

**BOROUGH OF MANHATTAN COMMUNITY COLLEGE – CUNY
SPEECH, COMMUNICATIONS AND THEATRE ARTS DEPARTMENT**

ANTIGONE

by

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Translated and Adapted

by

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CHARACTERS

ANTIGONE

ISMENE

CREON

GUARD

HAEMON

TEIRESIAS

MESSENGER

EURYDICE

CHORUS

ATTENDANTS

Darkness. Sound of drums. Lights up. Light smoke envelops the stage. Two figures (one of an eagle the other of a dragon) symbols of war, with masks and robes perform a symbolic dance (movement) of war. They fight. They fall.

Black out.

Lights up. In front of the Palace. Early dawn of the day after the war. Sounds of dogs and vultures.

Enter ANTIGONE and ISMENE.

ANTIGONE: Ismene, my sister, my soul.

Can you believe the new sufferings the gods have thrust upon us?

The sins of Oedipus visit his daughters once again.

New griefs are crushed upon our heads and sorrows have no end for you and me.

And now ... Have you heard nothing of the decree our new ruler, King Creon,
Proclaimed to the city?

ISMENE: No, Antigone, nothing that's good or bad.

They only came to say our brothers were dead.

Two deaths in one day; and that the enemy fled into the night.

But beyond that, nothing that could make things better or worse.

ANTIGONE: Just as I thought. That is why I sent for you to come out here.
There's something we must do.

ISMENE: You're frightening me, Antigone. What is it?

ANTIGONE: Our uncle, Creon, decided the fate of our brothers.

Though both bodies lie lifeless, he talks of shame and honor.

He eulogized Eteocles in military grandeur;

He talks of state funeral, of glory and of duty.

But Polyneices, also our flesh and blood,

Is to be left untouched, unburied and unmourned for;

They heard Creon say, no one shall touch him, but leave him there;

Food for hyenas, vultures, wild dogs; sweet treasure

To the hungry beasts and to the weeping wind.

No burial, no tears. That is the order; and it is true for you and me.

Imagine for me, too!

Our good uncle Creon is coming here to declare his order to the entire city.

If anyone dares break the law the penalty is death ... public stoning.

So there it is; it's up to you, my sister,

Show me that you are a true seed of our great family, or just a parasite.

ISMENE: But, Antigone, what can I do?

ANTIGONE: It's up to you, decide. Will you help me in my struggle?

ISMENE: What struggle? What are you saying?

ANTIGONE: Will you help me bury my brother?

ISMENE: Bury him? You just said it is against the law.

ANTIGONE: He is my brother! Your brother, too.

ISMENE: Antigone, you're mad! If you break the law, you'll betray your...

ANTIGONE: I won't betray my brother! If you won't help me, I'll do it alone.

ISMENE: Uncle Creon has forbidden it.

ANTIGONE: Creon will not stand in my way!

ISMENE: Come to your senses, Antigone.

Oedipus, our father, died in hatred and in shame,
His eyes no longer baring the light of truth,
Were gouged out of his head by his own hands.
Iocaste, at once his mother and his wife, our mother-sister,
We saw her body dangling in silence at the end of her cord.
Misfortune comes in threes;
Our brothers dead, each killed by the other's sword.
What now, Antigone? Say that we break Creon's law.
What punishment awaits us? Should we expect anything less?
We are Oedipus' daughters, the only living left of his legacy.
My sister, think! We're only women;
Not strong enough to fight men. Creon is our king;
He has all the power. He is the law!
We must learn to be patient and obey.
I beg the ones below to understand and forgive me.
I will obey and compromise.

ANTIGONE: If that is your wish, so be it. But hear this, Ismene:
If you're to have a sudden change of heart,
And beg me on your bended knees, I will not want your help.
You've made your choice as I have made mine.
Do what you think is best; but I will bury him.

This I must do, no, wish to do, and die by his side.
Brother and sister will waste no time to happily meet our loved ones below.
If the laws of the gods don't mean anything to you,
Go ahead, obey Creon.

ISMENE: Oh, Antigone, you know they mean a great deal to me,
But I have no strength to break the laws of state.

ANTIGONE: Excuses, excuses! Fine then, I, alone, will bury the brother I love.

ISMENE: I'm so afraid for you, Antigone.

ANTIGONE: Don't be. You just take care of yourself.
I alone will do what seems to be impossible for you.

ISMENE: Promise me you won't tell a soul, and I'll do the same.

ANTIGONE: No, Ismene. Tell everybody, let it be known to the entire city.

ISMENE: I don't know you anymore.

ANTIGONE: I know who I am, and I know the dead know I'll do the right thing.
Go, Ismene, go before I grow to hate you. Leave me alone with my foolishness.

ISMENE: Fine; Do it if you must. I will always love you, Antigone.

*They exit in different directions. Sound of drums. It is day time.
The CHORUS enters.*

CHORUS: Come, glorious sun, shine your golden blades, your brightest ever,
Upon our Thebes; city of the seven-gates. Peel back the dread of night,
And rise across the stream in your blazing ascent to victory,
As you scorched our enemy and forced him back to Argos,
Dragging their white shields, in shame, at their heels.

