

Medea Noir

Athens

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Talos Ensemble
ACTING EDITION

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Screens Dialogue Adapted From *Euripides' Medea*
Translations by Rex Warner and Arthur Danin Adler

It begins with a ritual.

As the audience enters, five characters are seen at scattered places throughout the seating area. They are dressed in white bodysuits and white, shimmering wraps. Their faces are painted in various subtle colors and they have bright white masks hanging around their necks. Each carries a branch of colored grain. In the background, a low percussive chant is heard. They move slowly, dance-like, responding to the rhythm of the distant music. Occasionally, each stops, approaches an audience member, offers the branch of grain. When the audience reaches to accept, they are given an imaginary branch instead.

The stage itself is lit in pools of deep hues of burnt orange and sea blue. There are eight large fabric panels set at varying positions to create the performing area, two are screens for projections. The panels are lit from behind and glow with color. Black levels, like pedestals, range across the back in front of the center panels. Levels of varying heights are scattered across the setting.

*At the **rise**, the percussive chant becomes louder as the house lights fade. The five turn on cue and begin a procession toward the performing area. A sixth character appears waiting for them on stage. She is dressed only in a white bodysuit. She moves fluidly to the music. The five reach the performing area, drop the branches on the center level and begin a series of circular movements that weave them around the sixth until they surround her and she is only able to move in place. The entire scene is measured and hypnotic. Suddenly, a growling, churning moan comes from the five. They become violent, pounce on the sixth and drown her with their bodies. After a moment, they lift the lifeless body of the sixth and in the same processional movement carry her off right.*

*As the group moves away, **MEDEA** appears in front of the Right Screen. She is dressed in a black shimmering wrap with a deep red bodysuit underneath. After the group exits, she slowly moves to the left revealing a life-size image of herself projected on the right screen. She stops in front of the Left Screen and faces the audience. The Right Screen fades. After a moment, she continues to move left, revealing an image of another woman on the left screen. Then she moves away left and exits. The music begins in the background. The Left Screen fades. The lights change.)*

In the distance, the sounds of the sea. The panels glow. Figures enter from both sides, in silhouette, and move along the back on to levels. All are dressed in wraps and colored bodysuits. They move in a measured pace. Everything, movement and speech, moves to its own measured pace.

MEDEA. (offstage – her voice rising in a rhythmic cry)
AWAY!... AWAY!... AWAY!... AWAY!... AWAY!... AWAY!

Right Screen: Moving shot of **MEDEA**

MEDEA. The sun rises, the moon rises... the sea rises... the wind echoes...

Left Screen: *Closeup of MEDEA*

MEDEA. Away...

Right Screen:

MEDEA. Once more...

Left Screen:

MEDEA. Away...

Right Screen:

MEDEA. Once more the sea is black...

Left Screen:

MEDEA. Again, the sea is black...

Right Screen:

MEDEA. And it calls me...

(screen fades)

Left Screen:

MEDEA. Once more, again, it calls me... to the sea.

(screen fades)

(lights fade out)

(the music changes)

(Offstage the plaintive, drifting song of MEDEA is heard. The figures step down, move right and left and exit leaving the WOMAN and the NURSE on the levels. The NURSE steps down. The music fades. The lights change.)

MEDEA. *(offstage)* Days end, days end
The sun will come again
Winds rise, winds rise
The moon will come again

NURSE. *(singing)* Days end, days end,
The sun will come again
Winds rise, winds rise
The moon will come again

(She sighs, moves to the center level and picks up the dropped branches of grain.)

Forgive me, my sweet one, I wish I could not hear you. I wish I could sing so loud that I couldn't hear you.

(She sits on the edge of the center level, and sings to herself)
The winds rise, the winds rise...

WOMAN. *(steps down)* She sings.

VOICES CHANT. Sing.

WOMAN. She sings in pain.

NURSE. Yes.

VOICES CHANT. Medea.

WOMAN. She remembers.

VOICES CHANT. Remember.

NURSE. Yes.

VOICES CHANT. Medea.

NURSE. She is haunted by her dreams, her memories. They cover her like a skin of masks.

WOMAN. The living winds of her breath, the flowing rain of her tears... doesn't time clean her memory?

VOICES CHANT. Time.

NURSE. She is helpless in the dream of her past life. My sweet little one suffers in the mirror of her own eyes.

WOMAN. She will leave Athens?

NURSE. Yes.

VOICES CHANT. Time.

WOMAN. She will travel across the Black Sea?

NURSE. Yes.

VOICES CHANT. Time.

WOMAN. She will disappear into the mountain kingdom of her father?

NURSE. Yes.

ALL. Medea.

*(**AEGEUS** and **SERVANT** move across the back on to the levels.)*

WOMAN. I want to help her, if she will let me. This is a time of strange omens and signs in the sky.

NURSE. This is her time.

ALL. Time.

*(**AEGEUS** steps down followed by the **SERVANT**. He strides to the center and grabs the **NURSE**. She pulls away and falls to her knees.)*

AEGEUS. Get her! Go inside and get her.

*(**MEDEA's** song stops)*

NURSE. Oh my lord she cannot see anyone, she cannot talk to anyone.

AEGEUS. What? Don't speak to me like that, get her!

NURSE. *(rising)* Please, my lord Aegeus, she cannot...

AEGEUS. *(angrily)* Cannot? Cannot? She'll see me when I want to see her, she'll talk to me when I want her to talk to me. She is the woman to me that she is.
(he pushes her aside and strides toward the left)

NURSE. Please... if you go in...

VOICES CHANT. Go.
(he stops)

NURSE. If you go in....
(he starts again)

VOICES CHANT. Go.
(he stops)

NURSE. I'll tell her that you are looking for her, I'll help her prepare herself to see you.
(he whirls around and stares at her)

AEGEUS. I know what you do, old nurse. I know the tricks and tactics of women, especially this woman. They mean nothing to me. I rule this land because I am a man, and no woman, not even this daughter of a king rules with me.
(smiling) Hmm, I know what you do.
(sharply) Tell her this... I will come back, I'll be back in a short time, and I will... see her, and I will... talk to her. And if she's not here, I'll bring her out on the point of my sword like a piece of brazed meat.

VOICES CHANT. Time.

*(She bows her head. He strides off with the **SERVANT**. They return to the back levels. **MEDEA's** song is heard again. The **NURSE** moves toward the sound of the song.)*

NURSE. *(calling out)* Did you hear him, did you hear him? He knows, he knows. Open your eyes... you need all of your strength, all of your clear vision to get through him. He won't step aside, he won't take his hands off you.

(to herself) She knows.

(singing) Days end, days end...

(to herself) She knows.

WOMAN. She knows. And yet, Aegeus is not afraid.

NURSE. He's strong, she made him strong.

VOICES CHANT. Afraid.

NURSE. She gave him the power and courage of the sea. He was not that way until she came to live with him. That was their bargain. He took us in, she gave him back his strength, his... his manhood.

(CREON moves across the back with his DAUGHTER. AEGEUS and the SERVANT move past him and exit.)

WOMAN. But as sure as the sun sets, she can take it away, drive him back into the twilight, into the shadows.

NURSE. Maybe she could, if only her mind were part of her body.

(sings... picking up on MEDEA's song)

VOICES CHANT. Medea.

(The music changes)

(CREON and DAUGHTER step down. They wander across and through the center. The other two are stunned. He moves between them, waves the WOMAN away, then looks at both of them for a moment.)

