

**SOPHOCLES'**  
**"ANTIGONE"**  
Written circa 442BCE

TRANSLATED BY  
GEORGE THEODORIDIS  
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**Dramatis Personae**

**ANTIGONE**

**ISMENE**

*(Sister to Antigone)*

**CHORUS OF THEBAN ELDERS**

**CREON**

*(King of Thebes)*

**HAEMON**

*(His son)*

**GUARD**

**HERALD**

**TEIRESIAS**

*(A blind seer)*

**A YOUNG BOY**

*(Teiresias' guide)*

**EURYDICE**

*(Creon's Wife)*

**SOLDIERS**

*(Attendants to the King)*

**FEMALE SLAVES**

*(Attendants to Eurydice)*

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**ACT ONE**

*Before the curtain is raised we hear the sounds of battle. Fade out.*

*Pause*

*Sounds of a bright morning. Cheery birds. Continues until just before Antigone speaks.*

*Curtain is raised.*

*Dawn breaking. We are at the front of the palace of Thebes. Its three great gates are a little off centre, towards Stage Right.*

*The centre gate is used by Creon, the side gates by everyone else.*

*The stage has two levels. The top is used by Creon, Eurydice and their attendants. The lower by everyone else.*

*ANTIGONE and ISMENE stand together at Stage Left.*

*It is made obvious that ANTIGONE has brought ISMENE to that spot in secret.*

*They are "whispering," lest anyone in the palace hears them.*

Antigone:

Dear, dear Ismene! My poor, darling sister! Do you think Zeus has any more disasters to hurl upon our lives as punishment for our father's sins? So far we have felt the weight of sadness, of destruction, of disgrace and even of dishonour. Now our king has stunned the whole city with this new law of his. Do you understand what it really means? Do know what shame this new law will bring upon our brothers?

**11**

Ismene:

No, Antigone. What is it?

I've heard nothing about them, neither good nor bad. Since that day when we were robbed of both our brothers I've heard nothing.

In that one day, in that one fatal battle, one brother killed the other.

I've heard that the Argive enemy has run away last night but other than that, I've heard nothing else, nothing that would make me neither happy nor sad.

Antigone:

I thought so. That's why I've brought you out here, Ismene; to tell you about it, secretly and alone.

Ismene:

Antigone, what is it?

I can feel something horrible, something frightening in your words.

Antigone:

The burial of our brothers, Ismene!

Creon has decreed that the one may be buried with all honours while the other is not to be buried at all but, instead, he is to be shamed!

They say Creon has buried Eteocles with all proper burial rites and ceremonies fully preparing him for the world below, while our other brother, Polyneices, who died a death just as horrible, should be left unburied and unmourned! Left alone, to be the food for the sky's starving ravens, all those birds of prey that eagerly hunt out their food.

These are the laws our Lord Creon has decreed for us two, Ismene! For you, Ismene and for me. Yes, even for me!

*She looks around her anxiously.*

They say he's about to come out of the palace any minute now to make this declaration again, loud and clear, in case there is anyone who hasn't heard it yet.

And he is not taking this declaration lightly, either! Because if someone dares to disobey it, he'll have death by public stoning to look forward to!

So, that's how things stand at the moment my dear sister, Ismene, and you, now you must show the true worth of your birth: are you worthy of it, Ismene, or will you shame your house, Ismene, the house of Oedipus, our father?

Ismene:

But, Antigone, if things have come this far what can I do? How could I possibly help?

**40**

Antigone:

We can think and act together.

Ismene:

How? And do what exactly?

Antigone, what are you up to? What awful, what dangerous thing have you got in mind now?

Antigone: *Extends her right hand to Ismene*

Ismene, help this hand to lift our brother's corpse!

Ismene: *Horried*

Oh! No!

Antigone, are you thinking of burying Polyneices? It is against the will of our country, the will of our King, Antigone!

**45**

Antigone:

He is our brother, Ismene! Yours and mine! And if you won't help me then they won't be blaming me for having betrayed him!

Ismene:

Ah, you poor, poor woman, Antigone! Are you really going to bury our brother against the King's wishes?

Antigone:

Creon has no right at all to separate me from my own brother. None whatsoever!

Ismene:

Antigone! Dear sister! Think how hated our father was when he died. How full of shame he was! He had committed such shame and such sins that, after bringing them all to the light, after he confessed to them all, he gouged out both his eyes!

Then she, too, Iocasta, who bore the double name of mother and wife, took her own life with a rope.

Then, both our poor brothers perished in the one day, each of them killing the other with his own hand.

And so, now, here we are, we two are left all alone. Think what awful end we can expect if we go against Creon's law, Antigone!

After all my darling sister, don't forget, we are mere women, we can't fight men!  
The rulers are far stronger than we are and we have to do as they say, not only about this but also about far worse things.

So, what I shall do, on my behalf, what is the only thing left for me to do, is, to pray to the dead souls, to forgive our Polyneices and then to do exactly as Creon says.

Trying to do deeds beyond your ability, my sister, is madness! Mindless folly, dear!

**69**

Antigone: *Angry now*

Fine then!

I will neither beg you nor would I be happy to accept your help, even if you had offered it to me my sister! You can believe what you want but I shall go and bury him. My death will be sweet once I bury him, because I will be lying next him in the underworld, having committed sacred, blessed crime.

The time I'll have to please the dead, sister, is far longer than the time I have to please the living. I will be among the dead for ever.

But you, Ismene, you can choose whether or not you want to dishonour those things that are honoured by the gods.

Ismene:

I'm not dishonouring them at all, Antigone but I can't see how I can go against the city either!

**80**

Antigone:

Sure, sure!

Make all the excuses you want, Ismene but I'm off to bury my dear brother's body!

Ismene:

How afraid I am for you, Antigone!

Antigone:

Afraid? Oh, no, don't be afraid for me Ismene. Look out after your own life!

Ismene:

At least don't tell anyone else, Antigone and nor will I! Let's keep this a secret!

**86**

Antigone:

God! By all means, Ismene, do tell the whole world!

In fact, my sister, I'd hate you all the more if you didn't!

Ismene:

Cold things are wrapped around your hot heart, my dear sister!

Antigone:

Perhaps but I know whom I should please!

Ismene:

And perhaps you may succeed but you're asking to do the impossible!

Antigone:

At least I shall be trying for as long as my strength holds out.

Ismene:

But one needs to know from the beginning what things one is capable of doing and not pursue in vain, the impossible.

Antigone:

This sort of talk will reward you with not only my own hatred but also with that of your dead brother when you, too, will die and you will want to be near him; and he'll be right to hate you then.

*Both exit through opposite sides*

*Pause*

*Light grows.*

Enter chorus

**101**

Chorus: *Hands raised in prayer to Apollo*

Oh, Ray of the Sun! The most beautiful light ever shone upon our Thebes, the Thebes of seven gates.

Here you are at last, great eye of our golden day.

Chorus:

You have come over the great waters of Dirke and made the enemy tighten his grips on the reins of his horse and hastened his flight. He had come from Argos in full armour, white shields glaring.

**110**

Chorus:

Covered in white wings, with full armour and with crests like the manes of horses, on his head, he was guided by the shrill and forked words of Polyneices to our land;

Chorus:

And like an eagle, swooped upon us from above.

Chorus:

The enemy first hovered and weighed his blood-thirsty spears above our seven-gated castle but then he turned sharply and ran well before his face was soaked with our own blood !

Chorus:

Well before the resin of our pine trees gave Hephaestus his fiery garlands!

Chorus:

Such was the war-noise which mighty Ares threw hard against the back of his difficult foe.

Chorus:

This because Zeus hates the arrogant tongue!

Chorus:

So, as soon as he saw them, rushing out like an over charged river, with their insolent golden spears and swords...

