

**Euripides— Medea:**

- 214 Mn Corinthian women, I have come out of the house, lest you may criticise me in any way: For I know that many mortals are [*lit.* have become] proud, some out of sight [*lit.* away from the eyes], and others among those out of doors. But some obtain an evil reputation for unconcern from a quiet foot. For there is not justice in the eyes of mortals, whoever before they learn with certainty the temper [*lit.* organs] of a man, hates at sight [*lit.* having looked], although having been wronged in no way... And it is necessary that a foreigner conform to [*lit.* approach] the city very much...
- Nor do I approve of a citizen, who, having become self-absorbed is hateful to his fellow citizens, because of [*lit.* by] his ignorance. But as for me, this unexpected thing which has befallen me has destroyed my soul. I am ruined and having let go of the joy of life, I desire to die, friends. For the one in whom there was everything for me — know it well — my husband, has turned out to be the worst of men.
- 230 Of all things are alive and have sense we women are the most unfortunate creatures— for whom it is necessary to buy a husband by an excess of money and to get [*lit.* receive] him as a master of our bodies. For this evil is still more hurtful than (the former) evil. And in this there is the greatest gamble, whether one gets [*lit.* receives] a bad husband or a good one. For there are no respectable divorces for women, nor is it possible to refuse a husband. And it is necessary that she, having already arrived at (new) values and customs, be a seer, if she has not learned at home, how she will especially treat her bed-mate. And if the husbands dwell with us finishing such things off well, if he does not endure the yoke by compulsion, life is enviable. If not, it is preferable to die. But the man, whenever he is annoyed being with those inside, he goes outside [*lit.* having gone outside] (and) ceases his heart from grief.
- 246 [Having turned towards either a friend or towards a comrade [*lit.* one of the same age]. But there is a necessity for us to look to one person. They say that we live a life without danger at home, but they fight with the spear. They think wrong! How I wish rather to stand three times beside a shield than produce children once only. But enough of that— this same story does not apply for you and me. On the one hand there is for you both this city and a father's house, the enjoyment of life, and the companionship of friends, but I, being deserted and stateless, am being ill-treated by my husband, having been carried off as plunder from a foreign land, having no mother, no brother, no kinsman to seek me a refuge from this disaster. And so I will want to obtain of you, if any means and device is found for me, to inflict punishments on my husband for these evils [and on the one having given his daughter to him, and she who is giving herself in marriage.], to be silent. For although a woman in respect to other things is full of fear and weak to look upon battle [*lit.* physical strength] and iron, yet whenever it come about that she is wronged in sexual relations, there is no other heart more murderous.

- 267 Xo I will do these things; for you will exact vengeance on your husband justly, Medea. And I am not amazed that you grieve at your fortunes. But I see also Creon, ruler of this land, coming, a messenger of new resolutions.
- Kp You, sullen and wrathful to your husband, Medea, I ordered you to pass out of this land as an exile, taking your two children with yourself. And you are not to delay in any way. Since, I am the arbitrator of these words, and I will not go away home back again, until I will throw you out of the boundaries of the lands.
- Mη Alas! Utterly ruined, I, the wretched one, am destroyed. For my enemies have let out all the rope, and there is no easy landing place from my ruin. But still I will ask even though I am being treated badly: Why [*lit.* because of what certain things] do you send me out of the land, Creon?
- Kp I am afraid of you— it is not at all necessary to cloak my words— lest you will do some incurable evil to my daughter. Many things are put together as parts of this fear. You are clever and skilled in many evil arts, and you are pained, having been deprived of the marriage-bed of your husband. I hear that you are threatening— as it has been announced to me— to do something to the one giving, the one marrying, and the one being given in marriage. And so I will stand guard before suffering these things. To me it is better to be hostile towards you now, woman, than, having softened, to groan greatly later on.
- 292 Μη Alas Alas! And so now my reputation has harmed me, not for the first time, but many times, and has worked great evil on me. And whoever is (by nature) a sensible man, ought never teach his children to be excessively clever. For apart from the idleness which they have also, they gain hostile envy at the hands of the citizens. For on the one hand, bringing new ideas to foolish men, you will seem to be useless and not clever. But on the other hand, having been thought better again than those who seem (to themselves) to know something subtle, in the city you will appear harmful. But I share in all this fortune also. For being clever, to some I am certainly a grudge, to others I am silent [*ie.* submissive], to others I am of another character, and to others in turn I am in the way. But I am not very clever. So do you fear me— lest you suffer something harmful? Don't fear me [*lit.* us], Creon— my condition is not such to make me wrong a royal man. For have you wronged me somehow? Give over you daughter to whoever you desire was leading you (to). But I hate my husband. But you, I suppose, did these things because you are wise [*lit.* being wise]. And now I do not begrudge that your interest [*lit.* thing] fares well. Marry (them), may you prosper [*lit.* fare well]. But permit me to dwell in this land. For although I have been wronged [*lit.* having been wronged], I [*lit.* we] will be silent, because I have been overcome [*lit.* having been overcome] by the stronger.
- Kp You sound harmless [*lit.* you speak, being soft to hear], but inside your heart there is a threat for me, lest you are plotting something terrible; but by so much less than before I trust you. For a sharp-spirited woman, as also a man himself, is easier to guard (against) than a clever, silent one. But go out as quickly as possible; do not indulge in speeches [*lit.* speak