CREON. Bring me to her.

(MEDEA's song stops. The NURSE puts her hand in front of her face)

NURSE. Go away... oh go away from here, shadow of Medea's dreams.

ALL. Shadow.

CREON. Bring me to her so I can see her eyes and put her face to the face of my daughter.

NURSE. You're dead, Creon, long dead. Go back to the mists and silence where you rest.

CREON. No, not dead. I'm a living memory that she holds and caresses like a loving creature. I'm a light in the dark of her long sleepless nights.

NURSE. She's done with that, good king, dead king...
(falling to her knees) She's done with the past, long ago...

CREON. No, we're like lovers. She burned me into her heart and yearns for me. Bring me to her.

*(The **WOMAN** steps between them, lifts the **NURSE** up and faces **CREON**)*

NURSE. Go back. Let Medea call for you if she must.

CREON. *(distracted)* Call for me... call for me? Yes, I'll hear her when she calls for me.

VOICES CHANT. Medea.

*(After a moment, he returns with his **DAUGHTER** to the back levels. Music fades, lights change. The **NURSE** collapses into the arms of the **WOMAN**)
(**MEDEA's** song is heard again.)*

NURSE. See, see... she's helpless, my poor little one is helpless to stop the flood that drowns her. She only wants to go home...

ALL. Home.

NURSE. It's been so long... since we've traveled on the sea, since we've looked at the rivers of green trees rolling down the mountains that protected us... since she's felt the moonlight on her face and heard her own laughter in the wind... since she's smelled the deep thunder of the earth, the power that pulses her blood, nourishes her great strength.

WOMAN. She goes home.

NURSE. Yes... she wants to take her child home.

ALL. Aegeus' child!

NURSE. Medea's child, from her womb, from her breast. Medea's child.

ALL. Medea.

WOMAN. He won't let her go, he will not let his child go.

NURSE. Medea's child! She will take him. She'll walk through and over *(smirking)* lord Aegeus, as she has done before... if only...

WOMAN. If only...

NURSE. If only she can bring her mind back into her body.

WOMAN. She's haunted.

VOICES CHANT. Haunted.

NURSE. She haunts herself.

(CREON and DAUGHTER move across the back and exit as the SERVANT moves across the back in the other direction and on to a level)

WOMAN. To be haunted by one's own spirit is a horror. It leads to an empty mind or to the emptiness of death. There is always a lock, a terrible lock, that keeps the spirit bound. Only she can find the key.

VOICES CHANT. Medea.

(MEDEA's song becomes more present as she appears, slowly coming from the left, singing, followed by LAZA. The WOMAN returns to a back level. After a moment, the NURSE runs to Medea, falls to her knees and throws her arms around her. MEDEA smiles and strokes her hair.)

MEDEA. How beautiful you look today, how young. And your skin shines...

NURSE. Oh please, listen to me, my sweet baby...

MEDEA. *(laughing)* What, what, what, what? I'm still your baby? No... and you're not my nurse, or my slave... you're a free woman and my very close friend.

NURSE. Listen to me, lord Aegeus is coming...

MEDEA. *(with momentary anger)* He's not a lord!

NURSE. He's coming with fire in his mouth...

MEDEA. *(softly again)* Didn't I free you...

NURSE. Yes.

MEDEA. Didn't I stop you from aging? Look, look, look, look... in ten years, you haven't changed. You're as young as you were then. Then! *(her face darkens for a moment, she smiles)* Do you remember what you were like... then? You called yourself an old woman, you fretted and moaned and stumbled around with worry.

NURSE. I remember.

Right Screen: Midshot of Nurse/Medea/**OTHER VOICES** in Background
NURSE. If one is a good servant, it's a terrible thing when one's master's luck runs out. It goes to one's heart. So, I myself have got into such a state of grief that I yearned to come outside here and tell the earth and the air of my lady's sorrows. How much I fear that something may happen! Great people's tempers are terrible. It's because they always have their own way. They shift dangerously from mood to mood. How much better it is to live on equal terms with everyone. I would like to grow old in a humble way. There is no profit in greatness. When the gods are angry, they bring greater ruin to great men's houses.
(The image freezes)

MEDEA. *(laughing)* Do you remember, my good friend, what a bundle of worry, of moans and groans, you were.

NURSE. You must listen to me...

Right Screen: Closeup Nurse/Medea
NURSE. You must listen to me...

MEDEA. *(onstage)* I am listening.

Right Screen:
MEDEA. I am listening.
NURSE. There are great dangers, riding on the hills, flying in the wind.

NURSE. *(onstage)* There are black narrow eyes watching you...

NURSE. ... waiting to pierce you with their stare, but you're so lost in your passion, lost in the pain that has cut your heart open. You must come back to yourself, you must come back to me.
(screen fades)

NURSE. ...you must come back to me!

MEDEA. *(smiling)* I'm here, my mother-nurse, because I never left.

NURSE. You must listen to me... Aegeus will come...

ALL. Stop!

MEDEA. *(low-voiced)* Who was here? Who is that? *(pointing to the **WOMAN**)*

NURSE. A woman, a woman of Athens. She is a friend... who loves us.

ALL. Stop.
*(Music and lights change. **MEDEA** begins to dance, using her arms as wings)*

MEDEA. (*strangely*) Loves us? Loves us? No one in Athens loves us. We are strangers and they are golden-haired Greeks with their golden-haired, narrow-eyed gods who look down at this small, splintered piece of land and think they rule the world. (*stroking the NURSE's hair*) But we are strangers, dark hair, dark skin with only one god who lives between our legs and rules nothing. (*sardonically*) Come, loving woman of Athens, come out of the shadows into the light and tell us why you love us so.

(*The WOMAN steps down and moves toward the center. MEDEA dances around her and suddenly jumps on to the center level.*)

WOMAN. I've come to be with you, Medea, to offer you what little advice and comfort I can, to help you.

MEDEA. (*ironically*) As a woman?

WOMAN. As a woman.

MEDEA. (*dancing in sharp poses*) I know you, I know you, I know you, lover of Athens.

(*she grabs the WOMAN's hands and pulls her along as she dances*)

(*the lights change in rhythm to her movement*)

I've seen you many times before... whispering in my ear, singing to my eyes, a chicken, a hen, a friendly hen in a house of chickens and hens, clucking with that painted sadness on your face, wringing your hands until all of your feathers are wet and matted.

WOMAN. Please, dear Medea...

MEDEA. (*angrily*) Do not "dear" me!

WOMAN. Please, Medea... I know you're going to leave, I know you're leaving with your son. Aegeus protects his pride above all of his treasures, he will not allow it to be injured. Aegeus will stop you, he is strong...

MEDEA. (*spitting her anger*) He is nothing! (*quietly, smiling*) I know you.

Left Screen: A Woman in Corinth/**OTHER WOMEN/NURSE.**

WOMAN. I heard the voice, I heard the cry, of Colchis', the Black Sea's wretched daughter. Tell me, hasn't she calmed down yet? Within the double gates of the court I heard her cry. I'm sorry for the sorrow of this home.

NURSE. There is no home. It's over and done with. Her husband has done his royal wedding. While she, my mistress, her eyes melting... there in her room, and takes no comfort from any word of any friend.

MEDEA. (*offstage*) Aiyee...I wish, I wish that lightning from heaven would split my head open.

