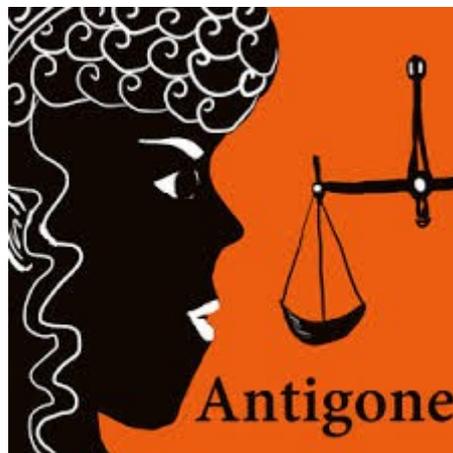


Antigone

A short one act play

By

Keith Passmore



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SYNOPSIS

A Greek tragedy about two sons of Oedipus both seeking to succeed their father. They fight and kill each other. Their sister, Antigone, defies her uncle, a leader out of touch with the people (what's changed,) who has decreed that her traitorous brother should go unburied and therefore find no rest in the afterlife. Ultimately, her and her uncle's actions have tragic outcomes.

Antigone

The Characters

Narrator

*Polynices

*Eteocles

Antigone

Ismene

*Guard 1

*Guard 2

Creon

Haemon

*Tiresias

*Mason

**These parts could be shared among the cast. One person could play 2 or more parts. Females could be cast as males.*

Antigone

Scene 1: Outside the walls of Thebes

The stage is bare of furniture

The lights go up on the Narrator DC behind whom Polynices and Eteocles face each other at CR and CL. They both carry swords.

Narrator: Shortly before Oedipus's death, his two sons, Eteocles and Polynices quarrelled over who was to rule Thebes. Polynices sought help and support for his claim to the throne and requested Oedipus's blessing, but Oedipus was appalled at the behaviour of his sons and cursed them both, a curse that each would kill each other. Eventually Eteocles ruled Thebes alone and Polynices raised an army and attacked the city. Eteocles with the aid of the brothers' uncle Creon resisted the attack, which resulted in the brothers meeting in combat.

Narrator exits DR

Polynices: I don't wish to kill you brother. I suggest you lay down your weapon and allow me to rule. I'm stronger and wiser and my army is more able to defend Thebes against its enemies.

Eteocles: What arrogance! You've caused considerable pain and anguish by deserting your family and engaging mercenaries to assist you. No brother, you'll never rule in Thebes.

Polynices: You are a fool Eteocles. No more talk, fight!

After a period of choreographed fighting they kill each other.

Their bodies lie on the stage and the Lights go down and up on the Narrator DR in a Spot.

Narrator: Creon, the brothers' uncle, now rules Thebes. He has refused Polynices proper burial rights. Antigone and Ismene, the daughters of Oedipus, address the situation.

Lights down

Scene 2: In a corridor at the Palace of Thebes

The stage is bare of furniture

Lights up as Antigone, followed by Ismene, enter UL and cross RC.

Ismene: How can you even think about it Antigone? Creon has decreed that no matter who claims the body and gives it burial rights should be put to death!

Antigone: Ismene, I can't allow my Polynices to lie in the gutter and rot like an animal.

Ismene: The people consider him a traitor. No matter how you or I feel about him, we must accept our uncle's decree. I just can't agree to the stealing of the body.

Antigone: Stealing! Our family owns his body.

Ismene: In the eyes of the law the removal of the body would be theft.

Antigone: He's our brother! We share the same flesh and blood.

Ismene: But he brought shame on our family!

Antigone: Whatever he did he's still our brother and he deserves to be buried in accordance with the proper burial rites.

Ismene: He was fully prepared to kill Eteocles, would he have spared you had he been successful in his quest?

Antigone: Yes, I am certain of it and he wouldn't have harmed you either. He loved us Ismene! He should be forgiven in death so that he may rest in peace.

Ismene: Dear sister, as much as I love you, on this occasion I can't help you. Please give the matter serious thought.

Antigone: I have thought about it, most seriously. I shall take the body myself and bury it.

