

# Medea by Euripides

# Third Episode: MEDEA seeks REFUGE

## **MEDEA** and **AEGEUS**

(701) **Medea:** I will end your childlessness, and I will make you able  
To beget children. The drugs I know can do this.

(711) **Aegeus:** If you by yourself can reach my house, then you  
Shall stay there safely. To none will I give you up  
But from this land you must make your escape yourself.

(722) **Medea:** With no oath to the gods, you will be lightly armed,  
Unable to resist their summons. I am weak,  
While they have wealth to help them and a royal house.

(725) **Aegeus:** You show much foresight for such negotiations.  
Well if you have it so, I will not refuse.

(756) **Medea:** And now I shall tell you the whole of my plan.

[...] I shall send one my servants to find Jason

[...] And when he comes, the words I'll say will be soft ones,

I'll say that I agree with him, that I approve

The royal wedding he has made betraying me.

I'll say it was profitable, an excellent idea.

But I shall beg that my children may remain here:

[so] that by a trick I may kill the king's daughter.

(768) Medea: For I will send the children with gifts in their hands  
[...] a finely woven dress and a golden diadem.  
And if she takes them and wears them upon her skin  
She and all who touch the girl will die in agony;  
Such poison will I lay upon the gifts I send.  
[...] I weep to think of what a deed I have to do  
Next after that; for I shall kill my own children.

(777) My children, there is none who can give them safety.  
And when I have ruined the whole of Jason's house,  
I shall leave the land and flee from the murder of my  
Dear children, and I shall have done a dreadful deed.

(791) Let no one think me a weak one, feeble-spirited,  
A stay-at-home, but rather just the opposite,  
One who can hurt my enemies and help my friends;  
For the lives of such persons are most remembered.

# FOURTH episode: medea deceives jason

(845) **Medea:** Jason, I beg you to be forgiving toward me  
For what I said. It is natural for you to bear with  
My temper, since we have had much love together.  
I have talked with myself about this and I have  
Reproached myself. “Fool” I said, “why am I so mad?  
Why am I set against those who have planned wisely?  
Why make myself an enemy of the authorities  
And of my husband who does the best thing for me  
By marrying royalty and having children who  
Will be as brothers to my own? What is wrong with me?”

(860) Now I agree with you. I think that you are wise  
In having this other wife as well as me, and I  
Was mad. I should have helped you in these plans of yours,  
Have joined in the wedding, stood by the marriage bed,  
Have taken pleasure in attendance on your bride.  
But we women are what we are – perhaps a little worthless;



(884) **Jason:** I approve of what you say. And I cannot blame you  
Even for what you said before. It is natural  
For a woman to be wild with her husband when he  
Goes in for secret love. But now your mind has turned  
To better reasoning. In the end you have come to  
The right decision, like the clever woman you are.

# Fifth epeisodion: The revenge

**Medea, Tutor, Messenger, Children, Chorus**

(974) **Tutor:** Mistress, I tell you that these children are reprieved,  
And the royal bride has been pleased to take in her hands your gifts.

[...] Why do you stand confused when you are fortunate?

[...] Are not these words of mine pleasing for you to hear?

(981) **Medea:** Oh, I am lost!

(The tutor goes into the house. Medea turns to her children)

(995) O children, O my children

(1006) Oh surely once the hopes in you I had, poor me,

Were high ones: you would look after me in old age,

And when I died would deck me well with your own hands;

A thing which all would have done. Oh but now it is gone,

That lovely thought.

(1011) Sad will be the life I'll lead and sorrowful for me.  
And you will never see your mother again with  
Your dear eyes, gone to another mode of living.  
(NO!) Why do you look upon me with your eyes?  
Why do you smile so sweetly that last smile of all?  
Oh, Oh, what can I do? My spirit has gone from me,  
Friends, when I saw that bright look in the children's eyes.  
I cannot bear to do it. I renounce my plans  
I had before. I'll take my children away from this land.

(YES!) Ah, what is wrong with me? Do I want to let go

My enemies unhurt and be laughed at for it?

I must face this thing

(-1031- NO!) Do not, O my heart, you must not do these things!

Poor heart, let them go, have pity upon the children.