WOMAN. Oh god and earth and heaven, did you hear what a cry that the sad wife sings. Poor fool, why should you long for that terrible act? The final end

comes fast. No need to pray for that. Suppose your man gives honor to another woman's bed. It often happens. Don't be hurt. The gods will be your friends in this. You must not waste away grieving for him... who shared your bed.

MEDEA. (*offstage*) The things I suffer, though I made him promise, my hateful husband. I pray that I may see him, him and his bride and all their palace shattered for the pain they dare to do to me. Oh my father, my country! What dishonor I left you, killing my own brother for it. (*wailing*) Asyrte!

VOICES CHANT. Stop.
(*screen fades*)

(*MEDEA crumbles to the ground, pulling her head down with her hands. The WOMAN hesitantly reaches for her to touch her. MEDEA jerks her head up and stares at her.*)

Left Screen: A Woman, **OTHER VOICES** in the background

WOMAN. Will she come out? Will she listen to the words we say? I wish she would relax her rage and temper her heart. I am so willing to help her as a friend.
(*screen fades*)

Right Screen: Midshot of Woman

WOMAN. It is a strange form of anger, difficult to cure, when two lovers turn on each other in hatred.
(*screen fades*)

Left Screen: Longshot of Woman

WOMAN. The gods care for you Aegeus, for you appear to be a generous man.
(*screen fades*)

Right Screen: Closeup of Woman

WOMAN. Of all women, you will be the most unhappy.
(*image freezes*)

MEDEA. (*whispering*) I know you.
(*screen fades*)

VOICES CHANT. (*rhythmically with percussion*) StopRunPainTo Be Afraid... the gods... are sighing.

(*MEDEA slips off the center level and begins to whirl in a dance around the center.*)

VOICES CHANT. StopRunPain To Be Afraid... the gods... are laughing.

(*The pace becomes frenzied*)

VOICES CHANT. StopRunPain To Be Alone... the gods... are dying. StopRunPain. StopRunPain. StopRunPain.

(*Suddenly, the SERVANT rushes in and falls to the ground. MEDEA freezes.*)

SERVANT. He's coming!

VOICES CHANT. *(in a distant whisper)* StopRunPain.

SERVANT. *(breathless)* My lady, he comes, alone, without his guards.

NURSE. He said he would! I'll go to the top of the hill and watch for him.

MEDEA. Stay.

VOICES CHANT. *(whispering)* Stay.

SERVANT. I came to tell you this, my lady, because I once lived in your house and you were kind and loving to me. I know I'll be punished for this... I'll run away and hide and wait until he drinks his anger away.

MEDEA. Stay.

VOICES CHANT. *(whispering)* Stay.

(AEGEUS moves across the back onto a level)

WOMAN. She cannot trust Aegeus.

NURSE. She doesn't trust him... she shouldn't talk to him.

WOMAN. Then why does she stand there? Why does she wait?

NURSE. Because she is so alone.

*(AEGEUS strides in. The two women move by him and on to back levels. He stops when he sees the **SERVANT.**)*

AEGEUS. Here? This is where you run to when I yell at you. Get the rags of your ass out of here!

MEDEA. Stay!

AEGEUS. *(archly)* Ah, are you now the mistress of the house? Are you commanding my servants and slaves from this... retreat, this hideaway in the hills?

MEDEA. *(after a moment)* I hear a man. *(turning)* I smell a man. But I only see... you!

AEGEUS. *(after a moment)* How ugly you make yourself.

MEDEA. Through your eyes, I have always been ugly.

ÆGEUS. That's not true.

MEDEA. Through your eyes I have always been... a piece of brazed meat on the... tip of your sword. How is your sword, my lord?

(He smiles.)

Are you as faithful to it, as it is to you?

ÆGEUS. My sword and I are one.

MEDEA. *(sarcastically)* One what?

(He walks in a circle around her.)

ÆGEUS. Is it true that you want to leave?

MEDEA. Want? Yes. Will? Yes.

ÆGEUS. Why didn't you come and tell me, first, before the whispers and ripples of rumor floated through the city?

(SERVANT moves to the back on to a level)

MEDEA. *(softer)* We're separate and apart.

ÆGEUS. We talk, we've talked, we've been together. This silence is an insulting hand across my face.

MEDEA. There are no words to give to each other. I must leave, I must go home.

ÆGEUS. Home? Haven't you been safe and protected these past ten years?

MEDEA. *(quietly)* Yes.

ÆGEUS. Haven't I treated you with respect and honor as a king, as a lover?

MEDEA. Yes.

ÆGEUS. *(firmly)* Then this is your home.

(sadly) How can I love you if you're gone?

(He is dizzy from his circling around her. She grabs his arm and stops him.)

MEDEA. When I am gone, you will love me as I have loved you. You'll remember the soft moments of feeling, and the hard moments of sweat and skin. These are the memories that are deep in my mind and deeper in my body. It makes no difference where you are sleeping or where I am running... memory is what binds all of our parts together. It gives us dreams, free, embracing dreams that let us accept the empty

future... into which we all fall... when our memories blink out like sparks at the end of a fire.

(He puts his arms around her.)

ÆGEUS. I adore the memories between us, and I want more.

MEDEA. There is no more.

(He stares at her for a moment, then moves away)

ÆGEUS. And honor... the honor I've given you... must be returned to me... I can't let you go off like a fisherman's wife or a beggar's whore.

MEDEA. *(angrily)* Achh... it always wrinkles down to the face... your face and other people's faces, your glaring eyes and other eyes, your tongue and other flopping tongues. You're a man, I made you a man, you're a king, you make your own honor.

ÆGEUS. *(angrily)* That's right a king, a ruler of people whose face is turned to the gods. It's in their eyes my spirit and dignity... and that face must be clean. They... made me a man, they... made me a king... not your mountain magic or your seaside sorcery.

MEDEA. And when you came to me on that dark day in Corinth, where were your gods?

ÆGEUS. They were by my side and all around me.

MEDEA. And when I came to you in Athens, where were your gods?

ÆGEUS. They were by your side and all around you.

MEDEA. How lucky I was!

ÆGEUS. How lucky you were!

MEDEA. *(sarcastically)* Of course... my gods were nowhere to be found since they live under rocks and in dung heaps. How gracious of your gods to give you a mind that skips along the hills of your memory and ignores the valleys. Is that your honor... throwing your arms around yourself and protecting the puny image you draw on the steamed marble of your bath? I gave you entrée to my womb, Athenian ruler, so that you could have entrée to your manhood like a returning child.

(suddenly she moves to him – the anger gone)

Oh Aegeus, it was not a god... it was a bargain of needs, of terrible pain, of danger. Remember.

VOICES CHANT. Remember.

MEDEA. I was plunged into an unforgiving horror, as you were reaching through an agony, a dry despair. Remember.

VOICES CHANT. Remember.

MEDEA. You offered your hand, distant as it was and I offered you a dream.

Left Screen **MEDEA/AEGEUS/OTHER VOICES**

AEGEUS. I have just left the ancient oracle. I went to inquire how I might have children born to my house.

MEDEA. Is it so? Your life is childless?

AEGEUS. Yes, by the fate of some power, we have no children.

MEDEA. Do you have a wife, who shares your bed?

AEGEUS. Yes.

MEDEA. And what did the oracle say to you about children?

AEGEUS. Words that are too wise for me to guess their meaning.

MEDEA. (*onstage*) Can you tell me the god's words?

MEDEA. Can you tell me the god's words?

AEGEUS. Yes, you should hear the words. You're clever, you may know what they mean.

MEDEA. Then what was his message, tell me.

