

# MEDEA

## adapted by Nelly E. Cuellar-Garcia

FROM THE PLAY BY EURIPIDES

### Author Notes

I wrote this piece specifically for my students as a venue for one-act play contest, and as we rehearsed it became a living breathing entity. It would be easy to misconstrue the piece and play Medea as a woman scorned—seeking revenge and nothing else. It is important to understand how all the different aspects of Medea’s inner nature, her culture, and her experiences drive and motivate her to commit acts of atrocity. The goal of the director is to ensure that while the audience might not agree with her decision to murder her children or Jason’s second wife, they can at least understand her decision and feel great compassion for her in the end. For while she “triumphs” in her plans, the irony is that she ends up just like Jason—“alone and forsaken.” No one wins.

The savage chorus was assigned a different personality based on the inner psyche of Medea. For instance, one played the savage warrior wanting vengeance for the betrayal heaped upon her. Another enacted her cunning self—the one connected to the dark arts. Another savage chorus member reflected her sensual self and her connection to Jason, while the last one reflected the love she felt for her children. These women were costumed in rich colors and patterns that reflected the land of Colchis—her homeland. They carried staffs, danced, sang, chanted, and in essence were the living, breathing emotions uniting in Medea. They are a powerful vehicle for actresses.

All the songs and music used in the piece were original and specifically created. Everything was sung in Greek.

The Greek chorus, as expected, represented the accepted role of women. I assigned each chorus member a different stage of a woman’s life. The principal Greek chorus member was assigned the role of a pregnant woman. She is the soul of motherhood. She’s beautiful, fully aware of what men are and do to women. She has learned to accept what she cannot change and has made for herself a life she can deal with. Our “pregnant” chorus member was given a 6 month belly. In the confrontation with Medea (where she threatens to tell of her plan), Medea moves behind her, grabs her belly and gently squeezes it to reinforce the idea of the precariousness of motherhood. Our second chorus member was an old woman who had experienced all life had to offer. She is a widow. The youngest

member of the chorus is the “new bride”. The idea of “happily ever after” is alive and well in her psyche. The other two women are gently exposing her to the truth about life and hope to help her avoid the mistakes they and Medea have made in their own relationships.

We used life-sized dolls for the young children. They were wrapped in a deep scarlet silk material when they were finally brought out. The dolls had dark hair (which could be seen by the audience) which swung when the savage chorus carried them in and laid them down.

This piece also offers a voice to Jason’s new wife. In the traditional Medea, she never appears and her father takes care of all her problems. In this piece, we see a highly intelligent woman who knows what she wants out of life and how to get it. We see her ruthlessness in her pursuit of her own needs.

Jason and Medea’s relationship should be explored. This is not a simple case of love dying. In fact, Medea still loves Jason while hating him. We need to see how conflicted she is. Jason, on the other hand, loves her as much as he can love anyone. He is a man who loves himself and his ambition above all else. Directors should explore and look for nuances to this couple as they work with their scenes.

Above all, directors should pursue the real tragedy of this piece—no one walks away unscathed when love is shattered.

### Cast of Characters

*(In order of appearance:)*

MEDEA, mid-30s, Jason’s former wife, daughter of King Aeetes of savage Colchis

GREEK CHORUS, represents society’s value and mores

MEDEA’s SAVAGE CHORUS, represents Medea’s thoughts / Medea’s attendants

NURSE, Medea’s constant companion and former nurse

MEDEA’s CHORUS LEADER

GLAUCE, Jason’s new wife, daughter of Creon

GREEK CHORUS LEADER

JASON, leader of the Argonauts; heir apparent to Corinth

AEGEUS, King of Athens, former Argonaut; friend to both Jason and Medea

SOLDIERS

CHILDREN

*Creative substitutes for the children should be explored if the director does not wish to use children in the show.*

### Setting

Medea’s home.

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## Scene 1

*(The curtain slowly opens to reveal Medea's home bathed in blue light and covered in low-lying mist. Female guttural song [sung in her home language] is heard. Stage center, we see MEDEA on her haunches looking down, her SAVAGE CHORUS surrounds her in various poses of deep introspection. Slowly, she rises.)*

**MEDEA.** Ghosts...spirits of a world that once was fill my mind with visions of the past. Echoes...echoes flit through my memory of a brother's laughing face and a father's loving embrace. Visions of home fill me... Night brings no relief for as I look up at the stars I hear the song of my people...

*(The NURSE begins to sing as she spreads healing incense in the air. The SAVAGE CHORUS adds their voice to her wordless tune...)*

And remember what it meant once to worship Gods who protected us from evil.

