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Antigone

A Play

by Jean Anouilh

Translated by Jeremy Sams

A SAMUEL FRENCH ACTING EDITION



New York Hollywood London Toronto

SAMUELFRENCH.COM

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Billing *must* be substantially as follows:

(NAME OF PRODUCER)
presents

ANTIGONE
by
Jean Anouilh

Translated by
Jeremy Sams

CHARACTERS

ANTIGONE

CREON

PROLOGUE

HAEMON

ISMENE

THE NURSE

THE MESSENGER

THREE GUARDS

EURYDICE

ANTIGONE

(A neutral décor. Three identical doors. When the curtain rises all the characters are on stage. They are chatting, knitting, playing cards. The PROLOGUE comes towards us and speaks.)

PROLOGUE. Well, here we are.

These are the protagonists. The people who are going to play out the story of Antigone for you. That's her over there. Antigone. That thin little girl, not saying a word. Just sitting, looking straight ahead ... thinking. What's she thinking? That any minute now she'll have to become "Antigone." To somehow break the bounds of what she was, the rather pale, withdrawn young girl who no one in the family really takes seriously, and become *Antigone*. Who must rise up and face the world, and face Creon who is her uncle, who is the King. She's thinking that she's going to have to die, that she's young, and that she'd rather not. But there's nothing she can do about it. She's Antigone and that's the part she has to play. And she has to play it to the hilt. Ever since the curtain rose she's been feeling, what, a sort of distance. A distance growing and growing at a giddy rate, not just between her and her sister Ismene (that's Ismene over there, chatting and laughing with that young man), but also between her and us. Between her and those of us who are quite content to sit here, and watch her, quite content because we don't have to die. Well we do, but not necessarily tonight.

The young man I mentioned earlier ... yes, him ... the one talking to the blonde girl, Ismene, Antigone's sister, he's called Haemon. He's the son of Creon, and he's Antigone's fiancé. It's odd that, because actually he's much more Ismene's type. They've got a lot in common. They share a taste for fun and parties and dancing ... for happiness and for success. Even for sensuality.

As you'll have noticed, Ismene is much more beautiful than

Antigone. But there was that one night, a while back, the night of the ball, when Haemon was dancing with Ismene, and only with Ismene, and who can blame him, she looked so ravishing in her brand new, dress. But that was the night, nevertheless when he disappeared, suddenly, in search of Antigone and found her, just as you find her now, sitting, dreaming, hugging her knees. And then asked her to marry him. Just like that. No one's quite understood why. She looked up at him with her great big serious eyes and, quite unsurprised, and with a hint of a sad sweet smile said, quite simply ... "yes." Then the orchestra struck up a new number and there was Ismene laughing, dancing, surrounded by young men and there was Haemon and guess what, he was going to be Antigone's husband. Of course he didn't know that Antigone would never have a husband, and all that princely title would earn him was the right to die.

That larger man over there, the one with the grey hair, standing next to his page, lost in thought, that's Creon. He's the King. His face is lined, he's tired. He has to govern, to rule men and that's a tricky business. It's exhausting. In the old days when Oedipus was still alive, he was merely Head Courtier. He used to love music and books and beautiful things. But Oedipus and his sons died, so he abandoned his library and his antiques, rolled up his sleeves and got on with the job. Sometimes in the evenings when he's beside himself with fatigue he wonders if it's all a waste of time. A vain pursuit, trying to rule men. A rather sordid occupation, something better left to the lower order, like looking after beasts. But then, come the morning, he sees things differently, more pragmatically. These are nothing more than problems, he thinks, precise problems, to be precisely solved. And so up he gets and calmly starts his day, as any workman would.

The older lady over there, knitting — no, that's the nurse, she brought the two sisters up — no, next to her, that's it, that's Eurydice, Creon's wife. She'll be knitting throughout the whole play, until it's her turn, her turn to get up and die. She's a good woman, noble, loving, but she can be of no help to him. Creon is alone, alone apart from his page who's too young to be of any help to him either.

The pale boy over there, right at the back, all on his own, against the wall, that's the messenger. He's the one who will have to announce Haemon's death, not long from now. You'll notice he's not mixing with the others, or chatting. That's why. He knows.