Chorus:

And just as they were about to shout out their triumphant cry from the tips of our towers, he, Zeus, threw his searing bolt at them.

Chorus:

And so, our enemy, who came to us with torch in his hand and in the grips of a whirling wild wind wavered and swayed for a while, high above us but then fell heavy upon the ground and there he lay.

Chorus:

Things turned out differently for him then. Ares stood by our side and the Fates destroyed him.

**147**

Chorus:

Seven of our generals, against seven of theirs

Chorus:

Equal in number, equal in skill, all gave their lives their full-bronze armour to Zeus.

Chorus:

All but two unlucky men, born of the same father and the same mother.

Chorus:

Double the contest, spear-to-spear,

Double the death, each a victim to the other.

Chorus:

But Victory –so great is her name- has come to us, to Thebes!

Chorus:

So well-armed is this city!-

Chorus:

And so let us forget wars and begin the sacred dances in every temple of every god beginning with Dionysus.

Chorus:

Let us dance all night!

The gates of the Palace open and Creon and soldiers enter

Chorus:

Ah! Here is Creon, son of Menoeceus and our new King! The gods gave us this luck along with our new victory. I wonder what disturbs him so much, that he sent a herald calling us, his elders, to an early morning meeting.

Creon:

Men! The gods have righted again what they have thrown into turbulence before. I've gathered you here, you alone, because I know of the respect you had for Laius' throne and for his person.

Even when Oedipus rebuilt the city and he himself died, you stayed loyal to his sons with minds unswayed. So, now that these two both, with each other's polluted swords, died, a double fate for them both and both on the one day, I, being their nearest next of kin, took over the throne.

Yet, it's impossible to understand the soul, the mind, the wisdom of any man before he's tested by the great power and laws.

And I feel this: that a man is of no use to his city if he's to govern it not by wisdom, but by a tongue, silenced by some fear. And if a man places anything above his city in friendship, that man I think is worthy of disdain.

This I always felt and this I will always feel.

Let Zeus who sees all be my witness!

I will never hold my tongue if I see that our city is in harm's way! Nor will I ever make friends with an enemy of Thebes. Because I know one thing absolutely: that our safety relies on us travelling upon a steady ship. Only then can we make friends.

It is by these laws that I will hold our city strong.

**193**

And so!

In respect of Oedipus' sons, I have proclaimed to the city that, Eteocles, who fought and fell for our country, who fought more bravely than anyone in this battle, let him be buried in a grave with all honours due to a most worthy dead.

For his brother, though, Polyneices, his own flesh and blood, the man who came back here to burn his country -end-to-end- and her gods, the man who wanted to taste his brother's blood and to make slaves out of his own kin, it is prohibited for everyone in this land to honour him by building for him a grave or by shedding a tear of grief.

Let his corpse be left untouched, unburied! Let the dogs and the birds of prey tear it to pieces, mangle it, make it a ghastly sight for all.

These are my thoughts.

I shall never give to the dishonourable the same rights that I give to the honourable but he who loves his city will earn the same honours whether alive or dead.

**211**

Chorus:

You have the right, son of Menoeceus to do as you please and to decree what laws you want, both, for the dead, as well as for the living.

Creon:

Then heed well the things I have said to you.

Chorus:

This task is so weighty, my Lord, you should place it upon the shoulders of younger men.

Creon:

Don't worry, the men who are watching over the body are already at their post.

Chorus:

Well then, what else is there for us to do?

Creon:

Just make sure you don't stand by while this law is broken.

**220**

Chorus:

Who's mad enough to seek out his own death?

Creon:

And that will be the wages of that error! Death! Yet there are men who the mere hope of winning has killed them.

*Enter a guard from SL. He is harried and afraid, obviously carrying an uncomfortable report.*

Guard:

My King, I can't really say that I've lost my breath by running my feet to the ground so as to get here as quickly as I could! No, a tarried. God knows I've stopped myself often enough, on the way here and I've almost turned back many times.

My soul, you see, was talking to me all the while and all the while it kept changing its mind: "poor man," it would say one minute, "Why are you rushing to your suffering?" Or again, "Stupid man," it would say, "why are you hanging about like this? What if the king hears it from someone else? What a mess you'd get yourself into then!"

Stuff like that was spinning about in my head and it made this small road so much longer!

Eventually, in spite of all the arguing in my soul, the decision to come here before you, won over. And, even if I have nothing really to tell you, still, I wish to speak because I've come holding on to the hope that I'll suffer nothing more than what's my due... my king!

Creon:

So, what is it that's made you lose your courage so badly?

Guard:

Hang on... You know, I want to say something about me, first; because you see, my king, I've neither done the awful deed nor did I see who did it, so, by rights, I should suffer nothing because of it! I didn't do the deed, my Lord!

**241**

Creon:

I can hear lots of words but I can also see plenty of walls around them.  
You obviously have some... important news to tell us!

Guard:

Walls, yes! Eh... That's because it's always painful to utter bad news.

Creon:

Well then, say what you have to say and be off!

Guard:

All right, then, here it is: someone, my King, someone... someone –I don't know who- someone, has buried the body of the dead Polyneices... a little while ago.

He just tossed a bit of soil over him, that's all, some dry dust; performed all the usual sacred things and then quickly ran off!

Creon:

What? Which man has the audacity to do such a thing?

Guard:

Impossible to tell, sir.

The soil is not disturbed at all; neither dug up by pick nor shoved about by hoe. The ground is as solid as a rock, without the slightest mark or bruise, nor lines made by cart wheels. Not a footprint left by the person who did this, my King.

And so, when the first guard of the day calls us all to have a look, we were stunned by this... inexplicable sight.

The corpse was fully buried – no, I don't mean entombed beneath the ground but there was this somewhat high mound put above him, as if done by someone who wanted to save him from dishonour. Yet, we could see no prints anywhere. Not even the footprints of some wild beast or some dog which might have come to tear at the corpse. We saw no were at all!

Then, we started arguing with harsh words, each guard blaming the other for it and we nearly got down to blows because there was no one there to pull us apart. Because every one of us was thought of as guilty and there was no proof to save anyone.

We all screamed that we were not at fault and each of us was ready to walk into fire, holding hot irons and swearing by all the gods, to prove that he neither did it nor knew who did it.

Then, when all our arguing came to nothing, one of us came out and spoke words that made our head drop low in horror, because we could neither say "no" nor come out of this without a great deal of trouble. So we listened. He said that we should inform you of this immediately, rather than cover it up. Then we've all agreed and then we chose by lot. Unfortunately, my King, the lot fell on poor old me and so, here I am, unwilling and unwanted – I know that because I know that no one ever welcomes a bearer of bad news.

**278**

Chorus:

Creon, while this man was talking a thought had crossed my mind. Perhaps it's some god's doing!

Creon: *To the chorus*

Quiet!

By Zeus! You're getting me angry! It seems that not only you are all old but you're mindless as well! I cannot tolerate such nonsense!

The gods do not care for this corpse. And why should they? To honour a man who's come here to put fire to their adorned temples, and to the people's offerings, to turn their land and laws upside down – or do you see the gods honouring evildoers these days?

Of course not!

No!

For a while now there have been some people around here who tolerate my decree only with mutterings and by shaking their treacherous heads! No! They did not want to bend their heads and place it into my yoke, as justice demands it! They did not want to obey me! And, I know this very well, whoever did this, did it because he was paid money by these malcontents.

Money! No discovery ever made by man is worse than the silver coin.

It's this silver coin which turns countries upside down.

It's this silver coin which sends the men away from their homes.

It's this silver coin which turns the minds of wise men; makes them wander about, lost to evil deeds, teaches them to commit every sacrilege.

But it will not be long before the traitors who have done this, will reap their reward.

And all of you know also that so long as Zeus receives my devotion, I swear that if you do not find the man who has committed this atrocious burial and if you do not present him here, before my own eyes, Hades will not suffice for you. Believe me, before the noose tightens your gullet, you will have

revealed the doer of this sacrilege.

