

PROLOGUE TO MEDEA

JASON AND THE GOLDEN FLEECE

In Thessaly, Pelias unlawfully took the royal scepter, the throne, and the kingdom of Iolcus from his half-brother, Aeson. Then Aeson's wife gave birth to a son, whom they named Jason. Fearing that Pelias would kill Jason, Aeson had Jason reared in secrecy. Years later, Jason returned to Iolcus and claimed the throne in the name of his father. Pelias then commanded Jason to go forth to Aetes' kingdom of Colchis and fetch the wondrous Golden Fleece. Pelias expected that this dangerous quest would kill Jason, but Jason accepted the challenge in order to win lasting fame.

Pelias was so upset by Jason's return that he neglected to offer a sacrifice to Golden-throned Hera. The goddess's heart flooded with wrath, and she decided to use Jason and Aetes' maiden daughter, Medea, to punish Pelias for having dishonored her. Jason invited the greatest heroes of Hellas to accompany him on his quest, and they set forth. They rescued the seer Phineus, who gave them valuable advice about their journey. Then they rescued the sons of Aetes' son-in-law, Phrixus. Long before, Phrixus had given the Golden Fleece to Aetes and had then married Aetes' older daughter, Chalciope.

When Jason arrived in Colchis, Aetes demanded that he perform tasks in order to win the Golden Fleece. Hera asked Foam-born Aphrodite to have her son, Eros, shoot one of his love-inspiring arrows at Medea so that she would fall in love with Jason and help him. Hera's plan succeeded, and because of Medea's help, Jason captured the Golden Fleece. The Argonauts—together with Medea, her little brother, and the sons of Phrixus—then fled Colchis and the rage of Aetes.

MEDEA

Muse, divine daughter of Far-seeing Zeus, Father of Gods and Mortals, sing of the ways of the human heart. Sing of how the heart floods, like the storm-tossed salt sea, with waves of love, hatred, ambition, and revenge, enslaving the human mind with these passions and making all who walk the earth its victims. And sing of the Olympian gods, the deathless ones, who observe all who are mortal, judge them, and then

respond in ways mortals do not expect. And through your song, reveal who is to blame for the troubles that plague all who walk the earth.

Muse, divine daughter of Far-seeing Zeus, Father of Gods and Mortals, sing of how Medea accompanies Jason and the wondrous Golden Fleece back to Iolcus. Sing of the death of Medea's brother. Sing of how Golden-throned Hera avenges King Pelias's insult to her honor. Sing of Medea's life in Corinth. Sing of Jason's wedding with Glauce. And sing of Medea's revenge.

Chapter I

Aetes pursues the Argo. Jason would give up Medea. Instead, they kill Apsyrtus. The Argo's speaking beam reveals Far-seeing Zeus's anger. Jason and Medea marry on the island of Phaeacia. Then Zeus punishes the Argonauts.

King Aetes now paced back and forth in front of his throne. And his mind flooded with thoughts. "Medea helped Jason perform all the godlike tasks I demanded of him. And now, my heart floods with fear!" he silently exclaimed. "For surely she will help him steal the wondrous Golden Fleece. And this deed may already have come to pass! I have searched the royal palace. And Medea has fled. No doubt, she has already fled from Aea, as well. And she had taken little Apsyrtus—my only son!—with her.

"Medea's mind and heart must have flooded with the fearful thought that, if Apsyrtus remained here, the day would come when he would avenge her treachery! Or else, Jason's mind and heart flooded with the fearful thought that Apsyrtus would avenge his deeds. And so, once again, he asked Medea to help him—this time, by stealing my son. And she did it! For Medea does whatever Jason asks! How my mind floods with the wonder of it.

"Long ago, my father, Shining Helios, warned me of this. He told me to beware of deceitful schemes. He said they would lead to treachery and destruction. And he warned me that those of my own blood would contrive them. And so, I have always feared that the sons of Phrixus would become mad for power. And that, without respect for law, they would contrive to take my royal scepter, my throne, and my kingdom.

"But I never thought to fear Medea's treachery! And so, her deeds have surprised me. But Medea is a maiden. And Jason must have set forth to corrupt her mind and her heart. For surely he knew that, without her help, he would never capture my Golden Fleece. He must have flooded her mind with honeyed words. And so, her young heart flooded with waves of love and longing for the handsome stranger from Hellas.

"And I was right to fear the sons of Phrixus. For they, as well as Jason, are surely to blame. They must have told Jason that Pelias had given him a hopeless task. For why else would he have sent Jason forth to fetch my Golden Fleece? And they must have told him that, without Medea's help, he would never capture it. For Hecate has smiled on Medea and made her gifted in the ways of magic. And in Medea's skillful hands, all the: herbs that grow on land become drugs and charms.

"They must have told Jason that Medea can call forth blazing fires. That she can quiet rushing rivers. And that she can make Silver-homed Selene drive her silver-yoked chariot next to the: gold-yoked chariot of Gold-helmeted Helios. They must have told him that Medea can make spring flowers bloom in summer. That she can make: the grain grow ripe for harvesting in winter. And that she can make the floor of heavily-wooded forests reflect Father's golden rays. And they must have contrived for Jason to meet her.

"Yes, Medea's gifts have made her god-like:. But in the ways of the heart, she is young and foolish! How could she be so blind as to forsake her family, her home, and her homeland for a handsome stranger? How does she think she will fare as a stranger in a strange land? Docs she know the Hellenes look upon all strangers as barbarians? And she has chosen a man who apparently will do anything as long as he thinks he will profit from it. Does Medea really think she can hold onto light and life by casting her lot with him?"

So Aeetes mused. And his heart flooded first with surprise, then with grief, and at last, with rage. "Surely Medea knows the ways of my heart!" he silently exclaimed. "She knows that she has always flooded my heart with waves of pride and delight and love. And she knows that a father's heart longs to flood with pity for her! But she also knows that her treachery now floods my heart with rage. And she knows that my heart and mercy are strangers! And surely Medea knows the ways of my mind. She knows that I

will come after her. And she: knows that my watchful eyes will not close in sweet sleep until I find her!

"Dread that day, Medea! For I will find you! I will find you in the kingdom of Colchis. Or on the salt sea. Or in the land of Hellas. But I will surely find you! And then, I will avenge your treachery. You are my daughter. But I will push you into the grasping hands of Thanatos. And birds and dogs will feast on your lifeless flesh!"

