

Seven Tragedies of Sophocles

Antigone

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Antigone

(Dramatis Personae)

Antigone

Ismene

Chorus of Theban Elders

Creon

Guard

Haimon

Teiresias

Messenger

Eurydice

Second Messenger

Antigone	Dear sister, Ismene, my love and my life, do you know of any ill that Zeus has not inflicted on us in our brief lives, because of Oedipus? For I have witnessed pain and madness, indeed, and shame and dishonour - yes, all of these have been a part of our fate and disaster. And even now men speak of a new decree the general has pronounced to all the city folk. Have you heard of this, or you unaware of still more hostile cruelty urged upon the ones we love?	5 10
Ismene	No word has come to me, Antigone, about our loved ones, neither fair nor foul, since we were robbed of our dear brothers both, in mutual slaughter on that dread and single day. And since the Argive army left in the night just past, I have had no further news to bring me either grief or happiness.	15
An.	Just as I thought and so I have called you here, alone outside the gates to hear he news from me.	
Is.	What then? You would uncover some dark threat?	20
An.	Lord Creon has honoured only one of our two brothers with a grave, dishonouring his twin. Men say he has interred Eteocles beneath the earth with all due rites and ceremony, to rest in honour with the dead below, while poor dead Polyneices' corpse, men say, he has decreed to all the citizens that they must neither give it burial, nor cries of grief, but leave the corpse unburied and unwept, to give a welcome larder to sharp-eyed birds. Such orders, men say, the noble Creon has also enjoined on you and me, on me, I say, on me... and now he is coming even here to announce his news to those as yet in ignorance, a thing of some importance too, since he will condemn all those who disobey to public stoning in the streets. That is the situation, and you will soon reveal if you are noble born, or will betray your line.	25 30 35
Is.	You always were impetuous... but if things are as you say, what can I do to hinder him, or help?	40
An.	Perhaps you can share an enterprise with me.	
Is.	What enterprise? Just what is in your mind?	
An.	Will you join hands with me to bury him.	
Is.	You think to bury him, a thing forbidden to all?	

An.	Yes! Bury my brother - and yours, like it or not! For I shall not be blamed for betraying him!	45
Is.	Rash fool you are, when the king forbids!	
An.	It is not his right to keep me from my own.	
Is.	Oh, no! Consider our father, sister, how he died, an object of hatred, all honour gone, a man who took it on himself, with his own hands, to gouge, destroy his eyes; and then his wife and mother, ours as well, she throttled out her life in the woven noose; and third and last, our brothers, on the self- same day, in rashness, both fulfilled their fate, and brought about their deaths with mutual hands. Consider again how we, the sole surviving kin, how we shall both be ruined, yes, in misery, if we run counter to the vote and power of a king. We must remember this - we are mere women both, and so we cannot hope to combat men. And so, since we are ruled by those who are more powerful, we must obey them, and suffer even worse, if needs must be. And so I shall beg of those beneath the earth to pardon me for what I am compelled to do, and I shall obey the men who walk in power. It makes no sense to flout due moderation here.	50 55 60
An.	I would not pressure you to work with me, not even if you wanted to, and gladly changed your mind... Be just what you choose yourself to be, while I myself shall bury him - and if I die, then well and good. For I shall lie in love beside my best beloved, when I have done this crime of piety: the time to please the dead below is longer far than that required to satisfy the world above. For I shall rest there evermore... but you, so be your will, be guilty of dishonouring the practice honoured by the gods!	65 70 75
Is.	I shall not be guilty of dishonouring the laws of god, but I am not empowered to flout by force the people's will.	
An.	Excuses are easy to make - but I shall make my way and heap the earth on my dear brother's tomb.	80
Is.	My dear misguided darling, how I fear for you...	
An.	Fear not for me, guide rather your own course aright.	
Is.	At least you must not advertise your plan to anybody else, but keep it closely hid and I will also keep it so...	85
An.	Proclaim it rather! Your silence will win my hatred more, unless you broadcast, shout my crime aloud to all.	
Is.	Your blood runs hot in the face of chilling threats.	

An. I know I shall find most favour where most I ought.
Is. If you succeed perhaps, but what you strive for is impossible. 90
An. So then I'll fail, but only when my strength fails me...
Is. It is not right to hunt in vain in a hopeless quest...
An. To say such things will earn my hate, and you
will be hated too, and justly, by our brother dead.
Allow me, please, to suffer the dread results 95
of foolishness... for at least I shall not suffer then
the thing I hate the most, a shameful death.
Is. If that is your decision, go, but be assured of this, despite
the folly of your quest, your loved ones love you still.

Chorus

Sunlight, fairer yet than all str.
the former days to shine 101
on seven-gated Thebes,
you have shone at last, bright eye
of this golden day, have come
across the streams of Dirke, 105
have put to flight the men
who came from Argos, white
their shields, in total panoply,
and fled far swifter than they came.

This host it came against our land, 110
the reason - Polyneices' fretful claim,
and screaming shrill it stooped
upon our land, an eagle plumed
on wings of snow, all white,
allied with full array of arms 115
and horse-haired helmet crests.

He stood outside our walls, ant.
his a ring of spears agape
with bloodied teeth, a threat
to the sevenfold mouths 120
of Thebes... but he was gone
before his jaws were glutted on
our blood, or pine fed flame
engulfed our crown of towers.
The clatter of war rose thick about him, 125
indomitable the dragon born battle cry.

For Zeus he loathes boasts made
by an arrogant tongue, and so when he saw
them, a river in spate, and filled
with the clangour of gold-clad disdain, 130
that man he hurled down with thunder and fire,
as he strove at the peak
of endeavour, advancing victory's cry.

And he fell, hurled, twisting down to the earth, **str.**
his torch clasped still in his hand, who had then
in his madness breathed 135
hatred most bitter against us.
Dashed, disappointed
his hopes, and mighty Ares, god
of war, allotted each their different fate,
rude help and harnessed strength. 140

Seven captains, each marshalled to match
matching champions, each at the sevenfold gates,
abandoned their gear, all of bronze, a trophy
for Zeus, save for two, ill fated this pair, twins
born
of one mother, one sire, spear shafts set against
each the other's they stood, to the fate 145
of a mutual death both condemned.

And victory has come, fair of fame, to Thebes, **ant.**
a city that loves its wealth of chariots, and the
wars
are all done and behind us now, 150
so let us forget, and dance
through the night to the homes
of the gods in our dance, Dionysus
our guide, as his feet beat the earth.

But here is the king of this land, lord Creon, 155
the son of Menoecus, new come to the throne,
the most recent chance brought by the gods:
what fresh plan does he urge that he comes,
and has summoned this council of elders 160
to meet in assembly,
brought by a common command.

