

CABIN PRESSURE

Conceived and Directed by Anne Bogart
Written and Created by the SITI Company

Barney
O'Hanlon

Ellen
Lauren

Kelly
Maurer

Stephen
Webber

Will
Bond

Set Design Paul Owen
Light Design Mimi Jordan Sherin
Costume Design Walt Spangler
Sound Design Darren L West
Company Stage Manager Megan Wanlass
Assistant Director Stuart Carden
Dramaturgs Adrien Hinsel & Kae Koger

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END OF PLAY

LOOP ONE

AMANDA: It all seems very amicable.

SIBYL: It is, thank you.

AMANDA: I don't wish to depress you, but Victor isn't going to divorce me either.

ELYOT *[looking up sharply]*: What!

AMANDA: I believe I asked you once before this morning, never to speak to me again!

ELYOT: I only said "What." It was a general exclamation denoting extreme satisfaction.

AMANDA *[politely to SIBYL]*: Do sit down, won't you?

SIBYL: I'm afraid I must be going now. I'm catching the Golden Arrow; it leaves at twelve.

ELYOT *[coaxingly]*: You have time for a little coffee surely?

SIBYL: No, I really must go!

ELYOT: I shan't be seeing you again for such a long time.

AMANDA *[brightly]*: Living apart? How wise!

ELYOT *[ignoring her]*: Please, Sibyl, do stay!

SIBYL *[looking at Amanda with a glint in her eye]*: Very well, just for a little.

AMANDA: Sit down, Victor, darling. *[They all sit down in silence. Amanda smiles sweetly at Sibyl and holds up the coffee pot and milk jug]*
Half and half?

SIBYL: Yes, please.

AMANDA *[sociably]*: What would one do without one's morning coffee? That's what I often ask myself.

ELYOT: Is it? And what do you always answer?

AMANDA: *[withering him with a look]*: Victor, sugar for Sibyl. *[To Sibyl]*
It should be absurd for me to call you anything but Sibyl, wouldn't it?

SIBYL: *[not to be outdone]*: Of course; I shall call you Mandy. *[Amanda represses a shudder]*.

ELYOT: Oh God! We're off again. What weather.

SIBYL: Thank you.

VICTOR: What's the time?

ELYOT: If the clock's still going after last night, it's (actual time here).

AMANDA: *[handing Victor a cup of coffee]*: Here, Victor dear.

VICTOR: Thanks.

AMANDA: Sibyl, sugar for Victor.

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[Amanda pours some out for him, and hands it to him in silence.]

AMANDA *[to Victor]*: Brioche?

VICTOR *[jumping]*: What?

AMANDA: Would you like a brioche?

VICTOR: No, thank you.

ELYOT: I would. And some butter, and some jam.
[He helps himself.]

AMANDA *[to Sibyl]*: Have you ever been to Brioni?

SIBYL: No. It's in the Adriatic, isn't it?

VICTOR: The Baltic, I think.

SIBYL: I made sure it was in the Adriatic.

AMANDA: I had an aunt who went there once.

ELYOT *[with his mouth full]*: I once had an aunt who went to Tasmania.
[Amanda looks at him stonily. He sticks out his tongue at her, and she looks away hurriedly.]

VICTOR: Funny how the South of France has become so fashionable in the summer, isn't it?

SIBYL: Yes, awfully funny.

ELYOT: I've been laughing about it for months.

AMANDA: Personally, I think it's a bit too hot, although of course one can lie in the water all day.

SIBYL: Yes, the bathing is really divine!

VICTOR: A friend of mine has a house right on the edge of Cape Ferrat.

SIBYL: Really?

VICTOR: Yes, right on the edge.

AMANDA: That must be marvelous!

VICTOR: Yes, he seems to like it very much.
[The conversation languishes slightly.]

AMANDA *[with great vivacity]*: Do you know, I really think I love traveling more than anything else in the world! It always gives me such a tremendous feeling of adventure. First of all, the excitement of packing, and getting your passport visa'd and everything, then the thrill of actually starting, and trundling along on trains and ships, and then the most thrilling thing of all, arriving at strange places, and seeing strange people, and eating strange foods--

ELYOT: And making strange noises afterwards.
[Amanda chokes violently. Victor jumps up and tries to offer assistance, but she waves him away, and continues to choke.]

VICTOR *[to Elyot]*: That was a damned fool thing to do.

ELYOT: How did I know she was going to choke?

VICTOR *[to Amanda]*: Here, drink some coffee.

AMANDA *[breathlessly gasping]*: Leave me alone. I'll be all right in a minute.

VICTOR *[to Elyot]*: You waste too much time trying to be funny.

SIBYL *[up in arms]*: It's no use talking to Elyot like that; it wasn't his fault.

VICTOR: Of course it was his fault entirely, making rotten stupid jokes--

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VICTOR: Why now particularly?

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SIBYL: You weren't very comforting when I lost my trunk.

VICTOR: I have little patience with people who go about losing luggage.

SIBYL: I don't go about losing luggage. It's the first time I've lost anything in my life.

VICTOR: I find that hard to believe.

SIBYL: Anyhow, if you'd tipped the porter enough, everything would have been all right. Small economies never pay; it's absolutely no use--

VICTOR: Oh, for God's sake be quiet!
[Amanda lifts her hand as though she were going to interfere, but Elyot grabs her wrist. They look at each other for a moment, she lets her hand rest in his].

SIBYL *[rising from the table]*: How dare you speak to me like that!

VICTOR *[also rising]*: Because you've been irritating me for days.

SIBYL *[outraged]*: Oh!

VICTOR *[coming down to her]*: You're one of the most completely idiotic women I've ever met.

SIBYL: And you're certainly the rudest man I've ever met!

VICTOR: Well, then, we're quits, aren't we?

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VICTOR: Well, then, we're quits, aren't we?

SIBYL *[shrilly]*: One thing, you'll get your deserts all right.

VICTOR: What do you mean by that?

SIBYL: You know perfectly well what I mean. And it'll serve you right for being weak-minded enough to allow that woman to get round you so easily.

VICTOR: What about you? Letting that unprincipled roué persuade you to take him back again!
[Amanda and Elyot are laughing silently. Elyot blows her a lingering kiss across the table.]

SIBYL: He's nothing of the sort, he's just been victimized, as you were victimized.

VICTOR: Victimized! What damned nonsense!

SIBYL *[furiously]*: It isn't damned nonsense! You're very fond of swearing and blustering and threatening, but when it comes to the point you're as weak as water. Why, a blind cat could see what you've let yourself in for.

VICTOR *[equally furious]*: Stop making those insinuations.

SIBYL: I'm not insinuating anything. When I think of all the things you said about her, it makes me laugh, it does really; to see how completely she's got you again.

VICTOR: You can obviously speak with great authority, having had the intelligence to marry a drunkard.

SIBYL: So that's what she's been telling you. I might have known it! I suppose she said he struck her, too!

VICTOR: Yes, she did, and I'm quite sure it's perfectly true.

SIBYL: I expect she omitted to tell you that she drank fourteen glasses of brandy last night straight off; and that the reason their first marriage was broken up was that she used to come home at all hours of the night, screaming and hiccoughing.

VICTOR: If he told you that, he's a filthy liar.

SIBYL: He isn't--he isn't!

VICTOR: And if you believe it, you're a silly scatterbrained little fool.

SIBYL *[screaming]*: How dare you speak to me like that! How dare you! I've never been so insulted in my life! How dare you!
[Amanda and Elyot rise quietly, and go, hand in hand, towards the front door.]

VICTOR *[completely giving way]*: It's a tremendous relief to me to have an excuse to insult you. I've had to listen to your weeping and wailings for days. You've clacked at me, and sniveled at me until you've nearly driven me insane, and I controlled my nerves and continued to try to help you and look after you, because I was sorry for you. I always thought you were stupid from the first, but I must say I never realized that you were a malicious little vixen as well!