(YES!) No! By Hell's avenging furies it shall not be

This shall never be;

(1042) Come, children, give  
Me your hands, give your mother your hands to kiss them.  
[...] Oh! How good to hold you!  
How delicate the skin, how sweet the breath of children!  
Go, go! I am no longer able, no longer  
To look upon you. I am overcome by sorrow.

## **The Messenger enters**

(1095) **Messenger:** Medea, you have done such a dreadful thing

(1108) **Medea:** Do not be in a hurry friend,

But speak. How did they die? You will delight me twice

As much again if you say they died in agony.

(1133) **Messenger:** She took the gorgeous robe and dressed herself in it,  
And put the golden crown around her curly locks,  
And arranged the set of the hair in a shining mirror,  
And smiled at the lifeless image of herself in it.  
Then she rose from her chair and walked about the room,  
[...] all overjoyed with the present.



(1141) But after that it was a fearful thing to see.

The color of her face changed, and she staggered back,

She ran, and her legs trembled, and she only just

Managed to reach a chair without falling flat down.

[...] The white foam breaking through her lips and her rolling

The pupils of her eyes and her face all bloodless.

(1157) [Then] she, poor girl, opened her shut and speechless eye,

And with a terrible groan she came to herself.

(1159) For a twofold pain was moving up against her.  
The wreath of gold that was resting around her head  
Let forth a fearful stream of all-devouring fire,  
And the finely woven dress your children gave to her,  
Was fastening on the unhappy girl's fine flesh.  
She leapt up from the chair, and all on fire she ran,  
Shaking her hair now this way and now that, trying  
To hurl the diadem away; but fixedly  
The gold preserved its grip, and when she shook her hair,

Then more and twice as fiercely the fire blazed out.

Till, beaten by her fate, she fell down to the ground,

Hard to be recognized except by a parent.

[...] From the top of

Her head oozed out blood and fire mixed together.

Like the drops on pine-bark, so the flesh from her bones

Dropped away.

(1210) **Medea:** As quickly as I may  
To kill my children, and start away from this land,  
And not by wasting time, to suffer my children  
To be slain by another hand less kindly to them.  
[...] Just for this one day be forgetful of your children,  
Afterward weep; for even though you kill them,  
They were very dear – Oh, I am an unhappy woman!

(With a cry Medea rushed into the house)

**One of the children (from within):** What can I do and how  
Escape my mother's hands?

**Another child (from within):** O my dear brother, I cannot tell.  
We are lost.

**Chorus:** Shall I enter the house? Oh, surely I should  
Defend the children from murder

**A child (from within):** O help us, in God's name, for now we  
Need your help.

Now, now we are close to it. We are trapped by the sword.

# Exodos (medea escapes)

**Jason enters**

**Deus Ex Machina**

(1294) **Medea:** You will never touch me with your hand,  
Such a chariot has Helius, my father's father,  
Given me to defend me from my enemies

(1297) **Jason:** You hateful thing, you woman most utterly loathed  
[...] I wish you dead. Now I see it plain though at that time  
I did not, when I took you from your foreign home  
And brought you to a Greek house, you an evil thing,  
A traitress to your father and your native land.  
[...] for your own brother you slew.  
[...] For the sake of pleasure in the bed you killed them (the children)  
There is no Greek woman who would have dared such deeds.

(1337) O children, what a wicked mother she was to you!

**Medea:** They died from a disease they caught from their father.

**Jason:** I tell you it was not my hand that destroyed them.

**Medea:** But it was your insolence and your virgin wedding.

**Jason:** And just for the sake of that you chose to kill them.

**Medea:** Is love so small a pain, do you think, for a woman?

**Jason:** For a wise one, certainly. But you are wholly evil.

[...] Give me the bodies to bury and to mourn them.

**Medea:** No I will bury them myself.



(1363) **Jason:** May a Fury for the children's sake destroy you

**Medea:** What heavenly power lends an ear  
To a breaker of oaths, a deceiver?

**Jason:** I hate you, murderess of children.

**Medea:** Go to your palace. Bury your bride.

**Jason:** I go, with two children to mourn for.

**Medea:** Not yet do you feel it. Wait for the future.

**Jason:** Oh, children I loved!

**Medea:** I loved them you did not.

[...] Now you would speak to them, now you would kiss them. Then you rejected them.