*As the LEADER speaks, the rest of the chorus forms a phalanx
that emulates military formation and fight.*

LEADER: Polynices, their commander, with pompous words and shouting insults
Inflamed their hearts and hovering over their heads like a soaring eagle,
In snow white wings, spearheaded his hoards against our great city.

CHORUS: Gone is he who rose above our heads, soaring above our seven gates,
His talons ready with shrieking spears.
Suddenly, nothing; silence. The foe was gone.
The almighty Zeus, hating the clatter of bragging tongues,
And like a great big Dragon, hurled his thunder,
Defending the walls of great Thebes.
Seven captains against seven gates surrendered their arms to the fiery Dragon
As he broke their shields and backs.
All but those two brothers, Eteocles and Polynices,
The wretched sons of Oedipus, stood in dusty battle,
Hacking in blind rage until the filial blood was spilt and soaked the earth.
Slain, dead, still.
But now sweet Victory is here, a gift to Thebes.
The citizens will dance in praise of her name, will sing in the temples
And dance in the fields; to her who shamed war and soon will be forgotten.

Enter CREON

CHOREGOS: Now here he comes, Creon, our new King,
And herald of the gods new plans.
Why, I wonder, has he summoned us all in such haste?

CREON: Citizens of Thebes, my friends, the very gods who shook our Ship of State,
Have come to set it straight again.
Why, you may ask, have I requested to meet with you,
The chosen few, to speak of Thebes? Because of your undoubted duty
To our late ruler Oedipus, and to his Queen, my sister, Iocaste.
Your devotion to them was total, absolute. When Oedipus died,
Your loyalty to his heirs was once again unflinching.
But now, Fate, has struck our family again.
As you know, Oedipus' sons lie dead, slain by each other's hand in battle.
And I, as the unfortunate boys' uncle, and next in blood,
Have inherited all the power of the royal throne.
My friends, you cannot know of a man's soul, his mind and intent,
Until you see how he rules; how he applies the law.
As for me, I have nothing but contempt for a King who is afraid,
For whatever reasons, to uphold the best interests of the State.
As for the man who puts his family first above the public good,
I say to him: "Leave our city!"
So I – may all mighty Zeus be my witness – will never be afraid
To speak the plain truth. My soul will never shake in fear
When dealing with the enemies of our people.

I am sure you'll all agree, that I am a man who values friendship above all.
 But if anyone dares to sink our ship and wreck our great city,
 He is no friend at all.
 Only with these principles our ship will sail straight.
 So then, my first rule is this, concerning the sons of Oedipus.
 Eteocles, who died defending his homeland, will be buried in full honors,
 With pomp reserved for heroes.
 But, Polynices, his brother, whose homegrown gods and land dared defile,
 An exile, armed with your enemy, thirsty for his cousin's blood
 And wishing to sell you, yes you, into slavery, this is my decree:
 Polynices will have no burial. No man is to touch him, or pray for him;
 Leave him unburied and disgraced, food for vultures and wild dogs.
 Finally, let me say this to you, as long as I am King,
 Never will I equate the wicked with the just. He who dies for our land,
 I will honor in death as I honored him in life.

CHOREGOS: If this is your decree, Creon, so be it. We will obey.

CREON: That is my decree. Now, go on and do the right thing.

CHOREGOS: What is it that you wish us to do?

CREON: I ordered men to guard the traitor's body.
 You will support no one who breaks the law.

CHOREGOS: Only a fool will do that.

CREON: Exactly! But money talks and the wisest of men
 Sometimes are known to be the biggest fools.
 In this case, the reward will not be gold, but death.

Enter GUARD.

GUARD: King, I can't say that I'm out of breath from running to come here,
 'cause I'm not. I did a lot of stop-n-go, stop-n-go
 Not only with my feet but also with my head.
 So, I kept saying to myself: "I'm damned if I go and damned if I don't."
 But then a little voice said: "You'd better hurry."
 But then I said: "Why rushing?" and then "Damn fool, what if King Creon
 Learns the news from someone else, what then?"
 So, thinking and walking and stopping and thinking
 I made a short trip, long. Finally, I said, I'd better go.
 Now, what I have to say to you may be nothing, still, I gotta say it.
 I can't rewrite my fate, so whatever happens, happens.

CREON: What is it you wish to talk to me about? Why the face of gloom?

GUARD: First, let me tell you from the start. I didn't do it!
And I didn't see who did it neither. So, I don't think I should be punished for it.

CREON: Soldier, get to the point! What happened?

GUARD: A bad thing, sir...

CREON: Out with it!

GUARD: Well, here's the thing, King...
Someone's gone and covered the body with dust.
They gave Polynices burial that way, sir.
And then, sheeeww!.. they disappeared!.. Gone!..

CREON: What? Who dared do such thing!

