.366)

“She did nothing to you! Why did you have to sacrifice her?” she shouts, spitting at him. The expression on Aegisthus’s face shifts. Pain and fear—fear of her—are tearing him apart. “I thought you wanted her dead,” he says. She sinks her head into Cassandra’s robe and weeps. She weeps for the Trojan girl, but mostly for everything she has lost. (ch.34: p.372)

“You are not surprised I killed him,” Clytemnestra says. Aileen takes a piece of linen and wraps it around the fingers as tightly as she can. “He was a cruel man,” she says. “And yet Electra hates me for it.” “You can’t have justice and everyone’s approval,” Aileen says, touching her queen’s thumb carefully, trying to move it. I don’t want everyone’s approval, just my daughter’s. (ch.35: p.378)

“Electra knows what her father was,” Aileen continues, “but I think she would have wanted you to show him mercy.” “Would you have shown him mercy?” Aileen makes a knot to keep the linen tight

	around her hand. "I have never been in your position. I wouldn't make a good queen." (ch.35: p.378) For more than half her life, she has worn vengeance like a second skin. Now it is time to shed it. Who will she be without her anger, her pain? What will her freedom taste like? (ch.35: p.379)
Solidarity	"You live to honor Sparta and your king. You fight so that you may have strong, healthy children and rule your houses. You fight to prove your loyalty to the city. You fight to belong. Survival, courage, and strength are your duties." "Survival, courage, and strength are our duties," the girls say in unison. (ch.2: p.25) "The man has no wife," Castor points out. "He's a widower." Tyndareus sighs. "What do you suggest, Clytemnestra?" She sits up. "Summon the woman. Ask her what she did and why." Her brothers turn to her quickly. "And then?" "Then act accordingly." When no one says anything, she continues, "Are we in Sparta or in Athens? Do we not take pride in our strong, free-willed women, or do we lock them into the house so they grow fragile and useless?" (ch.4: p.39) When they were children, Penelope was always following her around, trying to discourage her hasty choices. When she couldn't, she made excuses for her cousin to the elders. She was a very good liar. (ch.5: p.53) She looks at the warrior women tossing their hair as they attack a boar and remembers when she spent hours staring at them as a child, wishing to be like them. (ch.5: p.57) "Ah," Penelope says. Then, unexpectedly, she smiles. "I see you have inherited your mother's interest in foreigners." (ch.5: p.58) Last night, the blankets twisted around their naked bodies, Tantalus asked her why Spartan women train. "To bear healthy children," she replied. "And to be free." (ch.6: p.61) "Good," Lysimachos says. "But you need to last longer. You need to find better tactics to push back your opponents. Use your legs to balance yourself. If you lose balance, you are lost." He points at the broken spear on the sand. "Someone takes your weapon from you? You do not falter. You find a new balance." (ch.6: p.64) "It was Agamemnon, wasn't it?" Clytemnestra says. The servant nods. The bruise is turning green at its edges. "Did he force himself on you?" Clytemnestra persists, her voice cracked with anger. Timandra stops tugging, alert, scanning her sisters' faces. The helot shakes her head. "He isn't interested in servants," she mumbles. (ch.7: p.75) "We should tell Mother," Helen says. "This isn't the first time it has happened. Have you seen those poor women who prepare his bath?" (ch.7: p.75) "Men who find solace only in other men are to be distrusted," Castor told Clytemnestra and Helen one morning as they were watching Theseus and Pirithous fight in the gymnasium. "They don't respect anyone else, let alone a woman." (ch.8: p.87) "You stay here," he said. When Clytemnestra ignored him and took a horse, Polydeuces shouted, "Didn't you hear your brother? You stay here!" They spurred the horses and were gone in a cloud of dust. Forced to wait without any news of the person she loved most, Clytemnestra took refuge in the temple of Artemis. There, near a spring at the foot of the mountains, she sat between two wooden columns and prayed. (ch.8: p.88) "I want Helen back," Tyndareus said. Then he turned, feeling watched, and saw Clytemnestra. He walked to her, leaving the priestess, and said, "Let us pray together for your sister's return." (ch.8: p.88) For a long time after Theseus took her, Helen would wake up screaming. For a few moments, before she understood that she was safe in bed with her sister, her body would twist and struggle as if she was being tortured. Clytemnestra never left her side. She held her wrist, feeling her pulse climbing, and lifted her hands to her sister's cheeks. (ch.8: p.95) "You mustn't cry, Helen. Theseus is gone." He never used that patient tone with anyone else. "It still hurts," Helen whispered, and Clytemnestra knew she was speaking neither of the memory nor of the dream. It was her body that still hurt. (ch.8: p.96) When he has left, Tyndareus relaxes against the back of his chair. "I knew they would take the city back." "You said so," Leda says. "They are great warriors." Leda turns to Clytemnestra, then back to her husband. "You know we disagree on that." (ch.8: p.101) "What use are brains? The gods favor the strong." Odysseus's smile doesn't drop. "The gods favor whoever amuses them. And I can assure you that clever men, and women," he adds with a quick nod to Penelope, Helen, and Clytemnestra, "are more appealing than brutes." (ch.9: 106) "Very little upsets the women of Sparta, my friend," Tyndareus says quietly. Clytemnestra leans forward. "Besides, the prince of Ithaca says nothing we don't know already." "Ah," Odysseus says and