Ismene: On your own?

Antigone: Since I appear to be the only one in this family who desires proper and humane action, yes.

Ismene: How could you possibly do it alone?

Antigone: Don't concern yourself, I shall do it. Good day, sister.

She exits quickly DR

Ismene follows her

Ismene: Antigone, wait!

She exits as the lights go down

Scene 3: Outside the walls of Thebes

Guard 1 is seated on a small bench C leaning on his spear. A covered corpse is on the ground in front of him. He wipes his face and neck with a cloth.

Guard 1: I've watched over prisoners before, but never dead ones. To think only two days ago I was in combat. Watching over a corpse? It's just not a job for a soldier. *(He yawns loudly)* It's hot and I can hardly keep awake. It's been hard these past few days and I deserve some rest the same as anyone else.

He shakes his head, yawns again and soon nods off. The spear falls to the ground.

Antigone enters DR and she approaches the corpse. The Guard stirs and Antigone freezes for a moment. The Guard grunts and falls into sleep.

Antigone squats and reaches out to drag the body away. At that point the Lights go down.

Scene 4: Creon's Palace

The only item of furniture is a small table and a chair at CL.

The lights go up on Creon sitting at the table drinking wine R. He stands and crosses DC looking pensively in the direction of the audience and drinks. Guard 1 enters R in a hurry and crosses to Creon, but keeps his distance.

Creon turns to him

Creon: *(irritably)* Why the hurry?

Guard 1: *(beside himself in fear)* My lord I have to report incompetence on my part.

Creon turns away from him

Creon: Don't waste my time; report the matter to your captain!

Guard 1: I did so my lord, but he demanded I tell you personally. You see my lord, I've done something terrible.

Creon: Then you'd better explain!

Guard 1: It's about the body of the traitor.

Creon: *(turning back to him)* Polynices?

Guard 1: Yes my lord. It's gone. It's been stolen.

Creon: What? Were you the one who was supposed to be guarding it?

Guard 1: Yes my lord. I er ... fell asleep. Post battle fatigue, I think you'd call it.

Creon crosses to the table where he firmly places the drinking vessel. He crosses to the guard.

Creon: I call it gross incompetence!

Guard 1: That's what the captain said, but he used a stronger word than 'gross', among others. All I can offer are my apologies my lord.

Creon: You shall offer me your life! *(Gripping him by the scruff of his neck)* If you do not find the culprit by sunrise tomorrow, you will be executed. Your death will be a slow, agonising one. Do you understand?

The guard looks in horror at Creon before replying

Guard 1: T-Tomorrow at sunrise, why yes my lord.

Creon pushes him R

Creon: Go and find the corpse and the body stealer!

Guard 1: Yes, of course my lord and thank you.

He scurries off R

Creon sits heavily at the table

Creon: *(incredulously)* I announce his possible execution and he thanks me.

He drinks

Lights down

Scene 5: The same scene – later

Creon is seated at the table. Guard 2 enters R jostling Antigone. He pushes her towards Creon, who stands.

Creon: What's going on?

Guard 2: The princess is the one who stole the body my lord. I saw her, she was about to bury the corpse.

Creon: Within the confines of the city?

Guard 2: Oh yes my lord, in the place of burial for persons of honour.

Antigone: And so he should've been in the first place.

Creon looks at her up and down and In an effort to control his anger he stands and crosses DL. He turns to her.

Creon: And you confess to the act of burial Antigone?

Antigone: I do. (*Quickly and crossing DC*) I had no intention of insulting you uncle. I considered what I did was right.

Creon: (*Angrily*) It is an insult and who are you to say what's right? You have defied me!

Antigone: (*raising her voice*) Uncle, you have taken away a fundamental right, the right to be buried!

Creon: Don't raise your voice at me child, Polynices was a traitor! I shall immediately deal with your treacherous act.

Antigone is shocked by Creon's accusation against her.

Antigone: My treachery?

Creon: Princess or commoner, treason makes no exceptions.

Antigone: How could you accuse me of treason?

He turns away from Antigone

Creon: Guard, exhume the body immediately and throw it to the dogs outside the city walls! Go, now!