SIBYL *[shrieking]*: Stop it! Stop it! You insufferable great brute!
[She slaps his face hard, and he takes her by the shoulders and shakes her like a rat, as Amanda and Elyot go smilingly out of the door, with their suitcases, and--]

CURTAIN CALL

Q AND A I

EDDIE

Any questions? (*Silence*). What did you think?

VANESSA

I liked it.

BERT

Mmmmm....

EDDIE

Did you learn anything? (*Silence*). What was your experience?

ROZANNE

It was fun.

BERT/VANESSA

Uh....

BERT

I was very embarrassed most of the time.

VANESSA

I was uncomfortable.

EDDIE

What did you think it was about?

VANESSA

Oh.

EDDIE

What were your expectations? (*Silence*). Did you have a good time?

ROZANNE

Sometimes yes, sometimes no.

BERT

It was, it was a lot of work to be there. I wasn't sure what the relationship was at first. Are we friends, co-workers, enemies...?

EDDIE

's interesting. Were there any moments that made you feel uncomfortable?

YOSHI

I was uncomfortable physically and I was chilly.

VANESSA

Well, yeah, I, well, yeah, yeah.

EDDIE

Could you elaborate on that?

VANESSA

Oh.

EDDIE

Can you describe a moment or in some way convey what it was?

(*Silence.*) What was your favorite part?

ROZANNE/VANESSA

Oh, the the - with the thing, oh yeah, etc.

EDDIE

Why was that satisfying? (*Silence.*) Was there anything that surprised you?

ROZANNE

Yep. Oh, yeah.

EDDIE

Could you describe it?

VANESSA

It was a, it was really shocking initially. Uh, I I didn't think it would be so *shocking*, but it was.

ROZANNE*

...*shocking*....

EDDIE

Was there anything that you really hated? (*Silence.*) Was there anything you feel you missed out on?

YOSHI

Well, I spent most of the time concentrating very hard on not coughing.

VANESSA

The whole situation was um very odd situation. Um. Very odd. Very odd.

YOSHI

And the whole thing with the glasses.

EDDIE

Can you say more about that?

YOSHI

You know, I can think of color. A color or a smell or - So, I mean, I can do that. I mean, I can say "cotton candy." I mean, that- that's one. I can say, "neon." I can say, um, "shrill." Um- "acrimony." Um- "manipulation." "Style." With a capital "S". Um- "acrobatics." Uh- and I guess, "mis-guided passion."

ROZANNE

It's it's just pretty.

EDDIE

If you closed your eyes, what moments would you remember?

THEATER OF IMAGES

VANESSA

You represent something. You are someone. You are something. You are no longer someone, you are something. You are a society of sorts. You are an order because of your kind of dress, the position of your bodies. The direction of your glares. You also form an order with the seating arrangement. You are dressed up. With your dress you observe an order. You dress up. You are putting on a masquerade so as to partake in a masquerade. You partake. You watch. You stare. By watching you become rigid. You are something that watches. You are no longer someone. You are something. You are no longer alone with yourselves. You are no longer left to your own devices. Now you are with it. You are the reason why. You are an audience. That is a relief. You can partake.

You become aware you are sitting. You become aware of your tongue. You become aware of your sex organs. You become aware of your sweaty palms. You become aware of the beating of your heart. Try not to blink your eyelids. Try not to swallow anymore. Try not to move your tongue. Try not to hear anything. Try not to smell anything. Try not to sweat. Try not to shift in your seat. Try not to breathe.

Why, you are breathing. Why, you are salivating. Why, you are smelling. Why, you are listening. Why, you are blinking your eye lids. Why, how terribly self conscious you are. Don't blink. Don't salivate. Don't bat your eyelashes. Don't inhale. Don't exhale. Don't shift in your seat. Don't listen to us. Don't smell. Don't swallow. Hold your breath. Swallow. Salivate. Blink. Listen. Breathe.

You are now aware of your presence.⁽¹³⁾

BERT (voice-over - repeated 3 x's)

They met me in the day of success; and I have learn'd by the perfect'st report they have more in them than mortal knowledge. When I burn'd in desire to question them further, they made themselves air, into which they vanish'd. Whiles I stood rapt in the wonder of it, came missives from the King, who all hail'd me Thane of Cawdor, by which title, before, these Weird Sisters saluted me, and referred me to the coming on of time with "Hail, King that shallot be!" This have I thought good to deliver thee, my dearest partner of greatness, that the mightiest not lose the dues of rejoicing by being ignorant of what greatness is premed's thee. Lay it to thy heart, and farewell.'⁽²⁰⁾

Q AND A II

YOSHI

"manipulation." "Style." With a capital "S". Um- "acrobatics." Uh-...silence, whistling, sighing, faster pulse, heavier breathing, tension in the pit of the stomach, sexual arousal, and - I guess misguided passion.

ROZANNE

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EDDIE

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EDDIE

What is it that makes an actor interesting?

ROZANNE

Teeth. Like her front teeth look like her smile went back to her ears. And her front teeth were like this big and I really liked it. And uh-- um--she-- her eyes looked really huge and like they were pointing upwards. Her role reminded me of a Dr. Seuss character. Because the way she smiled and like her teeth were really huge and I'm near sighted and so um-- I think that helps my creativity, I guess. Because, uh, otherwise, everything is so--you know.

EDDIE

Where were you sitting?

ROZANNE

In the balcony.

YOSHI

I was so far away, I couldn't hear anything that was going on except for an occasional line. And I wanted to get up and come over just to listen, you know. Uh--so I missed that a lot. And I was uncomfortable physically. I was chilly and the--the chair got harder and harder. And I was desperate for a cup of coffee.

VANESSA

I really do like sitting down front. On the stage if you let me. The closer the better. I wanna feel the vibes. I wanna feel the heat off the actors. It's like being close to the drums. You know how--when you can feel the vibe. You can feel that off an actor.

EDDIE

What were your expectations? *(Silence.)* Was there anything you really liked?

BERT

I love the magic. It's just magic because it's--it's lights and it's--it's movement and it's--it's--in another time and space than I am. I mean I'm there but--you know, it's sort of watching fantasy ge--happen in front of your eyes or--or unfold--um - And the bigger--I mean, the bigger the show, the bolder the show, the brighter the show, the more I love it. Um--cause, I just- I like everything really big.

EDDIE

What is the actor doing? *(Silence.)* What do you feel when you are sitting in an audience?

ROZANNE

You're in-number one, you're--it's a live performance. Number two, in a room full of people. And three, you don't know half of them. Most of them. So--you know, you're already in clothes you might not like, wear on a normal basis. Might feel constricted. It's the end of the day. It was the end of the d-- a long day for me. I had my husband with me so I had to entertain his--whatever--was going on with him. And the cigarette smoke was the last thing I could handle.

EDDIE

What is the audience doing? *(Silence.)* If you could ask an actor anything, what would it be?

YOSHI

Well, do-- do they mi-- do they mind doing the-- you know, over and over again.***

BERT

Well, do-- do they mi-- do they mind doing the-- you know, over and over again.

VANESSA

Well, do-- do they mi-- do they mind doing the-- you know, over and over again.

ROZANNE

Well, do-- do they mi-- do they mind doing the-- you know, over and over again.

EDDIE***

Who is the actor secretly addressing?⁽⁶⁾ Audiences clearly play a role but what kind of role? And what kind of audience?⁽²⁾ Is the audience a group of individual spectators each dreaming the action in a dark room? Is the audience a number of people who are each potential rescuers to the drowning of a civilization? Or is the audience a group of people wanting the relaxation of an entertainment - to be comfortably purged, fascinated, amused? Must the audience like the actor, be an active participant in the performance? The baffling question for the actor is "who is the audience?" To whom does the actor personally dedicate his or her performance? ⁽¹⁵⁾ Who is the actor secretly addressing?⁽⁶⁾

RESTORATION

EDDIE

(Clears throat. Music & procession begin.)

