

Medea by Seneca

M/F UA, Kn

JASON

[490] When angry Creon was bent on thy destruction, 'twas by my tears he was prevailed upon to grant thee banishment.

MEDEA

[492] As punishment I deemed it; now, as I see, exile is a boon.

JASON

[493] Depart while still thou mayst; take thyself hence; grievous ever is the wrath of kings.

MEDEA

[494] In urging this upon me, thou art Creusa's advocate; thou wouldst remove the rival whom she hates.

JASON

[496] What! Medea charge me with love?

MEDEA

[496] Yes, murder, too, and treachery.

JASON

[497] What crime, pray, canst thou charge to me?

MEDEA

[498] Whatever I have don.

JASON

[498] This one thing remains still for me, to become guilty of thy sins as well.

MEDEA

[500] They are, they are thine own; who profits by a sin has done the sin. Though all should hold thy wife infamous, do thou alone protect her, do thou alone call her innocent; let her be guiltless in thy sight, who for thy sake is guilty.

JASON

[504] Unwelcome is life which one is ashamed to have accepted.

MEDEA

[505] Then one should not keep a life which he is ashamed to have accepted.

JASON

[506] Nay, calm thy wrath-stirred heart; for thy sons sake be reconciled.

MEDEA

[507] I reject, forswear, disown them! Shall Creusa bear brothers to my children?

JASON

[509] Yes, a queen, to the sons of exiles; a royal lady to the fallen.

MEDEA

[510] Never may such ill day come to the wretched, as shall mingle a base breed with illustrious stock, Phoebus' sons with the sons of Sisyphus.

JASON

[513] Why, wretched woman, dost thou drag both me and thee to ruin? Begone, I pray thee.

MEDEA

[514] Creon has heard my prayer.

JASON

[515] What can I do? Tell me.

MEDEA

[515] For me? Crime.

JASON

[516] A king on this side and on that –

MEDEA

[516] There is (and this more fearsome still) Medea. Let us⁵⁴ strive together, and let the prize be Jason.

JASON

[518] I yield, worn with trouble. And do thou thyself beware lest thou tempt fate too often.

MEDEA

[520] Always has every fortune stood beneath my feet.

JASON

[521] Acastus is hard after us.

MEDEA

[521] Nearer foe is Creon; flee them both. That thou arm thy hand against thy father-in-law, and stain thyself with kindred⁵⁵ blood, Medea does not compel thee; remain guiltless and escape with me.

JASON

[525] And who will resist if double war assail us, if Creon and Acastus unite their arms?

MEDEA

[527] Add the Colchians to these, add Aetes, too, to lead them, join Scythians with Pelasgians; to destruction will I give them all.

JASON

[529] I tremble at lofty sceptres.

MEDEA

[529] See that thou lust not after them.

JASON

[530] Cut short this long discourse, lest it arouse suspicion.

MEDEA

[531] Now, O most high Jupiter, thunder throughout thy heavens, stretch forth thy hand, thine avenging flames prepare, rend the clouds and make the whole world quake. Let thy bolts be poised with hand that chooseth neither me nor him; whichever of us falls will perish guilty; against us thy bolt can make no error.

JASON

[537] Begin to think with reason, and speak with calm. If any solace from my father-in-law's house can soothe thy flight, request it.

MEDEA

[540] To scorn the wealth of kings, my soul, as well thou knowest, hath strength and wont. I ask but this: that I may have my children as comrades of my flight, that in their bosoms I may pour forth my tears. Thee new sons await.

JASON

[544] I confess that right gladly would I yield unto thy prayer, but a father's love forbids; for that I should permit this thing, not Creon himself, my king and father-in-law, could force me. This is my reason for living, this, my heart's comfort, consumed as it is with cares. Sooner could I part with breath, with limbs, with light.

MEDEA

[549] [*Aside.*] Thus does he love his sons? 'Tis well! I have him! The palce to wound him is laid bare. [*To JASON.*] As I depart, my final message, at least, grant me to speak; grant me to give the last embrace; e'en that will be a boon. With my latest utterance I beg thee now; let not any words my distracted grief has poured forth remain within my mind; let the memory of my better self stay with thee, and let these words spoken in wrath be quite forgot.

JASON

[557] All have I driven from my mind, and I also make prayer to thee that thou curb thy hot passion and be calm; peace soothes the soul's distresses.

[*Exit.*]