smiles. "The princess of Sparta doesn't like the sons of Atreus." Clytemnestra smiles back. "We share that, I am sure." (ch.9: p.107)

"Please!" Clytemnestra tightens the grip on her hand. "Don't be sorry. If they say anything, you deny it. I will protect you." They are at the entrance of the megaron now, the voices in the hall loud and clear. "But be careful, Timandra. You are not a child anymore." (ch.9: p.112)

"You will offer your gifts to Helen," Tyndareus starts. Many kings whisper in confusion. They probably expected to present their gifts to Tyndareus, the king, not his beautiful daughter. (ch.9: p.113)

"...You know you will have to marry one day." Timandra nods sadly. "If Father learns of this, he will punish me." "He will. So ask yourself, is it worth it?" "Yes." (ch.10: p.119)

"And do you approve?" He sits back in his chair, leaning on the carved arm. "Young men often lie with their companions," he says. "Why shouldn't women do the same?" Then, "I must say, Helen doesn't have much luck with men. I have heard how she suffered with Theseus... poor girl." He shakes his head, mortified. (ch.10: p.122)

"I am not the only one who has made a deal with Tyndareus." She steps back. "Who else?" "I know nothing for sure, but keep an eye on Menelaus." (ch.10: p.122)

"The baby is coming," Clytemnestra whispers, her voice strangled. She leans against the wall because the pain is worse. Helen's eyes open wide. "I will call Mother . . ." Clytemnestra shakes her head. "Take me to the midwives. It is coming now." (ch.10: p.127)

"Is your sister covering for us again?" Chrysanthé asks. "Not today," Timandra replies. (ch.12: p.137)

Leda turns. Tyndareus is standing next to Agamemnon. A knowing look passes between them, like hunting dogs before they maul a deer. She runs to her husband and shouts with all the strength in her body, "WHERE IS MY DAUGHTER? WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?" (ch.12: p.142)

Her mother holding the dead baby. Tantalus's bloodied hands. Timandra, her face baked with mud, trying to hold her sister. Clytemnestra is mad, tearing her tunic apart. She is trying to grab a blade to slash her own throat. Helen jumps forward and joins Timandra. Clytemnestra cries and bites like a panther, but together, they manage to take her down, their beating hearts the only comfort to their sister. (ch.12: p.143)

"You should eat," Timandra says. Her voice is so soft it doesn't even sound like hers. "She won't," Helen says from her corner of the room. "I have tried." (ch.13: p.145)

"I will come with you," Helen says, closing the purple tunic on Clytemnestra's back with a golden pin. She has been pacing the bedroom all day, restless, cleaning every stain from Timandra's dress. There was crusted blood under her sister's fingernails, and Helen scrubbed them so hard she might have been trying to flay them. "I will go alone," Clytemnestra says. "Father must know it was me," Timandra says. (ch.13: p.148)

"You sit there, telling me about lives that were wrongly taken, after you helped a monster murder your grandchild." "Agamemnon and Menelaus are our guests." Tyndareus's voice is flat. "They must be treated with respect." "They showed no respect to us," replies Leda. (ch.13: p.149)

She is barely outside when Agamemnon closes it, shutting her out. Clytemnestra hears her sister protest, then her hurried steps. She must be running to Timandra for help. (ch.13: p.151-152)

"We have been sold like cattle for the Atreidai's stupid alliance." "We are not cattle." Helen produces a muffled sound between a laugh and a cry. Clytemnestra moves closer and touches her cheek. She wants to speak but she is afraid she will cry, and she has cried enough already. (ch.14: p.157)

She is holding a small jeweled knife. "It was your grandmother's." Clytemnestra touches the point with her finger, and a drop of blood appears on the tip. "It is very sharp, though no one suspects it. Everyone is distracted by its beauty." Leda gives her daughter a final meaningful look, then turns away. (ch.14: p.158)

Clytemnestra waits to find the right words, as if pulling them out of deep darkness. "You were born free and you will always be free, no matter what others tell you. But you must see what is around you and learn to bend it to your will before you are the one who is bent." (ch.15: p.170)