- any words]— as these things are fixed, and you do not have a skill, so that you can remain with us, being hostile to me.
- 324 Mἥ Do not, by your knees and your newly-wedded daughter.  
Kρ You waste your words, you would never persuade me.  
Mἥ But will you drive me out, and will you feel no shame on account of my prayers?  
Kρ For I do not love you more than my own house.  
Mἥ O fatherland, how I hold you very well in my memory now.  
Kρ Except for my children it is the dearest by much to me.  
Mἥ Alas, alas, how great an evil thing are passions to mortals.  
Kρ That depends on the circumstances [*lit.* In whatever way, I think, the fortunes actually stand by.]  
Mἥ O Zeus, may you not forget who is responsible for evil.  
Kρ Move, O foolish woman, and relieve me of my toils.  
Mἥ I [we] myself [ourselves] toil and have no need for toil.  
Kρ Perhaps you might be thrust with force from the hands of my servants.  
Mἥ No, not that, but I beseech you, Creon...  
Kρ You will provide a nuisance, so it seems, woman.  
Mἥ We will go into exile. It was not that for which I begged you [*lit.* I did not beg to obtain this thing from you.]  
Kρ So why are you struggling and do not let go of my hand?  
Mἥ Allow me to remain for this one day and conclude in my mind the manner in which I go into exile, and a provision for my children, since their father does not regard as priority to plan for his children. But have pity on them. You also are the father of children. And it is reasonable that you have kindness. For there is not a concern to me, in respect to my interest, if we go into exile, but I weep for those children who have [*lit.* having] experienced misfortune.  
Kρ My nature is not in the least tyrannical, but by feeling shame I have put to ruin many things. And now I see that I am erring, woman, but nevertheless you will obtain this. But I warn you, if tomorrow's light will see you and your children inside of the borders of this land, you shall die; This statement has been spoken true. But now, if it is necessary to stay, remain for one more day. For you will not do anything terrible, the fear of which grips me.

Mη (I) have fared badly in every way; who will deny [*lit.* speak against] it? But things are not as they seem [*lit.* these things are not a bit in this way]—do not think so. There are still trials [*lit.* struggles] for the newly-wedded ones and for those who have made the marriage the toils are not so small. For do you think that I would have ever flattered this man, unless gaining or devising something? Nor would I have talked (to him) or touched (him) with my (two) hands. But he has reached such a degree of foolishness, that, it being possible for him to seize my plans (by) throwing (me) out of the country, he has allowed me to remain for this day, in which I will render three of my enemies corpses, both the father, and the daughter, and my husband.

But having many ways of death for them, I do not know which sort I might try first, dear friends. Either shall I kindle the bed-chamber alight from below with fire, or shall I thrust a sharpened short sword through their liver, having entered the house in silence, to where the marriage bed is stretched out. But there is one obstruction for me. If I am taken entering the house secretly and plotting, having been killed I will make laughter for my enemies. It is best the straight way, in which I am [*lit.* we are] especially wise, to destroy them with poisons.

So be it.

