

Medea by Euripides

First Epeisodion

Medea's monologue explaining the powerlessness of women

(225) My friends, I only want to die.

(229) We women are the most unfortunate creatures.

A)

(230) Firstly, with an excess of wealth it is required

For us to buy a husband and take for our bodies

A master; for not to take one is even worse.

And now the question is serious whether we take

A good or a bad one; for there is no easy escape

For a woman, nor can she say no to her marriage.

B)

(242) A man, when he's tired of the company in his home,

Goes out of the house and puts an end to his boredom

And turns to a friend or companion of his own age.

But we are forced to keep our eyes on one alone.

C)

(246) What they say of us is that we have a peaceful time

Living at home, while they do the fighting in war.

How wrong they are! I would very much rather stand
Three times in the front of battle than bear one child.

D)

(255) I have no mother or brother, nor any relation
With whom I can take refuge in this sea of woe.

Creon enters

(269) **Creon:** You, with that angry look, so set against your husband.

Medea I order you to leave my territories an exile, and take along with you your two children. It is my decree and I will see it done. I will not return home until you are cast from the boundaries of my land.

(303) **Medea:** Well, then, are you frightened, Creon, that I will harm you? There is no need. It is not my way to transgress the authority of a king. How have you injured me? You gave your daughter away to the man you wanted. Oh, certainly I hate my husband, but you, I think, have acted wisely; [...] 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, but submit to my betters.

Medea begs

(337) **Medea:** Allow me to remain here for this one day,

So I may 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.

It is natural for you to look kindly on them.

For myself I do not mind if I go into exile.

Creon: Even now I know that I am making a mistake.

All the same you shall have your will.

(364) Medea talking to the Chorus: Do you think that I would ever have fawned on that man unless I had some end to gain or profit in it?

(369) By exiling me he has given me this one day
To stay here, and in this I will make dead bodies
Of three of my enemies – father, the girl and my
husband.

I have many ways of death which I might suit to them,
And do not know, friends, which one to take in hand;

(374) Medea: Whether to set fire underneath their
bridal mansion,

Or sharpen a sword and thrust it to the heart.

[...] If I'm caught

Breaking into the house and scheming against it,

I shall die, and give my enemies cause for laughter.

(380) Medea: It's best to go by the straight road, the one in which

I am most skilled,
and make away with them by poison.

(382) And now suppose them dead. What town will receive me?

(404) You have the skill. What is more, you were born a woman,

And women, though most helpless in doing good deeds,
Are of every evil the cleverest of contrivers (planners).

Second Epeisodion (Jason and Medea)

(435) **Jason:** This is not the first occasion that I have noticed
How hopeless it is to deal with a stubborn temper.
For, with reasonable submission to our ruler's will,
You might have lived in this land and kept your home.
As it is you are going to be exiled for your loose speaking.
Not that I mind myself. You are free to continue
Telling everyone that Jason is a worthless man.

(447) All the same, and in spite of your conduct, I'll not desert
My friends, but have come to make some provision for you,
So that you and your children may not be penniless
Or in need of anything in exile.

[...] And even if you hate me, I cannot think badly of you.

(454) **Medea:** O coward in every way – that is what I call you,
With bitterest reproach for your lack of manliness,

You have come, you, my worst enemy, have come to me!

[...] But you did well to come, for I can speak ill of you and
lighten

My heart, and you will suffer while you are listening.

A) I saved your life

B) I betrayed my father and my home

C) I killed Pelias with a most dreadful death

(477) And you forsook me, took another bride to bed,

Though you had children.

(480) Faith in your word has gone.

[...] Since you must know you have broken your word to me.

(487) Come, I will share my thoughts as though you were a friend.

[...] Where am I to go?

(506) Why is there no mark engraved upon men's bodies,
By which we could know the true ones from the false ones?

(515) **Jason:** My view is that Cypris (Aphrodite) was alone responsible

Of men and gods for the preserving of my life.

(522) But on this question of saving me, I can prove
You have certainly got from me more than you gave.

(524) A) Firstly, instead of living among barbarians,
You inhabit a Greek land and understand our ways,
How to live by law instead of the sweet will of force.

(535) Next for your attack on my wedding with the
princess:

Here I will prove that, first, it was a clever move,
Secondly a wise one, and finally that I made it
In your best interest and the children's. Please keep
calm.

(557) You women have got into such a state of mind
That, if your life at night is good, you think you have
everything;

But if in that quarter (room) things go wrong,
You will consider your best and truest interests most hateful.
It would have been better far for men
To have got their children in some other way, and women not
to have
existed. Then life would have been good.

(575) **Medea:** If you were not a coward, you would not have married

Behind my back, but discussed it with me first.

(588) **Jason:** Change your ideas and show more sense.

Do not consider painful what is good for you.

(591) **Medea:** You can insult me. You have somewhere to turn to.

But I shall go from this land into exile, friendless.

(593) **Jason:** It was what you chose yourself. Don't blame others for it.

(599) **Jason:** In exile to have some of my money to help you,
Say so, for I'm prepared to give with open hand.

(604) **Medea:** I shall never accept.

(607) **Jason:** Then, in any case, I call the gods to witness that
I wish to help you and the children in any way,
But you refuse what is good for you.
You push away your friends. You are sure to suffer for it.

(615) **Chorus:** When love is in excess, it brings a man no honor, nor any worthiness. But if in moderation Cypris comes, there is no other power at all so gracious.