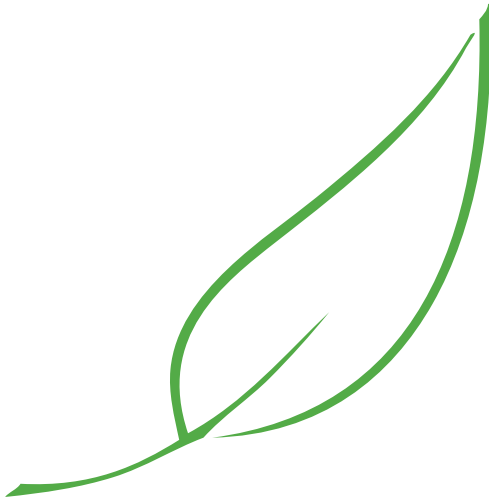


Medea In Black And White

By Charles Eichman



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SYNOPSIS: The classic play by Euripides gets a unique facelift in this "act and a half" adaptation. The story is retold by a chorus of performers who "wake up," assemble the stage, perform the play, and then disassemble the set. Includes a unique prequel depicting the voyage of Jason and the Argonauts (with some memorable sight gags involving a "dragon" and a "How's my sailing?" bit). The original tried and true plot is, of course, followed closely, though the typically choral commentary is expressed through the characters of the "White" and "Black" choruses, each of whom serves the dual function of observer and participant in the story. Features a simple set, flexible casting (outside the principals) and brisk pacing.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(5 females, 4 males, 3-15 either)

MEDEA (f)a sorceress
 BLACK CHORUS (f) Medea (and the play's) "voice"
 WHITE CHORUS (f) Medea (and the play's) "voice"
 GRAY CHORUS (m/f)(minimum of 8 actors):
 JASON (m)former husband to Medea
 CREON (m)King of Corinth
 NURSE (f)servant of Medea
 TUTOR (m)servant of Medea
 AEGEUS (m)King of nearby land
 PRINCESS (f) Daughter of Creon, Jason's bride
 CHILDREN Of MEDEA (2)
 GUARDS
 CITIZENS Of CORINTH

SETTING

A vaporous, eternal void, materializing at random intervals throughout eternity for a period of approximately one hour.

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PROLOGUE: RISING FROM THE VOID

AT RISE: *CHORUS members lie about the stage haphazardly, sleeping on top of whatever flats, platforms, etc. are being used for the production. A few are snoring. BLACK/WHITE sit in a prominent position, back to back, leaning on each other for support. Except for their neck and heads, they are covered, shoulder to ground, in a red blanket. Like everyone else, they are snoozing away. Eventually, the bright lights burn their way behind BLACK's eyelids. She yawns a bit, looks around, taps WHITE.*

BLACK: Hey... hey... (*WHITE moans disconsolately.*) Hey... HEY!

WHITE: (*bothered*) What?! (*BLACK points at the lights. WHITE looks up, squints.*)

WHITE: Eh?

BLACK: It's time.

WHITE: Eh?

BLACK: It's time.

(WHITE looks up at lights, over her shoulder at BLACK. She is still "wiping the sleep out of her eyes.")

WHITE: (*yawns*) Are you sure about this?

BLACK: (*a bit put out*) Yes. C'mon on, now. C'mon. Let's start.

WHITE: Alright already! Just hold your horses. (*A beat or two of WHITE yawning, rolling her neck, etc.*)

BLACK: Ahem!

WHITE: (*sighs*) Okay, okay! I'm ready.

BLACK: One... two... THREE!

(They pull apart. A tearing, velcro-like sound occurs. The red blanket drops to the ground. BLACK and WHITE are revealed for the first time as their separate (and usually equal) selves. Henceforth, they will serve as commentators on and narrators of the play (as well as their additional function of representing the various aspects of MEDEA's personality.)

(BLACK and WHITE wake up a few members of the GRAY CHORUS [WHITE in a motherly fashion, BLACK rather roughly]. As CHORUS awakes, they begin to kibbitz, the general conversation running something like, "Well, it's time to get on with-" "Again?" "Hey, didn't we just-". They take some time to greet each other ["Sleep well?" "Why, yes." etc.]. Meanwhile, WHITE sneaks off, sits down and begins to perform yoga. Chattering among GRAY CHORUS continues, until...)

