

SCENE SELECTION 1: 271-356 (KREON AND MEDEA)

Kreon with silent attendants enters from City Path.

KREON

You there, scowling and angry with your husband.
 Medea, I command you to leave this land,
 banished with your two children without delay.
 As the enforcer of this order myself,
 I will not return to the palace
 until I cast you beyond my borders.

275

MEDEA

No! Misery, utter destruction!
 My enemies unfurl all their sails against me
 and I can find no safe harbor from ruin.
 Still, although in agony, I will ask:
 Kreon, why do you banish me?

280

KREON

I fear you – no need at all to cloak my words –
 afraid you may incurably harm my daughter.
 The evidence points that way: You are clever
 by nature and skilled in myriad means of destruction.
 And you grieve, deprived of your man's marriage-bed.
 I hear, as the report goes, that you threaten the groom,
 the bride, and me, who gave her in marriage.
 So I will be on guard before anyone suffers.
 Better for you to hate me now, woman,
 than for me to be soft now and later groan in regret.

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MEDEA

Puh! Not now for the first time, Kreon, but often,
 has my reputation hindered and injured me.
 No sensible man should ever educate
 his sons to be overly clever.
 Aside from seeming lazy, they earn
 envy and resentment from their neighbors.
 If you bring a new idea to fools
 you will seem useless, not clever.
 But if the public considers you superior
 to the experts, they will be offended.
 I, too, share in this lot:
 The experts envy me for being clever,
 while fools consider me a bother.
 No, I am not so very clever.

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Yet you fear me. What unpleasantness could you suffer?
 Kreon, don't be afraid of me. I'm not the kind
 to make a mistake with a man of the royal line.
 What injustice have you done me?
 You gave your daughter where your heart led you. 310
 Yes, I hate my husband. You, I think, acted sensibly.
 Even now, I don't resent that your affairs prosper.
 Keep the marriage and fare well.
 But allow me to live in this land. I will keep quiet,
 even if wronged, conquered by those more powerful. 315

KREON

I hear your mild words, but I am terrified
 that you may be planning something evil.
 I trust you even less than before:
 much easier to guard against an angry, sharp-tongued
 woman – or man – than a silent clever one. 320
 Leave as quickly as possible: no more talk.
 The matter is fixed and you cannot contrive
 a way to remain among us, while hostile to me.

MEDEA

No, I beg you by your knees, by your newlywed daughter.

KREON

You waste words. You will never persuade me. 325

MEDEA

Will you cast me out, showing no respect at all for prayer?

KREON

Yes, because I do not love you more than my home.

MEDEA

O my Fatherland, how strongly I remember you now.

KREON

After my child, I love my country by far the most.

MEDEA

Puh! Loving is a great evil for mortals. 330

KREON

I suppose that depends on the circumstances.

MEDEA

Zeus, may you not forget who caused these troubles.

KREON

Crawl away, foolish woman, and end my toils.

MEDEA

I have toils – no shortage of toils.

KREON

My attendants will force you out at once.

335

MEDEA (*on her knees, grabs Kreon's hand*)

No, not that! Kreon, I beg you!

KREON

You are making a scene, woman.

MEDEA

We'll leave. I'm not pleading to revoke my exile.

KREON

Then why still pressure me by not releasing my hand?

MEDEA

Allow me to remain for this one day
to fully consider the means of our exile
and a refuge for my boys, since their father
does not care enough to plan at all for the children.

340

Pity them – you, too, are a father,
so naturally you would favor children.

345

If we go into exile, I have no thought for myself,
but I weep for their lives in disaster.

KREON

In no way is my temper tyrannical by nature;
I have often ruined matters by showing consideration.

Although I see I am making a mistake, woman,
you shall succeed in your request. I proclaim to you:

350

If tomorrow the light of Helios sees
you and your children within our borders,
you will die. This sentence is fixed infallibly.

So now, if you must stay, stay for just one day.

355

You will not do in a day the terrible things I fear.

Kreon exits City Path.

SCENE SELECTION 2: 410-445 (CHORUS)

Holy rivers run upstream; justice and everything flows in reverse. With deceptive plans men no longer keep their pledge sworn to the gods.	410
Now the stories will change our lives for glory. Honor arrives for womankind and ugly rumor will settle upon women no more.	415
The Muses of ancient bards will end the songs of our unfaithfulness. Apollo, god of music, did not endow us with inspired song to the lyre or we would have sung a reply to mankind. Long ages have much to tell about the destinies of women and of men.	420 425
You sailed from your father's home with a maddened heart, traveling through the rocky shores of the Bosporos. You live here as a foreigner, your bed, now a manless union, lost.	430
Miserable woman, driven in exile from Korinth, dishonored.	435
The Grace of oaths has vanished. Shame no longer stays in wide Greece, flown into the ether. Unhappy woman, you cannot find shelter from your troubles on your father's shore, and another woman, a princess, stronger than your marriage bond, commands your house.	440 445

SCENE SELECTION 3: 579-626 (MEDEA AND JASON)

MEDEA

How very different I am from mortals in many ways.
 In my mind, whoever speaks cleverly, 580
 while being unjust, deserves the most punishment.
 Confident that his tongue will nicely cloak injustice,
 He dares to do wrong. Yet he is not so very clever.
 So you, too. Don't wear a façade of decency to me
 with a terribly clever speech. One point will knock you out. 585
 If you were not evil, you should have persuaded me
 before making this marriage, not hidden it from your family.