Creon My friends, our ship of state, storm-tossed by the gods,
 has been set once more by them upon a safe and even keel;
 and I have summoned you by messenger, from all the citizens
 especially, to come, because I know, and well, that you 165
 did ever honour loyally the rule of Laius in the house -
 and so too after him, when Oedipus was ruler of the state...
 and when he... died... why still you remained a bastion
 of common and supportive sense for their successive heirs.
 When those two men did perish on the self same day, 170
 struck down by a mutual fate and by each other's hand,
 and they did share the guilt and shame of fratricide,
 I then assumed the throne and all the cares of royal power
 by dint of my closest kinship with the brothers dead.
 It is impossible to know and understand the heart 175
 and soul and intellect of any man, until he is revealed,
 submitting to the daily test of government and rule.
 For if a man, entrusted with the total guidance of the state,
 will take no heed of counsel from the best of men,
 but keeps a lock upon his tongue through some anxiety, 180
 why him I judge, have always judged the worst of men;
 and if any man considers that a friend weighs more in his
 affections than the state, why him I count as nothing worth.
 For I - Zeus be my witness, who forever sees all things -
 would never hold my peace were I to see disaster speed 185
 against the citizens so as to ruin our security, nor yet
 could I befriend a man, at any time, who posed a threat
 to the state, because I know and know it well that she,
 our city, is our bulwark and our strength, in whose
 safe care we sail and prosper and find proper friends. 190
 With principles like these I shall enhance our city's fame.
 Accordingly, I have publicly pronounced my policy
 regarding these two brothers, the sons of Oedipus:
 Eteocles, who died a hero's death, his spear in hand,
 in defence of this city, a hero I say, he shall be buried 195
 in a tomb, with all the offerings that are sent below
 to accompany the very best and noblest of the dead;
 but that man's brother, yes, Polyneices I mean,
 who, though he was an exile, descended on
 his native land and gods, intent on sack and fire 200
 and pillage, intent on drinking kindred blood,
 on leading others of his kin in slavery, of him
 it is decreed that none shall gratify his corpse
 with proper burial rites, nor yet lament for him,
 but men must leave his body all exposed, a feast 205

	for carrion birds and dogs, gross spectacle of shame. My mind is thus made up, and never shall the men of shame outstrip the just, so long as I hold sway; whoever, though, has served this city well, alive or dead, that man I shall both honour and respect.	210
Ch.	It is your pleasure then, Menoeceus' son, to deal in contrary fashion with the traitor and the patriot. Employ the law's full force upon the dead, therefore, and on as many of us as yet do live. This is your right.	
Cr.	You will, of course, ensure my will is done...	215
Ch.	That task were entrusted better to a younger man.	
Cr.	I have posted eager guards to oversee the corpse.	
Ch.	What else then would you still enjoin on us?	
Cr.	You must not sympathise with those who may transgress.	
Ch.	No man is quite so foolish that he wants to die.	220
Cr.	That would be the penalty, be sure... but oftentimes a man has been corrupted by the hope of gain.	
Guard	My lord, I shall not speak as one who has come, quite out of breath from haste, nor as one fleet of foot, since many times my anxious and whirling thoughts delayed my progress here, and brought me to a stop. For my inner voice would speak, and that at length, 'You fool! You know what pay awaits you there!' 'You clown, yet more delay?' 'If Creon learns of this from someone else...then yours will be the sorry ass!' Such consternation checked my tardy progress here, and so a meagre path becomes a marathon... At last, however, my resolve to come to you, it won the day...and I will tell my tale, such as it is, mere bagatelle... and anyway I guess one thing alone is certain sure, I cannot suffer anything outside my share of destiny.	225
Cr.	What is this tale that causes such distress?	
Gu.	I want to tell you first my role in this - I didn't have one, actually, nor did I see the man who did... do this thing - and so by rights I shouldn't pay the penalty...	240
Cr.	You shrewdly aim to fence this thing around, blockade yourself from blame... You clearly have a novel tale to tell.	
Gu.	Yes, dangerous news will urge long-windedness upon a man...	
Cr.	Then spit it out and then be off with you!	
Gu.	I'm telling you... Someone just now has gone and done a burial, has sprinkled thirsty dust upon the flesh, performed the necessary rites...	245
Cr.	What's that? What man would dare that crime?	

Gu.	<p>I do not know. For there was no mark of shovel there, no clods dug up by a hoe. The earth was packed and barren dry, unbroken even by the ruts of wagon wheels – the perpetrator left no trace. And when the early morning watchman showed us this, all felt a dreadful clutch of fear.</p>	250
	<p>For the corpse had vanished, not buried fully yet - a scanty covering of dust sufficient to placate the dead. No hint at all there was that predator or dogs had come, no sign of any rending of the flesh. Recriminations then flew thick and fast, with guard accusing guard, until it would have come at last to blows - and no one there to check the brawl.</p>	255
	<p>For each and every one of us could have done this thing... and yet there was no proof, and all denied their guilt. Prepared we were to grasp hot iron in our hands, to walk on fire and call the gods to witness we were innocent, were not involved, knew nothing of the crime, were not complicit in the planning or the act.</p>	260
	<p>At length, when nothing further came from our enquiries, a comment was made which had us all in fear survey our boots. For we could think of no reply nor plan of action that was not fraught with peril. For it was said the crime should be referred to you, that there should be no cover up. This counsel won the day and the lot selected me, poor foolish wretch that I am, to win this privilege.</p>	265
	<p>So I am come against my will and yours, I know. For no man likes to be the bearer of bad news.</p>	270
Ch.	<p>My lord, I have long been nurturing the thought that this act may have been driven by the gods.</p>	275
Cr.	<p>Enough, before your words fill me with rage, and you are found to be as senile as your age suggests, since what you say cannot be borne, declaring that the gods have any care about that wretched corpse. Would they have buried him and honoured him as if he were a gallant hero when he came in fact to torch their colonnades and temples, overthrow their images, lay waste their land, destroy their laws? Can you conceive of the gods respecting evil men? Not so! For from the first some citizens begrudged my will and muttered secretly against me, shook their heads, refused to bear in cheerfulness my yoke and my dominion, as right and justice demand.</p>	280
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These are the men, I am convinced, that have bribed
 the guards, and have suborned them into wickedness. 295
 For nothing ever took root so evil among men
 as pieces of silver. Cash brings destruction on the state,
 drives men to betray their homes and their native land,
 perverts the consciousness and turns the noble minds
 of men so they can countenance all acts of shame.
 Corruption teaches men the varied kinds of villainy, 300
 highlights the potential sleaze in every enterprise.
 But as many as have profited by this crime have but
 ensured that they in time will pay due recompense.
 And so - as still I hold lord Zeus in high regard -
 be well assured - and hear my solemn oath on this, - 305
 unless you find the guilty man who did this burial,
 and then deliver him to me before my very eyes,
 then death alone will not suffice for you, until,
 hung out in torment, you inform upon this violation,
 so you may learn in future whence to snatch your gain, 310
 and also learn the lesson that you should not be blind
 in your love affair with each and every source of coin.
 For you will see that more men are destroyed
 by ill-gotten gains than are made secure by them.
Gu. You grant me leave to speak, or should I turn and go? 315
Cr. You do not understand how tiresome is your talk?
Gu. Do I tire your ears alone, or your thoughts as well?
Cr. But why define the seat of irritation?
Gu. The criminal pains your heart, I but your ears...
Cr. Good gods, what a natural clown you are! 320
Gu. Not such a clown as to have done this thing.
Cr. On the contrary, and you sold your soul for cash!
Gu. Ye gods!
 It is terrible when the judge can get it wrong!
Cr. Philosophise, so be your wish - but if you do not
 produce for me the men who did this thing, you shall 325
 aver that criminal gain brings sorrows in its wake.
Gu. Why, I wish then he be found... but whether he
 be caught or not - and fortune be the judge of that -
 be sure you will not see me coming here again.
 And now, beyond all hope and expectation safe, 330
 I owe the gods a monster debt of gratitude.

