

*Creon.* I have had them laid out side by side. They are together at last, and at peace. Two lovers on the morrow of their bridal. Their work is done.

*Chorus.* But not yours, *Creon*. You have still one thing to learn. Eurydice, the Queen, your wife—

*Creon.* A good woman. Always busy with her garden, her preserves, her sweaters—those sweaters she never stopped knitting for the poor. Strange, how the poor never stop needing sweaters. One would almost think that was all they needed.

*Chorus.* The poor in Thebes are going to be cold this winter, *Creon*. When the Queen was told of her son's death, she waited carefully until she had finished her row, then put down her knitting calmly—as she did everything. She went up to her room, her lavender-scented room, with its embroidered doilies and its pictures framed in plush; and there, *Creon*, she cut her throat. She is laid out now in one of those two old-fashioned twin beds, exactly where you went to her one night when she was still a maiden. Her smile is still the same, scarcely a shade more melancholy. And if it were not for that great red blot on the bed linen by her neck, one might think she was asleep.

*Creon* [in a dull voice]. She, too. They are all asleep.

[Pause.] It must be good to sleep.

*Chorus.* And now you are alone, *Creon*.

*Creon.* Yes, all alone. [To PAGE.] My lad.

*Page.* Sir?

*Creon.* Listen to me. They don't know it, but the truth is the work is there to be done, and a man can't fold his arms and refuse to do it. They say it's dirty work. But if we didn't do it, who would?

*Page.* I don't know, sir.

*Creon.* Of course you don't. You'll be lucky if you never find out. In a hurry to grow up, aren't you?

*Page.* Oh, yes, sir.

*Creon.* I shouldn't be if I were you. Never grow up if you can help it. [He is lost in thought as the hour chimes.] What time is it?

*Page.* Five o'clock, sir.

*Creon.* What have we on at five o'clock?

*Page.* Cabinet meeting, sir.

*Creon.* Cabinet meeting. Then we had better go along to it.

*Exit* CREON and PAGE slowly through arch, left, and CHORUS moves downstage.

*Chorus.* And there we are. It is quite true that if it had not been for Antigone they would all have been at peace. But that is over now. And they are all at peace. All those who were meant to die have died: those who believed one thing, those who believed the contrary thing, and even those who believed nothing at all, yet were caught up in the web without knowing why. All dead: stiff, useless, rotting. And those who have survived will now begin quietly to forget the dead: they won't remember who was who or which was which. It is all over. Antigone is calm tonight, and we shall never know the name of the fever that consumed her. She has played her part.

*Three GUARDS enter, resume their places on steps as at the rise of the curtain, and begin to play cards.*

A great melancholy wave of peace now settles down upon Thebes, upon the empty palace, upon *Creon*, who can now begin to wait for his own death.

Only the guards are left, and none of this matters to them. It's no skin off their noses. They go on playing cards.

*CHORUS walks toward the arch, left, as the curtain falls.*