*(The WOMEN flow and move to the beats of their own staff movement and choral chants. MEDEA makes her way into the tableau. The singing/chanting [foreign language] reaches a crescendo. The SAVAGE CHORUS beats their staves against the floor and creates a prison for MEDEA. Suddenly all freeze and silence reigns. MEDEA's ragged breathing is heard. She is majestic in this chaos. She carries herself with the assurance of a woman who has always commanded.)*

**MEDEA.** All is lost. I am left alone with my thoughts and these Greek women who come to peer at me with pity. How I wish the long ship Argo had never come to our shores. For then I would have never met Jason, nor loved him. You see he came to Colchis seeking the Golden Fleece. And I, using my knowledge of the dark arts, assisted him. For love of him, I betrayed my father, murdered my brother, and became an outcast.

**MEDEA'S CHORUS.** At first all went well. Jason loved her and was proud of her beauty. Happy is the house where the man and woman love and are faithful.

**MEDEA'S CHORUS LEADER.** Now all is changed. He calls the old bond a barbarian marriage. He has cast her off, like a common whore, and married the daughter of Creon—the ruler of this land.

**MEDEA'S CHORUS.** *(Encircling MEDEA:)* Jason is free. Mocking laughter flits across his face.

**MEDEA'S CHORUS LEADER.** While you are left to bear the burden of our pain.

**MEDEA.** To weep for a man who would throw me away for naught would dishonor me and betray all that has been my life. From now till the end of time, no regrets...

*(She hands the Golden Fleece to her CHORUS and moves away.)*

**ALL WOMEN.** *(Follow her with their gaze:)* Jason would have been wiser to tempt a lioness. *(Face forward:)* He is not wise I think.

*(One beat of the staff on floor.)*

*(MEDEA'S CHORUS retreats with MEDEA to Olive tree.)*

## Scene 2

**NURSE.** Oh it's a bad thing to be born wealthy and of noble blood. For when misfortune strikes, it becomes unendurable and drives you mad. I say poor people are happier. They are used to misfortune and know to lie low in its wake so that they may survive.

*(Enter GREEK CHORUS. GREEK CHORUS LEADER is visibly pregnant. She represents fertility, accompanied by an old woman [2ND CHORUS MEMBER], and a young woman barely wed [3RD CHORUS MEMBER].)*

**GREEK CHORUS LEADER.** Old servant of Medea, what are you doing out here all alone? Shouldn't you be inside with your mistress?

**NURSE.** I needed a moment of solace out in the clean crisp air away from the grief.

**GREEK CHORUS LEADER.** Then Medea's grief hasn't diminished?

**NURSE.** No. Her mood has blackened even more.

**GREEK CHORUS LEADER.** You must prevail upon Medea to stop crying. She has worse news to endure.

**NURSE.** What do you mean?

**GREEK CHORUS LEADER.** I have heard rumors that Creon intends to harm Medea.

**NURSE.** How?

**GREEK CHORUS LEADER.** I do not know. A group of old men were talking about it, but when they saw that I listened, they became silent.

**NURSE.** Then we must try and keep our wits about us and protect her until she is able to come to her senses and help herself.

*(We hear horns.)*

**GREEK CHORUS.** Jason's new wife approaches.

**MEDEA / MEDEA'S CHORUS.** She dares to come here?

**NURSE.** This is her domain. She can do as she pleases. Be wary, Medea.

*(GLAUCE appears with her SOLDIER ESCORT.)*

**MEDEA'S CHORUS LEADER.** She is as you were...

**MEDEA.** Princess...what an honor

**SAVAGE CHORUS LEADER.** Notice her taugth skin...

**MEDEA.** How gracious of you to come to my humble home...

**SAVAGE CHORUS LEADER.** Her shining hair...her pouting lips...

**MEDEA.** May I offer you some refreshment?

**GLAUCE.** Swallow your pride, Medea. I will tell you frankly why I am here. Reports have reached me that you have uttered threats of vengeance against Jason and myself, and since you are famous for your powerful magic and your knowledge of the dark arts, I have decided to take fate in my own hands and keep my family safe from your hatred.

**NURSE.** This is her domain. She can do as she pleases. Be wary, Medea.

**MEDEA'S CHORUS LEADER.** She is as you were Medea—fifteen years ago. Notice her taut skin...her shining hair...her pouting lips. It is a bitter draught you drink.

**MEDEA.** How touching. But you are mistaken. The rumors are lies. In fact, I wish you well. I hope Jason is as kind to you as he was to me.

