

ANTIGONE

BY SOPHOCLES

ADAPTED BY EAMON FLACK

CHARACTERS

ANTIGONE

ISMENE

CHORUS

KREON

GUARD

HAEMON

TIRESIAS

TIRESIAS' BOY

MESSENGER

EURYDICE

SETTING

The play takes place outside the palace gates of Thebes. It begins just before dawn.

Outside the palace gates of Thebes.

Before dawn.

ANTIGONE *and* ISMENE.

ANTIGONE: Ismene. Sister.
We're the daughters of Oedipus,
That's our lot, yes?
Yes?
So what next?
There's two of us now,
What'll Zeus drop on us next?
Misery, shame, panic, dishonour, stupidity—
We've seen it all.
Things are bad.
What next?

This proclamation to the city,
Has escaped you, has it?
Whole new hatreds
Coming at us?
At who we love?
Suddenly we love
Our enemy?
You don't know?
Huh?

ISMENE: I don't know, Antigone.
I know that yesterday there was a war
Between our brothers

Who killed each other
An hour,
Two ago,
It's nearly morning,
The city's held,
Enemy fled
(We think),
We're burying our brothers,
Kreon is king,
That's what I know.
Has something good happened?
I don't know.
Has something bad happened?
I don't know.

ANTIGONE: I'll tell you.

ISMENE: Tell me what?

ANTIGONE: Kreon's made his first law
And our brothers' burials—
Our brothers' burials—
Justice and custom for Eteokles,
Hidden in the earth
And honoured among the dead below.
But Polynikes:
Nothing.
His corpse is desperate
But Kreon's law forbids
Anything—
Burial, tears, women's cries,
None of it.
He must be
Unwept,
Unmourned,

Left as he fell where he fell
For breakfast for the birds.
Polynikes.

Kreon's coming to announce it to the city,
And to us,
And me,
So there'll be no mistake.
He's drawn a line.
Close the eyes,
Straighten the head,
Drop a pinch of dust,
The smallest thing
You'll be stoned to death
In the city centre.
Show yourself,
Ismene.
Coward, sister, what?

ISMENE: Sister,
I don't know what I could do—

ANTIGONE: Help me. Do this with me.
Less pain when there's two.

ISMENE: Do what?

ANTIGONE: Bury our brother. Give me your hand.

ISMENE: When the city's been told—

ANTIGONE: I'll bury our brother. Give me your hand.

ISMENE: Poor
Stupid girl,
Kreon's outlawed it.

ANTIGONE: What business is it of his to bar me from what's mine?

ISMENE: Use your head.

Who's our family?
Our father
The king who discovered
He'd married his mother
And killed his father
So tore his eyes out and died hated and shamed,
Our mother
Our brother-father's mother-wife
Who twisted her dirty bedsheets together
And hung herself,
Our brothers
Who couldn't decide
Who'd be king
So one steals the throne
The other one
Marches a foreign army to our city gates
And the pair of them stand
Face to face
And kill each other—
Stop and think.
We're what's left of that
Knot.
Two girls.
Think.
Turn to the city now
And break our uncle's first law?
We're women,
We can't fight,
We have no authority,
Not anymore,
And there'll be worse than this.
We beg the dead to forgive us.
They'll understand.
We have no choice.
We're not capable.

It's an extravagance.

I'll obey.

ANTIGONE: I won't beg.
But don't change your mind.
Be what you are.
Do what you think's best.
I'll bury him
And if I die
That's love,
My brother and I
Side by side,
That's a good crime.
I have far more time to come
With the dead down there
Than the living up here.
Honour the dead, say the gods.
You're honouring dishonour.
But you do what you think's best.

ISMENE: I'll honour the dead but I won't break this law.

ANTIGONE: I will bury my brother.

ISMENE: You're panicking.

ANTIGONE: Speak for yourself. Stand up straight.

ISMENE: Keep it secret.

ANTIGONE: Yell it out!

ISMENE: Hothead! Stupid, selfish, cold-hearted—

ANTIGONE: I bestow my graces where I must.

ISMENE: It's an idea, you're in love with it, but you can't make it happen.

ANTIGONE: I'll try and when I fall down and can't move anymore then I'll stop.