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# Medea's Children

By Per Lysander and Suzanne Osten

In cooperation with  
the ensemble of Unga Klara Theatre, Stockholm

Based on Euripides' *Medea*

Translated by  
Ann-Charlotte Harvey

Music by  
Gunnar Edander

**Dramatic Publishing Company**  
Woodstock, Illinois • Australia • New Zealand • South Africa

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English translation ©1985 by  
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(MEDEA'S CHILDREN)

ISBN: 978-0-93272-048-1

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## CAST OF CHARACTERS

LITTLE JASON, 5 years old

LITTLE MEDEA, 9 years old

JASON, ex-hero, the children's father

MEDEA, Jason's wife, the children's mother

ANNA, the NURSE, takes care of the children

GLAUCE (pronounced GLAO'-KEE), princess of Corinth,  
Jason's new love interest.

All characters are played by adult actors.

GLAUCE is a non-speaking role.

## SYNOPSIS OF SCENES:

1. PROLOGUE.  
Introduction of the story. Presentation of the characters.  
General outline of the conflict.
2. FIRST ESCAPE ATTEMPT: "DIVORCE"  
The CHILDREN are speculating about the consequences of divorce and LITTLE JASON tries on a utopia for size.  
The NURSE is interrogated.
3. CLASSICAL PLANE I. MEDEA'S DEPRESSION  
MEDEA laments. The NURSE tries to protect the CHILDREN.  
The CHILDREN see their father, JASON, and MEDEA has a violent outburst.
4. SECOND ESCAPE ATTEMPT: "SUICIDE"  
The CHILDREN toy with the idea of suicide. The NURSE goes in and talks to them. JASON brings a present.
5. CLASSICAL PLANE II. JASON AND MEDEA QUARREL  
JASON and MEDEA draw the CHILDREN and the NURSE into their argument.
6. THIRD ESCAPE ATTEMPT: "RUNNING AWAY"  
The CHILDREN try to run away from their problems, but cannot do it. LITTLE MEDEA tells a significant dream.
7. CLASSICAL PLANE III. JASON AND MEDEA ARE "RECONCILED"  
The reconciliation of JASON and MEDEA is a false one, which ends when the NURSE blows up at the parents and decides to leave. The CHILDREN then take control of the situation and arrange the divorce.

#### RULES OF THE GAME:

The stage is made up of two acting areas: a "classical" area in blue and white with columns, i.e., Corinth, and--far down stage right, in one corner of the classical area--a realistic modern children's room. The CHILDREN may not go alone into the classical/adult world, whereas the parents invade the children's room at will. The NURSE lives on a "diving board" extending out into the audience, where she has her telephone and books. With the exception of certain sentences and isolated words, the adult dialogue of the Classical plane is incomprehensible to the children.

#### THE MUSIC:

The music is an integral part of the action and functions like a Greek chorus. It belongs to the Classical plane, and is sung and played off stage, preferably by live musicians.

Complete score by Gunnar Edander is available from the publisher for \$5.00.

#### TIME OF THE ACTION:

The three escape attempts take place in the middle of the day, in the afternoon, and at night, respectively. JASON and MEDEA's reconciliation takes place at dawn.

The action occupies 24 hours (from Saturday to Sunday) and represents the culmination of several months of conflict.



## TRANSLATOR'S NOTES:

As is clear from the set description and stage directions, the premiere production of Medea's Children at the Unga Klara Theatre, Stockholm--on which this script is based--used proscenium staging. However, arena or modified arena staging can be used. The authors, in fact, recommend arena staging.

The unusual and poetic form of the stage directions is both a liability and a blessing: it is less precise than standard script formats, but it also gives the director greater creative freedom and conveys a feeling of the overall character of the play. The director should feel free to interpret, interpolate, and invent action and stage business. The detailed stage directions are merely intended to give as full a picture as possible of the authors' intentions, not to be slavishly followed.

For a better understanding of the authors' intentions, some additional information about the staging of the premiere production may be helpful. Thus, the furniture in the children's room was oversized, so as to make the actors portraying the children appear smaller. Jason's soccer ball was made of the same "golden" material as the Golden Fleece. The "pirate" fought by Jason and Medea was a dummy, not a live character. The costumes of Jason and Medea and the mesh headdress of the Nurse were "Greek;" the children wore modern clothes.

The song texts in this translation are intended to be sung to the music composed by Gunnar Edander. (See music notes). "Classical" dialogue is visually distinguished from modern in that each classical speech line begins with a capital letter.