**GLAUCE.** That is your wish? Do you curse me?

**MEDEA.** You dare to stand there and accuse me of sorcery when it is you who has stolen my husband?

**GLAUCE.** There was no stealing. He came willingly.

**MEDEA / MEDEA'S CHORUS.** All men sniff after beasts in heat.

**GLAUCE.** *(Controlling herself:)* I am a civilized woman of Corinth; therefore, I will not stand here and argue with a savage barbarian from a foreign land. I accept, Medea that you have some cause for your grief, and in your moment of weakness I pity you.

*(MEDEA's face contorts, but she catches herself before GLAUCE sees her.)*

That is why I am here to tell you personally that I have asked my father to banish you.

**MEDEA.** Banish? You know what exile means to a woman of my birth and rank. We would be held in lower esteem than the dogs in the street. My children are Jason's who is now bound to you by marriage. Why must we be banished?

**GLAUCE.** You are dangerous to me and mine. Jason must forget his past in order to proceed with his future. Accept what cannot be changed, Medea, for all our sakes. Farewell.

**MEDEA.** Princess? In the middle of the night, when Jason awakes with terrors, rub his back and kiss the tender spot on his neck. Always remember...

**MEDEA / SAVAGE CHORUS.** I had him first.

**GLAUCE.** You have what is left of the day to pack, Medea. Don't waste your time with taunts.

*(Exit.)*

### Scene 3

*(MEDEA'S CHORUS becomes agitated and chaotic thought. Their staffs begin to twirl in frenzied patterns as they surround MEDEA.)*

**MEDEA.** I am alone... Forsaken... Am I to abide by the dictates of others, or do I defend my honor?

**MEDEA'S CHORUS.** We must. No one else will do so in our stead.

**MEDEA / MEDEA'S CHORUS.** Think before we run out of time.

**MEDEA.** Time is relative. It would be good to stand here for a thousand years and think of nothing but the death of three people.

**MEDEA.** I have in mind so many paths that I don't know which one to choose from.

*(Staff beat.)*

**MEDEA'S CHORUS.** Should you set fire to the house and burn the burial chamber?

*(One beat from staffs.)*

**MEDEA.** Or maybe creep up on their bed and drive a sharp knife through their guts?

*(Beat. Beat.)*

*(Loud bang from MEDEA'S CHORUS' staffs, then stillness.)*

**MEDEA / MEDEA'S CHORUS.** I might fail. I might be caught and cut down first.

### Scene 4

**GREEK CHORUS / GREEK CHORUS LEADER.** Stop, Medea, think of your children.

**MEDEA.** Is it possible to annihilate the past without nipping its fruit in the present? Am I to look into my children's eyes forever and see Jason laughing back at me?

**GREEK CHORUS LEADER.** Medea, your thoughts are unnatural. It is the thoughts of *men* that are deceitful. Women must learn to bear the burden and move on, or else their bitterness will destroy them.

**MEDEA.** I do not know how much misery a Greek woman will endure, but the people of my race are more impetuous.

**GREEK CHORUS.** Learn the Greek way, Medea. Reason over passion is always best.

**MEDEA.** We will see.

*(Enters home.)*

### Scene 5

*(Horns are heard. JASON and his HONOR GUARD enter.)*

**JASON.** Where is Medea?

**NURSE.** *(Pointing towards house:)* There. Mourning for what you have done.

**JASON.** Not I. It is what she has done. It is not by my will—but rather through hers *(MEDEA enters unnoticed by JASON.)* that she and my sons are to be exiled.

**MEDEA.** Do I hear a dog?

**JASON.** So, Medea, you could not keep from making threats against the head of Corinth. You had to tell every one of your anger

and my so-called injustices. You could have lived here happily—secure and honored—but instead you had to go mad with anger and talk yourself into exile. You might have been decent enough to think of the children.

**MEDEA.** Did you consider them when you chose to betray this house?

**JASON.** Certainly I considered them. This grievous thing you hate me for; do you think I did it out of boyish fantasies of love or passion? (*MEDEA begins to respond.*) No. Keep quiet, Medea. You will listen. It was not, as you resentfully assume, that I found your attractions wearisome, nor do I especially want to raise another family, but by marrying Creon's daughter, I become his dynast and thus ensure that we should live well and not be poor.

**MEDEA.** You're shameless. If you were honest, you ought to have first won me over, not got married behind my back. Jason, where am I to go? To my father's side? Or perhaps to Pelias' daughters? What a fine welcome they would prepare for me who murdered their father! It would have been better if I'd let you die. I poured my magic out for you Jason, you drank it like wine, and then betrayed me.

