

This collection contains the following works:

Euripides: Medea

Sophocles: Antigone

Aeschylus: Agamemnon

Aeschylus: Eumenides

Aeschylus: The Choephoroi

*William Shakespeare: The Tragedy of Othello,
the Moor of Venice*

William Shakespeare: Romeo And Juliet

*William Shakespeare: Hamlet, Prince of
Denmark*

William Shakespeare: The Tragedy of Macbeth

*William Shakespeare: A Midsummer Night's
Dream*

William Shakespeare: King Lear

William Shakespeare: Antony and Cleopatra

William Shakespeare: The Tragedy of Coriolanus

*William Shakespeare: The Tragedie of Julius
Caesar*

William Shakespeare: Cymbeline, King of Britain

*William Shakespeare.: The Life of Tynon of
Athens*

William Shakespeare: Titus Andronicus

William Shakespeare: Troilus and Cressida

Henrik Ibsen: A Doll's House

Anton Chekhov: Uncle Vanya

Bernard Shaw: Pygmalion

**THE BEST OF THE
PLAYWRIGHTS: TRAGEDIES AND
COMEDIES BY THE MASTERS:
Medea by Euripides; Antigone by
Sophocles; The Oresteia by
Aeschylus; Othello, Hamlet,
Macbeth by Shakespeare; A Doll's
House by Ibsen; Uncle Vanya by
Chekhov; Pygmalion by Shaw and
others
Illustrated**

Euripides

Medea

Characters of the play

MEDEA, daughter of Aietes, King of Colchis.

JASON, chief of the Argonauts; nephew of Pelias, King of Iolcos in Thessaly.

CREON, ruler of Corinth.

AEGEUS, King of Athens.

NURSE of Medea.

TWO CHILDREN of Jason and Medea.

ATTENDANT on the children.

A MESSENGER.

CHORUS of Corinthian Women, with their LEADER.

Soldiers and Attendants.

The scene is laid in Corinth. The play was first acted when Pythodorus was Archon, Olympiad 87, year 1 (B.C. 431). Euphorion was first, Sophocles second, Euripides third, with Medea, Philoctetes, Dictys, and the Harvesters, a Satyr-play.

The Scene represents the front of MEDEA'S House in Corinth. A road to the right leads towards the royal castle, one on the left to the harbour. The NURSE is discovered alone.

NURSE

Would God no Argo e'er had winged the seas
To Colchis through the blue Symplegades:
No shaft of riven pine in Pelion's glen
Shaped that first oar-blade in the hands of men
Valiant, who won, to save King Pelias' vow,
The fleece All-golden! Never then, I trow,
Mine own princess, her spirit wounded sore
With love of Jason, to the encastled shore
Had sailed of old Iolcos: never wrought
The daughters of King Pelias, knowing not,
To spill their father's life: nor fled in fear,
Hunted for that fierce sin, to Corinth here
With Jason and her babes. This folk at need
Stood friend to her, and she in word and deed
Served alway Jason. Surely this doth bind,
Through all ill days, the hurts of humankind,
When man and woman in one music move.
But now, the world is angry, and true love
Sick as with poison. Jason doth forsake
My mistress and his own two sons, to make
His couch in a king's chamber. He must wed:
Wed with this Creon's child, who now is head

And chief of Corinth. Wherefore sore betrayed
Medea calleth up the oath they made,
They two, and wakes the clasped hands again,
The troth surpassing speech, and cries amain
On God in heaven to mark the end, and how
Jason hath paid his debt.