So King Aetes mused. And with these thoughts, he gathered his armed men. And it came to pass that more than the storm-tossed waves of the salt sea, more than the grains of shining sand on its shores, and more than the autumn leaves on the floor of the oak forest were the Colchian warriors who now responded to their great king's call for revenge.

And when they had assembled in front of the royal palace, the great king of Colchis declared, "Warriors of Colchis, open the doors of your mind to my words. For, like well-aimed arrows, they will fly forth straight and true. You have heard my command to rid Colchis of the well-benched Argo and all who would flee aboard her. Except for one: among them, they must not escape your torches. They must look their last upon light and life! And birds and dogs must feast on their lifeless flesh!"

"But one among them—my daughter Medea—you must return safely to me. Find her in Colchis. Find her on the salt sea. Or find her in Hellas. But find her! For I myself will avenge her treachery. Find her! Or Thanatos will clasp you in his grasping hands. And birds and dogs will feast on your own lifeless flesh."

So King Aetes spoke. And it came to pass that he led his well-benched ships in pursuit of the Argo. He knew a direct route. And so, before long, he discovered her.

As soon as Jason spied the Colchian fleet, he approached Medea and declared, "Medea, you muse contrive a way to save us! Or we are surely lost! Your father might be satisfied if I return you and your little brother to him. And perhaps that would be best for everyone! Certainly we cannot hope to escape. Nor can we hope to win a battle against him."

So Jason spoke. And his words caused Medea's heart to flood with waves of rage and terror. And so she replied, "Jason, where is your heart? Your gratitude? Your

loyalty? Now that you have the wondrous Golden Fleece, will you really abandon me now, after all I have done for you?

"How quickly your success makes you forget your sweet promises to me! And how lightly you regard the sacred vows you made before the deathless gods—before Zeus, Lord of Escape and Protector of Strangers, and before Hera, Protector of the Wedding-bond! Your words, both sweet and sacred, melt like the spring snow beneath Grandfather's golden rays. Surely your heart is made of shifting grains of sand. For swift as the wind, you bow before every wave of the sale sea! And surely your courage is no stronger than a wisp of a tree. For swift as the wind, you rush to bend before every wind.

"Well, I am made of stronger metal! Your sweet promises and your sacred vows have burned their way into my heart. You swore before the deathless gods that, when we reached your home in Hellas, you would make me your wedded lady! You swore you would keep me safely at your hearth. And you swore you would love me until Thanatos embraces you! And though you are a Hellene, Jason, I took you to be a man of honor—a man who keeps his word! And so, I chose to help you. I was willing to forsake my family, my home, and my homeland. For my heart flooded with grief to think that my father would kill a godlike mortal. And I knew that I, alone, could save you.

"A man of honor would protect and defend me! But you long to sacrifice me for my good deeds! Now if love and honor have truly fled from your heart, Jason, then draw forth your sword, and slash my throat! And may the heart of Far-seeing Zeus—Protector of Strangers and Lord of Justice—and the heart of lady Hera—Protector of the Wedding-bond—flood with wrath when they know your scheming mind and your cold heart. May the wondrous Golden Fleece vanish, like a drop of water, into the depths of the salt sea. And may the Furies, those fearsome avengers of unspeakable crimes, pursue you and prevent your return to Hellas!"

So Medea spoke to Jason. And so she prayed to the deathless gods. And her words caused Jason's heart to flood with fear. "You are wrong to think I have forgotten all that I owe you, Medea," he responded. "But, if your father and his warriors capture the Argo, then neither you, not I, not any Argonaut, will escape the grasping hands of Thanatos!"

At these words, Medea turned away from Jason and looked toward the Colchian fleet. And just as a young shepherd, while watching over his flock high in a mountain meadow, runs after a stray lamb, though it is heading toward the steep, rock-strewn edge, and as the boy reaches the edge, he stumbles on a rock and tumbles down the mountain-side, his heart flooding with terror, and his hands grasping wildly at every rock, hoping this one or that one will stop his fall as he cries desperately to escape from the grasping hands of Thanatos, so Medea's heart now flooded with terror as she recognized the truth in Jason's words. And her mind flooded with fear as she sought frantically for a way to survive.

"Foolish heart!" she silently exclaimed. "Why did you flood with pity for this stranger? Could you not see beneath his godlike face and form? And foolish mind! Why did you choose to help a stranger from Hellas? Why did you allow a foolish heart to rule you? What led you who are so wise to be so blind? For now my eyes see dearly, but too late! I have paid for Jason's life with my own. And what a poor trade I have made! For I have given true gold. And I have received its glittering fake! Jason does not have the heart of a good man. His heart is that of a scoundrel!

"Should I return to my father? His heart and mercy are strangers. And swift as the wind, he will push me into the grasping hands of Thanatos. But, if I must give up light and life, surely I should invite the embrace of that dreadful god. For my ways are far more gentle than my father's.

"And yet, I love light and life too much to join Hecate in grim Hades' lifeless kingdom. I want my heart to flood with the joy of embracing someone I love! I want my ears to flood with the sound of a bird's sweet song! And I want my throat to be moistened by sweet water from sparkling streams! I want my eyes to flood with the sight of Grandfather's chariot! And I want my skin to flood with the comforting warmth of his golden rays! I want my eyes to flood with the sight of fields of flowers. And I want my nose to flood with the smell of their sweet fragrance."

So Medea mused. And with these thoughts, it came to pass that that she now turned back to Jason and replied, "You are right, Jason. My father must not capture the Argo. For then, we would surely look our last upon light and life.

"And so, I will save us! And yet, my heart floods with horror and my mind quails in terror as these words come forth from my mouth! For we must push little Apsyrtus into the grasping hands of Thanatos! And may the deathless gods hide their eyes as I now give him the drugs that will make our unspeakable deed easier-for him, as well as for us."

So Medea spoke. And in reply, Jason declared, "Medea, I told you before we left Colchis that the time would come when you would have to face this dreadful deed. For as long as the wind of life blows through him, your brother will threaten our lives. The time would come when he must uphold his father's honor. Then he would have to avenge your treachery. And he would have to avenge my capture of the Golden Fleece. So give him the necessary drugs. And then, I will help you chop off his limbs. For we must prevent his shade from leaving grim Hades' lifeless kingdom and taking revenge on us. And let the deathless gods who rule the Underworld welcome him there!"