**JASON.** A man dares many things in his adventures. If the gods care for him, they appoint an instrument to help him. You were that instrument...let's stop this, Medea. Show some sense, woman! Control your passions and come to your reason. If I would have mentioned it, would you have helped me? No. Your sex-jealousy would not have allowed me to continue. How I long for the days when you, thinking rationally and without bed-jealousy, would approve.

**MEDEA.** You'd better go, Jason.

**JASON.** I came to help and save you if possible. I can provide to meet the needs of you and the children. Tell me. I will gladly give you whatever you desire.

**MEDEA.** Your help is not wanted. Go home to your...wife.

**JASON.** Medea, listen to me. To refuse such help is madness. You have everything to gain if you give up this rage. Medea? What is it

to be? I have a guest in my house and must return to the state's business.

**MEDEA.** Then leave, Jason.

**JASON.** Yours the regret then.

**MEDEA / MEDEA'S CHORUS.** (*Watching him leave, MEDEA'S CHORUS reaching out for him in different ways:*) If I could peel off his memory as easily as he has mine.

**MEDEA.** I hate who I've become. I no longer remember who I am.

*(Moves off by herself.)*

**NURSE.** (*To GREEK CHORUS:*) Who is Jason's guest?

**GREEK CHORUS LEADER.** Aegeus. King of Athens.

**NURSE.** My lady knows him. Perhaps he can help us.

**GREEK CHORUS LEADER.** King Aegeus leaves for his home today. If he is to help, you must catch him before he sails. Go, old woman. Life is always better than death.

*(NURSE hobbles out as quickly as she can.)*

## Scene 6

**GREEK CHORUS.** Our hearts beat with compassion for our friend. But why can she not accept what is?

**GREEK CHORUS LEADER.** Medea was raised as a savage and allows her passion to sway her. She doesn't understand that a woman's fate was molded by Zeus himself. Zeus created us to serve, so that from birth we are trained with only one eye: the pleasing of a husband. As such, our first duty is that of lover. (*Taking YOUNG CHORUS MEMBER's face with the palms of her hands:*) We give men our flesh, and they take our bodies and make children of it. Then, we become mothers, and our duty ( *Holding her belly lightly and lovingly:*) is to bear and protect the children that will shape our future. Lastly, when we have reached our final years, (*Putting her arm around the OLD WOMAN:*) we become providers of comfort for husbands who seek peace.

**GREEK CHORUS.** We must help Medea understand this.

**GREEK CHORUS LEADER.** That may not be possible. Medea is caught in an ancient world that no loner exits. Set in her ways. It's not easy to make an enemy of her and come off best.

### Scene 7

**NURSE.** My lady! Medea, Lord Aegeus is here as Creon's guest. Athens is an old friend of yours. I have asked him to come see you. Tell him truthfully of our plight. I am sure he will grant us refuge.

**MEDEA.** I have things to do. Be quiet.

**NURSE.** Listen to me. You have been banished from here. We must find shelter.

**MEDEA.** I am not interested at the moment. Leave me in peace.

**NURSE.** No. I held you in my arms when you were a newborn babe. I gave you milk from these breasts that are now dead as leaves. How can I not try and save you? Medea, life is better than death. Help me save us.

**MEDEA.** I am so weary.

*(She moves away.)*

**NURSE.** Time has a way of settling all our troubles. Find peace, Medea. Find peace.

*(NURSE softly sings the song she sang at the beginning, but now it has the quality of a lullaby. A lone tear falls from MEDEA's face for a land that is lost.)*

**GREEK CHORUS.** Sunlight bounces off the brass of spearheads. Aegeus approaches.

*(MEDEA wipes her face and puts on a brave almost artificial look.)*

**AEGEUS.** Medea, I rejoice at seeing you. I hope you do not mind that I have shown up unannounced, but your nurse assured me of a warm welcome.

**MEDEA.** Aegeus, my friend, many a year has passed since we last met.

**AEGEUS.** How times change us. You look wan and pale. What ails thee?

**MEDEA.** Nothing is wrong. I am quite well. Fools bother me, that is all. Where are you traveling?

**AEGEUS.** I come from Delphi. I went to consult the oracle about the begetting of sons.

*(Picks up one of the boys' toy horses.)*

**MEDEA.** I had not realized that you had no heirs. Perhaps it is better, Aegeus. *(Taking the horse from his hand:)* Sometimes when misfortune strikes, Aegeus; it is bitter to have children around us.

**AEGEUS.** But when death comes, Medea, it is utter despair for a man to know that his bloodline will not continue. One's children are our gift to immortality.

**MEDEA.** Do you feel it so? Then, if you had an... *(Searching for a term:)* enemy...you wished to destroy, you'd...kill...the children...first?