If we are honest
theatre is itself an absurdity
but if we are honest
we can't put on theatre
neither can we if we are honest
write a play
or act one
if we are honest
we can't do anything
but do away with ourselves
but as we don't do away with ourselves
because we don't want to do away with ourselves
at least until today and not up till now
since then we have not done away with ourselves till today and up till now
we keep giving the theatre another try
we write for the theatre
we perform in the theatre
even though that is the absurdest thing possible
and the most mendacious
How can an actor play the part of a king
when he doesn't have the faintest idea what a king is
how can an actress play the part of a stable lass
when she doesn't have the faintest idea what a stable lass is
Representation is mendacity
and represented mendacity is what we love
that's how we present it
mendacious
and that's how it's received
mendacious
The writer is mendacious
the actors are mendacious
and the audience is mendacious too
and the sum total is one single absurdity
to say nothing of the fact
that we are dealing with a perversity
dating back for millennia
the theatre is a millennial perversity
which humanity is besotted with
and so deeply besotted because
it is so deeply besotted with its mendacity
and nowhere else in this humanity
is mendacity greater and more fascinating
than in the theatre.⁽³⁾

Q AND A III

EDDIE

Could you elaborate on that?

VANESSA

Very odd...Very odd. But oh it was a very odd situation. Because, um - it can be a million different things. There's no right answer. You know. And that's - that's one of the things I like about it. But then when you go - something is always unexpected.

It's live, it's human people, it's three dimensional. You can't say it's going to be this way or it's going to that way. You know? You know you get a surprise all the time, whether it's negative or positive. Hopefully positive. But you just - you marvel at how the ballet - how well they do something. You know, how - its so precise. Or you say, "God, that really sucked."

But anyway it makes you pay attention. You're not an island to yourself. You are part of the audience and you are part of the play. Because, without the play - without you there is no play. Without the play, there is no you. So, it just - sort of makes a circle. It's live. Unexpected. It's odd... Or ... You can do something which would look ridiculous, like somebody gets punched in the, in the stomach and out comes a, a red cloth, for example. And you kind of go, "Oh, okay. I'm sposed to see blood. So I'll I'll buy that, into that with my imagination. So you actually get more involved because it's more artificial. You know what I mean? It is an extreme event. Its not an habitual daily event. It is an extreme athletic event.

MELODRAMA

YOSHI

Snow.

You don't need to demonstrate that an object is heavy, but in your imagination it weighs a lot.⁽¹⁷⁾

Anything that increases your energy will help your acting.⁽¹⁷⁾

ROZANNE

(Sigh.)

YOSHI

More snow.

ROZANNE

(Scream.)

BERT

(Evil laughter.)

YOSHI

Actors always enjoy themselves on stage. Even when they are murdering each other, or in desolate grief, actors enjoy that situation.⁽¹⁷⁾

EDDIE

Whack, whack, whack, whack, whack (*or other such noises.*)

BERT

Dug-a-dug-a-dug-a-dug-a-dug-a-dug-a-dug-a-dug-a-dug-a-dug-a-dug-a-dug. Wwwwwwwhhhhh (*blow*). (*or other such noises.*)

YOSHI

Actors always... ⁽¹⁷⁾

EDDIE

Why was that satisfying?

ROZANNE

Its....Its difficult. Its more difficult. I'm learning that's not necessarily a bad thing....the effort. The effort to go. To get there. Like if you have to get through a snowstorm someday to get there every - body really feels more together because you all got through a snowstorm to get there. I like that. I like that fact that its a little bit difficult I mean. Some go cause they wanna be shocked, to be angered, challenged. All of the heavier emotions - I 'spose! Ya know, blah, blah surprise. But for me it's it's just pretty.

BERT

The most authentic endings are the ones which are already revolving towards another beginning.⁽²¹⁾

Q. AND A IV

EDDIE

Which brings me to my next question. When does it begin?

YOSHI

Yeah, it's like a snowball. Is that, you kind, all of us know that what we have to is, you know, you can start with anything. You put something on the stage you start with an idea. But then you start to intensify it. Like...storing chemicals, or something. Something starts to happen in the room. The wonderful thing is it's about the presence 'in the room.' And the play doesn't make any sense unless it's actually happening. There's something happening. All the good ideas in the world, uh, don't don't mean anything unless there's something, some quality, that's generated. And I have a theory that's never been proved but I think you cannot disguise the rehearsal process, uh, from the performance. What I mean is: something that one feels in performance; the politics in the room; the values; how, how people are, uh, interacting; the quality of relationships; the quality of attention in the room, uh, is evident on the stage in performance. You can't can't hide behind any, you can't hide behind a bad rehearsal process. So that in a way, everybody's responsibility comes to create a, a, a beautiful quality of concentration and, dare I use this word, artfulness, in the room. And I think one thing that I learned by being in the room is that was very important that I contributed as well and that my presence was, was felt. Immensely. Um.

EDDIE

What is the actor doing?

MURDER MYSTERY

EDDIE

Scene: The drawing room of Cobblestone Court, the Hailsham-Brown's home in Kent. It is a charming and comfortable room with french windows down right opening on to the garden. Double doors upcenter lead to the entrance hall where the foot of the staircase can be seen. A door upleft gives access to the library....It is a stormy evening in March. The family Hailsham is summoned to the drawing room.⁽²⁴⁾

VANESSA

Enter Scarlet, agitated.

YOSHI

Enter Ned, bored.

VANESSA/YOSHI

Dismisses.

ROZANNE

Enter Mrs. Hailsham-Brown, grumbling. (*Grumbles*)

VANESSA

Turns.

YOSHI

Turns.

VANESSA

Sits.

VANESSA

Dirty look.

ROZANNE

Dirty look.

(*Gong.*)

EDDIE

Enters.

VANESSA

Follows.

ROZANNE

Sits.

YOSHI

More gin.

EDDIE

Exits.

VANESSA/YOSHI/ROZANNE

Uncomfortable pause.

(Thunder, thunder, thunder).

BERT

I'm sorry for the intrusion. My name is Inspector Cedric Eaton-Hogge of Scotland Yard.

VANESSA

Goes for cigarette. Trembling.

YOSHI

Drifts absently.

ROZANNE

No reaction.

EDDIE

Re-enters.

BERT

You're probably wondering why I've asked you all here.

VANESSA

Seductively pulls on cigarette. Crosses.

EDDIE

Crosses to kitchen.

YOSHI

More gin.

ROZANNE

Cane, cane, cane.

YOSHI

Stops.

VANESSA

Stops.

BERT

Stop!!!! No one may leave this room.

VANESSA/YOSHI

Escapes.

BERT

That goes for you too Miss Scarlet. I'm afraid you are all potential suspects or witnesses to a crime.

VANESSA/YOSHI/ROZANNE
(Grumbling).

BERT

Cccccooooocckkkk!!!!!!

EDDIE

Take.

YOSHI

Take.

ROZANNE

Take.

VANESSA

Take.

BERT

You must try to be comfortable being uncomfortable.⁽¹⁵⁾ Please sit down.

VANESSA

Take.

ROZANNE

Take.

YOSHI

Take.

EDDIE

Take.

Sweeping counter-clockwise cross to chaise in five, four, three, two, hold for the dowager...

VANESSA/YOSHI

Holding.

EDDIE

.....one.

BERT

I realize that this is a very odd situation. Someone in this room has committed a monstrous crime of mis-guided passion.

VANESSA

Straightens.

YOSHI
Bristles.

ROZANNE
Gasps.

BERT
It is my job to ascertain who may have perpetrated this crime and who may have witnessed it. For what we witness, we also do.⁽⁶⁾

VANESSA/YOSHI/ROZANNE/EDDIE
Listening.

BERT
It pains me to inform you in this way, Miss Scarlet, but it seems your sister is dead.

VANESSA
Lurches to feet, knees weaken, drops back, visibly shaken.

BERT
Where were you at 7:30 this evening?

VANESSA
Rising furtively, gathers composure, looks about defensively, regains her polish, fabricates convincing alibi, while forming serpentine like pattern across the floor. Implicates butler.

BERT
You need to be very clear about exactly what kind of story you are telling.⁽¹⁷⁾

VANESSA
Returns smugly to chaise.

BERT
To act means to feign, to simulate, to represent, to impersonate.⁽¹⁴⁾

VANESSA
Sits.