"I always liked her best, Timandra," Agamemnon continues. "She is tough, like you. I just wish she would visit more." He gives her a sly leer. (ch.17: p.186)

"They pushed him down." Eurybates's words are thick with spite. "One threatened him while the other hurt him with a rock." (ch.18: p.199)

"You shouldn't be afraid of me," she had told the girl. "Why?" Aileen asked. "Because I am not going to hurt you. You should save your fear for the warriors, for the elders, or for the king." Aileen looked up then. "And you? Don't you fear them?" "I do," Clytemnestra said, "but I'm smart enough not to show it." (ch.19: p.206)

"King Agamemnon asked for my presence tonight." Clytemnestra stiffens. Aileen moves to scrub her feet, and Clytemnestra catches her face under the feeble light—her features are calm, just like Clytemnestra taught her, but the wavering in her voice is unmistakable. "You will not go," Clytemnestra says. "He can find some other servant to entertain him." (ch.19: p.206)

"Menelaus says she is unhappy." "What has he done to her?" He laughs. "You always think us guilty of petty crimes. My brother hasn't done anything. Your sister is spoiled, always has been." "Menelaus doesn't respect her," Clytemnestra spits out. (ch.20: p.212)

But then she thinks of her sister, shutting herself up like a prisoner in her childhood home. It is terrible to be alone like that, when you are surrounded by people but no one can help you. It makes you feel there is no hope. She needs to go to Sparta. (ch.20: p.212)

Helen takes her hand. "No matter how many husbands we'll have, we have already been lucky enough to have each other." (ch.21: p.223)

"You know I once saw Timandra kissing another girl during the procession of she-bears?" Castor says. "She looked up at me as if daring me to say anything, then ran away into the shadows." "And? What did you say to her?" Clytemnestra asks. "Nothing. Sooner or later, Father would have found out and flogged her anyway. Not that Timandra cared. She has always been unruly." (ch.21: p.228)

"Do you miss your home?" Clytemnestra asks as they are walking between the roses in a garden. Phoebe is usually the one who speaks, with her fervent eyes and defiant face, but this time it is Hilaeira who answers. "There is nothing for us in Messenia anymore." Her words are stiff and clear. (ch.22: p.229)

Idas turns to him. "You speak, cousin, yet you don't even sit on a throne. Have you lost your cock by any chance?" Helen gasps. Castor laughs. The sound echoes against the walls, and when it dies, it leaves behind a faint, evil echo. "Speak of my brother like that again and I will cut your throat," Polydeuces says. (ch.22: p.231)

"Your bride wasn't taken," Castor repeats. "You are right, Idas," Clytemnestra intervenes. "We wouldn't murder you in our home. We can give you hospitality, food, wine, but not Phoebe and Hilaeira." (ch.22: p.231)

"Phoebe especially is a spirited girl. Did she tell you of our own time in bed together?" he asks Castor. Castor's face is as cold as a blade. "She did." "That's it? She didn't comment on it? She didn't mention how she cried when I took her?" "You will never take her again." (ch.22: p.232)

"Did you know about them?" she asks. "Yes," Castor replies. "Why didn't you tell me?" "I didn't want you to turn them away because they're monsters. I wanted you to do it because I love Phoebe, and Polydeuces loves Hilaeira." (ch.22: p.233)

"What if they come back?" she asks. He stiffens in her arms. "We'll kill them." (ch.22: p.233)

"You were brave today, facing Idas like that," she says. Her steps were silent; Clytemnestra didn't hear her coming. "I did what I had to. There was nothing else I could have done." "You could have sent us back, like Menelaus asked you to." (ch.22: p.233)

"Your brother can find a new wife," Clytemnestra says. "I once heard him say that women are better when ripe and fresh, like fruit." "We made peace with Troy," he hisses. "The peace can stand." (ch.23: p.245)

Clytemnestra looks at Aileen's chapped hands. "I don't fear for Helen. I am glad she left. Now the king will leave too, and I shall rule Mycenae." Aileen flushes, and Clytemnestra smiles. "I know you want to get rid of him too." (ch.23: p.251)

He shrugs. "Ithaca couldn't be in better hands, with her ruling in my stead. You should see her . . . That woman knows more secrets than all my spies put together." He smiles to himself. (ch.24: p.263)

After Theseus had taken her, she wanted to die. She told me that the pain and the shame were too much to bear. I told her she had nothing to be ashamed of and that death was inevitable but she wasn't meant to die then. (ch.25: p.272)

Hermione misses her mother, but I won't let her hate her, no matter how hard she tries. And now that Menelaus is gone, I will teach her to rule. She might be queen one day. (ch.25: p.272)

