

MEDEA

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

JASON.

CREON.

MEDEA.

NURSE.

MESSENGER.

CHORUS OF CORINTHIAN WOMEN.

SCENE — *Corinth.*

MEDEA

ACT I

SCENE I

Medea [alone]. Ye gods of marriage ;
Lucina, guardian of the genial bed ;
Pallas, who taught the tamer of the seas
To steer the Argo ; stormy ocean's lord ;
Titan, dividing bright day to the world ; 5
And thou three-formed Hecate, who dost shed
Thy conscious splendor on the hidden rites !
Ye by whom Jason plighted me his troth ;
And ye Medea rather should invoke :
Chaos of night eternal ; realm opposed 10
To the celestial powers ; abandoned souls ;
Queen of the dusky realm ; Persephone
By better faith betrayed ; you I invoke,
But with no happy voice. Approach, approach,
Avenging goddesses with snaky hair, 15
Holding in blood-stained hands your sulphurous
torch !
Come now as horrible as when of yore
Ye stood beside my marriage-bed ; bring death
To the new bride, and to the royal seed,
And Creon ; worse for Jason I would ask — 20

Life ! Let him roam in fear through unknown lands,
An exile, hated, poor, without a home ;
A guest now too well known, let him, in vain,
Seek alien doors, and long for me, his wife !
And, yet a last revenge, let him beget 25
Sons like their father, daughters like their mother !
'Tis done ; revenge is even now brought forth —
I have borne sons to Jason. I complain
Vainly, and cry aloud with useless words,
Why do I not attack mine enemies ? 30
I will strike down the torches from their hands,
The light from heaven. Does the sun see this,
The author of our race, and still give light ?
And, sitting in his chariot, does he still
Run through the accustomed spaces of the sky, 35
Nor turn again to seek his rising place,
And measure back the day ? Give me the reins ;
Father, let me in thy paternal car
Be borne aloft the winds, and let me curb
With glowing bridle those thy fiery steeds ! 40
Burn Corinth ; let the parted seas be joined !
This still remains — for me to carry up
The marriage torches to the bridal room,
And, after sacrificial prayers, to slay
The victims on their altars. Seek, my soul — 45
If thou still livest, or if aught endures
Of ancient vigor — seek to find revenge
Through thine own bowels ; throw off woman's
fears,
Intrench thyself in snowy Caucasus.

All impious deeds Phasis or Pontus saw, 50
Corinth shall see. Evils unknown and wild,
Hideous, frightful both to earth and heaven,
Disturb my soul,— wounds, and the scattered
 corpse,
And murder. I remember gentle deeds,
A maid did these; let heavier anguish come, 55
Since sterner crimes befit me now, a wife!
Gird thee with wrath, prepare thine utmost rage,
That fame of thy divorce may spread as far
As of thy marriage! Make no long delay.
How dost thou leave thy husband? As thou
 cam'st. 60
Homes crime built up, by crime must be dissolved.

SCENE II

Enter Chorus of Corinthian women, singing the marriage song of Jason and Creusa.

Chorus. Be present at the royal marriage feast,
Ye gods who sway the scepter of the deep,
And ye who hold dominion in the heavens;
With the glad people come, ye smiling gods! 65
First to the scepter-bearing thunderers
The white-backed bull shall stoop his lofty head;
The snowy heifer, knowing not the yoke,
Is due to fair Lucina; and to her
Who stays the bloody hand of Mars, and gives 70
To warring nations peace, who in her horn
Holds plenty, sacrifice a victim wild.

Thou who at lawful bridals dost preside,
Scattering darkness with thy happy hands,
Come hither with slow step, dizzy with wine, 75
Binding thy temples with a rosy crown.
Thou star that bringest in the day and night,
Slow-rising on the lover, ardently
For thy clear shining maids and matrons long.
In comeliness the virgin bride excels 80
The Athenian women, and the strong-limbed
maids
Of Sparta's unwalled town, who on the top
Of high Taÿgetus try youthful sports ;
Or those who in the clear Aonian stream,
Or in Alpheus' sacred waters bathe. 85
The child of the wild thunder, he who tames
And fits the yoke to tigers, is less fair
Than the Ausonian prince. The glorious god
Who moves the tripod, Dian's brother mild ;
The skillful boxer Pollux ; Castor, too, 90
Must yield the palm to Jason. O ye gods
Who dwell in heaven, ever may the bride
Surpass all women, he excel all men !
Before her beauty in the women's choir
The beauty of the other maids grows dim ; 95
So with the sunrise pales the light of stars,
So when the moon with brightness not her
own
Fills out her crescent horns, the Pleiads fade.
Her cheeks blush like white cloth 'neath Tyrian
dyes,
Or as the shepherd sees the light of stars 100

Grow rosy with the dawn. O happy one,
Accustomed once to clasp unwillingly
A wife unloved and reckless, snatched away
From that dread Colchian marriage, take thy
bride,

The Æolian virgin — 'tis her father's will. 105
Bright offspring of the thyrsus-bearing god,
The time has come to light the torch of pine;
With fingers dripping wine put out the fires,
Sound the gay music of the marriage song,
Let the crowd pass their jests; 'tis only she 110
Who flies her home to wed a stranger guest,
Need steal away into the silent dark.

ACT II

SCENE I

Medea, Nurse.

Medea. Alas, the wedding chorus strikes my ears ;

Now let me die ! I could not hitherto Believe — can hardly yet believe such wrong. 115
And this is Jason's deed ? Of father, home,
And kingdom reft, can he desert me now,
Alone and in a foreign land ? Can he
Despise my worth who saw the flames and seas
By my art conquered ? thinks, perchance, all
crime 120

Exhausted ! Tossed by every wave of doubt,
I am distracted, seeking some revenge.
Had he a brother's love — he has a bride ;
Through her be thrust the steel ! Is this enough ?
If Grecian or barbarian cities know 125
Crime that this hand knows not, that crime be done !

