

EURIPIDES: *Medea*

lines 446–626

Enter Jason

JASON: *To Medea*

This is not the first time I've noticed what a great evil excessive anger is.

No, I've noticed this many times. You, for instance, could have easily stayed on here, in your own home, if only you had obeyed the wishes of your superiors and kept your mindless words to yourself. It's because of these mindless words of yours that you're being sent away.

I don't care about myself. I don't care if you never stop yelling that I, Jason, is the worst of all men. But you've also uttered evil words about the king. Far too many words and far too evil.

And now you're paying the price of that excess.

Exile!

I've often softened the king's anger against you because I wanted you to stay here but you, you've never stopped uttering your insults against him. So, here's your reward for it.

Exile!

Still and all, here I am, with my love for you intact, to make sure that you and the children don't leave this land lacking money or anything else. Exile carries enough hardship as it is. Even though you hate me, I'll never wish you any harm.

MEDEA:

Hateful, miserable man! Words defy my tongue to put together insult worthy enough of your sort of cowardice! You dare come here, to us! You! You, a man most hated by all the generations of mortals and immortals alike – and by me!

No, this is not “daring!” It takes no courage to lift your eyes and look upon the friends whom you destroyed. This is not courage. No! This is the worst of all human flaws.

This is shame!

Ha! But it is good you came. It's good because I'll be able to tell you what I feel and that way ease my heart somewhat and have yours taste my bitterness.

First, let me tell you, let me remind you, that I have once saved your life.

All those Greeks who were with you when you came on that ship, Argo, they all know this. When you were made to yoke the fire-spewing bulls and sow that deadly field with dragon's teeth, all those Greeks who were with you then, know that I have saved your life.

And it was I who also saved your life by killing the sleepless dragon who guarded the golden fleece with the coils of its body.

And again, it was I who betrayed my father and my home to come with you to Pelios' Iolcos, not moved by a mind but by a mindless heart.

And finally it was I who had killed Pelias, in the most abominable way, by his own children so as to save you from every fear.

And though I did all this for you, most disgraceful of all men, you betrayed me and even though we had children you took another wife. If you had no children then it was possible for someone to forgive your indecent act of preferring this new marriage to your old one.

Your oaths mean nothing to me these days.

Nor do I care what you think about gods. Are they the same as they always were or are they different? Nor do I care if there are new laws for mortals to obey. To me you've broken all oaths, old and new – and you know it!

She raises her right hand

Poor hand! He has grasped you so often. Poor knees! Hand and knees! How often we were deceived by this coward! How often we've missed out on our hopes!

Yet... come now, Jason! I'll speak to you as one would speak to a friend. Not because I shall gain anything by doing so but because by your answers people will see just how big a coward you are!

Tell me then, Jason. Where can I go now? Tell me! Shall I go back to my father's home, to my homeland, which I have betrayed so as to come here with you? Or shall I go to the poor wretched daughters of Pelias? *Shakes her head bitterly* Oh, I can just imagine how well they will receive me! Me who has killed their father!

Because, you see, Jason, the truth falls like this: because of you, I have become a most hated woman! Hated by both, my own folk in my own country and by the folk I should have never hurt.

And still, even after all this, I have become the envy of all the women in Greece and I, poor fool, think of you as the best, most faithful husband.

They envy me! Me, as I am going off into exile alone, with my children!

What great praise this is for a new groom, to have his poor children and the woman who has saved his life wandering about lost, away from their home.

Oh Zeus! You gave such obvious signs for men to tell the difference between genuine gold and fake and yet you gave not a hint for people to tell who's a good man and who an evil one!

CHORUS: *To each other*

Friend against friend! An anger most implacable!

JASON:

Ha! I need to be a very capable sailor to escape the tempest of your words, woman. I'd need to be excellent at the wheel as well as at the sails to slide past the whirlwind of your words.

Such a bloated ego! Gods, how much you've exaggerated your beneficence, woman!

Of all our gods I can only call Aphrodite to help me with my sailing and you're intelligent enough to understand why I say this but you don't want to admit it. You don't want to admit that it was Eros only, Eros, with his faultless arrows who persuaded you to save me and nothing else. Lust and only lust! However I won't examine this in detail, since, to be honest, there were moments when I found you useful, though I'll prove to you that you've received far more than what you have given to have my life saved.

Firstly, you are now living in a Greek land and not one inhabited by barbarians and so you are enjoying Greek justice and Greek laws, instead of simply submitting to the law of the strongest.

