

Found the bare corpse, and all her love's work
wasted,
She wept, and cried on heaven to damn the
hands
That had done this thing.
And then she brought more dust
And sprinkled wine three times for her brother's
ghost.

We ran and took her at once. She was not
afraid,
Not even when we charged her with what she
had done.
She denied nothing.

And this was a comfort to me,
And some uneasiness: for it is a good thing
To escape from death, but it is no great pleasure
To bring death to a friend.

Yet I always say
There is nothing so comfortable as your own
safe skin!

KREON (slowly, dangerously): And you, Antigone,
You with your head hanging, — do you confess
this thing?

ANTIGONE: I do. I deny nothing.

KREON (to Sentry): You may go.
(Exit Sentry.)

(To Antigone.) Tell me, tell me briefly:
Had you heard my proclamation touching this
matter?

ANTIGONE: It was public. Could I help hearing it?

KREON: And yet you dared defy the law.

ANTIGONE: I dared.
It was not God's proclamation. That final Justice
That rules the world below makes no such laws.

Your edict, King, was strong,
But all your strength is weakness itself against
The immortal unrecorded laws of God.
They are not merely now: they were, and shall
be,
Operative for ever, beyond man utterly.

I knew I must die even without your decree.
I am only mortal. And if I must die
Now, before it is my time to die,
Surely this is no hardship: can anyone
Living, as I live, with evil all about me,
Think Death less than a friend? This death of
mine

Is of no importance; but if I had left my brother
Lying in death unburied, I should have suffered.
Now I do not.

You smile at me. Ah Kreon,
Think me a fool, if you like; but it may well be
That a fool convicts me of folly.

~~Creon: Like father, like daughter, both
headstrong, deaf to reason!~~
She has never learned to yield.

KREON: She has much to learn.
~~The inflexible heart breaks first, the toughest~~

~~iron
Cracks first, and the wildest horses bend their
necks~~

~~At the pull of the smallest curb.~~

~~Pride? In a slave?~~
This girl is guilty of a double insolence,
Breaking the given laws and boasting of it.

Who is the man here,
She or I, if this crime goes unpunished?
~~Sister's child, or more than sister's child,
Or closer yet in blood~~ — she and her sister
Win bitter death for this!

(To Servants.) Go, some of you,
Arrest Ismene. I accuse her equally.
Bring her: you will find her sniffing in the house
there.

~~Her mind's a traitor: crimes kept in the dark
Cry for light, and the guardian brain shudders;
But how much worse than this
Is brazen boasting of barefaced anarchy!~~

ANTIGONE: Kreon, what more do you want than
my death?

KREON: Nothing.
That gives me everything.

ANTIGONE: Then I beg you: kill me.
This talking is a great weariness: your words
Are distasteful to me, and I am sure that mine
Seem so to you. And yet they should not seem
so:

I should have praise and honor for what I have
done.

All these men here would praise me
Were their lips not frozen shut with fear of you.
(Bitterly.) Ah the good fortune of kings,
Licensed to say and do whatever they please!

KREON: You are alone here in that opinion.

ANTIGONE: No, they are with me. But they keep
their tongues in leash.

KREON: Maybe. But you are guilty, and they are
not.

ANTIGONE: There is no guilt in reverence for the
dead.

KREON: But Eteocles — was he not your brother
too?

ANTIGONE: My brother too.

KREON: And you insult his memory?

ANTIGONE (softly): The dead man would not say
that I insult it.

KREON: He would: for you honor a traitor as much
as him.



TOP LEFT: Kreon (F. Murray Abraham) in a scene from the 1982 New York Shakespeare Festival production directed by Joseph Chaikin. BOTTOM LEFT: Antigone (Lisa Banes) steadfastly admitting her guilt. ABOVE: The Chorus urges Kreon to change his decree before it is too late.

ANTIGONE: His own brother, traitor or not, and equal in blood.

KREON: He made war on his country. Eteocles defended it.

ANTIGONE: Nevertheless, there are honors due all the dead.

KREON: But not the same for the wicked as for the just.

115 ANTIGONE: Ah Kreon, Kreon,
Which of us can say what the gods hold wicked?

KREON: An enemy is an enemy, even dead.

ANTIGONE: It is my nature to join in love, not hate.

KREON (*finally losing patience*): Go join them then;
if you must have your love,
Find it in hell! 120

CHORAGOS: But see, Ismene comes:

(*Enter Ismene, guarded.*)

Those tears are sisterly, the cloud
That shadows her eyes rains down gentle
sorrow.

KREON: You too, Ismene,
Snake in my ordered house, sucking my blood 125
Stealthily — and all the time I never knew
That these two sisters were aiming at my throne!
Ismene,

Do you confess your share in this crime, or deny
it?

Answer me.