

# ANTIGONE NOW

Characters  
*(in order of importance)*

**Clara**  
**Mayor**  
**Peter**  
**Master Guido**  
**Killer 1**  
**Killer 2**  
**Security Guard**  
**Philip**  
**Sabina**  
**Gentleman from Heidelberg**

*Antigone Now* was first produced by Theater im Keller in Graz, Austria, opening on October 19, 2010. It was directed by Alfred Haidacher with the following cast:

<b>Clara</b>	Mayuna Hasebe
<b>Mayor</b>	Alfred Haidacher
<b>Peter</b>	Alexander Kropsch
<b>Master Guido</b>	Tino Schubert
<b>Killer 1</b>	Ute Walluschek - Wallfeld
<b>Killer 2</b>	Bernd Sracnik
<b>Security Guard</b>	Andreas M. E. Hierzer
<b>Philip</b>	Christian Krall
<b>Sabina</b>	Eva Weutz
<b>Gentleman from Heidelberg</b>	Roots Wallner



Mayuna Hasebe  
*Antigone Now*, Theater im Keller, Graz, Austria, 2010



Christian Krall, Mayuna Hasebe  
*Antigone Now*, Theater im Keller, Graz, Austria, 2010



Ute Walluschké – Walfeld, Alexander Kropsch, Bernd Sracnik  
*Antigone Now*, Theater im Keller, Graz, Austria, 2010



Ute Walluschké – Wallfeld, Bernd Sracnik  
*Antigone Now*, Theater im Keller, Graz, Austria, 2010





Budi Ros, Tuti Hartati  
*Antigoneo*, Teater Koma, Jakarta, Indonesia, 2011



Nano Riantiarno, Tuti Hartati  
*Antigoneo*, Teater Koma, Jakarta, Indonesia, 2011



Cornelia Agatha, Muhammad Bagya, Dudung Hadi  
*Antigoneo*, Teater Koma, Jakarta, Indonesia, 2011



Cornelia Agatha, Muhammad Bagya, Dudung Hadi  
*Antigoneo*, Teater Koma, Jakarta, Indonesia, 2011



Muhammad Bagya  
*Antigoneo*, Teater Koma, Jakarta, Indonesia, 2011

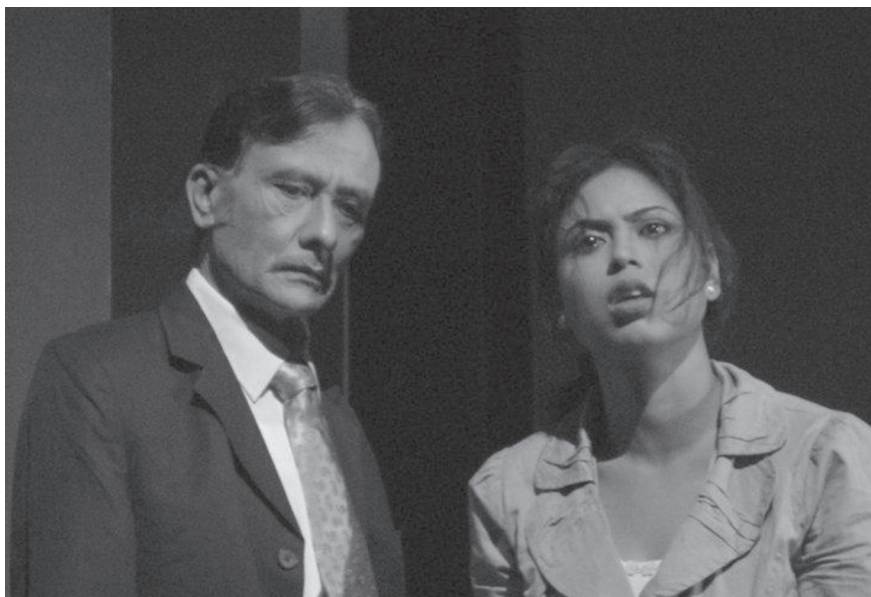




Bindia Ghosh  
*Antigone Now*, Ganakrishti Theatre Company, Kolkata, India, 2011



Bindia Ghosh, Tapas Mill  
*Antigone Now*, Ganakrishti Theatre Company, Kolkata, India, 2011



Sanat Chandra, Bindia Ghosh  
*Antigone Now*, Ganakrishti Theatre Company, Kolkata, India, 2011



Shubhashis Gangopaghyay, Bindia Ghosh  
*Antigone Now*, Ganakrishti Theatre Company, Kolkata, India, 2011

*Graveyard on a hill above a small seaside town. Late spring. Backstage on the right, corner of a small church. In the front, left, a tree; can be just a trunk, with some of the lower branches in view of the audience. The graveyard (on a gentle slope, mostly gravel, with some tufts of grass) looks demolished, graves are open, with earth piled around them. One grave is untouched and freshly decorated. There are two entrance points: past the church corner and past the tree at the front.*

## Act One

### 1.

*(In darkness, the church clock slowly strikes seven. After the seventh stroke, the curtain rises, revealing the empty cemetery. Tourist Guide (played by the actress who later appears as Sabina) enters the auditorium through the main entrance. She is followed by five male tourists, Tourist 1 (later Gentleman from Heidelberg), Tourist 2 (later Master Guido), Tourist 3 (later Security Guard), Tourist 4 (later Philip), Tourist 5 (later Mayor) and by Killer 1, Killer 2 and Peter. Tourist Guide leads them toward the stage).*

TOURIST GUIDE (*breezily*): Don't be afraid, gentlemen. The spirits have fled a long time ago.

TOURIST 1: It's not the spirits I fear, my legs are about to drop off.

TOURIST 2: Yes, rushing up the slope like that, I mean, what's the hurry?

TOURIST GUIDE: We have to stick to the schedule.

TOURIST 3: But we don't have to kill ourselves. We're not all the same age.

KILLER 2: Or the same weight.

TOURIST 3 (*affronted*): What do you mean by that?

KILLER 1: My friend is joking. We all agree we need more time to see the sights.

TOURIST 4: Then why waste even more of it by silly blabbing?

TOURIST GUIDE: Can you manage a few more steps? We'll stop here for a while.

KILLER 1: Yeah, you can stretch out in one of the open graves.

KILLER 2: Check out if it's comfortable.

KILLER 1: Have a little rest.

PETER: Come, let me help you.

*(Peter helps Tourist 1 on to the stage.)*

TOURIST 1: Well, thank you.

TOURIST GUIDE: Right, are we all here?

TOURIST 1 (*looking around the graveyard*): Where is she then?

TOURIST GUIDE: Who, sir?

TOURIST 1: The girl that's in all the papers.

TOURIST 3: That's why we came. To see her.

TOURIST 1: The girl who's guarding her brother's grave.

*(They all look at the freshly decorated grave.)*

TOURIST GUIDE: Must've gone to get something to eat.

TOURIST 3: But you said –

TOURIST 5: Can we stop whining and allow the young lady to carry on with her job?

TOURIST GUIDE: Thank you, sir.

TOURIST 3: No need to get riled up.

TOURIST GUIDE: Okay. It's true that the Mayor's niece isn't here, but I'm sure she'll be back in no time at all. Then you can photograph her.

TOURIST 1: I want a picture with her.

TOURIST GUIDE: That might be difficult.

TOURIST 5: You'll have to be careful she doesn't scratch out your eyes.

TOURIST 3: Is it true, then?

TOURIST GUIDE: What, sir?

TOURIST 3: That she is completely gaga?



TOURIST GUIDE: I'd certainly advise you to stay clear of her.

TOURIST 2: But how did all this begin?

TOURIST GUIDE: With the hotel. Can you see it down there?

*(They all look into the valley.)*

KILLER 1: Hotel Golf.

KILLER 2: Casino for Italians with big fat wallets.

KILLER 1: Jacuzzi in every room.

KILLER 2: Round-the-clock room service.

KILLER 1: Water beds for happy bouncing with young Ukrainian ladies.

KILLER 2: Or with the local talent wanting a bit on the side.

KILLER 1: Sea view at no extra cost.

KILLER 2: They're already advertising it on TV.

KILLER 1: Although the hotel still has no roof.

KILLER 2: And no electricity.

KILLER 1: And no golf course.

TOURIST 4 (*sternly*): All right, you two.

TOURIST GUIDE: So, if I may continue. The mayor of this pretty seaside town struck a deal with foreign investors to build a luxury hotel with a casino and golf course.

TOURIST 3: Not a bad idea.

TOURIST GUIDE: But the whole thing got stuck. Not enough land for the golf course.

TOURIST 3: So?

TOURIST GUIDE: So the mayor was forced to buy additional acres on the other side of the graveyard.

TOURIST 2: Which he did, according to newspapers.

TOURIST GUIDE: And that's how the problem started.

TOURIST 3: Why?

TOURIST GUIDE: Because the graveyard found itself smack in the middle of the golf course.

TOURIST 3: Can't see a problem there.

TOURIST 5: Oh come on. We may indeed be in death in the midst of life, but who would want to be reminded of that while playing golf on his annual holiday?

TOURIST 1: Well, he could've dropped the golf and just kept the casino.

TOURIST GUIDE: That's what he wanted to do. But foreign investors said that if there is no golf course they'll pull out.

TOURIST 3: They would, wouldn't they?

TOURIST GUIDE: So the mayor found himself facing a big dilemma. He could forget the whole thing or move the graveyard.

TOURIST 2: Which he did, according to newspapers.

TOURIST GUIDE: Yes. He bought a piece of land to build a crematorium. He offered money to the next of kin and they all signed permissions for their dear departed to be dug out.

TOURIST 4: All except one.

TOURIST GUIDE: The mayor's niece. Who said she would never allow the removal of her brother's remains.

TOURIST 3: Why not?

TOURIST GUIDE: Because the ground in which he was laid to rest is sacred, she said.

TOURIST 3: That's ridiculous.

TOURIST GUIDE: The guests can play golf around her brother's grave if they want to, she said.

TOURIST 4: So this is where we are at.

TOURIST 1: This girl must be awfully stubborn.

PETER: She wouldn't be doing this without a reason.

TOURIST 2: I haven't read a single kind word about her.

PETER: Have you read all the papers?

TOURIST 2: Why are you defending her?

PETER: Because you don't know what you're talking about.

TOURIST GUIDE: Gentlemen...

TOURIST 1: Is it true she makes a living by singing at funerals?

TOURIST 5: Yes. I've heard her. She sang at my nephew's wedding. Mostly she's hired for funerals, but every now and then someone wants her at a happier event.

TOURIST 1: Can she sing?

TOURIST 5: Can she sing! I was dumbstruck.

TOURIST 1: That's why I came on this tour. To hear her sing and to get a photo with her.

TOURIST 3: Jesus...

TOURIST 1: Can we come back after dinner? Surely she'll be here by then.

TOURIST GUIDE: The tour ends with dinner.

TOURIST 1: But it's part of the program, we paid for it.

TOURIST GUIDE: You did not, sir. The program lists a visit to the cemetery, that's all. Nowhere is it mentioned that you will see the girl, let alone that she will sing for you.

TOURIST 3: For God's sake, what do you think she is?

TOURIST 1: Yes, but if I don't even see her –

TOURIST GUIDE: We have to go. Dinner is waiting.

TOURIST 1: I will lodge a complaint.

TOURIST GUIDE (*claps her hands*): Let's move on, gentlemen. Past the church and down the hill on the other side.

*(They move on, filing past the decorated grave. Peter and Tourist Guide make up the rear.)*

TOURIST 2: Look at these flowers. The girl deserves admiration.

TOURIST 4: The people in town don't think so.

TOURIST 2: The hotel, of course, would bring money and jobs.

TOURIST 5: Plenty of jobs.

TOURIST GUIDE: Let's go, gentlemen, the soup's getting cold.

TOURIST 2: Sooner or later they'll remove her. One way or another.

TOURIST 3: The mayor brought her up as his own daughter. He isn't going to hurt her.

TOURIST 5: He is under terrible pressure.

TOURIST 3: But otherwise a reasonable man, I hear. Capable, highly respected.

TOURIST 5: Doesn't have much choice, poor man.

TOURIST 2: Poor girl.

*(One after another they disappear behind the corner of the church. Tourist Guide looks back at Peter who has paused by the grave.)*

TOURIST GUIDE: Admiring the gravestone?

PETER: I like the inscription. "Rest in peace for all eternity."

TOURIST GUIDE: Yes. Amazing girl.

PETER: Actually, I know her. My parents had a holiday cottage down there, close to the beach. Demolished five years ago to make way for the supermarket. But this graveyard! To me it seemed the most beautiful place in the world. Black marble, white marble, statues...

TOURIST GUIDE: I know.

PETER: And silence. Despite the wind and the crashing of waves, complete silence.

TOURIST GUIDE: Do you miss those days?

PETER: Very much. This is where we used to meet. Among the graves.

Clara, her two brothers, her sister, and Philip, the Mayor's son. And I.

TOURIST GUIDE: She had two brothers?

PETER: Andrew and Alan. Identical twins. I could never tell them apart.

But Clara... she could. She liked Andrew. With Alan she... put up.  
Barely.

TOURIST GUIDE: And which one is...? *(She nods at the grave.)*

PETER: Andrew. Alan was cremated. They died together in a car accident.

TOURIST GUIDE: Not a happy family.

PETER: No.

TOURIST GUIDE: Will you join us later?

PETER: Probably not.