BERT
What about you? You mincing, prancing, poncey, squiffy, whiffting, Nancy boy. Where were you at 7:30 this evening?

YOSHI
Stung. Feigning wide-eyed innocence, he desperately attempts to regain his feet, composure and dignity. Quickly mustering courage and wit and struggling through gin induced fog, he attempts to vindicate self while shamelessly flirting with Inspector Hogge.

BERT
That's Eaton-Hogge.

YOSHI

Sorry.

BERT

That may be, but how do you account for THIS KEY - (*thunder, thunder, thunder*) which I found on your dressing table?

YOSHI

Key! My key! My diary! Oh no, Inspector, please don't read my diary.

BERT

As a matter of fact, I have read your diary and it's a cracking bore. Nevertheless, I'm taking it down to the station house as evidence.

YOSHI

Defeated, humiliated and confused, he drags himself back to chaise in an abject manner.

ROZANNE

(*Grumbles on cross upstage and whacks the inspector with her purse.*)

BERT

Thank you. Now did anyone find anything out of the ordinary this evening...a letter... or a letter or....

(*Cuckoo, cuckoo, cuckoo....9 cuckoos total*)

VANESSA

Light bulb. Pulling crumpled missive from sleek clutch. Relinquishes it to Eaton-Hogge.

BERT

Cedric.

VANESSA

Sorry.

BERT

Ahhh. Indeed. Thank you all very much...that's all for now...you may go. ...thank you...don't leave town.

ROZANNE

Cane, cane, cane.

BERT

Not you Miss Scarlet. (*Curtain closes*). Please sit down.

VANESSA

Crosses....

BERT

Shhhhh.

Shakespeare wrote that an actor's nature is unnatural and horrible. He described it in one word: monstrous. What is horrible about the actor is not the lie, for she does not lie. It is not deceit, for she does not deceive. The actor is doing something forbidden: she is playing with her humanness and making a sport of it.⁽⁷⁾ In order to save the theatre the theatre must be destroyed. All actors must die of the plague, they make art impossible.⁽⁸⁾ (*Scream. Blackout.*)

Q. AND A. V

EDDIE

If you could ask an actor anything, what would it be?

BERT

You know, how do you feel about operating in an atmosphere where, where you're given latitude as opposed to always being told what to do? You know, you waited all this time to grow up and do what the hell you wanted to do in your life and now all of a sudden, even in your job space, you're being told where to move, how far to move and when to do it. But now you're given a little bit of latitude, can you control or are you going to go off the deep end can you control the latitude that you're given? Or are you going to take advantage of everything? I'm sure that in many cases, in many situations it gets well out of hand. Which can be dangerous.

CLASSICS IN CONTEXT

EDDIE

's interesting. What is it that makes an actor interesting?

ROZANNE

Teeth. For a very short while upon her teeth, her looks, nor to a great extent upon how skillfully she does what she has to do. For longer, perhaps, on the magnetism of her speech. But ultimately it seems to rest upon something that she is. Other qualities may attract an audience, but it is by this that she will hold them.⁽¹¹⁾

EDDIE

Where were you sitting?

ROZANNE

In the balcony.

YOSHI

I was so far away, I couldn't hear anything that was going on except for an occasional line. And I wanted to get up and come over just to listen, you know.

EDDIE

Who is the audience?

BERT/VANESSA

(start at same time)

BERT

The audience - - is not so much a mere congregation of people as a body of thought and desire. It does not exist before the play but it is initiated or precipitated by it; it is not an entity to begin with but a consciousness constructed. The audience is what happens when, performing the signs and passwords of a play, something postulates itself and unfolds in response. That is a matter of subjectivity but also of historical process, subjectivity underwritten or, in the Freudian sense, overdetermined.⁽⁴⁾

YOSHI

The mind of an audience - its state of being, its capacity for experience - is far, very far ahead of what it sees on the stage. Someday an audience is going to rise to its feet, en masse, during a performance and say, "Who do you think we are? What kind of people do you take us for?" I hope I am in the theater that night.⁽⁹⁾

VANESSA

Well, yeah, I, well, yeah, yeah.

EDDIE

Can you elaborate on that?

VANESSA

The pleasure of resemblance and repetition produces both psychic assurance and political fetishization. Representation reproduces the Other as the Same. Performance, insofar as it can be defined as representation without reproduction, can be seen as a model for another representational economy, one in which the reproduction of the Other as the Same is not assured.⁽¹⁸⁾

EDDIE

's interesting.

BERT

What we are looking for is what is looking.⁽¹⁹⁾

YOSHI

All drama is a political event.⁽¹⁰⁾

EDDIE

My next....

ROZANNE

Drama is a postlapsarian form born of the fall.⁽⁴⁾

BERT

And what we witness, we also do.⁽⁶⁾

EDDIE

I....

VANESSA

When distance disappears then art does to.⁽⁵⁾

BERT

Yes, all these things; but inevitably, if he or she has it, the ability to interest people sexually.⁽¹⁶⁾

EDDIE

Did you have a good time? (*Silence.*) Did you learn anything?

YOSHI

The gods it is I ask to release me from this watch
A year's length now, spending my nights like a dog...⁽¹⁾

BERT

Which is another way of speaking of the originary breach, the splitting, which seems to be the necessary condition of theater...⁽⁴⁾

VANESSA

As social groupings are less and less defined by religion, traditional mythic forms are in flux, disappearing and being reincarnated. The spectators are more and more....⁽¹²⁾

ROZANNE

The actor may try to deny it, but in her most religious inwardness she knows that somebody is watching.⁽⁴⁾

YOSHI

Watching on my elbow on the roof of the sons of Atreus.⁽¹⁾

BERT

--where we are often watching not only the others ... but what --at the forgotten threshold of desire...⁽⁴⁾

VANESSA

--individuated in relation to the myth as corporate truth or group model and belief is often a matter of intellectual conviction.⁽¹²⁾

EDDIE

Did you have a good time?

BACKWARDS FARGE

(Stage Manager's Voice: Ladies and gentlemen, this is places for the top of act I, places for the top of act I please).

(Stage Manager's Voice: Could I have Eddie on headset please?)

EDDIE

I'm on headset. Places backstage.

(Somewhere in here Rozanne and Yoshi run these lines).

ELYOT *[hotly]*: You've got your nasty little feet dug into the ground, and you don't intend to budge an inch, do you?

SIBYL *[with spirit]*: No, I do not.

ELYOT: If there's one thing in the world that infuriates me, it's sheer wanton stubbornness. I should like to cut off your head with a meat axe.

SIBYL: How dare you talk to me like that, on our honeymoon night.

ELYOT: Damn our honeymoon night. Damn it, damn it, damn it!

SIBYL *[bursting into tears]*: Oh, Elli, Elli--

ELYOT: Stop crying. Will you or will you not come away with me to Paris?

SIBYL: I've never been so miserable in my life. You're hateful and beastly. Mother was perfectly right. She said you had shifty eyes.

ELYOT: Well, she can't talk. Hers are so close together, you couldn't put a needle between them.

SIBYL: You don't love me a little bit. I wish I were dead.

ELYOT: Will you or will you not come to Paris?

SIBYL: No, no I won't.

ELYOT: Oh, my God! *[He stamps indoors.]*

SIBYL *[following him, wailing]*: Oh, Elli, Elli, Elli--

EDDIE

Standby. Standby. Going off headset.

(Overture begins).

Back on headset.

(Stage Manager's Voice: Eddie, could you check the stage right door please.)

ROZANNE

How did that go?

YOSHI

I think they are with us.

(Stage Manager's Voice: Standby for the racquet stage left please.)

EDDIE

Off headset.

(Stage Manager's Voice: Could I have Eddie on headset please.)

(Laughs).

ROZANNE

They are good tonight.

YOSHI

Laughers.

(Stage Manager's Voice: Could I have Eddie on headset please.)

EDDIE

Back on headset.