AEGEUS. (*onstage*) I am not to loosen the hanging foot of the wine-

AEGEUS. I am not to loosen the hanging foot of the wine-skin.

MEDEA. Ahh!

AEGEUS. And you... why so pale... and sad?

MEDEA. Oh Aegeus, my husband has hurt me in the worst way.

AEGEUS. What do you mean? What has he done? Tell me.

MEDEA. (*onstage*) He has taken a new wife and tossed me away.

MEDEA. He has taken a new wife and tossed me away.

AEGEUS. He wouldn't dare do a thing like that.

MEDEA. But he has.

AEGEUS. Did he fall in love? Or is he tired of your love?

MEDEA. He was so in love with me.

AEGEUS. Then let him go.

MEDEA. A passionate love... for an alliance with the king.

AEGEUS. And who gave him this wife? Tell me the rest of it.

MEDEA. It was Creon, the ruler of this land of Corinth.

AEGEUS. Damn, Medea, your grief is understandable.

MEDEA. I'm ruined. And there is more... I am banished.

AEGEUS. Banished? By whom?

MEDEA. Creon will drive me out of Corinth into exile.

AEGEUS. Does Jason allow this? I can't believe it.

MEDEA. He pretends not to, but he'll put up with it. Oh, Aegeus, I beg you, have pity on me, have pity on your poor friend... don't let me go into desolate exile. Receive me in your land and at your home. Such love from you will lead to children, and happiness. You don't know how fortunate for you to have come here. I... will end your childlessness. I... will make you able to father children. The drugs and sayings that I know can do this.

AEGEUS. You make me anxious to do this favor for you, for the sake of the gods and then for what you promise. But it's not so easy... if you reach my land, I will welcome you. But... I cannot agree to take you out of this country. I cannot anger Creon. If you reach me safely, then you will stay there safely. I will give you up to no one. But you must make your escape yourself.

MEDEA. I understand. But I must have a pledge from you.

AEGEUS. Don't you trust me?

MEDEA. I trust you, yes. But there are those who hate me... if you are bound by this oath, when they try to drag me from your land, you will not abandon me. If our pact is only words, with no oath to the gods, you will be weak.

AEGEUS. *(onstage)* You can keep your promise?

AEGEUS. You can keep your promise?

MEDEA. *(onstage)* Yes, can you?

MEDEA. Yes, can you?

AEGEUS. Yes.

MEDEA. Swear by the Earth and your gods above... that you yourself will never cast me from your land, nor if any of my enemies demand it, you will not willingly hand me over.

AEGEUS. I so swear, again and again.

MEDEA. Then let us say farewell, and I will reach your city as soon as I can, after I do what I must do.

(they embrace)

(the image freezes)

VOICES CHANT. *(whispering)* Remember. Remember. Remember.

AEGEUS. You were so beautiful then.

MEDEA. Then? And so were you.

AEGEUS. I kept my promise. When they came for you, the power of Athens stopped them. And you've been safe and protected all these years.

MEDEA. And my promise was unbroken. You have your manhood, you have your children. And they are happy.

ÆGEUS. Yes... and *our* child and he is happy.

(the screen fades)

MEDEA. No... he's not... no bastard child is ever happy.

ÆGEUS. Dammit, he is! He's a happy boy in a happy house. He is my child!

MEDEA. *(bitterly)* He is your half-breed, bastard child... but he is *my* son, and he is a prince. I will take him home where his family will adore him and give him his... honor!

ÆGEUS. *(stunned)* Is that it? You will leave me in disgrace and take my child with you? May the gods curse you for the hateful color of your heart.

MEDEA. *(jumping on to the center level)* I was born cursed, Aegeus of Athens. My people come from the fire beneath the sea at the center of the earth. Let your gods curse, they are doomed to destroy themselves. .. anyway.

VOICES CHANT. Stop. Stop.

ÆGEUS. No! *(moves away)* No! I won't let you do this. As the earth turns... you turn against it. No... no, you will not leave me. I'll stop you.

(In the distance the music of the chant is heard. MEDEA rises to her full height, her arms outstretched with the wings of her cape)

Right Screen: Image of LAZA

(LAZA, in front of the screen, moves with the screen image).

VOICES CHANT. *(singing rhythmically)* Lay Sahm Lay Nesso La Nahna Lay Sahm... Lay Sahm Lay Nesso La Nahna Lay Sahm...

MEDEA. Then stop me now... stop me. Take your sword and stab it here between the breasts you loved to lick and kiss. Here, stab it here between the legs you loved to lick and kiss -- I am your meat... devour me. Eat your full because you will never eat again.

VOICES CHANT. Lay Sahm Lay Nesso La Nahna Lay Sahm... Lay Sahm Lay Nesso La Nahna Lay Sahm...

(ÆGEUS freezes for a moment in panic and fear. Then he breaks free with anger.)

ÆGEUS. *(low-voiced)* I'll stop you! I'll change your brown color to white, Medea. I'll stop you!

*(He staggers off to the back and on to a level. The **VOICES** fade. The music fades. **LAZA** moves left. **MEDEA** slowly collapses to her knees crying. The **NURSE** and **WOMAN** step down and carefully move toward her.)*

WOMAN. This is a dangerous Aegeus, a dark Aegeus, standing at the edge of a dark rift in the Earth.

VOICES CHANT. (very distant) Lay Sahm Lay Nesso La Nahna Lay Sahm...

MEDEA. *(sobbing)* Away, away... it rolls through me like a tide, it floods my brain.

Left Screen: Midshot - **MEDEA/TWO CHILDREN/OTHERS** – no sound
*(**MEDEA** stands calling to her children. They run across the space into her arms. She holds them close, kissing them. Closeup of the three faces.)*

MEDEA. I hear their voices, their sweet, laughing voices.

Left Screen - Last shot repeats

(She runs to the screen in an effort to join the image.)

(the screen fades)

Right Screen: Midshot – **MEDEA/TWO CHILDREN** – no sound
*(**MEDEA** stands facing the camera, her two children on either side. They slowly move in front of her and nestle against her, reaching up over their heads to touch her)*

*(On stage, **MEDEA** runs to the right screen and moves her hands lovingly over the image.)*

(the screen fades)

(She turns and drifts back to the center level.)

NURSE. *(softly)* You're here, my lady, my dear one... you're here with me.

WOMAN. *(carefully)* This is where the dream stops... the lock is tight.

MEDEA. I can't stop the voices, the sounds, the eyes... they flow through me into the future with such force... wherever I turn, I see nothing else. The top of my head is open and my memory erupts like molten rock from a mountain of fire.

VOICES CHANT. Fire.

MEDEA. I hear me... I breathe me... I feel the horror in my heart. I want to stop it.

VOICES CHANT. Fire.

MEDEA. *(closing her eyes)* Sleep... sleep. Day into night, night into day. Dreams... dreams. White into black, black into white. Eyes... eyes. Light into dark, dark into light. *(opening her eyes)* They stare at me... with such longing, with such forgiveness. Can't you rest, my babies? Can't you drift and play on the soft clouds of your innocence? When I take your loving little brother back to our home in the warm valleys by the sea, you can play, we can all play together, and laugh, and dance.

(She takes the hands of the other two women and pulls them with her in a circle around the center level. They are hesitant to go with her, but they move as she sings and dances in a circle. The lights follow them rhythmically)

MEDEA. Free... free as the wind in our hair. Clean... clean as the rain on our skin. Smile for me, my little ones. Smile and laugh and listen to the stories in the smooth blue air.