GUARD: I swear, I don't know, sir!
Listen ... the ground around the body was dry and hard.
No signs of spade, digging, no tracks of wheels, or footprints, nothing!
It was the morning watch that told us.
He pointed to the spot and it was weird...shocking...
Look, the body was sprinkled with dust, see?
Not buried really like in a tomb or anything, but just covered with dust.
When dawn came up, we saw the corpse had become sort of... invisible.
No traces of wild dogs, or beasts to disturb the peace.
Then, what a scene! A fight broke out.
Each guard accusing the other, trying to prove who did what
And where he was supposed to be when.
It was nasty, King, I can tell you that.
We take turns yelling our innocence, we swear to the gods it wasn't us,
We're ready to take hot iron in our hands, walk through fire.
Yelling all at once: "It wasn't me! It wasn't me!"
Then someone yelled: "Who's going to tell the King?"
Suddenly, silence fell upon us and around us.
We thought, "who's the lucky stiff?" So, we decided to draw straws
And guess who drew the shortest? So, here I am...
Honestly, sir, I don't want to be here, and I guess, you don't want me here neither.
But here I am. I mean, who wants a man who brings bad news.

CHOREGOS: Pardon me, sir, but could it be the gods have done this?

CREON: Stop it you fool! Are you suggesting that the gods would care for a corpse?
A traitor who tried to pillage their temples and burn their images?
Destroy the State and its laws?
Where, in your experience, have you seen gods honoring ~~was~~ criminals?
Don't insult my intelligence! I tell you what it is:
There are some amongst you, from the very start, conspiring, whispering,
Anarchists! Scheming against me and the State.
And now, seizing the opportune moment, they bribed my guards to do this thing.
Commit this horrible act. Do you know why? Because of money!
The root of all evil. Money, wrecks your homes, ruins your cities,
Corrupts the virtuous and rewards the crooked.
But I tell you this: They'll pay dearly. (*To the GUARD*)
You – I swear by the almighty Zeus – if you don't find the man who did this
And bring him before me, not even hell will be enough punishment for you.
I'll string you up, and your accomplices, to the tallest tree,
Until you choke his name. So, think again, how much money is enough
In exchange for my wrath? Go ahead, be a rich man in your grave.

GUARD: Sir, permission to speak, sir.

CREON: Your very sound annoys me.

GUARD: Is it my voice that annoys you, or your conscience, sir?

CREON: Listen to him! Soldier, what are you blabbering about?

GUARD: I have done nothing wrong, sir.

CREON: Sold your soul for money, that's what you've done.

GUARD: King, with all due respect, you judge me wrong.

CREON: Enough, out of my sight. When I see you next, and soon,
You'd better bring me the criminal.

CREON exits

GUARD: Great, "bring me the criminal" he says. Thank you gods!

Guard runs off

CHORUS: Many are the wonders of the world,
But none of them as wonderful as man.
With sails a-full he splits the foamy crest
His prow deep-slashes the roaring sea.

The greatest of Gods – the mother Earth –
Tireless and ageless, receives his plough
Year in and year out, as his obedient horses
Dig their hooves deep into her soil.

Delicate birds, fall prey to his snares
Wild boars he leads helpless from cover,
Schools of fish he traps into his nest
Wild mountain beasts he tames,
Even the fuming bull submits unto his yoke.
Clever thing it is, that man.

He uses words and thoughts as rapid as the wind
And puts them to his use; he dwells in cities
And finds shelter from the rain and snow;
He has made himself secure from all but one:
Death he cannot escape. But as he tries he finds cures and medicine.

Man imagines; uses the crafts, yet craftily
He puts his mind in works of good and bad.
When he upholds the laws and obeys the gods
He is a happy citizen. But when he breaks the law, what then?
Such man will find no shelter in my home
His thoughts are not my thoughts at all.

Enter ANTIGONE with GUARDS

CHOREGOS: But who is this prisoner? Antigone?

GUARD: Here she is, caught in the act of burying him, again. Where's Creon?

CHOREGOS: Here he is. Your timing is perfect.

CREON (*enters*): What is it? Perfect timing for what?

GUARD: King, life just taught me a great lesson, and it's this:
Never make promises you can't keep!
Now, I promise to myself never to set foot here again, no sir,
Not if I wanted to live, not after all those threats of yours.
But, I consider myself to be the luckiest man on earth.
No straws this time; and I'm so glad to see you again, sir.
"Bring me the criminal" you said, remember?
Well, I'm *with* the criminal. Here she is; the guilty party!
There she was, digging away, covering the corpse.
She was mine, now she's yours. Do what you will with her;
Question her, judge her; I go free.
Thanks to the gods, there's justice after all!

CREON: So, is this the "guilty party?" When and how did you catch her?

GUARD: Burying the corpse, I tell you!

CREON: Are you aware of what you're saying?

GUARD: I saw her with my very own two eyes. What more can I tell you?

CREON: Tell me everything, details; quickly!

GUARD: It's like this, King. I don't mind telling you how afraid I was when I left here.
What with your threats of punishment and torture.
So, we went back and brushed off the rotting corpse.
Pheew! You could see the stench!
We sat on the top of the hill, we couldn't take the smell, and guarded the body.
Now, it's noon and it's hot and it's still.
Suddenly, a strong breeze flares up and turns into a storm of dust,
The sky turns dark and we can't see a thing. We close our eyes and wait.
After a long time, the winds pass through and when we could see again,
There she is moaning and wailing over the naked body,
All the while cursing at those who did this shameful thing.
She kneels and scoops up fists of dry dust and covers the body;
Then from a bronze jug she sprinkles wine three times over his head.
We had seen enough. We ran down the hill and captured her.
And you know what? The strangest thing; no resistance, no denials.
She was just as calm as ... she is now.
Sir, it is a sweet thing to escape misfortune,
But there is nothing sweet to bring misfortune to a friend.
But I've got to look after number one, if you know what I mean.
Well, here she is.