WHITE: *(meditating in a lotus position)* OMMMMMMMMMMMMMM
MMMMMMM....OMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMM....

(Rest of cast stares at her. BLACK tries to take charge of situation.)

BLACK: Alright, now, we need to-

WHITE: OMMMMMM...

(Once again, everybody stares. The "OMMMMMMMM'ing" stops. WHITE begins rolling her neck, stretching, etc., continuing the ritual. Finally...)

BLACK: *(claps hands loudly)* All right, now, break it up! Enough chit chat! Get to your places!

(And they do. Upbeat music plays, as GRAY CHORUS assembles the stage, which includes several flats. Flats representing MEDEA's house are covered in red cloth, while flats representing "The House Of Creon" are covered in gold cloth. Neutral ground [the area behind most of CS] is represented by a blue backdrop.)

(BLACK barks out orders, complains a bit about their effort. GRAY CHORUS responds in various ways, yet moves with purpose. BLACK eventually ushers them all offstage, save one CHORUS MEMBER, who remains behind to straighten out cloth, check flats, platforms, etc. The music dies, as CHORUS MEMBER gives BLACK a "thumbs up.")

BLACK: Good! *(She grabs the red blanket, tosses it to a the departing CHORUS member)* Take this with you.

CHORUS MEMBER: When are we starting?

BLACK: *(points at WHITE)* Soon as I pull her out of "lotus land."

(CHORUS MEMBER nods, smirks, exits. BLACK gingerly approaches WHITE, taps her shoulder.)

BLACK: Uh, hello? *(No response.)* It's, uh, it's time. *(No response.)*
Hello?

WHITE: Sh! *(pause)*

BLACK: *(impatient exhalation)* Look, can y-

WHITE: Sh!

BLACK: But-

WHITE: A few more seconds... *(BLACK disgusted with her.)* Wait
for it...waaait...waaait... *(her eyes fly open)* Done! *(springs to her feet)* Now. What is it?

BLACK: Well, we're here.

WHITE: *(looks around, nods)* Yes. *(long pause)* Where?

BLACK: Pardon?

WHITE: Where?

BLACK: Oh! Here. *(pause)*

WHITE: Um, where is here?

BLACK: Where things happen.

WHITE: Oh.... *(beat)* Eh?

BLACK: Where things happen.

WHITE: Happen?

BLACK: Yes, happen... remember? *(pause)*

WHITE: *(dawning recognition)* Wait a minute... oh, no, not again...

BLACK: Yes...

WHITE: Surely not.

BLACK: Yes.

WHITE: Oh, please, surely not.

BLACK: YES! We must do it again.

WHITE: Again?

BLACK: Again.

WHITE: Again? *(BLACK nods.)* 'Til when?

BLACK: Forever.

WHITE: What?

BLACK: Forever. Forever and ever and ever and ever... **(pause)**

WHITE: Surely n-.

BLACK: YES!

WHITE: **(sulks)** Why?

BLACK: Well... can you imagine not doing it?

WHITE: Hmmmm... **(steps aside and actually "ponders" for a few beats, chin in hand, tapping foot, etc.; then)** It's no use, I can't.

But why?

BLACK: Because. **(pause)**

WHITE: Because why?

BLACK: **(majestically)** Because "no one must ever forget!"

WHITE: **(disappointed)** Oh.

BLACK: **(indicating audience)** And, uh, they are waiting.

WHITE: Ohhh...

BLACK: Can't just let them come in and, you know... just sit there.

WHITE: Right, right.

BLACK: Fine, then. Well - shall we?

(Beat.)

WHITE: Shall we what?

BLACK: Shall we begin?

WHITE: Begin? Oh! Yes, yes, of course.

(pause)

BLACK: Well?

WHITE: Well what?

BLACK: Aren't you going to start?

WHITE: Why me?

BLACK: It's your turn.

WHITE: But, I started last time!

BLACK: It's your turn.

WHITE:L But -

BLACK: It's your. Turn! **(pause)**

WHITE: You're mean.

BLACK: **(shrugs)** Eh.

(A change in lighting to signify SCENE 1.)

SCENE 1: IT IS A TALE

WHITE: It is a tale of love.

BLACK: A tale of hate.

WHITE: Two sides of a coin.

BLACK: A deadly coin.

WHITE: Yes... where to begin?

BLACK: Uh, at the beginning.