Chorus

Many things dread and wonderful, str.
 none though more dread than mankind -

voyaging across the white sea's waste,
he makes his way, storm tossed from the south, 335
closed in by overarching, tumbling waves
he sails the valleys between, and of the gods,
oldest born, Mother Earth,
everlasting, unwearied he constantly turns,
year in and out criss-crossing the plough, 340
working the mule and the land.

Light-hearted tribes of the birds, ant.
he ensnares, taking joy in the hunt,
and the clans of wild beasts,
salt sea fish scoured from the deep, 345
trapped in the coils of the well woven nets,
masterful man...conquering too
with his traps high country beasts,
their delight the wild and the space,
breaks in the wild mane of the horse 350
that submits to the yoke,
and the unflagging bull from the hills.

Speech too and thought swift str.
as the wind he devised and the impulse
creative of statecraft he learned, 356
houses to ward off the frost's inhospitable
sharpness of sky, rain's lancing shafts,
an answer for every demand
that exists or may threaten him, 360
yet to come. Only grave death
admits no escape... Deadly diseases
yield now to cure.

Wisdom he has beyond dreams ant.
of invention, now bringing him ill 366
and now yet again to salvation,
should he follow the law,
and honour sworn justice of gods:
the city stands proud, but provides 370
no safe home for the rash,
fixed on a life of crime.
Let no such man share in my hearth,
nor in my sentiments,
the man who acts so! 375

An omen sent by the gods!
 How can it be? - but how deny the certainty
 this is indeed the child Antigone?
 Poor wretched child
 of wretched Oedipus, 380
 whatever does this mean? It cannot be
 they lead you as a criminal, transgressing Creon's
 law,
 caught in an act of foolishness?

Gu. Here is the girl that committed the crime -we caught
 her in the act of burial. But Creon, where is he? 385

Ch. He returns from the house to answer our need.

Cr. What is it here that makes my entrance opportune?

Gu. My lord, a man should never swear that he won't do
 a thing in case hindsight should make him out a liar, since
 I swore I wouldn't come back here in a hurry again, 390
 by reason of the threats with which you pelted me;
 but unexpected joys which come quite unforeseen

are likely to outstrip by far all other happiness,
 and so I come, although I swore I never would,
 and bring this girl who was found in the act 395
 of tidying the tomb. No need this time to cast
 the lots, but I seized this opportunity for myself.

And now, my lord, take her yourself and test
 her, put her to the question, as you like - while I
 shall rightly gain complete acquittal in this case. 400

Cr. Just how and where did you apprehend this girl?

Gu. She was in the act of burial, no more, no less!

Cr. You are aware then of the import of your words?

Gu. I saw her in the act of burying the corpse the which
 you had forbidden - I assume that's plain and clear enough? 405

Cr. How is it she was seen and captured in the act?

Gu. Well, it was like this, you see... we went back
 to our post, all mindful of your dreadful threats,
 and swept away the shroud of dust which cloaked
 the body, laying the clammy corpse completely bare. 410

We sat ourselves down upon a ridge, upwind,
 to escape the stench that might assail us there,
 and each kept the others alert with floods of abuse,
 ensuring none grew careless in their task.

And that was how it was for quite a while until 415
 the sun's bright disk was at its zenith overhead
 and the heat grew stifling and all at once a blast

of wind kicked up a dust storm from the ground,
a nuisance of a thing which filled the plain, tore leaves
and branches from the trees, and all the sky's great dome 420
was choked with it, while we, eyes shut, endured
god's plague, but when this storm at last abated,
the child was spotted there, who cried aloud a cry
as sharp in bitterness as that of any bird, as when
it sees the empty nest stripped bare of fledgling young; 425
and just so she on seeing the body there exposed
screamed cries of grief and imprecations dire
upon the men who had undone her work. At once
she lifted up the dust dry earth in her cupped hands
and lifted too a well shaped urn of bronze and crowned 430
the corpse three times with threefold offerings of drink.
And when we saw her there, we rushed her then
to hunt her down, but she did not seem at all upset.
We questioned her about her past and present crimes,
and there she stood, did not deny a single thing. 435
And so I am at once both happy and distressed...
To escape from danger oneself is very sweet indeed,
but to do so at the cost of driving a friend into harm
brings pain. All things, though, pale into insignificance,
I think, and naturally so, compared with one's own reprieve. 440
Cr. You there, yes you, with your head cast down to the ground,
do you confess, or deny that you have done these things.
An. I do declare I did these things, do not deny the fact.
Cr. Then you can take yourself off where you will,
absolved of any grievous charge or guilt. 445
You, though, answer me... and keep it brief.
Were you aware that I had publicly forbidden such an act?
An. I was aware of it, of course I was... You made it crystal clear.
Cr. And still you dared to contravene these laws?
An. I did, since Zeus had not pronounced these laws, 450
nor yet does Justice, dweller with the gods below,
prescribe such laws among the ranks of mortal men.
I did not think that your decrees were of such weight
that they could countermand the laws unfailing and
unwritten of the gods, and you a mortal only and a man. 455
The laws divine are not for the now, nor yet for yesterday,
but live forever and their origins are mysteries to men.
There was no way that I would wish to pay a penalty
to gods for contravening them, and all because I feared
a tyrant's temper. I know that I must die - of course - 460
quite irrespective of your will... and if, then, I must die

	before my time, I reckon that to my advantage - since who would choose to live, all set about with troubles such as mine, would not consider that to die would bring advantages?	
	And so the pain that might accrue for me in death is but a trifle, although I would be hurt indeed were dogs to savage and shame my dead sibling's naked corpse, my mother's child... but as it is I feel no pain nor hurt.	465
Ch.	And if by chance I seem to you to act in foolishness, it may just be it is a fool himself condemns my foolishness.	470
Ch.	The child reveals her savage heart, itself a legacy from Oedipus... and quite incapable of compromise.	
Cr.	Know well that the most stubborn souls most often take the hardest fall, and that you will most often see the iron that is tempered hard and rigid in the flames, will see that metal fragment and shatter and snap.	475
	I also know that the highest spirited horse can be controlled with the merest curb... nor is it ever possible for a man to think proud thoughts when he is his neighbour's slave.	
	This woman, though, has always known the way of arrogance, just now did contravene established law and still compounds, a second time, her crime of pride, indulging herself in laughter and boasting her guilt.	480
	And so I am myself no man, but rather she the man, should she retain this seeming victory unchecked.	485
	It matters not she is my sister's child, closer to me by blood than any of the folk who worship Zeus within my house, since neither she nor yet her sister shall escape the worst of fates - for I charge that woman too with a share, an equal share in this conspiracy to bring about the burial!	490
	So call her here! For I saw her just now in a passionate fit of madness within, quite out of control of her wits. The minds of those who contrive treason and plots in the dark are like to betray themselves and so be caught.	
	I hate the man who when apprehended as a criminal will choose to glorify and make a virtue of his crime.	495
An.	Do you wish to do more than merely kill your prisoner?	
Cr.	No more than that, since that is all I need to do.	
An.	Why then delay? This conversation brings me no enjoyment, nor would ever any talk with you, while talk with me brings no delight to you, I trust.	500
	And yet what greater acclamation could I win, but from the burial of my own brother's corpse.	
	And all the people here would say this crime did please them too, if only terror did not lock their silent lips.	505

But the king is blessed with many fine advantages, not least of which is his capacity to speak and act just as he likes.