More strange than true: I never may believe
These antique fables, nor these fairy toys.
Lovers and madmen have such seething brains,
Such shaping fantasies, that apprehend
More than cool reason ever comprehends.
The lunatic, the lover, and the poet
Are of imagination all compact:
One sees more devils than vast hell can hold,
That is, the madman: the lover, all as frantic,
Sees Helen's beauty in a brow of Egypt:
The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,
Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven;
And as imagination bodies forth
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing
A local habitation and a name.
Such tricks hath strong imagination,
That, if it would but apprehend some joy,
It comprehends some bringer of that joy;
Or in the night, imagining some fear
How easy is a bush supposed to a bear!^(20.1)

(Stage Manager's Voice: Could I have Eddie on headset please)

(Curtain closes).

(Stage Manager's Voice: We are at a fifteen minute call, 15 minute call for the top of Act II please.)

INTERMISSION

Q. AND A VI

EDDIE

Any questions? (*Silence*). What did you think?

VANESSA

I liked it.

BERT

Mmmm....

EDDIE

Did you learn anything? (*Silence*). What was your experience?

ROZANNE

It was fun.

BERT/VANESSA

Uh....

BERT

I was very embarrassed most of the time.

VANESSA

I was uncomfortable.

EDDIE

What do you think it was about?

VANESSA

Oh.

EDDIE

What were you expectations? (*Silence.*) Did you have a good time?

ROZANNE

Sometimes yes, sometimes no.

BERT

It was, it was a lot of work to be there. I wasn't sure what the relationship was at first. Are we friends, co-workers, enemies...?

EDDIE

Interesting. Were there any moments that made you feel uncomfortable?

YOSHI

I was uncomfortable physically and I was chilly.

VANESSA

Well, yeah, I, well, yeah, yeah.

EDDIE

Could you elaborate on that?

VANESSA

Oh.

EDDIE

Can you describe a moment or in some way convey what it was?
(Silence). What was your favorite part?

ROZANNE/VANESSA

Oh, the the - with the thing, remember, oh yeah, etc.

EDDIE

Why was that satisfying?

HONEY

Why don't we dance, I'd love some dancing.

EDDIE

Was there anything that surprised you?

NICK

Honey...

HONEY

I would! I'd love some dancing.

EDDIE

Could you describe it?

NICK

Honey...

HONEY

I want some! I want some dancing!

NICK

Honey...

(Beat.)

VANESSA

...shocking.

ROZANNE*

...shocking....

GEORGE

All right...! For heaven's sake...we'll have some dancing.

EDDIE

Was there anything that you really hated?

HONEY (*All sweetness again*) (*To Martha*)

Oh, I'm so glad...I just love dancing. Don't you?

EDDIE

Was there anything you feel you missed out on?

MARTHA (*With a glance at Nick*)

Yeah....yeah, that's not a bad idea.

NICK (*Genuinely nervous*)

Gee.

GEORGE

Gee.

HONEY

I dance like the wind.

MARTHA (*Without comment*)

Yeah?

EDDIE

Can you say more about that?

GEORGE (*Picking a record*)

Martha had her daguerreotype in the paper once...oh' bout twenty-five years ago...Seems she took second prize in one o' them seven-day dancin' contest things...biceps all bulging, holding up her partner.

MARTHA

Will you put a record on and shut up?

GEORGE

Certainly, love. (*To all*) How are we going to work this? Mixed doubles?

(*Music*).

MARTHA

Well, you certainly don't think I'm going to dance with you, do you?

Noooooo...not with him around...that's for sure. And not with twinkle-toes here, either.

HONEY

I'll dance with anyone....I'll dance by myself.

NICK
Honey...

HONEY
I dance like the wind.

GEORGE
All right, kiddies...choose up and hit the sack.

EDDIE
If you closed your eyes, what moments would you remember?

THE EMOTIONAL SCENE WITH VIOLENCE

(Music starts...Second movement, Beethoven's 7th Symphony)

HONEY *(Up, dancing by herself)*
De, de de da da, da-da de, da da-da de da...wonderful.....!

NICK
Honey...

MARTHA
All right, George...cut that out!

HONEY
Dum, de de da da, da-da de, dum de da da da...Wheeee...!

MARTHA
Cut it out, George!

GEORGE *(Pretending not to hear)*
What, Martha? What?

NICK
Honey...

MARTHA *(As George turns up the volume)*
CUT IT OUT, GEORGE!

GEORGE
WHAT?

MARTHA *(Gets up, moves quickly, threateningly, to George)*
All right, you son of a bitch....

GEORGE *(Record off, at once. Quietly)*
What did you say, love?

MARTHA
You son of a...

HONEY (*In an arrested posture*)
You stopped! Why did you stop?

NICK
Honey...

HONEY (*To Nick, snapping*)
Stop that!

GEORGE
I thought it was fitting, Martha.

MARTHA
Oh you did, hunh?

HONEY
You're always at me when I'm having a good time.

NICK (*Trying to remain civil*)
I'm sorry. Honey.

HONEY
Just...leave me alone!

GEORGE
Well, why don't you choose, Martha? (*Move away from the phonograph..
...leaves it to Martha*) Martha's going to run things...the little lady's going
to lead the band.

HONEY
I like to dance and you don't want me to.

NICK
I like you to dance.

HONEY
Just...leave me alone. (*She sits....takes a drink*)

GEORGE
Martha's going to put on some rhythm she understands....Sacre du
Printemps, maybe. (*Moves...sits by Honey*). Hi, sexy.

HONEY (*A little giggle-scream*)
Giggles

GEORGE (*Laughs mockingly*)
Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha. Choose it, Martha....do your stuff!

MARTHA (*Concentrating on the machine*)
You're damn right!

(Music).

GEORGE (*To Honey*)

You want to dance with me, angel-tits?

NICK

What did you call my wife?

GEORGE (*Derisively*)

Oh boy!

HONEY (*Petulantly*)

No! If I can't do my interpretive dance, I don't want to dance with anyone. I'll just sit here and....(*Shrugs...drinks*)

MARTHA (*Record on...a jazzy slow pop tune*)

O.K. stuff, let's go. (*Grabs NICK*)

NICK

Hm? Oh...hi.

MARTHA

Hi. (*They dance, close together, slowly*)

HONEY (*Pouting*)

We'll just sit here and watch.

GEORGE

That's right!

MARTHA (*To Nick*)

Hey, you are strong, aren't you?

NICK

Unh-hunh.

MARTHA

I like that

NICK

Unh-hunh.

HONEY

They're dancing like the they've danced before.

GEORGE

...a musical interlude... ALL SILENCE

MARTHA

Don't be shy.

NICK

I'm...not....

GEORGE (*To Honey*)

It's a very old ritual, monkey-nipples...old as they come.

HONEY

I...I don't know what you mean. (*Nick and Martha move apart now, and dance on either side of where George and Honey are sitting; they face each other, and while their feet move but little, their bodies undulate congruently...It is as if they were pressed together*)

MARTHA

I like the way you move.

NICK

I like the way you move, too.

GEORGE (*To Honey*)

They like the way they move.

HONEY (*Not entirely with it*)

That's nice.

MARTHA (*To Nick*)

I'm surprised George didn't give you his side of things.

GEORGE (*To Honey*)

Aren't they cute?

NICK

Well, he didn't

MARTHA

That surprises me. (*Perhaps Martha's statements are more or less in time to the music*)

NICK

Does it?

MARTHA

Yeah...he usually does...when he gets the chance.

NICK

Well, what do you know.

MARTHA

It's really a very sad story.

GEORGE

You have ugly talents, Martha.

NICK

Is it?

MARTHA
It would make you weep.

GEORGE
Hideous gifts.

NICK
Is that so?

GEORGE
Don't encourage her.

MARTHA
Encourage me.

NICK
Go on. *(They may undulate toward each other and then move back).*

GEORGE
I warn you...don't encourage her.

MARTHA
He warns you...don't encourage me.

NICK
I heard him...tell me more.

MARTHA *(Consciously making rhymed speech)*
Well, Georgie-boy had lots of big ambitions
In spite of something funny in his past...

GEORGE *(Quietly warning)*
Martha...

MARTHA
Which Georgie-boy here turned into a novel...
His first attempt and also his last...
Hey! I rhymed! I rhymed!