WHITE: Yes, but how to tell it?

BLACK: Unadorned - like a blade drawn from a sheath. Tell first of him...

(JASON appears, assumes a haughty pose.)

WHITE: Ah, yes - him. He... is a quester.

BLACK: A wayfarer.

WHITE: A wanderer

BLACK: A ne'er do well.

WHITE: A hero.

BLACK: A villain.

WHITE: We should tell it unadorned, like you said.

(BLACK regards WHITE with disdain. WHITE regards JASON, continues, "unadorned.")

WHITE: It begins with a quest

(CHORUS appears, assuming poses similar to JASON's [hands on hips, jaws jutting forth, etc.] As the scene between BLACK and WHITE, below, unfurls, the following occurs: CHORUS creates "Argo," most members rowing. Two of them grasp and wave dark blue cloth to represent water. Yet another CHORUS MEMBER appears behind the crew, holding a wide piece of canvas in front of them, serving as the "mast." Written on the piece of unfurled cloth are the words "HOW'S MY SAILING? CALL 1-800-R-GO-

NAUT." *JASON stands behind them, as well, his pose indomitable [and still haughty].)*

WHITE: A crew, and a tall ship set to steer a star, the greatest boat and crew the world had ever known. And a voyage...

(WHITE glances at BLACK, expectantly.)

BLACK: *(sighs)* Okay. Where?

WHITE: To the end of the earth. A voyage fraught with danger.

BLACK: *(aside)* Aren't they all?

WHITE: Ahem...

BLACK: Sorry. Do go on.

WHITE: Yes, a dangerous voyage, quite dangerous. *(looks over at BLACK, who is yawning)* Much more dangerous than average.

BLACK: *(shrugs)* Eh.

WHITE: They passed through clashing rocks!

(CHORUS MEMBERS [except JASON and MAST MINDER] shriek loudly, then go right back to their "rowing." MAST MINDER drops the cloth, looks about quizzically, then raises it again.)

WHITE: They overcame the great serpent!

(Another shriek, the same actions as noted above.)

WHITE: They dodged the whirlpool!

(Yet another shriek. CHORUS MEMBERS holding the "water" rise, trot across, switch places. As they do so, they say in a high-pitched voice: "Whirlpoooooo!")

BLACK: Good for them.

WHITE: And this was just in the getting there.

BLACK: As I said -

ALL: *(save BLACK)* Ahem!

WHITE: Do you mind? They did pay, you know.

(CHORUS assumes pose of contempt. They no longer row, but begin to complain among themselves about BLACK's interruption. BLACK feels the pressure.)

BLACK: Okay, okay! Sor-ree! ***(to audience)*** And, uh, sorry.

WHITE: Where was I?

BLACK: The voyage.

WHITE: Ah, yes! The voyage!

(CHORUS does not respond. They are still shaking their heads over BLACK's recalcitrance.)

WHITE: Ahem! ***(CHORUS looks to her)*** The, uh, voyage, please?

ALL: ***(a beat, then:)*** Oh! ***(they recover, then reassume their required positions)***

WHITE: At long last, after many trials and tribulations, they rounded into view of that far-off land, as much lucky as they were skilled. Yet, they braved that danger, willingly. But why? Why did they so?

(WHITE waits for BLACK's response, but BLACK seems to be daydreaming. WHITE looks at her in disdain, taps foot loudly.)

WHITE: Hel-lo!

BLACK: Mm?

WHITE: "But why? Why did they so?"

BLACK: ***(a moment of confusion)*** Oh! Uh... magic! The magic drove them.

(MEDEA enters, clad in red, carrying with her the Golden Fleece. Her looks are wild, foreign, barbaric. Nestled in her hair is a bejeweled, stiletto-like ornament [ostensibly some sort of ornament, but it could, and ultimately will, serve as a nice weapon in a pinch]. JASON's crew stops rowing and looks upon the Fleece in awe.)

BLACK: ***(less than majestically)*** It was once a flying ram - I kid you not. This guy named Prixis - or Phrixis, or Pixies or something like that - brought it to this far-off land... where it was killed, skinned,

and left hanging in a tree. **(shakes head deploringly)** Why the general populace held such a thing in such low esteem, no one knows. It's not like flying, golden-fleeced rams are commonplace, y'know.