Cr. Alone of Cadmus' folk you see the situation so...

An. They see it also so, but fawn and cower down to you.

Cr. Have you no shame to think to be apart from them? 510

An. There is no shame in honouring one's brothers so.

Cr. Your other brother too both fought against him and died?

An. All siblings from the self-same sire and mother both...

Cr. How honour then the one to slight the other man?

An. Eteocles would not bear witness thus against dead kin. 515

Cr. He would were you to give the traitor equal rights.

An. This is not his slave's, but a brother's corpse and death...

Cr. Who wished to rape this land, while he defended it.

An. But nonetheless lord Death desires these burial rites.

Cr. The patriot demands a better share than the renegade... 520

An. Who knows if things are quite so clear in Hades' house?

Cr. The enemy, the friend are separate, alive or dead.

An. I am disposed to love by nature not to hate...

Cr. Then go beneath the earth to love your dead if love you must! So long as I live, no woman shall rule me. 525

Ch. But see, before the gates, Ismene here,
your sister comes, shedding sisterly tears...
and clouds of grief upon her fevered brow
do shade her face
to drown her loveliness. 530

Cr. You there, you, secret serpent, lurking in my house,
you too have fed on me, all unawares, nor did I know
I nurtured a twofold curse to rise rebellious against
my throne - come, speak to me, confess! Did you share
this burial with her, or do you deny complicity - on oath? 535

Is. I have done this thing, if only she accepts my claim,
and I would share the guilt and in the punishment.

An. I might, but right and justice never shall allow you this,
since you refused to help, nor yet did I accept your help.

Is. But in your present storms of strife I feel no shame 540
myself to sail with you to share your suffering.

An. The dead and Hades too can witness whose deed this is!
I have no love myself for those who love in word alone.

Is. I beg you, sister, don't dishonour me, forbidding me to share
your death, but rather let me share in honouring the dead. 545

An. You shall not share my death, nor claim a share in deeds
that were not yours - my willing death shall satisfy the day.

Is.	What life or love remains for me despoiled of you?	
An.	Ask Creon that! Since all your care is all for him!	
Is.	What good does it do to hurt, to wound me so?	550
An.	The hurt was mine when forced to sneer at you.	
Is.	What can I do to remedy that hurt?	
An.	Preserve your life - I don't begrudge you life.	
Is.	And shall I have no share at all in what is yours?	
An.	You chose to live, I chose to die.	555
Is.	At least I had my say on that...	
An.	Some will approve your choice, still others mine.	
Is.	And yet our folly now is shared...	
An.	Have courage now... you are alive, my soul was long since dead, which fitted me to serve the dead.	560
Cr.	It seems that of these girls the one has gone stark mad just now, the other though has been quite mad from birth.	
Is.	Our native common sense, my lord, cannot remain untouched by situations dire, must take its leave.	
Cr.	So much is sure for you, who chose to share her crime.	565
Is.	What life is left for me to live alone bereft of her.	
Cr.	Speak not of her - she is no more.	
Is.	And shall you kill your own son's bride to be?	
Cr.	There are plenty of other fields for him to plough.	
Is.	But none to offer such a loving union...	570
Cr.	I do not desire my sons to marry wicked wives.	
An.	My Haemon, best beloved, your father does you wrong!	
Cr.	You and your precious marriage, how they irk...	
Ch.	You shall deny your son his bride?	
Cr.	Death rather is the one to stop their union.	575
Ch.	You have, it seems, decreed her death.	
Cr.	Both I and you... Waste no more time, you there, but take them both inside. Our women must no more be left to wander out of doors... Brave men will even try to flee when close upon their lives they see the march of death.	580
Ch.	Happy are they whose time has not tasted disaster.	str. a
	For a house that is shaken by gods, there the curse fails not at all, but floods each generation in turn:	585
	just so the swell and the surge, pushed hard by grim blasts of storm winds from Thrace, scouring the crests of the deep, darkling sea, stirs up the black silted sands,	590
	beneath where the wracked and abutting cliffs resound.	
	I have seen the longstanding ills of the house of Labdacus	ant. a
	fall, blow on blow, in serried ranks on each successive age,	595

	with no relief for any generation, rather some one of the gods stalks, harries them implacable. For now the last hope of the clan, these girls, whose light illuminates with future hope the house of Oedipus, in turn is dimmed with blood and dust by the gods below, bestirred by foolishness and obsessive self-destructive talk.	600
	What wild lawlessness of human kind can limit your strength, lord Zeus?	str. b 605
	Nor sleep, which entraps all things can master your power, nor the sequence of months, unwearied, of gods can contain it, but deathless and timeless your rule over gleaming Olympus. Both the next to now and future time, time also past conforms to this law: no thing of excess can enter our lives divorced from disaster.	610 615
	And hope that wanders far and wide is a comfort to some in their hearts, to many another a source of deceptive, false dreams. The ignorant man remains oblivious, until he treads upon the flame: wisdom revealed the truth long ago that a man can reason the bad into good, when a god seduces his wit. But for only the shortest of spans does he live free of grief. But see, young Haemon, approaches, your youngest son...does he come full of grief, lamenting the fate of his bride to be, Antigone, whose bed he has lost?	ant. b 620 625 630
Cr.	We shall know soon enough and swifter than seers might tell. My son, it cannot be you come enraged against your sire, I trust, on hearing of my ruling as regards your bride to be? Or are we still your father, honoured and loved regardless of her?	
Haemon	My father, I am yours... and you it is that guides my life with rules set down for me, the which I trust and keep. No marriage shall I deem ever to be worth more to me than your example and sound leadership.	635
Cr.	Indeed, my son, your duty demands your heart remains disposed precisely so - to hear me and obey. For this is the reason why men pray, to get and keep compliant sons within their house, that they might repay its enemies with evils due, and honour their father's friends on equal terms.	640

However, any man that begets a thankless child, how else 645
 describe him but as one who breeds himself a store of pain,
 a source of much amusement for his enemies?
 And so do not for the sake of pleasuring a woman
 throw away good sense, and always bear in mind
 that such embraces give but comfort cold, when she 650
 who shares your house is proven vile. For what
 could be a more dreadful plague than an evil mate?
 No, shrink from her as from some enemy, and send
 the child to make her marriage bed in Hades' halls.
 For her alone of all the citizens have I caught 655
 in blatant disobedience to my will, and so I shall
 not betray myself as false before my people, no, for I
 shall kill her. Let her then pray to Zeus familial!
 For if I am to nurture kin that is unnatural, I must,
 show any foreigner at least as deep or deeper love. 660
 A man who shows himself as sound in things domestic
 and in the home that man will also prove himself to be
 a worthy citizen, but the criminal who disparages the law
 by force, who even thinks it right to rule the men who rule,
 that man will never win a word of praise from me. 665
 The man who is established by the state to lead must have
 obedience in matters constitutional, both small and great –
 and I am confident that such a man, who can obey
 with grace, would also make a splendid king,
 would, marshalled in the battle's hail of javelins, 670
 stay staunch in his appointed place beside his friends.
 There is no crime more heinous than disloyalty!
 It is the death of cities, makes desolate our homes...
 this is the thing that breaks apart the allied ranks,
 imposing a fate of desertion and flight. The rule of law 675
 preserves to best effect the lives of honest men.
 The constitution and the rule of law must be preserved,
 must never be compromised by a woman's crime.
 Far better to fall, if fall one must, to a warrior's hand.
 No shame of being mocked as weaker than a woman then. 680
Ch. Unless we are deceived by our advancing years,
 the things you say are sensible, articulated well.
Ha. My father, the gods have sown in men the gift
 of wisdom, which is the very best of all our gifts,
 but I lack both the skill and experience to judge 685
 if you are right or wrong in what you say,
 and yet another man may make good sense...
 and I am by nature one to watch on your behalf,