*(Tourist Guide disappears behind the corner of the church. Peter walks to the tree and looks up at the branches. Pulls a mobile phone from his pocket and calls a number.)*

PETER: Hi, Boris, I'm here now, in the cemetery... Look, I've no idea what I'm hoping to catch, maybe nothing... Maybe something that'll put the Mayor behind bars for ten years or more... I know it won't be broadcast quality, but as evidence, as inserts for a documentary it'll do... Listen, I have no time to argue, someone might come any minute... Just tell me one thing... Does the sensor react to sound as well as movement?... Okay... In other words, as soon as a mouse either squeaks or runs past the graves the camera will start recording... Three hours, Boris, you gave me a battery for three hours, don't tell me now you didn't!... Okay... No, the camera is already up... In the treetop, I told you... I fixed it this morning... Someone's coming.

*(Peter slips the mobile back into his pocket.)*

## 2.

*(A corpulent middle-aged gentleman has emerged from behind the church, dressed in blue overalls. On his right shoulder he carries a spade and a hoe. In his left hand he carries a sack whose contents can only be guessed. He notices Peter and stops.)*



PETER: You must be a gravedigger.

GENTLEMAN FROM HEIDELBERG: In a manner of speaking. And you?

PETER: I'm making a TV documentary about rare seaside birds.

GENTLEMAN FROM HEIDELBERG: There were plenty of them when I was a boy. Now I'm lucky to see one.

*(He puts the sack, the hoe and the spade on the ground next to the nearest open grave.)*

PETER: Yes, many things have disappeared since civilization arrived in these parts.

GENTLEMAN FROM HEIDELBERG: Civilization?! Haven't you noticed how quickly the green light for pedestrians turns to red?

*(With some difficulty he lowers himself into the grave and reaches for the spade.)*

PETER: Will someone be buried here? I mean, considering that all the corpses have been dug out and taken away.

GENTLEMAN FROM HEIDELBERG: So, you know what's happening.

PETER: Doesn't everybody?

GENTLEMAN FROM HEIDELBERG: Then why make a show about birds? Why not about the tragedy that's taken over this town?

PETER: Do you think the Mayor would be happy to see the television industry sticking its nose into his business?

GENTLEMAN FROM HEIDELBERG: Why do you worry about his happiness? I run a restaurant in Heidelberg, and I tell you there isn't a thing that German TV doesn't stick its nose into.

PETER: Wait a minute... Didn't you say you were a gravedigger?

GENTLEMAN FROM HEIDELBERG: Only today. I've come to bury my mother.

PETER: By yourself?

GENTLEMAN FROM HEIDELBERG: The others have dug her out, I'm going to put her back where she belongs. *(Reaches inside the sack and pulls out a skull.)* A real beauty she was, my Mum. A real lady, too. After her funeral the gravedigger said he hadn't buried a nicer-looking corpse in his life.

PETER: A very nice skull.

GENTLEMAN FROM HEIDELBERG: You know where I found it? Behind the local fire station! Where the bones of the dead lie around in sacks to be cremated. In a crematorium they haven't started to build!

PETER: As far as I know they didn't empty a single grave without the permission of the next-of-kin.

GENTLEMAN FROM HEIDELBERG: My Mum had two. My brother and me. He signed. I didn't.

PETER: So now you're going to put her back.

GENTLEMAN FROM HEIDELBERG: Not only that, I'm going to get her a gravestone. A real nice one. Black marble, two meters by two. Do you know that this was the most beautiful cemetery on the entire coast?

PETER: Does the Mayor know what you're doing?

GENTLEMAN FROM HEIDELBERG: He doesn't own the remains of my Mum. But I did send him a letter of intent, just in case. *(Puts the skull back in the sack and reaches for the spade.)* Must get on with it.

PETER: Good luck, then.

GENTLEMAN FROM HEIDELBERG: Same to you, with the birds.

PETER: I don't want to alarm you, but – be careful.

GENTLEMAN FROM HEIDELBERG: I have nothing to fear.

*(Peter exits behind the church corner. The Gentleman from Heidelberg starts deepening the grave. Then he stops and reaches for the sack. He rummages inside it and pulls out a hot dog. Removes the plastic, takes a bite.)*

GENTLEMAN FROM HEIDELBERG: Sorry, Mum. Haven't eaten all day.

### 3.

*(Killer 1 and Killer 2 enter past the tree. Gentleman from Heidelberg stops munching and stares at them. They walk up to him.)*

KILLER 1: Good evening, sir.

KILLER 2: And good day, and good night, and good-bye.

KILLER 1: Having dinner?

*(Gentleman from Heidelberg nods. He is confused.)*

KILLER 2: Is it good?

GENTLEMAN FROM HEIDELBERG: Very good.

KILLER 2: Let me try.

*(Gentleman from Heidelberg passes the hot dog to Killer 2. Killer 2 bites off a piece, moves it around in his mouth, spits it out.)*

KILLER 2: Piece of shit.

*(Killer 1 pulls the hot dog from his hand, bites off a piece, chews, spits it out.)*

KILLER 1: Worse then shit. Piece of crap.

KILLER 2: Why are you eating this? *(Returns the hot dog to the Gentleman from Heidelberg.)* It'll make you sick.

KILLER 1: Digging a grave? For yourself?

GENTLEMAN FROM HEIDELBERG: For my Mum. She's in here. *(Pats the sack.)* What's left of her.

KILLER 1: You have permission?

KILLER 2: You need permission for that. You got it?

KILLER 1: If you don't, my friend here will get really mad.

GENTLEMAN FROM HEIDELBERG *(weighing his options)*: I'll take her back. If you want to. Skull, bones, everything.

KILLER 2: Back where?

GENTLEMAN FROM HEIDELBERG: Where I found her.

KILLER 1: What do you say, friend? This man is afraid to die.

KILLER 2: Can you blame him?

KILLER 1: But there is a problem. We won't get any money.

KILLER 2: Who is going to feed my kids?

KILLER 1: Very sorry, but we can't help you.

KILLER 2: Not many jobs around, we must take what we get.

KILLER 1: And we must do what we must.

KILLER 2: Unless you sing the anthem of this country. Which is called what?

GENTLEMAN FROM HEIDELBERG: A Toast.

KILLER 2: Okay, how goes it?

GENTLEMAN FROM HEIDELBERG: "God's blessing on all nations, / Who long and work for that bright day, / When o'er earth's habitations, over..."

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KILLER 2: "When o'er earth's habitations / No war, no strife shall hold its sway; / Who long to see..."

GENTLEMAN FROM HEIDELBERG: "That all men free / No more shall foes, but neighbors be."

KILLER 2: Now sing it. Come on, sing the anthem from the beginning.

GENTLEMAN FROM HEIDELBERG (*soliciting help from Killer 1*): I'm tone-deaf.

KILLER 1: So am I.

GENTLEMAN FROM HEIDELBERG: Sir...

KILLER 2: You want me to count to five?

*(Killer 1 and Killer 2 pull out their guns and start counting.)*

KILLER 1: One.

KILLER 2: Two.

KILLER 1: Three.

KILLER 2: Four.

GENTLEMAN FROM HEIDELBERG (*starts singing*): "God's blessing on all nations, / Who long and work for that bright day, / When o'er earth's habitations all men foes not neighbors be."

KILLER 2: This man is making a fool of his country.

KILLER 1: Of the greatest poet of his country!

GENTLEMAN FROM HEIDELBERG: I told you I was tone-deaf –

*(Killer 1 and Killer 2 aim their guns at the Gentleman from Heidelberg.)*

KILLER 2: "Let thunder out of heaven strike down and smite our wanton foe!"

*(They fire simultaneously. The Gentleman from Heidelberg sinks to his knees, then topples over inside the grave)*

KILLER 1: Fuck you, what have you done?

KILLER 2: What do you mean?

KILLER 1: You shot him in the heart!

KILLER 2: So did you!

KILLER 1: I do the heart, you do the head.

KILLER 2: But you said we could reverse it for a change.

KILLER 1: I never said that.



KILLER 2: You did.

KILLER 1: Now he has two bullets in the same place.

KILLER 2: You think he needs one in his head?

KILLER 1: No, he's got enough.

KILLER 2: Sorry if I made a mistake. (*Shoots in the grave.*) Now he's got a bullet in his head, too. He doesn't know it, but the main thing is that you're happy.

KILLER 1: Pick up the spade.

4.

(*Killer 1 replaces the gun and grabs the hoe. Killer 2 replaces his gun and takes the spade. They start burying the Gentleman from Heidelberg.*)

KILLER 2: You know what? We have to stop making a living like this. Let people die of natural causes.

KILLER 1: In traffic accidents?

KILLER 2: This is no business for honest people.

KILLER 1: That's why I'm looking for honest work.

KILLER 2: Are you joking?

KILLER 1: And I'll get it. Soon. Down there, in the hotel.

KILLER 2: General manager?

KILLER 1: Chief of security.

KILLER 2: You're lucky I'm burying an innocent man. Otherwise I wouldn't stop laughing.

KILLER 1: Regular work, regular pay, pension benefits.

KILLER 2: Pension? It's waiting for us behind bars.

KILLER 1: Smooth out that bit on your side.

(*They smooth out the soil on top of the grave.*)

KILLER 2: Oh shit. We forgot to bury the spade and the hoe.

KILLER 1: We buried your brains instead.

KILLER 2: Fuck my brains. It's that hot dog we shouldn't have buried.

KILLER 1: Come, I'll buy you one.

KILLER 2: Where? In town?

KILLER 1: Hot dog and beer.

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KILLER 2: I have a better suggestion. Let's throw the spade and the hoe  
in the car and get the hell out of here.

KILLER 1: I have to meet someone.

KILLER 2: I'll wait for you here.

*(Killer 2 lights a cigarette, starts pacing about.)*

KILLER 1: Nervous?

KILLER 2: Sure I'm nervous. I feel bad, killing a man for one thousand  
euros.

KILLER 1: Couldn't get more.

KILLER 2: Who is this miser?

KILLER 1: Very important man.

KILLER 2: Oh yeah? We should find work in Paris, London, Berlin.

KILLER 1: No, it's better here.

KILLER 2: Are you joking? I pump bullets in people's heads, I rob banks  
and gas stations, but what is my status in this shit society? Fuck  
the country where even criminals can't have a decent life.

KILLER 1: Let's go.

*(Killer 2 stops under the tree and looks up.)*

KILLER 2: What's that up there?

KILLER 1 *(comes closer, looks up)*: Stork's nest.

KILLER 2: Near the sea?

KILLER 1: Storks have big wings, they fly very far.

KILLER 2: Bullshit.

KILLER 1: Climb up, take a look.

KILLER 2: You take a look.

KILLER 1: What happened to your camera?

*(Killer 2 pulls a digital camera from his pocket.)*

KILLER 1: Take a pic, slap it on a computer, blow it up and you'll see.

*(Killer 2 lifts the camera toward the tree branches as far as his arms  
will allow; there is a flash.)*

KILLER 2: Suppose it's a bomb?

KILLER 1: It is. That's why the dead ran away.

KILLER 2: Except one. Lying there in a very nice grave.

KILLER 1: Yeah. Too many flowers there, for my taste.

KILLER 2: Far too many. Far too pretty. What's the word? Kitschy.

KILLER 1: Shall we make it less kitschy?

KILLER 2 (*tosses the cigarette butt towards the decorated grave*): We got time?

KILLER 1: Let's get some beer, relax, then come back and do a proper job.

*(He picks up the hoe and walks towards the church corner.)*

KILLER 2 (*picks up the spade and follows*): Is the church open?

KILLER 1: Why, you need a confession?

KILLER 2: As a little boy I wanted to be a bell-ringer.

*(They disappear behind the corner. A moment of silence. Then the sound of bells can be heard, very discordant, eerie.)*

*Blackout.*

## 5.

*(The graveyard is bathed in sunlight. Clara enters from behind the church with a linen bag on her shoulder. She approaches her brother's grave, stops, takes a deep breath. Flowers on the grave have been trampled, the gravestone has been defaced with graffiti.)*

CLARA: Oh my God!... My God!

*(Clara starts to cry. She tries to save a few flowers to make a bouquet, then she drops them and recoils as if afraid to touch the grave.)*

I should've known...

*(She rummages inside a linen bag, pulls out a packet of tissues, wipes her tears. She looks around to see where she could deposit the tissue, then finally stuffs it inside the bag.)*

I'm sorry, Andrew... I won't leave your side again, I promise.

*(She closes her eyes and clasps her hands as if praying. Then she fishes a mobile phone from the bag, types in a number and waits.)*

Master Guido, where are you? They've vandalized the grave, crushed all the flowers, defaced the gravestone with obscene graffiti... Please, Master Guido, I need you...

*(She puts the phone in the bag, takes some tissues and tries to rub graffiti off the gravestone, without success.)*

Bastards...

*(Once again she is overcome by tears. Peter enters from behind the church. Clara turns and looks at him.)*

PETER: Clara...

CLARA: Do we know each other?

PETER: We used to play in this graveyard. As children. Almost every summer.

CLARA: Peter? My God, how you've grown! You look so... mature.

PETER: So do you.

CLARA: But I'm not. Not enough to cope with what's happening.

PETER: I know what's happening.

CLARA: You do?

PETER *(crouching beside her)*: I'm trying to learn as much as I can. I used to work for National TV. Now I'm a freelance journalist.

CLARA *(turning away)*: Another one.

PETER: Clara...

CLARA: Don't you read what they write about me?

PETER: I do.

CLARA: Well, what do you want? An interview?

PETER: No...

CLARA *(points at the grave)*: Look what they've done.

PETER: Clara, the atmosphere in the town is ugly. There is worse to come.

CLARA: But why, *why*?

PETER: Two hundred people are waiting for promised jobs.



CLARA: My uncle keeps telling me that.