Guard 2: Yes my lord.

He goes to leave R but is stopped by Antigone's outburst as she turns on the guard.

Antigone: No! You must not touch his body! *(to Creon)* How could you do this, he's my brother!

Creon: Guard, do as I say!

Guard 2: Yes my lord.

Guard 2 exits R in a hurry

Creon: How could you even think of behaving like that in front of a common guard? Have you no pride?

Antigone: The little pride I now have is for what's left of my family. I beg you please don't do this uncle. I don't expect you to bury Polynices with honour, but simply in the right way.

Creon: Yet you attempted to bury him in a place of honour. I'm ashamed of you, child. What about Ismene, does she know of your betrayal?

Antigone: I'm accused of betrayal now, am I?

Creon: Your insolent remarks do you wrong my child. You've betrayed me and the citizens of Thebes. Well, did Ismene have a hand in this deed?

Antigone: No, not at all.

Creon: I'd rather hear it from her.

Antigone: Uncle, believe me, she played no part in it.

Creon crosses to DR and calls off

Creon: Guard!

Guard 1 enters DR as Creon crosses to DC

Guard 1: Yes my lord?

Creon: *(turning to him)* You've saved your neck, it seems.

Guard 1: Yes my lord. I'm deeply sorry the culprit is Princess Antigone.

Creon: I decide who the culprit is; now bring Princess Ismene to me immediately before I change my mind about sparing you.

Guard 1 quickly bows and exits DR

Creon: You've placed me in a very difficult position.

Antigone: Then why not accede to my request and have done with it.

Creon: Traitors don't deserve privileges!

Antigone: (*aghast*) I repeat, I'm not a traitor!!

Guard 1 enters DR with Ismene

Creon: Guard, wait outside.

Guard 1 bows and exits DR

Ismene: Antigone, what's the problem?

Creon: Polynices is the problem. (*He crosses DL and turns to her*) Your sister has confessed to the removal of his corpse. Did you know of this?

Ismene: Uncle, I.....

Antigone: (*interjecting and crossing to her*) She knows nothing!

Ismene: I knew of her desire to bury him, yes.

Creon: You knew? I do not believe it! What is happening to our family?

He turns away, shaking his head and sighs deeply, his back to them.

Ismene: I didn't think she would carry out the task.

Antigone: Oh Ismene!

Creon turns to them

Creon: When did she tell you?

Ismene glances at Antigone and bows her head

Ismene: The night before last.

Creon: And you did nothing?

Ismene: How could you have expected me to do anything, she's my sister.

Antigone: Ismene was not involved; (*with a hint of sarcasm*) she played the dutiful sister.

Creon: Ismene, I hope you appreciate the seriousness of this matter.

Ismene: Yes I do uncle.

Creon: If I find out you conspired to remove the body I shall have you punished too. Now leave us.

Ismene: (*alarmed*) Is Antigone to be punished? Please be merciful uncle.

Creon: Leave us, child.

Ismene: Antigone, I am so sorry...you knew how I felt?

Antigone: (*quietly*) Oh Ismene, I wonder. Did you feel anything?

Ismene reaches out to her but Antigone moves away.

Ismene: (tearfully) Oh Antigone.

Creon: (*to Ismene*) Just go child, there is nothing you can say or do on your sister's behalf.

She exits DR reluctantly

Antigone: Perhaps now you would answer Ismene's question.

Creon: What?

Antigone: Am I to be punished?

Creon: You leave me with no option.

Haemon quickly enters R

Haemon: Father, I've just heard the news. (*to Antigone*) Is it true?

Antigone bows her head

Haemon: Why? How could you do this, knowing you were betrothed to me, the King's son!

Antigone quickly collects her thoughts and emotions

Antigone: I did it for my brother.

Haemon: For the Gods' sakes, he's dead. Did you not consider the living?

Antigone: How can you speak to me like that?

Haemon: Don't I have the right to speak to you frankly? I'm your husband to be!

Antigone: Polynices, my dear brother needs to be in the next world with my father. Yes, even with Eteocles.

