

CREON

Is that a threat? You impudent...

HAEMON

Is it a threat to combat empty, mindless judgment with words?

CREON

You will suffer for your sermons, you and your empty wisdom.

HAEMON

If you weren't my father, I'd say you were insane

CREON

Don't flatter me with "Father" –
Keep empty compliments for your lady-love.

HAEMON

So your's is the final word? Flinging abuse, but expecting not the same?

CREON

By heaven and by the gods I promise you, you'll pay
Taunting, insulting me! Bring her out!
She'll die here. Now.
In front of his eyes, in front of her groom!

HAEMON

No. She'll not die at my side.
Don't delude yourself
You will never see me, never set eyes on my face again
Rage your heart out, rage with these friends
Who can stand the sight of you.
Let them be witness to your wickedness and folly

Exits

LEADER

He is gone, my king, in passionate haste.
Who shall say what a young man's wrath will do?

CREON

Let him do – let him dream up something desperate
Good riddance
Rest assured, he shall never save these two women from doom.

LEADER

You really intend to kill both of them?

CREON

No... not the one who's hands are clean. You are right.

LEADER

But Antigone – what sort of death have you in mind for her?

CREON

I will take her down some wild desolate path
Never trod by men, and wall her up alive
In a rocky vault with food enough to acquit our city of blood guilt.
There let her pray that the one god she worships – Death –
Who knows, may just relieve her from death
Or she may learn at last, better late than never,
What a waste of breath it is to worship Death.

Exits

CHORUS

Love, never conquered in battle
Love the plunderer laying waste the rich
Love standing the night watch,
Guarding the girl's soft cheek
In the farthest corners of the earth, in the midst of the sea
You are there, you are here
Not even the deathless gods can flee your onset
Nothing human born for a day

Whoever feels your grip is driven mad

Love! You wrench the minds of the righteous to outrage
Swerve them to their ruin, driving souls to mazes of sin and strife

Dividing kindred strife – you have ignited this
Father and son at war.

Love alone is the victor – warm glance of bride triumphant
Burning with desire, throned in power, side by side with mighty laws
Irresistable Aphrodite, never conquered

Love, you mock us for your sport

ANTIGONE is brought from the palace, under guard

CHORUS (SPEAKING INDIVIDUALLY)

But now, even I would rebel against the king
I would break all bounds when I see this
I fill with tears
I cannot hold them back
Not any more

CHORUS

Here is a sight beyond all bearing
At which my eyes cannot but weep
Antigone forth faring
To her bridal-bower of endless sleep

ANTIGONE

Look at my, my countrymen, setting out on the last road
Looking into the light of the last day
The last I will ever see
The god of death takes me down the banks of Acheron alive
Denied my part in wedding songs
No songs in the dusk crown my marriage
I go to wed the lord of the dark waters.

CHORUS

But glory and praise go with you, lady
To you resting place, you go with your beauty
Unmarred by the hand of consuming sickness
Untouched by the sword, living free
A law to yourself, no mortal like you ever
You go down to the halls of Death alive and breathing.

ANTIGONE

Why in the name of all my father's gods
Why can't you wait 'til I am gone –
Rather than taunt while I still live?
Oh my city, all your fine rich sons!
Your valleys of rivers, your chariots and horses
You at least bear me witness, look
Unmourned by friends and forced by crude laws
I go to my rockbound prison
In strange cold tomb to linger,
Gods! I've no home on earth and none below
Not with the living nor with the breathless dead.

CHORUS

You went too far, the last limits of daring
Stumbling against the law enthroned.
Do you, I wonder, pay for the sins of your father?

ANTIGONE

There – you've touched it. The worst pain, the worst anguish
Raking up the grief for father, three times over for all the doom
That's struck us down – the brilliant house of Laius.
Oh mother, your marriage bed – the coiling horrors, the coupling there
You with your own son, my father – doomstruck mother!
Such were my parents, and I their wretched child
I go to them now, cursed, unwed, to share their home
Doomed to this death by the ill-starred marriage
That marred my brother's life
This marriage murders mine, and brother's dying
Drags me down to death, alive.

CHORUS

Reverence ask for reverence in return
But attacks on authority never go unanswered
Not by those who hold the reins of power
Your blind will, your passion has destroyed you.

ANTIGONE

No one to weep for me, my friends

No funeral hymn, no marriage music
No sun from this day forth, no light
None to tears for the destiny that is mine
No loved ones mourn my death.

CREON

If a man could wail his own dirge before he dies, he'd never finish

Take her away quickly! Wall her up in the tomb
You have your orders. Abandon her there, alone
And let her choose, death or a buried life with a good roof for shelter
Her life is ended from this day, but her blood be not on our hands.

ANTIGONE

So to my grave, my bridal-bower, my everlasting prison
I go to join those many of my kinsmen
Who dwell in the mansions of Persephone
Last and unhappiest, before my time
Yet I believe my father will be there to welcome me
My mother greet me gladly
My brother, Eteocles, gladly see me come
Each of you, my hands have laid to rest
When you died, I washed you with my hands
I dressed you all, I poured the sacred cups across your tombs.
But now, Polynices, because I laid you out, as well
This is my reward.

Nevertheless, I honored you – the decent will admit it –
Well and wisely, too

I would not have done the forbidden thing
For any husband or for any son.
I'd have never taken this ordeal upon myself
Never defied our people's will. What law, you ask
Do I satisfy with what I say?
A husband dead, there might have been another
A child by another, too, if one were lost
But father and mother lost in the halls of Death
No brother could ever spring to light again.