Thy sins return to mind exhorting thee :
The far-famed treasure of a kingdom lost ;
Thy little comrade, wicked maid, destroyed,
Torn limb from limb and scattered on the sea 130
An offering to his father ; Pelias old
Killed in the boiling cauldron. I have shed

Blood often basely, but alas ! alas !
'Twas not in wrath, unhappy love did all !
Had Jason any choice, by foreign law 135
And foreign power constrained ? He could have
bared

His breast to feel the sword. O bitter grief,
Speak milder, milder words. Let Jason live ;
Mine as he was, if this be possible,
But, if not mine, still let him live secure, 140
To spare me still the memory of my gift !
The fault is Creon's ; he abuses power
To annul our marriage, sever strongest ties,
And tear the children from their mother's breast ;
Let Creon pay the penalty he owes. 145
I'll heap his home in ashes, the dark flame
Shall reach Malea's dreaded cape, where ships
Find passage only after long delay.

Nurse. Be silent, I implore thee, hide thy pain
Deep in thy bosom. He who quietly 150
Bears grievous wounds, with patience, and a
mind

Unshaken, may find healing. Hidden wrath
Finds strength, when open hatred loses hope
Of vengeance.

Medea. Light is grief that hides itself,
And can take counsel. Great wrongs lie not
hid. 155

I am resolved on action.

Nurse. Foster-child,
Restrain thy fury ; hardly art thou safe
Though silent.

Medea. Fortune tramples on the meek,
But fears the brave.

Nurse. This is no place to show
That thou hast courage.

Medea. It can never be 160
That courage should be out of place.

Nurse. To thee,
In thy misfortune, hope points out no way.

Medea. The man who cannot hope despairs
of naught.

Nurse. Colchis is far away, thy husband lost;
Of all thy riches nothing now remains. 165

Medea. Medea now remains! Here's land
and sea,

Fire and sword, god and the thunderbolt.

Nurse. The king is to be feared.

Medea. I claim a king
For father.

Nurse. Hast thou then no fear of arms?

Medea. I, who saw warriors spring from earth?

Nurse. Thou'l die! 170

Medea. I wish it.

Nurse. Flee!

Medea. Nay, I repent of flight.

Nurse. Thou art a mother.

Medea. And thou seest by whom.

Nurse. Wilt thou not fly?

Medea. I fly, but first revenge.

Nurse. Vengeance may follow thee.

Medea. I may, perchance,
Find means to hinder it.

Nurse. Restrain thyself 175
 And cease to threaten madly ; it is well
 That thou adjust thyself to fortune's change.

Medea. My riches, not my spirit, fortune
 takes.
 The hinge creaks, — who is this ? Creon himself,
 Swelling with Grecian pride. 180

SCENE II

Creon with Attendants, Medea.

Creon. What, is Medea of the hated race
 Of Colchian Æëtes, not yet gone ?
 Still she is plotting evil ; well I know
 Her guile, and well I know her cruel hand.
 Whom does she spare, or whom let rest secure ? 185
 Verily I had thought to cut her off
 With the swift sword, but Jason's prayers availed
 To spare her life. She may go forth unharmed
 If she will set our city free from fear.
 Threatening and fierce, she seeks to speak with
 us ; 190

Attendants, keep her off, bid her be still,
 And let her learn at last, a king's commands
 Must be obeyed. Go, haste, and take her hence.

Medea. What fault is punished by my banish-
 ment ?

Creon. A woman, innocent, may ask, ‘What
 fault ? ’ 195

Medea. If thou wilt judge, examine.

Creon. Kings command.

Just or unjust, a king must be obeyed.

Medea. An unjust kingdom never long endures.

Creon. Go hence ! Seek Colchis !

Medea. Willingly I go ;
Let him who brought me hither take me hence. 200

Creon. Thy words come late, my edict has gone forth.

Medea. The man who judges, one side still unheard,

Were hardly a just judge, though he judge justly.

Creon. Pelias for listening to thee died, but speak,

I may find time to hear so good a plea. 205

Medea. How hard it is to calm a wrathful soul,

How he who takes the scepter in proud hands
Deems his own will sufficient, I have learned ;
Have learned it in my father's royal house.

For though the sport of fortune, suppliant, 210
Banished, alone, forsaken, on all sides

Distressed, my father was a noble king.

I am descended from the glorious sun.

What lands the Phasis in its winding course
Bathes, or the Euxine touches where the sea 215

Is freshened by the water from the swamps,
Or where armed maiden cohorts try their skill

Beside Thermodon, all these lands are held
Within my father's kingdom, where I dwelt

Noble and happy and with princely power. 220

He whom kings seek, sought then to wed with me.
Swift, fickle fortune cast me headlong forth,
And gave me exile. Put thy trust in thrones —
Such trust as thou mayst put in what light chance
Flings here and there at will! Kings have one
power,

225

A matchless honor time can never take :
To help the wretched, and to him who asks
To give a safe retreat. This I have brought
From Colchis, this at least I still can claim :
I saved the flower of Grecian chivalry, 230
Achaian chiefs, the offspring of the gods ;
It is to me they owe their Orpheus
Whose singing melted rocks and drew the trees ;
Castor and Pollux are my twofold gift ;
Boreas' sons, and Lynceus whose sharp eye 235
Could pierce beyond the Euxine, are my gift,
And all the Argonauts. Of one alone,
The chief of chiefs, I do not speak ; for him
Thou owest me naught ; those have I saved for
thee,

This one is mine. Rehearse, now, all my crime ; 240
Accuse me ; I confess ; this is my fault —
I saved the Argo ! Had I heard the voice
Of maiden modesty or filial love,
Greece and her leaders had regretted it,
And he, thy son-in-law, had fallen first 245
A victim to the fire-belching bull.
Let fortune trample on me as she will,
My hand has succored princes, I am glad !
Assign the recompense for these my deeds,

Condemn me if thou wilt, but tell the fault. 250
Creon, I own my guilt — guilt known to thee
When first, a suppliant, I touched thy knees,
And asked with outstretched hands protecting
aid.