CREON: (*Slowly towards ANTIGONE*)

Antigone, look at me, do you admit it, or deny it?

ANTIGONE: Yes, I did it. I deny nothing.

CREON: (*To the GUARD*)

You are free to go.

(*Exit the GUARD*)

Tell me, briefly: Did you hear my decree against the burial?

ANTIGONE: It was public. How could I have missed it?

CREON: And yet you dared to break the law?

ANTIGONE: Yes, I did. It was not gods' law.

Justice, who rules the world below, makes no such laws.

Your law, Creon, is man-made. How can it stand a chance against

The laws the gods made? Yours is here today, gone tomorrow.

Theirs is forever, immortal, fixed.

I know I must die, with or without your decree.

I consider myself fortunate that Death will come to me sooner than later.

Living, as I live, with pain all around me,

Who would not want to be Death's friend? My death is insignificant.

But if the son of my mother lies lifeless on the ground, that I cannot endure.

Think me a fool, Creon; perhaps I am. But could it be that only a fool would think

I committed a foolish act?

CHOREGOS: Like father like daughter, King.

Pride runs deep in the family. They never could yield in the face of trouble.

CREON: Rigid spirits break first. The toughest iron does not bend but break.

The smallest whip tames the wildest horse.

Slaves do not know the meaning of pride.

This ... girl knew exactly what she did.

Not only did she break the law but boasted of it.

What are you suggesting? Let her go?

Who is the man here, she or I?

What do I care if she is my sister's daughter?

She broke the law she must be punished!

If the whole family broke the law they all must be punished.

Go arrest her sister, Ismene, too. You'll find her sniffing in the palace.

Find her and drag her out here, too.

It sickens me to know that behind that mask of innocence

There is the face of a traitor.

It sickens me to see acts of treachery disguised as bravery and heroism.

ANTIGONE: Creon, you caught me, now let me die, what more do you want?

CREON: Nothing! I have everything!

ANTIGONE: Then why delay the inevitable?

Save your words for they are distasteful to me.

I should be honored for burying my brother, instead I'm being punished.

Look at your subjects here, they all wish to praise me,

But they are silent. Do you know why? Because they are afraid of you!

Ah, the perks of royalty; free to do and say whatever they please.

CREON: Only you see it that way.

ANTIGONE: Really? They see it my way, but they keep their mouths shut.

CREON: It is a shame to include them in your equation.

ANTIGONE: There is no shame to love my mother's son.

CREON: You shame the one who died defending his city.

ANTIGONE: How do you know that? Did he tell you?

CREON: Look, the one attacked his city the other defended it.

ANTIGONE: Creon, in the eyes of the gods all dead are equal.

CREON: You keep confusing the good with the bad.

ANTIGONE: I live to love not hate.

CREON: Then go to hell and there love them all the same.

As long as I live no woman will tell me how to rule!

ISMENE enters

CHOREGOS: Here's Ismene. Her gentle eyes teared in grief.

CREON: You viper! Slithering, sucking my blood inside my own house.

And I, oblivious to your scheme, sheltered two usurpers of my throne.

Admit you helped her to this crime, Ismene.
Confess, did you do it or not!

ISMENE: Yes, I did ... if my sister lets me say so. I did the crime.

ANTIGONE: No, Ismene, don't lie! You didn't help me
And I would not have wanted you to.

ISMENE: Do not deny me, Antigone. I, too, share responsibility for the dead.

ANTIGONE: The ones below know who did the deed.
Your death will not make mine lighter.

ISMENE: What kind of life would be without you?

ANTIGONE: Ask Creon; you seem to value his opinion.

ISMENE: Do not mock me, Antigone.

ANTIGONE: It is not my intention, I'm sorry.

ISMENE: What can I do to save you?

ANTIGONE: Save yourself sister. Live!

ISMENE: I want to live and die with you!

ANTIGONE: No, sister, you chose life and I death.

CREON: My friends, observe these two mad sisters. The one lost her mind just now,
The other was born without one.

ISMENE: Grief, sometimes, makes the sane go mad, Creon.

CREON: You lost your senses when you joined her.

ISMENE: How can I live without her?

CREON: You can; she's already dead.

ISMENE: How can you kill the bride of your own son?

CREON: There are enough fields for him to push his plow.

ISMENE: Poor Haemon, hear the insults of your father.

CREON: Enough of your childish talk about marriage.

ISMENE: You're taking her away from your son's arms.

CREON: No, Death will do that, not I.

ISMENE: Is this then your final decision?

CREON: Enough of this! Take her away. Take them both away!
Guard them inside the house where they belong.
Even the bravest of men run away in the face of Death.

Exit ISMENE, ANTIGONE and GUARDS

CHORUS: Fortunate are they who never taste the wrath of Gods!
When the Gods strike a house no man is safe
Like an angry wave bursting down washed ashore
Ripping out the sand from the bosom of the sea,
Crushing like death against the wounded rocks.