Who else have we got? Oh yes, those three red-faced guards. They're not a bad bunch, they have their wives and their kids and their worries, just like everyone else. Quite soon you'll be seeing them going about their business. Seizing people, taking them away to their death, that sort of thing. They don't make a song and dance about it. It's what they do, it's their job. They reek of garlic and of red wine and they're completely devoid of imagination. They're simply the tools of justice. Which means, for the moment at least, Creon's justice. But then again, they'll arrest anyone, even Creon himself, should the need arise, should the order be given. And that'll happen too.

And, well, that's it. That's everyone. Now you know who they are, now they act out their story for you. Of course the story began before. There's a history. There's always a history.

Oedipus, the late King, had two daughters. We've already met them. Ismene and Antigone. But he also had two sons. Who aren't actually here because they're already dead. They were called Eteocles and Polynices, and after their father died it was decided they were to share the throne of Thebes, each ruling a year, taking it in turns. Perfectly reasonable. But not to them. They didn't want to share the throne. No, instead they fought, and killed each other outside the city walls. Why? Well, what had happened was that Eteocles, the elder brother, had refused to give back the throne once his year was up. So, civil war. Polynices brought in reinforcements. Seven foreign princes, each of whom was defeated at the seven gates of the city. That war's over now. Both the brothers are dead and Creon is king. And Creon has now decreed that Eteocles, the good brother, should be given a state funeral ... whereas Polynices, the rebel, the man who dared to raise arms against Thebes, should be left to rot without a headstone, left to be eaten by the vultures and the wild dogs. And that anyone, anyone at all, who tries to give him a proper burial should be condemned to death. That is his decree. So. There we have it

(While the PROLOGUE has been speaking the characters have left the stage one by one. Now the PROLOGUE also leaves. The lighting changes. It is now a grey dawn, the house is still asleep. ANTIGONE opens the door and tiptoes out barefoot with her shoes in her hands. For a moment she stands and listens. The

NURSE rushes on.)

NURSE. Where've you been?

ANTIGONE. Just out walking.

NURSE. Walking?

ANTIGONE. Yes. Just out for a stroll. And Nana, it was lovely. So lovely and grey. You'd never guess it now, not now it's gone all pink and yellow and green, like some gaudy picture postcard. You should get up earlier if you want to see the world drained of all color.

NURSE. I get up early enough, thank you very much. I get up when it's still dark, and I go to your room to see if you're still in bed. But you're not, are you? You're up and out and off somewhere.

ANTIGONE. It's funny, the garden was still asleep. I think I took it rather by surprise. That's what's nice about gardens, they forget all about us.

NURSE. I went to the back door and you'd left it ajar. That's how I knew.

ANTIGONE. It's as if everything were waiting. The fields, everything, wet and waiting. Silently. And I was really embarrassed to be making such an unholy racket on the pavement, to be breaking their silence, because I knew that it wasn't me they were waiting for. So I took off my sandals and I slipped into the countryside. Imperceptibly.

NURSE. Be sure to give your feet a good wash before you go back to bed.

ANTIGONE. I'm not going back to bed.

NURSE. What? It's four in the morning! Not even that. And I get up and go into her room to see if she's still tucked up, and she's not, the bed's quite cold with no one inside.

ANTIGONE. Do you think if you always got up that early it would always be that beautiful, and that thrilling? The thrill of being the very first out of doors in the morning.

NURSE. What do you mean morning? It's the middle of the night. And what are you saying? That you just went out for a little stroll? Little fibber. Where've you been?

ANTIGONE. You're right. It was the middle of the night. I was the only person who thought it was morning. Isn't that wonderful? To be the only person.

NURSE. That's right. Speak in riddles. Go all poetic on me. You don't fool me for one minute. I was young once, just like you. Don't think I don't know all the tricks. So tell me, you bad bad girl, where have you been?

ANTIGONE. I'm not bad. I'm not that.

NURSE. Come on, you were seeing someone weren't you? Deny it.

ANTIGONE. I can't. I was seeing someone.

NURSE. You've got a lover haven't you?

ANTIGONE. (*After a pause.*) Yes I have. Poor him.