Again I ask a refuge, some poor spot
For misery to hide in ; grant a place 255
Withdrawn, a safe asylum in thy realm,
If I must leave the city.

Creon. I am no prince who rules with cruel
sway,

Or tramples on the wretched with proud foot.
Have I not shown this true by choosing him 260
To be my son-in-law who is a man
Exiled, without resource, in fear of foes ?
One whom Acastus, king of Thessaly,
Seeks to destroy, that so he may avenge
A father weak with age, bowed down with years, 265
Whose limbs were torn asunder ? That foul
crime

His wicked sisters impiously dared
Tempted by thee ; if thou wouldest say the deed
Was Jason's, he can prove his innocence ;
No guiltless blood has stained him, and his
hands 270
Touched not the sword, are yet unstained by
thee.

Foul instigator of all evil deeds,
With woman's wantonness in daring aught,
And man's courageous heart — and void of
shame,

Go, purge our kingdom ; take thy deadly herbs, 275
 Free us from fear ; dwelling in other lands
 Afar, invoke the gods.

Medea. Thou bidst me go ?
 Give back the ship and comrade of my flight.
 Why bid me go alone ? Not so I came.
 If thou fear war, both should go forth, nor choice 280
 Be made between two equally at fault :
 That old man fell for Jason's sake ; impute
 To Jason flight, rapine, a brother slain,
 And a deserted father ; not all mine
 The crimes to which a husband tempted me ; 285
 'Tis true I sinned, but never for myself.

Creon. Thou shouldst begone, why waste the
 time with words ?

Medea. I go, but going make one last request :
 Let not a mother's guilt drag down her sons.

Creon. Go, as a father I will succor them, 290
 And with a father's care.

Medea. By future hopes,
 By the king's happy marriage, by the strength
 Of thrones, which fickle fortune sometimes shakes,
 I pray thee grant the exile some delay
 That she, perchance about to die, may press 295
 A last kiss on her children's lips.

Creon. Thou seekst
 Time to commit new crime.

Medea. In so brief time
 What crime were possible ?

Creon. No time too short
 For him who would do ill.

Medea. Dost thou deny
 To misery short space for tears ?

Creon. Deep dread 300
 Warns me against thy prayer ; yet I will grant
 One day in which thou mayst prepare for flight.

Medea. Too great the favor ! Of the time
 allowed,
 Something withdraw. I would depart in haste.

Creon. Before the coming day is ushered in 305
 By Phœbus, leave the city or thou diest.
 The bridal calls me, and I go to pay
 My vows to Hymen.

SCENE III

Chorus. He rashly ventured who was first to
 make
 In his frail boat a pathway through the deep ; 310
 Who saw his native land behind him fade
 In distance blue ; who to the raging winds
 Trusted his life, his slender keel between
 The paths of life and death. Our fathers dwelt
 In an unspotted age, and on the shore 315
 Where each was born he lived in quietness,
 Grew old upon his father's farm content ;
 With little rich, he knew no other wealth
 Than his own land afforded. None knew yet
 The changing constellations, nor could use 320
 As guides the stars that paint the ether; none
 Had learned to shun the rainy Hyades,

The Goat, or Northern Wain, that follows slow
By old Boötes driven ; none had yet
To Boreas or Zephyr given names. 325

Rash Tiphys was the first to tempt the deep
With spreading canvas ; for the winds to write
New laws ; to furl the sail ; or spread it wide
When sailors longed to fly before the gale,
And the red topsail fluttered in the breeze. 330

The world so wisely severed by the seas
The pine of Thessaly united, bade
The distant waters bring us unknown fears.
The cursed leader paid hard penalty
When the two cliffs, the gateway of the sea, 335
Moved as though smitten by the thunderbolt,
And the imprisoned waters smote the stars.

Bold Tiphys paled, and from his trembling hand
Let fall the rudder ; Orpheus' music died,
His lyre untouched ; the Argo lost her voice. 340
When, belted by her girdle of wild dogs,
The maid of the Sicilian straits gives voice
From all her mouths, who fears not at her bark ?
Who does not tremble at the witching song
With which the Sirens calm the Ausonian sea ? 345
The Thracian Orpheus' lyre had almost forced
Those hinderers of ships to follow him !
What was the journey's prize ? The golden fleece,
Medea, fiercer than the raging sea, —
Worthy reward for those first mariners ! 350

The sea forgets its former wrath ; submits
To the new laws ; and not alone the ship
Minerva builded, manned by sons of kings,

Finds rowers ; other ships may sail the deep.
Old metes are moved, new city walls spring up 355
On distant soil, and nothing now remains
As it has been. The cold Araxes' stream
The Indian drinks ; the Persian quaffs the Rhine ;
And the times come with the slow-rolling years
When ocean shall strike off the chains from
earth, 360
And a great world be opened. Tiphys then,
Another Tiphys, shall win other lands,
And Thule cease to be earth's utmost bound.

ACT III

SCENE I

Medea, Nurse.

Nurse. Stay, foster-child, why fly so swiftly
hence?