WHITE: **(tiring of her attitude)** No! **(sort of gets in BLACK's face)** They're magic.

BLACK: **(sighs; she's got to go on)** Yes, Yes. Magic. Like the moon... "God's will on earth." It had the power to heal whomever it shrouded. And whosoever owned it, it was said, would be master of his fate. Which is why he wanted it. Power.

(BLACK disdainfully regards JASON, whose eyes are full of greed.)

BLACK: Typical.

WHITE: This was his quest.

BLACK: **(sighs)** Yes, it was, I'll grant you. Poor fellow was sent to the ends of the earth by the foul man who had taken his kingdom - though poor ol' Jason here didn't know that at the time. Just like he didn't know that returning to his kingdom with the fleece would make him famous, but not a king. Then again, that fellow who sent Jason on the quest was ever so sure the boy would die on the way.

WHITE: But he didn't.

BLACK: Nope.

WHITE: He came to this land intact.

BLACK: Yep. So much for dark scheming...

WHITE: He comes! Seeking the fleece.

BLACK: Yep.

WHITE: Gaining it!

BLACK: Ah, but not without danger...

WHITE: No, not without danger.

BLACK: The dragon!

(On those two words, both BLACK and WHITE make a dramatic gesture toward the CHORUS, which stares back at them dumbly.)

WHITE: Ahem! The, uh, dragon?

(CHORUS members look at each other, still confused. After a beat or two or murmuring, one of them says.)

CHORUS MEMBER: Alright, huddle up! Huddle up!

(They gather in a circle, as BLACK casts daggers at them. WHITE calms her, taking her through a series of yoga exercises. A few beats, and the huddle breaks with a clap.)

"DRAGON": ***(strides purposefully over next to MEDEA stops, turns, looks out proudly, and with hands on hips, says)*** Roar!

(WHITE and BLACK shake their heads in disappointment.)

"DRAGON": ***(continues, quite happy with "itself.")*** Roar! Roar, roar, roar! ***(burps, sports an embarrassed look)*** Roar! ***(now standing there next to MEDEA, stupid grin plastered on its face.)***

BLACK: ***(trying to recover)*** The large, powerful, mean, vicious... ***(looks at DRAGON, who is still smiling away; shakes head)***...toothy dragon takes the fleece from Medea's people. ***(grabs fleece, tosses it to "DRAGON")*** It takes the prize away to its lair... ***(rest of CHORUS creates "lair" entrance, "DRAGON" heads that way)*** ...where it jealousy, eternally guards it. ***("DRAGON" now seated in "lair's" entrance)*** What will Jason do now? Why, anyone trying to take the fleece away from this horrible, vicious, cruel, mean, toothy watchdog would surely die before he pried the jewel from its clutches!

"DRAGON": ***(smiling)*** Roar!

WHITE: ***(rolls eyes)*** But, there is a way?

BLACK: Of course. ***(regards MEDEA)*** She. She will help him.

WHITE: How?

BLACK: She is both daughter of the sun, and disciple of the dark. A sorceress, skilled in the wild arts.

(MEDEA approaches "Dragon," weaves a spell.)

BLACK: The great beast falls, falls, falls into the pit of slumber.

("DRAGON" stares stupidly at MEDEA, grinning widely. A beat or two, then it abruptly flops over with a loud "THUNK!" CHORUS MEMBERS hand the fleece to MEDEA.)

BLACK: So much for dragons...

(MEDEA gives JASON the FLEECE.)

BLACK: It is she who makes his victory possible.

WHITE: Why? Why does she help him? The fleece belongs to her people! It is their prize!

BLACK: ***(with disdain)*** She is... in love.

WHITE: The will of the gods...

BLACK: Yes. Their magic overcomes hers...

WHITE: And she is in love.

BLACK: The love that kills.

(MEDEA, JASON exit.)

BLACK: She betrays her country and family, and flees the land...

WHITE: She had no choice.

BLACK: She leaves it all - her family, her homeland...

WHITE: She had no choice!

BLACK: She had no choice...

(But BLACK's tone indicates the opposite of what she says. Soft lighting. MEDEA re-enters, stands alone onstage, looking lost.)

WHITE: And now?

BLACK: Now... the years have passed... She has come to Corinth after a long journey.

WHITE: She is married.

BLACK: Yes. And more.

(NURSE [clad in red sash over right shoulder] and MEDEA's two children [wearing red] appear.)

