

HELEN.

BY CAITLIN GEORGE

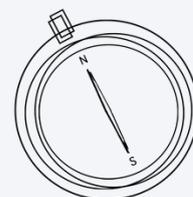


Directed by

Violeta Picayo

Produced by

The SuperGeographic
Ensemble Theatre Inc



supergeographics.org

FIRST: AWAY

ONE

*We, our sisters, distinctly singular yet definitively bound, are contained.
Above it all is Eris.*

ERIS

I am Eris. I am a god. Goddess, if that makes you more comfortable.
I am the god of Discord. That friction, dissonance, the schism between accord.
Does that make you nervous? It's not an easy place to be. I wear it like silk.
Beneath me are three women, sisters in fact. These women are ancient. Which is
another way to say they are constant.
Ugh. Constance.

*As Eris speaks the sisters move through structured mess.
As it grows to a point Helen is raised above and she
falls from a great height.*

That one is Timandra, she's the eldest. Timandra is one of those highly strung
power shouldered types, who would rather she just do it, regardless of what it is,
so she knows it is done right. If it wasn't for Timandra executing exactitude,
seams would rip, worlds would tumble. This is a burden. But alas, someone
must.

Next is Klaitemnestra. Depending on who you ask she was, or is, a devoted
mother, a succubus, a mistress, or a vicious murderer, vindictive even in death.
Quite a resumé if you're asking me. She is precisely 9 minutes and 32 seconds
older than her twin sister Helen. Which is for her, of course, a source of endless
satisfaction.

Finally, Helen. One time when she was little Helen ran down a hill so fast she
tripped and skinned her knee. Her sister saw the whole thing happen and laughed,
hysterically, for a full ten seconds before coming over to check on her. It hurt,
but she didn't cry. Since then, she runs with caution.

Helen is also beautiful. But where has beauty ever gotten anyone?
Oh. It's starting. I love a good beginning.

KLAITEMNESTRA

Well, fuck.

TIMANDRA

What?

KLAITEMNESTRA

I lost a button.

TWO

We are at a wake.

Long pause.

*Helen fidgets. Timandra looks. Helen stops.
Helen fidgets.*

TIMANDRA Helen.

Helen stops.

Long pause.

Helen burbs.

TIMANDRA Helen.

KLAITEMNESTRA Can we –

HELEN Can we?

TIMANDRA Sandwiches. Get more sandwiches.

HELEN We don't need more sandwiches.

TIMANDRA Tea. Who needs a tea? I'll make some tea.

HELEN I can't drink any more tea.

KLAITEMNESTRA It's just us left, Timmy.

TIMANDRA Timmy.

KLAITEMNESTRA You remember.

TIMANDRA Stop fussing.

HELEN Of course she does.

TIMANDRA No one wants a tea?

Pause

Today is -

KLAITEMNESTRA Just another day.

TIMANDRA Don't be dreary.

HELEN We're in mourning.

KLAITEMNESTRA I don't miss her yet. That's awful isn't it.

HELEN Yes.

TIMANDRA You'll get there.

HELEN Does this mean I'm in charge now?

Klaitemnestra and Timandra burst into laughter.

TIMANDRA No.

HELEN Something's changed.

TIMANDRA Yes, well. There's no back up now. That's all. We are the last line of defence.

KLAITEMNESTRA Well that's terrifying.

Pause

HELEN How long do we have to sit here?

TIMANDRA Soon. It doesn't take much.

HELEN For what?

TIMANDRA To all go back to normal.

HELEN That's bleak.

KLAITEMNESTRA That's life.

HELEN What day is it -

TIMANDRA Laundry.

KLAITEMNESTRA The next day -

HELEN Yesterday was -

TIMANDRA Tomorrow is a new day.

HELEN But which day is it -

TIMANDRA Joy in work.

KLAITEMNESTRA A job well done.

TIMANDRA Never half to do a job.

HELEN Tomorrow is -

KLAITEMNESTRA Kitchen. Clean the cupboards.