So Jason spoke. And to his words, Medea declared, "After we have chopped off my brother's limbs, we must remember to lick his blood and spit it out three times. For only in this way can we hope to atone for our dreadful deed. And then, we must toss the pieces of his corpse into the salt sea that flows behind the Argo. For this—and this alone—will save us! My father will stop his pursuit. For he will collect what remains of his son. And he will turn back in order to give the little corpse a proper burial. Meanwhile, we will escape. But let your tongue, like mine, remain forever silent about this unspeakable deed. For my heart and my mind recoil from what our hands must do!"

So Medea spoke to Jason. And it came to pass that the maiden gave her brother the powerful herbs that she had earlier considered taking herself. And just as a butcher picks up his blade, and he chops a slaughtered ox into pieces in order to provide food for gods and mortals, so Medea and Jason picked up sharp woodchopping blades and began to chop away at little Apsyrtus's corpse. Meanwhile, the Argonauts turned away from Jason and Medea. They said nothing. And they did nothing. One and all, they remained silent and still.

And it came to pass that Medea's ears flooded with the sound of a great sigh that came forth from the mouth of her little brother's shade. And just as leafy boughs shiver and shake—now here, and now there—as a summer storm-wind buffets them, so the

maiden now felt her body tremble. And her heart flooded with terror at the sound of Apsyrtus's sigh. However, with Jason's help, she continued to chop away at her brother's small form. Her mind and her heart recoiled from the sight and sound of her unspeakable deed. But, with Jason's help, she persisted until her little brother's corpse was in pieces.

And now, Medea's eyes flooded with the sight of her brother's blood-drenched hand. For it bounced up from the Argo's planks. And it smeared its gore on her robe. And just as when Loud-thundering Zeus sends forth a lightning-bolt that kindles a fire in an old forest, and the flames greedily fasten on the dry wood and suddenly burst into a wondrous blaze, so the maiden suddenly felt as if her heart was now blazing within her. "I am being toasted alive!" she silently exclaimed. "A great fire is raging within me. And its flames are hungrily feeding on my flesh. Thanatos is surely embracing me. And swift as the wind, I will now look my last upon light and life!"

But what Medea feared did not come to pass. The flames that raged within her subsided as she and Jason performed the ritual act of atonement. Then they tossed Apsyrtus's limbs into the salt sea that flowed behind the Argo. And indeed, it came to pass that King Aeetes gave up the chase in order to rescue the pieces of his son's corpse and then bury them. And he commanded the Colchian fleet to return to the royal city of Aea.

Meanwhile, the well-benched Argo continued safely on her way toward Hellas. And it now sped, swift as the wind, over the salt sea. Gray-eyed Athena had fashioned a plank from one of many oak trees that were Far-seeing Zeus's ancient oracle at Dodona. And she had placed it in the Argo's prow. These sacred trees revealed Zeus's prophecies by rustling their leaves. And it now came to pass that the goddess's plank spoke to the Argonauts in a commanding mortal voice.

"Hear me, Argonauts!" exclaimed the voice. "Open the doors of your mind to my words. For I speak the words of Far-seeing Zeus, Father of Gods and Mortals, and Lord of Justice. And just as Blushing Eos makes the new day light, so what I now tell you will surely come to pass. Every one of you will suffer for Medea and Jason's unspeakable deed. For you all stood by, silent and still, and so, gave them your support!"

"And so, this well-benched ship will be battered by fierce storm-winds and carried by unfriendly currents. She will now take you far past the shores of Hellas. And at last, you will reach the land of the Etruscans. Nearby, Circe, the great sorceress, makes her home. And there, you must go. For Jason and Medea must petition the goddess to absolve them of their unspeakable deed. And only this daughter of Shining Helios can remove their blood-guilt.

"And in time, it will come to pass that you will find yourselves stranded in a barren and arid land. There, you will be compelled to work long and hard at tasks that will test the limits of your strength and your endurance. And you will think only of food, water, and rest from your hard labors."

So spoke the voice of Loud-thundering Zeus. And the sound of his voice flooded the heart of every Argonaut with waves of terror and despair. For no word spoken by Far-seeing Zeus can be changed.

And it came to pass that whatever Zeus foretold, indeed came to be. The Argo sailed past the shores of Hellas to the land of the Etruscans. And Circe performed the necessary cleansing rites that Far-seeing Zeus requires of those who have taken the life of another mortal without cause.

But then, the goddess declared, "I have performed the rites for which you came. But I am your father's sister, Medea. And my heart, like his, floods with blame toward you. First you took this stranger, whoever he is, into your heart. And so, you were disloyal to your father. And then, like a toward, you fled from your family, your home, and your homeland. And with this stranger, you committed an unspeakable deed. But since you are my niece, and you have come to me as a suppliant, I will not harm you or your friend."

So Circe spoke. And her words caused Medea's heart to overflow with waves of fear and anguish. Then the Argonauts resumed their voyage. And in time, it came to pass that they reached the island of Phaeacia. King Alcinous and Queen Arete gave the Argonauts a joyful welcome. But the arrival of a great fleet from Colchis interrupted them. And, swift as the wind, the Colchian commander sent his herald forth with a message for the Phaeacian king.

"King Alcinous, King Aeetes of Colchis gives you this choice," declared the herald. "Demand that the leader of the Argonauts release the princess of Colchis to the commander of the Colchian fleet. For King Aeetes waits impatiently for his daughter's return. Or prepare to engage the warriors of Colchis in battle, where you Phaeacians will surely look your last upon light and life!"

So the Colchian herald spoke to King Alcinous. And to his words, the Phaeacian king replied, "Tell your commander that I must give his words careful thought. And so, when Blushing Eos makes the new day light, I will announce my decision."

So King Alcinous declared. And, swift as the wind, it came to pass that Medea's ears flooded with the sound of the herald's words. And so, swift as the wind, the maiden went forth to seek audience with Queen Arete. There she kneeled before the queen, and with honeyed words, she spoke of how her heart had flooded with pity for the godlike stranger from Hellas. She spoke of how she had used her skills to help him, and she spoke of how she had cast her lot with the Argonauts.