PETER: Then you know that he won't protect you.

CLARA: My uncle is an honest man, and he loves me.

PETER: Clara...

CLARA: Go and see him, ask him about his plans. You're a journalist, he'll have to receive you.

PETER: He won't. I've tried.

CLARA: Let me talk to him.

PETER: No! – don't. Things are under surveillance, we're doing what we can. There will be evidence, whatever happens.

CLARA: What do you mean?

PETER: It's your safety I'm concerned about.

CLARA: I don't need a knight to defend me.

PETER (*slight pause*): Then allow me to tell you at least one thing.

CLARA: Sorry, Peter. I didn't want to offend you. I seem to remember that years ago, when we used to meet here, you were rather fond of me.

PETER: I was. But we were children then, Clara. These are not childish things.

CLARA: No?

PETER: We're older now, and have to take care of our safety. Especially when we are in someone's way.

CLARA: Thank you. You probably have things to do.

PETER: One more thing, Clara –

*(Clara's mobile rings. She answers.)*

CLARA: Master Guido... Oh no!... Oh my God!... Where are you?... Wait for me there, don't move... (*Clutching the mobile in her left hand, she picks up her bag with the right one.*) My old professor... He's blind... He tripped on the way up and fell...

*(She heads towards the corner of the church.)*

PETER: Clara!

*(Clara turns. Peter offers her a visiting card.)*

PETER: Call me if things get really bad.

CLARA (*with a hint of impatience*): Thank you.

*(She drops the card in her bag and exits behind the church corner. Peter walks to the tree and looks up at the branches to make sure the camera is still there. He exits past the tree.)*

6.

*(Clara and Master Guido enter from behind the church. Clara is supporting the old man by his right elbow. Master Guido is a tall, elegant man with gray hair and very dark sunglasses – he looks a little like Borges. He is wearing a very neat dark pinstriped suit, but his tie is askew and could do with a helping hand. In his left hand he carries a wicker basket full of fresh flowers. In his right hand he holds a blind man's stick, which he is using to feel the ground before him. Tucked under his right armpit is a small folding chair.)*

CLARA: Here, Master Guido... Careful... Give me the chair.

*(She relieves him of the chair, which she unfolds and puts on the ground. She helps him lower himself into it. She takes the basket of flowers from his hand.)*

CLARA: Did you get hurt?

MASTER GUIDO: Oh, nothing to speak of.

CLARA: Master Guido! – where did you get these flowers?!

MASTER GUIDO: At the flower shop. I asked for the best.

CLARA: I wish you could see what they did to Andrew's grave!

MASTER GUIDO: I can imagine.

CLARA: With these flowers I'll make it look even nicer. How much do I owe you?

MASTER GUIDO: A pleasant smile.

CLARA *(squeezing his hand)*: To think that I failed your exam in mathematics. Twice!

MASTER GUIDO: *And philosophy.*

CLARA: Allow me to straighten your tie. *(She does so.)* You've always been so handsome, professor. As a schoolgirl I was in love with you.

MASTER GUIDO: Just as well I didn't know.

CLARA: Like all the other girls.

MASTER GUIDO: How can I help?

## ANTIGONE NOW

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CLARA (*after a pause*): I've decided not to speak to my sister. Is that bad?

MASTER GUIDO: Depends on the reason.

CLARA: She keeps saying I have no idea into what sort of world we have been thrown by fate.

MASTER GUIDO: And you think you do?

CLARA: I've always been a little... confused. As you know. Volatile. Wasn't that what they said?

MASTER GUIDO: But not anymore.

CLARA: No. Or am I? What do you think?

MASTER GUIDO: I'm not sure.

CLARA: There are moments in life, aren't there, when we must stop asking questions.

MASTER GUIDO: There are.

CLARA: When we must surrender our thoughts to our feelings.

MASTER GUIDO: There are such moments.

CLARA: Give me your hand, Master Guido. (*She takes his hand and places it in her lap.*) I'm so alone.

MASTER GUIDO: I'm with you.

CLARA (*placing Guido's hand on her cheek*): No one has caressed me for a long time. And no one will, ever again.

(*With his other hand, Master Guido gently strokes her hair.*)

CLARA: Master Guido, when I remember what's happening in this town my heart aches all over my body! From now on I'm just going to cry.

(*She rummages inside her bag for tissues. She notices that Master Guido is offering her a clean, neatly folded handkerchief. She accepts it and wipes her eyes.*)

MASTER GUIDO: Okay?

CLARA: Master Guido, you're the last of the great romantics. In fact the only one I've ever known.

(*She starts redoing the grave.*)

MASTER GUIDO: How about Philip?

CLARA (*a touch angrily*): Why do you keep talking about him?

MASTER GUIDO: Because I know that you miss him.

CLARA: I'm one of those who can't forgive.

MASTER GUIDO: You should try.

CLARA: He's done a horrible thing to me.

MASTER GUIDO: He is regretting it deeply.

CLARA: Philip is my uncle's stepson. We grew up as brothers and sisters.

That's what we should've remained.

MASTER GUIDO: But your love was pure.

*(Clara puts one of the flowers in Master Guido's breast pocket.)*

CLARA: There. Instead of the handkerchief you gave me to wipe my tears.

MASTER GUIDO: Thank you, dear child.

CLARA: Without your advice... I don't know... I've always seen a father in you. The father I never knew. Uncle has never been more than an uncle.

MASTER GUIDO *(rising)*: I have things to do.

CLARA: I would go with you, but I can't leave the grave.

MASTER GUIDO: I won't get lost.

CLARA: You tripped and fell.

MASTER GUIDO: I took a wrong step.

CLARA: What about my step, Master Guido?

MASTER GUIDO *(after a pause)*: Have you started to doubt?

CLARA: I want to know what you think.

MASTER GUIDO: No advice can do justice to what you feel is right. It's true that a self-serving compromise is the mark of our times, and that belief in something that's of no practical use seems unreasonable, even wasteful. But that may be the very reason why you shouldn't give up. Every so often we need to be reminded that there are things in life that can't be bought.

CLARA: That is my task?

MASTER GUIDO: If you so decide.

*(Clara folds Master Guido's chair and pushes it under his arm. Master Guido exits round the church corner. Clara returns to the grave. Her mobile rings. She checks the number, answers.)*

CLARA: Uncle!... What a surprise... No, I don't need a security guard...

No, Uncle... I said no... Thank you, Uncle, for wanting to protect me,

but I'm doing no wrong so I have nothing to fear. (*Listens*) Yes, he was here... Of course he didn't, how could he, he has no camera... I know him from childhood, he used to come here on holidays with his parents... No, he wasn't asking any questions... No way, Uncle... I'm staying here.

*(She replaces her mobile and turns back to the grave. She is startled by the sound of the church bells, discordant and eerie. Silence again. She shakes her head and resumes her work. Then, as if startled by another sound, she looks toward the corner of the church. Staring at her from behind it are Killer 1 and Killer 2. Clara rubs her eyes and looks again. Now all she sees is the wall. She places both hands on the grave.)*

Andrew... I'm losing my mind... Help me pray.

*(She joins her hands and prays.)*

*Blackout.*

## 7.

*(Clara is asleep on newspapers she previously spread on the ground, almost in fetal position, sucking her thumb. Philip enters round the church corner and pauses, watching her. He pulls a box of cigarettes from the pocket of his stylish jacket, lights one with a lighter. The sound wakes Clara, who sits up and looks at Philip.)*

CLARA (*turning away*): Still hallucinating...

PHILIP: Clara...

CLARA: Philip, are you real?

PHILIP: I don't know. What do you see?

CLARA: What do I see? A playboy who loves women and expensive cars.

Expensive, exclusive and fast.

PHILIP: Sense of style?

CLARA: Hardly. He's far less choosy when it comes to women. His reputation stretches along the entire coast.



PHILIP: No further?

CLARA: But once his charm completely failed him.

PETER: Oh?

CLARA: With a girl by the name of Clara. Not used to rejection, he decided to *pretend* he was in love with her.

PHILIP: Full marks for trying.

CLARA: Then something unusual happened.

PHILIP: Oh?

CLARA: One morning he woke up to discover that he *was* in love.

PHILIP: A game had become reality.

CLARA: And so Clara said, "Right, you can have me. But only after the wedding. Which won't happen until you prove beyond doubt that your love is real."

PHILIP: Very cruel.

CLARA: Maybe so. But for two whole years Philip didn't even look at another woman.

PHILIP: Who would've thought?

CLARA: And so Clara and Philip announced the big day. And what happened? A week before the wedding the stupid boy went to bed with Clara's sister, Sabina!

PHILIP: A serious error.

CLARA: Fatal.

PHILIP: But maybe the stupid boy knows that and is awfully sorry.

CLARA: So he should be.

PHILIP: Maybe the mistake has taught him a lesson he will never forget.

CLARA: Good for him.

PHILIP: And maybe the whole thing really wasn't all that important. Just a slip, lasting no more than ten minutes.

CLARA: And how would the stupid boy describe those ten minutes? As practice for marital duties?

*(Philip throws the cigarette butt on the ground and steps on it. He stares into the valley. Then he comes alive.)*

PHILIP: Don't you remember what it was like? How we raced in an open car along coastal roads, with your hair billowing in the wind?

CLARA: That means nothing to me.

PHILIP: Once, high above the sea, you rose in your seat and shouted into the wind that for the first time in your life you were truly happy.

CLARA: Impossible.

PHILIP: We would come here. When this was still a cemetery.

CLARA: Still?! You're standing next to a grave!

PHILIP: We would run up and down among the graves.

CLARA: Stop this, Philip.

PHILIP: Life is movement, Clara. Don't you remember what you said?

CLARA: No, I don't.

PHILIP: You said it was a waste to use so much marble for gravestones.

You said –

CLARA: So that's why you here! I should've known.

PHILIP (*after a pause*): I've come to tell you how sorry I am that I hurt you.

CLARA: Philip, we've missed the moment when we could still turn the clock back.

PHILIP (*offers her a small folder*): Perhaps we haven't.

CLARA: What's that?

PHILIP: Two tickets for a cruise around the world. Four months.

CLARA: Congratulations. Who is the lucky girl?

PHILIP: Okay, I know you're trying to punish me –

CLARA: Why don't you show the tickets to my sister? She'll be packed in less than an hour.

PHILIP (*returning the folder to his pocket*): You don't really know her. And you don't know me.

CLARA: Go, Philip, go on this cruise. Walk down to the beach and show the tickets to a sexy young girl. To some German tourist, you've always liked blondes.

PHILIP: Clara...

(*Master Guido enters from behind the church with his stick, folding chair and a large bag.*)

CLARA: Master Guido... Wait, let me help you.

PHILIP (*leaving*): Good to see you, Professor.

MASTER GUIDO: You too, Philip.

CLARA: Philip... (*Philip turns.*) I'm sorry.

8.

*(Philip disappears behind the church corner. Master Guido stops by the grave. Clara helps him unfold the chair. He sits.)*

MASTER GUIDO: Not so young anymore.

CLARA: Young as the morning dew, Master Guido. Up the hill with this heavy bag...

MASTER GUIDO: Open it.

*(Clara unzips the bag and takes out a folded blanket, a cushion, a large pullover, a plastic bottle of water, a toilet roll and three sandwiches, wrapped in plastic.)*

CLARA: Master Guido...

MASTER GUIDO: The pullover will be too large. But nights can be cold. As for the sandwiches – I hope they are not stale.

CLARA: Master Guido, I don't know what to say.

*(She spreads out the blanket, sits on it.)*

MASTER GUIDO: And how's Philip?

CLARA: He is trying to lure me away from the grave. I know. He has invested money in the hotel.

MASTER GUIDO: So have I.

CLARA: You haven't.

MASTER GUIDO: I have. And so have many others. Modest savings, but still. It looked like a safe bet.

*(A security guard enters from behind the church. He is a corpulent, slightly awkward man in his fifties. He pauses, looks at Clara, then at Master Guido.)*

SECURITY GUARD: I'm in charge from now on.

MASTER GUIDO: Says who?

SECURITY GUARD *(pulls a piece of paper from his pocket and unfolds it)*: The Mayor. And the chief of police. The girl is in danger, they say. Threats have been made. So now I'm her bodyguard.

CLARA: For every hour you won't stay by my side I'll pay you double the amount you get from my uncle. (*Almost screaming*) I don't want you here!

MASTER GUIDO: Clara... Please.

SECURITY GUARD: Don't you know what's happening? Yesterday a sack with the remains of a dead lady disappeared from the fire station. A gentleman came from Germany, said he was her son, notified the Mayor. I think he took the bones back to Germany. He will cremate them and put the urn on his bedside table.

MASTER GUIDO: Highly unlikely.

(*Sound of bells in the church, discordant, eerie. They stop as suddenly as they began.*)

SECURITY GUARD: Someone will have to see to those bells.

MASTER GUIDO: Spirits of the dead?

SECURITY GUARD: There are no spirits, professor. Only evil.

## 9.

(*Killer 1 and Killer 2 enter from behind the church. They stop and look at Clara.*)

KILLER 1: What do you think, friend? Have we come to the right place?

KILLER 2: Sure. Look at the girl. Exactly the same as the one on the photo. Same hair, same eyes, same... (*Makes a gesture, indicating breasts.*)

SECURITY GUARD: Now listen, you two. Who are you and what are you doing here?

KILLER 1: Did you hear that, friend? Some fly is buzzing around.

KILLER 2: I don't like flies. If I hear it again I will... zzzpppp! (*Slaps his cheek.*)

SECURITY GUARD: I will zzzpppp you if you're not careful. (*Pulls a piece of paper from his pocket and unfolds it.*) By the order of the Mayor and the chief of police I'm in charge of security in this graveyard. I demand that you tell me your reasons for being here.