	to hear what men may say and do, what faults impute.	690
	The common herd are afraid to provoke your rage and eye with the kind of talk you hate to hear, while I can listen to these shady murmurings, with which the citizens express their grief for her, this child, 'Of womankind,' they say, 'the least deserving she to die such a dreadful death, because of a deed after all	695
	most noble, who would not suffer her brother's corpse to lie unburied in the bloody aftermath of strife, to be consumed by ravening dogs and carrion birds... and so deserves, does she not, to win, rather, prizes of gold? Dark rumours such as these spread secretly abroad.	700
	There is nothing I hold more precious, father, no prize is more dear to me than your safety, your success. What greater prize could children win beyond a parent's fair fame, or a parent win beyond a son's?	705
	And so, do not forever keep a single, stubborn mood, do not believe that you alone monopolise the truth. If any man believes that he alone of all mankind is wise, his tongue and heart alone of all are true, then under test that man will prove to be a hollow man.	710
	There is no shame in a man learning more, be he ever so wise, nor in remaining flexible. You see yourself how next to the winter floods some trees yield to survive and save their limbs, while those resisting are uprooted and destroyed.	715
	Just so the mariner who sails close hauled, no reefs in place, turns turtle and completes his trip capsized, the rowing benches all awash, keel uppermost. So check your rage, allow yourself a change of heart. For if it is right for a younger man, like me, to give advice, I say that though it is the best by far always	720
Ch.	by nature to be judicious and indeed omniscient, why, failing that, and chance and fate will have it so - one should then learn from any man of good advice. My lord, it is right to be advised by him, if his words ring true, and you by him, my son - you both speak well...	725
Cr.	Are we at our age then to take our lessons on how to think and feel from such a callow youth as this?	
Ha.	But what I teach is just... I may be but a youth, but you should look not at my age, but at my character.	
Cr.	And is it in your character to honour criminals?	730
Ha.	I would not recommend that any honour criminals.	
Cr.	And is not she herself assailed by such a malady?	

Ha.	The men of Thebes, her city, think not so...	
Cr.	The city then dictates my policies to me?	
Ha.	Your answer smacks of youth and inexperience.	735
Cr.	Whose judgement other than my own should guide my hand?	
Ha.	A city does not belong to any single man to rule...	
Cr.	Is not the state the business of the ruler's guiding hand?	
Ha.	Oh, better you to be sole ruler of a wilderness.	
Cr.	This youth, it seems, supports the female's cause!	740
Ha.	If you are female, yes!! My care is all for you...	
Cr.	An utter traitor you to cross your father's just decree.	
Ha.	I rather see your view of justice is mistaken and awry.	
Cr.	I am mistaken then to honour what I legislate?	
Ha.	No law of man is just that tramples down the law of god.	745
Cr.	A coward's nature yours to fawn on womanhood!	
Ha.	No coward's nature mine despite your charge...	
Cr.	But everything you say is said on her behalf...	
Ha.	And for me and you and for the gods below.	
Cr.	There is no way you'll marry her while yet she lives.	750
Ha.	Then if she dies her death condemns another too...	
Cr.	You make so bold as to come and threaten me?	
Ha.	Where lies the threat in countering stupidity?	
Cr.	You will regret your empty wisdom when it causes tears.	
Ha.	If you were not my father I would say that you were mad.	755
Cr.	A woman's plaything you, do not attempt to sweet-talk me...	
Ha.	You wish to have your say, but then refuse to hear me speak.	
Cr.	Quite so! But know this well, by all that's holy, you will win no pleasure from your foul abuse of me...	
	Go, bring her out, the loathsome thing that she might die at once in front of him, before her lover's very eyes.	760
Ha.	No, not before my eyes, do not think that, she shall not die in front of me, and nor shall you lay eyes again upon my face. Be mad and keep instead the company of sycophants.	765
Ch.	My lord, the man has gone in rage and haste... a young man's pain is deep and sharp.	
Cr.	Oh, let him dream immortal, adolescent dreams! Yet still he will not save these women from their fate.	
Ch.	You have it in your mind to kill them both?	770
Cr.	No, not the innocent... for your advice is sound.	
Ch.	What is the fate you have decreed to be Antigone's?	
Cr.	I shall take her somewhere off the beaten track and hide her there, alive, within a rocky cave, providing food enough to satisfy the rite, so that the state might not incur blood guilt.	775

- And in that place she then may pray to Death, the god
she cherishes the most, to win from him the prize of life,
or learn at last what a waste of effort and time
it is to dedicate oneself to what is dead and gone. 780
- Ch.** Desire, in battle unconquered, Desire besetting the fortunes
of men,
keeping sweet vigil on youth's downy cheek, sweeping over
the sea
and the dwellings of men in the wild, not one of the gods
nor any of men, ephemeral things, can elude you,
a passion to drive a man mad. 790
- Perverting the minds of even right-minded men to corruption,
confusion and strife you rouse here between men who are kin.
Desire springing clear from the eyes of the beautiful bride 795
is victorious, a power enthroned beside natural law,
while Aphrodite always wins and works her arbitrary will. 799
- But now when I see these things I am myself
transported past the bonds of blind obedience,
no longer can restrain well springs of tears,
when I see Antigone, embarked upon her path
to the universal bridal suite of death. 805
- An.** Observe me, fellow citizens of this my native land, how I embark
on this my final journey, look one last time upon the light of day,
and nevermore... Death leads me, living still, to universal sleep,
the shores of Acheron. 812
No share for me in marriage songs, no bridal hymn
has ever honoured me, but I shall be the bride of Death.
- Ch.** Fair fame and praise are your companions, **syst. A**
departing to the depths of those now dead,
and no disease has wasted you,
no fatal sword thrust earned, 820
but you shall, all willing and unique
of mortals, go down alive to Hell.
- An.** I heard of Niobe, once stranger guest and child of Tantalus **ant. a**
in Thebes, how on Mount Sipylus she died most dreadfully, 825
overwhelmed by ivy tight tendrils of stone, eroded by rain,
as men say,
and unfailing snow, while she drenches with tears everlasting 830

the hills and the vales of her breasts. The god has set just such a fate for me.