HELEN Oh, the cupboards.

TIMANDRA Nobody notices clean windows.

KLAITEMNESTRA Did you see who came with -

TIMANDRA I thought that was what -

KLAITEMNESTRA Yes, can you believe -

HELEN I heard it was -

KLAITEMNESTRA I always knew. Bad stock, apple and the tree, you can tell.

TIMANDRA You can tell. Bad girl, wild.

HELEN Wild.

KLAITEMNESTRA Oh, to be wild.

HELEN Again.

KLAITEMNESTRA Let's not.

Long pause

TIMANDRA Today is -

HELEN There's colours, whites, delicates, sheets -

KLAITEMNESTRA Sheets? Not today.

TIMANDRA Diapers, reusable -

KLAITEMNESTRA Of course.

TIMANDRA Eco-friendly, better for the fish, better for the budget.

HELEN Then -

TIMANDRA Onto tiles, the grout. Mould.

HELEN A constant battle. Take your eye off the ball and the war is lost.

KLAITEMNESTRA You have to be on it, or it will take over.

TIMANDRA Up at the crack, breakfast first round, second round, third round, off to school, off to work, lunch. Better, best get dinner going.

KLAITEMNESTRA I just throw it all in my slow cooker and leave.

TIMANDRA You love a slow cooker.

KLAITEMNESTRA If I could, I would run off into the sunset with my slow cooker.

TIMANDRA Satisfaction in a day's work.

KLAITEMNESTRA Have you tried the -

TIMANDRA I found a new way to -

KLAITEMNESTRA With the onion in the sauce -

TIMANDRA Revolutionary.

HELEN Drama in the humdrum.

Long pause

We can't stay here all day.

TIMANDRA Priorities.

KLAITEMNESTRA It's important to be –

TIMANDRA House proud. I've always been house proud. A fixer-upper, when we bought it, needed a lot of work. Sanded the floors, painted architraves, rewired, waterproofed. Quality. I chose everything for its quality. Though gods know I love a bargain. You must be patient, vigilant, able to recognise opportunity when it presents itself. The right kitchen countertop makes all the difference. It feels good to nest, to build something.

KLAITEMNESTRA No one notices clean windows.

TIMANDRA That's rude.

HELEN Should we -

KLAITEMNESTRA Would you like to -

HELEN Can I -

TIMANDRA Not yet.

Long pause

TIMANDRA Today is –

HELEN What is today?

KLAITEMNESTRA Grout.

HELEN Fuck.

KLAITEMNESTRA Language.

TIMANDRA Groceries. I have to pop to the shops. Need anything?

KLAITEMNESTRA Milk, bread, beans, protein. Chicken, flour. It's important to -

HELEN Yes. Yes. Would you like to -

TIMANDRA There's no point getting upset about it.

KLAITEMNESTRA I'm not upset.

TIMANDRA Busy hands, quiet mind.

HELEN I'm bored.

TIMANDRA Only boring people are bored, Helen.

KLAITEMNESTRA Helen. Look! It's mum. Back already?

HELEN Some might say that's a bit too soon, Timmy.

TIMANDRA Jog on.

KLAITEMNESTRA Busy hands. How are the children?

HELEN Good.

TIMANDRA Good, good.

KLAITEMNESTRA Good, good, good. Coping?

HELEN You know.

TIMANDRA The pregnancy?

HELEN Are you sleeping?

KLAITEMNESTRA Drinking water, glass of milk. Babies suck the calcium out of your teeth.

HELEN My gums bled with mine.

TIMANDRA Joy. Eating well?

KLAITEMNESTRA Eating for two.

HELEN Wait till you start feeding and your hair falls out.

KLAITEMNESTRA Nah.

TIMANDRA Oh no, yes.

KLAITEMNESTRA Yes?

TIMANDRA But it's wonderful.

KLAITEMNESTRA No one told me that.

TIMANDRA It grows back.

HELEN I want to be doing something.

TIMANDRA We are.

HELEN Something real. Something important.

TIMANDRA This is real, Helen.