Then Medea declared, "Oh, Queen Arete, I am still a maiden. As I kneel before you this day, I am as pure as I was in my father's house, but I am doomed to give up light and life unless the king's heart floods with pity for me! And so, I clasp your knees. And I take your chin in my hand as I ask this favor of you. Save me from my father's vengeance! Open your heart. And let it flood with pity for me. Send your sweet words forth to find their way into the king's heart. And may Far-seeing Zeus, Protector of Strangers and Fugitives, cast his smile on you, on your family, and on your fair city!."

So Medea spoke. And just as a young widow works in the darkness, turning her spindle round and round about in order to twist her wool into yarn, while her little ones cry out for their father and tears flow freely from the widow's eyes as she bemoans her sorry fare, so Medea now wept as she thought of what would surely become of her.

And it came to pass that the queen pleaded with the king on Medea's behalf. And to her words, Alcinous replied, "My dear, let the doors of your mind now open to my words. For, like a well-aimed arrow, they will fly forth straight and true. No kingdom is safe when Aeetes chooses to go to war against it! For his heart and mercy are strangers. And yet, I would protect Medea. But to decide in her favor may displease Far-seeing Zeus, Lord of Justice. And so I will attempt to give a balanced judgment. If Medea

has been living as Jason's wedded lady, then I will protect her wedding bond. If not, then Jason must return her to her father.”

So Alcinous spoke. And with these words, he fell asleep. Swift as the wind, the queen then sent her messenger forth to Jason with the king's decision. And so it came to pass that the Argonauts found a sacred cave. There, they prepared Jason and Medea's wedding bed with the wondrous Golden Fleece. For they wanted White-armed Hera-Protector of the Wedding-bond-to honor their wedding. And they hoped the wondrous fleece would help their wedding live on in poets' songs for as long as mortals walk the earth to hear them. And so it came to pass that the stranger from Hellas wedded with the maiden from Colchis. And Lady Hera blessed their sacred union.

Meanwhile, once again, Golden-throned Hera had been looking down from Mount Olympus, watching and listening, in order to see how her plans for Jason and Medea were progressing. And now, she silently exclaimed, "How clever I was! For I put the idea of revealing Alcinous's decision into Arete's mind and heart. And Jason's wedding with Medea causes my heart to flood with joy! For now, Medea will surely return to Iolcus with Jason. And through Medea, I will avenge Pelias's insult to my honor. For his fate must remind all who walk the earth that I will not tolerate anyone who dishonors me."

So the White-armed Goddess mused. And it came to pass that, when Blushing Eos with her sparkling eyes made the new day light, King Alcinous, accompanied by his armed warriors, met with Jason and the Colchian commander. And Alcinous formally declared the conditions he had privately stated to Arete. And Jason declared that Medea was his wedded lady.

When the Colchian warriors realized they would have to return to King Aetes without Medea, their minds flooded with thoughts of their king's rage. And their hearts flooded with terror, for they knew that Aetes' heart and mercy were strangers. And so, they remained on the island of Phaeacia, and they became King Alcinous's allies.

And now, it came to pass that Far-seeing Zeus called Glad-hearted Hermes, his swift-footed messenger, to him and said, "My son, even Lady Hera must admit that I have let her have her way with Jason, that Hellenic youth who apparently has captured her heart. But now, the Argo is leaving Phaeacia. And the time has come to punish

Jason and Medea for their unspeakable deed. And I will punish the other Argonauts as well. For they stood by, silent and still, and so, gave them their support.

"And so, go forth to the palace of King Aeolus, Lord of the Wind. And command him to release only Boreas. For he must now lash the salt sea, causing foaming waves, like great snow-capped mountains, to pierce the heavens. And he must drive the well-benched Argo to the toast of Libya."

So Far-seeing Zeus commanded. And so it came to pass. There, the tide carried the Argo into a shallow gulf. And there, she sank into the soft sands that lay beneath the sale-water shallows. No wind ever blew here. No fresh water flowed here. And no living form survived here. And so it came to pass that, step by plodding seep, the Argonauts carried the Argo across the scorching and lifeless wasteland.

Twelve times Nyx watched them as she ascended her throne and covered Mother Gaea with her star-filled robe. And twelve times Gleaming Selene watched them as she drove her silver-yoked chariot across the heavens. For they trudged on and on. Twelve times Blushing Eos watched them as, with her sparkling eyes, she made the new day light. For they trudged on and on. And twelve times Shining Helios watched them as he drove his gold-yoked chariot across the heavens and into the western waves of Oceanus. For when they did not lie beneath their cloaks with their eyes closed in troubled sleep, they trudged on and on.

But it came to pass that they found the salt sea and see sail once again. And at last, they saw the mountains of Hellas. Meanwhile, once again, Golden-throned Hera was looking down from Mount Olympus in order to see how her plans for Jason and Medea were progressing. And when she saw that the well-benched Argo was approaching the mainland ofHellas, her heart flooded with joy. "At last I will avenge Pelias's insult to my honor!" she silently exclaimed. "For his face must remind all who walk the earth that I will not tolerate anyone who dishonors me!"

Chapter 2

At last, the Argo returns to Iolcus. There, Medea avenges Pelias's insult to Golden-throned Hera.

It came to pass, in Iolcus, that Silver-homed Selene, appeared four times in her new robe. But still the Argonauts had not returned. And so King Pelias now determined to kill Aeson. For despite Pelias's power, as long as the rightful king of Iolcus lived, Pelias's heart remained flooded with fear. He feared losing his kingdom. And he feared losing his life. However, Aeson gave up light and life by drinking the blood of a bull. And then, his lady cursed Pelias and gave up light and life by hanging herself.

Now the freshly fallen snow of a new winter was already covering the peaks and the high meadows of Mount Pelion when the well-benched Argo approached the harbor of Iolcus. The Argonauts cloaked their arrival in secrecy so that Jason could learn what had occurred during his absence. And so it came to pass that he quietly called Medea aside and declared, "My dear one, open the doors of your mind to my words. For, like well-aimed arrows, they will fly forth straight and true. It is bad enough that Pelias took the kingdom of Iolcus from my father. And that he sent me forth to fetch the Golden Fleece with the hope that I would look my last upon light and life.

"But now, I have learned that Pelias has caused my parents to give up light and life. And so, I am the lawful king of Iolcus. Surely I must reclaim my father's throne! And I must avenge the deaths of my parents! The only question is how to kill Pelias. For I must kill him before he kills me. And you must help me decide what path is best."

