

ANTIGONE
RETOLD
AUDITION SCRIPT

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SYNOPSIS

Antigone Retold is a reimagining of the tale of Antigone, daughter of the cursed house of Oedipus and an anachronistic feminist icon who was centuries ahead of her time. Our version follows the tale of Antigone as portrayed by our traditional cast who speak the script as translated from Sophocles' original play from 441BCE however, interspersed amongst the ancient narrative, we have exchanged the chorus of "old Theban citizens" with the Seven Devils of Greek Mythology. Meta-directed by Calliope, the muse of epic poetry and our new chorus leader, our audience is introduced to Athena, Hera, Medusa, Aphrodite, Megara and Pandora who provide us with the complicated contemplations of the 21st century feminist in relation to the central narrative of *Antigone*. *Antigone Retold* consciously shines the proverbial spotlight on this group of formidable, famous mythological women who have occupied an intricate feminist and even anti-feminist space for 2500 years. Perhaps it's about time we heard what they think...

CHARACTERS

ANTIGONE: The tragic hero of a tale that feels centuries before its time because of the feminism inherent in the titular character. The play chronicles the repercussions of Antigone's actions as she stands up to Creon.

ISMENE: Antigone's sister and her antithesis in many ways. She begins the play in a fully subservient state as a female who understands her assigned place in society, but do we give her space to evolve?

CREON: Antigone's uncle and the newly crowned King of Thebes. A patriotic but deeply misguided individual who, in trying to do what he believes is right, ends up bringing further horror upon his house.

HAEMON: Creon's son and Antigone's betrothed. He is the voice of composure when dealing with his father but finds himself caught between his duties as a son and his honour as a fiancé.

TIRESIAS: The non-binary blind prophet who attempts to advise their King. Tiresias has had direct dealings with members of The Seven Devils and therefore treads the world between now and then, sight and blindness, fact and fantasy.

CALLIOPE: The muse of epic poetry and leader of The Seven Devils, Calliope is the ultimate disruptor. In an act of conscious reclamation, she changes the very face of a narrative written by men for centuries and brings to life the statues of her sisters who have lain dormant for far too long.

HERA: The queen of Olympus and would-be widow of the almighty Zeus. Hera is a complicated woman who consciously directs her wrath towards the women who her husband has been unfaithful with instead of her husband himself.

PANDORA: The gift to man who became the curse to mankind. Pandora was set-up and literally created by the gods to serve as a punishment for the sins of Prometheus. She never stood a chance!

APHRODITE: The goddess of love who is so much more than she appears. She has spent years of her existence trying to comprehend her place in a world which disrespects her so deeply that she is still one of the only Greek goddesses depicted more naked than she is clothed.

MEDUSA: The formidable female who was cursed by Athena. The woman can literally turn you to stone with a single glance! What is it any wonder why she's been singled out throughout history as a monstrous missus? But... what would that make Perseus, then? #askingforafriend

ATHENA: The warrior goddess who is sometimes cast in the role of traitor. Athena was crafted in the likeness of Zeus and is (honestly) just as powerful as her old man. She is an inspiration to women everywhere... and also does stuff like curse Medusa and then help Perseus chop off her head too!

MEGARA: The prize bestowed on a murderous husband. Megara is a character from mythos who is actually sometimes referred to as Creon's daughter who is gifted to Hercules as a token of appreciation for his assistance. Sweet right? Totes! Until she is reduced to a short plot point in his quest narrative.

THE DIONYSIANS: Taking the form of Calliope's *spirare* or messengers, catalyzing the narrative to be driven forward.



ANTIGONE

SCENE WITH ISMENE

Ismene enters the stage space, nervous and skittish. She is looking for someone. Pacing. Paranoid. Antigone enters, they run towards each other. This sequence is punctuated with gestures performed by the chorus to add a visual aspect to the exposition and show a sense of reverence for the burial rites.

ANTIGONE: My own flesh and blood

- dear sister, dear Ismene –

how many griefs our father Oedipus handed down!

Is there one - just one grief - that Zeus will not perfect for us while we still live and breathe?

There's nothing! No pain –

our lives are pain

– no private shame, no public disgrace, nothing I haven't seen in your griefs and mine.