GEORGE
I warn you, Martha.

NICK
Yeah....you rhymed. Go on, go on.

MARTHA

GEORGE
You're looking for a punch in the mouth...You know that, Martha.

MARTHA
Do tell!...and he was very shocked by what he read.

NICK
He was?

MARTHA
Yes....he was....A novel all about a naughty boy-child.

GEORGE (*Rising*)
I will not tolerate this!

NICK (*Offhand, to George*)
Oh, can it.

MARTHA
....ha, ha!
naughty boychild
who...uh...who killed his mother and his father dead.

GEORGE
STOP IT, MARTHA!

MARTHA
And Daddy said...Look here, I will not let you publish such a thing...

GEORGE (*Rushes to phonograph...rips the record off*)
That's it! The dancing's over. That's it. Go on now!

NICK
What do you think you're doing, hunh?

HONEY (*Happily*)
Violence! Violence!

MARTHA (*Loud: a pronouncement*)
And Daddy said...Look here, kid, you don't think for a second I'm going to let you publish this crap, do you?...You publish that goddam book and you're out...on your ass!

GEORGE
DESIST! DESIST!

MARTHA
Ha, ha, ha, HA!

NICK (*Laughing*)
De...sist!

GEORGE
Oh, violence...violence!

MARTHA
If you respect your position here, young man, young...whippersnapper, you'll just withdraw that manuscript....

GEORGE

I will not be made mock of!

NICK

He will not be made mock of, for Christ's sake. *(Laughs)*
(Honey joins in the laughter, not knowing exactly why)

GEORGE

I will not! *(All three are laughing at him)*
(Infuriated) THE GAME IS OVER!

MARTHA *(Pushing on)*

Imagine such a thing! A book about a boy who murders his mother and kills his father, and pretends it's all an accident!

HONEY *(Beside herself with glee)*

An accident!

NICK *(Remembering something related)*

Hey...wait a minute...

MARTHA *(Her own voice now)*

And you want to know the clincher? You want to know what big brave Georgie said to Daddy?

GEORGE

NO! NO! NO! NO!

NICK

Wait a minute now...

MARTHA

Georgie said...but Daddy...I mean...ha, ha, ha, ha....but Sir, it isn't a novel at all *(Other voice)* Not a novel? *(Mimicking George's voice)* No, sir...it isn't a novel at all...

GEORGE *(Advancing on her)*

You will not say this!

NICK *(Sensing the danger)*

Hey.

MARTHA

The hell I won't. Keep away from me, you bastard! *(Backs off a little...uses George's voice again)* No, Sir, this isn't a novel at all...this is *(Mimicking George's voice)* this really happened. To ME!

GEORGE *(On her)*

I'LL KILL YOU! *(Grabs her by the throat. They struggle)*

NICK

HEY! *(Comes between them)*

surgery as a way to underline the transformative imperatives of the physical and psychic dimension of time, offered us the slogan "Remember the Future." For the future is the stage, that grand canopy that drapes and folds our most unspeakable desires, the stage that promises to dramatize our pasts, to enact them in such a way that we might begin to understand them, to touch them, to know them, to become intimate with them. Those pasts that we have still not encountered we label "ends" so that we might one day reach them. For we know that there is no future that remains untouched by the whispering pass of our many pasts.

In my dream a thousand people wait backstage to participate in an outdoor talent night. At the very end of the line is a little girl in a Superman costume. But whereas he wore a big S on his broad chest, she has a P across her skinny torso. She seems to move up as the awful performers do their talent and exit the stage, but she remains forever last on line. I keep asking her what her talent is and she always replies, "Tap." Time passes and she remains there at the end of the line, not speaking unless I demand it, and even then she only mutters that tiny word, "Tap." When I wake I spell out all the letters in the dream, good girl Freudian that I am: S P T A P. And then I'm off and running: Spat, Jack Spratt, Platter Clean, S.P. Spinal tap. E.S.P., what I'm always wishing I were having, P.S., the abbreviation for "performance studies", P.S., the abbreviation for "postscript," for the age that follows print and post; stamp, pat, Joe Papp, pap smear, pee, little P-ness, until I see with that horrifying clarity of a fist in my face: P A S T. Tap as time passes into the past. We can resolve trauma by putting time in order, by allowing it to pass into the past. This is a dream about the heroic act of belief in a recoupable past, my endless dream of the girl who knew, who holds the secret, who will someday claim the stage after all these parading impostors, my performing selves, finally move off the stage. This is what it means to believe in the future.

The dramatization of the past in the present is related to both Freud's term for psychoanalytic understanding, *nachträglichkeit*, "afterwardness" or deferred action, and Schechner's understanding of performance as "twice behaved behavior." For Freud, *nachträglichkeit* indicated the retrospective account that reinterprets the past in such a way that what had been repressed by the unconscious can be joined with consciousness. The querulous dreamer can join the worrier here in the "afterwardness" of the conference, retrospectively interpret the gap wrought by the difference between the plan and the event, and rename it *The Ends of Performance*. The interpretation of the conference could not occur at the time of its unfolding because the very fulsomeness of its enactment short-circuited our

interpretative capabilities. Freud understood that curing the traumatic symptom required a lot of talking afterward. Talking after the event, post-talking, the often tedious recitations of events and sequences, rehearses the tongue for trickier, less sequential psychic acts. For talking after often means "talking over," and in that performance one might be able to discern what consciousness overlooked during the event's unfolding. This talking after and talking over is where the curative interpretation occurs within psychoanalysis: in the rehearsing of the event that has passed, the analyst and the analysand learn how to play the past when it happens again in the future. Performance studies as a discipline has, until recently, been in the first part of this process: the careful recitation of the facts of the event. It is only recently that the field has given sharper attention to curative interpretations, to the affective and ideological consequences of performance events. It is these consequences that the essays in this volume articulate. Such interpretations, which are always reinterpretations, are also what I most hope will become the future of the field and the truest end of performance—truest in the sense that they help us move past the time of the diagnosis and bring about, enact, give us the time of the cure.

Act Two

At the end point, when the velvet whisper of the final curtain's enveloping dark is about to absorb us all, when we find ourselves in this century's last lumbering act, when we have reached the end of the road, the end of the way we once lived and thought, spoke and prayed, dreamed and died, why act a part, why make a move? Why write or read?

Print culture has heaved its last gasp, the heralding angels of the virtual proclaim.³ This was also said about the pencil upon the commodification of the office computer, but I still find myself tucking sticks of yellow-colored lead behind my ear, in my mouth, across the pages that sail across my desk. These gestures are not nostalgic; they are sometimes quick, often careless, occasionally calculating. But for me they remain necessary acts, functions I cannot do without. In the same way, books for me are also necessary acts, events of making, reading, longing, learning. Creating performances and writing about those performances require acts of critical and creative imagination, both contend with the imperatives carried by "the act."

