

Enter ISMENE from the palace, under guard

CHORUS

Look – Ismene is coming, weeping sister's tears
Her faced flushed, her fair cheeks marred with flooding rain,
Sorrow puts her radiance into dark.

CREON

You – in my own house, you viper – slinking undetected,
Sucking my life-blood. Two traitors unbeknown
Twin disasters rising up against my throne.
Come. Tell me. Will you confess your part in the crime?
Or not. Answer me. Swear to me.

ISMENE

I did it – yes – if she will consent me say so.
I share the guilt; the consequences too.

ANTIGONE

No! Justice will never suffer that – you were unwilling
And I refused your help in what I did.

ISMENE

But I am not ashamed to stand beside you,
Now that you face such dangers,
Make your troubles mine.

ANTIGONE

Whose was the deed? Who did the work?
Let the dead and the god of the dead bear witness!
I've no love for a friend who loves in words alone.

ISMENE

Oh no, my sister! Do not reject me, please.
Let me share your death,
Share in the tribute of honor to him that is dead.

ANTIGONE

You shall not share my dying.

You shall not lay claim to that which you never touched.
One death, my death, is enough.

ISMENE

What do I care for life, if you must die?

ANTIGONE

Ask Creon. Is not he – are not his laws – what you care for?

ISMENE

Why taunt me so? Such abuse does not help you now.

ANTIGONE

You are right. If I mock you, I get no pleasure from it
Only pain.

ISMENE

Tell me, dear one, how can I still help you?
What can I do even now?

ANTIGONE

Help yourself. I don't grudge you your survival.

ISMENE

For pity, Antigone – can I not die with you? You deny my portion of your
death?

ANTIGONE

You chose. Your choice was to live. My choice was to die

ISMENE

I warned you it would be so, with every caution I could voice

ANTIGONE

Your wisdom applied to one world – mine to another.

ISMENE

But look. We are both guilty! Both condemned to death.

ANTIGONE

No. No! You live. My heart is long since dead
So it was right for me to help the dead.

CREON

They are both mad. One lately crazed, the other since she was born.

ISMENE

Truth indeed, my king. The sense we are born with cannot last forever...
Commit cruelty on a person long enough and the mind begins to go.

CREON

Yours did – when you chose to commit these crimes with her.

ISMENE

How could I wish to live without her?

CREON

Her? You have no sister. Count her dead already.

ISMENE

You cannot take her! Kill your own son's bride?

CREON

There are other fields for him to plow.

ISMENE

But...never as true, as close a bond than theirs...

CREON

A worthless woman for my son? No son of mine shall wed
So vile a creature. It repels me.

ISMENE

O Haemon, your father wrongs you so!

CREON

Enough! You and your talk of marriage!

LEADER

Sir, would you take her from your own son's arms?

CREON

Not I. Death shall break their marriage off.

LEADER

So it is settled? Antigone must die?

CREON

Settled? Yes. We both know that.

Stop wasting time. Take them in.
From now on they'll act as women.
Tie them up – no more running loose
Even the bravest will cut and run
Once they see death coming for their lives.

*The guards escort ANTIGONE and ISMENE into the palace. CREON
remains with the citizens who form the CHORUS*

CHORUS

Truly blest they are, who all their lives
Have never tasted devastation. For others
Once the gods have rocked a house to its foundations
The ruin will never cease – cresting on and on
From one generation on throughout the line –
Like a great mounting tide
Driven on by savage gales
Surging over black dead depths
Roiling up from the bottom dark heaves of sand
And the headlands, taking the storms' onslaught full force, roar
And the low moaning
Echoes on and on
And now
As in ancient times
We see the sorrows of the house
The living heirs of the ancestral kings
Piling on the sorrows of the dead

One generation cannot free the next –
Some god will bring them crashing down
And no kin of this tree can find release.

And now, the light
The hope
Springing up from the late last root of the tree of Oedipus
That hope is cut down in turn
By the long, bloody knife
Swung
By the gods of death
By a senseless word
By a fury at the heart

Zeus, yours is the power
What presumption of man on earth can override it
Who can hold it back?
Zeus, that are not subject
To sleep
Or time
Or age
Mighty lord of power, you hold fast, living forever
In the dazzling mansions of Olympus

Tomorrow and for all time to come, as through the past
Your law prevails
For mortals greatly to live is greatly to suffer.

True – our dreams, our high hopes voyaging far and wide
Bring sheer delight to many
To many others,, delusion – blithe, mindless lusts –
And the fraud steals on one slowly ... unaware
Til they trip and fall
On the fire that consumes them.

He was a wise man that said
“Sooner or later
Foul is fair and fair is foul
To the man the gods will ruin ”
And short is the time before ruin comes

Here's Haemon now, the last of your sons
Does he come in tears for his doomed bride,
Bitter at being cheated of their marriage?

CREON

Soon shall we know, and will need no prophet to tell us.

Son, you've heard the final verdict on your bride?
Are you coming now raving against your father,
Or do you love me no matter what I do?

HAEMON

Father, I am your son. You in your wisdom
Set my bearings for me – I obey you.
I cannot value any marriage tie
Above your own good guidance.