**AEGEUS.** I have no enemy I hate enough to inflict such vengeance on. Outliving all your children would be horrific torture.

**NURSE.** My lady, please...

**MEDEA.** Stop... *(Giving her the horse:)* I would not hurt my children. Their father hurts them.

**AEGEUS.** Jason? What do you mean? Medea, look at me. What has Jason done?

**MEDEA.** He has allowed Creon to banish me and the children.

**AEGEUS.** That cannot be. I was led to understand that your separation was amicable and that all was well between you. What will you do?

**NURSE.** King Aegeus, my lady is bewildered with grief; if not she would ask refuge of you.

**MEDEA.** She's right. Aegeus, will you offer me shelter in Athens? I would repay your kindness tenfold. (*Lightly caresses him:*) I know of certain remedies that would help you overcome your sterility.

**AEGEUS.** (*Stilling her hand:*) You tempt a man to madness, Medea. You offer me all my hopes, (*Slightly suspicious:*) but at what true price?

**MEDEA.** (*Innocently:*) Protection from my enemies is all I ask of you in return.

**AEGEUS.** Medea, if you can help me beget a son, I will shelter you in Athens against all. However, you must reach my lands on your own. I want no quarrel with Corinth.

(*MEDEA nods and moves away in thought. The NURSE steps in and covers up her lack of etiquette.*)

**NURSE.** If Medea were not preoccupied, she would gladly thank you for your generosity. We will see you soon, Lord Aegeus. May your journey home be a safe one.

**AEGEUS.** Farewell.

### Scene 8

**GREEK CHORUS.** We hear you travel to Athens, Medea. May your voyage be fair to this new land.

**GREEK CHORUS LEADER.** You see, Medea? Life is beautiful and holds infinite possibilities. How can one think of death at this moment? To be alive and to experience the sun's warmth on our skin is beautiful.

**MEDEA.** As you say, what a marvelous privilege it is to be merely alive. How foolish it is to spend the one day of life that remains to me in this city full of tears and hatred. Rather, I should reconcile with my enemies. The time has come when reason must overcome passion.

**GREEK CHORUS LEADER.** Yes. You have found the path to peace. Forgiveness is always best. But how will you convince Creon and Jason that you have had a change of heart?

**MEDEA.** (*Thinking:*) I can appease them with gold. They say that gold will buy you anything from friendship to love. So I shall buy theirs. Go to Jason, all of you. Tell him I wish to make...peace...and that I wish to send his...wife some gifts as a measure of my contrition. (*GREEK CHORUS starts to exit.*) Tell him also that he may see his children. Go quickly.

**NURSE.** Medea, what are you planning? I fear this turn of events.

**MEDEA.** Dear nurse, all is well. You will see. Go quickly. Accompany the women to Jason.

(*NURSE exits.*)

(*Ancient drums begin. MEDEA goes to 4' pylon. She takes out her bowl, her knife, her oils, and her herbs. She mixes these as SAVAGE CHORUS speaks.*)

**MEDEA'S CHORUS.** Hatred is here and is heavy to bear; for when love blows away...only hatred remains.

**MEDEA'S CHORUS LEADER.** Sometimes it is a bitter thing to be a woman. First, an excess of wealth is required for us to buy our husbands. Then they take our bodies and become masters of that.

**MEDEA'S CHORUS.** The Great question follows. Will the man we get be bad or good?

**MEDEA'S CHORUS #2.** If the man is good, our life is enviable; but if he's bad, death is preferable.

**MEDEA'S CHORUS.** How do we avenge our betrayal? We cannot command armies.

**MEDEA'S CHORUS LEADER.** A woman is weak for warfare; therefore; she must use cunning. A plan...a scheme...

(*Pulling snake from the basket that lays at the foot of the pylon and handing it to MEDEA who wraps it around her wrist and forearm.*)

**MEDEA'S CHORUS.** Remember who you once were.

**MEDEA.** I still am who I was...

**MEDEA / MEDEA'S CHORUS.** I am Medea.

**MEDEA.** The bearer of magic

**MEDEA'S CHORUS LEADER.** Find a means to pay my husband back for what he has done to me.

**MEDEA.** The best way is the direct way. The one I know best. The dark arts will deliver my enemy. (*Cuts her palm and drips it blood into the bowl; takes snakes body and cradles it from one hand to the other.*) That and poison.