You'll know then for the next time, from where to steal, and you will also know that no one should not steal from every one and everywhere.

Dishonourable profits destroy more people than they save.

**315**

Guard:

My king, do I have your permission to speak or shall I just turn about and leave?

Creon:

Can you not see that the very sound of your voice disturbs me?

Guard:

Is it your ears that are disturbed, my king or is it your soul?

Creon:

What? Are you weighing the disturbance to locate its spot?

Guard:

Well, you see, my Lord, it is the culprit who disturbs your soul, my Lord, whereas I merely disturb your ears!

**320**

Creon:

What a chatterbox the gods have made out of you!

Guard:

Chatterbox or not, at least I have not committed this crime, my King!

Creon:

You did, indeed! You've done it by selling your soul for silver!

Guard:

Oh, my! What a terrible thing it is for one to think, if the thought is the wrong one!

Creon:

Go! Go and make your logic prettier! Go but if you don't bring the culprits to me you'll see what disasters dishonourable gains can bring!

*Exit Creon into the palace.*

Guard:

Let them be found! Above all else, it's my wish also! Still, Fate will choose whether they're caught or not and I shall forget I've ever been there and you will never see me again! Phew! What a huge debt I owe to the gods! I neither hoped nor suspected this unwelcomed end.

*Exit the Guard*

**332**

Chorus:

Wonders abound in this world yet no wonder is greater than man. None!

Chorus:

Through the wild white of a frenzied sea and through the screaming northerlies beneath him and through all the furious storms around him, through all this, man can pass!

Chorus:

And Gods' most glorious Earth, the imperishable, untiring Earth, this man works with his horses and ploughs, year in, year out.

Chorus:

And man traps generations of the light-minded birds in his nets

Chorus:

And man catches the nations of wild beasts

Chorus:

And herds of teeming fish, huge harvest of the sea, man catches in his nets made of mighty cord.

Chorus:

So skilful is man!

Even the beasts that live in the barren mountains he rules over with his cunning machines

Chorus:

And around the hairy neck of the horse he placed the yoke and he does this around the tireless bull also

Chorus:

And man has learnt speech and thought, swifter than the wind he mastered

Chorus:

And learnt to govern his cities well

Chorus:

And this omniscient being has learnt how to avoid the blasts of the wild open air: the arrows of the freezing night, the dreadful wind driven piercing gale!

Chorus:

He's prepared for all events bar Death and from Death he can find no escape.  
Of illness, though and of disease, each man found a cure for the other.

Chorus:

And though his wisdom is great in discovery -wisdom beyond all imaginings!  
Yet one minute it turns to ill the next again to good.

Chorus:

But whoever honours the laws of his land and his sworn oaths to the gods, he'll bring glory to his city.

Chorus:

The arrogant man, on the other hand, the man who strays from the righteous path is lost to his city. Let that man never stay under the same roof as me or even be acquainted by me!

*Enter the Guard dragging behind him Antigone. She has her hands tied with rope.*

Chorus: *Indicating Antigone*

Ha! Is this a ghost?

Chorus:

My mind argues.

Chorus:

Yet how can I say "no" when I know her!

Chorus:

Is this not Antigone? Poor child!

Chorus:

Poor daughter of the poor man, Oedipus!

Chorus:

What happened Antigone? Surely you're not brought here because you've disobeyed the king's edict?

Chorus:

Surely they haven't caught you doing such a thing?

**384**

Guard:

That's it! You've got it, all right! We've caught her burying Polyneices! Where's the king?

*Enter Creon from the palace, with soldiers*

Chorus:

Here he is! Came out of the palace just in time!

Creon:

In time for what? What is it?

Guard:

My King, it's true! One shouldn't take oaths lightly because a second thought often makes a liar out of the first. That's how it was with me.

After all that fury and anger you threw at me the last time I was here and you had me trembling as if it was the middle of winter, I gave a sworn oath you'd never see me here again. Yet, nothing is sweeter than the unexpected joy, the joy your mind cannot imagine. So, in spite of those oaths I've taken, I've come with this woman whom we caught burying the dead soldier.

No lots to draw this time. The luck was wholly mine and no one else's!

And now my King, she's all yours. Take her, question her, judge her as you wish and so far as I'm concerned, I think I'm right in saying, I'm free and that I've escaped any punishment.

**401**

Creon:

So, how did you catch her? Doing what exactly?

Guard:

Looks puzzled by Creon's slowness of understanding.

You know what! She was burying the body of Polyneices!

Creon:

Is this true? Do you understand what you're saying?

Guard:

Completely, sir. I'm telling you, I've seen her with my own eyes. She was burying the body –the one you've banned, sir, with my own eyes, sir!

Am I not saying it clear and straight, sir?



Creon:

And how exactly was she seen? Who caught her? Where did she do it?

**407**

Guard:

Well, sir, it happened like this:

After that tirade of yours, all full of fear and dread, we returned to the ground where Polyneices' corpse lay. When we got there, we dusted the corpse totally clean and then, by the end of our work, we had stripped it absolutely naked.

Of course, by then, sir, the corpse had begun to... let's say, putrefy.

Then we sat upon some rocks. We sat windward side, sir, so as not to be hit by the stench of the corpse.

Each of us kept swearing at the other with horrible consequences if he had not taken this job seriously.

Things proceeded like this until the sun reached mid-sky and turned into a burning flame. Then,

suddenly, some wild and spinning wind comes and raises a godly turbulence, sir. Takes over the whole

camp, hitting mercilessly all the leaves and all the branches of the trees in the valley. The sky, sir, the

sky swelled from the dust and we, with our eyes firmly shut stood there, waiting for some god's curse

to be hurled at us. Then, after a while the storm passed and this woman, here, sir, appeared.

She began crying sir, like a little bird that's come to its nest and found it bereft of its chicks. Exactly

like that, sir! When she saw that the body was naked she began to scream and curse with wild oaths at

those who did it. Then, immediately after that, sir, she brings handfuls of dry dust and, lifting a

beautiful bronze urn up, above the corpse, she pours libations from it –sir!

But as soon as we saw her, we rushed towards her all of us together and grabbed her.

She was calm about everything, sir and it was easy to question her about what she had done then, as

well about when she must have done it before. She kept nothing back sir, nothing, which made me feel

both sad and happy sir, because it is a sweet thing for one to escape a disaster but a sad one indeed to

lead a friend into it.

One way or another though, I place nothing before my own life's salvation, sir.

**441**

Creon: *To Antigone*

You! You with the head to the ground!

Do you admit your guilt?

Antigone:

I admit, my guilt. Yes, I did it!

Creon: *To the guard*

You! You can go now! Go anywhere you like. You are free from every suspicion

*To Antigone:*

You again! Tell me with a few, quick words. Were you aware of the proclamation that forbade anyone from burying Polyneices?

Antigone:

Of course I did. Everyone did.

Creon:

And you had the audacity to break that law?

**449**

Antigone:

Yes, because this was not a law decreed by Zeus, nor by Zeus' daughter, Justice, who rules with the gods of the Underworld. Nor do I believe that your decrees have the power to override those unwritten and immutable laws decreed by the gods.

These are laws which were decreed neither yesterday nor today but from a time when no man saw their

birth; they are eternal! How could I be afraid to disobey laws decreed by any man when I know that

I'd have to answer to the gods below if I had disobeyed the laws written by the gods, after I died?

I knew that my death was imminent, of course I did and even if it came sooner, I would still think it a

good thing because when one lives in such a dreadful misery why should he not think death to be a

good thing?

There is no pain in this death but the sight of the body of my mother's son, dead and unburied would be a painful thing for me for me to endure.

Nothing else hurts me and if you think I'm a mindless woman then perhaps it's a mindless man who

recognises a mindless woman.