In order to make the script work for a specific production, you may wish to make certain changes in the script:

- . when Little Jason talks about the subway, you may wish to substitute "bus" or some other means of public transportation familiar to your audience;
- . the washbasin can be an old-fashioned basin with pitcher, or a modern sink with faucets. In one production of the play the Nurse actually washed Little Jason's hair on stage; however, there need be no real water on stage.

- . In this translation, there are "blankets" on the children's beds. The original text speaks of "comforters" or "quilts." Depending on your geographical location, you may wish to use comforters instead of blankets.
- . The children's beds can be either bunk beds--as implied in the script--or trundle beds, depending on your requirements and space available. Make any necessary adjustments in the lines--e.g., when the Nurse asks Little Medea to help her "push the beds together."
- . For judo, you may wish to substitute any martial arts discipline.
- . Little Medea's line "Pizza Man delivers" can be changed to some local advertising jingle or slogan that implies paying back or "delivering."

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

The authors wish to give special thanks to grades 2 and 3 of Eriksdal Elementary School and Lisbeth Palmgren for good ideas and helpful suggestions.

Peter D Arnott's translation (copyright 1961) has been used for certain passages from Euripides' Medea.

## PROLOGUE

### LITTLE JASON:

ONCE UPON A TIME  
there was a Greek Prince, whose  
name was JASON.

And he had a fantastically magical  
ship that was called  
ARGO

and onboard that ship he sailed  
around among the islands of Greece  
and had one adventure after another.

JASON

wanted to win the greatest treasure  
in the world,

THE GOLDEN FLEECE,

which was a fleece of gold  
and whoever owned it was protected  
against all misfortune.

But...

JASON:

...a power-hungry king had taken  
the golden fleece and he had hung  
the fleece up in a tree and under  
the tree he had put an enormous

FIRE-BREATHING DRAGON...

...to guard it.

So it was no easy task for Jason.

But it so happened that the king  
had an incredibly beautiful  
daughter,

MEDEA,

who knew black magic...

Begins to tell the story down  
in the audience, stage left.  
JASON runs out.

"Argo music" begins.  
JASON shows the model ship and  
"sails" with it in the air.

JASON jumps up and takes over  
the storytelling.

LITTLE JASON, LITTLE MEDEA, and  
NURSE take over the story and  
become the tree and the dragon.

JASON is burnt by the dragon.

MEDEA squeezes into the row of  
seats where JASON is cowering  
from the dragon's fire.

JASON (CONT.):

...and when she saw Jason she gave

A LITTLE SQUEAL

because she thought he was so handsome.

And Jason also fell madly in love so Medea decided to help him.

Medea had MAGIC POWERS

so first she sang a song...

...and then the dragon stopped breathing fire.

and then she sprinkled magic water on the dragon

AND THEN IT FELL ASLEEP...

So Jason could climb up and take the GOLDEN FLEECE.

LITTLE JASON:

When the king heard about this

HE GOT FURIOUS

and he came after them with all his men:

"ROW! ROW!"

And Jason and Medea were forced to run away together across the sea on the swift ship Argo and the waves were whipped to foam like whipped cream.

NURSE:

And then they sailed together among the Greek islands

JASON emits Tarzan yells. JASON and MEDEA are overwhelmed by passion and fall down among the audience.

"Argo music" is hummed. The dragon is lulled to sleep.

"Argo music" concludes...

...with a final chord.

Describes in words and pictures.

JASON carries MEDEA onto the stage.

Takes over the storytelling.

Music: "The sacred rivers..."

NURSE (CONT.):

and had adventure upon adventure

and were HAPPY and promised each other they would never part

and Medea had two children

and they were all

ONE HAPPY FAMILY.

And one day they came to a city called CORINTH

and there they decided to settle down

They got a house with a room for the children and were  
ONE HAPPY FAMILY.

LITTLE MEDEA:

BUT ONE DAY  
Jason suddenly saw a princess whose name was

GLAUCE

and he fell madly in love with her.

MEDEA:

BUT HE WAS ALREADY MARRIED TO ME.

NURSE:

But Jason went to Glauce anyway because he was so much IN LOVE.

SONG:

"The sacred rivers are flowing backwards up the mountains,

JASON and MEDEA dance a happy dance, fight and kill a pirate.

JASON and MEDEA exchange rings and vows.

A family portrait is arranged after the CHILDREN are "born" from under MEDEA's skirts, everyone still rocking in the ship Argo.