WHITE: They are his.

BLACK: And hers.

WHITE: Where is he?

BLACK: (*ruefully*) He has what he wants.

(PRINCESS and CREON appear. ALL wear the "insignia" of CREON's house -- a gold sash over the left shoulder. CREON gives JASON the PRINCESS' hand in marriage. MEDEA looks on with anger, frustration, sadness. She strides toward the couple, pulling the stiletto from her hair, meaning to plunge it into JASON's back. But JASON, PRINCESS, et al, exit before she gets the chance, leaving her alone with BLACK and WHITE. MEDEA stares briefly, painfully in the direction which JASON departed. Then she exits. Soft lighting...)

BLACK: Well, well. What treachery among men.

WHITE: If you'll remember, she betrayed her family, as well.

BLACK: Let's try to keep some perspective, shall we? Let's talk degrees. Who really used whom, ah? Who dumped whom?

WHITE: True. Oh, it is despicable! Yet, somehow, she still loves him.

BLACK: The remnant of the gods' spell. And the other side of the same coin.

WHITE: How?

BLACK: That which you can love, you can most surely hate. With a passion...

(Lights dim as BLACK, WHITE exit.)

SCENE 2: A HOUSE TEETERS

(Music through a blue wash. Lights slowly rise on passersby. It is morning. They greet each other, begin conversing, etc. When lights reach full...)

(MEDEA storms in, followed by NURSE, TUTOR and CHILDREN. Like the NURSE, the TUTOR wears a red sash over his right shoulder. As already mentioned, the children are clad in red.)

MEDEA: No!

NURSE: Please, my lady!

MEDEA: Silence! I will hear no more!

TUTOR: You must listen to reason, my lady!

MEDEA: Reason? You want me to be reasonable? After what he's done? You're mad.

TUTOR: My lady, think of your children. You must determine how to best provide for them.

MEDEA: I don't care what happens to them! Let the whole house fall in ruin - with Jason in it! **(glaring at children)** And may both of you die with him...

NURSE: **(screening children)** Don't listen to her, children. Your mother's angry. She doesn't know what she is saying.

MEDEA: I know perfectly well what I am saying! Let them all die, for all I care. Let Jason and his new, royal family perish in the most foul of deaths!

(Passersby look on in shock.)

TUTOR: **(pulls MEDEA aside)** Lady, beware - you slander the king.

MEDEA: What do you know, old man? How can you understand one iota of my grief? Or you, nurse? Or these baleful progeny of Jason standing here to spite me? Let them all perish. Death to their house!

NURSE: Lady -

MEDEA: Out of my sight! Away!

(Passersby nervously depart. TUTOR urges NURSE, CHILDREN to leave, they do. He tactfully addresses MEDEA.)

TUTOR: Mistress Medea -

MEDEA: I thought I ordered you to go.

TUTOR: Perhaps you did. I am old, and do not comprehend things as quickly as I used to. But since I am here... My lady, I have served you many years. We have shared many days and miles. Now, I know I am not of noble blood, but I have seen much in this great world. Enough to know that such rage only brings about destruction.

MEDEA: What are you saying, old man?

TUTOR: You must think calmly and rationally, my lady. Your house teeters on fragile legs.

MEDEA: What house? There is no house! There is no homeland for me to return to. In short, there is nothing!

TUTOR: You still live, lady. As do your children.

MEDEA: What comfort is that, old man?

TUTOR: In life, there is hope.

MEDEA: I'd rather be dead.

TUTOR: Do not beg for that, my lady! Never that.

MEDEA: Leave me.

TUTOR: Lady -

MEDEA: Leave me!

(TUTOR exits. BLACK and WHITE CHORUSES enter on his heels. They edge their way into the scene. Lights dim on MEDEA.)

WHITE: So, it comes to this again.

BLACK: Yes, well... You do your job, I'll do mine.

WHITE: Naturally...

BLACK: Though we both know what is going to happen.

(WHITE glances ruefully at BLACK, then gingerly approaches MEDEA. As the CHORUSES address her, MEDEA acknowledges their presence, but never looks directly at them. This holds true of their relationship for the entire play.)

WHITE: Lady... in life, there is hope...

MEDEA: Wasted words. I am lost.

WHITE: Have faith, Medea! Keep the faith!