NURSE. I knew it. Oh this is brilliant, this is perfect. The King's daughter! You work your fingers to the bone to bring them up but, push comes to shove, they're all the same. I didn't think you were like that, I really didn't. I thought you were different. You were never primping and preening yourself, never painting your lips, never trying to get yourself noticed. You were never like that. I used to say to myself, "Come on darling, make an effort." Always the same old dress, hair like a bird's nest. Your sister, on the other hand, little Ismene, with her ringlets and her ribbons, she turned all the boys' heads, and I used to think, "I'll never get you off my hands." But now I see the truth. You're as bad as your sister. You're worse, because you're a hypocrite. So, tell me, who is he? Some rough boy I bet. Some bad boy. Some boy you could never bring home and introduce to the family, and say, "This is the boy I love, this is the boy I want to marry." That's it, isn't it? You little slut.

ANTIGONE. (*With a slight smile.*) Yes Nana. That's it.

NURSE. And she admits it! God help us, each and every one. I took her on when she was tiny, and I promised her poor mother I'd make a decent girl of her. And now look at her. But don't think you've heard the last of this, oh no. You may think I'm just your nurse, just an old servant, just an old chattel, but your uncle Creon will hear about this, I swear he will.

ANTIGONE. (*Slightly weary.*) Yes Nana, my uncle Creon will absolutely hear about this. Now leave me.

NURSE. And he'll have a thing or two to say about it too. When he finds out what you've been up to at night. And what about Haemon, your fiancé? Your *fiancé*! She's engaged to be married. And four in the morning she's off out of her bed doing God knows what! And

what does she have to say to it? "Leave me," she says. What, leave you and say no more about it? Do you know what I ought to do? I ought to put you over my knee, like I used to, and thrash some decency into you.

ANTIGONE. Please don't shout. Not this morning.

NURSE. Not shout? I'll shout it from the rooftops. I promised your mother ... what would she say if she were here? "You stupid old woman," that's what she'd say, "you stupid old woman, you couldn't even keep her pure. Oh yes, you scolded her and ran around after her, and fed her and kept her warm in the winter, all that, fine, but you didn't keep your eye on the ball, did you? Come four in the morning you're fast asleep, and she's off and out and up to her mischief. And when you can be bothered to check up on her, her bed's already cold." That's what she'll say when I meet her face to face, up there, and I'll die of shame if I wasn't dead already. Because what could I say to her apart from, "Yes, madam Jocasta, it's all true."

ANTIGONE. Nana, please don't cry. And it's not all true. You'll be able to look her in the face when you see her, as you surely will, and she'll say, "Thank you Nana, thank you for everything you did for little Antigone." She knows why I went out this morning.

NURSE. So you haven't got a lover?

ANTIGONE. No.

NURSE. So it was, what, a joke? I'm too old for jokes, and for games. You've always been my favorite, in spite of your bad character. Your sister was always nicer to me, but I always thought you really loved me. But if you loved me you wouldn't lie to me. So tell me, truthfully, why was your bed stone cold when I came to find you?

ANTIGONE. Please, Nana, please don't cry. *(She kisses her.)* There we go. You know, you're my big old red apple. Do you remember when I used to rub your cheeks to make them shine? My gorgeous wrinkled old apple. And now all the wrinkles are rivulets of tears and it's not worth it, really it isn't. I'm still pure, I promise, and I have no lover apart from Haemon my fiancé. And I'll never have any lover but him, I can promise you that too if you like. So save your tears, Nana, you'll have need of them in time, believe me. When you cry like that I feel like a little girl again. And I don't need to be little. Not this morning.

(Enter ISMENE.)

ISMENE. You're up already? I went to your room.

ANTIGONE. Yes I'm up already.

NURSE. They're both as bad as each other! What are you thinking of, both of you, being up before the servants? It's not decent. Can I remind you that you're princesses. There are standards. Look at you both, running around before breakfast with not a stitch on, you'll catch your deaths.

ANTIGONE. It's alright, it's not cold. It's summer. Go and make us some coffee. *(She sits down wearily.)* Please, I need some coffee. It'll do me good.

NURSE. Poor little thing, what am I thinking of? She's fainting dead away for want of a hot drink. I'll make some breakfast.

(Exit NURSE.)

ISMENE. Are you ill?

ANTIGONE. No, it's nothing, just a bit weary, that's all. I did get up rather early.

ISMENE. I didn't sleep either.

ANTIGONE. That's awful. You've got to sleep. You've got to be beautiful.

ISMENE. Don't make fun of me.

ANTIGONE. I'm not, honestly. You are beautiful and you always were, and I now find that somehow reassuring. When I was little, do you remember, I was so unhappy ... perhaps that's why. So I used to chuck mud at you and put worms down your back, and once I tied you to a tree and cut all your hair off, all your beautiful hair. I was jealous. It must be so much easier not to think stupid thoughts, with all those lovely curls coiled up around your head!