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*(Killer 2 pulls the paper from the Security Guard's hands and brings it up to his eyes.)*

KILLER 2: What do you do with official papers in your hometown, friend?

KILLER 1: Official paper makes good toilet paper.

KILLER 2: Where I come from we starve, so we eat everything that smells of calories. *(He crumples the paper and swallows it.)* Oooohhhh... very tasty! Must be the signature of the chief of police. *(He burps.)*

SECURITY GUARD: I don't have to put up with this.

*(He pulls a handgun from his pocket and aims it at Killer 2.)*

KILLER 2: Again this fly. Friend, tell me what to do.

KILLER 1: Blow it away.

KILLER 2: That was my plan.

*(With a sudden gesture, Killer 2 knocks the gun from the Security Guard's hand and delivers a severe blow to his neck. The Security Guard collapses and remains motionless on the ground. Killer 2 picks up the gun and puts it in his pocket.)*

CLARA *(trying to get the Mayor on the phone)*: Uncle!... Answer, please!

KILLER 1: Uncle will not help you, Miss.

MASTER GUIDO: What's going on?

KILLER 2 *(removes Master Guido's glasses and peers closely into his eyes)*: What's going on? Nothing special, sir. *(Puts on the glasses.)* Oooh... For the first time in my life I see the world I'd like to live in!

CLARA: How dare you? Give him back his glasses! The gentleman's blind! *(She kneels and tries to revive the Security Guard.)* My God, you've killed him.

KILLER 1: Leave him. If he wakes too soon, my friend will have to whack him again.

KILLER 2 *(pulls a photograph from his pocket)*: Sir, you recognize the girl on this photo? *(Master Guido says nothing.)* Listen, friend, this gentleman is pretending he doesn't see the photo.

KILLER 1: Ask him if he needs glasses.

*(Killer 2 takes off the glasses and puts them back on Master Guido's nose.)*



KILLER 2: Look now, sir. You recognize this boy? And this girl? Both very young, both naked, both lying on the beach.

KILLER 1: My friend and I think this girl is Clara. The Mayor's niece. And the boy is Andrew, her brother.

CLARA (*tries to pull the photograph from Killer 2's hand*): You broke into my flat!

KILLER 1: No, Miss...

*(Clara is trying to snatch the photo from Killer 2's hand. But he is holding it so high she can't reach it.)*

KILLER 1: We found it lying on the pavement. We're looking for the owner to give it back.

CLARA: Then give it back to me!

KILLER 1: We don't know if the photo is yours. (*Pulls another photo from his pocket.*) Same two people on this one, but not very clear. The girl is you, for sure, but the boy is only seen from the side. I'm almost sure it's your brother. What do you say, friend?

*(He shows the photo to Killer 2.)*

KILLER 2: Are you mad? You know what we do in my hometown to brother and sister kissing each other like that?

CLARA: How dare you? This is a fake!

*(She snatches at the photo. Killer 1 hides it behind his back, then he passes it to Killer 2, who raises it high in the air, one photo in each hand.)*

CLARA: What do you want? Money?

KILLER 1: Did you hear that, friend? The young lady is offering money.

KILLER 2: Why? If the photos belong to her, she doesn't have to pay. If not, we must find the owner.

KILLER 1: We are honest people, after all.

KILLER 2: We must show these photos to an expert.

KILLER 1: I know one. He works for News of the World.

10.

*(Peter enters from behind the church and stops.)*

PETER: Good afternoon.

*(Killer 1 and Killer 2 exchange glances. Killer 2 lowers his arms and pushes the photos in his pocket.)*

KILLER 2: Suddenly there are more people alive than dead in this cemetery.

PETER: I happened to be passing, and I overheard what you were saying.

KILLER 1: We were saying something?

PETER: I'm a journalist, I work for a TV station. Those two photos would really interest me. I could offer a decent price.

KILLER 1: What do you think, friend? A journalist just *happened* to be passing.

PETER: No, I happened to overhear the conversation. The reason I came was to interview this gentleman.

*(Killer 2 looks at Master Guido, then at the Security Guard on the ground.)*

KILLER 2: Which gentleman?

PETER: The professor. *(Master Guido nods. Peter looks at the Security Guard on the ground.)* What's the matter with him?

KILLER 1: We were discussing something, and he couldn't follow.

KILLER 2: He got tired, decided to take a rest.

KILLER 1: What sort of interview do you want to make with the professor?

PETER: About rare seaside birds. The professor is an authority on the subject.

MASTER GUIDO: One of the best in Europe.

KILLER 1: Interesting. A blind authority on rare seaside birds.

PETER: To return to the photos. Considering what's happening in this town –

KILLER 1: Did you hear that, friend? Something is happening in this town.

KILLER 2: Did we miss something?

KILLER 1: I think we did. There are journalists walking around and we know nothing about it. We are more blind than this blind professor.

CLARA (*who has been trying to make a call on her mobile*): No, Uncle!... I don't care about your meeting!... No, you won't!... It's urgent!... Uncle!!!... Ohhrrrr!

KILLER 1: Uncle won't help?

CLARA: If you knew his name you'd be crawling around on all fours!

KILLER 1: We better go then.

KILLER 2: Yes. I haven't been crawling around since I was a baby.

PETER: I really could make you a generous offer.

KILLER 1: Tell him, friend.

KILLER 2: It's like this, Mister Journalist who is making a documentary on rare seaside birds. If the media get their hands on these photos –

KILLER 1: You know what they're like.

KILLER 2: They could do much harm to the girl.

KILLER 1: Incest is a serious matter.

KILLER 2: But maybe Miss Clara is innocent.

KILLER 1: So it's best for the photos to stay with us.

KILLER 2: And you can interview the professor.

KILLER 1 (*laughs*): Without a camera. For TV. Shall we go, friend?

KILLER 2 (*approaches Peter*): One question for Mister Journalist. Can you sing the national anthem?

KILLER 1: Friend!

KILLER 2: Okay, okay.

*(He follows Kiler 1 past the tree and out.)*

CLARA: Thank you, Peter. Very brave of you.

*(She opens the plastic bottle of water brought by Master Guido and pours some on the Security Guard's face. The Security Guard comes back to life, sits up and looks around, confused.)*

SECURITY GUARD: My gun!

PETER: Who are you, sir?

SECURITY GUARD: And who are you? Should I know you?

*(Clara's mobile rings. She answers.)*

CLARA: Why did you cut me off?... Listen... No, you listen to me... The security guard you sent me after I told you I don't need one is sitting here minus his gun, because it was taken from him by two villains who also broke into my flat and stole my photos.

*(Clara hands the phone to the Security Guard.)*

SECURITY GUARD: Mister Mayor, sir... No, I didn't provoke them, I swear... Don't you worry, I'll chase them as far as the end of the world... Thank you, Mister Mayor, thank you very much.

*(He returns the phone to Clara who puts it back to her ear. But evidently the Mayor had finished the call.)*

SECURITY GUARD *(still dazed)*: Which way did they go?

*(Peter points past the tree. The Security Guard rises and walks toward the tree.)*

PETER: Be careful, they're dangerous.

SECURITY GUARD *(without looking back)*: So am I.

*(The Security Guard exits past the tree.)*

PETER: Clara, there's something I have to tell you.

CLARA: Not now, Peter.

MASTER GUIDO: Clara, I will tell you, if you won't listen to him.

PETER: You know there is a camera in the tree? How?

MASTER GUIDO: Don't worry, I haven't told anyone. Go and change the tape.

*(Peter, shaking his head in disbelief, pulls a videocassette from his pocket, walks to the tree, takes off his shoes and, with the tape between his teeth, climbs onto the branches.)*

CLARA: *(suddenly dawning on her)*: Wait a minute. Peter is filming me?

MASTER GUIDO *(stands up)*: Clara! I'm sorry if I have to speak to you in the tone I used as your teacher, but –

CLARA: Master Guido –

MASTER GUIDO: Don't object. You're no longer a schoolgirl.

CLARA: I want to know what's happening!

MASTER GUIDO: More than you're prepared to believe. Calm down, please, and trust your friends. *(He turns to go.)*

CLARA: Are you leaving?

MASTER GUIDO: I have some business at the courthouse.

CLARA: I didn't want to offend you.

MASTER GUIDO: You didn't.

*(Clara starts to fold his chair.)*

MASTER GUIDO: Leave it. I'll be back.

*(Master Guido feels his way round the church corner. Peter climbs out of the tree with another videocassette between his teeth and puts on his shoes.)*

CLARA: Why didn't you tell me before?

PETER: Clara, those photos can be understood the wrong way. We have to get them back.

CLARA: My uncle will take care of that.

*(She quickly walks toward the church corner.)*

PETER: I'm going to check what's on the tape. Call me if anything happens.

## 11.

*(Peter exits behind the church corner. The Security Guard enters past the tree. He walks slowly, head bowed. He sits in Master Guido's folding chair. Pulls a chewing gum from his pocket, puts it in his mouth, chews. Clara is watching him.)*

SECURITY GUARD: My wife's been promised a job in the hotel.

CLARA: Oh yes?

SECURITY GUARD: We have three kids.

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CLARA: Nice.

SECURITY GUARD: What can I tell her now? That I screwed everything up?

CLARA: Have they gotten away?

SECURITY GUARD (*rising*): I'm going to kill them...

CLARA: Everything will be alright.

SECURITY GUARD: No, it won't. Not until your uncle succeeds in removing the final obstacle.

CLARA (*pause*): Your true task isn't to guard me, is it?

SECURITY GUARD: It is. For the time being.

CLARA: For the time being.

SECURITY GUARD: Yes. For the time being.

CLARA: But at any moment your phone may ring, and you'll be instructed to drag me away.

SECURITY GUARD: It may.

CLARA: Would you do it?

SECURITY GUARD (*pause*): I don't know.

CLARA: But if you don't, your wife will not get a job, your kids will starve.

SECURITY GUARD: All I know is it would be best for the future of this town if you came to your senses.

CLARA: Yes. Or stepped into the path of a passing bullet.

*Blackout.*



**Act Two**

**12.**

*(Some time later. Clara is nervously rearranging the flowers on her brother's grave. The Security Guard is snoring in the folding chair. Clara's mobile rings. The Security Guard jerks awake and rubs his eyes. Clara answers.)*

CLARA: Oh Peter... So far so good... Wait, I didn't quite get that... What did you see on the cassette?... That's impossible... *(She sees the Mayor entering from behind the church.)* I'll call you back.

*(She puts the phone away and rises. So does the Security Guard. The Mayor slowly approaches, stops.)*

CLARA: Uncle! What a surprise.

MAYOR: More of a surprise than delight, it seems.

CLARA: No, I'm surprised you came to the graveyard.

MAYOR: Clara, a letter has just arrived from the prosecutor's office.

CLARA: And?

MAYOR *(pulls an official letter from his pocket)*: I'd like to give it to you in person because I fear you might misunderstand it.

CLARA: Why would I do that?

MAYOR: The prosecutor has ordered the exhumation of your brother's remains. On suspicion that he may not have died of natural causes.

CLARA: He was killed in a traffic accident!

MAYOR: They may have found something else, I don't know.

CLARA: Show me the letter. *(The Mayor hands her the letter. Clara skims it.)* There is one thing you don't seem to realize. After the forensic examination the remains will have to be returned to the grave.

MAYOR: That's up to them.

CLARA: No, that's up to me. (*She hands him the letter back; the Mayor takes it.*) You've wasted a lot of valuable time.

MAYOR: Clara, my position is getting more difficult by the minute. And my love for you is slowly turning to bitterness.

(*Master Guido feels his way from behind the church corner.*)

CLARA (*relieved*): Master Guido!... Come and sit down...

(*She helps him to the folding chair. He lowers himself into it.*)

CLARA: You're out of breath!

MASTER GUIDO: Good for the lungs.

MAYOR: Good afternoon, Professor.

MASTER GUIDO: Mister Mayor! To what do we owe your visit to this demolished graveyard?

MAYOR: And to what do we owe *your* presence on this windy slope?

MASTER GUIDO: A desire to protect my ex-pupil.

MAYOR: Really? And what can *you* protect her from that I can't?

CLARA: Master Guido, they're going to remove Andrew's body for a forensic examination.

MASTER GUIDO: No, they won't.

CLARA: I'm afraid they will.

MASTER GUIDO: Have you asked your uncle to prevent that?

MAYOR: There is nothing I can do. Even the Mayor has to respect the law. Especially the Mayor.

MASTER GUIDO: Music to my ears. Knowing that you will respect the decree I've just brought from the court fills my heart with relief.

(*He takes an envelope from his pocket and hands it to Clara. Clara takes it, pulls out an official letter, reads it. She smiles and hands the letter to the Mayor. The Mayor nods to the Security Guard, who takes the letter and tries to hand it to the Mayor.*)

MAYOR: Read it.

SECURITY GUARD (*confused*): Mister Mayor?

MAYOR: Tell me what it says.

SECURITY GUARD (*studies the letter*): It says... It says that the district court has issued a decree forbidding the bodily remains of the applicant's brother to be disturbed in any way whatsoever.

MAYOR (*trying to control himself*): On what grounds?

SECURITY GUARD (*studies the letter again*): On the grounds that the applicant has inherited the property of the deceased and that, according to the will, this property includes the bodily remains of her brother.

MAYOR (*turns away*): Bizarre.

SECURITY GUARD: My thoughts exactly, sir.

MAYOR (*to Master Guido*): I underestimated you.

