

CREON

Stop! Before you make me choke. The Gods?
You're senile. You must be insane.
You say – this is intolerable – you say the gods
Could have the slightest concern for that corpse?

Was it for meritorious service they buried him?
Held him in high esteem, I suppose
The hero who came to burn their temples
Ransack their holy shrines,
Scorch their hallowed lands,
And fling their laws to the winds?
Is that the sort of man you think gods love?
Exactly when did you last see the gods celebrate traitors?

No. From the first, there were certain citizens
Who could hardly stand the spirit of my word and law,
Shakers of their heads in secret, grumbling against me in the dark,
They are the instigators, I'm convinced, turning my own guard
Bribing them to do their work.

Money! Nothing worse in our lives, so current, rampant, so corrupting.
Money! You demolish cities, root men from their homes.
You train and twist good minds and set them to atrocious schemes
You make them adept to every kind of outrage, to every godless crime
Money! And so shall they pay.

You!

Wheeling on the SENTRY

I swear to Zeus as I still believe in Zeus,
If you don't find the man who buried that corpse
The very man, and produce him before my eyes,
Simple death will not be sufficient for you
Not 'til we string you up alive and make a living lesson of you
You'll be racked and tortured 'til you tell
The whole truth of this outrage.

SENTRY

May I say more? Or just turn and go?

CREON

Everything you say offends me.

SENTRY

Where does it hurt you? Though I offend your ears, it is not I that is guilty of the offense to your soul.

CREON

Who are you to so know my displeasure?

SENTRY

I just annoy your ears.

CREON

You are a born nuisance and talk too much...

SENTRY

Perhaps. But I never did this thing, so help me.

CREON

Yes you did. What's more, you squandered your soul for silver.

SENTRY

Tis terrible when the one who does the judging judges things all wrong

CREON

Well now, you must be clever about your judgments
If you fail to produce the criminals for me
You'll swear it was money that brought you pain.

CREON turns and goes into Palace

SENTRY

I hope he's found. Best thing by far
But caught or not, that's in the lap of fortune

I'll never come back, you've seen the last of me
Once free who never thought to see another day
I'll thank the dear gods and keep away!

Dashes Out

CHORUS (DIVIDED IN PARTS)

Wonders are many on earth, and the greatest of these is man
Who rides the Ocean and takes his way
Through the deeps, through the wind-swept valleys
Of the perilous seas that surge and sway

He is the master of ageless earth, to his own will bending
The immortal mother of gods
By the sweat of his brow
As year succeeds to year, with toil unending
Of mule and plough

He is lord of all things living; birds of the air
Beasts of the field, all creatures of sea and land
He taketh, cunning to capture and ensnare
With sleight of hand

Hunting the savage beast from upland rocks
Taming the mountain monarch in his lair
Teaching the wild horse and the roaming ox
His yoke to bear

The use of language, the wind-swift motion of the brain
He learnt; found out the laws of living together
In cities, building shelter against the rain
And wintry weather

There is nothing beyond his power. His subtlety
Meeteth all chance, all danger conquereth.
For every ill hath found it's remedy,
Save only death

O wondrous subtlety of Man, that draws
To good or evil ways! Great honor is given
And power to him who upholds his nation's laws

And the justice of heaven

But he that, too rashly daring, walks in sin
In solitary pride to his life's end
At door of mine shall never enter in
To call me friend.

Enter ANTIGONE from the side, accompanied by the SENTRY

Here is a dark sign from the gods

LEADER

What to make of this. I know her

CHORUS

How can we deny it? That young girl is Antigone
Wretched child of wretched father Oedipus

LEADER

Is this possible? They bring you in as a prisoner?

CHORUS

Did you break the King's laws?
Did they take you in some act of mad defiance?

SENTRY

She's the one. She did it single-handed –
We caught her burying the body.
Where is the King?

LEADER

Back again, just in time as you need him.

CREON

In time for what? What is it?

SENTRY

My king, there is nothing you can swear you'll never do –

Second thoughts make liars of us all.
I could have sworn I wouldn't hurry back, to again face your threats
And the drubbing you gave me the first time,
But there's no pleasure like the unexpected pleasure
No luck like this stroke beyond our hopes
So back I've come, breaking my oath and who cares?
I am bringing you a prisoner – this young girl –
We took her giving the dead last rites.
No casting lots this time,
This is my luck, my prize, noone else's

Now my lord, there she is
Take her, question her
Cross-examine her to your heart's content
But set me free. It's only right.
I am rid of this dreadful business once and for all

CREON

Prisoner? Her? You took her – where, doing what?

SENTRY

Burying the man with her own hands.

CREON

Are you in your senses? Do you know what you are saying?

SENTRY

She's the one. With my own eyes I've seen her
Bury the body, just as you've forbidden
There.
Is that plain and clear?

CREON

How is it she came to be seen and taken in the act?

SENTRY

Here's what happened. We went back to our post
Those threats of your breathing down our necks.
We brushed the corpse clean of the dust the covered it

We stripped it bare – it was slimy. Going soft.
We left it a sodden naked corpse again
Then we took to high ground, backs to the wind
So the stink of him wouldn't hit us
Jostling and baiting each other to keep awake, shouting back and forth
No napping on the job – not this time
And so the hours dragged by until the sun stood high above our heads
A huge white ball in the noon sky beating, blazing down
Then it happened – suddenly a whirlwind
Twisting a great dust storm up from the earth
A black plague of the heavens, filling the plain
Ripping leaves of every tree in sight
Choking the air and the sky. We squinted hard
And took our whipping from the gods.