ISMENE. Why are you avoiding the issue?

ANTIGONE. What do you mean?

ISMENE. You know what I mean.

ANTIGONE. Yes.

ISMENE. I was up all night thinking it through.

ANTIGONE. Yes.

ISMENE. And we can't do it.

ANTIGONE. (*After a silence.*) Why not?

ISMENE. He'd have us put to death.

ANTIGONE. Well yes. Absolutely. He'll certainly do that. We all have our parts to play. Ours is to bury our brother, his is to have us put to death. Those are our roles. What can we do about it?

ISMENE. I don't want to die.

ANTIGONE. It's not exactly what I want either.

ISMENE. Listen, I've been going through it in my mind. I'm older than you. I reflect on things. You do whatever pops into your head, and if it's a mistake then ... there we go. I like to weigh things up. I like to think about things.

ANTIGONE. Sometimes it's better not to think too much.

ISMENE. Is it? I know it's all ghastly and it's all a mess and I'm sorry for my brother, but I have to say that I do partly understand my uncle's point of view.

ANTIGONE. I don't want to 'partly' understand anything.

ISMENE. He's the King. He has to set an example.

ANTIGONE. But I'm not, and I don't. I'm the bad one, remember, the stubborn one. Naughty Antigone, who gets sent up to her room or made to stand in the corner. And serve her right. Serve her right for being so disobedient.

ISMENE. Typical, typical. Look at you. Your frowning blinkered little face ... you just do what you want and don't listen to a soul. Listen to me. I'm right more often than you are.

ANTIGONE. I have no desire to be right.

ISMENE. Then at least try and be reasonable.

ANTIGONE. Reasonable? I've been hearing that word since I was tiny. Be reasonable, don't touch the water, wonderful water, flowing and freezing, you'll only get the floor wet. Don't play with earth, you'll only get it on your clothes. Be reasonable, don't bolt your food, don't give all your money to the first beggar you see in the street, don't just run until you drop and drink when you're thirsty, or bathe whenever you feel like it ... be reasonable. Well I don't want to be. When I'm old I'll be reasonable, if I ever get old. Not now.

ISMENE. He's stronger than we are. He's the King. And the whole city's on his side. Thousands of people all swarming through the streets of Thebes.

ANTIGONE. I'm not listening.

ISMENE. The mob is murmuring and the murmur will grow. Thousands of voices, and arms and hands ... thousands of angry faces that'll spit in ours. And we'll be dragged through their hatred and their stink and their laughter to the scaffold. And the guards will be waiting, with their stiff necks and their stupid fat obedient faces, ready and willing to do exactly what they're told, be it good or ill. And we'll suffer. God how we'll suffer. We'll feel the pain growing and growing till it's unbearable. But that's not when it stops. It carries on. Getting stronger and stronger, rising to a piercing scream, and I can't bear it, I can't bear it.

ANTIGONE. You have been thinking it through.

ISMENE. Yes, all night. Haven't you?

ANTIGONE. Oh yes.

ISMENE. And I'm such a coward. I've always been a coward.

ANTIGONE. So have I. But what's that got to do with it?

(A silence.)

ISMENE. Don't you want to live?

ANTIGONE. Do I want to live? Do I want to live? You're joking! Who's always the first up every single morning, the first to feel the cold fresh air on her bare skin? Who's always the last to bed, only sleeping when she drops, so as not to squander a single moment of the night? Who used to cry all the time when she was little, because there were too many animals too many plants in the world, too many for her to get to know them all.

ISMENE. My little sister

ANTIGONE. *(Breaking away.)* No, don't touch me, don't stroke me, we'll only both start sniveling. You've been thinking it through, you say. The whole city screaming for our blood, the pain of torture, the fear of death ... and that's made up you mind.

ISMENE. Yes. It has.

ANTIGONE. Fine. Fair enough. That's as good an excuse as any.

ISMENE. Antigone! Please, listen. It's proper for men to believe in ideals and to die for them, but you're a girl.

ANTIGONE. Oh yes I know that, and every day I've cursed the fact.

ISMENE. You have your own happiness in the palm of your

hand. You have a fiancé, you're young, you're beautiful.

ANTIGONE. I'm not ...