Year after year I've seen sorrows visiting the house of Oedipus;
Generation upon generation condemned they are to bare
The dark rage of the gods.
Lately a shred of light shown in the child's face
Quietly to be extinguished by a senseless word and a handful of dust.

Oh Zeus, what human gesture could appease you?
You, restless, ageless, relentless god,
Who holds the light of life from mount Olympus,
The past, the future and the present all wrapped in your almighty grip.
No mortal action is toll-free from the road to ruin.

Hope, sometimes, brings to men the gift of joy,
But others, blinded by delusions, walk straight to the fire.
Ancient wisdom still speaks to our time:
Bad deeds sometimes seem good to those who think the gods would doom,
Sorrows are many, pleasures so few.

CHOREGOS: Here is Haemon, the last of your sons.
He looks angry, King, could it be because he learned of the Fate
Of his beloved Antigone?

Enter HAEMON

CREON: No need for prophesies; we shall soon see.
Son, you've heard my ruling concerning your bride.
Are you angry at me, or love me and agree with my decision?

HAEMON: You are my father. I obey you and always listen to your advice.
I will not marry a woman without your consent.

CREON: That's my boy. Sweet sounds to any father's ears.
Love his friends and fight his enemies.
But if a father rears a troubled child, what could he expect but trouble for himself
And a laughing stock for his enemies.
You are right not to lose your head over this woman.
Warm embraces turn cold in time and a bad wife
Can turn your bed into a block of ice.
Spit her out like a curse; she'll find a husband in hell.
Of all the people in this city she was the only one who disobeyed my orders.
The declaration was public; I can't rescind it. Therefore she dies.
Let her pray a thousand prayers to Zeus. So what? Let her.
I will not breed rebels in my house.
If I cannot protect my own family how can I protect the city?
If chaos rules my palace how can I rule the people?
Law and order begins at home!
The rulers the people chose must be obeyed, in every way, big or small,
Just or unjust. Without order, anarchy reigns; and that is unacceptable.
The man who says "I obey" is a model citizen;
And the man who is disciplined can not be ruled by a woman.
I'd rather lose to a man than bend my knee to a woman.

CHOREGOS: King, your speech seems sensible to us.

HAEMON: Father, reason is the greatest gift the gods gave to man,
And I can't say I find anything unreasonable in what you just said.
Yet, there are others who can reason too.
You cannot hear or see everything that's being said and done.
People of the city do not tell you how they feel because they're afraid of you.
But in the dark streets I hear things.
People whisper how unfair it is for this girl to die so shamefully
For such a noble act. Where is the crime, they say,
In the act of burying her brother?
Where is the blasphemy in keeping him away from hungry dogs and birds?
This is what I hear them say.
Father, to me, your happiness is the most precious thing.

But I beg you, bend your knee to reason and listen to other opinions.
Wisdom is not an entitlement for you and you alone.
True wisdom comes when we listen to other reasonable opinions.
I know I am young, but let me say this:
Our instinct should guide us to do the right thing,
But since some of us could go astray, our goal should be to learn
From those with voices of reason.

CREON: Am I instructed by a boy now?

HAEMON: Yes, if I happen to be right. Age should not matter.

CREON: You think that anarchy is the right way?

HAEMON: No, I have no respect for criminals.

CREON: And she is not a criminal?

HAEMON: The people deny it.

CREON: Are you suggesting "the people" will teach me how to rule?

HAEMON: Ah, who sounds like a boy now?

CREON: I am he who gives the orders!

HAEMON: It is no city if ruled by one man.

CREON: I am the King of this city!

HAEMON: Yes, if the city is a desert.

CREON: This boy is ruled by a woman.

HAEMON: If you are a woman. My only concern is you.

CREON: Your concern? Insulting your father in public?

HAEMON: How about you insulting justice?

CREON: I am doing nothing of the sort. I am doing my duty as a King.

HAEMON: You may call it duty; I call it disrespect in the face of the gods.

CREON: You disgust me, taken in by a woman!

HAEMON: Where is the dishonor in that?

CREON: Everything you say is about her!

HAEMON: No, I speak for me and for you and for the gods below.

CREON: You will never marry her while she is alive.

HAEMON: Then her death will cause another.

CREON: Are you threatening me now?

HAEMON: How can I threaten you if I speak to a void.

CREON: You are the empty void!

HAEMON: If you weren't my father, I'd say you are insane.

CREON: You, woman-slave! Don't push me, boy!

HAEMON: Can you hear anything I say, father?

CREON: I swear by the high Olympus, you'd better watch it, boy.

To a member of the CHORUS

Bring that thing out here. Let the bride die beside the groom.

HAEMON: No, not here, King, never. Never will you see my face again.
Rant and rave to your friends; they may be entertained.

Exit HAEMON

CHOREGOS: He is gone, King, but not his rage.
A young man in rage is a dangerous thing.

CREON: Let him go and do what he likes. He will not save these girls from Death.

CHOREGOS: Have you decided to kill them both?

CREON: No, not the one who didn't touch the body.
You are right...not Ismene.