Restrain thy wrath ! curb thy impetuous haste ! 365
As a Bacchante, frantic with the god
And filled with rage divine, uncertain walks
The top of snowy Pindus or the peak
Of Nyssa, so Medea wildly goes
Hither and thither ; on her cheek the stain 370
Of bitter tears, her visage flushed, her breast
Shaken by sobs. She cries aloud, her eyes
Are drowned in scalding tears ; again she laughs ;
All passions surge within her soul ; she stays
Her steps, she threatens, makes complaint, weeps,
groans. 375

Where will she fling the burden of her soul ?
Where wreak her vengeance ? where will break
this wave

Of fury ? Passion overflows ! she plans
No easy crime, no ordinary deed.
She conquers self ; I recognize old signs 380
Of raging ; something terrible she plans,
Some deed inhuman, devilish, and wild.
Ye gods, avert the horrors I foresee !

Medea. Dost thou seek how to show thy hate,
poor wretch?

Imitate love! And must I then endure 385
Without revenge the royal marriage-torch?
Shall this day prove unfruitful, sought and gained
Only by earnest effort? While the earth
Hangs free within the heavens; while the vault
Of heaven sweeps round the earth with change-
less change; 390

While the sands lie unnumbered; while the
day

Follows the sun, the night brings up the stars;
Arcturus never wet in ocean's wave
Rolls round the pole; while rivers seaward flow,
My hate shall never cease to seek revenge. 395

Did ever fierceness of a ravening beast;
Or Scylla or Charybdis sucking down
The waters of the wild Ausonian
And the Sicilian seas; or Ætna fierce,

That holds imprisoned great Enceladus 400
Breathing forth flame, so glow as I with threats?
Not the swift rivers, nor the force of flame
By storm-wind fanned, can imitate my wrath.

I will o'erthrow and bring to naught the world!
Does Jason fear the king? Thessalian war? 405
True love fears nothing. He was forced to
yield,

Unwillingly he gave his hand. But still
He might have sought his wife for one farewell.
This too he feared to do. He might have gained
From Creon some delay of banishment. 410

One day is granted for my two sons' sake !
I do not make complaint of too short time,
It is enough for much ; this day shall see
What none shall ever hide. I will attack
The very gods, and shake the universe ! 415

Nurse. Lady, thy spirit so disturbed by ills
Restrain, and let thy storm-tossed soul find rest.

Medea. Rest I can never find until I see
All dragged with me to ruin ; all shall fall
When I do ;—so to share one's woe is joy. 420

Nurse. Think what thou hast to fear if thou
persist ;
No one can safely fight with princely power.

SCENE II

The Nurse withdraws ; enter Jason.

Jason. The lot is ever hard ; bitter is fate,
Equally bitter if it slay or spare ;
God gives us remedies worse than our ills. 425
Would I keep faith with her I deem my wife
I must expect to die ; would I shun death
I must forswear myself. Not fear of death
Has conquered honor, love has cast out fear
In that the father's death involves the sons. 430
O holy Justice, if thou dwell in heaven,
I call on thee to witness that the sons
Vanquish their father ! Say the mother's love
Is fierce and spurns the yoke, she still will deem
Her children of more worth than marriage joys. 435

My mind is fixed, I go to her with prayers.
She starts at sight of me, her look grows wild,
Hatred she shows and grief.

Medea. Jason, I flee !

I flee, it is not new to change my home,
The cause of banishment alone is new ; 440
I have been exiled hitherto for thee.

I go, as thou compellst me, from thy home,
But whither shall I go ? Shall I, perhaps,
Seek Phasis, Colchis, and my father's realm
Whose soil is watered by a brother's blood ? 445
What land dost thou command me seek ? what
sea ?

The Euxine's jaws through which I led that band
Of noble princes when I followed thee,
Adulterer, through the Symplegades ?

Little Iolchos ? Tempe ? Thessaly ? 450
Whatever way I opened up for thee
I closed against myself. Where shall I go ?
Thou drivest into exile, but hast given

No place of banishment. I will go hence.
The king, Creusa's father, bids me go, 455
And I will do his bidding. Heap on me

Most dreadful punishment, it is my due.
With cruel penalties let royal wrath
Pursue thy mistress, load my hands with chains,

And in a dungeon of eternal night 460
Imprison me — 'tis less than I deserve !

Ungrateful one, recall the fiery bull ;
The earth-born soldiers, who at my command
Slew one another ; and the golden fleece

Of Phrixus' ram, whose watchful guardian, 465
The sleepless dragon, at my bidding slept ;
The brother slain ; the many, many crimes
In one crime gathered. Think how, led by me,
By me deceived, that old man's daughters dared
To slay their aged father, dead for aye ! 470

By thy hearth's safety, by thy children's weal,
By the slain dragon, by these blood-stained hands
I never spared from doing aught for thee,
By thy past fears, and by the sea and sky
Witnesses of our marriage, pity me ! 475

O happy one, give me some recompense !
Of all the ravished gold the Scythians brought
From far, as far as India's burning plains,
Wealth our wide palace hardly could contain,
So that we hung our groves with gold, I took 480
Nothing. My brother only bore I thence,
And him for thee I sacrificed. I left
My country, father, brother, maiden shame :
This was my marriage portion ; give her own
To her who goes an exile. 485

Jason. When angry Creon thought to have
thee slain,
Urged by my prayers, he gave thee banishment.

Medea. I looked for a reward ; the gift I see
Is exile.

Jason. While thou mayst fly, fly in haste !
The wrath of kings is ever hard to bear. 490

Medea. Thou giv'st me such advice because
thou lov'st
Creusa, wouldst divorce a hated wife !