ISMENE. Not like everyone else, but differently. None of the boys can ever take their eyes off you, you know that. Nor can the girls. They just stand and stare till you've disappeared from view.

ANTIGONE. So, I'm popular with boys and girls then. Brilliant.

ISMENE. And with Haemon. What about him?

ANTIGONE. I'll talk to Haemon this morning. I'll take care of Haemon.

ISMENE. You're mad.

ANTIGONE. You've always said that. You've always told me I was mad, ever since ever. Go back to bed, Ismene. It's daylight now, so nothing can be done anyway. By now my brother will be surrounded by an armed guard, as if he'd actually succeeded in becoming King. Anyway. Go back to bed. You're dead on your feet.

ISMENE. Aren't you?

ANTIGONE. I've no desire to sleep. But I promise I'll still be here when you wake up. Nana's bringing me some food. Off you go, it's only dawn. You look so sleepy, your eyes are little dots! Come on.

ISMENE. I'm starting to talk you round, aren't I? That's it isn't it? Will you let me speak to you again?

ANTIGONE. Yes of course I'll let you speak to me. I'll let you all speak to me. Now please go and get some sleep. You have to stay beautiful. *(She watches ISMENE exit with a little sad smile, then suddenly falls exhausted into a chair.)* Poor Ismene.

NURSE. *(Entering.)* Here we are little one, nice cup of coffee and some hot buttered toast.

ANTIGONE. I'm not really that hungry.

NURSE. I made it just the way you like it.

ANTIGONE. That was sweet of you, but I'll just have something to drink.

NURSE. Do you hurt? Tell me where you hurt.

ANTIGONE. Nowhere, Nana. But do keep me safe and warm like you did when I was little. You've always been strong for me, stronger than the nightmares, stronger than the fever, stronger than the scary shadows on the bedroom wall. Stronger than the noises in the night, stronger than the night itself with its silent screams. Stronger than death. Hold my hand like you used to when you'd sit by my bed.

NURSE. What's wrong little one?

ANTIGONE. Nothing, Nana. It's just that I'm still a little too little for ... everything. But please don't tell anybody.

NURSE. What do you mean, petal?

ANTIGONE. Nothing. And anyway you're here. So everything will be alright. I'll hold your hand, your rough strong hand, and that'll make everything alright. Perhaps you'll yet save me. You're so strong, you know.

NURSE. What do you want me to do for you?

ANTIGONE. Nothing. Just hold your hand like that ... against my cheek. (*She stays still for a minute with her eyes closed.*) There we are. All gone. Not scared anymore. No more wicked monsters, no more hobgoblins, no more fiends. All gone now. Nana ...

NURSE. Yes.

ANTIGONE. ... you know my little dog ...?

NURSE. Yes.

ANTIGONE. You promise you won't scold her too much?

NURSE. She shouldn't be allowed in the house. She gets her filthy paws everywhere.

ANTIGONE. Even if she misbehaves, you promise?

NURSE. What, I have to watch her chew the place to bits and not say a word?

ANTIGONE. That's right.

NURSE. That'll be hard.

ANTIGONE. Please Nana, you know you like her really, she's sweet. I've seen you stroke her when no one's looking. Anyway you'd hate it if everything was always neat and tidy.

NURSE. What if she wees on my carpet?

ANTIGONE. Even if she wees on your carpet. I beg of you, don't scold her.

NURSE. You think you can get around me just because you're looking a bit poorly today ... oh well, have it your way. I'll clean it up and not say a word.

ANTIGONE. Also, please, talk to her, please. Talk to her as often as you can.

NURSE. What, talk to a dog?

ANTIGONE. Yes. But not like people talk to dogs. Like you're talking to a person. Like I do.

NURSE. Oh please God don't make me do that, not at my age. And anyway what do you want the whole house to be talking to your dog for?

ANTIGONE. Just in case, for whatever reason, I won't be here to do it myself.

NURSE. And why wouldn't you do it yourself?

ANTIGONE. And if she was still too sad. If she still looked like she was, you know, waiting ... with her nose jammed under the door like she does when I leave the room, it might be better, don't you think, to have her killed. Just to put her out of her misery.

NURSE. To have her killed? To have your little dog killed? What madness has got into you this morning?