CHOREGOS: What kind of death you have in mind for Antigone?

CREON: (*Somber deliberate tone*) Antigone...I will take her to a place unknown,
Un-trod, and I will lock her in a deep, cold cave. Alive...
Food she will have as is customary, to absolve the State from the evil eye.
And there, let her pray to the only God she respects, Hades.
And maybe, just maybe she'll find out slowly, and however late,
How pointless it is to be in love with Death.

CREON exits

CHORUS: Love, conqueror of all battles, ruler of all nature,
Who, in an all-night vigil, comes resting on a girl's cheek.
Love, who crosses the oceans and slithers in the peasant's hut.
No one, God or mortal, escapes your presence.
The lightest of your touch; you make them all insane.

Love, you take a sane mind and bring it to its ruin.
Just as you did to this father and his son.
And then you send a touch of heaven to the gleaming eyes of a girl.
The temptress Aphrodite is playing with us, no doubt.

ANTIGONE enters led by guards.

But my tears blind me when I see Antigone walk towards
Her bridal bed where we all find rest at last.

ANTIGONE: Look at me friends, witness my final walk under the sun.
I raise my hand to death as he leads me to the cold stone of Acheron.
No man will dance with me on my wedding day.
No man will sing to me a song of love.
Death is my husband and I his bride.

CHORUS: Yet, praised and honored you walk towards the underworld.
Succumbed to no disease, nor fallen by the enemy's sword,
No other living woman walks to her death on her own free will.

ANTIGONE: No, friends, I am not the first.

Niobe, Tantalus' daughter, wept and died as the mountain turned her into stone.
I feel her fate akin to mine.

CHORUS: But, Antigone, she was a goddess; and you are a woman
Born of mortal's flesh. If her fate is yours,
Is it not enough glory for you in life and in death?

ANTIGONE: You mock me, friend. Can you wait until I am dead?
I am still in the light.
Ah, Thebes, city of warriors and wealth, of silver springs and green groves
Be my witness and ask them what law has judged me and walks me to my death.
I, Antigone, dead on earth and alive under it.

CHORUS: You, Antigone, have surpassed all human daring.
You challenged the law and now justice sends you to your grave.
It must be one of your father's sins that comes to fall upon you.

ANTIGONE: There, at last you said it! My father's house; the house of pain.
He who murdered his father and married his mother
And **that** union made us.
The bed of incest, the sheets of shame!
Oedipus, my brother's son, my father and my brother
And I, poor wretch, am paying in life the debts of the dead.

CHORUS: It is commendable to respect a brother,
But, the law must be respected, too.
The deed was of your own choice; your fall is your excessive pride.

CREON *enters*

ANTIGONE: No one will cry for me, or call me friend or wife.
Darkness is my friend and light the everlasting stranger.
I hear no sighs for my fate, only silence, cold silence.

CREON: If songs of pity could move Death, men would never stop singing.
(*To the Guards*)
Take her away at once. Do as I've ordered. To the tomb, go!
If she lives or dies that's her business. We've done ours.

ANTIGONE: Oh tomb, my bridal bed. Soon I'll be with my family again;
My loving father and mother and my brothers, my loved ones.
You, my dearest brother, Polyneices, must kiss me,
Since I washed you and poured wine on your grave.
Your kiss is my reward for loving you and dying for you.

(To the Chorus)

Some of you think that I did the right thing.
If circumstances were different I never would have gone
Against the laws of my land, or do this for a husband,
Or even for my own flesh and blood ... my child.
Why then you may ask?
My husband could die, I could marry another.
My child could die, I could bare another.
But my dead father and mother cannot make another brother for me.
This is why I honor my brother Polyneices.
Creon, here, thought I did something wrong;
That I broke the law. Which one?
Which of the Gods' laws did I break, Creon?
For this, you drag me to my grave, my hands tied up,
Unmarried, unsexed, unsung, no child suckling on my breast.
Which one of you do I call my friend?
Which law did I break? I have not sinned before the Gods.
What am I guilty of? But if the guilt lies on those who judge me,
I say their punishment may equal mine.

CHORUS: Oh passionate spirit, defiant to the end.

CREON: Enough! Take her away or you'll regret the delay.

ANTIGONE: Creon, your words are death to me.

CREON: There is nothing left to say. Death has sealed your fate.

ANTIGONE: Oh Thebes, land of my fathers and my fathers' gods, farewell.
Look at me, my friends, the last Princess of our royal house.
Look what I suffer and by whom.
I, alone, must perish for honoring the laws of the gods.

(To the Guards)

Come, let us delay no more.

(They exit)

CHORUS: Danae's beauty and Dryas' son and the seed
That spawn all Athens; three echoes of a similar fate.
Ah Fate, you who succumb to no battle, or wealth,
Or the ferocious wind of the stormy sea.
No tears, or blood, or sacrifice can ever sate your appetite.
Oh child, child the same gods you honored,
Now seal you in a stone.

(Enters TEIRESIAS with Boy)

TEIRESIAS: Greetings, my friends, to one and all.
Four legs, two heads one pair of eyes. The way to the light.

CREON: Teiresias, my old friend, what news you have for us?

TEIRESIAS: Plenty, my lord, and you had better listen.