MASTER GUIDO: Never a good thing to do.

MAYOR: Of course, a criminal investigation takes precedence.

MASTER GUIDO: Not without permission of the court.

MAYOR: It won't be difficult to get one.

MASTER GUIDO: I'm sure. But it will take time.

MAYOR: Anyway, this has nothing to do with me. But I will instruct the police to make sure they act within the law.

MASTER GUIDO (*hint of irony*): As they always do.

MAYOR: Clara, is this something *you* have decided to do? Is the professor acting on your instructions? (*Clara says nothing.*) Or have you fallen under his influence and are incapable of independent thought?

(*Clara buries her face in her hands.*)

MAYOR: Evidently his sway over you is so great that you're afraid to open your mouth, let alone realize how he has manipulated you.

CLARA: Yes, I have been manipulated. But not by him.

MAYOR (*to the Security Guard*): Help the professor to his feet and escort him to his home.

CLARA: Master Guido, object!

MASTER GUIDO (*rising*): It's no use, Clara.

MAYOR (*to the Security Guard*): Take him away.

SECURITY GUARD (*hesitates*): I'm sorry, Mister Mayor, but may I ask why?

MAYOR (*raising his voice*): Because I want to talk to my niece alone, not in the presence of an old man who is deliberately confusing her fragile mind!

*(Silence. The Mayor's shoulders twitch as he tries to calm down.)*

SECURITY GUARD *(to Master Guido)*: Will you go freely?

MASTER GUIDO: Take my folding chair. We may have to rest a couple of times.

*(He feels his way toward the church corner. The Security Guard folds his chair and follows him.)*

CLARA: Master Guido...

MASTER GUIDO *(half-turning)*: I'll be back.

*(Exit Master Guido and the Security Guard.)*

### 13.

MAYOR *(after a pause)*: Only you and I can solve this problem. *(Clara says nothing.)* Unless, of course, you think that keeping silent is your only option.

CLARA: I haven't speak without the presence of a lawyer.

MAYOR: If you only had the courage to see the problem from my point of view...

CLARA: Have you the courage to see it from mine?

MAYOR: More than you think.

CLARA: Well, I'm glad to hear that.

MAYOR: You remind us of the kind of world we would like to live in. I respect that.

CLARA: Oh well, thank you.

MAYOR: Unfortunately we are forced to live in a world in which all of us, including you, have to accept that there are things which are simply not possible.

CLARA: Then why don't you accept that you can't have Andrew's grave?

MAYOR: And you say you need a lawyer? I'm the one who needs one.

CLARA: Have you ever considered that you may, sooner or later?

MAYOR: And you, are you sure you're safe from the fury of the townsfolk who are publicly praying for you to be struck by lightning? Without my protection you'd have ended up in intensive care a long time ago. You have no idea what I have to do to spare you the worst.

CLARA: Thank you, Uncle, thank you. Will that do?

MAYOR: Is it wrong to act in accordance with one's interests?

CLARA: Where did you get the idea that a miserly sum of money must be the interest of everybody?

MAYOR: And where did *you* get the idea that two cubic meters of soil, crawling with worms, moles and other vermin, are sacred simply because they contain the remains of your brother?

CLARA (*calmly*): The ground becomes sacred when we place those we love in it. We bury the dead with a ritual. On All Saints' Day we decorate the graves, light candles, pray for the souls of our dear ones. If all this means nothing, why do we do it?

MAYOR: Clara, I will erect a tomb to your brother, if you wish. I will ask the people to forget he doesn't deserve one, and we will worship him in great numbers, just to make you happy.

CLARA: We don't understand each other, do we?

MAYOR (*gradually losing patience*): A third of the people are out of work! The textile industry has been washed away by the tide of cheap Chinese imports. Fishermen sit around because of demarcation disputes. Shopkeepers, tradesmen, restaurant owners – everybody is affected. Examine your conscience.

CLARA: I understand all that, and I'm sorry. But I won't accept responsibility for *your* decisions.

MAYOR: Don't tell me I could've done things differently after I've done everything to do them differently, but didn't because it wasn't possible. Don't, please, criticize the greatest project of my life while remaining the only one who doesn't want it to succeed.

CLARA (*raising her voice*): I would give my life to make your project succeed. (*pause*) But I cannot surrender this grave.

MAYOR: Do you realize how cunning you are?

CLARA: Not half as much as you. Had you remained a barrister you could have saved people from injustice better than anyone else. You were the best and most eloquent lawyer on the entire coast.

MAYOR: That was a long time ago.

CLARA: Not that long. You were defending Andrew, who was falsely accused of drug trafficking.

MAYOR: Only because of loyalty to my brother's family. And that was the only time I defended the innocence of someone I knew to be guilty.

CLARA: He was not guilty.

MAYOR: Come on. You all smoked, and much worse.

CLARA: Smoking isn't trafficking. And we were children. But then we grew up.

MAYOR: Not Andrew. He never did. But he remained your idol just the same. You were fascinated by his audacity, his recklessness. Life was a burden to him. Deep inside he always wanted to die. What a pity that his brother had to die with him, and because of him.

CLARA: It was an accident.

MAYOR: No one knows what really happened. Except that a little before the accident the two brothers had a huge fight. Then they made up, embraced each other, drank each other under the table and finally, late at night, set off for home. It's not clear who was driving.

CLARA: Andrew, of course.

MAYOR: No one knows. They were identical twins. Inside the mangled car they seemed to be locked in a tight embrace. The impact was so great that the corpses had to be separated by a surgeon in hospital.

CLARA: Uncle, please...

MAYOR: On one of them they found a donor card, allowing the use of his organs for transplantation. As soon as he was dead, they removed his heart, kidneys and liver. The rest of him they cremated. The other twin's body was sent home. It was laid to rest in the grave, which you've decided to defend with your life.

CLARA: Andrew didn't carry a donor card.

MAYOR: The doctor on duty told me they had no idea from whose body they had removed the organs. Because the brothers were so much alike it's quite possible that it was Andrew's. In which case it is Alan whose remains you refuse to surrender.

CLARA: No.

MAYOR: The brother you never liked. Who was nasty to you all his life and would have done everything to make you unhappy.

CLARA (*pause*): None of this is true.

MAYOR: I'm not claiming to know which one is buried here. It could be either. But quite possibly it isn't Andrew. (*Leaning slightly toward her.*) And if it isn't him, is the ground still sacred?

CLARA: You're disgusting.

MAYOR: We may indeed be disgusting, we rare individuals who risk our capital so that those of you who risk nothing can have a good time...

CLARA: My God!

MAYOR: There is life before you. Forgive Philip his indiscretion, marry him, go with him on a cruise round the world.



CLARA: Of course, the cruise...

MAYOR: Do you really think you will change the world with your stubborn refusal to accept the inevitable? Don't listen to the voices inside you. They're nothing more than the barking of a mad dog in your subconscious mind.

CLARA (*surprised*): How do you know I hear voices?

MAYOR (*pause*): You hear voices?

CLARA: You don't?

MAYOR (*carefully*): I do. I hear orders I gave to myself and then forgot about them. I hear warnings from deep inside that I mustn't give in to despair because too many people depend on me.

CLARA: I hear different voices. That the universe is a huge river of energy carrying along our dreams and our future. That we are intimately connected to everything that is alive. That every single thing in the universe is aware of itself. That flowers and trees have feelings, dreams, desires, even plans. Stones know they are stones, mountains admire their reflections in lakes. But clearest of all is the voice of my brother. "Please, Clara," he keeps saying, "don't let them burn me. There's nothing I've ever feared more than fire."

MAYOR: I see.

CLARA: So who should I listen to? You or the voices?

MAYOR (*pause*): My voice is just one among many. And no doubt completely inaudible among those of flowers, trees, grass and departed souls. Pity. (*He turns to go.*)

CLARA: You're leaving?

MAYOR: What else would you have me do?

CLARA: Does that mean that Andrew can stay in his grave?

MAYOR: It means that you have to listen to your voices and I to mine.

CLARA: I don't understand.

MAYOR: Maybe we're not here to understand. Maybe we're here to play our parts to the end as best we can, and then say good-bye.

CLARA (*pause*): Then let's do that, shall we?

*(The Mayor turns back. Clara reaches inside her bag and pulls out a small portable CD player and offers it to the Mayor.)*

CLARA: I have recorded a selection of funeral songs. The CD is inside it. Listen to them. They might lessen your pain.

MAYOR: What pain?

CLARA: The pain of knowing that you'd much rather not do what you think you must do.

*(The Mayor hesitates. Then he takes the CD player and pushes it in the side pocket of his jacket. He exits round the church corner. Clara spreads out the blanket brought by Master Guido and lies down on top of it. Resting her head on her folded arm, she stares at the grave.)*

*Blackout.*

14.

*(Lights. Sabina enters from behind the church corner. She stops and watches Clara. Clara sits up, looks at Sabina, remains silent. Sabina slowly approaches.)*

SABINA: I wish this wasn't happening.

CLARA: Why have you come?

SABINA: To warn you that your heroic defiance, so utterly at odds with the times we live in, is no more than a spider's web that'll be blown away by the first wind.

CLARA: Dear sister, the times are what we've created. My defiance is merely a small attempt at correction.

SABINA: You have always been so clever.

CLARA *(almost with reproach)*: And you so beautiful.

SABINA: Clara, who sat awake by your side in the long nights when you couldn't sleep? Who brought you home safely when you sleepwalked into the hills?

CLARA: My sister.

SABINA: Who tries to understand you when no one else will, or is unable to?

CLARA: The lover of my fiancé.

SABINA: I want you to know that I'm on your side. I'm going to put up a tent here, and no force on Earth will drag me away.

CLARA: What you had with Philip is of no interest to me. It's in the past. And if it isn't, it doesn't matter. It no longer hurts.

SABINA: Philip loves *you*. And you know that.

CLARA: Go to him. Tell him that, in spite of everything, I love him too.

And I love you. Forget and forgive, isn't that how it should be?

SABINA: Clara...

*(Clara gets to her feet and embraces Sabina. They stand embraced, saying nothing. Then Clara moves back, but keeps her hands on Sabina's shoulders.)*

CLARA: Don't you know how many times I secretly went to your room, tried on your clothes, your make-up? Longing to be at least half as beautiful as you are?

SABINA: Beauty is short-lived. As soon as it blossoms it starts to wane. The beauty you carry inside you lasts forever.

CLARA: Perhaps what I carry inside me isn't more than a ball of despair; a moment of realization that the world isn't as beautiful as I once believed.

SABINA: Clara, are you not afraid?

CLARA *(pause)*: Very.

SABINA: Would you mind if I came back with Philip? So we can apologize hand in hand?

CLARA: If that's what you want.

SABINA: Thank you, sister. I'll go and get him. *(She turns to go, pauses.)* Remember our professor of mathematics? Master Guido?

CLARA *(with foreboding)*: What about him?

SABINA: He was attacked. Left lying on the pavement.

CLARA *(with resignation)*: I did warn him. He wouldn't listen.

SABINA: I don't understand...

CLARA: Maybe we're not here to understand. Maybe we're here to play our parts to the end as best we can, and then say good-bye.

SABINA: I'll go now.

CLARA: Do that, sister.

*(Sabina walks toward the church corner. Clara calls her name. Sabina turns.)*

CLARA: Which one of our brothers is buried here?

SABINA: Andrew.

CLARA: Can you swear?

SABINA: I can't. But it doesn't really matter, does it?

CLARA (*pause*): No, it doesn't. Not really.

(*Sabina leaves. Clara reaches for her mobile.*)

CLARA: Peter? I need your help.

(*She puts the mobile away, lies down on the blanket as before.*)

15.

(*The Security Guard enters from behind the church corner.*)

SECURITY GUARD: It's time.

CLARA (*sitting up*): So soon?

SECURITY GUARD: The devil is always in a hurry.

CLARA: Must I take everything?

SECURITY GUARD: Shall I help you?

CLARA: No. You guard me. That's what you were hired for, after all.

(*Clara starts to collect her things.*)

SECURITY GUARD: I'm sorry if I said anything hurtful. I couldn't afford to create the impression that I respect you.

CLARA: I may be unworthy of your respect.

SECURITY GUARD: Many people respect you. But they're afraid to say so in public.

CLARA: Why didn't you protect Master Guido?

SECURITY GUARD: He is blind. I had no heart to shut him up. So I let him wander off.

CLARA: Will you let me wander off too?

SECURITY GUARD (*pulls a gun from his pocket*): I will defend you to the last bullet. Your Uncle's orders.

CLARA: Oh, you got it back.

SECURITY GUARD: It's a new one. A better one. (*He puts the gun back in his pocket.*)

CLARA: Do you know how to handle it? Or will it go off by itself? With the bullet accidentally piercing my heart?

SECURITY GUARD: It won't.

CLARA: Are you hungry?

*(She offers him one of the sandwiches brought by Master Guido.)*

SECURITY GUARD: Maybe later. *(Takes the sandwich and puts it in his pocket.)*

CLARA: I'm ready.

SECURITY GUARD: Shall I help you?

CLARA: I can manage. Where must you take me?

SECURITY GUARD: To the police station.

CLARA: Interrogation?

SECURITY GUARD: They have caught two men who broke into your flat. They want you to identify the things they found in their car.

CLARA: Is that all?

SECURITY GUARD: That's what they said.

CLARA: And then?

SECURITY GUARD: Depends on your uncle. Then, I think, you can return up here.

CLARA *(confused)*: So it isn't finished? Will you give me a minute by the graveside?

SECURITY GUARD *(takes the blanket and bag from her)*: I'll wait for you at the church.