CREON

Rightly said, Haemon.
That is how you should feel with your heart.
Obedient to your father's will in every way
That is what a man prays for: to produce good sons –
A household full of them – dutiful, attentive –
So they can repay his enemies with interest
And match the respect their father shows his friends
To be the father of useless children
Is to be the father of sorrows
And mockery comes from enemies laughing in his face.

Haemon, do not be fooled – never lose your senses over woman
The warmth, the rush of pleasure – it all goes cold in your arms
I warn you ... a worthless woman in your house, a misery in your bed
What wound cuts deeper?

This girl is an enemy – away with her
Let her go and find a husband in the realm of Hades

Imagine it: I caught her in naked rebellion
The traitor – the only one in the whole city
I am not about to make myself a traitor, too
Not to my people, no. So I am going to kill her

Let her cry for mercy, sing her hymns to Zeus
Who defends all bonds of kindred blood
How, if I tolerate a traitor at home, shall I rule those abroad?
If I bring up my own kin to be rebels,
Think what I'd suffer from the world at large.
Show me a man who rules his own household well
And I'll show you someone fit to rule the state.
That good man, my son, I have every confidence he and he alone
Can give commands and take them too.
Staunch in the storm of spears he'll stand his ground
A loyal, unflinching companion at your side.

There is no more deadly peril than disobedience.
Anarchy – show me a greater crime in all the earth!
States are devoured by it and homes laid in ruin
Armies defeated and victory turned to rout.

The ones who last it out, the great mass of them,
Owe their lives to discipline.
Therefore, we must defend the men who live by the law
I hold the law and will never betray it, – least of all for a woman
Better to fall from power, if fall we must,
At the hands of a man
Than to let a woman get the better of us.

LEADER

To us, unless old age has robbed us of our wits, it seems your majesty has spoken well.

HAEMON

Father, only the gods endow a man with reason
The finest of all gifts, a treasure
Far be it from me – I haven't the skill
And certainly no desire to tell you when, if ever
You may prove wrong
All men might not think as you do.

It is not for you in the normal course of things, to watch
Whatever men say or do, or find to criticize.
The man in the street, you know, dreads your glance

He'd never say anything displeasing to your face
But it is for me to catch the murmurs in the dark.

The city mourns the death of this young girl.
“no woman” they say “ever deserved death less –
or such brutal death for such glorious action”
“She, with her brother lying in his own blood –
couldn't bear to leave him dead, unburied food
for the wild dogs and wheeling vultures”
“Death? She deserves a glowing crown of Gold”
Thus they say in the dark, thus spread the rumors in secret...

I rejoice in your successes father –
Nothing is more precious to me in the world.
What medal of honor be brighter to his children
Than a father's growing glory?
Please, don't be so single-minded to assume
The world is wrong and you are right.
Let not your first thought be your only thought.
To think one's is the only wisdom, the only word, the only will
Betrays a shallow spirit and an empty heart.

It is no disgrace for a man, even a wise man
To learn when he is wrong and know when to yield
You've seen many trees by a raging winter torrent –
How many sway with the flood and salvage every twig – but not the
stubborn – they are ripped out roots and all.
Bend or break. The same when a man is sailing –
Haul your sheets too taut, never tack or slacken before the gale
And find yourself capsized, keel up for the remaining voyage.

Father, pause. Relax. Put aside your anger.
I'm young I know, but let me offer this:
That good as it is to have infallible wisdom,
Since such is rarely found, the next best thing
It willingness to listen to wise advice.

LEADER

You do well my lord, if he is speaking to the point, to learn from him
And you, my boy, from him. You both are talking sense.

CREON

So – men our age are to be lectured, are we? Schooled by a boy his age?

HAEMON

No lesson you need be ashamed of. It isn't a question of age, but of right and wrong. Look less to my years and more to what I do.

CREON

Do? Is admiring rebels an achievement?

HAEMON

I'd never suggest you admire treason.

CREON

And was not this woman's act treasonous?

HAEMON

The city of Thebes denies it to a person.

CREON

The people of Thebes? And is Thebes to tell me how to rule?

HAEMON

Now who is speaking like a child?

CREON

Not I. I am the king and responsible only to myself

HAEMON

A one man realm is no realm at all.

CREON

What? The realm is the king's – that's the law!

HAEMON

What a splendid king you'd make of a desert island. You. And you alone.

CREON

This boy, I believe, is on her side. The woman's side.

HAEMON

If you are the woman, then yes. My concern is all for you.

CREON

You degenerate! Despicable coward. Threatening me – your own father.

HAEMON

Only because I see me father and he is wrong.

CREON

Wrong? To respect my own authority?

HAEMON

Respect authority? You trample down the honors of the gods?

CREON

You are the soul of corruption, rotten through. A woman's accomplice.

HAEMON

That may be, but you will never find me accomplice to a criminal.

CREON

That is what she is, and every word you say
is a blatant appeal for her cause

HAEMON

No father. For yours and mine and for the gods beneath the earth.

CREON

You will never marry her on this side of death

HAEMON

Then she will die, and she will not die alone.