So Jason spoke. And in reply, Medea declared, "If you wish, Jason, I will contrive to have Pelias see the last of light and life."

"Medea, even before the deed is done, your words cause my heart to flood with gratitude! What do you have in mind? And what weapons will you need? For whatever I have, is yours!"

So Jason responded. And to his words, Medea replied, "My plan will work best if I keep my own counsel, Jason. And, if I have been successful, you will learn of it. For my mind floods with a clever scheme, and I have the herbs I need."

So Medea spoke. And it came to pass that she fashioned a small, hollow statue of Artemis, the Archer-Goddess. And she placed certain powerful herbs within it. Then she transformed herself into a very old woman. And with the statue in her arms, she went forth into the royal city of Iolcus. "I am a priestess of Artemis, the Archer-Goddess,

who protects Iolcus," she declared to everyone who crossed her path. "And I have come to tell you that the goddess will confer good fortune on King Pelias, his family, and all his subjects."

So Medea, in her disguise, spoke. And her words caused the hearts of the people of Iolcus to flood with gratitude toward the Archer-Goddess for her blessings. And so, swift as the wind, they went forth to Lady Artemis's temple. And there, they honored her with sacrifices. Meanwhile, Medea, still in her disguise, and still holding the statue in her arms, entered the royal palace. There, she asked to meet with King Pelias and his royal family. And since she appeared to be a priestess of the Archer-Goddess, the king honored her request. So it came to pass that Medea came into the presence of King Pelias and his daughters. But Pelias's son, Acastus, was still with the Argonauts.

"My lord, thank you for being so kind as to receive a priestess of the Archer-Goddess," declared Medea. "Lady Artemis has searched throughout Hellas. And she has found that you, my lord, of all the kings who walk the earth, are the most pious ruler. And so, the goddess has sent me to you. For she wants to confer her special blessings on you and your family.

"My lord, infirmity is a great liability, both in time of war and in time of peace, and certainly in one who is the leader of his people. Strength and vitality should course through your body as they did in days of old. But you have become an old man. Time, who ravishes all Mother Gaea's children, has left his mark on you. For your limbs, have become weak. And your legs now go forth slowly. And so, my lord, if you approve, my first deed will be to strip your old age from your body. And in its place, I will confer all the blessings of youth upon you."

So Medea, in her disguise, spoke. And her words caused the king's heart to flood with waves of pride and longing for his lost youth. And so it came to pass that Pelias replied, "Priestess, your presence honors the kingdom of Iolcus and the royal family. My heart floods with delight at your desire to bless me with the gift of renewed youth. And my mind floods with the thought that I should accept your wondrous gift.

"But Priestess, my mind floods with thoughts of caution, as well. And it urges me to request some proof of your power. For you are asking me to place my life in your hands. Now if you are truly the priestess of the Archer-Goddess, you have nothing to

fear. And I have nothing to fear. For if the Archer-Goddess acts through you, as you declare she does, then you will restore the flower of my lost youth. And so, I ask you, Priestess: Are you willing to demonstrate your godlike skill? Will you show me exactly how you strip some living thing of its age? For my heart floods with the desire to see an example of renewed youth."

So King Pelias spoke to the woman who appeared to be the priestess of the Archer-Goddess. And in reply, Medea declared, "My lord, your words reveal that you are as wise as you are pious! Have your servants bring me a cauldron of fresh, warm water in which to bathe. And I will reappear before you stripped of my own white hair and wrinkled skin. And what I do for myself, I am prepared to do for you, as well."

So Medea, in her disguise, spoke. And swift as the wind, her words caused Pelias to command his servants to fetch the cauldron of water. And then, he commanded his daughters to watch Medea while she bathed. And it came to pass that Medea carefully chose certain of the powerful herbs that she had stored in the hollow statue of Artemis. And she sprinkled handfuls of these herbs into the warm water in the cauldron. And as she bathed, the white of her hair vanished like drops of water into the depths of the salt sea. And the wrinkles that lined her skin vanished, as well. And so Medea reentered the king's hall in the form of a beautiful maiden.

Now Pelias rose to his feet. And he stood silent and still. For his eyes flooded with the sight of the priestess's restored youth. And his heart now flooded with waves of amazement and delight. "Priestess, you have indeed restored you own lost youth! And so, surely you can restore my own lost youth, as well! But I will not yet entrust my life to you. For while my heart floods with hope, my mind still floods with doubt. And so, I need farther proof of your godlike skill."

So King Pelias spoke to the woman who appeared to be the priestess of the Archer-Goddess. And in reply, Medea declared, "My lord, your words give me farther proof that you are as wise as you are pious! And so, have your servants bring me the oldest ram from the royal flock. Have them bring me another cauldron of fresh water, a tripod, and firewood. And have them bring me a sharp, wood-chopping blade. Then before your eyes and the eyes of your lovely daughters, I will restore the ram's lost youth."

So Medea, in her disguise, spoke. And her words caused Pelias to command his servants to return with all that Medea now requested. And so it came to pass that the king's servants set the large bronze cauldron upon the tripod that had been placed over the pile of firewood. Medea ignited the wood beneath the tripod. Then she carefully chose certain of the powerful herbs that she had stored in the hollow statue of Artemis. And just as she had done before Jason went forth to perform the tasks that King Aeetes had demanded of him, she now sprinkled handfuls of these drugs into the water. Then she picked up a large, dead, olive branch. And she began to stir the brew in the cauldron carefully and well.

And it came to pass that, as the broth in the cauldron became hotter, the bare olive branch began to grow strong and green. Then, as the broth became even hotter, the branch sprouted a host of green leaves. And at last, as the broth began to boil vigorously, a wealth of firm, ripe olives grew upon the branch. Meanwhile, wherever the pot boiled over and the broth splattered upon the earth, Mother Gaea sent forth fresh green grass and fragrant flowers.

Medea now stopped stirring. She approached the aged ram and took it between her hands. Next she picked up the wood-chopping blade and slit the ram's throat. Then she chopped its corpse into pieces and dropped them into her boiling brew. And it came to pass that, just as it had done with Jason, swift as the wind, Medea's broth now restored the ram's youth.

Once again, Pelias rose to his feet. And his daughters rose to their feet, as well. And they all stood silent and still. For a frisky, young lamb now jumped out of the cauldron. The broth had restored its body. And new flesh now clothed its strong, young bones. The eyes of Pelias and his daughters flooded with the sight of the ram's restored youth. Their minds flooded with wonder. And their hearts flooded with awe. For they knew they were witnessing the work of the Archer-Goddess.