They tell of the day the Greek troops sailed for Troy, of the brutal sacrifice of your daughter. Agamemnon and Menelaus, they say, gathered their ships in Aulis to launch the biggest armada to Helen's rescue. How unkind the Fates can be—to sacrifice a princess for the rescue of a queen? Is one life really worth more than another? And if so, who is the judge of that? (ch.25: p.273)

As soon as I heard what they did to you, I almost took a ship, twenty of my best swordsmen, and left for Troy to slaughter them myself—that heartless man Father made you marry, the stinking seer, and the traitor Odysseus. I could see myself cutting them down, carving them into joints. (ch.25: p.275)

	When he had finished, he put down the cloth and started sobbing. His breath came in muffled pants, like a soldier wounded in battle. She had never seen a man cry before. She drew him to her, and his head shook against her shoulder. “She is gone,” she whispered. “She is gone.” (ch.25: p.281) “You once said that Aegisthus didn’t use violence like everyone else in his family,” she says. “You were scared of everyone except him. And yet he comes here alone with a sword at his waist, refusing to call me his queen. Should I trust this man?” Aileen looks at her hands in her lap. They are very pale, like milk. “He saved my life,” she says quietly. “You never told me that.” (ch.26: p.286) Helen used to dream of being able to command the clouds. She would lie on the grass, close her eyes, and ask them to move faster, the wind to blow stronger, the sun to burn brighter. “It won’t work,” Clytemnestra would say. “You should lie down too,” Helen always replied, tugging at her sister’s tunic. “If we can unite our wills, we are stronger.” (ch.28: p.303) “Why should we follow you, a woman who sleeps with the enemy, when your son is of age to command us until your husband returns?” “I trust my mother’s choices,” Orestes says. “And you should trust your queen.” (ch.30: p.328) Clytemnestra feels a rot inside her body. “He left, and I did nothing to stop him.” “You had no choice. If you had stopped him, he would have stayed here and hated you. If you had followed him, you would have disgraced yourself.” (ch.31: p.336) “The first night you came to Mycenae, you saved me from flogging. Remember that? You may not, but I do not forget. Then a few days later, you came into the kitchen and asked if I wanted to walk around the garden with you. You said, You remind me of my sister. When Agamemnon wanted to sleep with me, you intervened. When I had the fever, you gave me herbs. You taught me to read so I could help you with the inventories. Would a cruel person do any of this?” (ch.31: p.337) Clytemnestra runs back to the temple of Hera, eager to find the Trojan girl and take her somewhere safe. The palace is silent, each corridor flooded with darkness. She has ordered the guards to feast and rest tonight, and now they must be sleeping, half drunk next to their lovers. (ch.34: p.372) She has heard the warriors who walked on the Trojan fields speak of Helen: the “bringer of agony,” “the scourge of Greece.” What is left of the girl who was afraid to speak in front of her father? Who followed Clytemnestra everywhere? Who couldn’t lie, not even when her sister asked her to? She has survived a war that destroyed a city—a war that she started—and now is at home, safe in the arms of her brother. Clytemnestra holds on to the image, refusing to let it slip away. (ch.35: p.379)
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Impacts of Gender Equality	Quotation
Economic Empowerment	Outside her mother’s room, the corridor is full of noise—women’s whispers, hurrying feet, the clatter of pots and pans—and the smell of spiced meat drifts from the kitchen. (ch.3: p.35) The table is laid with rare delicacies—goat and sheep meat, onions, pears and figs, honeyed flatbreads—but Clytemnestra doesn’t want to eat. (ch.3: p.37) The suburbs stretch like cobwebs, traders and other workers running their last errands of the day. As Agamemnon and Clytemnestra ride through, the people stop and kneel. They look filthy and strangely thin, like helots. (ch.13: p.159) She is wearing a small tiara adorned with amethysts and several gold anklets as rich women in Mycenae do. (ch.17: p.183) IN THE DINING hall, Clytemnestra looks at the elaborate handles of the bronze swords on the walls—bone, ivory, gold, with inlaid decorations of lions hunting deer, geese flying, dogs running. As the servants prepare the room for dinner, her brothers, Phoebe, and another woman with long hair and a darkblue dress walk in. (ch.21: p.220) Helen claps her hands and young men enter, flutes and lyres in hand. They play, each note unfolding quietly like wings in the darkness. “In Troy, they never eat without music,” Helen explains. Paris smiles at her and Helen smiles back. She doesn’t touch her food; the honey on her plate spreads, soaking the cheese. (ch.21: p.221) “I am aware that many of you consider you might rule this city better than I do,” she says. “That

