

## AND THEY DANCE REAL SLOW IN JACKSON

things must beat up on old ladies for fun! This stuff is warped!

ELIZABETH: (*Pleased.*) You want me to read it again? "How many things must you know that you may live and die in the blessedness of God's grace?"

SKEETER: Three. First, the greatness of my sin and...wretchedness! (*On the word "wretchedness" Skeeter tilts Elizabeth's chair up on its back wheels and goes running off stage with her like her chair is a car. She loves it.*)

ELIZABETH: Skeeter!

## ANTIGONE

by Jean Anouilh

translated by Alex Szogyi

Antigone (18) - Hemon (19)

**The Play:** Jean Anouilh's retelling of Sophocles' *Antigone* (the second tragedy in the Oedipus Cycle) was motivated by the Nazi occupation of Paris during World War II. The parallels between the tyranny of Hitler's rule and that of Creon's Thebes are at once evident. Eteocles and Polyneices, the sons of the late Theban King Oedipus, and the brothers of Antigone and Ismene, have recently killed one another in a civil war to gain control of Thebes. Their uncle Creon has become King. Creon has decreed that Polyneices, whom he believes provoked the war, be left unburied—his spirit left to roam eternally. Antigone considers this edict a sacrilege and defies her uncle by covering her brother's body with earth. When Creon learns of the deed, he is unyielding, and he condemns his niece to be buried alive. This act brings about the suicide of Creon's son, Hemon (Antigone's fiance), and Creon's wife, Eurydice. Creon is left to face the tribulations of life alone. Ultimately *Antigone* explores questions concerning human responsibility to family, government and personal honor.

**The Scene:** Antigone has sent for Hemon so that she can apologize for a quarrel they had the night before. Hemon does not yet know that she has defied Creon's edict and buried her brother's body. Antigone professes her love for Hemon and then breaks off their relationship, much to Hemon's bewilderment.

**Special Note:** A comparison of Alex Szogyi's translation of Anouilh's *Antigone* with Lewis Galantiere's version and Sophocles' original Oedipus' Cycle may prove helpful to a full exploration of the text.

ANTIGONE

HEMON: You know very well I forgave you as soon as you slammed the door shut. Your perfume was still there and I had already forgiven you. *(He holds her in his arms, he smiles, he looks at her.)* Who did you steal this perfume from?

ANTIGONE: From Ismene.

HEMON: And the lipstick, the powder, the beautiful dress?

ANTIGONE: From Ismene, also.

HEMON: Why did you make yourself so beautiful?

ANTIGONE: I'll tell you. *(She huddles a little closer to him.)* Oh! my darling. How stupid I was. A whole evening spoiled. A beautiful evening.

HEMON: We'll have other evenings—Antigone.

ANTIGONE: Perhaps not.

HEMON: And other fights too. Happiness is full of quarrels.

ANTIGONE: Happiness yes... Listen, Hemon.

HEMON: Yes.

ANTIGONE: Don't laugh at me this morning. Be serious.

HEMON: I am serious.

ANTIGONE: And hold me. Tighter than you ever have before. So that all your strength may be pressed into me.

HEMON: There. With all my strength.

ANTIGONE *(in a breath)*: That's good. *(They remain for a moment without a word, then she begins softly.)* Listen, Hemon.

HEMON: Yes.

ANTIGONE: I wanted to tell you this morning... The little boy that we would have had together...

HEMON: Yes.

ANTIGONE: You know, I would have defended him against everything.

HEMON: Yes, Antigone.

ANTIGONE: Oh! I would have squeezed him so tight he would never have been afraid, I swear it, not of the oncoming night, nor of the shadows... Our little boy, Hemon! He would have had an insignificant mother, her hair badly combed—but better than all the real mothers in the world with their big bosoms and big aprons. You believe that don't you?

ANTIGONE

HEMON: Yes, my love.

ANTIGONE: And you believe too, don't you, that I would have been a true wife?

HEMON *(holds her)*: I have a true wife.

ANTIGONE *(cries out suddenly, huddling close to him)*: Oh! you loved me, Hemon, you did love me, are you really sure you did love me, that evening?

