**MEDEA** “Begs for more time” scene (1 M, 1 W)

Medea (MIH-DEE-UH)

Creon (KREE-ON)

(Medea rises. Creon comes in up Right with Men attending him. The Women move to one

side. He speaks to Medea, with an angry gesture toward Women.)

Creon. (At Center)

You have admirers, I see. Abate your pride: these people will not be with you where you are going. ( A pause. Medea does not answer. Creon brings his wrath under control and crosses up to second step to Right of Medea) Medea, woman of the stone forehead and hate-filled eyes : I have made my decision. I have decided that you must leave this land at once and go into banishment with your children. I intend to remove a root of disturbance out of the soil of Corinth. I am here to see to it. I will not return home until it is done.

Medea.

You mean — banishment?

Creon.

Exile : banishment : go where you may, Medea, but here you abide no more.

Medea.

— I with my children?

Creon.

I will not take them away from you.

Medea.

The children, my lord— (Her lips move angrily, but the voice is not heard.)

Creon.

What are you muttering?

Medea.

Nothing — I am praying to my gods for wisdom, and you for mercy. My sons are still very young, tender and helpless. You know, my lord, what exile means — to wander with fear and famine for guide and driver, through all the wild winter storms and the rage of the sun ; and beg a bread-crust and be derided ; pelted with stones in the villages, held a little lower than the scavenger dogs, kicked, scorned and slaved — the children, my lord, are Jason’s children. Your chosen friend, I believe, and now even closer bound. And as for me, your servant, O master of Corinth, what have I done? Why must I be cast?

Creon.

I will tell you frankly: because you nourish rancorous ill will toward persons whom I intend to protect : I send you out before you’ve time to do harm here. And you are notorious for occult knowledge : sorcery, poisons, magic. Men say you can even sing down the moon from heaven, and make the holy stars to falter and run backward, against the purpose and current of nature. Ha ? As to that I know not : I know you are dangerous. You threaten my daughter : you have to go.

Medea.

But I wish her well, my lord ! I wish her all happiness. I hope that Jason may be as kind to her as — to me.

Creon.

That is your wish?

Medea.

I misspoke. I thought of old days — (She seems to weep.)

Creon.

I acknowledge, Medea, that you have some cause for grief. I all the more must guard against your dark wisdom and bitter heart.

Medea.

You misjudge me cruelly. It is true that I have some knowledge of drugs and medicines: I can sometimes cure sickness. Is that a crime? These dark rumors, my lord, are only the noise of popular gratitude. (Crosses down to one step above him ) You must have observed it often: if any person knows a little more than the common man, the people suspect him. If he brings a new talent, how promptly the hateful whispers begin. But you are not a common man, lord of Corinth; you will not fear knowledge.

Creon.

No. Nor change my decision. I am here to see you leave this house and the city : and not much time. Move quickly, gather your things and go. I pity you, Medea, but you must go. (He crosses off steps, with back to her down Right Center.)

Medea.

You pity me? You — pity me? (She comes close to him, wild with rage) I will endure a dog’s pity or a wart-grown toad’s. May God who hears me — We shall see in the end who's to be pitied.

Creon.

Yes, and I’ll keep her safe of your female hatred: therefore I send you out of this land.

Medea.

It is not true, I am not jealous. I never hated her. Jealous for the sake of Jason? I am far past wanting Jason, my lord. You took him and gave him to her, and I will say you did well, perhaps wisely. Your daughter is loved by all : she is beautiful : if I were near her I would soon love her.

Creon.

You can speak sweetly enough, you can make honey in your mouth like a brown bee when it serves your turn.

Medea.

Not honey: the truth.

Creon.

Trust you or not, you are going out of this country, what I decide is fixed; (Medea crosses away from him to Center.) It is like the firm rocks of Acrocorinth, which neither earthquake can move nor a flood of tears melt. Make ready quickly: I have a guest in my house. I should return to him.

Medea

(Crosses; kneels to Creon) I know that your will is granite. But even on the harsh face of a granite mountain some flowers of mercy may grow in season. Have mercy on my little sons Creon, ’ though there is none for me. (She reaches to embrace his knees. He steps backward from her.)

Creon.

How long, woman ? This is decided; done; finished.

Medea.

(Risinq from her knees, turns half away from him) I am not a beggar. I will not trouble you. I shall not live long. (Crosses two steps to Left; turns to him again ) Sire : grant me a few.hours yet, one day to prepare in, one little day before I go out of Corinth forever.

Creon.

What? No! I told you. The day is today, Medea, this day. And the hour is now.

Medea.

There are no flowers on this mountain : not one violet, not one anemone. Your face, my lord, is like flint.— If I could find the right words, if some god would lend me a touch of eloquence, I’d show you my heart. (Crosses to Creon ) I’d lift it out of my breast and turn it over in my hands ; you’d see how pure it is of any harm or malice toward you or your household. (She holds out her hands to him) Look at it : not a speck : look, my lord. They call mercy the jewel of kings. I am praying to you as to one of the gods: destroy us not utterly. To go out with no refuge, nothing prepared, is plain death: I would rather kill myself quickly and here. If I had time but to ask the slaves and strolling beggars where to go, how to live: and I must gather some means : one or two jewels and small gold things I have, (Crosses away from Creon to Left ) to trade them for bread and goat’s milk. (Crosses up steps to Center of doorway) Wretched, wretched, wretched I am, I and my boys. ( She kneels again) I beseech you, Creon, by the soft yellow hair and cool smooth forehead and the white knees of that young girl who is now Jason’s bride : lend me this inch of time: one day — half a day. For this one is now half gone — and I will go my sad course and vanish in the morning quietly as dew that drops on the stones at dawn and is dry at sunrise. You will never again be troubled by any word or act of mine. And this I pray you for your dear child’s sake. Oh Creon, what is half a day in all the rich years of Corinth?

Creon.

I will think of it. I am no tyrant.I have been merciful to my own hurt, many times. Even to myself I seem to be foolish if I grant you this thing — No, Medea, I will not grant it. (Three Women rise, cross down Right of Creon, imploringly) Well — We shall watch you : as a hawk does a viper. What harm could she do in the tail of one day? A ruler ought to be ruthless, but I am not. I am a fool in my own eyes, whatever the world may think. I can be gruff with warriors ; a woman weeping (Medea weeps.) floods me off course. — Take it, then. Make your preparations. But if tomorrow’s sun shines on you here — Medea, you die — (Medea and Women make a gesture of thanks.) Enough words. Thank me not. I want my hands washed of this business. (He departs quickly up Right, followed by his Men. Medea rises from her knees.)

Medea.

I will thank you and the whole world will hear of it.