**471**

Chorus:

My King! I see a savage head from a savage father! It has yet to learn how to bend with ill fortune!

Creon: *To the chorus.*

Know this, though: The tougher the mind, the easier it falls. The tougher the iron is made in the burning fire, the easier it breaks or cracks. And it is a light pull of the reins which teaches the most spirited horses obedience because it's not right for a slave to be arrogant.

This woman knew the arrogance of her deed she performed, and was aware of her disobedience to our laws yet she still continued with the performance of that deed and laughed at her achievement.

Were she to gain the upper hand in this and keep it with impunity she would be seen as being the leader of this land and not I!

What, is she a man?

Even though she's my sister's child and even though she's the closest blood relative to me here, of all of us who revere Zeus, she will not escape the ultimate penalty. She will not escape death. Even her sister will be put to death because I accuse her, too, of the same crime because she too had schemed the burial of Polyneices' corpse.

Call her here immediately. I saw her only a minute ago behaving like a raving lunatic.

*Soldiers exit through the palace gates.*

The soul of those who scheme of evil deeds in the cover of darkness and shadows are often disclosed even before those deeds are accomplished.

And there's nothing I hate more than when someone is caught committing a crime and tries to hide it by embellishing it with sweet words.

Antigone:

Kill me then! Or are you waiting for something else?

Creon:

Who, me? No, I need nothing else. I have everything I need.

**497**

Antigone:

So what are you waiting for? I find no pleasure in your words either now nor, dare I say, will I, in the future. And the feeling, I am sure is mutual: none of my actions please you. Where can I get higher pleasure than by burying my brother? All these men here would agree with me if only their tongue was not stopped by fear.

Kings, though, among all the other benefits they get with the crown, they can also do and say as they please!

Creon: *To the chorus*

You're the only ones among them who sees this. The only ones of all the Thebans!

Antigone:

They, too, can see but they hold their tongue when you're near.

Creon:

Aren't you ashamed of yourself standing apart from all the others in this?

Antigone:

No, I feel no shame wanting to honour my own flesh and blood!

Creon:

Was not Eteocles also your flesh and blood?

Antigone:

Yes. Same father, same mother.

Creon:

How then do you honour Polyneices when this is a dishonour to your other brother?

**515**

Antigone:

Eteocles would not bring this up in the Underworld.

Creon:

But, though one is a traitor, you honour them both in the same way.

Antigone:

I'm burying a brother, not a slave!

Creon:

The one was fighting against his country while the other in its defence.

Antigone:

Hades, however seeks similar laws for all.

Creon:

But it is not right for good and evil to be rewarded by the same lot.

Antigone:

Who might know if such things are of any value down below.

Creon:  
No enemy will become a friend in the Underworld.

Antigone:  
I am for sharing love, not hatred.

**524**

Creon:  
Well then, if you must love, love those you'll meet down below but so long as I am on Earth, no woman will be the ruler!

Chorus:  
Ah! Here is Ismene coming through the gates. She is shedding sisterly tears.

Chorus:  
Moist cheeks, bright red face, marred by a huge cloud over her brow.

Creon: *To Ismene:*

You, too, ey?

Locked up in the palace, like a snake that's secretly sucking someone's blood! I had no idea I was nurturing two curses, two women who wanted to topple my throne!

Come here!

Will you admit that you took part in this burial or will you swear that you knew nothing about it?

Ismene:

Yes, I did it. If she admits to doing it, so do I.

Yes, I, too, accept responsibility.

Antigone:

No! Justice will not allow you to do this!

You neither wanted to help me bury our brother nor did I take you with me when I did it.

Ismene:

But, Antigone, in such troubled times I feel no shame in sharing the dangerous journey with you.

Antigone:

Hades and all the gods below have no idea who did this deed and I can't tolerate a sister who loves only with words.

Ismene:

Let me die with you, Antigone and let me pay my debt to our dead brother. Don't refuse me this honour.

**546**

Antigone:

My own death is enough. I have no need of your company down below and you should not claim for yourself rewards for which you haven't lifted a finger!

Ismene:

But what sort of life will be left for me if I lose you, dear sister?

Antigone:

Ask Creon! It's him you're worried about!

Ismene:

But what do you gain by hurting me so much?

Antigone:

If I'm hurting you I'm also hurting myself.

Ismene:

Yet even now, tell me, how can I help you?

Antigone:

Save yourself. I do not envy your escape of death.

Ismene:

So, we can't share the same fate?

Antigone:

No, because you chose to live and I chose to die.

Ismene:

At least let me tell you my reasons for doing so.

Antigone: Indicating the group of people around them, including Creon.

Because you believed in their system of Justice and I believe in mine.

Ismene:

Yet the fault weighs us equally.

Antigone:

Courage. You live but my soul has been dead for a long time now. It died so as to serve our dead.

**561**

Creon: *Laughs*

These women! One of them just showed herself to have just become mad and the other to have been mad since birth!

Ismene:

Because, my King, even the mind leaves one, when he's stricken by disaster.

Creon:

Your mind has left you the moment you started mingling with evil doers.

Ismene:

How shall I live without her?

Creon:

Her? Forget her now. She no longer exists.

Ismene:

Will you kill your son's bride-to-be?

Creon:

There is much more fertile land in the world for my son, Haemon.

**570**

Ismene:

But the love between these two, can it be found elsewhere?

Creon:

I'd hate my son to have an evil wife.

Ismene:

Poor Haemon! How your father disgraces your name!

Creon:

You and all your talk about marriage is making me mad.

Chorus:

Are you sure you want to deprive your son of her?

Creon:

It's Hades who'll put an end to this wedding.

Chorus:

So you stay firm about her death?

Creon:

And I'll also have your support!

*To his soldiers*

Right! Let us put an end to all this. Men, take them inside and from now on they should be tied up because no matter how courageous a man is, the moment Death approaches, he wants to flee.

**582**

Chorus:

How lucky are the people who have not tasted an evil deed in their whole life!

Chorus:

Those people whose house is stricken by some godly wrath, those people will be visited by every possible calamity for endless generations.

Chorus:

Just as when a huge wave, bloated with the wild winds of far north Thrace, rushes over the dark abyss and, from its dire deep, agitates violently the black, wind-shaken sands below and then, with counter-sighing and counter-groaning, rolls against the wave-beaten headlands.

Chorus:

I could see the suffering of the house of Labdacus for a long time now.

Chorus:

Suffering falls upon the suffering of those who have perished and not one generation is able to save another. There's no escape! Some god or other will strike these generations down for ever.

Chorus:

And so, here again we see a light risen above the last root of Oedipus' house, yet the blood-painted sickle of the gods of the underworld came, mingled with the wild words and the words of frenzy.

Chorus: *Wildly*

The Furies!

The Spirits of Vengeance!

**604**

Chorus:

What human arrogance can stand against your strength, Zeus?

Chorus:

Neither Sleep, who weakens all, nor the tireless months of the gods can bind you.

Chorus:

The years have not lessened you and still you reign in the brilliant light of Olympus.

And this law will hold fast for the past, the present and the future.

Chorus:

Man enjoys nothing without having to endure some ill fortune.

Because hope, ever unstable, is, for some men a good thing but for others, the hollow men, hope laughs at their desires.

Chorus:

Betrayal slips within a man without his knowing anything right up the moment when his leg is burning in the open fire.

Chorus:

That well known expression is wise, the one which says that if God wishes to guide a man to ruin, that man will see good in evil and it will not be long before ruin strikes him.

*Enter Haemon through the palace gates*

**626**

Chorus:

Ah, but here's Haemon, the last of your sons, your youngest born, my King.

Chorus:

Has he come because he has heard of his bad luck of losing his wife-to-be, Antigone and the loss of his marriage to her?