(Suddenly, she stops.)

Light into dark... dark. They stare at me, with such hatred, eyes filled with the desire to revenge the betrayer. *(closing her eyes)* I want to go home, I want to bathe in the anguish of my Father, I want to soothe the wet fear of my people.

(opening her eyes) They will know what a faithless man did to slash the tapestry of my life. They will all know what passion sank its teeth into my heart.

Right Screen: Medea

MEDEA. I saved your life, Jason, and every Greek knows I saved it. When you faced the bulls that breathed fire, I destroyed them.

MEDEA. *(onstage)* And the snake!

MEDEA. And the snake that never slept, wrapped in its coils around the Golden Fleece, I killed it and brought you to safety. And I betrayed...

MEDEA. *(onstage)* My Father!

MEDEA. ...my Father and my home. And I came with you to Pelias' land, and to save you, I killed him with a terrible death at his daughter's hand and took away your fear, your fear! Now... you reward me, not with your love... you throw me away like a bruised, ripened fruit... for the tart juice of a golden-haired young girl. *(image freezes)*

Left Screen: Jason

JASON. How hopeless it is to deal with your temper, woman, this mouthing of your ignorant tongue. You write your own history. But I know that the gods were alone responsible, Aphrodite was responsible for saving my life. You are clever enough, but it was your passion for me, the goddess' inescapable power, that compelled you to keep me safe.

MEDEA. (*onstage to LAZA*) Coward, liar.

JASON. The gifts I gave you far outshine the small services you did for me.

MEDEA. (*onstage to LAZA*) I loved you!

JASON. I brought you away from that... cold land of ruins and fog into the light and warmth of Greece. All Greeks considered you a clever woman.

MEDEA. (*onstage to LAZA*) I loved you!

JASON. You were honored for it! Look at yourself, instead of living among barbarians, you inhabit a Greek land and understand how to live by the laws of men instead of the will of shadowed forces. If you were still living, there, at the ends of the earth, no one would have ever heard of you.
(*the images freeze*)

(*LAZA moves between the two screens*)

MEDEA. (*onstage*) I gave you everything and you put ashes in my mouth. (*darkly*) The laws of men are for men! The laws of men for women are not laws at all, just the one-eyed, arrogant tyranny of a mindless little beast. It compels them to fight wars, while they believe we live a peaceful, untroubled life at home without pain. How ignorant and blind they are. I would rather stand in front of the warriors' spears in battle, anytime, than give birth to even one child! (*softly*) And yet... there is not a painful stain of regret in my body for any of the children I bore into this world. (*sharply*) You know the truth. You know. (*sighs*) Why is there no mark, no scar, embedded on a man's body to tell us who is true and who is false? (*stands close to the left screen*) You know, now, my self-betrayed, shattered husband... they did come to hear of me... in a terrible voice and song that they'll never forget... and neither will you!
(*She wraps her clothes tightly around her and begins to move away. The NURSE starts to follow her. MEDEA lifts the back of her hand, as if to tell her to stay. Then she moves off left into the shadows, followed by LAZA .*)

(*both screens fade*)

VOICES CHANT. Fire.

WOMAN. Is it despair, madness, or both? What grips her mind and heart in its terrible grasp comes from a place so deep in her being that only she can go there.

NURSE. I'm afraid... she finds no comfort anywhere, and now that danger runs after her, she turns away as if she's alone in an empty room. I'm afraid... I must help her... we must help her.

WOMAN. How? She barely hears you when you talk to her. She looks at me as an ancient enemy... she doesn't hear my voice.

NURSE. Afraid... I'm afraid she'll hurt herself with her own hands... or even worse... raise herself into a terrible madness and do... again...

WOMAN. Again.

NURSE. Again.

(CREON and DAUGHTER move across the back onto levels. The other two women are startled as the SERVANT steps down and moves to the center)

WOMAN. You're still here... this is not a safe place for you to be.

SERVANT. I don't want to go back. I want to stay with... her.

NURSE. No... it's dangerous to stay here. Your master will...

SERVANT. He's no longer my master!

NURSE. He is! You can't escape from that. But she's no longer your mistress.

SERVANT. And I am no longer her servant. I've seen what he does to her. I want to protect her, I want to be a man to her, I want to love her.

WOMAN. Medea needs no more men in her life, no more masters of her body and her fate.

NURSE. No more. Especially not you... you're only a boy.

SERVANT. I was a boy when I served her, I'm a man now. I was a faithful servant to Aegeus but always for her sake. Now he crushes my loyalty like broken clay. He threatens her. He puts tears of sadness in her eyes and the sweat of fear on her lips.
(He turns to move left, the NURSE grabs his arm and drags him away.)

NURSE. She has no fear, you motherless son. Not for him. She is only afraid of herself. Do you know who she *is*?

SERVANT. I do... I know everything about her.

NURSE. You know nothing! If you are a man, you will go back and stop him from coming here again.

SERVANT. I can't do that. He has guards, an army. But here... he wouldn't dare bring them here. And here I can protect her.

WOMAN. (*strongly*) How wrong you are! You can't protect her from Aegeus if she will not protect herself. She's grown weak with sadness and grief, her tears drain out the water of her life. And her son, she's lost her son.

NURSE. (*shaking*) No, not yet. She'll take him, she'll take him with her however terrible the journey. Oh I'm afraid, I'm so afraid of what she'll do.

SERVANT. She needs me, she...

WOMAN. To do what? When Aegeus comes back, and he will come back, will you stand up to him? Will you fight him? Will you put your body in front of hers and eat his sword?

SERVANT. I'll give her my blood, I'll lay my chopped arms and legs at her feet.

NURSE. (*sarcastically*) What use will you be to her then?

SERVANT. (*jumping on to the center level*) Don't doubt me!

NURSE. You're just a boy.

SERVANT. And don't pity me! I love her! You can't understand that, but *she* will. Yes, I'm young, but with a young passion that has power, the highest point of power of a man's life. I want to smooth her face, widen her eyes, blow the heat of my breath into her lungs. I want to put my arms around her and hold her so tight, so tight... I want to love her.

MEDEA. (*offstage*) I hear you. (*laughing*) I hear your slippery whisper, Asyrte. You're a bad boy.

NURSE. Shhhh... she's coming. Get down from there!

SERVANT. (*stretching tall with his arms out*) No, I want her to see me, full and strong.

(**MEDEA** appears at the left, **LAZA** in the shadows.)

MEDEA. (*wistfully*) I see you, you silly little boy, standing there, pretending to be brave, to have hair on your chest and strong legs. Oh, my little Asyrte, the words you say that make everyone stare at you, that turn their faces blush red.

WOMAN. (*whispering to the NURSE*) That's not his name, he's...

NURSE. That is *his* name... the name of her young brother (*closes her eyes*) Asyrte.

SERVANT. I am here for you, my lady, to keep you safe.

WOMAN. Her brother?

MEDEA. *(mockingly)* Ahh!

NURSE. Sacrificed to the sea to drown her father's anger.

SERVANT. I pledge to you, my love, and my life.

MEDEA. Ahh, my little lord, the musk of your skin, the fire of your eyes overwhelm me.

(She takes his hands and pulls him toward her and kisses his mouth. She moves away laughing. Then she reaches and drags him down off the center level.)

MEDEA. You *are* a bad boy... come, dance with me.

WOMAN. She is delirious, lost in her thoughts somewhere.