Jason. And does Medea taunt me with my loves?

Medea. More — treacheries and murders.

Jason. Canst thou charge Such sins to me?

Medea. All I have ever done. 495

Jason. It only needs that I should share the guilt
Of these thy crimes!

Medea. Thine are they, thine alone ;
He is the criminal who reaps the fruit.
Though all should brand thy wife with infamy,
Thou shouldst defend and call her innocent : 500
She who has sinned for thee, toward thee is pure.

Jason. To me my life is an unwelcome gift
Of which I am ashamed.

Medea. Who is ashamed
To owe his life to me can lay it down.

Jason. For thy sons' sake control thy fiery heart. 505

Medea. I will have none of them, I cast them off,

Abjure them ; shall Creusa to my sons
Give brothers ?

Jason. To an exile's wretched sons
A mighty queen will give them.

Medea. Never come
That evil day thatmingles a great race 510
With race unworthy, — Phœbus' glorious sons
With sons of Sisyphus.

Jason. What, cruel one,
Wouldst thou drag both to banishment? Away!

Medea. Creon has heard my prayer.

Jason. What can I do?

Medea. For me? Some crime perhaps.

Jason. A prince's wrath 515
Is here and there.

Medea. Medea's wrath more fierce!
Let us essay our power, the victor's prize
Be Jason.

Jason. Passion-weary, I depart;
Fear thou to trust a fate too often tried.

Medea. Fortune has ever served me faithfully. 520

Jason. Acastus comes.

Medea. Creon's a nearer foe,
But both shall fall. Medea does not ask
That thou shouldst arm thyself against the king,
Or soil thy hands with murder of thy kin;
Fly with me innocent.

Jason. Who will oppose 525
If double war ensue, and the two kings
Join forces?

Medea. Add to them the Colchian troops
And King Æëtes, Scythian hosts and Greeks,
Medea conquers them!

Jason. I greatly fear
A scepter's power.

Medea. Do not covet it. 530

Jason. We must cut short our converse, lest
it breed
Suspicion.

Medea. Now from high Olympus send
 Thy thunder, Jupiter ; stretch forth thy hand,
 Prepare thy lightning, from the riven clouds
 Make the world tremble, nor with careful hand 535
 Spare him or me ; whichever of us dies
 Dies guilty ; thy avenging thunderbolt
 Cannot mistake the victim.

Jason. Try to speak
 More sanely ; calm thyself. If aught can aid
 Thy flight from Creon's house, thou needst but
 ask. 540

Medea. My soul is strong enough, and wont
 to scorn
 The wealth of kings ; this boon alone I crave,
 To take my children with me when I go ;
 Into their bosoms I would shed my tears,
 New sons are thine.

Jason. Would I might grant thy prayer ; 545
 Paternal love forbids me, Creon's self
 Could not compel me to it. They alone
 Lighten the sorrow of a grief-parched soul.
 For them I live, I sooner would resign
 Breath, members, light.

Medea [aside]. 'Tis well ! He loves his sons, 550
 This, then, the place where he may feel a wound !
 [To *Jason.*] Before I go, thou wilt, at least, permit
 That I should give my sons a last farewell,
 A last embrace ? But one thing more I ask :
 If in my grief I've poured forth threatening
 words, 555
 Retain them not in mind ; let memory hold

Only my softer speech, my words of wrath
Obliterate.

Jason. I have erased them all
From my remembrance. I would counsel thee
Be calm, act gently ; calmness quiets pain. 560
[*Exit Jason.*]

SCENE III

Medea, Nurse.

Medea. He's gone ! And can it be he leaves
me so,
Forgetting me and all my guilt ? Forgot ?
Nay, never shall Medea be forgot !
Up ! Act ! Call all thy power to aid thee now ;
This fruit of crime is thine, to shun no crime ! 565
Deceit is useless, so they fear my guile.
Strike where they do not dream thou canst be
feared.

Medea, haste, be bold to undertake
The possible — yea, that which is not so !
Thou, faithful nurse, companion of my griefs 570
And varying fortunes, aid my wretched plans.
I have a robe, gift of the heavenly powers,
An ornament of a king's palace, given
By Phœbus to my father as a pledge
Of sonship ; and a necklace of wrought gold ; 575
And a bright diadem, inlaid with gems,
With which they used to bind my hair. These
gifts,
Endued with poison by my magic arts,

My sons shall carry for me to the bride.
 Pay vows to Hecate, bring the sacrifice,
 Set up the altars. Let the mounting flame
 Envelop all the house. 580

SCENE IV

Chorus. Fear not the power of flame, nor
 swelling gale,
 Nor hurtling dart, nor cloudy wain that brings
 The winter storms; fear not when Danube
 sweeps 585
 Unchecked between its widely severed shores,
 Nor when the Rhone hastes seaward, and the
 sun
 Has broken up the snow upon the hills,
 And Hermes flows in rivers.
 A wife deserted, loving while she hates, 590
 Fear greatly; blindly burns her anger's flame,
 For kings she cares not, will not bear the curb.
 Ye gods, we ask your grace divine for him
 Who safely crossed the seas; the ocean's lord
 Is angry for his conquered kingdom's sake; 595
 Spare Jason, we entreat!
 Th' impetuous youth who dared to drive the car
 Of Phœbus, keeping not the wonted course,
 Died in the furious fires himself had lit.
 Few are the evils of the well-known way; 600
 Seek the old paths your fathers safely trod,
 The sacred federations of the world
 Keep still inviolate.

The men who dipped the oars of that brave ship ;
Who plundered of their shade the sacred groves
Of Pelion ; passed between the unstable cliffs ;
Endured so many hardships on the deep ;
And cast their anchor on a savage coast,
Passing again with ravished foreign gold,
Atoned with fearful death upon the sea 610

For violated law.