MEDEA: ***(a refusal)*** There is no faith! There is no joy! I have given up all I have ever known to a man who proved the vilest serpent of all!

BLACK: Yes, vile. Vile. Treacherous. Deceitful.

MEDEA: My husband...

BLACK: Of everything alive, we women are the most wretched of creatures. In order to get anywhere in this world, we are forced to take a husband.

MEDEA: To take a master for our bodies!

WHITE: Yes, but if we manage this well, the yoke is enviable.

MEDEA: And if not...

BLACK: Then it strangles us. For how can we ever truly know what we are getting into? Who knows if we are taking a good husband or bad? If good, then, yes, the yoke is enviable. But if bad...

MEDEA: Death would be enviable...

WHITE: That is not the way we are supposed to behave!

BLACK: Then we must come to new ways of behavior.

MEDEA: He carried me like plunder from a foreign land! I have no family...

BLACK: No mother, no father, no relative at all...

MEDEA: ...no friends, no homeland. He wreaks disaster upon me...

BLACK: ...but leaves you nowhere to run to, and so...

MEDEA: ...Death... is enviable...

(Pause.)

WHITE: Death is never enviable! And death of that kind is shame!
Shame!

(Roll of a deep, low drum.)

WHITE: ***(points offstage)*** But look! The king comes!

BLACK: Of course. It's that time.

WHITE: She has been slandering his family in public!

BLACK: Yes. She has.

WHITE: He comes to punish her. Oh, what will she do?

BLACK: What else? Beg him. Beg him for forgiveness.

WHITE: Alack, more shame!

BLACK: Not shame, but shrewdness. Watch...

(BLACK and WHITE melt into darkness.)

SCENE 3: A KING'S DECREE

(A HERALD enters, a gold sash over the left shoulder.)

HERALD: Behold! Creon, king of this land!

(CREON enters, attended by a GUARD. Both wear gold sashes, as does the HERALD. MEDEA assumes a pose of respect.)

MEDEA: Greetings, my king. To what do I owe the honor?

CREON: Let's skip the pleasantries, shall we? The proclamation please.

(HERALD hands him a scroll.)

CREON: **(reading)** "Medea, former wife of Jason, inhabitant of that far-off land of Colchis - you stand accused of slander against the royal family. For this crime, and in anticipation of others, I hereby proclaim that you and your children must go into exile without delay." **(rolls up the scroll)**

MEDEA: Now, my lord?

CREON: **(hands her scroll)** Now.

MEDEA: But, my lord -

CREON: There is no appeal. I shall not leave this spot until I see you escorted beyond our borders.

MEDEA: **(aside)** My enemies are sailing against me...

CREON: What? More slander from that tongue of yours? Haven't you said enough already?

MEDEA: My lord, what have I said?

CREON: That myself and my whole house should fall in ruin. That you wished the death of every member of Jason's new family, which, I needn't remind you, includes me. Do you deny that you uttered such curses?

MEDEA: No. No, I do not deny it. But there are reasons -

CREON: What possible reason could excuse such a crime?

MEDEA: The crimes of others. King Creon, what I have endured at the hands of my husband is bitter poison. Why do you add to it by exiling me and my children?

CREON: You think this is bitter? You should be thankful I don't have you executed.

MEDEA: So, you defend what Jason has done.

CREON: What Jason has done is immaterial.

MEDEA: Not to me!

CREON: I owe you no explanation.

MEDEA: Then you and my husband have much in common.

CREON: What has happened between yourself and Jason is a matter for you, he and the gods. The fact is you are a clever woman, Medea. Devious. Willful. Skilled in the black arts. In short, a wolf among my sheep.

MEDEA: It is not a crime to be clever!

CREON: No, but it is a crime to utter oaths of revenge against the royal family.

MEDEA: My lord, surely you don't think I'm plotting against you?

CREON: I'm not a fool, Medea.

MEDEA: But this is unjust! You have no cause!

CREON: Protecting my house is cause enough!

MEDEA: Well, I see how it is now, with women. Once we acquire knowledge, we are the most dangerous animals in the world, fit either to be caged or put away.

CREON: Philosophize all you want - all I know is what I hear, and what I see.

MEDEA: And what is it that you see, Creon, King of Corinth?

CREON: Impudence.

MEDEA: **(suddenly [and strangely] contrite)** Yes, I can be that way, and worse, when the mood strikes me. Perhaps if you understood the world I come from.