All fasting now

And cold, her body yielded up to pain,
Her days a waste of weeping, she hath lain,
Since first she knew that he was false. Her eyes
Are lifted not; and all her visage lies
In the dust. If friends will speak, she hears no

more

Than some dead rock or wave that beats the

shore:

Only the white throat in a sudden shame
May writhe, and all alone she moans the name
Of father, and land, and home, forsook that day
For this man's sake, who casteth her away.
Not to be quite shut out from home... alas,
She knoweth now how rare a thing that was!
Methinks she hath a dread, not joy, to see
Her children near. 'Tis this that maketh me
Most tremble, lest she do I know not what.
Her heart is no light thing, and useth not
To brook much wrong. I know that woman, aye,
And dread her! Will she creep alone to die
Bleeding in that old room, where still is laid
Lord Jason's bed? She hath for that a blade
Made keen. Or slay the bridegroom and the king,
And win herself God knows what direr thing?
'Tis a fell spirit. Few, I ween, shall stir

Her hate unscathed, or lightly humble her.
Ha! 'Tis the children from their games again,
Rested and gay; and all their mother's pain
Forgotten! Young lives ever turn from gloom!

The CHILDREN and their
ATTENDANT come in.

ATTENDANT

Thou ancient treasure of my lady's room,
What mak'st thou here before the gates alone,
And always turning on thy lips some moan
Of old mischances? Will our mistress be
Content, this long time to be left by thee?

NURSE

Grey guard of Jason's children, a good thrall
Hath his own grief, if any hurt befall
His masters. Aye, it holds one's heart!...
Meseems
I have strayed out so deep in evil dreams,
I longed to rest me here alone, and cry
Medea's wrongs to this still Earth and Sky.

ATTENDANT

How? Are the tears yet running in her eyes?

NURSE

'Twere good to be like thee!... Her sorrow lies
Scarce wakened yet, not half its perils wrought.

ATTENDANT

Mad spirit!.. if a man may speak his thought
Of masters mad. – And nothing in her ears
Hath sounded yet of her last cause for tears!

He moves towards the house, but the
NURSE checks him.

NURSE

What cause, old man?... Nay, grudge me not one
word.

ATTENDANT

'Tis nothing. Best forget what thou hast heard.

NURSE

Nay, housemate, by thy beard! Hold it not hid
From me... I will keep silence if thou bid.

ATTENDANT

I heard an old man talking, where he sate
At draughts in the sun, beside the fountain gate,
And never thought of me, there standing still
Beside him. And he said, 'Twas Creon's will,
Being lord of all this land, that she be sent,
And with her her two sons, to banishment.
Maybe 'tis all false. For myself, I know
No further, and I would it were not so.

NURSE

Jason will never bear it-his own sons
Banished, – however hot his anger runs
Against their mother!

ATTENDANT

Old love burneth low
When new love wakes, men say. He is not now
Husband nor father here, nor any kin.

NURSE

But this is ruin! New waves breaking in
To wreck us, ere we are righted from the old!

ATTENDANT

Well, hold thy peace. Our mistress will be told
All in good time. Speak thou no word hereof.

NURSE

My babes! What think ye of your father's love?
God curse him not, he is my master still:
But, oh, to them that loved him, 'tis an ill
Friend...

ATTENDANT

And what man on earth is different? How?
Hast thou lived all these years, and learned but
now

That every man more loveth his own head
Than other men's? He dreameth of the bed
Of this new bride, and thinks not of his sons.

NURSE

Go: run into the house, my little ones:
All will end happily!.. Keep them apart:
Let not their mother meet them while her heart
Is darkened. Yester night I saw a flame
Stand in her eye, as though she hated them,
And would I know not what. For sure her wrath
Will never turn nor slumber, till she hath...
Go: and if some must suffer, may it be
Not we who love her, but some enemy!

VOICE (*within*).

Oh shame and pain: O woe is me!
Would I could die in my misery!

The CHILDREN and the
ATTENDANT go in.

NURSE

Ah, children, hark! She moves again
Her frozen heart, her sleeping wrath.
In, quick! And never cross her path,
Nor rouse that dark eye in its pain;
That fell sea-spirit, and the dire
Spring of a will untaught, unbowed.
Quick, now! – Methinks this weeping cloud
Hath in its heart some thunder-fire,
Slow gathering, that must flash ere long.
I know not how, for ill or well,
It turns, this uncontrollable
Tempestuous spirit, blind with wrong.

VOICE (*within*)

Have I not suffered? Doth it call
No tears?.. Ha, ye beside the wall
Unfathered children, God hate you
As I am hated, and him, too,
That gat you, and this house and all!

NURSE