Suppose they are dead. What city would receive me? What friend, having provided a safe country and secure house will protect my person? There is no one. And so, having remained a short time still, if a certain tower of safety appears for me, I will go after the murder, with deceit and with stealth. But if hopeless disaster drives me out, I myself, having taken a sword, even if I am going to die, I will kill them, and I will go towards the strongest act of daring. For by the mistress, which I revere greatest of all and my chosen helper, Hecate, living in the corners of my hearth, not one of them shall, rejoicing, give pain to my heart. And I will make for them a bitter and baneful marriage, make bitter the marriage-tie, and my exile from the land.

But come on. And spare nothing of what you understand, Medea, planning and devising. Move to danger. Now is the crucial time of strength of personality. You see what you are suffering. You must not [*lit.* it is necessary not to] incur [*lit.* bring] laughter on yourself, for the marriage of a descendant of Sisyphus and of Jason, you having been born from a noble father and the sun. But you have understood. And in addition, we women are most useless for noble deeds, but most clever craftsmen of all evil.

Ια Not now, for the first time, but often have I seen harsh anger as an intractable evil. For it being possible for you to have this land and home if you put up with the intentions of your superiors highly, (instead) you will be cast out of the country for the sake of your pointless words. And it is no consequence to me. Do not cease at any time from saying about Jason that he is a most evil man. But as to the things which have been spoken against the royal house, think being punished by exile all gain. And I for my part have always tried to diminish the angers of the kings being vexed, and I desired that you remain. But you were not abandoning your follies always speaking badly of the royal house. Therefore you will be thrown out of the country. Nevertheless, even after these things I have come having not let down my own children, but looking to your interests, woman, so that neither resourceless might you go into exile with your children, or in need of anything. Exile bears many evils with it. For even if you hate me, I could not ever think evilly of you.

Μη O most completely evil one, for I have to call you that, this is the greatest evil by a tongue against (your) unmanliness. Have you come, to come to us, have you come, having become most hostile? Both to the gods, and to me, and to the race of men? This is not boldness nor strength of purpose, to look dear ones in the face, having treated them evilly. But it is the greatest of all ills among men, shamelessness. But having come, you did well. For I, both having spoken evilly, will lighten my soul, and you, hearing, will be hurt.

From first things first I shall begin to speak. I saved you— as all of the Greeks know who embarked together on the same Argonian hull, having been sent to master the fire-breathing bulls with yoke straps and to sow the deathly field. And when I had killed the serpent— which kept safe the all-gold [Golden] Fleece, covering it with many folded coils— being sleepless, I held up to you the saving light. I, having betrayed [*lit.* abandoned] my father and my home, I came with you to Pelian Iolcus, keen rather than wise. I killed Pelias, in such a manner most painful to die, by (the means of) his own daughters, and I destroyed his whole house. And (although) having experienced such things by me, O basest of men, you have betrayed me, and you have taken a new marriage— although with children begotten. For if you were still with child, your desire for this marriage would be forgivable. But faith in oaths is gone, nor do I hold the power to learn whether you really think that the gods are not still ruling, or that a new code of behaviour is laid down for men these days, since you are conscious that you are indeed not being faithful in your vows to me.

Alas my right hand, which you so many times used to take hold of, and (of) these knees, how I have in vain been touched by an evil man, and I failed to obtain my hopes. But come on— thinking as though you were a friend I will communicate with you— thinking in what way to fare well from your hands? But nevertheless. For having been asked, you will seem more disgraceful— now whither do I turn? Either to my father's house and my fatherland, which having betrayed for you I came here? Or towards the wretched daughters of Pelias? And so indeed they would receive me well, at the house of whose father I killed. For it is thus; To

my loved ones at home I have become an enemy, and having borne favour for you I have enemies, whom I should not have treated evilly. For therefore you have made me blessed to many (women) of the Greeks in return for these things. But I, poor wretch, have you as an admirable and faithful husband, if I am indeed to flee the country, having been sent into exile, deprived of friends, abandoned with my abandoned children. This is beautiful praise for a new bridegroom, that his children wander as beggars and she who saved him. O Zeus, why did you give to men distinct evidences of gold whenever it is fake, but there is no mark implanted on a body, by which it is necessary to identify the evil of men?