Chorus:

He looks heavy of heart, sad and bitter.

Creon:

I'll soon know this more clearly than if a seer had it explained to us.

Tell me, son, have you come here angry at me because of my irreversible edict about your future bride? Or to tell me that no matter what I do, we'll still be friends?

Haemon:

Father, I am your son and you are my guide, guiding me with your good counsel; counsel which I will always follow because I shall never put the interests of my wedding ahead of my father's interests, since your counsel is always correct.

**639**

Creon:

And that's how it should always be, my son! Everything should give way to a father's wish because that's why a father hopes to have many children: so that they can inflict upon his enemies whatever hard punishment they can and treat his friends with the same honour as he does. Whereas the father who brings to the world worthless children, well, how would that be different to having brought about the birth of innumerable pains and cause for his enemies to ridicule him?

So, now! Don't let the desire for a woman make you forget these sentiments, my son.

**650**

It is wise to know that the embrace of a bad woman in your house is icy. Can there be a bigger wound than that inflicted by an evil friend?

Spit her out, son! Get rid of this woman like one does an enemy and send her to Hades where she can marry anyone she wants. She's the only one in the city who decided to openly disobey my command. I'll not look like a liar before every citizen. I'll kill her! Then she can go and sing all her prayers to Zeus the protector of our folk down below. If I nurture rebels within my household there'll be many more rebels outside it. The man who's good at managing the affairs of his own household will be worthy also of being the ruler of his nation. Whereas he who violates the laws of the gods and his city, or wants to command its leaders, will never gain my respect.

We must obey those whom the city has ordained to be its leaders. We should obey them, unquestioningly, in all things, minor or great, those we agree with and those we oppose. I believe such a man would govern well and he'd also be an obedient servant; and he'd stay at his post even in the hurricane of war, honourably, bravely defending his country.

**670**

There's no worse evil than anarchy.

Anarchy destroys nations, my son.

Anarchy destroys homes.

Anarchy turns the spears of allies into fleeing cowards.

Those men left standing, the survivors, have been saved by discipline.

That's why each man must protect with all his might, law and order and under no circumstances must he allow a woman to defeat him. It would be best –if needs be- to be defeated by a man, rather than allow it to be said that women have taken over.

**681**

Chorus:

My Lord, unless our many years have sapped our brains, we think what you have just said is true!

Haemon:

Gods give man his most important possession, his brain and I would not, or could not say if what you just said is correct; but others, too, can be correct, father. I can hear and see what others are saying or doing about you or what they are blaming you for. Things which they would not say directly to your face because they're afraid because these are things which you do not want to hear.

I, on the other hand can hear secretly how the citizens grieve about this woman. And they whisper things like, "She of all the other women deserves this punishment the least because her crime was a brilliant act of virtue worthy instead, of praise. She did not allow to have the corpse of her brother left unburied to be torn apart by all the bloodthirsty dogs or the wild carrion. Should she not, therefore, instead, be awarded some golden prize?"

**690**

These are the covered words that slowly work their way through the city.

Yet I, father, value no other concern more than I value your happiness.

What jewel is greater for a child than his own father's glory –and for the father that of his own children? So, don't be so single-minded. You said it yourself quite rightly: he who thinks that he's the only one with a brain or a tongue or a soul, if you open him up you'll find that he's a hollow man. On the contrary, it is no shame for even a wise man to continue learning. Nor should a man be obstinate. One can see the trees on the heavy river-banks. Those that bend with the rushing current, survive, whereas those bent against it are torn, roots and all.

Same with the boats, father. When the captain tightens all ropes and sails against the fast wind, the boat will topple and the captain will have to swim all the way back home.

So, you, too, father, bend a little to the fury and try to change your mind.

I'm younger, I know but I still might be able to judge what's right and I say that it's a good thing for a man to be born with all possible wisdom but still –because it's not such a common thing, to be able to learn from others.

**724**

Chorus:

It won't do you any harm, my Lord, to listen to him and see if what he says is wise.

*To Haemon*

And you, too Haemon. Because both of you spoke well.

Creon:

At our age? Should we allow a young little rooster to teach us wisdom?

Haemon:

Justice only. Young or old, one does not look at years but deeds.

Creon:

Do you consider the deeds of lawbreakers good?

Haemon:

No, I would not ask anyone to consider that the evildoers are good.

Creon:

And has she not been caught committing such a crime?

Haemon:

No! All the people of Thebes shout it out with one voice!

Creon:

Is a city then to dictate what my orders should be?

Haemon:

See how like a young man you just spoke?

Creon:

Should I govern the city for others and not for me?

Haemon:

There is no city that belongs to one man.

Creon:

So a city does not belong to the man who governs it?

Haemon:

One man alone can only govern an empty city.

**740**

Creon:

I see that this young man is taking the side of the woman.

Haemon:

That is true, if you are the woman because I only care about your welfare.

Creon:

Most evil boy! Are you fighting your father?

Haemon:

Because I can see you practising evil deeds!

Creon:

Do I practise evil when I am defending my rights?

**745**

Haemon:

You are not defending them when you trample all over the laws of the gods.

Creon:

Arrogant boy! Servant to women!

Haemon:

Yet you'll never see me being the servant of evil deeds!

Creon:

All this talk is for her sake.

Haemon:

For her sake and for yours, father. For mine and for the sake of all gods of the Underworld!

Creon:

Tear it out of your mind: You will never marry this woman alive!

Haemon:

So she will die but her death will take some one else with her.

Creon:

You're still arrogant enough to throw threats at us?

Haemon:

Is it a threat for one to speak against a stupid opinion?

Creon:

You'll pay dearly for this: to want to teach us when you are without a brain yourself!

Haemon:

You want to speak but not to listen.

Creon:

Listen to you? The servant of a woman? Be quiet!

Bother me no more with idle chatter, boy!

Haemon:

Had you not been my father I would be telling you that you've lost your senses.

Creon:

Is that so? Is that what you'd be telling me? Well! By the gods of Olympus I won't let you enjoy this sort of impertinence for long!

*To the guards*

Guards! Take this hateful woman to be killed in front of her lover! Let his eyes witness her death!

Haemon:

My eyes? Don't ever think, father, that that will ever happen!

Neither she will die before my eyes nor will your eyes ever see me again.

Let your friends enjoy your madness!

*Exit Haemon through the palace.*

**766**

Chorus:

The young man is gone, my King! Full of fury and indignation and a mind such as his, will be carrying a burden of dangerously heavy thoughts.

Creon:

Let him go and let him do as his mind pleases. These women, however will not be saved from their death by anyone.

Chorus:

Is that true? Will you kill both of them?

Creon:

You're right. The one who had no hand in it should go free.

Chorus:

And the other? How will you kill Antigone?

Creon:

I shall take her on a deserted road, untrampled by human foot and, there, with enough food to ward off the sin of murder for the city, lock her in a rocky, subterranean cave. Perhaps in there, she can pray to Hades, whom she respects more than all the other gods and he can save her from death. Either that or perhaps she might be able to learn down there that it's of no use earning the respect of the dead.

*Exit Creon through the palace gates*

## **ACT TWO**

**781**

Chorus:

Love! You are beyond wars, beyond any place you fall!

You make nests out of the soft cheeks of young girls for your slumber...

Chorus:

...and you hover over the oceans and distant lands

and no immortal god, nor mortal man with his measured days escapes you!

Chorus:

And then, you catch and your catch becomes insane!

Chorus:

You, Love!

You push the minds of the just to do injustice

Chorus:

And you're the one who lit this fire of discord between two men of the same blood. Between father and son.

Chorus:

You, Love!

Through the lashes of a lusty bride, Passion, you win the day, scorning the great laws which hold sway over the whole world.

Chorus:

Because Aphrodite is invincible!

Chorus:

So now, I, too, seeing all this Leave the laws behind me and I cannot stop the fountain of my tears when I see Antigone being dragged to her eternal death-chamber.