ANTIGONE. No madness Nana. (*HAEMON appears.*) Here's Haemon. Leave us now, and don't forget your promise. (*Exit NURSE.*) I'm sorry Haemon, I'm sorry we had a row yesterday, I'm sorry for everything. It was all my fault, please forgive me.

HAEMON. Don't be silly. I forgave you the moment you left the room. The moment you slammed the door ... as well you know. Your perfume was still hanging in the air and already I'd forgiven you. Whom did you steal it from, that perfume?

ANTIGONE. From Ismene.

HAEMON. And the lipstick and the powder and the beautiful gown?

ANTIGONE. All hers.

HAEMON. And in whose honor did you make yourself so beautiful?

ANTIGONE. Guess. (*She holds him tighter.*) Oh my darling, how stupid I was to waste a whole evening and such a beautiful evening.

HAEMON. We'll have other evenings.

ANTIGONE. Will we?

HAEMON. And doubtless other rows. That's all part of happiness.

ANTIGONE. Happiness ... yes. Listen Haemon.

HAEMON. Look at me. I'm all ears.

ANTIGONE. I don't want you to be joking this morning. I want you to be serious.

HAEMON. Alright. Being serious.

ANTIGONE. And hold me tight, tighter than you've ever held me. I want to be stamped through with your strength.

HAEMON. There you are. That's all my strength.

ANTIGONE. It's good. It's nice. Listen Haemon.

HAEMON. Yes?

ANTIGONE. I wanted to tell you ... you know the little boy we were going to have?

HAEMON. Yes?

ANTIGONE. You know I would have protected him from everything.

HAEMON. I know.

ANTIGONE. I would have held him so tight that he'd never have been afraid, never ever. Not of anything. Not our little boy. And alright, his mother would only have been tiny, and never have combed her hair, but he would have been safer with her than with any real mother, any big bosomy mother with a flowery apron. That's true, isn't it?

HAEMON. Absolutely my love.

ANTIGONE. And you'd have had a real wife, wouldn't you?

HAEMON. I already do.

ANTIGONE. (*Suddenly cries out, holding him tight.*) Oh Haemon, you loved me didn't you, really loved me didn't you, that night?

HAEMON. (*Holding her gently.*) What night?

ANTIGONE. The night of the dance, when you came looking for me. You're sure, aren't you, that you weren't looking for some other girl? You're sure that you've never regretted it, or that you've ever thought however deep, deep down even once that you wish you'd asked Ismene?

HAEMON. Don't be silly.

ANTIGONE. I mean, you love me don't you? Really love me, love *me* ... as a woman? I mean, are your arms lying when they hold me tight? And your hands, your big hands, do they mean it when they touch my back? All of you, the smell of you, the wonderful warmth, the confidence that flows into me when I nestle my head in the crook of your neck. All that's meant, isn't it?

HAEMON. Yes, Antigone, I love you with the whole of me, none of me can lie.

ANTIGONE. I'm scrawny, though, aren't I? Skinny, swarthy, I am. Ismene is pink and golden, as lush as a peach.

HAEMON. Antigone.

ANTIGONE. I know, I'm blushing. Ashamed of myself. But I

have to know. This morning I have to know. Tell me the truth please. When you think that I am to be yours, do you have a feeling that a great hole is being hollowed out in your heart, as if something inside you were dying?

HAEMON. Yes Antigone.

ANTIGONE. That's how I feel too. And I want to tell you that I will be very proud to be your wife, your real wife, the woman whom you would just touch, just casually, as you sat down to dinner in the evening ... casually, absentmindedly, as you might touch a possession. (*Her tone changes.*) Right. Now I have two things to tell you. And when I've told you them, you are to leave at once without asking any questions. Even if what I have to say seems odd or strange or hurts you. You promise?

HAEMON. What are you going to say?

ANTIGONE. No no. First promise me that you'll leave and say nothing. Without even looking at me. I mean it ... if you love me, promise me that. You can see I'm asking you from my heart. Please, promise me. It'll be the last mad wish you'll ever have to grant me.

HAEMON. (*After a pause.*) Very well. I promise.

ANTIGONE. Thank you. Right. Let's begin with yesterday. You asked me just now why I came to you wearing Ismene's gown and her perfume and her lipstick. It was foolish of me, I agree. I wasn't sure if you really wanted me, really desired me. And I did all that to make myself more like other girls so you would want me more.

HAEMON. Is that right?