(*Beat.*)

(*Lights fade. Lights go up on stage left.*)

### Scene 9

(*Two men are practicing sword play. JASON is intense, aggressive, and troubled. It is evident that he is using physical exercise to dispel his mood.*)

**AEGEUS.** Easy my friend. If I didn't know better, I'd swear you were out for blood.

(*They trade final blows and separate.*)

**JASON.** My apologies, old friend. Personal matters should be left out of the practice field. My mind is elsewhere.

(*JASON pours water into a bowl and washed face and chest. AEGEUS sits easily and waits his turn.*)

**AEGEUS.** I went to see Medea.

**JASON.** Did she publicly denounce my faults to you?

**AEGEUS.** She didn't have to. We've been friends a long time.

**JASON.** Why can she not see the advantages of my plan? (*Towelings off and exchanging places with AEGEUS. JASON continues to dress:*) Medea will not allow herself to see past her jealousy. Women! They judge all by their sex-life. If that goes wrong, the best and noblest of women turn to gall. If only children could be got some other way without the female sex! (*Straps on his sword:*) If women didn't exist, human life would be rid of all its miseries.

**AEGEUS.** Jason, hear me. (*Putting towel down and moving toward his clothes:*) You and Medea have been my friends and companions

since we all sailed together on the Argo many years ago. (*Looking directly at him:*) She has asked me for sanctuary, and I have granted it. My only condition to her is that she has to come to me on her own. I do not wish to start a war with Creon.

**JASON.** And in return, what do you ask of Medea? (*Suspicious because he knows AEGEUS has always wanted MEDEA.*)

**AEGEUS.** Why is this your concern? You have set her aside.

(*For an instant we see a jealous JASON. AEGEUS relents.*)

Very well. She has agreed to help me in...

(*AEGEUS is interrupted by the appearance of the WOMEN.*)

What have we here?

**GREEK CHORUS LEADER.** Medea bids we tell you she has her wits about her again and is willing to look beyond her own woes.

**JASON.** You must excuse me if I am doubtful.

**NURSE.** She offers only peace between you and wishes you to bid farewell to your sons before they depart.

**AEGEUS.** It is truth, Jason. I myself am awaiting Medea in Athens. I will foster your sons. All will be well.

**JASON.** (*JASON begins exiting, stops and looks back at AEGEUS:*) Know that I have done my best to help Medea. She has refused me. I am not without feeling. Farewell old friend. Your help will not be forgotten.

(*MEN grasp their forearms in farewell. Blue fade. Up on stage right.*)

### Scene 10

(*We see MEDEA sitting in the midst of golden robe, an open chest is by her side.*)

**JASON.** (*Even before JASON arrives at MEDEA's side he begins:*) I will tell you plainly that I came not for your sake—but my children's.



*(Realizes MEDEA is holding golden articles, a robe and diadem:)* Medea, these are King's treasures. Where did you get them?

**MEDEA.** There's nothing in the whole world like them. *(Removes them and starts placing them in their chests:)* See...the gold looks almost alive. *(JASON bends down to stroke the gold:)* No! Don't touch the gold or it might...tarnish. I want it to gleam for your new bride.

**JASON.** You shouldn't Medea. Creon's house has more than enough gold.

**MEDEA.** One can never have too much gold. Besides, what do I care? I had been saving this as a gift to you on a special occasion, what can be more special than our reconciliation?

**JASON.** Medea, your gifts never come without a price. What are you thinking?

**MEDEA.** Nothing bad. *(Claps for her CHORUS to enter and prepare to take the chests:)* Jason, exile is a cold and difficult life for children as young as ours.

**MEDEA.** I thought that by sending your bride these gifts it would aid in their petition to remain in Corinth with you.

**JASON.** You would allow my sons to remain in Corinth without their mother?

**MEDEA.** Better with you than in a cold harsh world.

**JASON.** Your plan is not without merit. I am pleased, Medea, that you have changed your mind and regained your senses.

**MEDEA.** *(Motioning for him to sit down beside her:)* Jason, I ask you to forgive the things I have said to you. It is difficult to forget the many memories of love we have shared, but when I considered your plan carefully I saw the wisdom of it. I should have helped you in your endeavors. Truce, Jason?

*(Offering her hand with the fingers spread out:)*

**JASON.** *(He entwines his own fingers through hers, and kisses her on the lips softly:)* Truce. Medea, I cannot blame you for what you said before. It's only natural for a woman to feel jealousy when her husband has a secret love. But understand that it all serves a purpose.

My wife, in her state of love, refuses me nothing. I will ask her to allow the children to stay with us. You will see, Medea, our boys will grow strong and become leaders in Corinth. Why do you weep? Are not my words pleasing to you?

**MEDEA.** Yes. It is nothing. A woman is a weak creature who cries easily. *(To her CHORUS:)* Carry these things to the palace...then return here.

