

author: Dana Łukasińska

# Antigone in krynki - excerpts

with excerpts from "Antigone" by Sophocles, translated by R. Gibbons & C. Segal

Translator: Kamila Rum

## Scene 4. PROLOGUE

CHORUS        The world is full of miracles.  
And our lives never come to an end.  
We live on in others. Both then and now.  
The past and the future are like sisters, who  
although alike, are different as well.  
When two brothers stand against each other in a sword fight  
the gods turn away their eyes.  
Are there any limits to history?  
The earth cries blood of siblings,  
vengeful Erinyes await revenge.  
Are there any limits to pain?  
History will repeat itself,  
until people start learning from it.  
Thus listen to the story of Antigone,  
who, here in Krynki, was called by the name Teresa.  
Creon and Szymon – at the helm of the city,  
rely too much on the power they have.  
Ismene and Ksenia, both cautious and righteous  
forced to live surrounded by death.

History will repeat itself,  
until people start learning from it.  
Thus listen and learn.

## Scene 5. CONSPIRACY

*Thebes, ancient times. TEIRESIAS, a seer (with a blindfold on, like a blind person) and CORYPHEAEUS (dressed as Politruk, a political official).*

TEIRESIAS      You are late.

CORYPHEAEUS      How did you know? I was trying to sneak up on you, as benefits a spy. I wanted to scare you. Boo! I failed again. Too bad!

TEIRESIAS      The fact that I don't have eyes doesn't mean I can't see.

CORYPHEAEUS      The fact that you say you can't see doesn't mean you can't see.

TEIRESIAS      Now that you know, allow me to take off my blindfold. What a relief! Sometimes I think I really can't see.

CORYPHEAEUS      You have small holes in it. That's what I was told.

TEIRESIAS      The cloth is worn out, so it may have some tiny holes in it, but to consciously lie? I would never!

CORYPHEAEUS      People believe that a blind seer is a much better prophet than the one who can see. They also believe that what happens to them, you can see in advance in visions from gods. But does it mean you have to walk into walls or fall from the stairs? No. We fully agree on that.

TEIRESIAS      You wanted to see me. Let's get to the point then.

CORYPHEAEUS      See is the right word. Because indeed, it is about seeing. A kind of seeing that will benefit us both.

TEIRESIAS      And Thebes. Don't forget about the benefits to Thebes.

CORYPHEAEUS      Naturally. Praise Thebes and its... king... Oh, right, I heard that you foretold Creon his early coronation.

TEIRESIAS      You know how he's intent on power.

CORYPHEAEUS      Even a blind person could see that.

TEIRESIAS      I told him what he wanted to hear, so he would back off. I didn't even rhyme. And now I'm done with him. Let him worry about how he's going to get the crown.

CORYPHEAEUS      Correct me if I'm wrong: after Oedipus's death his sons rule Thebes. Each of the sons has a right to the throne for a year. After that time he gives the throne to his brother.

TEIRESIAS      There's no need to explain to me what I personally advised Oedipus. It's a perfect system. I came up with it. I just disguised it as a prophecy from the gods. Maybe I truly see more? It prevents strife and conspiracies, in case one of the brothers decided he doesn't want to be a royal brother forever. It has to be frustrating: you're the king's younger son, you're waiting for your brother to "sadly" pass away, but he, just to spite, conceives descendants. To outlive them all is almost impossible nowadays. And this way – the year of Eteocles's rule is coming to an end and soon Polynices will sit on the throne. And so on, over and over again. It's genius!

CORYPHEAEUS I'm afraid I have to upset you. Creon is trying to persuade Eteocles to not give the throne to his brother after the year is over.

TEIRESIAS Why?

CORYPHEAEUS He convinced Eteocles that his older brother Polynices has had enough of the yearly system. If it wasn't for your "advice" he would have been the king for life. Eteocles believed him and is afraid that if he gives up the throne this time, he will never sit on it again.

TEIRESIAS And what are the real reasons?

CORYPHEAEUS Ugh. Ugh. Ew! I dislike this word so much... Real... Creon hopes that when Eteocles refuses to give the throne to Polynices, Polynices will look for allies and try to take power by force.

TEIRESIAS And what will Creon get out of it? There are two brothers. Either one or the other is going to rule.

CORYPHEAEUS And what if they kill each other in a fight?

TEIRESIAS It is possible. Which outcome is good for us?

CORYPHEAEUS And for Thebes. Don't forget about the benefits to Thebes.

TEIRESIAS Praise Thebes and its... politicians. So?

CORYPHEAEUS That's why I wanted to see you. We have to convince Polynices to fight for what is rightfully his. I will take this on myself. Polynices is an honest man and he loves his brother. Ughhh! That's another word I hate in the context of politics: love. The disgust makes my flesh creep!

TEIRESIAS Do we stand to benefit from it? If the brothers kill each other? Creon will be left anyway.

CORYPHEAEUS And your oracles. Do you get it?

TEIRESIAS Oh, right! Genius! Let me put on my blindfold. Yes! I can see it! I have my next prophecy for Creon!

CORYPHEAEUS See? I love this job!

## Scene 10. DEATH

*JERZY in a Polish People's Army uniform. During the monologue, ANDRZEJ'S GHOST appears, with blood stains on his chest. Jerzy is preparing to commit suicide by hanging himself with his belt. Andrzej's ghost is helping with the preparations.*

JERZY I always wanted to die a hero's death. But first – to live like you. Smart, strong, perfect.

Do you remember the scandal with the headmaster who sent himself into Siberian exile? I didn't get a chance to admit to it, but that was my doing. It was in 1940. You went into hiding in the forest, and I also wanted to fight. There was a portrait of Stalin in the classroom. I took it down and placed it under the carpet in the headmaster's office. The whole day he was walking all over "Stalin". When he found out, he informed on himself. You could say I fucked one communist over, huh?