And now this: an emergency decree our new King has just declared for all of Thebes.

The doom reserved for our enemies marches swiftly on the ones we have loved... and lost.

Two sisters have been robbed of two brothers.

Eteocles and Polynices, both gone in a single day, a double blow.

And now - our own brothers' burials?

Has not Creon graced one with all the rites, and disgraced the other?

Eteocles has been given full military honours -

Creon has laid him in the earth and he goes in glory, down among the dead

But the body of Polynices, who died miserably,

a city-wide proclamation forbids anyone to lament him, even mourn him.

He's to be left unwept, unearthed, a treasure for the vultures.

Such is the martial law our good uncle lays down for us,

and whoever disobeys in the least will die, his doom is sealed:

stoning to death inside the city walls!

(Pause) There you have it, sister.

You'll soon show what you are, woman or girl.



ANTIGONE

SCENE WITH CREON

Treason? Against who, uncle?

It was not Zeus who made this proclamation.
Nor did I believe your edict held such power
that you, a mere mortal, could override the gods.
The gods who are alive!
Not just today or yesterday,
but tomorrow and forever.

Treason? Yes.

If treason is to break the laws the gods hold in honour
for fear of some man's wounded pride.
The doom which settles upon me now is precious little pain.
Our lives are pain.

But if I had allowed my own mother's son to perish,
unburied, unmourned – that would have been an agony!
This? *(She gestures to her bindings and her situation)* This is nothing.

And if my actions strike you as foolish, uncle,
let's just say that I've been accused of folly by a fool.
(Pause for Creon's response)

Your moralizing repels me,
every word you say – by the goddesses, it always will.
Enough.

Give me glory! What greater glory could I win
than to give my own brother decent burial?
Your council would all agree,
they would praise me too,
if their lips weren't locked in fear.
You, with the privileges of power!
That pervasive power to do and say whatever pleases you.



ISMENE

SCENE WITH ANTIGONE

I haven't heard a word of this, Antigone - nothing of loved ones.
 Not since the two of us were robbed of our brothers.
Eteocles and Polynices, both gone in a single day, a double blow.
 Not since the armies of Argos vanished.
 I know nothing more, whether our luck's improved or ruin's still to come.
 Eteocles has been given full military honours -
 Creon has laid him in the earth and he goes in glory, down among the dead
 But the body of Polynices, who died miserably,
 a city-wide proclamation forbids anyone to lament him.
 But you - you would bury him?!
(She is shocked) Sister, think—
 think how our own father died, hated,
 his reputation in ruins, driven on
 by the crimes he brought to light himself.
Gouging out his eyes with his own hands—
 then mother... his mother and wife, two in one,
 mutilating her life in the twisted noose—
 and last, both our brothers dead in-a single day,
 boys battling out their common destiny hand-to-hand.
 Now look at the two of us, left so alone...
 think what a death we'll die, the worst of all
 if we violate the laws and override
 the fixed decree of the throne, its power—
 we must be sensible –
 Remember: we are women,
 ruled by much stronger hands,
 not born to contend with men.

We must submit in this
 and things still worse.
 I'll beg the goddesses to forgive me.
 But my hands are tied, I have no choice - I must obey.



CREON

SCENE WITH ENSEMBLE

Creon and his household (Haemon, Ismene, Tiresias with The Dionysians) are all dressed in black tie, a bizarre juxtaposition of mourning and celebration. Creon, newly appointed and taking charge, steps up to deliver a zealous address to his audience.

My countrymen,
 the ship of state is safe.
 The gods who rocked her mercilessly have righted her once more *(The household applaud)*
 Your undeviating respect for the throne
 and royal power of King Laius is well known.
 As Oedipus steered the land of Thebes, your loyalty was – once again – unshakable.
 You even stood by the children.
 But now, since his two sons are dead
 – two blows of fate in the same day –
 and as I am next in kin to the dead,
 I now possess the throne and all its power.
(Pause) Of course, you cannot know a man completely,
 his principles, his sense of judgment,
 not 'til he's shown his true colours
 – ruling men, making laws.
 As I see it, whoever assumes the task of setting our city's course,
 yet refuses to adopt the harshest policies for fear of being hated,
 he is utterly worthless.
 He is nothing.
 I have no use for him.
 Zeus, as my witness,
 Zeus, who sees all things!
 I could never stand by silent,
 watching destruction march against our city.
 Remember: our city *is* our safety.
 Only while she voyages true North can we maintain control.
 Such are my standards. They make our city great.