CREON: I do not wish to understand it.

MEDEA: But you should. Then you might understand the endless days of travel into the unknown, and what it's like to arrive in a land where you are greeted by gossip and suspicion. You would know what it is like to be different from everyone else, and scorned because of it. And finally you would see that, though my people are a hot-blooded people, that I am reacting not as some "clever" woman from a far shore, but as any other woman would in my place.

(Pause.)

CREON: Say what you will, my judgment stands.

MEDEA: It is my husband I hate! Not you!

CREON: That doesn't matter!

MEDEA: I am powerless! And what can hate do without power, without a blade to grasp?

CREON: And do you think I'm going to wait for you to find one?

MEDEA: I have nothing left but my children. Can't you at least think of them?

CREON: I grieve for your children, but... You must go into exile. It is the only way.

MEDEA: But there is no need!

CREON: I will not have my daughter's marriage end in disaster!

MEDEA: Is that what this is about? Then, let the marriage proceed, I say, and good luck to all of you.

CREON: Your words are hollow, witch.

MEDEA: But, hear me, my king!

CREON: Nothing you say will persuade me.

MEDEA: Creon, please!

CREON: DON'T YOU SEE, WOMAN? You will never be allowed to stay here! NEVER! You will go into exile, I swear it! You will go into exile, or by the gods, I'll...

(CREON takes weapon from the guard as if to use it on MEDEA. She is practically groveling now.)

MEDEA: Yes! Yes, my king! I will do as you say! I will go into exile! Staying here is not what I want, Creon!

CREON: Then, what do you want?

MEDEA: All I ask is that you allow me a single day to make preparations for myself and my children. Since their father cares so little for them, I am sure he will not bother to make any arrangements. But one day, Creon. That's all I ask.

CREON: ***(relaxes his aggressive stance)*** ...I, too, am a father. You shall have what you ask for. ***(gives weapon back to GUARD)***

MEDEA: Oh, Creon! Thank you! Thank you!

CREON: Don't thank me - I already regret my decision. Nevertheless, you have your day... ***(signals train to leave)*** But I tell you this - if the sunlight finds you within our borders by this time tomorrow, you will die. This is my final word. Remain - for but a single day.

(CREON and TRAIN exit. BLACK and WHITE re-enter.)

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WHITE: It all ended in disaster. Who can deny it?

BLACK: Oh, no, it has not come to that. There are still troubles ahead.

WHITE: For whom?

BLACK: The newlyweds.

MEDEA: Not to mention the man who made the match.

WHITE: Surely you don't mean -

MEDEA: Do you think I would have ever scraped and fawned before that man if there were no profit in it?

WHITE: You've been scheming all along!

MEDEA: Of course. And Creon has now plummeted to such depths of stupidity that it is impossible for him to stop my plans.

(MEDEA exits.)

WHITE: Plans? What plans?

BLACK: Revenge, sister. Revenge. Creon could have saved himself and his daughter by exiling her immediately. But now...

WHITE: What can she do in a single day?

BLACK: Plenty. She is a sorceress, the daughter of the sun, and disciple of the dark. She knows enough.

WHITE: To...?

BLACK: To make corpses of all her enemies. How shall she do it, ah? Set fire to the bridal house, perhaps? Or maybe she will slip silently into their wedding chamber and drive a sharpened sword through their hearts.

WHITE: She can't!

BLACK: She can!

WHITE: No!

BLACK: Oh, yes! Easily...

WHITE: All right, what if she is caught?

BLACK: Caught?

WHITE: Yes, caught. What if she is not only caught, but caught before she accomplishes the deed? What then?

BLACK: That's a problem...

WHITE: Yes it is. *Quite*.

BLACK: Her enemies would laugh at her!

WHITE: KOO-wite!

BLACK: And sweet revenge would grow harsh.

WHITE: Kooo-WITE!

BLACK: Would you stop saying that please?

WHITE: Sorry...

BLACK: Right. Now. What to do, what to do? If she's caught, what to do...

WHITE: Even if she's not caught, there are still troubles ahead.

BLACK: Eh?

WHITE: Where will she go? What city would take her? She has no friends in this part of the world. She knows no one. Face it - vengeance is not an option. Better to simply accept Creon's judgment. Therein lies her only chance at nobility.