	because I am a woman, I should put your counsel before my own. That my husband was a better ruler, more fit.” Some look away from her, uncomfortable. Others blush but keep staring at her, bold. “Yet Mycenae has grown richer under my command, despite the loss of men and resources at war—a war my husband wanted. So as long as I am on this throne, you will give your counsel and respect my choices.” (ch.28: p.302) “I am aware that many of you consider you might rule this city better than I do,” she says. “That because I am a woman, I should put your counsel before my own. That my husband was a better ruler, more fit.” Some look away from her, uncomfortable. Others blush but keep staring at her, bold. “Yet Mycenae has grown richer under my command, despite the loss of men and resources at war—a war my husband wanted. So as long as I am on this throne, you will give your counsel and respect my choices.” (ch.28: p.302) The courtyard that leads to the megaron is cool and quiet. Clytemnestra half expects to see Electra there, eavesdropping on her father, but there is no one under the shadowy colonnades except the frescoed griffins, sitting proudly by every column. (ch.17: p.184)
Political Empowerment	When Clytemnestra and Helen walk in, their mother is seated at the head of the table, speaking to a few servants, while Timandra, Phoebe, and Philonoe, Clytemnestra’s younger sisters, fill their plates with flatbreads and olives. (ch.2: p.22) “Make sure no one has stolen from the grain stores,” Leda is telling the servants, “and leave some wine for the king when he comes back from his journey.” She dismisses them with a wave of the hand, and they slip out of the room, as silent as fish moving through water. (ch.2: p.22) “It will be as boring as an elders’ meeting, Sister,” Castor had told Clytemnestra before he left. “You will have more fun here, hunting and helping Mother to run the palace.” (ch.2: p.22) Outside her mother’s room, the corridor is full of noise—women’s whispers, hurrying feet, the clatter of pots and pans—and the smell of spiced meat drifts from the kitchen. (ch.3: p.35) When commoners walk in the megaron with their pleas, Leda speaks and gives orders, but only when Tyndareus asks for her opinion. At dinner, when he glances at the servant girls—carelessly enough for his wife to see—Leda drains her wine in silence, though there are sparks in her eyes as if she were ready to catch fire. Clytemnestra sees that her mother challenges her father and that he likes her for it, but only up to a point. (ch.4: p.44) She sees that her mother can be two different people and that the best version appears when her father isn’t around. (ch.4: p.45) It doesn’t matter what Leda or Tyndareus does. Her grandmother told her she will be queen, and so it will be. She will bow to no one. Her destiny will be what she wants it to be. (ch.4: p.45) “I do not wish to give grounds for a quarrel, so I offer you an option. If you want to stay here and present your gift to my daughter, you will also swear an oath.” “An oath?” Idomeneus asks, frowning. “Yes. An oath that you will accept Helen’s choice and that you will support and defend her husband should he need help in the future.” (ch.9: p.113) “What news from the East?” “Not much,” Agamemnon says. “The city of Troy still challenges the Greeks at sea, but no one will fight it.” “Many say the city is impenetrable,” Leda comments. (ch.10: p.125) “Stay away,” she says. “You take no orders from him.” The helot backs down. “I have to make sure you stay here,” he mutters. “I have to make sure you are safe, Princess.” Helen spits at him, then throws the table against the door. “LET ME OUT!” (ch.12: p.139) They are not soldiers, Clytemnestra can tell. Her horse steps on some bread crusts on the pebbles, and guards ride on both sides of her as if to protect her from the people. (ch.13: p.159) “Lord Agamemnon has ordered us to stay here until he comes back,” the older slave says. “It doesn’t matter what he said. Now that I am here, you take orders from me.” (ch.14: p.160) There were too many embassies in the palace to be dealt with, too many guests and quarrels to be resolved. So Clytemnestra had held audiences and discussed land disputes and army training while her sister married the king of Arcadia. (ch.15: p.166) “Crete is not as rich as it used to be,” Echemus says dismissively. “King Minos is gone, his crazy wife disappeared. Nothing worthy of attention remains.” “Crete remains crucial for commerce,” Clytemnestra says. “They have ships and they have gold. They

trade with Phoenicians, Egyptians, and Ethiopians.” (ch.15: p.168)

“What happened to her?” Castor looks as the man laughs and cheers with Menelaus. “Her family is more and more powerful. They are among the few Spartans Menelaus trusts. Cynisca is often in the megaron, whispering in the king’s ear.” (ch.16: p.176)

“Your plots and plans haven’t worked. I have power and all you have is whispers in a king’s ear. I am queen of Mycenae, and you are nobody.” (ch.16: p.180)