**806**

Antigone:

See me, citizens of our country!

See how I take my final walk and how my walk sees the final

Rays of the Sun!

Never again the Sun!

But Hades, who accepts all, sends me to the banks of Charos,

Having not felt the honourable joys of a wedding.

Wedding songs were never sung outside my

Wedding chamber.

Yet Charos Will be my husband. The Underworld my wedding chamber

**817**

Chorus:

But you, Antigone, are a well known, well loved woman!

You're on your way to Hades' Dark chambers by your own hand.

Chorus:

You have not been hit by some dreadful illness nor by some angry sword but because you alone wish it!

You, of all the mortals wish to go down to Hades alive!

Antigone:

I've heard that Tantalos' daughter, Niobe, died a sad, bitter death.

Up, on the tip of Mount Sipylos some ivy tied the Phrygian girl to a rock and bound her there forever, the ivy, ever-growing over her body.

People say that the rains and endless snows melt her body and her tears roll down her throat.

I see my own end being similar.

Chorus:

But she was a god, Antigone!



And you! You're but a mortal!  
And so are we!

Chorus:

It's a heavy thing for the ears of immortals to hear that we, mortals wish the Fate of gods!

**839**

Antigone: *Indicating the chorus*

Ah! They're laughing at me!

Why, by the gods of our fathers, why can you not wait at least till I'm gone below, away from Earth's light, away from your face to do your mocking?

City and men of Thebes!

Lords who possess her lands!

Running streams of our river Dirke!

Forest of famed Thebes!

Let you be my witness!

I am taken to my rocky jail to a new type of grave unlamented and because of such gruesome Laws!

Neither here nor there will I be with welcoming friends.

Neither with the living nor with the dead!

Chorus:

But Antigone! You've rushed too far, too fast to the edge of daring

And there, Antigone, you hit upon the Throne of Justice!

Chorus:

You've stumbled too heavily and now you're paying the price of some crime by your father!

Antigone:

You've brought up my bitterest memories, my deepest woes about his thrice ploughed anguish of my father's Fate, of the fate of his lineage, the famous house of Labdacus!

The sinful marriage of a mother to her son, sleeping with the one to whom she gave birth!

And from which union, I, the poor wretch was the offspring.

And now, I go down to find them, to be with them, cursed and unwed.

Such dreadful Fate is your payment, my poor brother Polyneices!

Even dead, you've made a living corpse out of me.

**872**

Chorus:

It is a good and sacred thing this respect of yours but to disrespect the power of others is also wrong.

Arrogant. And it's your own unbending will that has destroyed you!

Antigone:

Without songs of lament, nor joyful songs of marriage, friendless, hapless,

I'm dragged along this inescapable, final path.

Nor will they let me, poor wretch, see the great sacred Sun in the sky.

Is there no friend who'll shed a tear of anguish for my death?

*Enter Creon and soldiers from the Palace gates. Looks around him and sees that the chorus and Antigone are still lamenting*

Creon:

Ha! You know? If lamentations and cries were of any use to the dead, they'd never end!

Take her from here and quickly! Do as I said. Shut her in the sealed cave and leave her there, all alone and abandoned. Let her die if she wants or let her marry in there.

We are innocent of her. She is deprived only of living up here.

*Soldiers tie Antigone's hands*

Antigone:

My wedding grave!

My eternal home, dug deep into the earth!

I'm starting off for you, for my people of whom Hades' wife, Persephone received a multitude. I'm the last of them and much more wretched than them.

I go before my time.

But I go with the fervent hope that my father will receive me with love.

You, too, mother and you, too, brother Eteocles whom I love very much.

Because it was these hands which have washed your bodies, which have dressed you and which have honoured you with all the gifts given to the dead.

Yet, now, Polyneices, I'm suffering this way because I want to bury your body also.

Yet I've honoured you justly and all those with a wise mind would agree.

Whether a mother of children or a wife, I'd always take up this struggle and go against the city's laws.

And which laws am I talking about?

Were I married and my husband died, I could have married yet another; and had I children and they died I could have had more by another man. But once my parents go down to Hades, it is no longer possible for me to have a brother.

And so I've put you ahead of Creon's laws, my dearest brother and Creon thinks it is an act of crime and an act of intolerable arrogance.

And so he has tied my hands and is dragging me to Hades even before I know the joys of a wedding night, before I see a husband next to me, before I raise any children.

Only abandoned thus by my friends, not yet dead, I go down. I, whose Fate is dark, am now taken down into the shadowy alleys of the dead, without having trampled on any god's law.

And why should I put my hope on the gods? Whom shall I call for an ally when, by doing what is just I have been judged unjustly?

Yet, if all this is thought by the gods to be just, I would die, admitting that I acted unjustly. If, however, it is the others who are at fault, then let them not suffer all that which they made me suffer.

**929**

Chorus:

Her soul is still in the grips of the same whirlwind.

Creon: *Indicating the soldiers*

And this is why these two will shed many tears. Why are you taking so long?

Antigone:

This word rings my final hour.

Creon:

I advise you not to think that your Fate will not be accomplished.

Antigone:

Ancient gods of our Thebes, land of our fathers!

This is the end! They are taking me away!

See here, great land owners of Thebes! Look upon your last princess!

Look how I'm suffering and by whose hand, only because

I kept my reverence to the gods.

**944**

Chorus:

Antigone, Danae's body, too, had to endure the exchange of our sky's sunlight with a bronze dungeon and she accepted the burden of her Fate to live hidden in a grave-like chamber. And she too, was of an important house and in her Zeus had entrusted his seed, the golden rain.

Chorus:

Fate's power, though, is mighty and neither Lords of lands nor Ares nor castles nor flighty ships well-beaten by the waves can escape her.

Chorus:

Lycurgus of the fuming mind, Drianta's son and king of the Edonians had also accepted the burden of his Fate because of his intolerable mocking. Dionysus had tied him in a rocky cave and so, drop by drop his anger slowly lessened and so, he slowly realised that his mocking insulted a god when he was making fun of the Bacchic Muses, lovers of the drink and song.

**966**

Chorus:

This side of the black rocks of the twin seas are the tips of the Bosphorus and there lives the man who hates strangers, Salmydisos of Thrace.

Ares rules there and it was there where he saw the cursed wound of the two sons of Fineus, those wounds which Fineus' evil wife made by gouging their eyes out, not with knives but with her own blood-dripping nails and with the sharp needles of her loom.

Chorus:

The poor men cried out their bitter Fate that they were born of a mother badly wed.

She was a seed of the ancient house of Erechtheidus, who grew up in the distant caves with the storms of her father, Boreas. She was faster than horses and ran high above the tall rocks, being a child of god.

Chorus:

Yet even upon her the eternal Fates fell, my child, Antigone!

*Antigone is lead away.*

*Pause.*

*Sun is descending*

*Enter the blind seer Teiresias holding onto a walking stick and onto the hand of a young boy.*

**988**

Teiresias:

Here we are, Lords of Thebes. Two men with the eyes of one.  
Such is the blind man's lot. He needs a guide.

Creon:

What's the matter, my dear old Teiresias?

Teiresias:

Listen to the seer and he'll tell you.

Creon:

I've never before ignored your thoughts, old man.

Teiresias:

And that's why you steered this city well.

Creon:

I agree, your views have helped me often.

Teiresias:

Well, then, Creon. Know this: You're treading upon a razor's edge!

Creon:

What? Your words send chills through my backbone! What's up?

**998**

Teiresias:

You'll know that after you hear the signs sent to me through my art.

Whilst I was sitting at the seat from where I read the signs of the birds –a real haven of every divination- I heard a strange sound from birds that cried with a shrill voice. All tangled, incomprehensible as if with an evil intent.