520 Xo What a terrible anger [it is], and one hard to heal, whenever loved ones join in conflict with loved ones.

Io It is necessary, as it seems, that I be not bad at speaking, but just like a trusty helmsman of a ship, with the extreme edges of the sail, to escape from your busy-mouthed pain from the tongue, woman. But I, since you even very much build up your favours to me, I consider that Aphrodite was, alone of gods and of men, the saviour of my voyage. But there is for you a subtle mind— but it is a grudge-creating argument, to pass through the fact, how Eros compelled you with his inescapable bows and arrows to save my body. But I will not count this point very strictly. For I am prepared to grant, by which way you helped me, that it does not fare badly. Indeed, however, from my rescue, you have received greater than you have given, as I will point out. First you live in the country Greece, instead of the barbarian land, you understand justice and how to use the laws, also not with a view for favour of strength. And all the Greeks recognise [*lit.* recognised] that you are clever and you have [*lit.* had] a reputation. But if you were still living at the extreme boundaries of the earth, there would be no account of you. May there be for me neither gold in my house; nor (the ability) to sing a song sweeter than Orpheus (can sing), unless fortune does not happen for me with the stamp of success.

I have spoken to you such things concerning my labours. For you preferred the contest of words, as to the things which you have reproached against the royal marriages for me, in this matter I shall show, first that I was clever, then sensible, then again a great friend to you and my children— but keep quiet.

551 When I came to here from the land of Iolcus, dragging back many desperate misfortunes, what would I find a more fortunate discovery than this, that I would marry the daughter of the king, although I were an exile [*lit.* being an exile]? Not because I hated your marriage-bed, the point about which you are grated, and not having been struck by desire for a new bride, nor having keenness for a many-childed contest, for the ones that exist [*lit.* having become] are enough, nor do I blame (you). But, that I might live well, the greatest thing, and that we might not lack anything, knowing that every friend flees out of the way of the poor man, but that I might nourish my children worthy of my home, and having sowed brothers for those children from you, that I might place them in the same category, and I, having united the family [*lit.* fastened the family together] we may be happy. What do you need children for [*lit.* for what is it

necessary for you of children]? For me, it also profits to benefit the living children with the future children. Surely I have not planned evilly? Nor would you say so, if the marriage-bed did not grate you. But you women have come to such a state, that with your marriage-bed in a good state, you think you have everything, but on the other hand, if some misfortune were to happen in the marriage-bed, you consider the finest and most beautiful things most hateful. For it was necessary [*lit.* should have been] that mortals give birth to children from somewhere else [*ie.* by another means], and there be no female kind. And thus there would be no evil for men.

576 Xo Jason, you have adorned your words well. But nevertheless, even if I will speak contrary to your own opinions, by having betrayed your wife, you seem not to have done justly.

Mη I am different to many mortals in many ways. For to me, whoever is clever at speaking, being unjust, incurs the greatest punishment. For being confident to cloak unjust things with his tongue, he dares to be unscrupulous. But he is not that clever. In which way, you, therefore, do not make a show of goodness to me [*lit.* do not become one making a show of goodness to me] and speak clever. For one word will lay you low. It was necessary for you, if you were not knavish, after you had persuaded me [*lit.* having persuaded me] you would enter this marriage, but not in silence to loved ones.

588 Ια Indeed beautiful, I suppose, would you serve this proposal, if I declared the marriage to you—you who do not even now bring yourself to release great bitterness from your heart.

Mη This did not hold you, but the barbarian wife [*lit.* marriage-bed] was not turning out a good reputation for you towards old age.

593 Ια Know this very well now, that I did not marry a royal bride [*lit.* marriage-beds of royal], which I now have, on account of the woman, but, as I also said previously, desiring to save you, and willing to bear [*lit.* having borne] royal children of the same seed as my children, as a defence for the house.

Mη May there not be [*lit.* happen] for me a fortunate life that causes pain, nor a prosperity, which grates my mind.

600 Ια Do you know how you ought to change your prayer [*lit.* imperative], and you will appear wiser? That good things do not ever appear hurtful to you, nor if you are fortunate, that you think you are unfortunate.

Mη Insult me! Since you have a refuge [*lit.* there is for you a refuge], but I will flee this land abandoned.