CREON

SCENE WITH HAEMON

Fine, Haemon.

That's how you ought to feel within your heart,
subordinate to your father's will in every way.

That's what a man prays for: to produce good sons,
a household full of them, useful and attentive.

I pity the man who rears a brood of useless children.

What has he brought into the world, I ask you? Nothing but trouble for himself.

Haemon, never lose your sense of judgment over a woman.

The warmth, the rush of pleasure, it all goes cold in your arms...

A worthless woman in your house, a misery in your bed.

Spit her out, like a mortal enemy - let the girl go!

Let her find a husband for herself down among the dead.

Show me a man among the living who rules his household well:

I'll show you someone fit to rule the state.

His orders must be obeyed, large and small, right and wrong.

Anarchy - show me a greater crime in all the earth!

She - she destroys our cities, she wrecks our homes.

But the men who last her out owe their lives to discipline.

Thus we must defend the men who live by the law,
and never let some woman triumph over us.

Better to fall from power, if fall we must, at the hands of a man
- never be rated inferior to a woman, never.



HAEMON

SCENE WITH CREON

Father, only the gods endow a man with reason,
 the finest of all their gifts, a treasure.
 Far be it from me – I haven't the skill, and certainly no desire,
 to tell you when, if ever, you make a slip in speech.
 Of course, it's not for you, in the normal run of things,
 to watch whatever men say or do.
 The man in the street dreads your glance,
 but he'd never say anything displeasing to your face.
 But it's for me to catch the murmurs in the dark,
 the way the city mourns for this young girl.
 "No woman," they say, "ever deserved death less.
 She, with her own dear brother lying in his blood
 she couldn't bear to leave him dead, unburied.
 Death? She deserves a glowing crown of gold!"
 So they say, and the rumour spreads in secret,
 darkly...
 I rejoice in your success, Father—
 nothing more precious to me in the world.
 What medal of honour brighter to his children than a father's glory?
 Or a child's to his proud father?
 Now don't, please,
 be quite so single-minded, self-involved,
 or assume the world is wrong and you are right.
 Whoever thinks that he alone possesses intelligence,
 the gift of eloquence, he and no one else,
 and character too... such men, I tell you,
 spread them open - you will find them empty.



TIRESIAS

SCENE WITHIN AUDIENCE

Tiresias emerges from upon the mezzanine. They stand centred and address Creon who emerges on the ground stage with the commanding voice Tiresias now uses. It is very unlike their earlier voice.

TIRESIAS:

King Creon,

Lord of Thebes.

There are words I have heard!

They stir in the darkness, like a whispering wind,
refusing to step out into the light.

These words are meant for you, I know.

For often, it is the blind who must see for those who have sight.

Thus, I am here to teach you and to beseech you to learn.

You, with your heavy-handed justice
have positioned us all against our gods.

And they declare their displeasure with an assault on the senses.

The ship of state was safe!

You escaped the cursed clutches of one sea mistress,
only to steer us all into the pathway of another.

And you, King Creon,
brother of Oedipus,

are now caught between Scylla and Charybdis.

The doom reserved for your enemies marches swiftly on the ones you have loved and lost.

For the focus of the Furies has shifted.

Their vengeance edges closer with each decision that you make.

They, the eternal children of Nyx, who flay the flesh from the bones of their victims!

And you, King Creon,
uncle of Antigone,

have summoned them upon your own house
with your own high resolve.

A mere mortal who could never countermand the gods.

The gods who are alive!

Not just today or yesterday, but tomorrow and forever.

You have upended the natural order.

And now the dark destroyers lie in wait for you,
to strike you down with the pains that you perfected!

Brother battles brother,

Father outlives son,

Husband forfeits wife,

Blood begets blood.