- Ch.** But she was immortal and born of the gods,
while we are but mortals and men born of men. 835
Yet for a woman to share as she dies a fate
that was won by a god, why that is renown,
both in life and ever after in death!
- An.** I am mocked! Why mock me now before my face, by all **str. b**
the gods paternal, when you could mock me dead and gone? 840
Ah, city mine - and wealthy gentlemen, her citizens!
You springs of Dircè,
sacred ground of Thebes, so rich in chariots, you are 845
my only witness now,
as, all unwept by friends, constrained by his decrees, I make
my way to an alien tomb's confinement of rock.
I grieve for my fate as one displaced, who shares no place 850
with neither the quick nor the dead.
- Ch.** You have dared the very limit of audacity, **str. c**
to fall headlong and heavily before 855
the pedestal of Justice, child.
You pay the continuing price of a father's guilt.
- An.** You touch upon my bitterest distress, **ant. b**
renew again my cries of grief for a father's fate, 861
and the fate of all the famous house of Labdacus.
I grieve the curse upon
my mother's marriage bed, and my father's union with her, 865
incestuous and doomed.
Such were the parents that gave to me a life accursed.
Accursed in turn myself and all unwed I go to live with them.
You also won a fatal Argive marriage, Polyneices,
and dead yourself win too for me a living death. 871
- Ch.** Respect for the dead deserves respect, **ant. C**
but the king cannot condone an act
that contravenes his majesty.
Your own madness has destroyed you. 875
- An.** No tears for me, no friends, no marriage song
for this poor wretch, **epode**
as she is led upon her destined path.
No more am I allowed to look upon

the sun's bright sacred light and seeing eye - 880
no friend, not one to weep or grieve
for me and my pitiful fate.

Cr. Do you not realise that none would cease from songs of grief
and lament before a death, were they of any proven benefit?
Get rid of her, and quickly now! And when you have enclosed 885
her inside her hollow and vaulted tomb, according to my word,
then leave her there alone and desolate, should it be her wish to die
or be concealed and buried there alive in such a resting place;
For we shall keep ourselves unsullied by her blood, this girl...
however, she shall be deprived of life in the world above. 890

An. My tomb and bridal chamber both, my shaded dwelling place
and prison evermore, in which I start my journey now
to meet my kin, the many of my numbered dead among
the many dead Persephone has welcomed as her guests;
And I go down to death before my span of life is spent, 895
the last of all my line I am, and am by far most pitiful.
And yet as I depart I nurture still the powerful hope
my coming will well please my father, and my mother too,
and that my dear, dear brother too will welcome me.
For did I not with my own two hands take care to lay 900
you out and wash your bodies properly, and pour
the pious offerings? And now, dear Polyneices, I
have earned a harsh reward for burying your corpse.
And yet right thinking men approve the rites I gave...
although I never would have taken on this task to spite 905
the state, had I been mother to a brood of children, or if
it had been some man of mine that lay corrupt in death.
You ask that I should justify that paradox?
One husband dead I might have won another man,
or even further children by some other sire... 910
but with both my parents dead in Hades' halls,
there is no chance another brother can be born.
This is the reason why I honoured you so much,
and why King Creon thinks that I am mad to dare
such a dreadful thing, my dearest Polyneices... 915
And now he has laid hands on me to drive me as
his prisoner, unwed, no marriage song for me, no share
in a family of my own, nor in the joy of rearing sons,
but alone and desolate of friends, poor wretch, alive

	I go, deep down amidst the hollow regions of the dead. ¹	920
	What privilege, or law of gods have I infringed?	
	But why should I look any more to gods for help?	
	Have I indeed one mortal friend to bring me aid, now that my piety has earned this impious prize?	
	But if these things find favour with the gods,	925
	I will in death find out the nature of my crime; but if the fatal fault belongs to these, then let them too achieve the self same fate they have prescribed for me.	
Ch.	Her soul is still beset by the same emotional storm.	930
Cr.	And so her guards will pay a price of tears for tardiness.	
An.	That sentence brings my death as close as it can be.	
Cr.	I have no words of spurious comfort to bring false hope of delay.	935
An.	Ancestral city and home that is Thebes, ancestral gods, I am their immediate victim now. Observe me, lords of Thebes, your last and lone princess, and this my fate at the hands of such as these, because I honoured what was right.	940
Ch.	Danaë too was constrained to hide her form from heaven's light in a tomb of bronze - concealed she bore the secret yoke of prisoner - and yet she too was noble of birth, my child, my child - entrusted then with the golden seed of Zeus.	str. a 945
	The rule of fate is mystical indeed. For there is no escape from fate, however rich or warlike a man might be, possessed of black ships and a citadel. Hasty tempered too, Lycurgus, son of Dyas, was constrained, Edonian king - his mockery the cause - by the god, enclosed in a prison of stone.	ant. a 956
	And in that place the joyous dread bloom of his madness faded and died. He came to know the god he had abjured in madness with his mockery.	960
	For he had tried to check the Bacchants and the sacred flame	

¹ There is considerable debate about the authenticity of vv. 903-920: if they are an interpolation, they were inserted before Aristotle's time, since he quotes vv. 911f in *Rhetoric* 3.16.9 and seems to have had the whole passage in his copy. The reservations of scholars about the authenticity of the lines may be due in part to their lack of sensitivity to Sophocles' presentation of Antigone's confusion and fear.

	of Dionysus, had angered the Muses whose love is the pipe.	965
	Close by the Black Rock currents and twin sea lay the shores of Bosphorus and Thracian Salmydessus' hostile coast, where neighbouring Ares saw the sockets of Phineus' twin sons blinded, cruelly gouged by the barbarous wife – sightless the two and demanding revenge – ensanguined the hands that plied and ploughed the shuttle, needle sharp.	str. b 970 975
	Wasting away in wretched misery they wept for their fate, wretched itself, like their birth from a mother unhappily wed, who claimed for her line the race of Erechtheus, as ancient as days, nursed herself in a far flung cave as guest of her father's winds, Boreas, swift himself as the wind that sweeps the steep hills, a daughter of gods – but even on her did the Fates, the immortals, bear down, my child.	ant. b 980 985
Teiresias	My lords of Thebes, we two are come a common road, and share one pair of eyes. A blind man's lot it is to journey thus dependent on a guide.	990
Cr.	What is it brings you here, Teiresias?	
Te.	I shall tell you all and you must heed my prophecy.	
Cr.	I never yet have been a man to doubt your word.	
Te.	And so your guidance of the state was ever sound.	
Cr.	I can bear witness to the benefits you brought.	995
Te.	Believe that you are on fate's razor edge once more.	
Cr.	Your meaning? For I shudder at your words.	
Te.	Then hear the evidence my art supplies and learn: for I was sitting at an ancient vantage point where I observe the birds, a gathering place for each and every one of them and there I heard a harsh cacophony of cries, unknown to me before, that drowned their song. I understood at last that with their bloody talons each was tearing at the others, as the whirl of wings betrayed. At once in dread I sought to test the omen in an altar's flame ignited for the task, but then Hephaestus' fire refused to kindle on the offerings, and from the victim's thigh there oozed and spat and sputtered on the embers there a noisome liquor, and then the bladder and its gall	1000 1005