I understood then that they tore at each other with their sharp talons. The clashing of their wings created a most terrible din.

I was frightened and immediately went to check the burnt offerings on the altars which were covered with fires. But among all the meats which were burning I could not see Hephaistos' bright light.

Rather, the juices and the fat were flowing into the ashes and there was smoke and cinders flying about and the bile spread wide through the air whereas the meats were left there, heavy and soaked in the melted fat.

These are the things this child told me. These things and how the divinations were spoiled by terrible signs. This is why he's here, a guide for me, as I am for others.

Our city is suffering all this because of your own head, Creon. Because all our altars and all our other fires were filled by the birds and dogs who feasted on the corpse of the poor dead son of Oedipus, Polyneices.

Gods don't accept prayers and sacrifices from us, nor do they accept the flames of the burning meats any more. Nor are the noises of the wings clashing pleasant to them because they are gloated by the fat of the dead.

That's why, my son. Understand this: All men make mistakes. But when they do, it would be a wise and well acting man who corrected that mistake and moved on rather than stayed there stubbornly and unrepentant. The stubborn man is rewarded with more errors.

Come now, do as the dead wish and don't hurt those in pain.

Do you think it bravery to kill a dead man again?

It's because I want what's good for you that I tell you to do what's good. There's no better thing than for someone to heed the words of those who wish him well.

**1033**

Creon:

Old man! Now, I can see it! I can see you all, lined up like archers pointing your arrows towards me! Even your prophecies are aimed at me! As for those of our generation it's been a long time now since they've sold me out and bundled me off for export. Try it then and I wish you good profits.

Go ahead, trade with me and bring as much Sardinian silver or Indian gold as you like but a grave for that man you will not be able to buy!

Not even if Zeus' mighty eagles grab that corpse and deliver its flesh before his throne; even then don't think that in fear of some sacred pollution I'll allow his burial. Because I know very well that no man can pollute the gods. But, I promise you old man, Teiresias, that they who embellish their wicked words for their own evil profit, fall hard.

Teiresias: *He looks all around him and questions everyone*

Is there no one who... does no one know... Speak up! Speak up!

Creon:  
What? What are you trying to say to us?  
Teiresias:  
What? What I'm trying to tell you, Creon, is that man's best endowment is wisdom.  
Creon:  
Just as idiocy is our worst curse.  
Teiresias:  
You're possessed by this illness to the full.  
Creon:  
I have no wish to contradict our seer.  
Teiresias:  
But you're doing so by saying that my prophecies are lies.  
Creon:  
The whole race of prophets loves money.  
Teiresias:  
And the kings love their shameful profits.  
Creon:  
Do you realise all these things you're saying, the things you are saying to your King?  
Teiresias:  
Of course I do, and you should thank me for having saved the city!  
Creon:  
You're a good seer but you're wrong, Teiresias.

**1060**

Teiresias:  
You'll make me tell you all those things I have locked tightly in my heart.  
Creon:  
Go ahead. Say them all but not for profit.  
Teiresias:  
Is that what you take me for?  
Creon:  
Be sure of this: You won't be changing my mind!  
Teiresias:  
Creon! You be sure of this:  
The rushing sun will not finish many of its circles before you make a corpse out of your own flesh and blood!  
It will be an exchange of corpses.  
For the person you've sent from this world to the world below and for the one soul which you entombed as punishment and for the corpse you've stolen from the gods below and keep up here, unburied and deprived of his burial rites.  
This corpse belongs neither to you nor to the gods above and all these things are done because of your own impudent head and by force.  
Hades' Furies and the furies of other gods are keeping vigil waiting till you, too, fall foul of your own laws.  
See now if my speech is lined with a golden bribe!

*Pause*

*Teiresias turns about him and listens into the air*

It won't be long now. Listen! It won't be long now before you'll hear the wailing of men and women! Every nation raises its hatred when either dogs or wild beasts tear at or pollute its sacred bones or when some wild bird carries an unholy scent into the housed city!  
Like an archer, I shot such arrows at you and you'll not escape their flame because you've hurt me bitterly.

*Turns to the boy*

My boy, take me home. Far away from here, so he can extinguish his anger upon a younger man.

*To the chorus*

And let him learn to hold his tongue more quietly and his mind –what's left of it- more wisely!

*Exit Teiresias.*

*FX sound: The sounds which he was talking about, the wailing of people is slowly raising. (15seconds then low under dialogue)*

**1091**

Chorus:

The old man has gone, my King!

Chorus:

And what dreadful prophecies, my King!

Chorus:

And I know, too, that since the days when my head wore black instead of grey hair, that seer has never lied in this city!

Creon: *Overtaken by anxiety*

I know that, too! And my mind is in turmoil. It would be a terrible thing if I were to retreat, yet, to insist upon this course frightens me that I shall fall upon a disaster.

Chorus:

We need wisdom, son of Menoeceus!

Creon:

Tell me what to do and I shall listen!

Chorus:

Go and get the woman out of her underground grave and dig a grave for the unburied.

Creon:

You think this a good idea? To go back upon my word?

Chorus:

Yes, my King. Do that as quickly as you can. The punishments of the gods have swift feet and do whatever evil they wish.

Creon:

I'll do so reluctantly but I will do it!

Yes, I'll go back on my word. No one should fight against what must happen.

*FX sound lift. A tempest-like noise with which the chorus and Creon fight.*

Chorus:

So run! Run yourself and don't leave this for others to do!

Creon:

I'm off immediately!

*Opens the gates and yells into the palace.*

Slaves come! Run with me! However many you are! Pick up your shovels and run over to that spot you see over there!

*Some slaves rush out of the palace side doors and follow the directions of Creon*

I'm coming also, now that I've changed my mind and I'll bring her out of that cave that I've put her in!

I am afraid! It's best to live by ancient laws, the laws which apply to all!

*Exit Creon.*

*FX Noise. Fade out.*

**1116**

Chorus:

Bacchus!

You, with the thousand names! You, the precious jewel of Semele, Cadmus' daughter, son of Zeus whose voice reaches far, Bacchus!

Chorus:

Bacchus, who loves famous Icaria and rules at the crowded Eleusis, in the folds of Dio!

Chorus:

Bacchus!

Who lives in the Bacchants' first city, Thebes, near the rolling waters of Ismenus

Above where the Dragon's teeth were sown.

Chorus:

Bacchus!

Above the double-peaked rock sways the smoke and the flame of the fire,

There where the Korykian maenads pass dancing, the torches saw you inside the flames and the smoke and so has the Krystalian fountain!

Chorus:

Bacchus!

It is you they follow whenever you come to visit!

The vines on the mountain sides of Nyssa – full of grapes.

Chorus:

The sacred songs of Thebes on her wide roads.

The city which you hold with greater honour from all others,  
Along with your mother who was struck by a thunderbolt, a death of miracle, a death of awe!

Chorus:

Bacchus!

Come now that this city of yours is in the grips of a great pollution

-From one end to the other-

Come and bring us salvation either from beyond the Parnassus or from the groaning straits

Chorus:

Bacchus!

You bring the flaming stars of heaven to your dance!

You stand by the night orgies!

Chorus:

Child, son of Zeus, appear for us our defender, along with your Bacchae, who follow you and dance with you all night.

Chorus:

Come now, Bacchus, who spreads the loud joy!

*Pause.*

*Light softens. Evening.*

*Enter the Herald*

**1155**

Herald:

Men who live around the houses of Cadmus and those of Amfion!

I shall never praise nor lament the life of man, whatever it may be.

Fate lifts him high and Fate drops him hard upon his destruction whether he lives well or miserably.

And no one can tell what's in store for him.

Creon, for example. I once used to think that he was an envied man. He saved this land from Cadmus' enemies, took over its royal office and let his seed blossom among the noble kids.

Yet now he has lost everything!

