

The Antigone Of Sophocles

Adapted for the stage by Robert
Bethune.

This text is protected by copyright. All rights reserved.

An excerpt: Antigone's lamentation
for her own imminent death.

Chorus

Love, the unconquered warrior,
Fights with a blush and a tear.
See how love has turned a son
Against his father's word!
The power of love can humble the gods
And drive a wise man mad.

The wisest take the gift of love
With gratitude, and humble hands.
Those who try to strive with love
Find bitter defeat, madness and ruin.
Spare me your cruelty, goddess of love,
Give me your peace, your rest.

See now, she comes, the bride of death.
Though pity break my loyalty, I weep.
This victim of battle of law with law
This woman's courage, both right and wrong
This sacrifice to justice and injustice,
See now, she comes--Antigone.

Antigone

Good people, why does the sunshine light my way to death? Does it know how I savor its warmth as I go to a cold, dark grave? I am alive, but I follow the path of the dead. Death is my bridegroom; he waits for me on a hard and icy bed, and no one sings my bridal chant or puts a wedding garland on my head.

Chorus

You go in glory, you go in honor,
You go the mistress of your fate.
No sickness wears you down,
No sword cuts off your life.
You pass the doors of death alive
Where no one else has gone.

Antigone

Once there was a woman whose sorrow was so great that her grief slowly turned her to stone. A rock, high on a mountain, she stands; she weeps in the lonely rain. The winds and snows wear her down; a day will come when she will be nothing but her tears. I feel her grief; I feel the cold, stony tomb consume my flesh.

Chorus

You are a mortal, human-bred,
She was a goddess, heaven-born.
She was married to the sky;
You are married to the earth.

Antigone

Why do you remind me, people of my city? Wait till I am gone, then speak of this. Remember me, children of my city. Remember how I walked, still living, to my tomb. Remember how no one was there for me, no one to weep with me. Remember always by what laws I was condemned, and by what judges I was sentenced. See how I go, the homeless one, bereft of every resting place, a stranger to the living and the dead.

Chorus

You rushed forward, heedless of danger,
You dove headfirst off the edge of a cliff.
You are paying the price of your daring,
And the price of your father's guilt.

Antigone

Ah! There you touch the pain that never sleeps, the dreary agony, the curse of my father, brother to his children. You wake the horror of my mother's bed, the curse that lives in my polluted blood. I go to greet them in the grave, accursed, unmarried. Brother and father, see how your life brings me to my death!

Chorus

Your reverent actions claim a certain praise,
But when you chose to fight against the state,
You crossed a line they could not let you cross.
Your own decisions bring you to your death.

Antigone

Bereft, friendless, unloved, I see the sun for the last time. Her warmth is all the comfort I am given. No one mourns, no one weeps, no one comforts me. I go to death forgotten and alone.

Kreon enters.

Kreon

Take her away and put her in the tomb. Seal her in and let her wail from there. She will have what she needs to live for a little while, or perhaps she may choose to die. Her death will bring no blood-guilt on my city. But know this--she shall not see the light of day again.

Antigone

Yes, come, marry me to the rock--a stone bed in a stone room! Send me to the country of the dead. I will find my people there, all the loved ones I have buried. Doing honor to them brought me here.

I am unmarried. But what I did for them, I would not do for husband, or child, but only for them. I could marry a second husband; I could bear a second child, but with my parents gone, how can I ever find another brother? That brother lost, how can I fail to honor him? This is what he--that ruler there!--what he tells you is criminal. For this he thrusts me in the earth before my time, taking from me all my hopes of love and home and family.

See how I honored holy justice. And yet see how I am treated as if I defiled the earth! Good people, what laws of God or man has he left you? What justice can you call on? If I have scorned the gods, what gods are left? If the death I go to pleases the sky and the earth, the night and the cold will teach my my sins. But if it is he, this ruler, who sins, beware! Look to it, city of mine--the evil that is done to me will curse the sinner here who murders me!

Chorus

The fierce winds of her soul drive her,
They rip at her life like a winter storm.

Kreon

You there! Move her on, before I make you learn to move!

Antigone

My death is in that command.

Kreon

You have no comfort. Spare yourself false hopes.

Antigone

I am going now--they take me to my grave. Good people, remember me! Remember what I suffer, the daughter of your kings! Remember who makes me suffer! Remember why this is done, and who did it! Thebes--remember me!

Chorus

We remember a woman imprisoned for her beauty
A god gave her sons in a shower of gold.
That hero, her son, he killed the woman's father
Unknowing what he did--but not by chance.

See how dark fate works in the world.
Wealth will not escape; war will not protect;
Fate is a dark sea, a fearsome storm,
No ship can ever escape.

We remember a man who cursed the gods,
He died alone, sealed in echoing caves.
His cries for mercy faded in the darkness;
Before he died he learned to know his god.

See how vengeance brings pain to the guilty.
We do as we will; we suffer as we must.
From the ends of the sea to the ends of the earth
Justice is deaf to a guilty voice.

We remember a man who blinded his sons,
In madness he believed they had betrayed him.
They hunted him, they haunted him, the fierce, relentless gods,
They killed him with the memory of sightless, bloody eyes.

See how every action bears its fruit,
How every step we take leads down the road.
When we come to the crossroad, what way shall we take?
Blessed is the one who is guided by a god.

All these we remember--rotted, destroyed,
Hunted from their homes to die, alone and far away.
They rose in pride and honor until fate struck them down,
In death, they were humble. Too late. Too late.