CREON: Have I ever failed you, prophet?

TEIRESIAS: Then you have ruled the city well.

CREON: I agree. What brings you here?

TEIRESIAS: This, my lord. You once again are walking on a razor's edge.

CREON: What now? I tremble at your words. Speak!

TEIRESIAS: Then hear this, King, and learn from the signs of my Art.
I was sitting at my sacred place where I sense the habitual flight of birds.
Suddenly, I heard something ominous, strange notes, cries, shrieks
Together with a wild flatter of their wings.
The birds were murdering each other in flight, Creon.
That troubled me. Immediately, I began to burn offerings at the altar.
But instead of fire, I smelled the burning of grease from the flesh of the birds.
Their bellies burst open and slowly dripped
Slime as gray smoke filled their carcass.
This boy described it for me. He guides me as I guide others.
I tell you, Creon, our city is once again polluted and you are the cause.
Our altars and hearths are stained with the blood from the son of Oedipus.
The gods no longer accept our prayers.
Their altars exude no flame but smoke from our offerings.
The birds sing no song of comfort but drink the thick blood of the dead.
Think, my child, all men make mistakes

But a wise man yields to reason and rights the wrong.
Only a fool is stubborn. Swallow your pride. Give in to the dead.
What is the use in re-kicking a corpse?
Listen to my advice, Creon. It is only for your own good.

CREON: You, too, prophet? Against me, too?
Why are you shooting arrows at me?
No, by the almighty gods, I will not be brought down
By a blabbering fortune-teller!
Is it money that you want, prophet? Gold? Indian gold?
Haggle over the price all you want, but you will never see
That corpse buried under the earth.
If all the eagles of the gods swoop down and sweep him up,
You will never see that corpse buried.
I know full well that no one can pollute the gods!
So, get rich some other way besides advising me what to do with a corpse.
It is a shame, you are willing to trade your wisdom for gold.
You'll see no profit from me, prophet!

TEIRESIAS: Oh Creon, if you could only hear...

CREON: Hear what? More words of wisdom?

TEIRESIAS: That wisdom outweighs any wealth.

CREON: I know, and foolishness is a disease.

TEIRESIAS: From which you suffer greatly.

CREON: Do not challenge me further, prophet.

TEIRESIAS: Yet you said my prophesy is for sale.

CREON: All fortune-tellers love gold.

TEIRESIAS: All kings profit from power.

CREON: You seem to forget you are speaking to your king.

TEIRESIAS: You seem to forget you are the king because of me.

CREON: I admit you are wise but also unjust.

TEIRESIAS: Do not force me to say things you will regret.

CREON: Say them, go ahead. Only remember, I will not pay for them.

(Teiresias sounds otherworldly as shafts of light bathe the stage)

TEIRESIAS: Then hear me Creon and hear me well.

Few will be the revolutions of the sun
Where you must pay for one death as recompense with a death of your own.
You send to death a living soul and kept a corpse from the gods below.
One in a grave before her death, the other dead denied a grave.
These are crimes against the gods and they demand their due.
Listen to me Creon. The gods demand for your punishment.
Fate is unchanged.
Tears will flood your house, death will fill your chambers.
Hatred and chaos will fall on the city
As dogs and vultures carry the dead's flesh
Blood drips from their teeth and talons.
You, Creon, provoked me to release my arrows;
Their targets are you. There is nowhere to hide;
Your fate awaits you, Creon.

(Teiresias resumes his previous self. Lights are restored)

Come boy, take me home.
Let him waste his ire on younger men.
Maybe he will learn to hold his tongue
And temper his head with reason.

(Teiresias and Boy exit)

CHOREGOS: The prophet is gone, King,
But his dreaded words echo in our heads.
In all my years, I cannot remember he ever lied to the city.

CREON: I know and it troubles me. It is terrible to give in.
But if I persist, misfortune will fall upon my house.

CHOREGOS: Take our advice, King.

CREON: Tell me what shall I do? Speak, I will listen.

CHORUS: Release the girl from the tomb.
Then build a grave for the unburied corpse.

CREON: Do you think it is right to yield now?

CHORUS: Yes, Creon, the quicker the better.
The gods move swiftly to right the wrongs of men.

CREON: I admit this is hard. I must change. I cannot stand against necessity.

CHORUS: You must do it yourself; do not leave it to others.

CREON: Yes, I will go. Now. Come, bring axes and shovels, quickly.
I will free the girl with my own hands.
I think a man lives better when the customs of the land are served.

(Creon and Attendants exit in a hurry.)

CHORUS: *(Joyfully)*
God of many names, come to us,
Born of the Thunder
Ruler of green valleys
Lord of rippling streams.

God of many names, come to us,
Heavenly child
Dance through the streets of Thebes
Leader of all brides.

God of many names, come to us,
Singer of the twinkling stars
Shine with the rays of the sun
Grace with your glory our good city

Iache! Evoe! Bacchus!

Enters MESSENGER

MESSENGER: Citizens of Thebes, children of Cadmus and Amphion,
Nothing is certain when we walk the road of life.
Sometimes Fate raises us up and sometimes she brings us down.
No living soul can un-write what is written.