For this law alone, I held you first in honor
For this Creon, the king, judges me a criminal
Guilty of dreadful outrage my dear brother
And now he leads me off, captive in his hands
Never a bride, never a mother,
Denied all joy of marriage, of raising children
Deserted so by loved ones, struck by fate,
I descend alive into the caverns of the dead

What law of the mighty gods have I transgressed?
Why look to the heavens any more, tormented as I am?
What help or hope have I, in whom devotion is deemed sacrilege?
Very well: if this is the pleasure of the gods,
Once I suffer, I will know I was wrong.

But if these men are wrong, let them suffer
Nothing worse than they mete out to me.
I wish them no punishment worse than mine.

LEADER

Still the same rough winds, the same tempest in her heart,
Torments her soul with angry gusts.

CREON

Take her away. Stop wasting time.
The more cause have they that guard her to hasten their work,
Or they, too will suffer.

LEADER

Alas, that word had the sound of death

CREON

Indeed, there is no more to hope for

ANTIGONE

Land of Thebes, city of all my fathers –
Oh you gods, first gods of our race!
They drag me away, now, no more delay
Look on me, you noble sons of Thebes –
The last of a great line of kings, I alone

See what I suffer no at the hands of what breed of men –
All for reverence
Because I honored those things to which honor truly belongs

CHORUS

So, long ago, lay Danae
Entombed within her brazen bower
Noble and beautiful was she
On whom there fell treasured shower
Of life from Zeus. There is no tower
So high, no armory so great
No ship so swift, as is the power
Of man's inexorable fate

There was a proud Edonian king
Lycurgus, in rock prison bent
For arrogantly challenging
Olympus' laws, it was his punishment
Of that swift passion to repent
In slow perception, for that he
Had braved the rule omnipotent
Of Dionysus' sovereignty

On Phineus' wife the hand of fate
Was heavy when her children fell
Victims to a stepmother's hate
And she endured a prison cell
Where the north wind stood sentinel
In caverns amid the mountains wild.
Thus the grey spinner wove their spell
On her, as upon thee, my child...

Enter TIRESIAS led by a boy

TIRESIAS

Elders of Thebes, we greet you, my companion and I
Who share one pair of eyes on our journeys together –
So the blind must go, with a guide to lead the way

CREON

What is it old Tiresias? What news now?

TIRESIAS

Ay, news you shall have; and advice, if you can heed it.

CREON

I've never wavered from your advice before.

TIRESIAS

And so you kept the city on a straight course.

CREON

And gladly acknowledge the debt we owe you, I swear to that.

TIRESIAS

Then reflect, good king, you are poised once more
On the razor-edge of fate.

CREON

Grave words from your lips, good priest. I shudder to hear you.

TIRESIAS

You will learn when you listen
To the warnings of my craft
As I sat on the ancient seat of augury
An unfamiliar sound came to my ears
In the sanctuary where every bird will hover at my hands –
Suddenly I heard a strange voice in the wingbeats, unintelligible
Barbaric – a mad scream! Talons flashing, ripping.
They were killing each other – that much I knew –
The murderous fury whirring in those wings made that much clear.

Full of foreboding, I tested the sacrifice upon the altar,
Igniting the altar at all points – but no fire
The god in the fire never blazed
There was no answering flame; only rank juice
Oozed from the flesh and dripped among the ashes
Smouldering and sputtering, the bladder puffed and burst

Spraying gall into the air. No fire.
The fat wrapping the bones slithered off
Leaving the haunches bare. No fire.
The rites failed that might have blazed
The future with a sign
So I learned from my acolyte
He is my guide as I am the guide to others.

The blight upon us is your doing.
It is your high resolve that sets this plague on Thebes
The public altars and sacred hearths are fouled
One and all, with blood and flesh torn
By the birds and the dogs from the doomstruck son
Of Oedipus
And so the gods are deaf to our prayers
They spurn the offerings of our hands
The flame of holy flesh.

No birds cry out an omen clear and true –
They're gorged with the dregs of blood this man has shed.

Take this to heart, my king, I warn you
All men make mistakes – it is human
But once the wrong is done, a man can turn back his folly
If he tries to make amends, however low he's fallen
And stops his bull-necked ways
Stubbornness brands you for stupidity
Pride is a crime.
Yield to the dead, pay heed his due – wound not the fallen
Where is the glory killing the dead twice over?

My words are for your good, as is my will.
And it should be acceptable, as I speak for
Your own good
Your pure gain.

CREON

Old man – Old men – ALL of you!
You take me for your target and shoot your arrows at my head
Even you are loosed on me, you fortune teller

I know your art of old – you've tried to sell me short
And ship me off for years
Drive your bargains. Traffic – as much as you'd like –
In the gold of India, in the silver of Sardis,
But you will never bury that body in a grave
Not even if Zeus' eagles rip the corpse
And wing their rotten pickings off to the throne of Olympus!
Never, not even in fear of such defilement
Will I tolerate his burial, that traitor!
We cannot defile the gods – no mortal has that power.

No, reverend old Tiresias, all men fail, but the wisest
Fail obscenely
When they seek their own advantage
Uttering obscene advice.

TIRESIAS

Gods, is there a man alive who knows? Who actually believes...

CREON

What now? What earth-shattering truth are you about to utter?

TIRESIAS

Just... how much a sense of judgment – wisdom –
is the greatest gift we have

CREON

Just as much, I'd say, as the twisted mind is the worst affliction known

TIRESIAS

Ah... affliction. Sickness. You speak of your own symptoms, sir.

CREON

I am in no mood to trade insults, to pick a quarrel with you, priest.

TIRESIAS

You have already, calling my prophecies a lie.