Cabin Pressure

Preliminary Set Dressing & Hand Props Listing
revised as of 7/8/98

| Page | Item(s) | Description & Details |
|-------|-------------------|---|
| TOS | Doors | 2, w/ Balconies above |
| | Main Drape | 1, Can Track - L / R, Opens at Center |
| Pg. 1 | Name Tags | 5, Ala Humana Name Tag - Plastic Shield, Typed Name & Title. Each should read one of the following names: Eddie, Rozanne, Bert, Yoshi & Vanessa |
| | Paper | A single piece of paper, Printed upon it is the Post Show Speech |
| | File Folder | Contains Miscellaneous Papers & Such |
| | Papers | Miscellaneous, Stored in the File Folder |
| | Project Tri-Fold | Metal, Lightweight, Must be able to open |
| | Art Board | Wooden Drawing Board, Needs Handle and Clips to attach a tablet of paper |
| | Tablet of Paper | Attached to the Art Board |
| | Marker | 1, Permanent Type, Black in color |
| | Backpack | Bondo's, Black, Non-Descript in Style |
| | Folding Chairs | 5, Metal Rehearsal Room kind |
| | Rolling Door Unit | Unit opens Out / Downstage |
| | Fake Snow | Dropped from the Grid / Drop Box to the Frame of the Door |
| | Frying Pan | Medium in Size, Metal Pan - Lightweight if possible |
| | Wooden Spoon | Stirring/Cooking Spoon Type, Medium in size |
| | Wooden Bench | 4' - 5' in length, 2' in width |
| | Scene Placard | 1, Large Wooden Sign - Lavish in its Design - No Text |
| | Fake Snow | Thrown from Bondo's Pockets |
| | Frying Pan | A Duplicate, Medium in Size, Metal Pan - Lightweight if possible |
| | Wooden Spoon | A Duplicate, Stirring/Cooking Spoon Type, Medium in size |
| | Pillows | 4, Circa 1950's, Couch / Medium Sized Throw Pillows Style |
| | [Chair] | 1, Metal Folding - Rehearsal Room kind |
| | Newspaper | 1, Circa 1950's |
| | Candelabrum | 1, Described as a "Lovely Old Candelabrum that used to be on an Episcopalian Altar" |
| | Candles | ?, Are Lit, Placed on the Candelabrum |
| | Yearbook | 1, Laura's, <i>The Torch</i> |
| | Program | 1, An Old High School Program - <i>Pirates of Penzance</i> |
| | Wine Glass | 1, Used to Drink Dandelion Wine from, Filled 3/4 from top |
| | Wine | 1, Glass Drunken Nightly - Is Dandelion Wine |
| | Pen | 1, Jim's, Circa 1950's Ink Pen, Used to Sign Laura's Program |
| | Chewing Gum | 1, Jim's, Circa 1950's, Wrigleys, Regular 5 Stick Pack, 2 chewed Nightly |
| | Cigarettes | 1, Jim's, Circa 1950's, Pack of - (?) remaining, One smoked Nightly |
| | LifeSavers | 1, Jim's, 3/4 - 1/2 Roll, Peppermint, One eaten Nightly |
| | Menagerie | 1, Small Glass Something (?) - Broken Nightly |
| | Letter | 1, Circa 1600's (Restoration in Style/Period), Plain, No Text, Folded in 3's |
| | Serving Tray | 1, Circa 1600's (Restoration in Style/Period), Silver |
| | Handkerchiefs | 2, Circa 1600's (Restoration in Style/Period) in Shape, Color & Lavishness |
| | Folding Fans | 2, Circa 1600's (Restoration in Style/Period) in Shape, Color & Lavishness |
| | Walking Cane | 1, Circa 1600's (Restoration in Style/Period), Wooden, 4' or so in height |

Fifteen Minute Oresteia

Characters: Clytemnestra, Agamemnon, Orestes, Aegisthus, Electra-who also plays-Athena

Clytemnestra

This was a night blessed above all other nights,
For on it Troy fell, and there is a great king who has
seen his last dawn.
The god of fire leaped the night-shrouded valleys
From peak to peak, and beacons cold these long years
Burned under the hands of joyful men
On Ida, Lamnos, Athos, and over the great sea;
And on Macistus, men whose eyes had strained long years
Until they saw false fires saw the true one
Leaping toward them, and lit their beacons in turn,
So that a current of flame streaked across the waters of Euripus
And the laughing watchmen on Messapius' hills
Heaped high the heather, and a crackle of orange fire
Made the god laugh too, in joyful strength
Increased, and he soared and swung like a scytheman
Across a frosty harvest of stars, and touched with light
The cold valleys of Asopus, and shone on Kithaeron
Like the autumn moon. The great marsh of Gorgopis felt his power
As the god raced on to Aegyplancus' peak.
Until last on Arachnus the great torch burst into bloom
And the flames fell on the house of Atreus, bringing news of joy.
I know only what must be, now:
The look of things in Troy.
Women lie crying on the hacked corpses
Of those that lay with them in love;
Children shake the stiff bodies
Of those that bore them, crying old sweet names
From throats that soon will be collared with the slave's iron.
But the Argives, drugged already with blood
And weary from the last great fight on the citadel wall,
Have ground out the spark of strength
On the bodies of once proud women, and filled their throats
With a wine of which no more will ever be drunk,
And now sleep like children
In soft beds without owners,
No more standing the nightly guard
Or lying open-mouthed to the icy stars.
But let them be satisfied.
The people and the city
Are crushed by the wheel. Let them go no further
And lay violent hands on the property of gods.
Leave the shrines standing, soldiers of Argos,
Or the gods may reach out as you go over the sea.
But yet there is blood in the earth that will cry for blood;
There is wrong done with the knife, and though the gods smile,
There are those of the dead who will not let old wrongs sleep.
--I say my dance is danced:
No. It will not begin

Until my lord is safely inside that house.
A watchdog waits him in his house--
And his wife, will love him as he has never been loved.
My heart has forgotten nothing
Since he took sail, and left his seal on me;
And as for taking pleasure with another man--
I could as easily dye metal scarlet.

(Enter Agamemnon)

Agamemnon

First I hail Argos and her gods,
Who know the right cause ~~from~~ the wrong
And brought us safe to shelter, while their wrath
Sent Justice, through our arms, to break great Troy.
Through them I have triumphed, and let them now see
That I do not forget a debt.
We were right, and therefore ruthless.
We fell like a lion on their towered city:
The smoke of her burning still goes up,
Carrying perfumed lust and painted glory
In a storm of ashes.
I am of a great mind now to call the Council
And begin the reordering of the state, which it doubtless needs.
I can see from the joy that greeted me that cancers have grown
That need the gentle knife and white-hot iron.
I go now to my home, my true seat, the palace of my fathers,
And for this victory, may our name live forever.

Clytemnestra

Forgive me, if I seem immodest
In looking such love at the man who owns my heart,
But it has been a long time, and I am not good at pretending.
What can a woman do? The world of men
Is more important to them than her love.
But I am not thinking of "men" and "women";
I am thinking of what went on in my own heart
While this man was away.
I am thinking of all the tears I shed,
Of nights black with fear and days gray with terror.
Did you know how many times, when messengers came saying
That your bones lay in the ground by the walls of Troy,
I hanged myself, and was cut down by frightened slaves, and went on living,
Till I ran out of tears and my heart dried up?
But now! Why, now all is changed: the king is back;
Sun shines once more; the earth drinks in your majesty like rain.
Come, dear my love,
Enter and claim the reward you so richly deserve.
Yet stay!
It is not meet that one whose foot
Was sanctified by God to crush high Troy
Should walk on this foul courtyard.
Let a path of crimson spring up into the house
That our high king may walk where Justice leads him,

To a welcome that he never thought to see.

(Clytemnestra spreads out purple cloth for Agamemnon. Agamemnon removes boots)

Agamemnon

And how do we know who is watching from the sky
As I crush these fair things into the courtyard's filth?

(Agamemnon walks on cloth--lead by Clytemnestra towards a bath, where he removes his purple robe)

Clytemnestra

This is not a pauper's house, O King.
There is Tyrian purple in the royal stores
Enough to carpet Argos with these footcloths,
And the great sea will serve when that runs dry.
I would have walked this path a thousand times
If such had been the price of your return.

(With Aegisthus watching Clytemnestra helps Agamemnon into the bath where she tangles him in his robe and stabs him to death)

Clytemnestra

--While she is murdering him--

Helpless and naked in his bath, I cast the rich robes about him,
Netted him, held him fast,
And pushed a blade of iron through the silk.
Twice I drove it home, and he screamed like a beast
And that great purple sack pitched and buckled to the floor.
They say the third time is the charm, so I brought down the edge
And the air squelched ~~from~~ him, and a fountain of bright blood
Shot up and fell on me like the sweet rain on the young shoots in spring.

Clytemnestra

Yes, that man was my husband...Agamemnon.
Now he is dead, and this hand, this good workman, did it.
That is all that makes any difference.
What you think of it means nothing to me.
I shall fear nothing while the presence of Aegisthus
Warms this house like a fire, and stands between me and danger like a rock.
--Listen to me. I ask no more than this:
The knowledge that I have set the balance straight,
Wiped clean the print of blood, and laid to rest
The doom that has walked this house so many years.