*(MEDEA'S CHORUS closes the lid on the chests and all begin to exit.)*

**MEDEA.** Oh, Jason...

**JASON.** Yes?

**MEDEA.** If anything were to happen to the children would you be grieved?

**JASON.** Rest your mind, Medea, I will ensure nothing happens to our children while they are in Creon's palace.

**MEDEA.** It is good to see that a father always will love his children even if the love he bears for the mother dies.

**JASON.** Of course, Medea. Blood will always be loyal to blood. Don't fret. I will bring them back safely. You will excuse me. I must catch up to the children.

*(Exits.)*

**NURSE.** Your mood is cruel, Medea, and quite dangerous. What has driven you to allow your children to be parted from you? I fear this...

*(NURSE exits to follow CHILDREN.)*

*(Enter GREEK CHORUS.)*

## Scene 11

**GREEK CHORUS LEADER.** I saw Jason leaving with the children. Don't give them to him. If you do, you will ache forever.

**GREEK CHORUS.** You have refuge in Athens. Take them there.

**MEDEA.** Silence. Did you see him? He loves his children...my soul feels as if it is being torn apart.

**GREEK CHORUS LEADER.** End this passionate grief of yours. It wastes you away. If your husband is won to new love, why let it anger you? The thing is common.

**MEDEA.** Stop! The gifts are given. The bait is laid. Jason's new wife will soon writhe in the meshes of a poison that will burn so hot, her flesh will erupt in flame.

**GREEK CHORUS LEADER.** You have become only darkness and vengeance. Turn back before it engulfs you and survive.

**MEDEA.** No.

**GREEK CHORUS.** Then, I'll run to the palace and warn them...

**MEDEA.** Go! But be careful you do not fall in the same fire...

*(Caressing the LEADER's pregnant belly then squeezing tightly all of a sudden.)*

**GREEK CHORUS LEADER.** *(In pain and afraid:)* Let me go, Medea. I cannot bear it.

**MEDEA.** *(Releasing her:)* You can and you will. Many are the time your people have called me savage and barbarian. Well, stay here and watch how the uncivilized deal with betrayal.

*(MEDEA'S CHORUS returns. Two of the SAVAGE CHORUS walk onto opposite sides of pylons and take up their positions as sentries. The third one waits by a platform for the CHORUS LEADER so they may proceed into the house.)*

**MEDEA.** What happened?

**MEDEA'S CHORUS LEADER.** Creon's entire house is well pleased. By the time we had entered the palace everyone had heard the rumor that you and Jason were at peace. We brought the golden gifts into the hall and put them before the princess.

**MEDEA'S CHORUS.** At first, the princess turned away and pouted. But when we opened the dark boxes and the brilliant gold shone up, she marveled at it and smiled.

**MEDEA'S CHORUS LEADER.** We came away then...before the final spectacle.

**MEDEA.** Well done. Begin preparing for our departure.

*(We hear thunder in the distance, followed by flashes of lightning.)*

**MEDEA.** The storm approaches. Soon all will be finished.

*(Thunder will be heard intermittently for the rest of the show, until we see the rain begin to fall at the end.)*

## Scene 12

*(NURSE enters with barely any energy left. She slowly sinks to the floor.)*

**NURSE.** Medea! Medea! *(MEDEA goes to her NURSE and helps her up.)* You are horribly avenged. It is too much. I have stood by and watched while you destroyed everything and everyone around you who truly loved you. Recriminations did not pass my lips because my loyalties have always been to you, but now naked truth must be examined. Jason never loved you. He has used you in his ambitions for power and wealth, and now he has transferred those ambitions to another woman. He would have used her as he has you then disposed of her also. He is a leech, Medea, and you have allowed him to bleed you dry. Take your children and flee, Medea. Leave him to the gods.

**MEDEA.** The gods are dead. I alone am in charge of my destiny, and I choose vengeance. Jason has not suffered enough. Jason can still say, "I have lost much, but I still have my children." I want him crushed...boneless...crawling. My sons are his cubs. They have his blood. As long as they live, I shall be mixed with him.

**GREEK CHORUS LEADER.** You would murder your own children for jealousy of a marriage bed? It is unnatural for a woman to think of this possibility.

**MEDEA.** Then what does it make me?

*(Angry drums are heard.)*

**GREEK CHORUS.** Avengers come! Flee, Medea!

*(Thunder becomes more prevalent.)*

### Scene 13

**MEDEA.** Don't be afraid. I can defend you and the children.

*(Stops and looks up at the darkening sky, another peal of thunder is heard.)*

There is no escaping the storm. I must not think too much...people go mad when they think too much.