To put a bullet in my head? That would be too easy. Besides, bullets are for soldiers. And I'm not one. It's not a uniform that makes a soldier, but belief in what he's fighting for. You said so. They told us to take our positions in the bushes. Then they gave the signal to fire. I was shooting hesitantly. I didn't want to hurt anyone. What sort of a battle is it when you have to shoot at your own people? I heard a bullet whizz and my friend Józwiak's blood splashed onto my face. I started shooting like crazy. I was screaming and shooting. Jesus, how badly I wanted to stay alive! Someone shouted – we killed the

motherfucker! Who was he? – they were asking. “Mieszko” – someone answered. That could have been my bullet, Andriusha. I am a brother killer. You said: Go enlist, when you become a soldier of the Polish People’s Army, they will leave our sisters alone. That was not a good plan. Give me your hand.

Now what’s left is “to spring back to the middle of the mat”<sup>\*\*\*</sup> You used to like poetry, remember?  
...Now!

### **Scene 23. MOSHE**

*Krynki, 1947. CORYPHEAEUS (POLITRUK), CHORUS as LOCAL RESIDENTS.*

CORYPHEAEUS           Who did this? How? Talk! Or you will face the military court!

CHORUS                   It was dawning when we saw him walking.

He was carrying a border post on his back.

He was going towards his fiancée’s village.

Teresa, who was executed yesterday.

I was on my way to milk the cows when I saw

him walking across the meadow.

He was carrying a border post on his back.

Where are you going, Moshe,

so early in the morning?

I am moving the border beyond the village, he said.

How come? By yourself? And where is the committee?

And he replied: this is my mission.

He was carrying a border post on his back.

They were following him. The army, the police.

They were shouting: Stop! Ruki vverh!

But Moshe kept on walking.

He was carrying a border post on his back.

I was in the fields. I came to say goodbye,

it’s a piece of land my grandfather used to cultivate,

we are moving to the Polish side,

because they moved the border.

And I see Moshe, the son of the commissar,

walking across the field.

He was carrying a border post on his back.

So I ask him: where are you going,  
risking your life?  
And he said:  
this will be Poland,  
this is where I will dig a grave for my Teresa.  
The army was shooting.  
At first just to scare him  
they were shooting up in the air.  
They ordered: Stop! Or we will kill you!  
Stop! Or we will shoot you!  
Then they started shooting at him. He didn't listen  
at all.  
They shot. He fell down. The post fell onto him.  
The one he was carrying.  
The border post.

## **Scene 25. INVESTIGATION**

*Krynki. CORYPHEAEUS (POLITRUK) and CHORUS as RESIDENTS OF KRYNKI.*

CORYPHEAEUS        I think I don't need to tell you what will happen to you.

CHORUS                What is that for, officer?

CORYPHEAEUS        Not for being innocent! A body was found in the river near Krynki.

CHORUS                God rest his soul!

CORYPHEAEUS        It was a female. The commissar's wife.

CHORUS                What a tragedy! The trecherous river! She was sucked into a whirlpool!

CORYPHEAEUS        Yes, she drowned. There's nothing strange about it. She had a knife stuck in  
her back.

CHORUS                We don't know anything!

CORYPHEAEUS        I want to know everything. When did she come back, who did she talk to, why  
was she in a river and not in her house, who stabbed her and what was his motive.

CHORUS                We don't know anything!

CORYPHEAEUS        We'll see about that. A metal rod to the head, standing in ice-cold water,  
tearing out fingernails, nights without any sleep. I know how to make you talk. You still don't know  
anything?

CHORUS                I saw her sitting on a cart, a farmer on his way to the market

was giving her a ride.

I saw her too. She entered Krynki and she turned pale.

She looked like a skeleton. Emaciated and pale. She was coming from the concentration camp.

So many were burned, and she was spared. Isn't that strange?

People were saying she was an informant, and that's why she was spared.

The people who took her house are saying so. It's a nice house, with a garden.

So many were killed. So many of our Jews, who used to live in Krynki before the war.

First the Soviets exiled a number of them in 1940.

Those were the Jews who didn't like the Soviet rule at all.

Later on Gestapo sent half of the city up in smoke.

Not half, more!

Those who were in hiding were being caught by shmaltsovniks.

As a punishment for sentencing Jesus to the cross!

When was that! Just drop it already!

A few returned after the war, but only for a while.

They went to America, Palestine, and other countries.

They didn't want to live in a city of graveyards.

Some of them became the officials, joined the communists.

CORYPHEUS And what about the dead woman, the one who was murdered?

CHORUS She came back sick, she had lost her hair.

She stepped on the porch of her house and cried.

That's not true! Nobody saw her, I know what I'm saying.

I've been living in her house since the war.

It was big and empty, it had a roof and a stove.

A priest consecrated it, so it would serve us Christians well.

Nobody saw her here in this farmyard.

I swear to God, she wasn't here.

Maybe someone thought she was hiding gold, and wanted to steal it. People are hyenas!

And maybe she was looking for death?

CORYPHEUS So she stabbed herself in the back?

CHORUS We don't know anything.

Maybe it was a gang of those who

look for Poland in the forest? They could have

killed to get the revenge on the commissar.

We don't know anything.

And we are innocent.

We are Polish and Catholic.

We believe in God.

When it was necessary we beat up the Jews,

but to kill?

It is a sin.

Although it was the Jews who sentenced Jesus...

We don't know anything!

We didn't see anything,

we didn't hear anything.

We are innocent.

\*\*\* a verse from Rainer Maria Rilke's poem "The Group", translated by J.  
B. Leishman