	was dissipated in the air, while the thighs themselves lay bare, denuded of the fat which once had covered them. Such were the signs of an experiment that had failed, revealing nothing - and these I learned from my slave; for he guides me just as I am a guide for other men.	1010
	Our city is sick with a sickness that your policy has brought. Our altars and our hearths are all alike polluted by the dogs and birds with the flesh that they have garnered from the corpse of the fallen and ill-fated son of Oedipus. And so the gods no longer can accept our prayers nor sacrifice nor yet our offerings of roasted meats, and nor can the cries of any bird give portents clear - for they have glutted on a corpse's fat and blood. Reflect, then, on these things, my son. For to err - it is the common lot of all of humankind...	1015 1020
	and yet, when a man has erred, that man need not remain mistaken and unfortunate, so long as he redeems himself, does not remain intransigent. Intransigence brings a reputation for stupidity. Be easy with the dead, do not abuse the corpse: what prowess is required to kill a victim twice?	1025 1030
Cr.	My son, my words are best designed to suit your case the best, and best it is to profit from the best advice. Old man, observe how each and every other man, like an archer, makes of me his target, nor yet am I without sure knowledge also of the art of prophecy, since its clannish masters long have traded in my life. Make profits, drive your bargains in the silvered gold of Sardis and, should you so desire, then trade as well in Indian gold - but you shall not conceal him in a grave, not even if the sacred eagle birds of Zeus himself desire to snatch and bring the carrion feast to Zeus's throne - not even dread of that pollution would convince me of the need to bury him. For I know well no man can have the strength to bring pollution on the gods. The very cleverest of men, Teiresias, my aged friend, fall fatally themselves into folly most foul, when they for profit's sake dress up foul thoughts in fancy rhetoric!	1035 1040
Te.	Agh!! Does any member of this human race quite comprehend...	1045
Cr.	What? What is your present pearl of commonplace wit?	
Te.	that the pearl of greatest price is sound advice.	1050
Cr.	As much, I trust, as folly is by far the greatest plague.	
Te.	Well, you should know, filled as you are with it...	

Cr. I do not wish to answer back a prophet with a curse.
Te. And yet you do by claiming that my words ring false! 1055
Cr. Love of profit ever drove your prophet tribe.
Te. The spawn of tyrants always hankers for ill-gotten gains.
Cr. Have you forgotten you are speaking to your king?
Te. No, nor that you hold that throne secure because of me.
Cr. You are skilled in prophecy, but attracted to crime...
Te. You will provoke my heart to betray its secret dread! 1060
Cr. Then spit it out, but do not hope to gain by what you say...
Te. There is no gain, I think, in what I say for you, or me.
Cr. Be sure you cannot trade upon my will to gain your ends.
Te. Be sure yourself of this: that you shall complete no more 1065
than a minimum of days, as the racing chariot of the sun
completes its daily course, before a son, begotten of
your loins, repays in death the living death of one
you thrust beneath the earth, while still alive, and housed
her in a tomb in shame, while yet again, you kept 1070
above the earth a corpse, unburied and dishonoured,
unholy, the lawful property of the gods below.
In bodies that belong to them you have no share,
nor do the gods above - a rule that you have flouted now.
And so the Furies, vengeful emissaries of Death
himself, that soon or late destroy, shall lay in wait 1075
to ambush you, and grasp you for these crimes.
Take note if I announce these things as one who has
been paid: for the brief erosion of time will soon reveal
the lamentations of the men and women of your house.
And all the towns of Greece are stirred with hostile rage, 1080
whose mutilated sons receive their burial rites from dogs
or beasts, or from some winged bird that takes the stench
of blasphemous corruption home to every city's hearth.
Such are the shafts I, archer like, have loosed at you,
because of provocation and the anger in my heart, 1085
shafts accurate enough you'll not outrun their sting.
Boy, guide me homeward now, so he may vent
his spleen on younger men than me, and also learn
to cultivate a tongue which is more temperate
and a milder temper too than that he nurtures now. 1090
Ch. My lord, the man has gone, dread omens on his lips,
and I am very well aware that from the time my hair,
once dark, grew white with the advance of years -
I know his prophecies to us have never proven false

Cr.	I know, I know, and so am deeply troubled in my mind... it is a dreadful thing to yield, but not to yield, and so to bring disaster crashing on my pride is dreadful too.	1095
Ch.	It is your duty, Creon, to take due note of good advice.	
Cr.	What would you have me do? Advise, and I shall... yield.	
Ch.	Go now, release the maiden from her rocky tomb, and rather give the corpse a proper burial.	1100
Cr.	And this is your advice - you think that I should bend?	
Ch.	And as quickly as you can, my lord... swift footed nemesis advances from the gods to cut our folly quickly short.	
Cr.	I goes against the grain and yet in my heart of hearts I know that my resolve must yield to harsh necessity.	1105
Ch.	Go then and act, do not entrust these tasks to other men.	
Cr.	I shall, and quickly, even as I am - do you go also too, my friends, yes, all of you make haste, take axes in your hands and hurry on to that far vantage point! While I myself, since this is our decision made, shall be the one to set her free in person who imprisoned her. For now I apprehend it is the best to live one's whole life through adhering strictly both to precedent and law.	1110
Ch.	Lord Dionysus, known by many names, the pride of Theban Semele, and son of Zeus, deep thunderer, far Italy is in your watchful care, so too the sheltering and hospitable vale of Demeter's Eleusis... Bacchus, Bacchus, lord of Thebes, the maenads' and your mother's city, beside the gentle stream of Ismenus your home, seeding ground of the savage dragon's teeth.	str. a 1116 1120 1124
	In flickering light the Bacchic torch has spied you out beyond the double peak, up where the Corycian nymphs are eager in the Bacchic dance, beside Castalia's plunging stream. The hilly heights of Nysa, ivy-clad bestow you on your way from vine green coastal plains, while Bacchanalian songs divine extol your glory on the road to Thebes. Yes, Thebes, honoured most by you of all the cities, your mother's home, the lightning's bride! And now this city and all its folk is in the grip of pollution and plague,	ant. a 1130 1135 str. b 1140

	so stir your tread to heal, traversing high Parnassus' peak and the sounding straits of Euripus.	1145
	Leading the dance of lambent stars, conducting songs nocturnal, son sprung from Zeus, appear, reveal yourself our lord, attended by your company of Nymphs, whose nightlong fervent dancing does your bounty honour, Iacchus!	ant. b 1150
Messenger	You, neighbours of the house of Cadmus and of Amphion, there is no shape or condition of human life that I would praise as being stable, nor ever yet condemn for its monotony. For luck may stabilise or in its turn destabilise the fates of men who may be fortunate, or not, as the case may be; no man can prophecy for men about the permanence of things. For Creon was once a man to envy, or so I thought, when he had saved the land of Cadmus from its enemies, had received as his reward the total rule and guidance of the land, and was blessed as well with a noble crop of sons. And now all of that is gone: for when a man himself betrays his joy and pleasures, I cannot count his life worthwhile, but rather think of him as mere animate flesh, a corpse. For a man may be as vastly rich at home as you like, and live the life and style of a king - but if a man's capacity for joy in these is lost, well, as for ceremony, I would not give the king a shadow of a price for all of that.	1155, 1160 1165 1170
Ch.	What fresh burden of grief do you bring our royal house?	
Me.	A burden of death, and the living are responsible.	
Ch.	Who is the murderer and who the victim, speak!	
Me.	Haemon is dead, and slaughtered by no stranger's hand.	1175
Ch.	His father's hand... or did he kill himself?	
Me.	He killed himself, enraged at his father's death decree.	
Ch.	Teiresias, how true your prophecy has proved!	
Me.	Such are the facts. Yours the need ponder them.	
Ch.	And now I also see Eurydice, poor thing, the wife of Creon. Perhaps her coming shows awareness of her son's demise, unless it is coincidence...	1180
Eurydice	Citizens of Thebes, I heard your words as I made my way to the gates, so that I could go and try propitiate the goddess Pallas with my prayers. And as I prepared to free the bolt and open up	1185