*(The Security Guard walks to the church corner, pauses, puts the bag and blanket on the ground, unwraps the sandwich and starts to eat it. Clara kneels by the graveside, rearranges a few flowers, then joins her hands in prayer.)*

CLARA: Forgive me, Andrew. I was prepared to die for your right to stay here... But now I don't know...

*(She rises and follows the Security Guard round the church corner. After a brief pause, the sound of bells can be heard, eerie and discordant as before.)*

## 16.

*(Killer 1 and Killer 2 enter from behind the church corner, the first carrying a hoe, the second a spade. They pounce on Andrew's grave and start digging.)*

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KILLER 2 (*after a while*): You know what I think, friend? If no one gave money for things like this, you and I would be good people, right?

KILLER 1: We don't have much time.

KILLER 2: Perhaps you don't believe me, but I'm a sensitive man.

KILLER 1: And I have a fuse for my nerves, so I don't explode because of every piece of bullshit. Do you know what'll happen if the fuse blows?

KILLER 2: No idea.

KILLER 1: Good. Otherwise you'd be running away now.

*(Killer 1 keeps digging. Killer 2 joins him.)*

*Blackout.*

17.

*(Lights. Philip and Sabina rush on stage past the tree.)*

SABINA: Look what they did to the grave!

PHILIP (*into his mobile phone*): Father?... No, you won't call me back, I don't give a fuck about your meeting!... Father!... (*He pushes the phone in his pocket.*) Fuck!

*(Suddenly remembering the Security Guard, he dials his number.)*

PHILIP (*into the phone*): Anthony? Where is Clara?... You took her where?... On whose orders?... Is she there? *Is she at the police station?*... What do you mean you don't know... Listen... When I see you I'll kick your teeth in... Hello? (*Closes the mobile.*) Fuck!

SABINA: Philip, we're in a cemetery.

PHILIP: Fuck, fuck, fuck! Satisfied?

*(Peter enters from behind the church corner.)*

PETER: I'm looking for Clara.

SABINA: So are we. Who are you?

PETER: Is that you, Sabina? Philip? It's me, Peter. Don't you remember?

SABINA: The Peter we used to play with?



PETER: Clara called me, she said she needed help.

PHILIP: Clara called you?

PETER: Look, it's a long story...

PHILIP (*into his mobile*): Hey Vic... Are you at work?... Someone just told me that Clara has been brought to the station. Is she still there?... Come on, Vic. Ask around. Call me back. (*Closes the mobile.*) She's not at the police station.

*(Master Guido enters from behind the church corner, limping. He is badly bruised and full of bandages.)*

SABINA (*almost shocked*): Professor?

MASTER GUIDO: Clara?

SABINA: Clara's not here. I'm Sabina. Philip is here, too. And Peter, a childhood friend.

MASTER GUIDO: I've met Peter. Where is Clara?

SABINA: She was taken away.

MASTER GUIDO: Where to?

PHILIP: The police station, according to the Security Guard. But the police know nothing about her.

MASTER GUIDO (*limps closer*): You have a mobile, Philip?

PHILIP: Who do you want me to call?

MASTER GUIDO: 041 354 412.

*(Philip enters the number and waits. Then he puts the phone to Master Guido's ear.)*

Mark, how are you?... Guido, yes... We must, absolutely, it's been a long time... Listen... Have you by any chance seen the Mayor's niece?... (*Listens.*) Now that is a surprise... (*Turns to the others.*) Did she ever mention she was hearing voices?

SABINA: Many times. But she didn't mean... she meant something else...

MASTER GUIDO: The experts obviously think she needs help. An hour ago she was taken to the white building on the outskirts of the town.

PHILIP: To the nuthouse?

MASTER GUIDO: Look, Mark, I know you're bound by medical ethics, but one little thing you will let slip to your old professor... (*He listens.*) What?... This isn't a joke, is it?... I know, I'm sorry... Thank you.

*(Philip withdraws the phone. Master Guido sways a little, as if about to lose his balance. Philip and Peter grab him by the elbows.)*

PHILIP: What did you find out?

MASTER GUIDO (*straightening up*): When they brought Clara to her room, a special room on the fifth floor, she ran to the window which happened to be wide open, and flew like a bird that managed to escape from a cage at last, toward the sea below. She didn't reach it; she broke her skull on the sharp rocks.

*(Complete silence.)*

18.

*(The Mayor and the Security Guard enter from behind the church corner. Philip rushes toward his stepfather and starts to pummel him with his fists. The Security Guard manages to pull him away.)*

PHILIP: That's where you put her? Among the loonies? Why?

MAYOR: Philip –

PHILIP: Because you didn't just want to kill her, but also humiliate her?

Well, you've succeeded.

MAYOR: Philip –

PHILIP: Now you won't have to lie anymore, at least not for a while.

MAYOR: Philip –

PHILIP: We agreed that I would take her on a cruise around the world!

MAYOR: No, we didn't.

PHILIP: You said you would pay for it!

MAYOR: Philip –

PHILIP: Well, you have won. And the mob will applaud you. Bravo!

MASTER GUIDO: Bravo, Mister Mayor.

SABINA: Bravo, Uncle.

MAYOR: There are no winners. I should've done earlier what I did too late. But she was dear to me, dearest of all. More than you, Sabina, even more than you, Philip. Don't hold that against me, please try to understand.

PHILIP: Who could understand a monster?

MAYOR: A few minutes ago the investors pulled out of the deal. (*He looks into the valley.*) That huge structure down there will remain unfinished. A gray concrete reminder that we don't deserve more than we have.

MASTER GUIDO: And now?

MAYOR: Maybe I'll leave. Somewhere far. Away from this place where I was lifted to the crest of the wave by sewage rather than a tide of goodwill. Out of this time, which promises so much and delivers so little.

SABINA: And Clara?

MAYOR (*goes to Andrew's grave*): Here is the sacred ground where she would have wanted to rest. Next to her brother. Here we're going to bury her. And I, who am responsible for all this, will be the first to pray for the soul of the girl I loved more than anyone else. And for the souls of all of us who have failed her.

*(He kneels and prays. Others stand, watching. The sound of bells can be heard in the church, eerie and discordant. Then silence again. Killer 1 and Killer 2 peek from behind the church corner. The Mayor's mobile rings. He rises and pulls the phone from his pocket. The two faces disappear.)*

MAYOR: I can't today. Not for some days. Have to organize a funeral. (*He slips the mobile back into his pocket.*)

PHILIP: You will not organize the funeral. (*Into Mayor's face, like a curse.*) Father! Sabina and I will do it. And don't even think of attending.

MAYOR: Philip –

PHILIP: I want to survive by my own wits, not by using your contacts, your connections –

MAYOR: Calm down –

PHILIP: Lawyer! Master of the glib tongue! I wonder how well it'll serve you when you'll have to defend yourself.

MAYOR: I have to go.

*(He walks toward the church corner. The Security Guard follows.)*

SABINA: Come, Professor. We'll take you back to town.

MASTER GUIDO: Good-bye, Peter.

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PETER: Good-bye, sir.

PHILIP: You aren't coming?

PETER: I need a moment by myself.

*(Sabina and Philip assist Master Guido as he walks slowly to the church corner. They exit.)*

19.

*(Peter hurries toward the tree, takes off his shoes and embraces the trunk to climb up. He changes his mind, pulls a mobile from his pocket, makes a call. Killer 1 and Killer 2 watch him from behind the church corner.)*

PETER: Boris?... Listen, get ready for editing... Tomorrow... You've never seen anything like it... It's a bomb... I tell you, it's... Right, talk to you soon.

*(He replaces the mobile and climbs up the branches. Killer 2 and Killer 1 approach, depositing hoe and spade on Andrew's grave. They stop under the tree.)*

KILLER 1: What are you doing up there?

*(Silence among the branches. Then the camera comes tumbling down. Killer 2 catches it before it hits the ground.)*

KILLER 2: Holy shit... It is a bomb!

KILLER 1 *(looking up the tree)*: Afraid to come down? You need help?

KILLER 2: We like helping people.

KILLER 1: Come, we have work to do.

KILLER 2: First you can show me how to remove the cassette from this camera.

*(He fiddles with the camera. Silence among the branches.)*

KILLER 1: Maybe he is a rare seaside bird. *(Pulls a gun from his pocket.)*  
How many have we shot so far? *(He aims the gun into the branches.)*

KILLER 2: Bang bang.

*(Peter slides down the trunk and remains crouching under the tree. Then he starts to put on his shoes. The killers watch him.)*

PETER: I have to get back to the hotel, I have some urgent –

KILLER 1 *(pulls a videotape from his pocket)*: Looking for this?

KILLER 2: We knew you'd need a film of rare seaside birds, so we brought it for you.

KILLER 1: From the hotel.

KILLER 2: Nice people, no?

KILLER 1: Very nice.

*(He pushes the cassette back into his pocket.)*

KILLER 2: What shall we do first? Check out this stork's nest *(picks up the camera)* or get some exercise?

KILLER 1: First exercise.

KILLER 2 *(to Peter)*: After you, Mister Journalist. Spade and hoe are waiting for you.

*(Peter, as if transfixed, goes to Andrew's grave and picks up the spade.)*

PETER: May I ask what all this is about...

*(Killer 2 hits him on the head with his fist.)*

KILLER 2: Any more questions?

KILLER 1: You got five minutes, so you better start digging.

*(Without any further objections, Peter starts digging.)*

KILLER 2: Not bad, eh, friend?

KILLER 1: A healthy attitude to work.

KILLER 2: Why make documentaries about birds? With his energy he could dig graves in Germany, France. Ten times more money.

KILLER 1: Sure. Now that we have free movement of labor and capital.

KILLER 2: But in the case of this hotel, capital went up in smoke.

KILLER 1: It happens.

KILLER 2: So you won't be chief of security.

KILLER 1: No. Are you happy now?

KILLER 2: I have decided. When this is finished, I go.

KILLER 1: Back to your village?

KILLER 2: Chicago. New York. Maybe Los Angeles. Will you come?

KILLER 1: Bad idea.

KILLER 2: Why?

KILLER 1: They all have machine guns in America. We got nothing to do there.

KILLER 2: But we are the best.

KILLER 1: Mustn't think like that.

KILLER 2: Look how we managed this. Like a song.

KILLER 1: It's not over.

KILLER 2: It is, for me. I leave tomorrow. On the first plane.

KILLER 1: Have a safe journey.

KILLER 2: Give me the number of your bank account. Every month I'll send you two thousand dollars. Financial help for a stupid friend.

KILLER 1: And I come to visit you. In prison where you'll wait for the electric chair.

KILLER 2: I want to be rich.

KILLER 1 (*looks at Peter in the grave*): Stop digging.

PETER (*who is standing in the grave up to his waist*): Shouldn't there be a body here?

KILLER 1: There will be.

*(Peter leans the spade against the edge of the grave and starts to climb out.)*

KILLER 2: Hey, hey, hey!

*(He puts his foot on Peter's left hand. Peter slides back into the grave.)*

KILLER 1: We got to talk.

KILLER 2: Yeah. How could you be so irresponsible?

PETER (*completely confused*): I don't understand.

KILLER 1: Not only that. You have shown a terrible lack of... how do you say?... common sense?



KILLER 2: Yeah, a terrible lack. We watched your video, and we were...  
we were what, friend?

KILLER 1: Horrified.

KILLER 2: Yeah, horrified. How could you think of showing such things  
on TV?

KILLER 1: There're too many lies shown there already.

KILLER 2: We can't suddenly show the truth. TV is watched by sensitive  
people.

KILLER 1: And children.

KILLER 2: What're they going to think if they learn that such things are  
happening in their country?

KILLER 1: People need fairy tales.

KILLER 2: Very irresponsible of you, Peter.

KILLER 1: Very, very irresponsible.

KILLER 2: I'm sure that only people who can't sing their national anthem  
can do things like that. How much would you bet, friend, that this  
expert on rare seaside birds can't sing it either?

KILLER 1: I bet his camera. If he can't sing it's yours, if he can it's mine.

KILLER 2: Okay with me. Now, Peter. Are you ready?

KILLER 1: He is.

KILLER 2: Imagine we are at the gala opening of the hotel down there.  
Many important people, the Mayor, foreign investors, five ministers,  
maybe even the prime minister. I am conducting the orchestra. You  
are an opera singer, and you must sing the national anthem. One,  
two, three.

*(He raises his hands as a conductor about to begin. Peter does not  
respond.)*

KILLER 1: Maybe he needs encouragement.

*(Killer 1 pulls out his gun and aims it at Peter. Killer 2 starts con-  
ducting once more.)*

PETER (*falsetto*): "God save our land and nation..." (*Falls silent, tries to  
remember.*) "Let thunder out of heaven strike down and smite our  
wanton foe..."

*(Killer 2, who had also pulled out his gun, shoots Peter in the heart.  
Killer 1 shoots him in the head. Peter sinks into the grave.)*

KILLER 2: Head or heart?

KILLER 1: Head.

KILLER 2: I did the heart.

KILLER 1: Now the other way round.

*(They discharge their guns into the grave simultaneously. They put them away. Killer 1 picks up the spade, Killer 2 picks up the hoe. A mobile rings. Killer 1 puts the spade on the ground, pulls out his mobile and answers.)*

KILLER 1: Sir?... Sure, everything's under control... We have the videos... Journalist?... He's no longer a problem... We sent him packing, just like you said... No no, he won't be back... Hundred percent... Of course we understand each other, sir... To send someone packing means to send someone packing... No more, no less... Don't you worry... Everything is okay.

*(He pushes the mobile into his pocket.)*

KILLER 2: Something wrong?