*(Enters home.)*

*(Suddenly, great flashes of lightning tear the sky. We hear the wailing of the wind combined with the cries of the CHILDREN joined by the cries of the MOTHER. Medea's two CHORUS MEMBERS who went into house should make the children sounds. As the sound continues, the NURSE and the GREEK CHORUS realize what is happening. The NURSE rushes up the steps as fast as her age allows. She beats on the doors trying to get in.)*

**NURSE.** No, Medea! Let me in...open the door...Medeeeeaaa!

*(She slowly collapses to the ground and begins to sob silently. She holds herself and rocks gently trying to come to terms with what has happened. She covers her head with her veil.)*

*(Enter JASON, desperate, angry, and in deep pain.)*

**JASON.** Where is Medea? *(He tries to run up the step, but the SAVAGE WOMEN hiss and bar his way with their staffs. He turns to GREEK WOMEN:)* Is Medea still here or has she run away? Medea!

**BOTH CHORUSES.** You caused these events. She was faithful to you, and you broke faith.

**NURSE.** Leave Jason. Only horror is here.

**JASON.** Enough. I do not want to hear your recriminations. Simply tell me where my sons are, so that I may save them from the wrath of Creon's people. Medea! Medea!

*(MEDEA appears through the doors. She keeps her hands out of sight.)*

**MEDEA.** What feeble night bird yells at my door? Can this be the great leader of the Argonauts crying on my steps?

**JASON.** Stop, Medea. I cannot stand hearing you. Just give me my sons that I may save them from Creon's men.

**MEDEA.** They are sleeping. The hour is late. You ought to go home to that highborn wife of yours. Surely her burnt flesh does not offend you?

*(JASON loses control of himself.)*

**JASON.** You're vile. I'll kill you first, and then find my sons!

**MEDEA.** *(Who has not flinched when he reaches for her throat:)* Tsk. Tsk. Tsk. Remember who I am. Touch me, and I'll make you what your wife and Creon are.

*(JASON is taken aback. He had forgotten how powerful his wife was.)*

*(Addressing her chorus:)* ...Let him see his sons.

*(Two of MEDEA'S SAVAGE CHORUS step from the house. Each carries a small body draped in red satin with splotches of black where the blood has saturated. One body allows us glimpses of a young boy's long hair. The other body suddenly has an arm drop from it. The SAVAGE CHORUS Members that carry the bodies should feel pain, but not allow their emotion to get in the way. [They will carry the bodies for the rest of the scene.] They are representations of Medea's ways. JASON gives a cry of agony. He rushes toward the bodies. He briefly touches the face of the one, then is transfixed by his son's hair peeking from the cloth.)*

**JASON.** Who has committed this horror?

**MEDEA.** I have done it.

**JASON.** *(Disbelieving:)* Why?

**MEDEA.** Because I loathed you more than I loved them. I tore my heart out and laughed while I did it because I was tearing yours out at the same time.

**JASON.** What a wicked mother you are. Why?

**MEDEA.** Is love so small a pain, do you think, for a woman?

**JASON.** You are wholly evil. You're a monster and wholly evil! *(Menacing, moving purposefully toward her:)* Will you laugh while I strangle you?

*(She is unflinching.)*

**MEDEA.** *(Powerfully, desperately, broken-heartedly:)* I would still laugh. You are left helpless, childless...alone. Tell me Jason; was your betrayal worth all this?

**JASON.** *(Defeated:)* What does it matter now? Nothing is left. Go. Leave before Creon's men find you. I have a bride to bury, and sons to mourn for. Just let me touch my sons' dear flesh before we are overrun.

**MEDEA.** No. They are mine. Besides, you might sell their bodies for silver or power.

**JASON.** *(With great hatred:)* The curse of our children's blood be on you!

**MEDEA.** Oh Jason, we were cursed the day we destroyed my family for your gain. This is simply the culmination of it all.

*(JASON slowly sinks to the floor. MEDEA crosses to her NURSE.)*

**MEDEA.** *(Gets torch to light their way out:)* Then let us leave this land of betrayal and find a place where the sun may shine gently on the graves of my children and where I may rest until the Erinnyes come to seek their retribution.

**JASON.** Medea, don't you feel any guilt? Any shame?

**MEDEA.** Do you? *(Sadly remembering all that was:)* Farewell, beloved.

*(MEDEA begins her exit. She does not look back. Her silhouette freezes in fire with her looking back at him; CHORUS begins its final scene.)*

**GREEK WOMEN, THE TWO SAVAGE CHORUS MEMBERS NOT CARRYING THE BODIES, NURSE.** In this matter no one is the victor except death. All is finished in the name of vengeance. Justice is served.

*(Staff beat. Fade out.)*

*End of Play*