HEMON *(cradles her gently)*: Which evening?

ANTIGONE: Are you quite sure that at the ball when you came to me in my corner, you didn't go to the wrong girl? You're sure that you've never regretted it since, never thought, even deep down, not even once, that it was Ismene you should have asked for?

HEMON: Idiot!

ANTIGONE: You love me, don't you? Do you love me as a woman? Your arms enfolding me aren't lying to me, are they? Your great big hands placed on my back don't lie, nor your smell, nor your good warmth, nor all this great confidence I feel when I put my head on the hollow of your neck?

HEMON: Yes, Antigone, I love you as a woman.

ANTIGONE: I'm dark and thin. Ismene is rosy and golden as a fruit.

HEMON *(murmuring)*: Antigone...

ANTIGONE: Oh! I'm blushing with shame. But this morning I must know. Tell me the truth, please. When you think I will belong to you, do you feel that a great empty space is being hollowed out of you...

HEMON: Yes, Antigone.

ANTIGONE *(breathy, after a time)*: I feel that way. And I would have been very proud to have been your wife, your true wife, on whom you would have placed your hand in the evening, when you were sitting down, without giving it a thought, as upon something belonging to you, *(She has drawn away from him, she has taken another tone.)* There. Now, I am going to tell you just two things more. And when I have said them, you must leave without any question. Even if they seem to you to be extraordinary, even if they hurt you. Swear to me.

HEMON: What else have you to say to me?

ANTIGONE: Swear first that you'll leave without saying anything.

## ANTIGONE

Without ever looking back. If you love me, swear it.

HEMON *(after a moment)*: I swear it.

ANTIGONE: Thank you. Now then. Yesterday first. You asked me before why I had worn one of Ismene's dresses, this perfume and this lipstick. I was stupid. I wasn't very sure that you really wanted me and I did all that in order to be a little more like other girls, to make you want me.

HEMON: So that was why?

ANTIGONE: Yes. And you laughed and we quarreled and my bad temper got the best of me. I ran away. *(She adds in a lower voice.)* But I had come to you last evening, so that you would make love to me, so that I might become your wife before. *(He draws back, he is about to speak, she cries out.)* You swore to me not to ask why. You swore to me, Hemon! *(She says in a lower voice, humbly.)* Please... *(And she adds, turning away, hard.)* Besides, I am going to tell you. I wanted to be your wife last night because that is how I love you, very strongly, and that—I'm going to hurt you, oh my darling, forgive me!—that never, never can I marry you. *(He remains stupefied, mute: she runs to the window, she cries out.)* Oh Hemon, you swore it! Go away, leave right away without saying anything. If you speak, if you take one step toward me, I'll throw myself out this window. I swear it, Hemon. I swear it to you on the head of the little boy that we have had together in a dream, the little boy that I shall never have. Now go, quickly. You will find out tomorrow. You will find out in a while. *(She ends with such despair that HEMON obeys and goes off.)* Please leave, Hemon. That's all you can still do for me, if you love me.

## BILLY LIAR

by Keith Waterhouse and Willis Hall

Billy (19) - Barbara (19)

**The Play:** Set in a dreary industrial town in the North of England, *Billy Liar* depicts the life of Billy Fisher, an imaginative teenager who is viewed by many in his community as little better than an idle, dishonest liar. But the play is more than a comedy about a boy who tells lies; it is a play that touches the very essence of all who long to escape the complacency of a mundane world. Billy, an undertaker's clerk, creates a world of fantasy far from his lower-middle class background—so much so that at times it is difficult to discern fact from fiction. His family is at a loss to understand him or control his habits; to them he is a hopeless good-for-nothing. Billy becomes engaged to three different girls simultaneously. When one offers him the opportunity to run away in search of a better life, he retreats into his dream world, preferring fantasy to reality.

**The Scene:** Billy has asked Barbara, his second fiancée, over for a visit—somehow he needs to get her engagement ring back so he can return it to Rita, the girl he first asked to marry him. Billy has some confessions to make, too.