JASON

Sure, I think if I had told you about my marriage,
 you would gladly pull your oar for it. Even now
 you can't bear to cast off your heart's great rage. 590

MEDEA

No, you were thinking that a foreign wife
 wouldn't provide you glorious status in old age.

JASON

Now understand this: Not for the sake of a woman
 did I marry into the bed of royalty as I now have,
 but, just as I said before, wanting to rescue you 595
 from danger, and to produce for my boys royal
 sons from the same source, a safeguard for my house.

MEDEA

Grant me no painful life with "prosperity,"
 or "wealth" that grates on my mind.

JASON

You know how to change your prayer and seem wiser? 600
 Pray that good things never seem painful to you
 and when you're fortunate don't think it bad fortune.

MEDEA

Add insult to injury, since you have refuge,
 but I will be in exile from this land, abandoned.

JASON

You chose this. Blame no one but yourself. 605

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MEDEA

I did what? Took a wife and betrayed you?

JASON

No, cursed unholy curses against the royal family.

MEDEA

And I am truly a curse on your house.

JASON

I won't dispute these things with you further.

If you want some aid from my wealth 610
for the boys or yourself in exile, say so.

I am prepared to give my ungrudging hand
and send tokens to allies, who will treat you well.

Woman, you would be a fool to reject this.

Forget your anger. You'll profit more. 615

MEDEA

We would not use your connections
and won't accept anything – don't give it to us.
Gifts from a wicked man benefit no one.

JASON

So be it. I invoke the gods as witness that I wish
to do everything for you and the children. But no, 620
good things are not enough for you. You reject friends
to please yourself. Well, you will suffer even more.

Jason begins to exit City Path.

MEDEA

Go on! Desire for the freshly-tamed girl seizes you,
out of sight of the palace for so long.

Go bed your wife! Perhaps, with a god's favor, 625
you marry such a marriage as will make you mourn.

Jason exits City Path.

SCENE SELECTION 4: 922-975, MEDEA AND JASON (& CHILDREN AND TUTOR)

JASON

Woman, why do you turn your pale cheek,
your eyes wet with fresh tears,
and not accept my words gladly?

MEDEA

It's nothing. I'm thinking about these children. 925

JASON

Now, take heart. I will arrange all things well for them.

MEDEA

I'll do that. I won't distrust your words.
But a woman is female and prone to tears.

JASON

Why so much moaning about these children?

MEDEA

I gave birth to them. When you prayed that the children 930
would live, pity washed over me. Will it happen?

Never mind, you came to speak with me for their sake:

Part I've said; the rest I will mention.

The royal family has decided to banish me.

I know well that this is best for me, too, 935

not to be underfoot for you or the rulers,

since I seem unfriendly to the palace.

All right, I will leave here for exile.

But ask Kreon not to drive your sons from this land

so that you may raise them with your own hand. 940

JASON

I might not persuade him, but I must try.

MEDEA

Then urge your wife to entreat her father
not to banish your sons from Korinth.

JASON

Certainly. And I do expect to persuade her,
if she is a woman like all the rest. 945

MEDEA

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I, too, will help you in this task,
 by sending her gifts far more beautiful,
 I know, than any among mortals:
 a delicate dress and a golden tiara,
 which your sons will carry. One of the servants 950
 should quickly bring the pretty things here.

Servant hands Medea dress and tiara in a box or basket.

Your bride will be happy, not in one but myriad ways:
 She wins you for bedmate, the best of men,
 and the finery which my grandfather
 Helios once gave to his own descendents. 955
 Grasp the dowry, boys, in your hands
 and give it to the blessed princess bride.
 She will welcome these faultless gifts.

JASON

You fool, why empty your hands? Keep these riches.
 Do you suppose the royal palace lacks dresses 960
 or, do you suppose, gold? Don't give them away.
 If a wife considers me worthy of any account,
 I know that she'll rank me higher than rich goods.

MEDEA

No, they say "gifts persuade even gods."
 Gold is stronger to mortals than countless words. 965
 A lucky spirit favors her, now a god makes her fortune grow:
 She's young and a princess. I would trade my life,
 not just gold, to revoke the exile of my boys.
 Children, go to the wealthy palace
 to your father's new wife, my mistress. 970
 Beseech her, beg her not to banish you,
 give her these pretty things. Take care that
 she receives these gifts into her own hands.