When at last it ceased, then, there, we saw the girl
And she cried a sharp piercing cry
Like a bird come back to an empty nest
Peering in to find all the babies gone
Just so, when she sees the corpse bare,
She bursts into a long shattering wail
And calls down withering curses upon the heads
Of all who did the work. And she scoops up dry dust
Handfuls, quickly, and lifting a fine bronze urn,
Lifting it high and pouring, she crowns the dead
With three full libations.

Soon as we saw, we rushed her
Closed on the kill like hunters
And she... She didn't flinch. We interrogated her,
Charging her with offenses past and present –
She stood up to it all, denied nothing. I tell you,
It made me ache and laugh in the same breath
It is pure joy to escape the worse yourself
But a pity to see another get into trouble
Whom you've no grudge against
However I can't say I've ever valued anyone else's life
More than my own, and that's the honest truth.

CREON

You, with your eyes fixed on the ground, speak up.
Do you deny you do this? Yes or no?

ANTIGONE

I did it. I deny nothing.

CREON

You. Get out – wherever you please. You're clear of a very heavy charge.

SENTRY leaves

You. Tell me briefly, no long speeches –
Were you aware a decree had forbidden this?

ANTIGONE

Well aware. How could I not be? You made it quite public and plain.

CREON

And still you dared to violate this law?

ANTIGONE

Of course I did. It wasn't Zeus who made this proclamation.
Not in the least, and not to me.
Nor did that Justice, dwelling with the gods beneath the earth
Ordain such laws for men
Nor did I think that your edict had such force
That you, a mere mortal, could override the gods
The great unwritten, unshakable traditions
They are alive, not today or yesterday, they live forever
From the first time and no one knows when they first saw light.

These laws – I was not about to break them
Not out of fear of some man's wounded pride
Only to face retribution of the gods
Die I must. I've known that all my life –
How could I keep from knowing, even without
Your death-sentence ringing in my ears
And if I am to die before my time

I consider that a gain. Who on earth
Alive in the midst of such grief as I
Could fail to find in his death so rich a reward?
So for me, at least, to meet this doom of yours
Is precious little pain. But if I had allowed
My own mother's son to rot, an unburied corpse –
That would have been agony! This is nothing
And if my present actions strike you as foolish,
Let's just say I've been accused of folly by a fool.

LEADER

Like father like daughter, passionate and wild...
She hasn't learned to bend before adversity

CREON

No? Believe me, the stiffest stubborn wills
Fall the hardest; the toughest iron,
Tempered strong in the white hot fire,
You'll see it crack and shatter first of all.
A little halter is enough to break the proudest horse.
There is no room for pride –
Not in a slave with the lord and master standing by.

This girl was an old hand at insolence
When she overrode the edicts we made public.
But once she had done it, insolent twice over, she glories in it?
Laughing, mocking us to our face with what she has done.
I am not the man, not now: She is the man
If this victory goes to her and she goes free.

Never. As I live she shall not flout my orders with impunity
Sister's child or closer in blood than all my family
clustered at my altar worshipping guardian Zeus.
She'll never escape, she and her blood sister, the most barbaric death.
Yes, I accuse her sister of equal part in scheming this, this burial.

Bring her here! I just saw her inside, hysterical, gone to pieces
It never fails: the mind convicts itself in advance
When scoundrels are up to no good, plotting in the dark.
Oh but I hate it more when a traitor, caught red-handed

tries to glorify the crimes.

ANTIGONE

Creon, what more do you want than my arrest and execution?

CREON

Nothing. Then I have it all.

ANTIGONE

Then why delay? Your moralizing repels me,
Every word you say – pray god it always will.
So naturally all I say repels you, too.

Enough. Give me glory! What greater glory could I win
Than to give my own brother a decent burial?
These citizens here would agree
They would praise me too
If their lips weren't locked in fear

Lucky tyrants – the perquisites of power.
Lucky power – to do and say whatever pleases them.

CREON

You alone of all the people in Thebes see it that way

ANTIGONE

They see it that way
But defer to you and keep their tongues in a leash

CREON

And you, aren't you ashamed to differ so from them? So disloyal!

ANTIGONE

Not ashamed or a moment,
Not to honor my own brother, my own flesh and blood.

CREON

Wasn't Eteocles a brother too – cut down facing him?

ANTIGONE

Brother, yes. Same mother. Same father.

CREON

Then how can you render his enemy such honors, such impieties in his eyes?

ANTIGONE

He will never testify to that. Eteocles is dead and buried.

CREON

He will – if you honor the traitor just as much as him.

ANTIGONE

It was his brother, not some slave that died –

CREON

Ravaging our country. Eteocles died fighting on our behalf.

ANTIGONE

No matter – death longs for the same rites for all.

CREON

Never the same for a patriot and a traitor.

ANTIGONE

Who Creon, on earth can say the ones below don't find this pure and uncorrupt? In the country of the dead, know you the law?

CREON

Never – once an enemy, never a friend. Not even in death.

ANTIGONE

My way is to share my love, not to share my hate. That is my nature.

CREON

Go down below and love, if love you must – love the dead!
While I am alive, we'll have no woman's law here.