**ANTIGONE – HELP ME BURY OUR BROTHER SCENE (2 WOMEN)**

ANTIGONE – (an – tea – go –knee)

ISMENE - )Iss-may-nay)

Dawn breaking. We are at the front of the palace of Thebes. Its three great gates are a little off centre, towards Stage Right. It is made obvious that ANTIGONE has brought ISMENE to that spot in secret. They are “whispering,” lest anyone in the palace hears them.

**Antigone:** Dear, dear Ismene! My poor, darling sister! Do you think Zeus has any more disasters to hurl upon our lives as punishment for our father’s sins? So far we have felt the weight of sadness, of destruction, of disgrace and even of dishonour. Now our king has stunned the whole city with this new law of his. Do you understand what it really means? Do know what shame this new law will bring upon our brothers?

**Ismene:** No, Antigone. What is it? I’ve heard nothing about them, neither good nor bad. Since that day when we were robbed of both our brothers I’ve heard nothing. In that one day, in that one fatal battle, one brother killed the other. I’ve heard that the Argive enemy has run away last night but other than that, I’ve heard nothing else, nothing that would me make me neither happy nor sad.

**Antigone:** I thought so. That’s why I’ve brought you out here, Ismene; to tell you about it, secretly and alone.

**Ismene:** Antigone, what is it? I can feel something horrible, something frightening in your words.

**Antigone:** The burial of our brothers, Ismene! Creon has decreed that the one may be buried with all honours while the other is not to be buried at all but, instead, he is to be shamed! They say Creon has buried Eteocles with all proper burial rites and ceremonies fully preparing him for the world below, while our other brother, Polyneices, who died a death just as horrible, should be left unburied and unmourned! Left alone, to be the food for the sky’s starving ravens, all those birds of prey that eagerly hunt out their food. These are the laws our Lord Creon has decreed for us two, Ismene! For you, Ismene and for me. Yes, even for me!

 (She looks around her anxiously.)

 They say he’s about to come out of the palace any minute now to make this declaration again, loud and clear, in case there is anyone who hasn’t heard it yet. And he is not taking this declaration lightly, either! Because if someone dares to disobey it, he’ll have death by public stoning to look forward to! So, that’s how things stand at the moment my dear sister, Ismene, and you, now you must show the true worth of your birth: are you worthy of it, Ismene, or will you shame your house, Ismene, the house of Oedipus, our father?

**Ismene:** But, Antigone, if things have come this far what can I do? How could I possibly help?

**Antigone:** We can think and act together.

**Ismene:** How? And do what exactly? Antigone, what are you up to? What awful, what dangerous thing have you got in mind now?

**Antigone: (**Extends her right hand to Ismene) Ismene, help this hand to lift our brother’s corpse!

**Ismene: (**Horrified) Oh! No! Antigone, are you thinking of burying Polyneices? It is against the will of our country, the will of our King, Antigone!

**Antigone:** He is our brother, Ismene! Yours and mine! And if you won’t help me then they won’t be blaming me for having betrayed him!

**Ismene:** Ah, you poor, poor woman, Antigone! Are you really going to bury our brother against the King’s wishes?

**Antigone:** Creon has no right at all to separate me from my own brother. None whatsoever!

**Ismene:** Antigone! Dear sister! Think how hated our father was when he died. How full of shame he was! He had committed such shame and such sins that, after bringing them all to the light, after he confessed to them all, he gouged out both his eyes! Then she, too, Iocasta, who bore the double name of mother and wife, took her own life with a rope. Then, both our poor brothers perished in the one day, each of them killing the other with his own hand. And so, now, here we are, we two are left all alone. Think what awful end we can expect if we go against Creon’s law, Antigone! After all my darling sister, don’t forget, we are mere women, we can’t fight men! The rulers are far stronger than we are and we have to do as they say, not only about this but also about far worse things. So, what I shall do, on my behalf, what is the only thing left for me to do, is, to pray to the dead souls, to forgive our Polyneices and then to do exactly as Creon says. Trying to do deeds beyond your ability, my sister, is madness! Mindless folly, dear!

**Antigone: (**Angry now**)** Fine then! I will neither beg you nor would I be happy to accept your help, even if you had offered it to me my sister! You can believe what you want but I shall go and bury him. My death will be sweet once I bury him, because I will be lying next him in the underworld, having committed sacred, blessed crime. The time I’ll have to please the dead, sister, is far longer than the time I have to please the living. I will be among the dead for ever. But you, Ismene, you can choose whether or not you want to dishonour those things that are honoured by the gods.

**Ismene:** I’m not dishonouring them at all, Antigone but I can’t see how I can go against the city either!

**Antigone:** Sure, sure! Make all the excuses you want, Ismene but I’m off to bury my dear brother’s body!

**Ismene:** How afraid I am for you, Antigone!

**Antigone:** Afraid? Oh, no, don’t be afraid for me Ismene. Look out after your own life!

**Ismene:** At least don’t tell anyone else, Antigone and nor will I! Let’s keep this a secret!

**Antigone:** God! By all means, Ismene, do tell the whole world!

In fact, my sister, I’d hate you all the more if you didn’t!

**Ismene:** Cold things are wrapped around your hot heart, my dear sister!

**Antigone:** Perhaps but I know whom I should please!

**Ismene:** And perhaps you may succeed but you’re asking to do the impossible!

**Antigone:** At least I shall be trying for as long as my strength holds out.

**Ismene:** But one needs to know from the beginning what things one is capable of doing and not pursue in vain, the impossible.

**Antigone:** This sort of talk will reward you with not only my own hatred but also with that of your dead brother when you, too, will die and you will want to be near him; and he’ll be right to hate you then.

**(**Both exit through opposite sides)