Then the king's heart flooded with joy. And he exclaimed, "Priestess, with this act, you have proved beyond a doubt that the goddess whom you serve has chosen to act through you! And so, I now command you to do to me what you have done to yourself and to the aged ram. Strip me of my old age. And renew in me the flower of my lost youth!"

So King Pelias spoke to the woman who appeared to be the priestess of the Archer-Goddess. And in reply, Medea declared, "My lord, your trust in the Archer-Goddess, and in my humble talent, flood my heart with joy! However, a king's children should have the honor of restoring their father's lost youth. Do you not agree?"

So Medea, in her disguise, spoke. And in response to her words, Pelias declared, "Once again, the priestess of the Archer-Goddess speaks words of wisdom. And so, my daughters, when Blushing Eos makes the new day light, I command you to listen well to our honored guest. And whatever this priestess of Lady Artemis cells you to do with me, I command you to do it."

So King Pelias spoke. And so it came to pass that, as soon as Blushing Eos made the new day light, Medea, in her disguise, gave the daughters of Pelias a drink that would put their father into a death-like sleep. And the princesses gave this drink to their father. But then, their hearts flooded with terror at the thought of the grisly deed that would follow. And so, despite Pelias's command, they balked like frightened horses.

"Oh, Priestess, we clasp your knees. And we take your chin in our hands. For we beg you! Be the one who picks up the wood-chopping blade! And if it muse be, then be the one who chops up Father! For he is more than a tree. And we will not make firewood of him!

"This deed will invite the embrace of Thanatos. And surely that dreadful god will take the wind of life that blows through him! Patricide is an unspeakable deed—a crime against Mother Gaea. And so, as surely as Blushing Eos makes the new day light, our deed will invoke the Furies, chose fearsome avengers of unspeakable crimes. They will chase us until we go mad and fall into the grasping hands of Thanatos. And there, we will surely look our last upon light and life. So we beg you, Priestess. Take Father's fate from our hands!"

So Pelias's daughters spoke. And to their words, Medea replied, "Come, Princesses! You hold in your hands your father's youth, and not his death. And so, if you truly love him, you will use the wood-chopping blade to free him from the heavy burden of old age. Your wounds will be a blessing, and not an evil. For they will restore your father's strength and vigor. And surely these are necessary qualities in one who leads his people. So come, Princesses! The cauldron is on the tripod. The fire is blazing. And

the broth is coming to a boil. If your father could speak, he would demand that, swift as the wind, you let your hearts flood with courage. And he would command that you obey his wishes!"

So Medea, in her disguise, spoke to Pelias's daughters. And with these words, the first princess picked up the wood-chopping blade. Meanwhile, her sisters prepared to take their turn. But the thought of their deed flooded their hearts with waves of dread and disgust. And so they did not permit their minds to flood with the thought of what their hands were about to do. Each sister took her turn in chopping up their father. But she closed her eyes lest they should flood with the sight of her unspeakable deed and so bear witness against her.

And so it came to pass that, since they were closed, the eyes of Pelias's daughters never flooded with the sight of Artemis's priestess. If she chose any of the powerful herbs that she had stored in the hollow statue of Artemis, their eyes never saw it. And if she sprinkled drugs of any kind into the boiling broth, their eyes never saw it.

But swift as the wind, the princesses blindly chopped their father's body into pieces. And swift as the wind, their hands tossed these pieces into the boiling broth. Then they opened their eyes. And they stood, silent and still, by the side of the cauldron. For their eyes now flooded with the sight of their father's chopped and stewing body. And they were watching and waiting for the Archer-Goddess to restore their father's body and the flower of his lost youth.

But it came to pass that, without the proper herbs, the king's body simply stewed in the boiling broth. Without the proper herbs, his body did not revive. And without the proper herbs, the broth did not restore his lost youth. Instead, the pieces that had been Pelias floated into the embrace of Thanatos. And there, without a whimper of protest, the great king gave that dreadful god the wind of life that blew through him.

Meanwhile, the eyes of the princesses remained flooded with the sight of their father's chopped and stewing body. And their hearts now flooded with waves of horror and rage. "The Archer-Goddess is not restoring Father's life and youth! And surely that woman is not her priestess! She is a fiend from grim Hades' kingdom!" they exclaimed.

"And we must search the palace, and Aea, until we find her! For she has contrived to have us commit this unspeakable deed!"

So Pelias's daughters spoke. But it came to pass that they did not find Medea. For swift as the wind, she had taken advantage of their interest in their father. And she had stealthily and safely returned to Jason.

Meanwhile, once again, Golden-throned Hera had been looking down from Mount Olympus, watching and listening, in order to see how her plans for Pelias were progressing. And her mind flooded with many happy thoughts as she now rejoiced in her success. "My heart overflows with joy to see Pelias's stewing corpse!" she silently exclaimed. "For at last, he has reaped the fate I determined for him! And surely his fate will live on in song for as long as mortals walk the earth to hear of it. And so, it will be a lasting reminder that I will not tolerate anyone who dishonors me!

So White-armed Hera mused as she celebrated the death of King Pelias of Iolcus.

Chapter 3

Acastus banishes Jason and Medea from Iolcus, and they take refuge in Corinth. Years later, Jason weds with Glauce. King Creon banishes Medea and her children, and Medea learns of it.

It came to pass that Acastus buried the dismembered corpse of his father. And being his father's only son, he inherited the throne of Iolcus. Acastus knew he was obligated to avenge his father's murder. But waves of conflicting thoughts flooded his mind. And waves of conflicting passions flooded his heart. "I muse avenge Father's murder by pushing Medea into the grasping hands of Thanatos. But the Colchian witch cannot have acted alone," he thought. "Father was no threat to Medea that she should have contrived to murder him. For they were strangers.

"Jason must have shared the deed with Medea. And so, he muse share her punishment. But how can I push him into the grasping hands of Thanatos when he has been my leader and my companion. Just the sound of his name causes my heart to flood with waves of affection and loyalty as well as with anger. And so, surely it would be far better to banish Jason and his wedded witch than to kill them."