NURSE whirls about the stage; lights up on columns ("Corinth") as she points to them.

Points to the children's furniture.  
JASON kisses MEDEA.  
Music stops.

NURSE shows a glass shoe.  
The "Glauce chord" is heard.

Cries out.

JASON runs out into the audience to a projection of a red heart.

SONG: (CONT.)

justice is thrown to the ground  
and everything's upside-down.  
Pledges of troth and vows are  
broken by falsehearted men..."

MEDEA sobs.

NURSE:

And they employed a girl--Anna.

NURSE goes out and stands on  
the "diving board" with her  
suitcase. Leafs through  
People magazine and interprets  
the adult language into  
"Childese" along with the song.

SONG:

"Now hatred reigns, now tender  
bonds are broken."

NURSE:

THEY DON'T LIKE EACH OTHER ANY LONGER.

"Jason denounces both his wife and  
children."

HE HAS LEFT HOME

"And toasts his wedding with his  
second bride"

THAT'S GLAUCE, OF COURSE.

"Daughter of Creon, ruler of our  
land."

YOU GOT THAT, DIDN'T YOU?

"Medea has forsworn all food and  
water,"

SHE'S STOPPED EATING

"Lies there broken with grief,  
Dissolves and melts in endless  
tears"

JUST LIKE A SNOWMAN

"She raises her pallid neck..." Music continues faintly.

NURSE: (CONT.)

There are the kids, coming from the playground. I usually pick them up around this time.

LITTLE MEDEA is giving LITTLE JASON a piggyback ride.

NURSE shows them a box. They stop.

LITTLE MEDEA:

What have you got in that box?

NURSE:

A reddish yellow hamster dragon. A really sad little animal. Actually, it has the world's cutest, fluffiest fur, but it catches fire every time it breathes out--like a little cigarette lighter, sort of.

LITTLE MEDEA:

We don't want any presents from you. I've got my dog, you see, and he has his duck that we got from our Mom and Dad.

FIRST ESCAPE ATTEMPT: "DIVORCE"

JASON:

Nevertheless I do not wish to betray  
Those who are near and dear to me.  
I care for you and the children  
And would like to arrange things so  
That you would not ever lack for  
money.

JASON and MEDEA go up on the  
Classical plane. MEDEA is  
weeping. "Divorce" theme  
Music stops.

LITTLE JASON:

What is "divorce," Daddy?

JASON enters the children's  
room, serious.

JASON laughs and tosses LITTLE  
JASON up in the air.

LITTLE MEDEA:

Me too, Daddy, me too!

JASON:

I don't have time right now...

Runs over to the Glauce heart.

LITTLE JASON:

What is "divorce," Mommy?

MEDEA rushes after JASON.

MEDEA:

O revenge, it is Themis I call on and  
Zeus,  
Overseeing the vows of all mortals.

JASON:

See you at nine, Glauce!

MEDEA, agitated, almost col-  
lides with LITTLE MEDEA, who  
is frightened. MEDEA makes an  
apologetic gesture, disappears  
up to the classical plane.

MEDEA:

O Zeus!

Screams.

LITTLE JASON:

What is "divorce?" I don't want "di-  
vorce." What is it? Tell me what  
it is!

Grabs hold of LITTLE MEDEA's  
hula-hoop, which is around  
her neck.

LITTLE MEDEA:

Can't you see I'm busy. I don't know.  
We aren't gonna divorce.

Continues to hula-hoop  
while moving away from him.

LITTLE JASON:

Tell me what it is.

LITTLE MEDEA:

It's nothing scary, Jase. It doesn't  
have to be scary. "Divorce" can be  
when you spit. Now I divorce my spit.

LITTLE MEDEA spits.

Do you wanna see who can spit the  
farthest?

LITTLE MEDEA swings herself  
up in the upper bunk with a  
Tarzan yell, which is echoed  
weakly by LITTLE JASON. LITTLE  
MEDEA lifts him up. They spit  
happily in the direction of  
their seated parents.

Great, Jase!

Wow, that's really FAR!

LITTLE JASON:

It's no fun. Divorce.

Jumps down from the bed.

NURSE:

Do you want to go out and play?

Opens the door from her room  
and calls.

LITTLE MEDEA:

Naw!

The CHILDREN shake their  
heads in reply.

NURSE

So much for that!

Goes into her room.

LITTLE JASON:

What is divorce?