KLAITEMNESTRA It's not been that long.

TIMANDRA It feels like an age.

KLAITEMNESTRA We could play a game?

TIMANDRA Yes. Pass the time. Dishes done? We could play a game.

HELEN A glass of wine?

TIMANDRA Now.

KLAITEMNESTRA Do you want to play -

HELEN I don't want to play a game.

KLAITEMNESTRA Not even -

HELEN I want to go on an adventure.

TIMANDRA What is this gone? Where are you going?

HELEN I can't stay here. I can't.

TIMANDRA Busy hands.

KLAITEMNESTRA That sounds nice.

HELEN You could come with me.

KLAITEMNESTRA Will there be fancy soaps?

HELEN Soft linens?

KLAITEMNESTRA Oh, a continental breakfast. Add it to the Running Away fund.

TIMANDRA Rainy Day fund.

KLAITEMNESTRA Yes, Rainy Day fund.

TIMANDRA You're babying her.

KLAITEMNESTRA She is the baby.

HELEN 9 minutes and 32 seconds.

KLAITEMNESTRA Then why are you such a child?

HELEN Timandra.

TIMANDRA Hush, Helen. The grown-ups are talking.

HELEN Jog on.

KLAITEMNESTRA If you haven't anything nice to say –

HELEN I will scream.

KLAITEMNESTRA We're expected.

TIMANDRA No.

KLAITEMNESTRA Expecting.

TIMANDRA Yes.

HELEN We know.

KLAITEMNESTRA Oh, be excited.

HELEN It's exciting.

TIMANDRA It's wonderful. You should sit down.

KLAITEMNESTRA My feet hurt. I'm going to sit down. How long will they be?

TIMANDRA Husbands.

KLAITEMNESTRA Oh, Husbands.

TIMANDRA Who's to say?

HELEN Dinner is at six.

KLAITEMNESTRA I could eat that man with a spoon.

TIMANDRA Oh, please.

HELEN What does that mean?

KLAITEMNESTRA It means that given the chance I would put my Husband in a bowl and eat him up, bit by bit, bite by bite. After dinner, just before bed. Not because I was particularly hungry but because I wasn't yet satisfied and had a hankering for something more.
My mouth would water at the sight of him. And the smell. Ugh, he smells so good. I think I would pair him with a dessert wine, something light, fruity, because you know that man would be rich to taste. It might be difficult to eat him all in one sitting. I'd probably get the meat sweats. But that wouldn't stop me. I would persevere, take my time. I wouldn't rush it, it's important to enjoy these things. That man is melt-in-your-mouth de-gods-be-damned-licious.

TIMANDRA I think that's quite enough.

KLAITEMNESTRA I love every little speck of him.

HELEN That sounds nice.

Timandra laughs.

KLAITEMNESTRA Yours is good too.

HELEN He loves me. Home, we have a home. It's good to nest.

KLAITEMNESTRA That's nice.

HELEN But there is something.

KLAITEMNESTRA What?

HELEN Somewhere else. Something else?

KLAITEMNESTRA Your daughter?

HELEN No.

TIMANDRA You're a horrible mother.

KLAITEMNESTRA Don't.

HELEN Maybe.

KLAITEMNESTRA No. You love her.

HELEN I do.

TIMANDRA It takes work. They take work.

HELEN I'm often kind.

KLAITEMNESTRA Sure.

HELEN See.

KLAITEMNESTRA There was that one time. I forget now but I remember thinking at the time.

TIMANDRA You were the same when you were little.

HELEN Angry?

TIMANDRA Precocious.

KLAITEMNESTRA Oh.

HELEN What?

KLAITEMNESTRA It just hit me.

TIMANDRA You miss her.

HELEN Mum.

TIMANDRA That's us now. First she was misses, then she was Mum, we made her Grandma, and now –

HELEN She made us Mum.

KLAITEMNESTRA We're Mum.

Pause

Now I'm upset.

HELEN I'm not upset, I'm –

TIMANDRA It's not about you.