So Acastus mused. And with these thoughts, he called Jason and Medea before him. And he announced, "Jason, open the doors of your mind to my words. For, like well-aimed arrows, they will fly forth straight and true. You, as well as Medea, murdered my father. But Pelias killed your father. And we have been companions aboard the well-benched Argo. So my mind does not flood with the thought to kill you. And my heart does not flood with the hatred or wrath that would push my hands to do the deed.

"But I hereby banish you and Medea from the kingdom of Iolcus. From this time forth, until it comes to pass that you look your last upon light and life, I condemn you to live as strangers in a strange land. Or to wander from place to place. But I warn you. Never return to Iolcus. For as surely as Shining Helios follows Blushing Eos at the start of each new day, when my eyes next flood with the sight of you, I will kill you!"

So Acastus spoke to Jason. And so it came to pass that the leader of the Argonauts and his wedded lady left the towers of Iolcus and went forth to the kingdom of Corinth. There, King Creon welcomed them. For Jason was the greatest hero of Hellas. And there, it came to pass that ten years followed one upon the other as the silver-yoked chariot of Silver-homed Selene follows the gold-yoked chariot of Gold-helmeted Helios across the heavens.

And it came to pass that Jason and Medea lived happily together in Corinth. As Jason had promised, their days followed one after the other like blossoms of shining gold upon a golden chain. Medea bore Jason two sons. And Jason's heart flooded with pride. For just as the golden rays sent forth by Shining Helios shine forth more brightly than silvery beams sent forth by Gleaming Selene, so Medea's beauty now outshone the beauty of all the women of Hellas. And yet, Medea wore the crown of modesty upon her head.

However, it came to pass that Time, who ravishes all Mother Gaea's children, came to Medea and left his mark upon her. She had become a matron. And just as the leaves on the oak tree lose their brightness as they age, so Medea's beauty was now more subdued and mature. And when Jason's eyes flooded with the sight of Time's mark on Medea's face and form, they shouted a warning to his mind and heart. And so, Jason's mind flooded with the thought that a glaring stain now indelibly marred Medea's face and form. And from that time forth, whenever his eyes flooded with the sight of his

wedded lady, or whenever his mind flooded with the thought of her, that glaring stain caused his heart to flood with disgust.

And so it came to pass that Jason's heart now flooded with desire for Glauce, the daughter of King Creon. And his mind flooded with thoughts about why she should now become his wedded lady. "This maiden should be mine!" he silently exclaimed. "For she is young and beautiful. And she is the daughter of a powerful king! Surely such a wedding will prove to be an advantage to me. For when Creon dies, I will become the king of Corinth!

"Glauce—and Creon, as well—will be happy to have me! For who among those who walk the earth is my equal? Surely I wear the crown of the greatest hero of Hellas! And so, poets will sing of my adventures for as long as mortals live to hear of them! For I led the Argonauts forth to fetch the wondrous Golden Fleece. And so, I have won great praise. And I have won the glory that brings lasting fame!"

So Jason mused. And so it came to pass that he wooed Creon's daughter. And when he saw that Glauce's eyes returned his love, he asked King Creon for permission to make her his wedded lady. And in response, the king declared, "Jason, open the doors of your mind to my words. For, like well-aimed arrows, they will fly forth straight and true. My heart floods with joy to have my daughter become your wedded lady. The deathless gods will surely smile on your wedding. For it will be good for you, good for me, and good for the people of Corinth. I have no son to inherit my royal scepter, my throne, and my kingdom. And so, Corinth could have no better future than to be ruled by the greatest hero of Hellas!"

So Creon spoke. And in response to his words, Jason asked, "My lord, does it not bother you that I live here in exile, banished from my own land?"

"No, Jason," replied Creon. "A lawful prince should have the opportunity to become king. And you cannot claim the royal scepter, the throne, and the kingdom of Iolcus. For they now belong to Acastus. And if you return to the towers of Iolcus, Acastus will push you into the grasping hands of Thanatos. For he holds you, as well as Medea, responsible for his father's murder. And he longs to avenge it. And yet, you are innocent of that dreadful deed. Medea claims she acted on your behalf. She claims her heart held no anger against Pelias. And she had nothing to gain from his death. But the

scheme was hers. And she made Pelias's daughters hold the blade and spill their father's blood."

So Creon spoke. And to his words, Jason replied, "Medea will not come between Glauce and me! For it is Glauce I love! But my lord, does it not bother you that Medea is already my wedded lady?"

"No, Jason," responded Creon. "For Medea is not one of us. She is a barbarian from a barbarian people. And she is not your lawfully wedded lady! For no true Hellene regards the wedding of a Hellene with a stranger as proper or acceptable. And all strangers are barbarians. Clearly, as your quest for the Golden Fleece and your return to Hellas prove, your wedding with Medea was nothing more than a necessary convenience. Why, I have even heard you enjoyed its first fruits in a cave! My mind floods with laughter to think of it. For if there is a more appropriate place for a barbarian, I have yet to hear of it!

"But now, all that is past, Jason. You must choose one of your own kind—a Hellene—to be your wedded lady. But if you are to become my daughter's wedded lord, you must put aside the barbarian who presently calls herself your wedded lady. You must renounce Medea. And from this time forth, she must take care of herself."

So King Creon spoke. And in reply, Jason declared, "If that is your will, my lord, then certainly I will do it!"

And so it came to pass that Jason left Medea and wedded with Glauce. And then, swift as the wind, Creon took counsel with himself. For his mind flooded with disturbing thoughts that caused his heart to flood with fear. "Surely I must banish Medea and her sons from Corinth," he mused. "For deeds of wonder and terror drip from her name like honey from a stick! Poets will surely sing of them for as long as mortals walk the earth to hear of them. But we must not suffer from them!

"All wise men should be wary of a spurned woman! For rejection and disdain flood the female heart with wrath. And just as dry timber will burst into a mountain of flame when it is struck by a bolt of lightning, so Jason's wedding with my daughter will now surely cause Medea's fury to erupt into a mighty blaze. And her wrath will endanger the royal family and Corinth. Already I have heard that Medea's heart floods with hatred for Jason and the royal house of Corinth. Tales of her ranting and raving flood my ears.

And so, I will banish Medea and her sons from Corinth. Swift as the wind, I must send them on their way!"