LITTLE MEDEA:

It's what Jason is doing. Running  
back and forth. Now I'm Medea, and  
she (points to a doll) is Glauce.  
Put her in the doorway. Then you  
come here. Run to Glauce! No,  
come here! Run to Glauce! No,  
come here! Run...

LITTLE JASON puts the doll in  
doorway and runs between the  
doll and LITTLE MEDEA's arms.

LITTLE JASON:

I don't want to play this divorce game anymore.

NURSE:

Do you want some lemonade?

LITTLE MEDEA:

Naw.

I'm gonna tell you a story. Once upon a time there was a prince whose name was Jason, who fell madly in love with a princess whose name was Medea. So she had two children...

LITTLE JASON:

How?

LITTLE MEDEA:

They fucked. I've seen it before.

LITTLE JASON:

Was that all?

LITTLE MEDEA:

(Airily) That's all. When you've done it, you divorce.

NURSE:

Are you bored?

LITTLE MEDEA:

Naw.

LITTLE JASON:

I don't want to divorce you.

Stops the game.

Puts his head in LITTLE MEDEA's lap.

Calls from her room.

They look up.

LITTLE MEDEA gets her gray dog and LITTLE JASON his green duck: "Bow-wow--quack-quack--bow-wow." Lusty intercourse. Suddenly over.

The CHILDREN look serious.

LITTLE MEDEA:

We've got to. You get Mommy, and I get Daddy. Now we'll split up our stuff. Mommy's--Daddy's--Mommy's--Daddy's...

Takes things from the basket and puts in two piles. Very serious.

LITTLE JASON:

I want my ball.

LITTLE MEDEA:

What do you need that for?

LITTLE JASON:

Practice.

LITTLE MEDEA:

OK then. But it better not land in my part.

LITTLE MEDEA gives him the ball and stretches a string across the room. They look at the border line. LITTLE JASON crosses the border on purpose. LITTLE MEDEA pushes him back in what turns into a playful wrestling match. LITTLE JASON crosses the border one more time, but is pushed away by LITTLE MEDEA.

LITTLE MEDEA:

Get lost.

LITTLE JASON doesn't understand that the game has turned serious and tries to cross the border again. LITTLE MEDEA chases him away again. She grabs the Glauce doll by the hair and puts it on the border line.

She's a border guard.

LITTLE JASON:

I don't have any place to sleep.

LITTLE MEDEA:

The floor.

LITTLE MEDEA throws him his blanket.

LITTLE JASON:

It's so hard. Can't I have the mattress, too?

Li'l Medea, now we'll never see each other again.

LITTLE MEDEA:

(Sudden regret) People can go visit each other...Hey...

NURSE

Hi Mom! Everything is just great... real nice people...pretty rich, it seems...definitely IN people...yeah, the ones who went to get the golden fleece...yes, except she isn't as good looking as in the pictures, I don't think...oh sure, they keep me running, big rooms, lots to do...and guess what, I've got my own room here, really comfortable, and free telephone, so we can talk as much as we want to...the kids seem real nice, I think...a little pale, maybe, but very well brought up...yes, they share everything.

LITTLE JASON:

Hey, we don't need to split everything up. Can't we keep it together?

LITTLE MEDEA:

Geez, don't you understand ANYTHING? They're getting a divorce.

LITTLE JASON:

But that's only if we don't go.

LITTLE MEDEA drags his bed across, then goes back and sits on her own bed.

LITTLE JASON hides behind his "barricade."

No reply from LITTLE JASON.

Telephoning from her "diving board".

Throws his duck across to LITTLE MEDEA's bed.

LITTLE MEDEA:

What do you mean "go?" "Go?" We aren't going anywhere. They're getting a DIVORCE.

LITTLE JASON:

But I know where you can go. You have to promise never, ever to tell anybody. I know where you can go. But it is a secret.

LITTLE MEDEA is silent.

That's where you go and START ALL OVER. That's where everything always is just like it was before, and also a little like it will be some time in a long, long time. Next summer, I think, yes, like it will be next summer, that's how it always is there.

LITTLE MEDEA is interested.

And there is lots of room. There is room for you too. And me. And Mommy.

LITTLE MEDEA:

What about Daddy? Won't there be room for Daddy?

LITTLE JASON:

Oh yeah, sure. I told you, there is room for everybody there.

LITTLE MEDEA:

What about Anna?

LITTLE JASON:

Sure there is room for Anna!

LITTLE MEDEA:

But what about Glauce, huh, that other woman?

LITTLE JASON:

There's room for everybody, her too. Glaucés, Daddies, Mommies...