VOICES CHANT. Lost!

SERVANT. *(pulling away)* Why are you making fun of me? My feelings are serious.

MEDEA. I know.

SERVANT. I want to protect you, care for you.

MEDEA. I know.

SERVANT. *(sharply)* Then why do you mock me? I'm young, yes, but a pure... young man. I don't want to become rough and rigid like Aegeus and... the other one. I want to grow into you and fill the empty space in your life. I am a lover of lover's things. I don't want to be like them. I am different.

MEDEA. *(her mood shifts to anger)* No, you're not different. You're pressed from the mold of all men. And in time, when you become as hard... as you can become... your eye will wander, your tongue will search for another taste, and your heart will sink to the base of your body and stiffen there. That's the curse of men, they're afraid to live with the taste of their own heart. What do I need you for? I've had all the eyes and mouths I can consume.

(her mood shifts again) Come, let's dance. *(she grabs his hands.)*

SERVANT. But you must...

(She is insistent and begins to whirl in circles with him. LAZA joins in. As they spin, they stretch out holding hands in a straight line, moving faster and faster until they reach the upper right area and suddenly stop. A percussive low sound is heard.)

ALL. Medea.

VOICES CHANT. *(in the distance)* Lay Sahn, Lay Nesso, La Nahna, Lay Sahn...

(MEDEA moves to the center, LAZA behind her. CREON and DAUGHTER step down.. The SERVANT backs up toward the right until he reaches the WOMAN and the NURSE. They huddle together as CREON and DAUGHTER slowly move across the back and stand with their backs to the left screen.

Left Screen: Creon, Daughter
He turns in place slowly.

Right Screen: **MESSENGER/MEDEA/NURSE/OTHER VOICES**

MESSENGER. She is dead, now, the royal princess, and Creon, too, by your poisons, by your magic.

MEDEA. Speak slowly, how did they die? You will delight me twice over, if you say they died in agony.

MESSENGER. The young princess was angry with your husband for bringing your children into the palace. But he calmed her and had the children offer her the gifts that you sent. After they left, when she saw the shimmering, golden dress, she couldn't restrain herself. She cleared her young white body of all clothes and jewels, and then she dressed herself in the wonderful robe. And put the shining gold crown on her head. She walked around the room with her gleaming feet stepping soft and delicate. But then, suddenly, the color of her face changed, and she staggered back.

VOICES CHANT. Medea, Medea

(onstage MEDEA waves her arms over her head as if to block out the Voices)

MESSENGER. She ran and her legs trembled, and she managed to reach a chair without falling flat down. It was then that the white foam poured from her lips and her eyes rolled and her face became bloodless. And, then, poor girl, with a terrible groan, she opened her speechless eyes. The wreath of gold burst into flames and the finely woven dress that your children gave to her was fastening on to her fine flesh. She jumped from the chair, all on fire, everywhere, until the flesh from her bones dropped away and she dissolved on to the ground in horror and pain.

MEDEA. Tell me more.

MESSENGER. It was a horrible sight and we were terrified to even touch the corpse. In came her father. He knew nothing and when he saw her, he fell upon her corpse and cried out and folded his arms around her, and kissed her and spoke to her saying: "Oh my poor child, what heavenly power has so shamefully destroyed you? And who has set me here like an ancient sepulcher, deprived of you? Oh let me die with you, my child!"

CREON. *(onstage)* Oh my poor child, what heavenly power has so shamefully destroyed you? And who has set me here like an ancient sepulcher, deprived of you? Oh let me die with you, my child!

MESSENGER. And then wailing and crying, he tried to stand up away from her, but he found himself stuck to the fine dress, and he struggled, oh how he struggled as he tried to lift himself up as she was pulling him down. And when he pulled even harder, he ripped his flesh from his bones until he dissolved on top of her, dead, dead, dead. There they lie... close... the daughter and her old father, dead bodies together, what he prayed for in his tears.

MEDEA. *(after a moment)* The delight I feel is drowned in cold, cold sorrow. Revenge casts no light to guide the heart.
(The images on both screens freeze)

(Onstage, she moves to the right and puts out her hand to touch the image. From the left, a deep moan comes from CREON and rises to a terrible piercing scream. The OTHER VOICES huddle closer. MEDEA turns her head to the right and after a moment begins to move to the right. The NURSE goes to grab her, LAZA blocks her.)

NURSE. No, no, no... don't go there, not to the ghost, he is dead.

CREON. I am not dead.

(the screens fade)

MEDEA. We are all dead, old king... life is nothing more than rolling, tumbling down a hill to that empty, dark place. Each day, each year we all become a little more dead.

CREON. But you would not let me stay there. With your gods and your black arts, you raised me up and set me free into the world. Why?

MEDEA. *(closing her eyes and swaying)* It was not you that I...

CREON. You took everything that was dear and precious to me, and left me to wander, old, hopeless, dry. Why?

MEDEA. I wanted to bring...

CREON. *(louder)* You've made me nothing more than a rolling, tumbling piece of dust in the wind. Why?

MEDEA. *(louder)* Because... when I sleep, I dream of your blood in my mouth and your burning hands on my thighs... I did not want to murder you... I only wanted...

CREON. *(shouting)* You didn't murder me, you murdered my life!

(She scrambles on to the center level on her knees. CREON strides toward her. She lowers her head. He raises both hands in a fist and moves to strike her on the head and then stops.)

MEDEA. *(speaking quickly)* Listen to me, good man, good father, listen to me... it's true I wanted to destroy your sweet daughter, Jason's trophy. I wanted to beat him into the ground and pour into him the putrid pain of betrayal that he poured into me. And it's true I wanted to hurt you, not destroy you, leave you with a taste of the loneliness and colorless life you threw on me like a suffocating robe.

(He lowers his hands somewhat. She raises her eyes and looks at him.)

The crime of Jason, the crime of a wild dog discarding a piece of meat he no longer savors... you were a dog in that crime too. You condemned me, you condemned me to leave my poor child-babies in a house of hate, to abandon them, to go out on to the desert roads, a woman alone, a woman unsafe... do you know what it feels like to be that alone, do you know what it feels like to wander without friendly eyes, without the touch of a warm hand?

CREON. *(raising his fists again and then opening his hands wide)* I do know... you have punished me without mercy into knowing.

(He gasps, tears begin to flow on his face)

VOICES CHANT. StopRunPain To Be Alone... the gods... are dying.

CREON. I wander... where I had glory and honor and the love of a tender family... now I wander... where I had the faith and respect of my people and the sun-filled success of my later years... now I wander... alone, an old man, gray outside and in, with confusing memories. To be old, to be alone, to be confused... that is an end point to a life, the bitter, end point of life. *(he lowers his head and speaks slowly)*

Was it so wrong... what I did? I wanted only to protect my daughter, my baby... I feared the spike of your revenge and the powers you could summon to drive it through whatever image your eyes mirrored. I failed to listen to my own wisdom. I wanted to protect all that I loved and cared for... keep safe from the black fire in your heart. Was I wrong?

MEDEA. *(singing softly)* Days end, days end
 The sun will come again
 Winds rise, winds rise
 The moon will come again

Right Screen: Creon, Medea

Left Screen: Medea, Creon

WOMAN. She is drifting again, into that place that no one can follow.

NURSE. He follows her, and he will trap her there.

Right Screen:

CREON. You, with the angry look, so set against your husband, Medea, I order you leave my land. Exile for you and your two children. And waste no time doing it. It is my decree and I will see it done.