KILLER 1: Listen, friend... To send someone packing, what does that mean, exactly?

KILLER 2: Not sure.

KILLER 1: Could this be understood in more ways than one?

KILLER 2: I don't think so. I pack, I send my luggage by post, I send it packing.

KILLER 1: Oh shit...

KILLER 2: What?

KILLER 1: I think we fucked the whole thing up.

KILLER 2: No. We're not stupid, are we?

KILLER 1: Come, let's bury him and get the hell out of here.

## 20.

*(Killer 1 and Killer 2 resume burying Peter. The Security Guard, gun in hand, enters from behind the church corner. Slowly, he approaches. Killer 1 and Killer 2, busy working, don't see him until he is less than two meters away. They stare at him.)*

SECURITY GUARD: Hello, friends. The annoying fly is back. *(He slaps his cheek.)* Zzzzzpp!

*(Killer 1 and Killer 2 exchange quick glances. They throw the spade and the hoe away and whip out their guns. Four shots are heard, one after another. Killer 1 and Killer 2 tumble into the half-filled grave. The Security Guard clutches his stomach and, with a pained expression on his face, sinks to his knees. Then he falls over. He keeps twitching for a while, then lies still. Silence.)*

*(The Mayor enters from behind the church corner. He stops and looks at the body of the Security Guard. He approaches and feels his pulse. He notices three more bodies in the grave. He approaches and pulls a cassette out of Killer 1's pocket. He looks at the camera, presses a button and pulls out a cassette. He throws the camera into the grave. With both cassettes in his hand, he goes to the bottom of the cemetery and stares at the town below. He pulls out his mobile and makes a call.)*

MAYOR: John, is that you? Yes, it's me... Look, I... I need a favor... There is a mess in the graveyard, things will have to be cleared away... I know, I know... How long have you been the municipal gravedigger?... Five years to retirement... Look, John, I'd very much like to offer you back your job... With a raise, it goes without saying, quite a handsome one... Hotel?... *(Looks into the valley below.)* We'll try to turn it into a holiday home for the disabled... No, this here will continue to be a cemetery... The construction of the crematorium has been cancelled... All the remains will be reburied here... Yes, a lot of work, I'm sorry... You still have the list, I hope, and know who goes where... However... There're some additional corpses... *(He looks around.)* Four, I think... No idea... Some sort of misunderstanding... Anywhere, John, maybe under the tree?... Can you promise you'll do that?... Thank you, John... Oh, one more thing... Have a look at the church bells... They don't sound right... A good set of church bells is the least we deserve.

*(He concludes the call, stares into the valley. The church clock slowly strikes twelve. The Mayor stands still, listening. Then he sits down on the ground and makes another call.)*

Bernarda?... I'll be a little late today... I know it's the same everyday, but today it'll be even later... It could even be... tomorrow... No, nothing special, I just have to report to the police and give a statement... I don't know, Bernarda, I don't know how long they'll keep me... Please tell our friends, acquaintances, colleagues... tell them that I'm... sorry...

*(He concludes the call and puts the phone in his pocket. He looks at the two cassettes. He pushes one into the left pocket of his jacket. He tries to push the other one into the right pocket and encounters resistance. He pulls out Clara's CD player, looks at it and switches it on.)*

*(He listens to Clara's "Ave Maria.")*

*Slow fade. Curtain.*

## Hubris in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

Antigone of *Antigone Now* is called Clara and lives in a seaside town somewhere on the Mediterranean coast. In order to create jobs and bring prosperity to the area, her uncle, the mayor, strikes a deal with foreign investors to build a large golf course and an expensive hotel. For this he needs to demolish the local graveyard and move the corpses to a crematorium he intends to build. But Clara refuses to surrender her dead brother's grave. She believes that, even in a world where everything can be bought, there are places that must remain sacred. In the ensuing confrontation we are shown how the common good (which, in the brutal neoliberal capitalism, is merely a mask for profit-seeking) cannot win without destroying personal values and thus subverting its own declared aims. Is tragedy still possible in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? *Antigone Now* is an attempt to answer that question.

However, tragedy as practiced by Sophocles and defined by Aristotle belongs to the world and a worldview that no longer exist. In the past 25 centuries the definition itself has been redefined so many times that today's Antigone cannot avoid being (next to whatever else it aims to be) an exploration of the changes that have taken place in the way we perceive reality, and changes in dominant values, and consequently in our motivations and moral as well as ethical inclinations. Not only of the *changes* but also of *similarities*, of those elements that are quintessentially human, unchangeable, part of the ground of our being. And so a contemporary Antigone, if it wants to avoid being a pastiche, cannot work except as a dispute with the original one, and as a confirmation of its eternal relevance at the same time.

If we start off by saying that every time you leave your house you enter a world of politics, and that politics can be defined as "civil war carried on by other means" or "the peaceful settlement of disputes," we

immediately face the question how individuals arrange things when they have to take into consideration the others who are fighting for the same (or their own) advantages. Threats, bribery, compromise, deceit, persuasion, unholy alliances? This is politics, all the way from the classical family unit to the village to the city to the state to the world as a whole. And in the world where everything sooner or later boils down to politics (including the interpretation of values and history), we are never more than a step away from hubris, which is Sophocles' main concern.

When asking myself how the theme of Antigone could be relevant today I soon realized that her steadfastness, in Sophocles' times perceived as obstinacy, was really, in modern terms, an extreme form of individuality that seems to be (or rather is) a desired norm in the modern and postmodern society. In today's terms, I came to believe, the main theme of Antigone is no longer the conflict between a belief in traditional values and right based on might (or, to vary it slightly, between personal and social values, between self-interest and the common good), but a conflict between two kinds of extreme individuality: between unyielding belief in one's right to be a free agent, unfettered by the needs and wishes of others, and a deep-seated (and systematically fostered, even advertised) desire for personal gain masquerading as common good. Of course, there *is* such a thing as the common good, no less than the individual's right to choose for himself, but somewhere along the way, for society to remain healthy and avoid breakdown, both sides need to take into account the needs of the opposite side. It is the inability to reach a compromise that leads to what may be called a tragedy in *Antigone Now*.

And here we enter the territory of the time-historical-cultural-social-moral-ethical differences between our world and the world as it was perceived in ancient Greece. It is unimaginable today that anyone in authority (even in dictatorial regimes) would forbid the burial of a corpse, regardless of whose corpse it was. Any modern Antigone based on this premise would simply retell the original tale about right versus might or freedom versus tyranny. In a contemporary democratic society those in power claim their mandate by the will of the people and are aware that the mandate can be taken away. Those opposing the will of the rulers have recourse to independent judiciary that may curtail the power of those who would abuse it. In such a setup, a clash of wills that would re-enact Antigone's story in a way relevant and believable in the context of contemporary reality must spring from different sources. To an extent, the story must be turned on its head.

And so, instead of claiming the right for her brother to be given a burial, Antigone claims the right for him to remain in his grave. Cemeteries have been moved more than once in the last hundred years and for various reasons; it isn't difficult to imagine that a local ruler (elected mayor of a small seaside town) would want to move one to make way for a major development, especially in an area where jobs are scarce and people rely on his promise to improve the economy.

I wanted to make my protagonist and antagonist more than just two individuals unable to work out a compromise. I wanted to show them as representatives of two divergent views of what is right and proper in our society: on one hand Clara's belief that we must retain at least a vestige of the sacred; that not everything must be cleared away or discarded to make room for development (houses, villages, people, forests); on the other hand, her uncle's conviction that progress cannot be stopped without the risk of mass unemployment, poverty and social disorder. Clara is guided by spiritual, ecological, protective inclinations (with an admixture of new age ideals which are an essential part of the mindset of those who oppose rampant capitalism; for her there must be barriers which financial interest should not be allowed to cross, otherwise we shall all be slaves. Her uncle, on the other hand, while sympathizing with her ideals, firmly believes that the well-being of the people who voted him into power is more important than a heap of bones (or the place where they are stored) and wants to keep his electoral promises not only for reasons of profit but to retain his integrity.

The irony is that he destroys his integrity precisely by trying to safeguard it at any cost. As he sinks deeper and deeper (avoiding the press, even hiring paid killers to remove anyone who would sabotage his plans – although not Antigone, whom he loves, in spite of everything) it becomes more and more difficult for him to backtrack. To be honest, he is the victim of a dilemma he cannot resolve without ending up a loser: if he abandons the project he will lose his position, his power, his good name, his material comforts and most certainly the respect of the people for whom he has promised to create jobs. If he sticks to the project he has to remove the obstacles, including Antigone, but by doing so he risks breaking the law and ending up in disgrace, as well as losing everything. Caught as he is, his only choice is to employ persuasion, cajoling, veiled threats, trickery, empty promises and the help of shady characters who are so stupid they misunderstand his instructions and "remove" people by killing them. By committing Clara to a mental hospital (the equivalent



of the tomb in the Greek *Antigone*) he hopes to find enough breathing space to complete the project and then, when she can no longer thwart his plans, have her released in the hope that she will accept the facts and forgive him and perhaps come to love him again.

But his *harmatia* (recognition that he has a flaw and that he may not be doing the right thing) comes too late – in fact, only when the world around him crumbles and he loses his project and his niece at the same time. He tries to save his dignity (and his soul) by turning himself over to the police, especially when he realizes that his way of trying to solve the problem has left behind a number of corpses. There is no doubt in my mind that the mayor in *Antigone Now* is a tragic figure, a victim of his conviction that he can resolve a major conflict by resorting to subterfuge (that is his hubris), the only thing left to the powerful in a democracy in which power is not absolute but given to people seeking it only as a temporary loan. It can be said in his favor that by giving precedence to the wider interests of the community (to the order of the polis, as can be said of Creon), thus overruling individual judgment based on conscience, he is at least partly right and that most responsible, socially aware politicians would do the same. It can also be said that he is at least partly wrong, because there are interests yet wider than those of a small seaside community, chief among them the basic human values (respect for the dead, for the wishes and beliefs of individuals that make up the society, for the idea that not every piece of land, and that includes rainforests, is there to be used and abused for profit). But he is at least willing to discuss the matter and find a compromise that would be acceptable to both sides, the individual and the polis, and that is his saving grace.

But what of Clara? Is she right in opposing her uncle and giving precedence to her personal convictions and feelings rather than to the interests of the community? Some would say she is and some would say she isn't. To many people today insisting that the remains of dead people, even of relatives, should remain forever in their original grave will appear as juvenile and stubborn lunacy. (In the same way the ancient Greeks might regard Creon's decision to deny Antigone's brother a decent burial as an expression of self-will and nothing more.) At least some people would say that Antigone is both right and wrong, because there are situations in life when we have no other choice but to act the way we believe we should. If the first Antigone's flaw was her unshakeable self-certainty (admirable in people opposing a tyranny based on might-is-right), my Antigone wavers occasionally and questions her stand, even

seeking advice. There are moments in the play when we believe that she may indeed change her mind and realize what is at stake. She is prepared to share insights in order to gain a larger view of truth, but only with her old Professor. He carefully leaves the final decision to her. Her blind belief that her uncle loves her and will not harm her, and her inability to see the problem as *his* and not only *hers* prevent her from engaging in a search for a possible compromise (although her uncle offers her one: a tomb for her brother's remains). As soon as she realizes that her uncle will stop at nothing to override her wishes, she knows she is doomed, but instead of giving in to his demands she gives in to fate, realizing that she is in fact fighting for much more than the grave of her brother. This is the turning point that makes a tragic outcome inevitable.

Of course, this is not all that unusual. People are still willing to die for their beliefs, and they do, in many parts of the world. What may be somewhat unusual is the fact that a young woman, even though admittedly mentally unstable, is prepared to do that in a world that is so close to us, the world of pop and sitcoms and fast cars and sea cruises and every other banality. Our world is a world of small things (made even smaller by the relentless chatter of the media); tragedies are usually hidden away in the newsflashes about murders, accidents, earthquakes and other disasters. Our world is one of banality and criminality; something we have taken for granted. I wanted to point out this criminality with the way I fashioned *Antigone Now*; as a brutal crime story, a thriller with coldblooded murders on stage, no matter how shocked the audiences may be. I had no desire to write a poetical drama or to disguise the true nature of today's world. It is not a noble world, it is full of lies, and even grand projects (such as trying to bring prosperity to people) are tinged with dirt. Perhaps my Antigone's stand can remind us that the human spirit is still alive and that fighting for what we believe in (even things that may not seem very important and may appear as no more than fixed ideas) is one of the few means left to us to regain our soul and to stop our descent toward final disaster and oblivion.

*Evald Flisar*

## Antigone 2012

Flisar's play *Antigone Now* poses a number of questions for which there are no unambiguous, universally applicable answers. Antigone is not only the eponymous heroine of a tragedy by Sophocles but has become a concept, a symbol in which the signifier and the signified are combined, and thus, in a special way that still needs to be described and explained, preserves the myth, i.e. the original source, the "sacred primordial seat" to use the words of Nietzsche – even though it was also he who concluded that myth had disappeared together with the (Attic) tragedy which, after only a century in which it reached its apogee, died as suddenly as if it had committed suicide.

What kind of a world is that of Antigone in 2012, i.e. now, today, here? The world of Flisar's play? Everything we have hitherto written about myth, tragedy, the consecration of the dead, the struggle of two ethical principles, the conflict between authority (the state) and the individual, even when he or she is related to the ruler, about the relationship between gods and people – all of that is absent in the second year of the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. So what is it like, this godless world of neoliberal capitalism, banal and globalized, which, from one day to the next, undermines its own foundations so that the day of its implosion is not far off? Will there be another revolution, no longer limited to the state, region, economic or monetary union? A revolution that will engulf the Earth like a global fire, destroying all the institutions now administering the world and its inhabitants, so that we become mere slaves enjoying varying degrees of happiness.