605 Ια You yourself chose this. Blame no one else.

Mη Having done what? Surely not marrying, and having betrayed you?

Ια Because you call down unholy curses on the royal family.

Mη Also I happen to really be a curse to your house.

Ια I will not dispute most of these things with you. But, if you wish to take any assistance from my money for your children or your own exile, speak. Since I am prepared to give with an ungrudging hand, and also to send tokens to friends, who will treat you well. And you are foolish if you do not want these things [*lit.* not wanting these things], woman; if you cease from your anger, you will gain better things.

- 616** Mη I would neither use your friends (under any circumstances), nor would I receive anything, so do not give me anything. For the gifts of an evil man do not have benefit.
- Iα Well anyway, I call the gods to witness, that I am willing to render service both to you and the children in every way. But to you good things are [lit. is] not pleasing to you, but you drive away friends with self-willedness. Therefore you are pained all the more.
- 623** Mη Go! For you are seized by desire for your new-tamed daughter, by lingering outside the house. Marry! For perhaps— with the god('s help) it will be said— you are making such a marriage that you will deny it.



Αγγ: When the twofold offspring of you sons came with their father, and they arrived at the halls of the newly wed, we were delighted, we slaves who used to be distressed by your evils; and through our ears was immediately a great discussion that you and your husband had made a truce (lit. poured libations) over your former quarrel. And someone kisses a hand, and another the blonde hair of the children; but I for my part followed at the same time with the children from pleasure to the rooms of the women. And the mistress, whom we now admire instead of you, before she looked upon the pair of your sons, was holding her gaze eagerly towards Jason; then, however, she covered her eyes and turned her pale cheek back away again, as she was disgusted by the entrances of the children; but your husband both began to remove her angers and the spite of the young woman, saying these things; “you will not be ill-disposed to your friends, and you will cease from your passion and turn back your head, considering as friends those whomever your husband sees fit, you will take the gifts and you will beg of your father to remit the exiles for these children, as my favour”. And she, as she looked upon the lovely clothing, did not stand firm, but granted everything to her husband, and before the father and children had left far from the halls, having taken your variegated robes she folded them round and having put on the golden coronet around her she arranged her hair in a bright mirror, laughing at the lifeless image of her body, and then having stood up from the seats she went around the rooms, walking delicately with her very pale foot, being exceedingly happy with her gifts, watching closely many times her straight tendon with her eyes. Hence, however, there was a terrible sight to see; for having changed her complexion, staggering back she moved back trembling in her limbs and scarcely first fell into the chairs so she did not fall on the ground. And some old woman of the servants, thinking somehow (lit. somewhere) that the angers of Pan or of some one of the gods had come, cried out, until she indeed saw the white foam going through her mouth, and her twisting her pupils from her eyes, and the blood not being within her skin. Then she sent out a great wail in contrast to her religious cry. And at once one set out towards the halls of her father, and another forthwith to her new (lit. recently) husband, to relate the disaster of the bride; and the whole house resounded with frequent running (lit. plural). And by now a fast runner would have touched the end (lit. plural), stretching back along the hundred foot leg of the track, and she from silence and closed eye having groaned terribly roused her wretched self. For double distress was waging war upon her; on the one hand the golden coronet lying around her head sent [out] an amazing stream of all-devouring fire, on the other hand the finely spun robes, the gifts of your children, rent the thin flesh of the ill-fated one. And she fled (lit. present), having stood up from the chairs, burning, shaking her hair and head from side to side, trying (lit. wanting) to hurl off the coronet; but the gold held the bands fixedly, and the fire, when she shook her hair, rather blazed twice so much. And she fell (lit. present) onto the ground overcome by her misfortune, (and) except to her father very difficult to see; neither was the condition of her eyes clear, nor was her visage graceful, but blood was dripping from the top of her head mixed with fire, and her flesh (lit. plural) flowed away from the bones like pine sap by the unseen jaws of the poison, a terrible sight, and there was fear for all to touch the corpse, for we had her fate