MEDEA. (*onstage*) Listen, hear your words, Creon.

CREON. (*turning to the screen*) I hear them.

CREON. I will not leave until you are cast out of here.

Left Screen:

MEDEA. Oh this is the end for me. I am utterly lost. What is your reason, Creon, for banishing me?

Right Screen:

CREON. I am afraid of you... why should I hide that? Afraid that you may do great harm to my daughter. Many things support my feeling... you are a clever woman, versed in the evil arts, and you are angry at having lost your husband's love. I hear you are threatening to do... something against my daughter and Jason. So I will act now. I prefer to earn your hatred now than to be soft-hearted and afterward regret it.

Left Screen:

MEDEA. This is not the first time, Creon. It's happened to me often... I've suffered much for being considered clever. A person of sense should never have his children raised to be more clever than him.

VOICES CHANT. StopRunPain To Be Alone

It will make them objects of envy and spite. If you put new ideas before the eyes of fools, they'll think you foolish and worthless in the bargain. And if you're thought to be superior to those who are educated, you will become hated. And yet, all my cleverness is not so much.

CREON. (*onstage*) I listened to your words and I failed to listen to my own wisdom.

VOICES CHANT. Listen, listen.

MEDEA. Well then, are you frightened, Creon, that I will harm you? There's no need. It's not my way to twist the authority of the king.

VOICES CHANT. Listen, listen.

MEDEA. (*onstage*) It is not my way to twist the authority of the king.

MEDEA. How have you harmed me? You gave your daughter to the man that you wanted. Oh, I certainly hate my husband. But you? I don't resent you that your affairs go well. May the marriage be a lucky one! Only let me live in this land. For even though I have been wronged, I will not raise my voice... I will submit to the more noble sensibility of the Greek view..

CREON. What you say sounds gentle enough. Still... in my heart, I greatly dread that you are plotting some evil. And so I trust you even less than before. A hot-tempered woman is easier to deal with than a clever type who holds her tongue. No... you must go! No need for more talk. There is no way that you will stay in my country.

MEDEA. I beg you, at your knees, by your new-wedded girl.

CREON. Your words are wasted. You will never persuade me.

MEDEA. Will you drive me out, and give no heed to my prayers?

CREON. I will! I love my family more than you.

MEDEA. Oh my gods, do not forget who is the cause of this!

CREON. Go! It's no use. Spare me the pain of forcing you.

MEDEA. I'm spared no pain. I lack no pain to be spared me.

CREON. Then you'll be removed by force by one of my men.

VOICES CHANT. StopRunPainTo Be Alone... the gods... are laughing.

MEDEA. *(onstage - whispering)* You condemned me.

CREON. *(onstage - whispering)* I condemned myself.

MEDEA. No, Creon, not that. But do listen, I beg you. I *will* go into exile.

CREON. Why then all this nagging and clinging to my hand?

MEDEA. Allow me to remain here for just this one day. So I can consider where to live in my exile, and look for support for my children, since their father chooses to make no kind of provision for them. Have pity on them! You have children of your own. It's natural for you to look kindly on them. For myself, I don't mind if I go into exile. It's the children, the children. It's such a short time, just what remains of this darkening day. That's all I ask.

CREON. *(sighing)* I'm not a tyrant of a man by nature. Though by showing mercy, I've often been the loser. Even now I know that I am making a mistake. All the same, I will give you this small grace. But I also will tell you this... if the golden sun rises tomorrow and sees you and your children on my land, you... will... die! That is as fixed as any fate can be. So now, if you must stay, stay for this day alone. For in it, you can do none of the things I fear.

(the screens freeze)

*(Onstage **CREON** turns and begins to move toward **MEDEA**.)*

ALL. StopRunPain To Be Afraid... the gods... are sighing

*(**LAZA** moves to step in between them, **MEDEA** sweeps her behind her back.)*

CREON. Was I wrong to give you the grace of a few hours? A small touch of time which you poisoned forever.

Right Screen: Repeat of Messenger with no sound

Left Screen: Medea, Children, Attendants with no sound.

MEDEA is seen carrying the bloody, lifeless body of one child, her attendants carrying the other.

*(Onstage, **MEDEA** runs to the left screen, reaches for it, but doesn't touch it. She turns with her back against it.)*

CREON. *(pointing to her)* Innocent, all innocent. You did this, not for the hate of love, but for the passionate love of hate, for the pure, mindless, agony of revenge.

VOICES CHANT. Stop.

MEDEA. *(sobbing)* True, true, true, true... I feel no pain greater than that. I feel a searing guilt so large that if it followed me into the grave, it would not rot away with my flesh... it would lay on my bones like white rock ice.

CREON. Am I alive?

MEDEA. Yes.

CREON. Am I your witness?

MEDEA. *(painfully)* Yes... because I cannot put it all to rest... it is the only act of my hands and heart that ever came from a place of such darkness... I couldn't stop it.

CREON. Is that my answer?

MEDEA. *(desperately)* Yes... you were brought into life again to gather your lost years, to kindle the light of your heart in your eyes again. *(closes her eyes and rocks back and forth)* I will take you with me to Colchis, across the sea of mists and deep water... to the land of my father, to bathe in my remorse, to breathe away the incense of anguish, to be restored.

CREON. And my daughter?

MEDEA. Yes... she too... and my son... and the lingering memory of my babies. She *is* here with you, isn't she?

CREON. Yes.

MEDEA. Let me see her.

*(He moves to the **DAUGHTER**, takes her hand and guides her. **MEDEA** moves to her, but cannot bring herself to touch her.)*

MEDEA. I cannot see her... let me see her... let me see her face!

(CREON reaches up and rips off his DAUGHTER's mask to reveal an identical mask underneath. MEDEA is stunned. He reaches and rips this one off. The DAUGHTER's face is like a mask, pale, her eyes closed)

CREON. She cannot see, she cannot hear, she cannot speak. She has become... flesh of my flesh.

(Suddenly, the DAUGHTER's eyes open. MEDEA slowly reaches out and holds her face in her hands.)

MEDEA. I have no power for this... no potions or drugs... only silent prayers to deaf gods. *(she closes her eyes and puts her arms around the DAUGHTER)* What a woman does on this nurturing mother earth, only a woman can undo.

VOICES CHANT. *(slow and distant)* Lay Sahm Lay Nesso La Nahna Lay Sahm.

(the screens fade)

(The DAUGHTER opens her mouth as if to speak. She takes a deep breath and lets it out with a soft, deep moan. MEDEA gently places her fingers on the girl's lips and smiles.)

MEDEA. Come home with me, Creon and Creon's daughter, and we will end this long journey together.

(They walk toward the Left Screen and stand there.)

Left Screen: Mid to Long Shot - CREON, DAUGHTER/MEDEA/CHILDREN
They stand quietly. There is a slight wind and the sound of the sea.

(AEGEUS and a GUARD move across the back and on to levels)

WOMAN. What a woman does on this nurturing mother earth, only a woman can undo. But at such an awful cost. A woman is truly the other face of a man. She gives him life from her body and he accepts that life from her. Yet, so often, he blindly turns away from her, and even more often, denies the nature of women in his own nature. Is it true that the gods are only the gods of men? What I've witnessed here is beyond the clear vision of my mind's eye. It casts a deep, rolling shadow over my faith. Are there any gods at all other than the truth that lives in both men and women?

(The lights and music change.)