Secondly, you've become famous and all the Greeks know of your wisdom, whereas if you still lived in your own land, at the end of the world, no one would say a word about you. No one would know about you.

As for me, I wanted neither endless wealth nor the voice of Orpheus himself. Nor would I have the fame of a fortunate man.

So much for the things I've done, answering your long speech about the golden fleece.

As for my marriage to the princess about which you disparage me, I prove to you that I've begun this affair, not only as a wise and well-tempered man but also in the way a good friend and a good father would behave.

So listen!

When I've arrived here, from Iolcos, I was full of suffering and totally lost as to what I should do next. But I was lucky. I came across this marriage and I took the opportunity. What better escape was there than to marry this young Princess? The king's very own daughter?

And I married her, not because I turned away from your love, from your jealousy, nor because

of the love for my new wife, nor yet because of a desire to have even more children. No, those I have are enough! I am well satisfied on that score.

No, I'm doing all this because I want us to live well, missing out on nothing. I am only too well aware just how much people shun the poor. Then, I also wanted my children to be brought up equal to my birth and to have other children who'll become their brothers and equals. That's why I've decided to unite the two families and to live happily.

You have no need for any more children but I? I need those new children. I need them to help those I have now. They will be a great advantage to me. Am I wrong?

Surely, even you wouldn't disagree, at least not if the pain of missing out on some sex did not hurt you so much.

But then again, that's how you women are! When the duties of the wedding bed are maintained, all is well –you're fully satisfied. But when something goes wrong with that bed, everything – good things, beautiful things and things of use are turned into hateful things!

By Zeus! It would have been far better if men, somehow gave birth and women simply didn't exist. How happy men would be then!

CHORUS:

An eloquently speech, Jason. Nevertheless, my own heart says that you should not have betrayed your wife.

MEDEA:

My views differ to those of many folk.

What I believe, for example is the more eloquent the misfit, the greater the punishment he deserves because, thinking that his eloquence and pretty words will get him out of any injustice, he has the audacity to commit even greater evils.

We should certainly not consider such men to be wise!

It is the same with you, Jason. Don't just stand there pretending that you are an honourable man and a great orator because just one word from my lips will topple you completely. To put it in simple words, for you, Jason, if indeed you were an honourable man, you would have tried to persuade me that this new wedding was a good thing before you went ahead with it, instead of working on it in secret, behind your own family's back.

JASON:

Oh, sure, yes!

I can see it now! You would be really understanding then, wouldn't you, about my marriage!

Look at you!

You can't shed this dreadful anger of yours even now!

MEDEA:

No, that's not what bothered you Jason! That's not it at all! What, in fact bothered you was that you would be entering your old age still married to a foreigner.

JASON:

I've told you before and I'm telling you again now. I have not married into royalty out of love. I did so because I wanted to save you and to give to my children royal siblings, from the same blood, siblings who will protect our household.

MEDEA:

I hope I'm never given such prosperity by means of such bitterness and such wealth by means of such a sad soul.

JASON:

One day, Medea you'll think differently and you'll act more wisely. Let not joy ever appear to you as something bad and happiness as something unhappy.

MEDEA:

You mock me. You make fun of me because you have a place to stand on, a house, whereas I, I, on the other hand, will be thrown out of here, alone and desolate.

JASON:

Accuse no one else, woman. You're the cause of your own fate.

MEDEA:

Why is that? Is it perhaps because I have married and betrayed my husband?

JASON:

No, but because you've uttered sacrilegious curses to the royal family.

MEDEA:

True. Yes, it's true. And I did so not only to them but to your own household as well.

JASON:

Ha! I'm not interested in what you have to say now. Just tell me if you want some money before you and the children leave. I'd be quite happy to provide you with plenty of that and with plenty of referrals to my friends. They will do everything in their power to help you. Reject the offer and you'll prove yourself to be a fool; accept it, calm your anger and your benefits will be many.

MEDEA:

I need neither your money nor your friends. Gifts from an evil man are of no use at all to anyone.

JASON:

Fine! But remember I, on my part, have the gods as my witness. They know that I am ready to provide you and the children with anything you need. You, on the other hand, reject all the good things offered to you and arrogantly send away those who want to help you. For this, you'll suffer even worse.

MEDEA:

Go!

Go now!

The longer you stay away from your new little home the more your heart suffers for your new bride.

Enjoy your marriage!

Though, perhaps, with the aid of the Gods, you'll see that this... this new marriage of yours is not what it seems to be. Perhaps you will even come regret it.

Exit Jason