Take Creon as example; he was happy once
He saved the city from her enemies;
An absolute ruler who governed absolutely.
Fortunate father proud of children nobly born.
But now all is lost. Gone are the joys of life.
For, what is a man if joy leaves his house, but a walking dead.
Grant him riches, live like a king, if he likes,
But if joy flies away he is nothing but a shadow of smoke.

CHOREGOS: What bad news do you bring the royal house?

MESSENGER: They are dead, and the living are to blame.

CHOREGOS: Speak, who are the dead and who are alive?

MESSENGER: Haemon is dead, slain by a hand...

CHOREGOS: His father's or his own?

MESSENGER: His own but driven by his father's deed.

CHOREGOS: Oh, Teiresias, you spoke the truth again.

MESSENGER: This is my news. I'd better leave, you draw your own conclusions.

As he turns to exit, EURIDICE enters from the palace.

CHOREGOS: Here comes poor Euridice, Creon's wife. Has she heard the news?

EURIDICE: Friends, I was on my way to prayer.
I could not help overhearing...by chance I heard the news...
I fainted there at the temple in the arms of my maidens.
But tell me...tell me again. I will be patient...
Grief and I are no strangers. I will listen.

MESSENGER: Dear lady, I was there. I will tell you what I saw.
Why should I comfort you with lies? The truth is always best.
I ran with your husband, Creon, where Polyneices was lying.
We knelt and prayed over the body to appease the gods
And restrain their rage. We washed the body, what was left of it,
With holy water, burnt the remains in a pyre and heaped
A funeral mound of his native land.
That done we then ran towards the living tomb of his sister.

As we approached, we heard cries and moans coming from the stone.
 Someone ran towards us and told the king.
 With heavy heart he wailed, "Oh misery, am I a prophet?
 Is this the wailing of my son that beckons me?
 Of all the paths I walked on, this is the bitterest.
 Is that my son I hear? Run, quickly, tell me.
 Is this my son in the tomb, or the gods play a cruel joke on me?"
 We obeyed. When we reached the tomb this is what we saw:
 At the far end Antigone's body turning from a noose of her fine linen.
 And Haemon, wrapping his arms around her waist,
 Was howling and wailing, that he lost his bride to death
 And his father was to be blamed.
 Creon, let out a howl and ran to his son, "Oh my child, what have you done?
 I beg you stop this madness and come out of the tomb."
 But his son glared at him with wild eyes,
 Spat on his face and drew his sword.
 He launched at his father but missed.
 In his blind rage he turned the blade to himself and ran it through his heart.
 Dying, he wrapped his arms around Antigone and sputtering his last breath,
 Blood stained her neck.
 And so united at last, Death blessed them with silence.
 Is there a greater fault when men act first and reason last?

EURIDICE exits in silence

CHOREGOS: She left us without a word. What does it mean?

MESSENGER: I do not know. Her grief is too great to share it with the public.
 Perhaps, she will spill her tears with her women
 Within the palace walls.

CHOREGOS: Perhaps, but I fear this deep silence.

MESSENGER: I agree, I will go in and see.

Messenger exits

CHOREGOS: Here is the king carrying the body of his son.

Enter Creon, and Attendants, carrying Haemon's body.

CHORUS: Here is the King carrying the body of his son.

CREON: Oh, fool, fool! Stubborn, blind, vain fool!
See how a father murders his son.
Look at the killer and his victim stand before you.
Oh my boy, so young...dead by a stubborn and proud heart.
Can there be worst misery befallen on my head?

CHORUS: Alas, you learn the truth too late.

CREON: And suffer for it. Which god did this to me?
Which god's hand led me to this unknown path? Oh, misery!

MESSENGER: (*rushes in from the palace*)
My lord, you carry one heavy load in your hands,
You find another in your house.

CREON: Is there anything worst than this?

MESSENGER: My lord, the queen is dead.

CREON: Oh port of Death. Is there no harbor of pity for me?
Why don't you drown me, too?
Is it true? Is she dead? Tell me straight, you messenger of Death.
Is my wife dead?

The door of the palace opens slowly to reveal Euridice's body

MESSENGER: See for yourself, my Lord.

CREON: Oh, gods! Oh, misery! My son dead. My dear wife dead!

MESSENGER: She stood before the altar.
She held a dagger and pressed it through her flesh beneath her liver.
Before her eyes went dark, she cursed you, Creon.
The child-killer, she said.

CREON: I am sick with fear.
Is there no one here to run a knife through my heart?

MESSENGER: She blamed you for all the deaths.

CREON: Yes, yes, I, alone, carry this burden.
I, alone, am guilty.
Hear me, my friends. I am the killer!
Take me in. Lead me to my death
I no longer wish to see the sun.
Quickly, take me in...I want to pray...

CHORUS: What is the use? You cannot escape your Fate.

~~CHORUS~~ CREON:
S: What do I do? Where do I go?
Can there be comfort to my sorrow?
My hands are stained with blood
My pride is crushed by Fate.

Exit all except the Chorus

CHORUS: The best way to happiness is wisdom.
The prudest road to the gods is moderation.
Words of pride are struck with heavy blows.
We learn all this in time.

END OF PLAY