“It is good to have you back, my queen,” Aileen says. She has changed since they met fifteen years ago. If her eyes were once downcast and her hands trembling, now she moves in the world with certainty—Clytemnestra has made sure of that. Many servants have come and gone, but Aileen has been her most faithful. (ch.17: p.182)

The elders kneel, their faces touching the floor at Clytemnestra’s feet. “Please stand,” she says. “There is no need.” It troubles her to see them so obliging, when all they do when her husband isn’t here is challenge and contradict her. (ch.17: p.185)

“The merchants I asked you to deal with are complaining again,” he says. No greeting or questions, but then she doesn’t expect her husband to behave in any other way. “They want to be paid more in exchange for the losses with Troy,” she says. She had dealt several times with a group of angry merchants before leaving for Sparta. (ch.17: p.185)

“They don’t want to deal with you anymore.”

“What did they say exactly?” she asks.

“That you are not fit to give them commands. But it doesn’t matter. You will talk to them tomorrow and you will teach them to listen.” “Good” (ch.17: p.185-186)

“What of Troy?” Clytemnestra asks. “Will there be war?”

Agamemnon shakes his head. “No Greek king wants to fight. They need a reason to do so. Troy is rich and dangerous to us, but that is not reason enough for them.”

She frowns. “You go to war because that is what you are trained for.”

“I agree. Still, they will wait until the Trojans are on our doorstep.”

“The Trojans will not come. They have gold, they control much of the sea, and they have the mines at the foot of Mount Ida. They have no reason to come to us.”

His eyes shine for a moment. He comes closer and kisses her forehead. “So we will go to them,” he says. (ch.17: p.186)

The merchants don’t go to her, so Clytemnestra must go to them. (ch.17: p.190)

He had thrown his opponent into the dust, walked to the dais where king and queen were seated, and knelt in front of Clytemnestra. “All I desire is to serve you, my queen,” he told her. Agamemnon laughed, but Clytemnestra let him kiss her hand and told him she would be happy to have him as guard. (ch.17: p.190)

“I have paid you in gold as compensation for your trade losses,” Clytemnestra says, “yet you have betrayed the king and tried to take advantage of the situation by selling your gold and jewels to Troy. I could have executed you, as my husband suggested, but I paid you more and made you promise to keep Troy out of your trade.” (ch.17: p.191)

Warriors and villagers ask for an audience in the megaron, each with their own request: My king, my son is born a cripple, my wife lay with another man, the merchants wouldn’t sell me their wine. My queen, the neighbor stole my bread, insulted the gods, spoke of treason. (ch.18: p.194)

Many commoners come to speak to the queen. They walk into the bright light of the hall, kneel in front of the king, then turn to Clytemnestra with their requests on land disputes and marriage portions. They know that she listens calmly to every plea and that she gives her help to those who respect her. (ch.18: p.194)

Her daughters may not be able to wrestle, she thinks, but they are not fools. They are fierce and clever, each in her own way, and won’t have trouble ruling men and cities. (ch.19: p.204)

“I have to leave for my grandfather’s funeral. A ship is waiting to take me to Crete, but I wanted to make sure you were here first. You must keep things in order.” “What things?” “There is an important guest here from Troy on a diplomatic mission.” (ch.20: p.216)

Agamemnon is standing under a large oak by the entrance of the palace, speaking with Calchas and two men-at-arms. He is dressed in bronze, his boar’s-tusk helmet in his hand, and looks tired. When Clytemnestra walks to them, the men leave. (ch.23: p.249)

“You are leaving tomorrow,” she says. “It is time. We’ll catch the spring winds.” “And what do you think of these men, the generals you are going to command?” “I can trust some of them.” He stands next to her by the window. “Like Idomeneus and Diomedes.” (ch.23: p.252)

Clytemnestra receives him in the megaron, sitting on her husband's throne. Leon is at her side, polishing his sword, yawning. It has been a boring day so far, filled with merchants' requests and noble women's gossip. (ch.24: p.255)

Leon turns to her. "You will go?" he asks. She can tell from his eyes that he had meant the words to be an accusation, but his voice is feeble, little more than a whisper. "I must," she says. "I can't turn away from a political alliance." (ch.24: p.256)

When Clytemnestra told him he was to come with them, he looked hurt. "Why me?" he asked. "Because you swore to protect us." "You always say you don't need protection." Clytemnestra almost laughed. "Well, I do now." (ch.24: p.259)

Outside the tent, there is a row of guards, sweat pouring through their thick armor. They bow and show them the way inside. (ch.24: p.260)

"Then you know how to address a ruler when you are in front of one." He tightens his jaw. He doesn't look angry, rather like a conflicted boy. "Isn't Agamemnon king of Mycenae now?" "Yes. And I am the queen." (ch.26: p.282)

