

"Prison Forever" from *Antigone* by Sophocles

Tomb, bridal chamber, prison forever
Dug in rock, it is to you I am going
To join my people, that great number that have died,
Whom in their death Persephone received.
I am the last of them and I go down
In the worst death of all-for I have not lived
The due term of my life. But when I come
To that other world my hope is strong
That my coming will be welcome to my father,
And dear to you, my mother, and dear to you,
My brother deeply loved. For when you died,
With my own hands I washed and dressed you all,
And poured the lustral offerings on your graves.
And now, Polyneices, it was for such care of your body
That I have earned these wages.
Yet those who think rightly will think I did right
In honoring you. Had I been a mother
Of children, and my husband been dead and rotten,
I would not have taken this weary task upon me
Against the will of the city. What law backs me when I say this?
I will tell you:
If my husband were dead, I might have had another,
And child from another man, if I lost the first.
But when father and mother both were hidden in death
No brother's life would bloom for me again.
That is law under which I gave you precedence,
My dearest brother, and that is why Creon thinks me
Wrong, even a criminal, and now takes me
By the hand and leads me away,
Unbedded, without bridal, without share
In marriage and in nurturing children;
As lonely as you see me, without friends;
With fate against me I go into the vault of death
While still alive. What law of God have I broken?
Why should I still look to the gods in misery?
Whom should I summon as an ally? For indeed
Because of piety I was called impious.
If this proceeding is good in the god's eyes,
I shall know my sin, once I have suffered.
But if Creon and his people are the wrongdoers
Let their suffering be no worse than the injustice
They are meting out to me.