HELEN You are such a bitch.

KLAITEMNESTRA It's very early for this.

TIMANDRA What an awful thing to call your sister.

KLAITEMNESTRA Stop. Both of you. Help me look.

HELEN What?

TIMANDRA Her button.

KLAITEMNESTRA My button.

HELEN Such a little thing.

KLAITEMNESTRA You'd care if it were yours.

Eris has the button. She throws it down on the other side of the containment.

SECOND: GOES

ONE

ERIS

Who holds a story, really? Who gets the legacy? The hero? Our villain? Those burdened with the remembering, remembered?

Try to keep in mind that time isn't a straight line. Sure, it is often seen to be, as humans are comfortable in patterns. Forward, backward, forward, inevitably we progress.

To stare down history in either direction one sees a consumable lineage of event to event to event. Much like in a book. One page comes after the other. One paragraph, space, next paragraph. One word then the next continuing in neatly partitioned sentences and phrases, for which the author is very proud and has in fact received some critical acclaim.

But for those in the know it is rarely so straightforward, neat, so satisfying. If you need a little help picture a single thread in a ball of metal wool. Or, better yet, a chunky soup. Events twist, they float next to one another, collide into things completely unrelated all depending on who is mixing the pot.

Partition be damned.

TWO

ERIS

Helen is on a journey.

HELEN

I am on a journey. I'm walking away from the house. Away from laundry, the peeling of vegetables, dirty dishwashers, and dinner promptly at six. From phone calls, appointments, from the daily commute, shopping with my mother-in-law, and instant coffee. Away from toast on Sundays, mortgage repayments and performative orgasms on my birthday.

Away from a bed shared. I don't think I've ever slept on my own before. That's fantastic.

I have a daughter. I left my daughter. I've left my daughter.

Keep walking. Where? Doesn't matter. It's all in the journey. I have direction.

I'm leaving. I'm in my underwear.

I'm not coming back.

THREE

MENELAUS We are brave.

AGAMEMNON We are strong.

MENELAUS We laugh at monsters.

AGAMEMNON Monsters with big teeth.

MENELAUS With leathery wings.

AGAMEMNON Snarky monsters who say rude things about you at parties.

MENELAUS But not at little puppies.

AGAMEMNON Little puppies we pat, gently.

MENELAUS As even we have a soft side.

AGAMEMNON Today is the day.

MENELAUS Today we quest.

AGAMEMNON Aren't we handsome?

MENELAUS Today we conquer.

AGAMEMNON Try not to swoon.

On cue, the sisters swoon.

AGAMEMNON Menelaus?

MENELAUS Yes, Agamemnon.

AGAMEMNON Why do we quest?

MENELAUS Why, brother?

AGAMEMNON Is it for gold?

MENELAUS We are kings. Who needs gold?

AGAMEMNON Is it for goodness.

MENELAUS For goodness sakes. No.

AGAMEMNON Tell me then brother, why do we quest?

MENELAUS Would you like to know?

AGAMEMNON What do we quest for?

MENELAUS FOR GLORY!

AGAMEMNON FOR SPARTA!

MENELAUS FOR TINY LITTLE PUPPIES!

The brothers do a solidier dance. It's sexy. It finishes with a flourish. They should expect applause. They're exiting. Timandra coughs. The brothers halt.

MENELAUS And who could forget these enchanting sisters three, our mothers, wives, daughters. What would we do without them?

AGAMEMNON They're the real heroes.

MENELAUS There's Timandra, who's so organized.

AGAMEMNON And my wife Klaitemnestra. A real M.I.L.F.

MENELAUS My wife, Helen. Cooks a mean leg of lamb and is the most beautiful woman who—

Beat

Timandra?

TIMANDRA She left.

MENELAUS Where is Helen?

KLAITEMNESTRA She left.

MENELAUS Was she taken?

TIMANDRA No, she left.

MENELAUS Who did this?

KLAITEMNESTRA She wanted to leave, and then she left.

MENELAUS That hurts.