the gate, my ears were struck by the news of some
 disaster newly come upon the house... I staggered back
 in dread, and fainted in the arms of my attendants.
 I beg you, tell me once again the nature of this news: 1190
 for I shall pay you heed as one well versed in woe.
Me. Dear lady, I was there and I shall tell you all I saw,
 shall not hold back one item of the truth of it.
 For why should I seek to comfort you with words
 that must in time prove false? The truth is ever best. 1195
 I accompanied your husband, walking as his guide
 across to the furthest reaches of the plain where still,
 harassed by dogs, there lay unpitied, Polyneices' corpse;
 and first we prayed to Hecate and to Pluto, both to check
 their rage and smile on us, and then with waters pure 1200
 we washed the body, what was left of it, and burned
 the scant remains with fresh cut boughs, and raised
 up high a burial mound compounded of his native soil,
 and then we began to make our way to the stony bed
 and hollow nuptial chamber of Antigone, bride of Death. 1205
 Then from afar one of our number had heard shrill cries
 of grief, their source - Antigone's unhallowed vault,
 and so he came to tell this news to his master Creon;
 then as the king crept ever nearer he too was met by cries,
 quite inarticulate of grief, and so he moaned within, 1210
 and gasped aloud his dread, 'What a fool I am, if my
 presentiments are true! For this shall surely be
 by far the most unlucky journey I have ever made.
 My son's lament, it welcomes me... come, friends,
 make haste, and when you reach the fissure in the tomb, 1215
 near where the rocks were stripped away, observe
 as you near the cave, if it is indeed the voice of Haimon I
 have recognised, or if the gods have made a fool of me.
 So we obeyed the master's bidding, desperate as he was,
 and made the search: inside the farthest reaches of the tomb 1220
 we saw that she was hanging there, suspended, her neck
 enclosed in a delicate noose of muslin of the finest kind,
 while he was holding her, his arms about her waist,
 as he grieved for the loss of his bride beneath the earth,
 and for his father's crimes and his own unhappy love. 1225
 Then when the father saw his son he groaned within,
 approached the boy and now, in tears, he spoke to him,
 'My poor, poor child, what have you done? What were
 you thinking of? Are you mad to have broken in here?
 Come out, my son, I beg of you with all my heart.' 1230

	Then Haimon rounded on his father with his eyes ablaze, made no reply, but spat in his face , wrenched out his double-hilted sword and, as his father ducked away in flight, he missed his stroke, so, disappointed then, and enraged at his failure, at once he flexed himself against the sword and plunged the half of it within his side and, as he breathed his last, he clutched her in his moist embrace, and the swift red flood poured down to stain her pale white cheek.	1235
	He lies there, his corpse entwined with corpse, has won his marriage rites inside the hall of Death, to prove to mortal men that of all the ills that plague our kind the worst by far is plain stupidity.	1240
Ch.	What would you think to make of that? For Creon's wife has gone inside without a word to say of good or ill.	1245
Me.	Her silence shocked me too... but I am nurtured by the hope she does not think it right to show in public view the pain she feels on hearing of her son's sad fate, but has rather gone inside to vent a private grief.	
Ch.	I do not know... although it seems to me that pain repressed in silence may threaten worse than loud lament.	1250
Me.	Then I will hurry now inside the house... in case she harbours in the torment of her secret heart some dark design, since your advice is sound and good: that danger also lurks wherever earnest silence reigns.	1255
Ch.	See where the king approaches now and carries in his hands the proof, if I may say, of his infatuation, since no other made the tragic error here.	
Cr.	I grieve for the tragic errors of an unsound mind, that have ended in death - behold the slayer and the slain, the father and the son. I grieve for my bankrupt and immoral soul! My son, my son, so young and dead, I grieve for you, your life has fled away... and all because of my stupidity.	str. 1265
Ch.	I see you realise the truth too late.	1270
Cr.	I grieve for the bitter lesson I have learned . I see some mighty god has crushed my head beneath his feet and thrust me onto cruel paths,	

	has trampled all my love of life.	1275
	I grieve the tragedy of humankind!	
Messenger	Lord king, your hands contain the cost of past and present grief, but soon inside the house it seems that you will see fresh cause of pain.	1280
Cr.	Can any pain be worse than this?	
Me.	Your wife is dead, the loving mother of your dead son, poor woman, and she herself struck down just now.	
Cr.	I grieve, Hell, your harbour is insatiate!	ant.
	But why am I your constant victim? And you, you messenger of doom and news ineffable, what now? For I was dead and now you kill me twice! What say you, slave, what news?	1285
	I grieve, I grieve... Another death, you say, on top of death, and that my wife's?	1290
Ch.	See for yourself. She is no longer hid within.	
Cr.	I grieve to look upon this other second death, poor wretch. What further doom awaits me still? Just now I held my son within my arms. And now another corpse confronting me... I grieve for both the mother and the son.	1295
Me.	She sat beside the altar in the house and with a sharp- edged blade allowed her eyes to close in peace, but not before that she had wept for the fates of Megareus and her son, the boy before you here, and, last of all had called down all the curses due infanticide upon your head.	1300
Cr.	I grieve, I grieve and my heart takes wing on fear. Will no one dare to strike me down with a double edge of sword? Poor wretch that I am, I grieve, am drenched in wretched grief.	1305 str. 1310
Me.	Indeed, you were found guilty by the woman dead of the death both of your son and of Antigone...	
Cr.	And by what means was she released by bloody death?	
Me.	With her own hand she stabbed herself beneath the heart, when she had learned about her son's departure, keenly wept.	1315
Cr.	The guilt for this cannot be fixed on any other man but me. For I it was that killed you, I and no man else, poor wretch, yes, I	str.

	confess the guilt. My servants, lead me off, as quickly as you can, remove this block, which is as good as dead.	1320 1325
Ch.	If any words befit the time such words are they. For briefest is best when tragedy strikes.	
Cr.	Let it come, let it come, yes, let it appear, the best of fates for me, that brings for me the last of days, let it come, let it come, that I may never look again upon the light of day.	ant. 1330
Ch.	Such things are not for now. For we must do what the now demands. For what will be must be for others to decide.	1335
Cr.	My prayers are all contained in that desire...	
Ch.	Then pray no more... for mortal men have no escape from predetermined tragedy.	
Cr.	Then take this man quite out of sight, who, all unwilling, caused your death, my son, and also yours, Eurydice, my wife, poor fool that I am, nor do I know where I should look, where walk... For all my handiwork is awkward, ruined even, and upon my head there leaps intolerable fate...	ant. 1340 1345
Ch.	By far the greatest part of happiness is wisdom. We must not ever act impiously toward the gods. Proud words of arrogant men receive harsh punishments... old age learns at the last to be wise...	1350