MEDEA “I did it for you, Medea” scene (1 M, 1 W)

Medea (MIH-DEE-UH)

Creon (KREE-ON)

(Medea leans wearily against one of the pillars of the doorway, her back to the stage, unconscious of what they are saying. Jason enters in haste up Right, followed by armed attendants, and speaks angrily.)

Jason.

Where is Medea ?

(They do not answer for a moment, but look involuntarily toward Medea, and Jason sees her. She jerks and stiffens at the sound of his voice, but does not turn.)

Jason.

Ha? What she has done. Not I. Not by my will she and my sons are exiled.

Medea.

(Slowly turns and faces him, her head high, rigid with inner violence ) Is there another dog here?

Jason.

So, Medea, you have once more affronted and insulted the head of Corinth. This is not the first time I’ve seen what a fool anger is. You might have lived here happily, secure and honored — I hoped you would — by being just a little decently respectful toward those in power. Instead you had to go mad with anger and talk yourself into exile. To me it matters little what you say about me, but rulers are sensitive. Time and again I’ve smoothed down Creon’s indignation, then you like a madwoman, like a possessed imbecile, wag your head and let the words flow again; you never cease from speaking evil against him and his family. So now — Call yourself lucky, Medea, not to get worse than exile. (Crosses a few steps to Medea on 2nd step) In spite of all this, I have your interest at heart and am here to help you. Exile’s a bitter business. I want to make some provision for you. I wish you no harm, although you hate me. (He waits former to speak, but she is silent. He continues ) And in particular the children, my sons ; our sons. — You might have been decent enough to have thought of our sons.

Medea. (Slowly)

Did you consider them when you betrayed this house?

Jason.

Certainly I considered them. It was my hope that they would grow up here, and I, having married power, could protect and favor them. And if perhaps, after many years, I become Dynast of Corinth — for that is Creon'\* desire, to make me his heir — our sons would have been a king’s sons — I hope to help them wherever they go : but now of course must look forward to younger children. (Steps down off steps and turns from her.)

Medea.

(Trembling) Ah — it’s enough. Something might happen. It is — likely that — something might happen to the bride and the marriage.

Jason.

I’ll guard against it. But evidently Creon is right to be rid of you. (He crosses as if to go off Right. She stops

him when he is up Right Center. )

Medea.

(Rises and crosses to Center) Have you finished now? I thought I would let you

speak on and spread out your shamlessness before these women : the way a Tyrian trader unrolls his rare fabrics : “Do you like it, ladies ?” It is the Dog's daughter’s husband. It is a brave person : it has finally got up its courage — with a guard of spears — to come and look me in the face. (Jason turns away from her „ Medea makes gestures as if to take him in her arms, then stops) O Jason : how have you pulled me down to this hell of vile thoughts ? I did not use to talk like a common woman. I loved you once : and I am ashamed of it: (Jason sits rock Right. She crosses two steps Left) but there are some things that ought to be remembered by you and me. That blue day when we drove through the Hellespont into Greek sea, and the great-shouldered heroes were singing at the oars, and those birds flying through the blown foam : that day was too fine I suppose for Creon’s daughter’s man to remember (Jason rises as if to leave.) — but you might remember whether I cheated my father for you and tamed the fire-breathing brazen-hoofed bulls; and whether I saved your life in the field of the teeth; and you might remember whether I poisoned the great serpent and got you the Golden Fleece; and fled with you, and killed my brother when he pursued us, making myself abominable in my own home ; and then in yours I got your enemy Pelias hacked to death by his own daughter’s hands — whatever these fine Corinthian friends of yours may say against my rapid and tricky wisdom : you it has served, you it has served well : (Jason starts to speak.) here are five times, if I counted right — and all’s not counted — that your adventure would have been dusty death if I’d not saved you — but now you think that your adventures are over ; you are safe and high placed in Corinth, and will need me no more. It is a bit of a dog, isn’t if, women? It is well qualified to sleep with the dog's daughter. (Jason makes a gesture of wrath.) But for me, Jason, me driven by the hairy snouts from the quadruped marriage-bed, what refuge does your prudent kindness advise ? Shall I fly home to Colchis to put my neck in the coil of a knotted rope, for the crimes I served you with? Or shall I go and kneel to the daughter of Pelias? They would indeed be happy to lay their hands on my head: holding the very knives and the cleavers that carved their sire. The world is a little closed to me, eh? By the things I have done for you ( Crosses away from him to down Center.)

Jason.

(Slowly crossing to Center to Right of Medea) I see, Medea, you have been a very careful merchant of benefits. You forget none, you keep a strict reckoning. But — some little things that I on my side have done for you ought to be in the books too: as, for example, that I carried you out of the dirt and superstition of Asiatic Colchis into the rational sunlight of Greece, and the marble music of the Greek temples: is that no benefit? And I have brought you to meet the first minds of our time, and to speak as an equal with the great heroes and the rulers of cities: is that no benefit? And now — this grievous thing that you hate me for : That I have married Creon’s young daughter, little Creusa : do you think I did it like a boy or a woman, out of blind passion? I did it to achieve power here; and I’d have used that power to protect you and our sons, but your jealous madness has muddled everything. And finally: (Jason crosses above Medea to top step ) As to those acts of service you so loudly boast — whom do I thank for them? I thank divine Venus, the goddess who makes girls fall in love. You did them because

you had to do them; Venus compelled you; I enjoyed her favor. (Crosses down two steps to her Left) A man dares things, you know; he makes his adventure in the cold eye of death; and if the gods care for him they appoint an instrument to save him ; if not, he dies. You were that instrument.

Medea.

Here it is: the lowest. The obscene dregs; the slime and the loathing; the muddy bottom of a mouthed cup: when a scoundrel begins to invoke the gods

Jason.

Ha!

Medea.

You had better go, Jason. Vulgarity is a contagious disease ; and in a moment what could I do but spit at you like a peasant, or curse you like a drunken slave? You had better take yourself back to “Little Creusa.”

Jason.

I came to help you and save you if possible. (Reaches down and touches her arm.)

Medea.

Your help is not wanted. Go. Go.

Jason.

(Crosses below her to Right Center , then stops) If I could see my boys —

Medea.

Go quickly.

Jason.

Yours the regret then. (Exits up Right. Watching him go, Medea strokes her wrist and hand to the tips of the spread fingers, as if she were scraping off slime.)