Medea gives them to the children.

Go quickly, and bring back the good news
 mother desires – of your success. 975

Jason, children, and Tutor exit City Path.

SCENE SELECTION 5: 1021-1080 (MEDEA)

MEDEA

Boys, my boys, this is your city and home
 where you live, forever deprived
 of your mother, leaving me in misery.
 I go to another land, a refugee,
 before enjoying you and seeing you happy. 1025
 Before prenuptial baths and wives, before
 I adorn your wedding beds and raise the torches.
 Most miserable from pleasing myself!
 I raised you in vain, children, after all.

In vain, I labored and was torn with pains, 1030
 bearing cruel grief in childbirth.

This unhappy woman once had many hopes in you,
 that you would take care of me in old age,
 and all would envy me when I die
 since your own hands would shroud me. 1035

Now these sweet thoughts perish. Without you
 I will lead a painful life, full of grief.
 Your dear eyes will no longer see your mother
 when you withdraw to another state of life.
 Oh! Boys, why this look in your eyes? 1040
 Why do you smile your last smile at me?

Ah! What shall I do? Women, my heart is utterly lost
 looking into the bright eyes of my children.
 I cannot do it – goodbye my plans.
 I will take my boys from this land. 1045
 Why should I hurt their father with their anguish,
 and win twice as much anguish for myself?
 No, I cannot. Goodbye plans.

And yet . . . why should I suffer? Do I want
 to be mocked for not punishing my enemies? 1050
 I must dare to do this. Such cowardice
 to even admit soft words in my mind.
 Children, into the house.

Children head toward skenē but are occupied by attendant by the doors.

Medea moves to where they cannot hear her.

Whoever thinks it is not right to attend my sacrifice,
 stay at your own risk. I will not weaken by hand. 1055

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Ah! No truly, my heart, no, don't do it.
 Let them be, wretched heart! Spare the children.
 Living here with us, they will bring us joy.

No, no by Hades' avengers, 1060
 this can never be, that I surrender
 my boys to my enemies to abuse.
 Anyway, what's done is done.
 The royal bride won't escape.
 Now in the dress, with the crown
 on her head, she dies, I know. 1065
 Since I will travel the most miserable road
 and send them down one more miserable still,
 I wish to speak to the children.

Medea and children come together.

My boys, give, give mother 1070
 your right hand to caress.
 Dearest hand, children's mouth,
 noble form and face so dear to me.
 May you be happy, but *there*; your father
 took away life *here*. O sweet embrace,
 the soft skin and sweetest breath of children. 1075
 Go in, go! I can't look at you any longer
 while anguish defeats me.

Children exit skenē.

I understand what evil I intend to do,
 but my heart is master of my plans.
 That heart causes mortals the greatest evil. 1080

SCENE SELECTION 6: 1251-1292 (CHORUS AND CHILDREN)

CHORUS

Earth and all-shining ray of Helios,
 look down on the destructive woman,
 before she attacks her children
 with a bloody, kin-slaying hand.
 She grew from your golden race, and now 1255
 we dread that blood descended from a god
 will spill upon the earth by mortal hands.
 Zeus-born light, hold her,
 stop her, rid the house of the reckless
 and bloodstained avenging Fury. 1260

The labor of childbearing is lost, in vain.
 Leaving the most inhospitable
 strait of the dark Clashing Rocks,
 you bore dear offspring in vain, after all.
 Sorry creature, why does mind-oppressing 1265
 rage fall on you and frenzied murder
 follow these other deaths?
 The stain of kindred blood is hard for humans;
 grief from the gods in due measure
 falls upon the house of murderers. 1270

Children speak from inside skenē.

CHILD

Oh, help me!

CHORUS (*speaks*)

Do you hear a shout? Hear the children?
 O reckless woman, evil fate!

CHILD A

Oimoi, what can I do? Where run from mother's hands?

CHILD B

I don't know, dearest brother – we're lost!

CHORUS (*sings*)

Shall I enter the house? I am determined 1275
 to prevent the children's murder.

CHILD A

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Yes, by the gods, stop her in time!

CHILD B

We are so close now to the sword's trap.

CHORUS (*sings*)

Wretch, so you truly are rock or iron,
since you will kill the crop of children
you bore, their doom by your own hand. 1280

Children's screams stop abruptly.

Only one we've heard of, one woman before
who cast her hand against her own children.
When Zeus' wife Hera drove Ino mad
and sent her from the house in a daze, 1285
the miserable mother fell into the sea
for her children's unholy murder.

Stretching a foot over the sea cliff,
Ino perished, dying with her two sons.
What terrible act is still impossible? 1290

O women's marriage bed of many woes,
such evil you have already done to humankind!