(Aegisthus re-enters/or joining Clytemnestra)

Aegisthus

So: the bright day of Justice, and at last
I can begin to feel there is a God,
Watching this dead beast tangle in the purple
Paying in full for the tricks his father contrived
(Clytemnestra removes the robe from the dead Agamemnon and gives it to Aegisthus)
Now I have found a voice, and an arm,

And now I have come home
I planned this deed, and if I die, I die.
The slate is clean.
I am your king,
And I will not forget this day.

Clytemnestra We hold the power,
And you and I shall order all things well.

(They go inside the palace. Electra enters and turns the bath upside down with Agamemnon's body underneath. She "buries" him/sprinkles dirt over grave and exits.)

(Enter Orestes who cuts lock of hair from head)

Orestes

Hermes, lord of the dead,
Be with me now. I stand by the grave of my father,
On the soil I called home.
(He lays lock of hair on the tomb)
Hear me, Father. I leave this lock of hair,
An offering of manhood and of grief.
I was not here when they struck you down,
Not here to stretch out my hand as they carried your corpse to this tomb.
(Electra approaches)
What does this mean? Has death come again to our house?
Or does someone still remember my father?
O God, that girl--it must be--my sister--Electra.
(He conceals himself)

Electra

Hermes, lord of the dead,
Be with me now. I stand by the grave of my father.
Father, hear me. I say this prayer for myself and for your son Orestes.
Our mother made us slaves and homeless wanderers;
She traded us for Aegisthus, the man who planned your murder.
O Father, let Orestes come back home.
Let me see him again.
And let me never be like my mother.
For our enemies, let them be killed as they killed you
This is my prayer.
--A lock of hair--it's so very like mine...
Orestes?
No. He might have cut it and sent it by some stranger.
To think of that is like a sword in my heart.
Is this the answer to my prayer.

(Orestes comes out of hiding)

Orestes

Thank the gods. They have answered half your prayer.
Now pray for the rest.

Electra

How do you know what is in my heart?
How is half my prayer answered?

Orestes

You prayed to see Orestes. Look before you.

Electra

You overheard me. You're making fun of me.

Orestes

Look in my eyes, if you think I'm laughing.

Electra

But--how can I be sure--

Orestes

Here I am and you won't believe it.

☞ Look. Here is the place the lock was cut from.

Is it still the gift of a stranger?

Look at this sash.

Your hands were smaller when you wove the cloth.

(She starts to cry out)

No, no, dearest, keep hold of yourself:

We are too close to those who hate us

✶ To lose our heads for joy.

Electra

O my own, my four-times beloved.

Orestes

Zeus. Zeus. Hear these grave words, and guide what we must do.

Apollo holds the power, and he will not forsake me.

His oracle told me to stake all on this chance.

Father, how can I reach down through the darkness?

Electra

Father, Father, hear us! Hear our cry!

Rise! Rise into the light!

Orestes

Ah, this agony pierces me like a sword!

Electra

Aie! Zeus, smash their skulls with your fist!

Hear me, Earth? Hear me, you gods of darkness!

Orestes

O Zeus, give me my kingdom.

Electra

O Persophone, let me see Aegisthus die.

Orestes

Remember the shame of your death!

Electra

Hear us, Father. Our grief and shame are yours,
And our prayers for ourselves are also prayers for you.

Orestes

I am the snake; I am the one who will kill her.
This is how it will be--disguised as a traveler
And talking like an outlander I will go to the outer gate
And ask to see Aegisthus.
Then, once I am over that doorstone, and through those gates,
And find that man sitting on my father's throne,
The minute he rises and looks me in the eye,
And says "Who are You?" I'll give him an answer
Swift, and sharp, and cold, through the middle of his body.
Electra, go in now, and keep your eyes open and your lips closed.

(Electra and Orestes exit. Orestes re-enters and knocks)

Orestes

You there! Inside the palace!
Is there no one at home?

(Aegisthus enters)

Aegisthus

All right, all right.
Who are you, stranger, and where from?

Orestes

I have news.

(gives letter)

Aegisthus

If you want lodging for the night you have only to say so.

Orestes

I'm ~~from~~ Phocis. While I was on the road to Argos
I met a man, a stranger to me, and we fell into talk.
He told me his name was Strophius, and he said
"As long as you're going to Argos anyway, my friend,
I'd appreciate it if you'd give Orestes' parents
A message from me: tell them that he is dead
Please don't forget. I'm sure they'll want to know.
I don't know if this concerns you,
But I think his father ought to know about it.
(Orestes stabs Aegisthus who screams and upon the second blow dies)

(Enter Clytemnestra)

Clytemnestra

What is this noise?
O God--Someone bring me a sword, or an ax, to kill!
I am at the end of my way; the curse has found us at last.
Bring me a sword, I say! Someone, bring me a sword!

Orestes

You next; I've finished with the other one.

Clytemnestra

No, no! Aegisthus, my darling, my strong one, have they killed you?

Orestes

You love him? Very well, you can share a grave with him.

Clytemnestra

Wait my son. I held you in my arms when you were a tiny baby--
You'd go to sleep on my breast after you'd had your milk--

Orestes

Can I let her go--do I have to kill her--
Come here.

I'm going to kill you on his body.

The one you thought was a better man than my father.

You should have loved my father, but all you gave him was hate.

You have made your choice. You may sleep with this one forever.

Clytemnestra

I raised you from a baby. Will you let me grow old in your company?

Orestes

You killed my father, and now you want to come live with me?

Clytemnestra

For a woman to be without her man for ten years is a hardship, child.

Orestes

But you managed to bear it nobly, thanks to Aegisthus.

Clytemnestra

So you've condemned your own mother to death.

Orestes

No, Mother. You have condemned yourself.

Clytemnestra

Do this thing, and my curses will follow you like hounds.

Orestes

Let them. My father's would, if I failed to do this.

Clytemnestra

I might as well be crying to a tomb.

Orestes

Yes. You might as well.

Clytemnestra

So you were the snake I bore and to whom I gave my breast.

Orestes

Yes. Your nightmare was a good prophet.
Come. You did wrong, and now you pay for it.
(Orestes stabs and kills Clytemnestra--she falls on Aegisthus' body)
Look at them well.
Here they lie, the double-headed dragon
That killed my father and usurped my house.
Behold this. This was the web which caught my father,
The robe in which she netted him for the bloody work.
A great robe, three times pierced by Aegisthus' sword,
Faded by time, darkened by blood...
The last thing that touched my father when he lived...
Our whole house...on and on...
What filthy victory is this that I have won?
When is this thing going to end?
Something I don't know has gotten into my heart and it's shrieking and dancing there.
I was right to kill my mother... the gods hated her...
She was soaked with my father's blood...
There is nowhere else I can turn.
(Furies in the form of sound begin to hound Orestes)
No!
Look at them!
No--they are real. They stand there in the day.
I know what they are. They are the hounds of my mother.
Yes, the blood.
O God Apollo!
It's dripping out of their eyes!
They drive me on--I can stay no longer--

(Orestes is pursued around the stage by the furies but everywhere he turns he runs into the dead bodies of his family. As Orestes tries to outrun the furies, their sound intensifies to a deafening level. Orestes screams out to Athena)

Orestes

I call upon this country's guardian,
Holy Athena, to end this thing
Without more fall or blood!
Help me, great Goddess!
Wherever you may be--
hear me, gracious Lady, from far away:
Come, and deliver me from this thing that is upon me!

(The intense sound of the furies is then broken by the appearance of Athena)

Athena

The final judgment is mine,
And I shall explain how it will be made.
It is true that I was not born of woman,
And thus in all things I am the child of my father
And see things, admittedly, in the man's way.
A woman's natural loyalty is to her blood kin,
And she feels herself subject only to the law of her own heart.
But a man must move not only in the home but in the world,
And is responsible not only to his own kind but to strangers.
His choices are not so easily made,

And since the woman in this case was not loyal even to her own children,
I cannot find in her favor.
I acquit this man of blood-guilt.