as teacher. And her father, the suffering one, in ignorance of her misfortune suddenly having reached the home falls upon her corpse; and at once he groaned (urrghhh), and having wrapped his hands around he kissed her, addressing [to her] these things; “O wretched child, which of the spirits has destroyed you so dishonourably? Who renders my aged grace bereft of you? Alas, let me die with you, my child!” And when he ceased moaning and groaning (lit. both plural), desiring to raise his aged person, he stuck to the fine-spun robes just like ivy to the shoots of the laurel, and there terrible wrestlings; for he wanted to raise his knee, but she was clinging [to him]. And if he tended to force, she rent the old flesh from his bones. And in time the ill-fated one quenched and gave up his soul; for he was no longer master of the evil. And the corpses lay, both the child and the venerable father nearby, a disaster causing desire for tears. And for me may your interests be out of the discussion; for you yourself will ascertain a refuge from punishment. And I think, now not for the first time, that mortals are a shadow, nor would I say with any fear (lit. fearing) that those of mortals seeming to be wise and thinkers of arguments, these bring the greatest punishments on themselves. For no-one of mortals is a happy man; and one may become luckier than another when Prosperity draws him to itself, but not happy.

Ια: O abomination, o most greatly most hateful woman, both to the gods and to me and to the whole race of men, you who have taken upon yourself to thrust your sword into your children, [you] who bore them, and you have ruined me, childless; and having done these things you look upon both sun and earth, having taken upon yourself this most irreverent deed; may you be destroyed; but I now have sense, although then not having sense, when I led you from your home and from a barbarian land to a Greek household, a great evil, the betrayer of both your father and the land which nurtured you. And the gods have hurled your avenging spirit against me; for indeed having killed your brother by the hearth you embarked upon the fair-prowed hull of the Argo, you began from such circumstances; and having been married to this man and having borne me children, on account of the sexual relations and marriage bed you destroyed them. There is not a Greek woman who would even take this thing upon herself, in front of whom I thought it right to marry you, a hateful and destructive marriage-tie for me, a lioness, not a woman, having a temperament more fierce than Tyrrhenian Scylla. But [enough], for I would not sting you with countless reproaches; your audacity has grown of such a kind; go to ruin, doing what is disgraceful and polluted by the murder of your children; but it is possible for me to lament my fate, I who neither will get the benefit of me new marriage bed, nor will I be able to speak to the children alive, who I begat and raised, but I have lost them.

Μη: I would have stretched out opposite at length for these words, if father Zeus has not understood what sort of things you were treated to from me and what sort of things you have carried out; and you [were not about to], having dishonoured my marriage bed, carry through a pleasurable life while laughing at me. Nor she of royal birth, nor he who conferred the marriage upon you, Creon, was about to, unpunished, throw me from the land. In respect of these things call me both a lioness, if you wish, and Scylla who inhabited the Tyrrhenian plain; for I have touched your heart, as is necessary.

Ια: You yourself are both grieving and are a partaker of these evils.

Μη: Know for certain; but it loosens me pain since (lit. if) you do not laugh.

Ια: O children, how you met with an evil mother.

Μη: O sons, how you have been destroyed by paternal disease.

Ια: Therefore certainly not has my right hand destroyed them.

Μη: But your arrogance, and your new-tamed bride [did].

Ια: You even thought it right to kill them on account of the marriage bed.

Μη: Do you consider than to be a small distress for a woman?

Ια: Indeed, [to anyone] who [is] sensible; but for you everything (lit. plural) is bad.

Μη: These live (lit. are) no longer; for this will sting you.

Ια: These ones live, alas, as the avengers for your life (lit. head).

Μη: The gods know who started the suffering.

Ια: They know indeed your detested mind.

Μη: Hate; I detest your galling voice.

Ια: And I indeed [hate] yours; but divorces are something easy.

Μη: And so how? What should I do? For I too very much wish it.

Ια: Allow me to bury these corpses and to weep [for them].

Μη: Indeed not, since I will bury them with my own hand, when I bear them to the precincts of the goddess, Hera Acraea, so that none of my enemies might defile them, dragging up their graves; and I will enjoin in this land of Sisyphus a revered festival and due rites for the rest of time in return for this innocent murder. And I myself will go to the land of Erechtheus, to live with Aegeus son of Pandion. And you, evil, as it is fit, will die evilly, having been struck on your head by the remnant of the Argo, having seen a bitter end (lit. plural) to my marriage.