BLACK: You think after what she's been through she cares about being noble? Would any woman? No, she will be revenged on them. And if need be, she will drive a blade through her own heart before she is caught.

WHITE: She will be reviled!

BLACK: She will be celebrated!

WHITE: She will slander our sex!

BLACK: She will bring honor to it!

WHITE: I say she will bring scorn!

BLACK: And I say women will finally be free from the bitter tongue of oppression! A small price to pay for one tiny parcel of dignity, don't you think?

WHITE: No. It is not.

BLACK: Oh, certainly! And, frankly, if more of us were willing to pay anything remotely resembling such a price, then perhaps we wouldn't still be slaves to men, thank you very much. But we pay nothing. We accept our sorry lot in life, and men continue to rule over us. What price freedom, ah? What price?

WHITE: **(steadfast)** It is too high.

BLACK: When it comes to freedom, no price is too high. A man looks into the eyes of another, and if he sees nothing there, he can do whatever he wants. Well, they will see her. They will all see her.

(Lights dim. BLACK, WHITE exit.)

SCENE 4: A BAD MAN'S GIFT

(Music. Lights rise on JASON and MEDEA. A SERVANT enters, bearing a tray with small decanter and two glasses. She sets them down, bows to JASON, exits.)

JASON: *(now clad in gold sash over left shoulder)* So - have you made arrangements to stay in another country?

MEDEA: How could I? I don't know anyone.

JASON: Come, come. You met many heads of state at all those feasts and festivals.

MEDEA: Those feasts were for you. Just like this marriage.

JASON: Hmpf. Again, you pluck that string.

MEDEA: Again. And ever again.

JASON: Surely you know a tune less discordant.

MEDEA: I only know the same woeful song I've been taught, thanks to you.

JASON: Yes, yes, yes! Let's go all over it again, shall we? You did everything for me, and I did nothing for you. You gained me wealth and fame, and stood by me like a dutiful wife, while I, the slovenly, lecherous husband cast you aside and went my merry way into someone else's bed. Does that about cover it? *(pause as he regards her scornfully)* That's what really gets under your skin, isn't it? The fact that I will sleep with another? Hmpf. You women. You think that if everything is fine in your bed, then everything must be just perfect outside it. I never forsook you for that, Medea. It was never about that.

MEDEA: What does it matter?

JASON: It matters!

MEDEA: To you, perhaps. It means nothing to me.

JASON: If you'd stop being so pig-headed and just listen for once, you might see how this marriage is the best thing for everyone.

MEDEA: Only if I were made stupid by the gods again. But that spell is long broken, Jason. Besides, you don't need me to listen. You've always been your own best audience.

(Beat.)

JASON: Once, just once, I wish I could make you open those stubborn ears! But have you ever stopped to listen to anyone? No. No. Instead, you rage against the wind, and spout unholy curses against the royal family - making enemies with every utterance, breaking bonds that I can't repair! Then, when your behavior gets you exactly what you deserve, you pin everything on me. Ask yourself, Medea - is this really all my fault?

MEDEA: What about your children?

JASON: I have been thinking about their future all along.

MEDEA: That is not possible!

JASON: How would you know? You haven't spoken to me since my marriage was approved by the king. You've been too busy railing to bother.

MEDEA: Then, what about them? You say you have their future in mind. Fine. What, then, is your "grand scheme?"

JASON: My plan has always been to allow my progeny every advantage. That's what this marriage will do.

MEDEA: How? By the gods, how?

JASON: You know full well that no child of this land can be counted a citizen unless both his parents are native to it.

MEDEA: And you blame me for that?

JASON: No. But the fact is, I am from here and you are not.

MEDEA: Your grasp of the obvious is keen as ever, Jason.

JASON: That's not the sole reason I'm marrying her, Medea.

MEDEA: **(sarcastic)** It's not?

JASON: Of course not. Have I fallen so far in your estimation?

(Pause. Eye contact between the two. Then:)

MEDEA: Tell me your reasons.

JASON: By marrying into a royal family, I have assured that our children will have kings and queens as their brothers and sisters. Moreover, they will benefit from any and all advantages that I may extend to them while I am in office.

MEDEA: Empty promises.

JASON: Hardly...

MEDEA: Oh, come, come! You said the same thing when you spoke to me of stealing the Golden Fleece. You said that would make you



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