The angry deep demanded punishment :
Tiphys to an unskillful pilot left
The rudder. On a foreign coast he fell,
Far from his father's kingdom, and he lies 615
With nameless shades, under a lowly tomb.
Becalmed in her still harbor Aulis held
The impatient ships, remembering in wrath
The king that she lost thence.

The fair Camena's son, who touched his lyre 620
So sweetly that the floods stood still, the winds
Were silent, and the birds forgot to sing,
And forests followed him, on Thracian fields
Lies dead, his head borne down by Hebrus' stream.
He touched again the Styx and Tartarus, 625

But not again returns.

Alcides overthrew the north wind's sons ;
He slew that son of Neptune who could take
Unnumbered forms ; but after he had made
Peace between land and sea, and opened wide 630
The realm of Dis, lying on Oeta's top
He gave his body to the cruel fire,
Destroyed by his wife's gift — the fatal robe
Poisoned with Centaur's blood.

Ankæus fell a victim to the boar
Of Caledonia ; Meleager slew
His mother's brother, stained his hands with
blood

635

Of his own mother. They have merited
Their lot, but what the crime that he atoned
By death whom Hercules long sought in vain —
The tender Hylas drawn beneath safe waves ?
Go now, brave soldiers, boldly plow the main,
But fear the gentle streams.

Idmon the serpents buried in the sands
Of Libya, though he knew the future well.
Mopsus, to others true, false to himself,
Fell far from Thebes ; and he who tried to burn
The crafty Greeks fell headlong to the deep :

Such death was meet for crime.

Oileus, smitten by the thunderbolt,
Died on the ocean ; and Pheræus' wife
Fell for her husband, so averting fate ;
He who commanded that the golden spoil
Be carried to the ships had traveled far,
But, plunged in seething cauldron, Pelias died
In narrow limits. 'Tis enough, ye gods ;
Ye have avenged the sea !

645

650

655

ACT IV

SCENE I

Nurse. I shrink with horror ! Ruin threatens us !

How terribly her wrath inflames itself !
Her former force awakes, thus I have seen 660
Medea raging and attacking god,
Compelling heaven. Greater crime than then
She now prepares, for as with frantic step
She sought the sanctuary of her crimes,
She poured forth all her threats ; and what before 665
She feared she now brings forth ; lets loose a host
Of poisonous evils, arts mysterious ;
With sad left hand outstretched invokes all ills
That Libyan sands with their fierce heat create,
Or frost-bound Taurus with perpetual snow 670
Encompasses. Drawn by her magic spell
The serpent drags his heavy length along,
Darts his forked tongue, and seeks his destined
prey.

Hearing her incantation, he draws back
And knots his swelling body coiling it. — 675
'They are but feeble poisons earth brings forth,
And harmless darts,' she says, 'heaven's ills I
seek.

Now is the time for deeper sorcery.

The dragon like a torrent shall descend,
Whose mighty folds the Great and Lesser Bear 680
Know well ; Ophiuchus shall loose his grasp
And poison flow. Be present at my call,
Python, who dared to fight twin deities.
The Hydra slain by Hercules shall come
Healed of his wound. Thou watchful Colchian
one, 685

Be present with the rest — thou, who first slept
Lulled by my incantations.' When the brood
Of serpents has been called she blends the juice
Of poisonous herbs ; all Eryx' pathless heights
Bear, or the open top of Caucasus 690
Wet with Prometheus' blood, where winter reigns ;
All that the rich Arabians use to tip
Their poisoned shafts, or the light Parthians,
Or warlike Medes ; all the brave Suabians cull
In the Hyrcanian forests in the north ; 695
All poisons that the earth brings forth in spring
When birds are nesting ; or when winter cold
Has torn away the beauty of the groves
And bound the world in icy manacles.
Whatever herb gives flower the cause of death, 700
Or juice of twisted root, her hands have culled.
These on Thessalian Athos grew, and those
On mighty Pindus ; on Pangæus' height
She cut the tender herbs with bloody scythe.
These Tigris nurtured with its current deep, 705
The Danube those ; Hydaspes rich in gems
Flowing with current warm through levels dry,
Bætis that gives its name to neighboring lands

And meets the western ocean languidly,
Have nurtured these. Those have been cut at
dawn ;

710

These other herbs at dead of night were reaped ;
And these were gathered with the enchanted hook.
Death-dealing plants she chooses, wrings the blood
Of serpents, and she takes ill-omened birds,
The sad owl's heart, the quivering entrails cut 715
From the horned owl living ; — sorts all these.
In some the eager force of flame is found,
In some the bitter cold of sluggish ice ;
To these she adds the venom of her words
As greatly to be feared. She stamps her feet ; 720
She sings, and the world trembles at her song.

SCENE II

Medea, before the altar of Hecate.

Medea. Here I invoke you, silent company,
Infernal gods, blind Chaos, sunless home
Of shadowy Dis, and squalid caves of Death
Bound by the banks of Tartarus. Lost souls, 725
For this new bridal leave your wonted toil.
Stand still, thou whirling wheel, Ixion touch
Again firm ground ; come, Tantalus, and drink
Unchecked the wave of the Pirenian fount.
Let heavier punishment on Creon wait : — 730
Thou stone of Sisyphus, worn smooth, roll back ;
And ye Danaïdes who strive in vain
To fill your leaking jars, I need your aid.