He's lost it because when a man's body has lost all sense of joy, you can say he's not alive any more.

He is a living corpse.

You can have as much wealth in your house as you like and you can live like a king but when joy is missing then all those other things I wouldn't exchange for the price of the shadow of smoke – not against the sweetness of joy!

**1172**

Chorus:

What calamity have you brought to the kings this time?

Herald:

They're dead! Both of them because of those still living!

Chorus:

And who's the murderer? Who's dead? Speak up!

Herald:

Haemon is lost. Dead. Rolling in his own blood!

Chorus:

How did that happen? By his father's hand or by his own?

Herald:

By his own. Angered by his father because of that death...

Chorus:

Ah, Old man Teiresias! How true was your prophecy!

Herald:

Now that things happened like this, we need to think about other matters.

Chorus:

Yes, but I see Creon's wife, poor, unfortunate Eurydice! I wonder if she has come out of her room because she has heard of her son's death or just by accident.

*Enter Eurydice with a couple of slaves through the gates of the palace.*

**1183**

Eurydice:

Men of our city.

My ears caught your words just as I was about to go and prey to Goddess Athina. I was about to pull the bolt of the gate when the horrible sound of a household disaster hit my ears. My knees weakened

by the shock and I turned to fall in the hands of my slaves here. Yet, whatever it is tell me again. I'm not inexperienced to disaster. Tell me!

Herald:

I'll tell you, my Queen.

I was there, in front of it all and I'll tell you the whole truth, hiding nothing. In any case, why should I soften the disaster if I'm to be found a liar afterwards? The straightest road then is always the truth.

So! I was following your husband, my Queen, as his guide, towards the hill of the valley where the unburied body of Polyneices was lying, mercilessly torn by the dogs.

We prayed to the roadside goddess and to Pluto to have mercy and end their anger, we washed the body with blessed water and then burned the remnants of his body on freshly cut olive branches.

Then, after we threw over the ashes, soil of our city, high enough to make a grave, we left for the rocky cave where Hades' bride, Antigone was shut.

From the distance, one of our men hears the voice of someone wailing from within the place of the unlamented grave and immediately runs and tells Creon. And as Creon approached closer that sad voice swayed over him, weaker now and Creon gave an anguished cry:

"Oh misery! Am I a seer, too? Is this the most miserable road I've ever had to endure? I hear my child's voice. Run slaves! Quicker! Around the grave! Pull back the stones from the entrance and go in! Go in to see if it's the voice of my Haemon or if the gods are deceiving me!"

And so, we did as the sad King ordered. We entered the grave and what did we see?

There, in the deepest part of the cave was Antigone. Hanging by a piece of her garment tied around her neck and next to her, holding her by the waist was Haemon, still wailing the loss of his bride to Hades, his father's deeds and his empty wedding bed.

As soon as Creon saw him he groaned bitterly and, going inside the cave, he calls at him, "poor boy, what have you done? What entered your mind? What pitiless disaster befell you? Come outside with me my son! I beg you on my knees!"

But the boy dug his wild eyes at him and spat at his face. Then quickly, without even answering his father, he pulled out his two-edged sword and the father only just managed in the nick of time to save himself by rushing out. Having missed, Haemon became enraged and turned his anger upon himself. In a second, he turned the iron blade towards him and dug it deep into his flank. And while he could still breathe he takes the virgin into his drained hands and as he exhaled with force his last breaths the blood ran like a fountain upon the girl's white cheeks.

*Exit Eurydice, with her slaves slowly, ominously.*

And now, a poor man is lying dead next to a dead bride, celebrating their wedding in Hades' palace. It's proof, though, that lack of thought is the worst thing for a man.

Chorus:

What do you think of that? Our queen has left us without saying a word. Good or bad!

Herald:

I thought that strange as well, but I hope that having heard her son's dire death she thought it best to go and wail inside with her women rather than stand out here in public. She would have to begin the preparations for the grieving and lamentations of the household. She has a strong enough mind for these things and she won't falter.

*Pause*

*Everyone tries to listen for some sound from the palace. There's none.*

Chorus:

I don't know... I think though this long silence is a bad sign. And the prolonged grief is of no use, either...

Herald:

You're right. This long silence is a bad sign. Let's go inside and see if her shattered heart is hiding something.

*Exit the herald. A moment later Creon enters holding the body of his son in his arms. He is followed by an entourage of his men.*

**1257**

Chorus:

The King! Blatant proof, if I had any word in the matter, that the fault is no one else's but his own.

Creon: *Crying*

Oh, what end my foolishness has wrought! You see before you, the murderer and his victim, both from one household. What an unfortunate soul I have!

My son!

My Haemon!

*He lies the body down on the upper level just to the side of the palace gate.*

How young you went to your untimely death! You're lost to me not because of your own foolishness but of my own!

Chorus:

Oh, how late it is for you to see your faulty reasoning!

Creon:

I know it now, poor wretch but some god held me tight then and threw hard upon my head a heavy weight, then tossed me about on a wild path, trampling upon my own joys! Torture that no man can endure!

*Enter Herald from the palace*

**1277**

Herald:

My king, you have all this calamity to deal with and more!

What you're holding in your hands is one thing but there's more inside. Hurry, go inside and see it with your own eyes!

Creon:

What new disaster could this be? Could there be anything worse than this?

Herald:

Your wife is dead. This young man's poor mother. She has only just killed herself. Her wounds are still open.

Creon:

Gluttonous harbour of Hades! Why are you bent on drowning me?

And you, my son, you came to hit a dead man!

What did you say?

What else have you to tell me?

Has a more womanly sacrifice ever been cut for my own end?

*The central gate of the palace open and a bier, carrying Eurydice's body is brought out. It is surrounded by her attendants in mourning.*

Herald:

You can see for yourself. They're bringing her out.

**1295**

Creon:

Oh! What a heavy Fate! Here's my other, my second crime! What's next Fate? What more shall I expect now? Here I can see my son and there his mother, another death! Oh poor mother! Poor, unfortunate son!

Herald:

She stood in front of the altar and with a sharp blade she snuffed out her dark eyes. She first grieved for Megareas, her first son and yours who died with such glory and then for this young man here. Finally she cursed you that all the ills of the world fall upon you because you've killed her son.

Creon:

What dread! What horror! Why does no one, no friend of mine run a sharp sword through me? What heavy Fate surrounds me!

**1312**

Herald:

It was you, whom Eurydice blamed for this young man's death and for the death of Antigone.

Creon:

Tell me how she destroyed her life.

Herald:

After I told her about the death of her beloved Haemon, she plunged her blade deep into her liver.

Creon:

For all this –for all this disaster, there's no one else to blame except me.

*To Haemon's body*

It was I, yes, it was truly I, who had murdered you! I, the wretched criminal!

You, men! Take me! Take me from here! Take me away. I'm less than nothing.

**1326**

Chorus:

You'll profit if profit comes from pain because, of all the disasters man suffers, the disaster which passes quickly is the lesser evil.

Creon:

Let her come! Let the best of my Fates come now and bring me to the end of my life. Let her come and let me not see another day!



Chorus:

We must deal with this later; for now we need to think about what's before us.  
All else will be considered by those who should do the considering.

Creon:

I only ask for what I yearn.

Chorus:

Ask of nothing for now. Man is not able to escape the disaster wrought by his Fate.

Creon:

Take me! Take this useless man from here! I have killed you, my son! I've killed you even though I did not want to kill you! And I've killed her!

Thrice wretched am I and I have nowhere to turn my eyes. Whatever my hands touch escapes them.

What a heavy calamity has fallen upon my head.

The most important thing in man's happiness is good judgement and he must not treat with disdain the works of the gods.

The arrogant pay for their big proud words with great downfalls and it's only then, in their old age that they gain wisdom!

*Exit all*

**END OF  
SOPHOCLES'  
"ANTIGONE"**