ANTIGONE. Yes. Then you laughed at me and then we had a row and my bad side got the better of me and I ran away. But last night I came to you so you would take me, so I could be your wife before I was your wife. (*He is about to speak.*) You promised not to ask any questions. You promised, Haemon. Please. And anyway I'm going to tell you. I wanted to be your wife because I love you so much and because ... this is going to hurt you and I'm sorry, my darling, I'm sorry ... because I'm never going to marry you. (*He wants to speak.*) Haemon, you promised. Now go, just go, without saying a word. If you so much as speak or take a step towards me I'll throw myself out of this window. I promise Haemon, I promise on our boy's life. The little boy we dreamed we'd have, the only little boy I'll ever have. So go now, go at once. Tomorrow you'll understand. Perhaps

sooner than that. (*HAEMON starts to obey her.*) Please Haemon, go. That's all I ask of you, if you love me. (*He leaves. She remains motionless for a while then goes to close the window. Then sits down and says quite gently, almost relaxedly ...*) There we go. That's Haemon dealt with.

ISMENE. (*Enters, calling.*) Antigone! Oh there you are.

ANTIGONE. Yes, here I am.

ISMENE. I couldn't sleep. I was worried that you might go out there and try to bury him, even in broad daylight. We're all here Antigone. We're all with you and around you and we love you. Me your sister, Haemon, Nana, your dog.... We're here and we're alive and we need you. All right Polynices is dead, but he never loved you. He was always a stranger to you, a bad brother, so forget him Antigone. We have. Let his ghost stalk the world for all eternity, unburied and unmourned, for that is Creon's law, and it's stronger than you. You always take on the whole world but remember you're only tiny. Please, stay here with us and don't go out there tonight.

(*ANTIGONE gets up and turns to go.*)

ANTIGONE. You're too late. This morning when you met me that's what I'd been doing. Burying our brother.

(*She exits. ISMENE follows her and cries out.*)

ISMENE. Antigone!

(*As ISMENE exits CREON enters by another door with his PAGE.*)

CREON. One of the guards, who was standing watch over the body? Show him in.

(*The GUARD enters, a big strong man but pale with fear.*)

GUARD. (*Saluting.*) Jonas, sir, second battalion.

CREON. What do you want?

GUARD. Well sir, we drew lots to see who should come and tell you and I lost. So here I am. We thought it'd be better if just one per-

son came to explain so as not to leave the body unguarded. There's normally three of us, you see, standing watch.

CREON. What exactly are you saying?

GUARD. That there's three of us. Not just me, two others. Du-rand and the Corporal.

CREON. So why aren't I talking to the Corporal?

GUARD. Absolutely, that's what I said. That the Corporal should come and tell you, 'cos obviously, the highest ranking should normally ... but the others said no, they wanted to draw lots. Would you like me to go and get the Corporal, sir? 'Cos I can

CREON. No. Since you're here, speak.

GUARD. Well ... I've been in the service seventeen years. Volunteer. One medal, two citations. I'm a soldier, I'm a guard, that's what I am, that's what I do. I guard. And I follow orders. To the letter. People always say you can rely on Jonas.

CREON. Excellent. So, why are you so scared?

GUARD. Normally it would be the Corporal. Actually I'm up for Corporal, but it hasn't gone through yet. June, it should be.

CREON. Look, speak, will you? If something's happened then all three of you are equally responsible. I really don't care who tells me.

GUARD. Yes sir. Of course sir. The thing is ... it's the body. We've been guarding it. No one can say we haven't. We had the early shift, which is the toughest. You know what it's like sir, when the dead of night becomes the crack of dawn. That time. Your eyes are heavy as lead, your neck's agony and there are shadows darting everywhere in the morning mist. The worst shift that, the early shift. Thanks a lot, we say. Thanks a bunch. So there we were, talking, shivering, stamping our feet to keep warm, and not sleeping I promise you. Not one of the three of us was sleeping and it was cold.... Suddenly I took a look at the body. I was just right next door to it, obviously, but still I usually glance at it from time to time. I'm like that, I'm meticulous. That's why people always say you can rely on ... *(A sudden gesture from CREON stops him in his tracks. Suddenly he shouts.)* I was the first one to see it sir! The others'll tell you the same. It was me who raised the alarm.

CREON. The alarm? Why?

GUARD. It was the body sir. Someone had covered it over. Not completely, obviously, 'cos the three of us were standing right there.

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