"I have wronged your king in the past," he says. It seems he is waiting, for scorn or punishment, it is hard to say. "Even if you have wronged my husband, you know I must allow you to stay in this palace." The man smirks. "I don't want to be killed in my sleep, my queen." The words sound mocking in his mouth, yet she likes it. "You won't be. I give you my word." He tilts his head and clenches his fists. He doesn't trust her, she can see. "Leon," she says, "bring Aileen here so we can wash this man's feet and welcome him properly." (ch.26: p.284)

"Aegisthus has no family left. No one will pay a ransom." "Then keep him in the dungeon until the king decides what to do with him." "The king has been away for nine years," she replied. "During which I have ruled this city, kept it safe. And yet you still refuse to trust my authority." (ch.27: p.292)

"Bring some wine for the queen," he orders the servants. "You can finish clearing later." Clytemnestra sits on the chair at the head of the table. She accepts the wine a woman gives her and sips. Leon sits next to her. (ch.27: p.297)

"We haven't spoken of Troy yet, my queen," Cadmus says. It is true. She hasn't asked because her scouts keep her well informed, though nothing much has happened. The city hasn't fallen yet. (ch.28: p.301)

"You should come to my meetings with the elders more," she says. "Why? You manage them much better than I could." "You must learn to manage them too. You will be king one day, and there are still things you need to learn. The elders are like snakes. They creep up behind you and strike you in the back if you are not ready to defend yourself." (ch.28: p.302)

Most of the warriors left with Agamemnon nine years ago, and Clytemnestra has been building a strong army to replace them. (ch.28: p.305)

"Very well. Then I will have your sword, Kyros. You will fight for me, next to my son and the other warlords." Silence again. Then Kyros kneels, his face warm with pride. When he stands, he and Orestes exchange a glance. "This is your chance to make your queen proud," Clytemnestra says. "Do not waste it." (ch.28: p.305)

"The first night you came to Mycenae, you saved me from flogging. Remember that? You may not, but I do not forget. Then a few days later, you came into the kitchen and asked if I wanted to walk around the garden with you. You said, You remind me of my sister. When Agamemnon wanted to sleep with me, you intervened. When I had the fever, you gave me herbs. You taught me to read so I could help you with the inventories. Would a cruel person do any of this?" (ch.31: p.337)

"You bring good news," she tells him. "You may rest in the palace tonight, but tell no one about this. Tomorrow you go back to your outpost. When the city falls, light a bonfire and order your men in the mountains to do the same so that the news might come here as soon as possible." (ch.31: p.340)

Clytemnestra stands, lifting her golden cup. "A toast, then!" she says, and the hall grows quiet. The men turn to her, their faces raw and wrinkled. "To the gods who helped true heroes come home, and to the best victory of our times, a war that will be remembered for generations!" (ch.34: p.359)

"Here comes my wife at last," he says. "The mighty queen of Mycenae, as they call you now." He chuckles, amused by the idea. "I am sure you have earned the name." (ch.34: p.367)

In the dining hall, she stands at the head of the table while Cadmus and a few other elders take their seats on one side and, on the other, Aegisthus, Electra, and Chrysothemis. (ch.35: p.374)

"The warlords are patrolling the streets," he says. "The people rejoiced at the news." "Did the elders say how the king was killed?" she asks. "They didn't." Good. (ch.35: p.380)

"Do you know the servants who went to Tantalus and brought him to Agamemnon?" Timandra nods.