Come at my invocation, star of night,
Endued with form most horrible, nor threat 735
With single face, thou three-formed deity !
To thee, according to my country's use,
With hair unfileted and naked feet
I've trod the sacred groves ; called forth the rain
From cloudless skies ; have driven back the sea ; 740
And forced the ocean to withdraw its waves.
Earth sees heaven's laws confused, the sun and
stars

Shining together, and the two Bears wet
In the forbidden ocean. I have changed
The circle of the seasons : — at my word 745
Earth flourishes with summer ; Ceres sees
A winter harvest ; Phasis' rushing stream
Flows to its source ; the Danube that divides
Into so many mouths restrains its flood
Of waters — hardly moving past its shores. 750
The winds are silent ; but the waters speak,
The wild seas roar ; the home of ancient groves
Loses its leafy shade ; the day withdraws
At my command ; the sun stands still in heaven.
My incantations move the Hyades. 755
It is thy hour, Diana !
For thee my bloody hands have wrought this
crown
Nine times by serpents girt ; those knotted
snakes
Rebellious Typhon bore, who made revolt
Against Jove's kingdom ; Nessus gave this blood 760
When dying ; Æta's funeral pyre provides

These ashes which have drunk the poisoned blood
Of dying Hercules ; and here thou seest
Althea's vengeful brand. The harpies left
These feathers in the pathless den they made 765
A refuge when they fled from Zete's wrath ;
And these were dropped by the Stymphalian birds
That felt the wound of arrows dipped in blood
Of the Lernæan Hydra.

The altars find a voice, the tripod moves 770
Stirred by the favoring goddess. Her swift car
I see approach — not the full-orbed that rolls
All night through heaven ; but as, with darkened
light,

Troubled by the Thessalians she comes,
So her sad face upon my altars sheds 775
A murky light. Terrify with new dread
The men of earth ! Costly Corinthian brass
Sounds in thy honor, Hecate, and on ground
Made red with blood I pay these solemn rites
To thee ; for thee have stolen from the tomb 780
This torch that gives its baleful funeral light ;
To thee with bowed head I have made my prayer ;
And in accordance with my country's use,
My loose hair filleted, have plucked for thee
This branch that grows beside the Stygian wave ; 785
Like a wild Mænad, laying bare my breast,
With sacred knife I cut for thee my arm ;
My blood is on the altars ! Hand, learn well
To strike thy dearest ! See, my blood flows forth !
Daughter of Perseus, have I asked too oft 790
Thine aid ? Recall no more my former prayers.

To-day as always I invoke thine aid
For Jason's sake alone! Endue this robe
With such a baleful power that the bride
May feel at its first touch consuming fire 795
Of serpent's poison in her inmost veins;
Let fire lurk hid in the bright gold, the fire
Prometheus gave and taught men how to store —
He now atones his daring theft from heaven
With tortured vitals. Mulciber has given 800
This flame, and I in sulphur nurtured it;
I brought a spark from the destroying fire
Of Phaeton; I have the flame breathed forth
By the Chimæra, and the fire I snatched
From Colchis' savage bull; and mixed with these 805
Medusa's venom. I have bade all serve
My secret sorcery; now, Hecate, add
The sting of poison, aid the seeds of flame
Hid in my gift; let them deceive the sight
But burn the touch; let the heat penetrate 810
Her very heart and veins, stiffen her limbs,
Consume her bones in smoke. Her burning hair
Shall glow more brightly than the nuptial torch!
My vows are paid, and Hecate thrice has barked,
And shaken fire from her funeral torch. 815
'Tis finished! Call my sons. My precious
gifts,
Ye shall be borne by them to the new bride.
Go, go, my sons, a hapless mother's sons!
Placate with gifts and prayers your father's wife!
But come again with speed, that I may know 820
A last embrace!

SCENE III

Chorus. Where hastes the blood-stained Mænad, headlong driven
By angry love? What mischief plots her rage?
With wrath her face grows rigid; her proud head
She fiercely shakes; threatens the king in wrath. 825
Who would believe her exiled from the realm?
Her cheeks glow crimson, pallor puts to flight
The red, no color lingers on her face;
Her steps are driven to and fro as when
A tiger rages, of its young bereft, 830
Beside the Ganges in the gloomy woods.
Medea knows not how to curb her love
Or hate. Now love and hate together rage.
When will she leave the fair Pelasgian fields,
The wicked Colchian one, and free from fear 835
Our king and kingdom? Drive with no slow rein
Thy car, Diana; let the sweet night hide
The sunlight. Hesperus, end the dreaded day.

ACT V

SCENE I

Messenger, Chorus.

Messenger [enters in haste]. All are destroyed,
the royal empire falls,

Father and child lie in one funeral pyre. 840

Chorus. Destroyed by what deceit?

Messenger. That which is wont
To ruin princes — gifts.

Chorus. Could these work harm?

Messenger. I myself wonder, and can hardly
deem

The wrong accomplished, though I know it done.

Chorus. How did it happen?

Messenger. A destructive fire 845

Spreads everywhere as at command; even now

The city is in fear, the palace burned.

Chorus. Let water quench the flames.

Messenger. It will not these,
As by a miracle floods feed the fire.

The more we fight it so much more it glows. 850

SCENE II

Medea, Nurse.

Nurse. Up! up! Medea! Swiftly flee the land
Of Pelops; seek in haste a distant shore.

Medea. Shall I fly? I? Were I already gone
I would return for this, that I might see
These new betrothals. Dost thou pause, my
soul?