KLAITEMNESTRA I know.

AGAMEMNON Where's Helen?

KLAITEMNESTRA She left.

AGAMEMNON She left?

TIMANDRA She'll be back.

MENELAUS How could you let this happen?

KLAITEMNESTRA That's not fair.

AGAMEMNON Why would she leave?

TIMANDRA Why does Helen do anything?

KLAITEMNESTRA Don't start.

MENELAUS You're sure she wasn't taken.

AGAMEMNON Do you want to leave?

KLAITEMNESTRA Where would I go?

AGAMEMNON Of course you don't.

KLAITEMNESTRA I don't want to leave.

AGAMEMNON She must have been taken.

TIMANDRA She asked to leave.

AGAMEMNON It just doesn't make sense.

MENELAUS It does not sense make.

AGAMEMNON Who would leave?

MENELAUS She was taken. I will get her back.

FIVE

ERIS This is Paris. He is young, and bright, and weightless. Paris and Helen collide. It's lovely.

HELEN You're lovely.

PARIS I love you.

HELEN Walk with me?

PARIS I'll carry you.

HELEN What if you get tired?

PARIS Then I'll lay you down gently and hold your head on my chest while you sleep. I'll count your freckles and name each of your scars.

HELEN If we part ways?

PARIS Then I'll be done. I will sit and wait for you in the Underworld.

HELEN I don't want you to be alone.

PARIS I won't be alone. I'll be waiting. That will fill me with hope.

HELEN It will.

PARIS Of course.

HELEN But you'll be stuck.

PARIS I don't see it like that.

HELEN I never want to be stuck again.

PARIS Then we won't.

HELEN Do you promise?

PARIS Forever.

HELEN Forever?

PARIS That's how I love you.

HELEN How else do you love me?

PARIS I love you every day but most of all on Sundays and Tuesdays and Thursday afternoons.

HELEN What day is it today?

PARIS I'm not sure.

HELEN Can we say it's Tuesday?

PARIS It must be Tuesday.

HELEN Then is tomorrow Thursday afternoon?

PARIS A logical conclusion.

HELEN And all the other days shall be Sundays. Is that okay?

PARIS I'll name the days whatever you like.

HELEN How else do you love me?

PARIS The sound of your voice is like bells.

HELEN That doesn't touch me.

PARIS Well. I feel it when you leave a room.

HELEN You miss me?

PARIS I don't miss you.

HELEN Oh.

PARIS It's not that polite, miss. It's more like I feel that you're missing, maybe. Like there's a rope that's attached to you and to me by my guts, my insides. Right here.

HELEN That's strange.

PARIS When you get out of bed in the morning I feel it pulling at me. It's desperate, almost. It makes me want to get up and run after you, even though I know you're just going to the bathroom and will be back soon.
But I would never do that. I know you like your quiet in the mornings.

HELEN Yes.

PARIS I think if you went too far away from me it might pull my insides clean out of my body.

Pause

You wanted to know.

HELEN What if I wanted to leave you early?

PARIS Why would you do that?

HELEN If I did?

PARIS I don't want to think about that. Let's talk about something else.

HELEN Tell me about your history.

PARIS I was born, I grew. Sometimes I cried, but not very often. Mostly I laughed.

HELEN Where were you going?

PARIS Nowhere in particular. I didn't want to move till I met you.

HELEN Do you want to go back?

PARIS Eventually. You can meet my mother. We'll have babies and be happy.

HELEN I have a daughter.

PARIS Where is she?

HELEN I left her behind.

PARIS Oh.

HELEN I have direction.

PARIS I see. Was your Husband mean? We can get her back.

HELEN He wasn't mean.

PARIS But he was cold. He didn't love you.

HELEN He loved me.

PARIS That wasn't enough.

HELEN It should have been.

PARIS Then why did you leave.

HELEN I wanted something else.

PARIS That's fickle.

HELEN That's why you love me.

PARIS I'm going to put you down now.

HELEN Will you still walk with me? Count my freckles and name my scars?