And then we – or if not us, our children or grandchildren – shall become aware that all previous revolutions were only exercises in consistency and cruelty. We shall start to believe in the construction of the Idea in the name of which the world must be changed. Not changed into

paradise on earth, the best of all possible worlds, but a world made to man's measure, acknowledging material goods as a mere necessity and not striving for their accumulation; which will acknowledge that progress in the last few centuries – let us say from the Enlightenment onward – constantly worked against itself. Which will acknowledge that happiness consists not in having ever more; that desires only bring unrest and a constant need for ever new satisfactions and fulfillments, for constant pleasure and gluttony. Insatiability is transforming today's man into an animal, even though by saying this I am offending animals, because they are never insatiable and greedy. In spite of ideas that the magnificent structure of human civilization will have to be newly erected, even though those who demand a new division of wealth (both natural and that hidden in stock exchanges and bank safes) are becoming ever louder, the world, both East and West, is striving to preserve and defend the state of affairs that prevails on all the continents.

With regard to the immense riches and unimaginable poverty, people in the West act as if the past – and even more the future – have nothing to do with us. Here and now is all that matters; tomorrow will be what it will be. Better to have than to be. And no ancient (Eastern) wisdom that has spread via millions of books lying in bookstores or the Internet, can convince us (any longer) to reflect on ourselves, look inside and seek that grain, that single bright grain that makes us human. We did not follow the philosopher who announced the re-evaluation of all values; no, we followed our not-reflected-upon impulse and devalued all values. Art and philosophy *do* try to return to man his dignity and confidence, but are overtaken by technology, which convinces him to play with toys that can conjure up the illusion of a beautiful and happy world. Myths and legends are replaced by ephemeral concepts and faces from showbiz, as well as politicians, either elected or self-appointed, leaders or kings, who are competing with anorexic girls for space on the front pages of the world media. And then there is, of course, the Church. An anachronistic institution that can refer only to its tradition of two thousand years, to the Rock on which it was founded, while remaining as dark a force as possible that – willingly or not – has to compete with both politics and consumerism. In this “conflict of civilizations” symbols announcing the only true god are raised up high, and fundamentalists of all creeds threaten the godless world that flies flags bearing the symbols of capitalism.

The world of today's Antigone is a world that simply does not know Antigone, takes no notice of her, does not understand her, either what she

says or what she does, and even less her ethical standards. Evald Flisar is well aware of all this. He knows that today's Antigone is not and cannot be even a long lost sister of Sophocles's Antigone. Why? Because today the conflict no longer lies in the dispute between the belief in traditional values (among which, as we have said, the right to bury the dead is one of the fundamental rights, irrespective of the fact on which side the dead have fallen) and the right based on power or ruling. Or to put it differently: the point is no longer in the conflict between personal affairs and social values, or a conflict between private and public interest, whereby we see public interest as the common good. We are dealing with a conflict between two extreme individualities, which remain extreme even when the common good, the welfare state, is at stake, as our political leaders, who are merely the leaders of political parties, try to persuade us day after day. We are dealing with extreme individualism and egoism, the desire for power, authority and to rule pretending to struggle for the common good, for the "good of the nation." Such a "blockade," which constantly leads to complacency and ignorance can, according to Flisar, be overcome only with the help of compromises, by taking others into account. And it is this very striving for a "common language," of how to contain the deranged, deaf and blind individuality or egoism that makes Antigone possible here and now.

Today, Flisar goes on, it is difficult to imagine that anyone, even a dictator, would prohibit the burial of a dead, killed, murdered human being, irrespective of on which side he or she died. Flisar is referring to the "democratic societies," which curtail the power of their rulers in every possible way. This is why Flisar sees the only option for a present day Antigone in her fight for her dead brother to remain buried, because the authorities wish to move the cemetery for very prosaic reasons: an investor wishes to build a hotel and golf course, which today is almost a *sine qua non* of modern tourism. The only space for the golf course is the cemetery. Which is not something the author has come up with, but something we have witnessed in reality. How many cemeteries have been dug up so that unconsecrated buildings could be erected in their place – even theaters? This is why the conflict in Flisar's *Antigone Now* takes place between her stubborn and consequently irrational insistence on not allowing the transfer of her brother's remains and the ruler's, i.e. mayor's, endeavours to please investors, build a hotel and a golf course, thus creating a certain number of jobs.

But even Flisar's *Antigone Now* cannot do without the arrangement of characters around the landscape of the play, just as they were first arranged in Sophocles's *Antigone*. When Flisar calls his Antigone Clara, he gives her a special, exposed status because her name means pure, clear. Clara's purity and clarity mean that she is disruptive to her environment, to "common sense," that she is "twisted." This is why she is a kind of tourist attraction – the play begins with the arrival of tourists at the cemetery in order to see this "local specialty." To the common sense view, such ethical insistence on the consecration of the dead/buried is not "normal."

Flisar wants to show the two options in today's society: insistence on one's conviction (which, because it is connected with Clara's dead brother, draws attention to a primordial pattern), and the authorities' striving for development, i.e. the prosperity of the town and the people in it. Clara resists the realization of the idea of development and a better life for the inhabitants of the town. She refuses to accept the fact that the will of the majority is stronger and more legitimate than her private, irrational ("twisted") desire to protect the consecration of her dead brother. But is it really about consecration? Is it now possible to talk about consecration at all? Is it not really just the construct of a (sick) mind standing against everyone – well, mainly against the (democratically) elected authority, which actually means her uncle, the mayor, who is acting on behalf of the community that elected him?

Flisar justifies Clara's actions by saying she is acting in congruence with her spiritual, ecological and protective convictions, typical of all those who in the name of these principles fight feral (neoliberal) capitalism. Clara is firmly convinced that somewhere there has to be a limit, a sticking point as far as financial interest is concerned. If these limits disappear, we will "all be slaves" – perhaps happy, but still enslaved. As a skillful and talented playwright, Flisar weaves around the central theme a dense network of storylines and their resolutions around Clara's dead brother Andrew (Polyneices). *Antigone Now* begins with a group of tourists who have come to see a local attraction: a girl guarding the grave of her brother. But she will not be an "attraction" for much longer as, due to the construction of a hotel and a golf course, Antigone's/Clara's brother will have to be relocated. The fact that someone thinks that the "ground in which we lay the dead to rest is consecrated" seems "funny" to tourists (and everyone else). "The girl must really be terribly stubborn" is one comment. In spite of moving away from the "archaic" Antigone,

the author has to preserve her archaic foundations, as only the family connections between all the protagonists allow the events to be tragic.

Clara's sister is Sabina (Ismene); the twin brothers are Andrew and Alan, who die in a traffic accident, one of the most banal types of death in our time; the mayor's (Creon's) adopted son is Filip (Haemon), who is once again lusting after Clara (they were lovers when young); the mysterious blind professor Guido transpires to be Oedipus, Clara's father(!); the investigative journalist Peter (Clara's friend from childhood) is researching the corruption in the town led by the mayor; and finally there are Killers 1 and 2, who are not just hitmen, but above all cynics with no morals whatsoever, whose grotesqueness prevents the play from sliding into melodrama. "Fuck the country where even a criminal can't have a decent life!" is how they describe the present state of affairs.

Flisar, if I interpret his writing correctly, still believes that even today there are people who are ready to die for their "ideals," even though the community sees them as eccentrics or "local attractions." Because our world, says the author, is a world of small things. The real tragedies are hidden; the media is not in the service of the public, but is concerned with the fabrication of affairs. This is why Flisar decided to change *Antigone Now* into a thriller, which simply has to involve two cold-blooded killers. And even though it was not his intention to write a poetic drama, as Dominik Smole did half a century ago, he has written a tragic play. Because Antigone/Clara, who (and what else could they do with such a "stubborn girl"?) is put somewhere "safe," into a psychiatric clinic, jumps out of the open window and "flies off like a bird escaping its cage, toward the sea beneath her. She did not reach it, but smashed her head against the sharp rocks," says the blind Guido.

The "cage" was the belief for which Clara was ready to become a victim and turn her uncle the mayor into an executioner. But because the mayor is standing on the designated spot where Creon stood, he also has to experience a failure which, in line with the times, is as banal as possible: the investor decides to take his money elsewhere. The unfinished hotel will remain "a gray concrete skeleton, sticking up into the sky, reminding us that we don't deserve anything better than what we already have," says the disillusioned mayor. Clara's sacrifice, which consecrated all her endeavours to prevent her brother's grave from being desecrated, even in the service of "public interest," finally touches the ruler/mayor as he decides to turn the unfinished hotel into a holiday home for the disabled. He gives up his power and, partly because Peter the journalist



recorded everything that happened for television, which means that there is indisputable proof about all the sleazy deals surrounding the building of the hotel and the golf course, decides to report to the police and confess his guilt, including what he knows of Clara's death. And those executed by the Killers.

Flisar's play reveals something else: that today (only today?) no protagonist or character in a play can be pure or clear. They are all weighed down by deeds that rob them of their integrity and make them problematic. The most interesting and also dramatic is the relationship between the dead brothers Andrew and Alan. Not only are they identical twins, which of course makes it hard to distinguish between them: it is Andrew who is lodged deep in Clara's heart, not Alan, whom she "could barely stand." Although it is a legitimate "right" of a sister to love one brother more than the other, it transpires that it is not quite clear which of the brothers was driving when the accident happened or which is buried in the grave Clara is defending because one of them – Clara is convinced it is Alan – was cremated. This makes Clara begin to doubt and really undermines her right to do what she is doing, even though it is true that the grave is sacred/consecrated even if it is Alan lying in it. In the light of this doubt, Clara's behavior becomes problematic and it increasingly seems that it is merely the result of her extreme individualism and egoism.

Even Clara's love for Andrew, on which all her conduct is based, is not "pure" and "clear," i.e. innocent, sisterly. There are reasonable grounds for suspicion that the love between Clara and Andrew was more than that between a brother and a sister: photographs hint that their love was an incestuous one. This allows the Killers to blackmail Clara, threatening to give the pictures to the media. This fact may throw a different light on Clara's conduct: that it is an unnatural love that common sense can in no way accept and tolerate. Clara's statement that "the ground becomes sacred when those we love are laid in it," is nullified in the light of the incestuous love between her and Andrew. Moreover, the relationship between the sisters Clara and Sabina is also problematic (just like that between Antigone and Ismene). Sabina is (only) beautiful, while Clara is clever. The relationship between cleverness and beauty is known: beauty fades, intellect persists. Filip is also involved in the relationship between the sisters, as he has an affair with both. Clara wants love – not only for her dead brother but also for the living Filip, who is a playboy and womanizer.

Layer after layer is slowly peeled off before our eyes and the true faces of the protagonists in *Antigone Now* are revealed. No one is "without sin,"

no one can be pure and clear; even though the blind professor acts as the supreme (moral) authority, he is still Oedipus, who at the moment he killed his father set off the infernal mechanism of *hamartia* or fatal flaw, which is the foundation not only of Attic tragedy, but also of all our (Western, white) civilization. Our kind began with patricide; the son had to take the place of the father, thus becoming the (potential) husband of the father's wife, his mother. Incest is not a "flaw," an "illness," but one of those relationships that were taboo from the very start. But Western history tells us that taboos are taboos only because they are constantly being violated.

The blind professor Guido reveals to Clara the true nature of the present time, a time of "practical compromises." A belief in something that brings no benefit is "pointless." However, it is because of this character of our time, which compels us to make compromises and search for benefits wherever possible, that man must persist and through his persistence prove that all things are not "for sale." Sabina claims that after Andrew's demise, her sister fell in love with death, which made life a burden for her. Perhaps that is the source of Clara's stubbornness, or as the mayor says: her "pride is too strong." In love with death, Clara cannot recognize "the interest" of the community, which lies in capital, politics, jobs, progress.

Near the end of the play – when Peter the journalist has to dig his own grave, since he will be murdered by the Killers – it transpires that the grave in which Andrew is supposed to lie is empty. Flisar's play finally becomes elusive, slippery in all its multiple meanings, in the mixture of appearances and truth, whereby we are dealing with literary reality and not a journalistic report on the happenings in a town by the sea. The world of Flisar's play is one of appearances and (stage) illusions. In this world, according to the mayor, people do not "deserve anything better than what they already have." The world of the unhappy Clara, of perhaps the only possible Antigone in 2011, is a "cesspit" and not the "clear sea." Our time "promises so much and gives so little," as the mayor says when it is all over – the end of the economy and of ethics.

In *Antigone Now*, Evald Flisar presents a very dark and pessimistic picture of the present. Perhaps, like Cankar, he is portraying darkness so that our eyes will demand more light. This is perhaps why the uninitiated may think that Flisar has written a morality play, although he dressed it as a popular transitional tale of economic crime and hired killers; but it is an indisputable fact that Flisar's *Antigone Now* is telling us that our world long ago discarded the last of the "unwritten laws" which say that only a man's heart is capable of pronouncing final judgements. Thus

## ANTIGONE NOW

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*Antigone Now* is in a special way a return to the beginning: as if historical, linear time has turned back a fraction, so that the snake's jaws have reached its tail and we are witnessing an unusual phenomenon of cyclicity, the cyclical nature of time, the time of myth – myth which always seeks expression in art and literature.

*Ivo Svetina*



Judita Zidar, Jožef Ropoša  
*Sunspots*, City Theater of Ljubljana, Slovenia, 1999