(AEGEUS steps down, followed by a GUARD carrying a spear. The NURSE falls to her knees and begins to pray. The SERVANT runs to face AEGEUS. As he moves by her, the WOMAN grabs him. They struggle. He yanks free and starts again. She blocks him. Again they struggle and finally, he shoves her away on to the center level. Then he turns and stridently moves to face AEGEUS. As he approaches, the GUARD

*moves. **AEGEUS** waves him off. **AEGEUS** and the **SERVANT** stand staring at each other.)*

AEGEUS. *(after a moment)* As you stand there, you are as dead as if your body was cut in half. You are a worthless boy and a less than worthless slave. Get out of my sight! *(**SERVANT** doesn't move.)*

Do you hear me? Are your ears as defiant as your eyes? I swear, boy, I will let him stick your head on the end of a spear and post it on the city's gate.

*(No answer and no movement. Amazed, **AEGEUS** looks around at the **OTHER VOICES**)*

You betray our master, you betray your king, and you will betray your own life in the bargain. *(yelling)* Do you hear me?

SERVANT. *(in a low voice)* You are not my master, you are not my king! And I am not a boy, I am a free man.

AEGEUS. *(archly)* Free? Free by whose word? I am the only...

SERVANT. By the lady Medea... I am her free man, her protector, her lover.

AEGEUS. What? You are what?

SERVANT. You will not touch her again!

AEGEUS. You are a mad boy, and a dead one!

*(He signals the **GUARD** to give him the spear, and then dismisses him. At first he holds it up as if to throw it. Then he lowers it in a thrusting position and begins to move forward. The **SERVANT** stands rigidly for a moment and as **AEGEUS** approaches, he suddenly lunges at his feet and topples him. Then he pounces on top of **AEGEUS** and presses the shaft of the spear against his neck. They struggle and the force of the two men breaks the shaft, allowing **AEGEUS** to throw him off. **AEGEUS** quickly grabs the piece with the spearhead, flips the **SERVANT** on to his stomach, and sitting on his back, pulls his head back by the hair and raises the blade.)*

VOICES CHANT. StopRunPain... the gods are laughing...

NURSE. He's going to kill him!

WOMAN. Aegeus, you're going to kill him!

AEGEUS. Let the gods be my witness...

MEDEA. Let the gods witness King Aegeus thrusting his new found spear into another helpless piece of meat! *(**AEGEUS** stiffens at her voice)*

VOICES CHANT. Stop... Run... Pain!

MEDEA. Is this where your honor takes you, Aegeus... the conquest of a young boy?

(AEGEUS rises and turns to her. The NURSE and the WOMAN run to the SERVANT and drag him off to the side)

MEDEA. *(ironically)* My man... my man! I told you before, stick it into me here... and here.

AEGEUS. *(spitting)* You're casting your spells on me, aren't you?

MEDEA. *(smiling, shaking her head)* No... no... you've cast your own spell, it's your magic that's at work here.

AEGEUS. *(angrily)* You're goading me, you want me to blindly strike out at you so you can raise the sharp teeth and nails of your vengeance once again. *(throws down the spear)* I will not be your sheep in your house of knives. *(jumps up on the center level)* I know you, I know you... I've been through every layer of your skin. I've looked in through your eyes and... out again. Am I the fool that you think I am? I will not fall like Jason.

MEDEA. *(moving toward the center, whispering)* But you are like Jason... you are the twin face on the mask, twirling in the wind.

AEGEUS. *(anguished)* No... no. Don't hiss at me, don't whisper that snake-like song of yours. I won't hear it. I won't...

MEDEA. *(jumping up on the center level)* The twin face as if you were born together. *(He reaches for her. She catches his hands and raises them up. They turn in a slow, strange dance.)*

VOICES CHANT. The winds rise, the moons rise, Aegeus, Aegeus

MEDEA. You are strong, and weak, you are full and hollow, you are... him!

(He falls to his knees. MEDEA moves behind AEGEUS, places her hands tightly on both sides of his head, turns him sharply to face the Right Screen.)

MEDEA. Now look there... I'll help you to see what you do not want to see. Look... look at the face of your brother.

Right Screen: Jason, Medea

JASON. You hateful thing, you who have left me childless. You have done this, and do you still look at the sun and at the earth? I wish you were dead. Now I see it plain, though at the time I did not, when I took you from your barbaric house

and brought you to a Greek house, when you were married to me and had borne children for me, for the sake of pleasure in bed you killed them.

MEDEA. *(onstage)* I loved you!

JASON. There is no Greek woman who would have dared such deeds. Out of all those I passed over I chose you to marry instead. No, no not if I had ten thousand words of shame could I sting you. You are so brazen... go, stained with your children's blood. I remain to cry aloud upon my fate, I remain with no pleasure from my newly wedded love, and my boys, I will never speak to them alive.

MEDEA. *(onstage)* And all of your Greeks and all of your Greek gods also know how I cared for you, took care of you, and what you did to me. No, it was not to be that you would scorn my love and pleasantly live your life through, laughing at me.

JASON. Oh children, what an evil mother she was to you.

MEDEA. *(onstage)* They died from a disease they caught from their father.

JASON. I tell you, it was not my hand that destroyed them.

MEDEA. *(onstage)* It was your arrogance and your virgin wedding.

JASON. And just for the sake of that you chose to kill them.

MEDEA. *(onstage)* The children are dead to make you suffer.

JASON. The children will bring down curses on you.

MEDEA. *(onstage)* The gods know who was the author of their sorrow.

(onscreen)

JASON. Give me their bodies to bury and mourn them.

MEDEA. No, go to your palace, bury your bride.

JASON. I go, with two children to mourn for.

MEDEA. *(onstage)* You don't feel it yet. Wait for the future.

(screen image freezes)

AEGEUS. Is the future the slave of the past? Does it turn like a wheel? I don't honor him and yet I feel his grief. And I feel shame... for the fear of what you are about to do.

(AEGEUS is sitting on the edge of the center level. MEDEA kneels behind him and puts her arms around him)

MEDEA. *(softly)* What I am about to do... I will go to your house and take our son, my son and leave this Greek place... and we will never return.

AEGEUS. Forever? Never to see you again.

MEDEA. You have a wife who loves you and your children and your people. It's enough to fill any of the emptiness in your life.

VOICES CHANT. *(repeats continuously through the next)* Lay Sahm Lay Nesso La Nahna Lay Sahm.

Left Screen: Medea, Children
Repeat of earlier scene and freezes

AEGEUS. Enough to fill the memory of you?

MEDEA. Enough. Life is always enough to fill fading memories.

(the screen fades)

(she steps down from the center level)

A dream ends and a new dream begins. It takes us to the land of my father, to Colchis at the edge of the Black Sea. It opens my heart to the dark-eyed people there and they will judge me, let my life pour out on to the ground or place their hands on me and let me breathe the wind again.

(The opening processional music is heard. All of the characters on stage begin to move. LAZA moves among them, and places each on a level, with their backs to the audience. LAZA turns and waits for MEDEA. Two white-dressed characters from the beginning appear on both sides of the stage. They begin to move toward the center. The lights fade leaving one shaft of light on MEDEA. The two meet at the center in front of MEDEA, and as before, to the rhythm of the music, they come down off the stage and move up the center aisle toward the back of the theatre.)

MEDEA. I've turned to face the sea. I'm going home!

(MEDEA turns and moves with LAZA to the back at the center. All on stage are in silhouette against the colored panels. The panels fade. The ritual ends.)

Medea Noir