	“Good. Bring them to me.” (ch.13: p.146) The servants are staring at her, pleading and fear on their faces. She can see the marks and blood crusts on their arms, and she wonders if Timandra beat them before she brought her here or if it was someone else. “Tell my sister what you told me,” Timandra orders, her voice empty of any warmth. “How you were with the king of Maconia when he died.” (ch.13: p.147) Leon plays with the handle of his dagger. “Some said that a woman should not wear a crown. Others defended you.” “What exactly did they say?” Leon hesitates. She gives him time and drinks more. This is not the first time she has heard the elders’ discontent. “They said that your power is like ‘the plague among soldiers.’” (ch.27: p.297)
Equal Rights	Castor frowns. “And if the woman claims she went with another man willingly?” “Then she will have to ask for her husband’s forgiveness with the man. If he raped her, he will apologize to her, not to her husband.” Tyndareus nods, and Clytemnestra’s face grows warm with pride. Her father rarely listens to anyone else. (ch.4: p.40) Is this what a woman gives up? All her life, she has been taught courage, strength, resilience, but must those qualities be kept at bay with a husband? But it is also true that her father listens to her when she speaks, and Tantalus looks at her as if she were a goddess. (ch.4: p.45) Cynisca smirks. “Ah, that is your mistake. You think yourself a man, but you aren’t. Lucky women never get past the envy of the gods.” Clytemnestra could have her whipped here and now if she wanted to. (ch.5: p.56) The Spartiates are waiting in the shade of the trees, their bodies covered with oil. They are to fight with spears today, and Clytemnestra is polishing hers in a corner, trying to keep focused. (ch.6: p.61) Last night, the blankets twisted around their naked bodies, Tantalus asked her why Spartan women train. “To bear healthy children,” she replied. “And to be free.” (ch.6: p.61) Make sure you are not seen is one of the first rules Spartans learn as children. You may steal, you may kill, but if you are caught, you will be punished. (ch.6: p.62) They had ridden for their lives, and it was Tyndareus’s duty to let them stay in his palace. A guest is always sacred in their lands, no matter his deeds and crimes. (ch.7: p.72) “In Salamis, all women do is moan and giggle,” Ajax the Great says. Perhaps that is what his comrades like, because Teucer cackles next to him, but few others, apart from Menoetius, Ephenor, and Diomedes. “They do not fight?” Clytemnestra asks. “Fight?” Ajax laughs, slamming a clenched fist on the table. “Women aren’t made to fight.” “They weave and dance,” Teucer says, still cackling, “and fuck every once in a while.” (ch.9: p.108) Maybe that is why she chose Tantalus. His world seems much more hopeful than what she has always been forced to believe. And if everything he told her about Maconia is true, her baby won’t have to be beaten to learn, to be whipped if he disobeys. (ch.10: p.119) Clytemnestra waits to find the right words, as if pulling them out of deep darkness. “You were born free and you will always be free, no matter what others tell you. But you must see what is around you and learn to bend it to your will before you are the one who is bent.” (ch.15: p.170) Fathers didn’t seek vengeance for their daughters. Kings didn’t punish lustful young men—Clytemnestra had learned that a long time ago. But she is no king. She had the nobleman’s son dragged outside under the scorching sun and before the people’s eyes. He was whipped until his back was soaked. (ch.18: p.194) “Iphigenia should choose.” Clytemnestra stands, a weight in her chest. “Which is why I shall ask her now. No one has ever made Iphigenia do anything she didn’t want to do.” (ch.24: p.256) “My father used to come here and watch every man, woman, and child in the village,” he says after a while. “Why?” she asks. “To decide whom he would flog or kill. He would see enemies everywhere.” “I am not your father.”...“No, I can see that,” he says. “You’re not cruel and yet you hold a kingdom together. I’ve never seen anything like it.” (ch.28: p.304) “The first night you came to Mycenae, you saved me from flogging. Remember that? You may not, but I do not forget. Then a few days later, you came into the kitchen and asked if I wanted to walk around the garden with you. You said, You remind me of my sister. When Agamemnon wanted to sleep with me, you intervened. When I had the fever, you gave me herbs. You taught me to read so I could help you with the inventories. Would a cruel person do any of this?” (ch.31: p.337) Clytemnestra takes her broken hand in the other. She tries to move the fingers, pain shooting through her. I have killed the lord of men, Agamemnon. My debt is paid. (ch.35: p.373)

	For more than half her life, she has worn vengeance like a second skin. Now it is time to shed it. Who will she be without her anger, her pain? What will her freedom taste like? (ch.35: p.379) They had ridden for their lives, and it was Tyndareus's duty to let them stay in his palace. A guest is always sacred in their lands, no matter his deeds and crimes. (ch.7: p.72) Her people don't know forgiveness. They know respect, greatness, beauty, the forces that shine like flames, brightening the earth. And next to them, like threatening shadows, shame, dishonor, vengeance, and moira, the unbreakable thread between guilt and punishment. (ch.13: p.148) "You have made Timandra a murderess," Leda says. Her eyes are red— she must have been crying. "She is only fourteen." She is a Spartan. If I have made her a murderess, then what of Father, who ordered her to break Chrysanthé's face? What of the priestess, who cut her back with a whip? (ch.13: p.149) No man or woman is allowed to live as he or she pleases, not even in Sparta. Nothing ever belongs to them entirely. (ch.13: p.151) There are more torches, more weapons on the walls, more cowhide on the floor, more dogs gnawing at the bones, and more women. (ch.16: p.176) "You used to spend a lot of time in bed with servants," she says. "I took my fair share, yes." Castor grins, and for a second, his face looks like it used to. Then he lowers his voice. "But these girls already have to entertain Menelaus." (ch.16: p.176) This was once a palace of mighty queens. Of warrior women and daughters of Artemis. Now it belongs to a man who treats his wife as a golden trophy. (ch.20: p.21)
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