855

This joy's but the beginning of revenge.
Thou dost but love if thou art satisfied
To widow Jason. Seek new penalties,
Honor is gone and maiden modesty,—
It were a light revenge pure hands could yield. 860
Strengthen thy drooping spirit, stir up wrath,
Drain from thy heart its all of ancient force,
Thy deeds till now call honor; wake, and act,
That they may see how light, how little worth,
All former crime—the prelude of revenge! 865
What was there great my novice hands could dare?
What was the madness of my girlhood days?
I am Medea now, through sorrow strong.
Rejoice, because through thee thy brother died;
Rejoice, because through thee his limbs were

torn,

870

Through thee thy father lost the golden fleece;
Rejoice, that armed by thee his daughters slew
Old Pelias! Seek revenge! No novice hand
Thou bring'st to crime; what wilt thou do;
what dart

Let fly against thy hated enemy? 875
I know not what my maddened spirit plots,
Nor yet dare I confess it to myself!
In folly I made haste—would that my foe
Had children by this other! Mine are his,
We'll say Creusa bore them! 'Tis enough;

880

Through them my heart at last finds full revenge ;
My soul must be prepared for this last crime.
Ye who were once my children, mine no more,
Ye pay the forfeit for your father's crimes.
Awe strikes my spirit and benumbs my hand ; 885
My heart beats wildly ; mother-love drives out
Hate of my husband ; shall I shed their blood —
My children's blood ? Demented one, rage not,
Be far from thee this crime ! What guilt is theirs ?
Is Jason not their father ? — guilt enough ! 890
And worse, Medea claims them as her sons.
They are not sons of mine, so let them die !
Nay, rather let them perish since they are !
But they are innocent — my brother was !
Fear'st thou ? Do tears already mar thy cheek ? 895
Do wrath and love like adverse tides impel
Now here, now there ? As when the winds wage war,
And the wild waves against each other smite,
My heart is beaten ; duty drives out fear,
As wrath drives duty. Anger dies in love. 900
Dear sons, sole solace of a storm-tossed house,
Come hither, he may have you safe if I
May claim you too ! But he has banished me ;
Already from my bosom torn away
They go lamenting — perish then to both, 905
To him as me ! My wrath again grows hot ;
Furies, I go wherever you may lead.
Would that the children of the haughty child
Of Tantalus were mine, that I had borne
Twice seven sons ! In bearing only two 910
I have been cursed ! And yet it is enough

For father, brother, that I have borne two.—
Where does that horde of furies haste? whom seek?
For whom prepare their fires? or for whom
Intends the infernal band its bloody torch? 915
Whom does Megaera seek with hostile brand?
The mighty dragon lashes its fierce tail—
What shade uncertain brings its scattered limbs?
It is my brother, and he seeks revenge;
I grant it, thrust the torches in my eyes; 920
Kill, burn, the furies have me in their power!
Brother, command the avenging goddesses
To leave me, and the shades to seek their place
In the infernal regions without fear;
Here leave me to myself, and use this hand 925
That held the sword—your soul has found re-
venge.

[*Kills one of her sons.*

What is the sudden noise? They come in arms
And think to drive me into banishment.
I will go up on the high roof, come thou;
I'll take the body with me. Now my soul, 930
Strike! hold not hid thy power, but show the world
What thou art able.

[*She goes out with the nurse and the living boy,
and carries with her the body of her dead son.*

SCENE III

*Jason in the foreground, Medea with the children appears
upon the roof.*

Jason. Ye faithful ones, who share
In the misfortunes of your harassed king,

Hasten to take the author of these deeds. 935
 Come hither, hither, cohorts of brave men ;
 Bring up your weapons ; overthrow the house.

Medea. I have recaptured now my crown and throne,

My brother and my father ; Colchians hold
 The golden fleece ; my kingdom is won back ; 940
 My lost virginity returns to me !

O gods appeased, marriage, and happy days,
 Go now,—my vengeance is complete ! Not yet—
 Finish it while thy hands are strong to strike.

Why seek delay ? Why hesitate, my soul ? 945
 Thou art able ! All thine anger falls to nought !

I do repent of that which I have done !

Why did'st thou do it, miserable one ?

Yea, miserable ! Ruth shall follow thee !

'Tis done, great joy fills my unwilling heart, 950
 And, lo, the joy increases. But one thing
 Before was lacking — Jason did not see !

All that he has not seen I count as lost.

Jason. She threatens from the roof ; let fire
 be brought, 954

That she may perish burned with her own flame.

Medea. Pile high the funeral pyre of thy sons,
 And rear their tomb. To Creon and thy wife
 I have already paid the honors due.

This son is dead, and this shall soon be so,
 And thou shalt see him perish.

Jason. By the gods, 960
 By our sad flight together, and the bond
 I have not willingly forsaken, spare

Our son ! If there is any crime, 'tis mine ;
Put me to death, strike down the guilty one.

Medea. There where thou askest mercy, and
canst feel

965

The sting, I thrust the sword. Go, Jason, seek
Thy virgin bride, desert a mother's bed.

Jason. Let one suffice for vengeance.

Medea. Had it been
That one could satisfy my hands with blood,
I had slain none. But two is not enough.

970

Jason. Then go, fill up the measure of thy
crime,
I ask for nothing but that thou should'st make
A speedy end.

Medea. Now, grief, take slow revenge ;
It is my day ; haste not, let me enjoy.

[*Kills the other child.*

Jason. Slay me, mine enemy !

Medea. Dost thou implore
My pity ? It is well ! I am avenged.
Grief, there is nothing more that thou canst slay !
Look up, ungrateful Jason, recognize
Thy wife ; so I am wont to flee. The way
Lies open through the skies ; two dragons bend
Their necks, submissive to the yoke. I go
In my bright car through heaven. Take thy sons !

[*She casts down to him the bodies of her children,*
and is borne away in a chariot drawn by dragons.

Jason. Go through the skies sublime, and
going prove

983

That the gods dwell not in the heavens you seek.