So Creon mused. His decision caused his heart to flood with relief. And so he called for his messenger and commanded, "Tell the Colchian woman that, swift as the wind, she must prepare to leave Corinth. She must take her sons. And she may take whatever possessions she can push in a cart. But once Shining Helios begins his next journey across the heavens, she must be on her way. Be sure she understands that, if she overstays her welcome, I will push her into the grasping hands of Thanatos. And there, she will look her last upon light and life."

So King Creon commanded. And so it came to pass that he banished Medea and her children from Corinth. And his decree caused Medea's mind to flood with thoughts that caused her heart to flood first with anguish, then with despair, and at last with wrath. "Oh, how my mind, my heart, and my life overflow with woe!" Medea silently exclaimed. "For what I have most feared has now come to pass! Jason has forgotten his honeyed words. And he has broken his sacred promises. For he has betrayed me! And he has abandoned me in order to wed with Creon's daughter! His behavior shames him! And his shameful deed clothes me in dishonor as well!

"And now, I face banishment and exile! What can I do? What can any woman do when the man whom she has loved, the man to whom she has devoted her life, abandons her? Of every living thing, surely women are the least fortunate! First, a woman must offer some form of wealth if she hopes to get a wedded lord. And then, she must subject her mind and her body to his rule, whether or not she has chosen well. She has no real choice. For once she weds, a woman can only choose between breaking the sacred wedding bond and keeping her honor. And unlike her wedded lord, if a woman is displeased with her life, she cannot escape from her home and take refuge with a friend.

"Men are fond of saying that a woman has an easy life. She can remain safely at home in time of war. And so, men think she has no cause to complain. But men have no idea of what it is like to be a woman. And so, their words are as empty as a lone cloud when Grandfather bathes Mother Gaea in his golden rays! Surely I would rather fight three blood-filled battles than give birth to one child!

"Oh, how my mind, my heart, and my life overflow with woe! For I am a stranger here in Corinth. And now that Jason has betrayed and abandoned me, what man will protect me? The other women have parents or friends who will comfort and support them. But I have no one! And being clever does not help me. For my talents have only caused others to fear and hate me! Surely if parents are wise, they will make every effort to prevent their children from learning too much. For people only resent those who surpass them!

"Oh, Hecate—Night-wandering Goddess whom I serve—smile on me now as I plan to avenge Jason's betrayal. Flood my mind with thoughts of some scheme. Help me deceive, and through my deception destroy, Glauce and her father. And through that royal pair, help me destroy my hateful wedded lord. For my heart overflows with wrath toward Jason!"

So Medea mused.

Chapter 4

Jason offers to help Medea, and they argue.

Now it came to pass that Jason came forth to see Medea. And seeing him, Medea silently asked, "Why does the sight of that man's hateful face and form now flood my eyes? Why is he coming here? By now, his mouth must suffer from an excess of honeyed words. And so he feels compelled to share them. Then let him share them with Creon's daughter. She is welcome to them. And to him! For she cannot have one without the other!"

So Medea mused. And just as, high on a mountain pass each spring, the melting winter snow swells the stream that meanders through the meadow, and it rushes headlong over the rocky cliffs and down the steep mountain-side, where it overflows its banks, fells ancient trees, and dislodges great boulders as its strength increases, so Medea's heart now overflowed with rage. And a torrent of angry words burst forth from her lips before Jason could say a word. "Since you have come, open the doors of your mind to my words. For, like well-aimed arrows, they will fly forth straight and true," she declared.

"Is your heart so shameless, Jason, that you now dare to face your wedded lady? For you have betrayed me! You have abandoned me! You have left me to be a stranger in a strange land! And is your heart so hard, Jason, that you can forget our wedding vows, the sacred promises you, as well as I, made before Far-seeing Zeus, Lord of Justice, and before White-armed Hera, Protector of the Wedding-bond? Surely you are the most shameless and ungrateful of men! For you promised you would remember how I saved you from every danger. How it must amuse you that I controlled fire-breathing bulls and a deathless dragon. And yet, I have no power over you!

"And now, Creon has banished me from Corinth. But where can I go? After what I have done for you, who will take me in? Surely not my own people! Or yours! And so, Creon has condemned me to wander from place to place. I will always be a stranger. At house after house, I will beg for food and shelter. But the people will lock their doors against me. How could you let this happen to me, Jason? And what about our boys? Creon has expelled them, too. Has your heart forgotten them as easily as it has forgotten their mother?

"I wish I had never let the beauty of your eyes rob mine of their clear sight! For now I see—but too late—that I let my heart flood with love for a man who puts himself first in everything! I have sacrificed my life for a man who will do anything as long as he will profit from it! I should never have believed a stranger's sacred vows. For I did not know the man who was making them! Oh, Far-seeing Zeus, father of the deathless gods and those who walk the earth, why did you mark true gold so that we can tell it apart from its glittering fake? And yet, you put no mark on a mortal's face or form so that we can tell the heart of a good man from the heart of a scoundrel!"

So Medea spoke. And in reply, Jason declared, "Enough, Medea! Do not batter me with a storm of words. And like poorly-aimed arrows, they miss their mark. But open the doors of your mind to my words. For mine will fly forth straight and true. You are wrong to place such high value on your clever devices and kind deeds. Surely you know that you did not cause me to capture the Golden Fleece and return safely to Hellas. For Foam-born Aphrodite and Love-inspiring Eros, alone among gods and mortals, win that praise."

"Aphrodite? Eros? Surely my ears deceive me, Jason! And surely my mind floods with words you have not spoken!"

"No, Medea. On our way to Colchis, we rescued Phineus. Far-shooting Apollo gave him the gift of prophecy. And Phineus declared that the success of my quest would depend on Lady Aphrodite. And surely it was Eros's arrow that made you full in love with me, Medea. For why would you turn against your own family and your own people in order to save the life of a stranger from Hellas? Admit it, Medea! If you were in control of your heart, you would never have been so foolish!"

"And you have received far more from me than you have given, Medea. For I took you away from a barbarian people. And I brought you to live among the civilized people of Hellas. Your people—like all others!—use force to solve their problems. But we Hellenes solve our problems peacefully. We live under the rule of law. And we honor justice, not force. Because of me, you are so fortunate, Medea! For few barbarians ever receive the gift of living among us. And because of me, you are famous, Medea! For if it were not for the voyage of the Argo, no one would know of you! But now, poets will sing of your deeds for as long as mortals walk the earth to hear of them!"

"And my new wedding proves that I am wise and prudent. Neither you, Medea—not any other woman!—can see beyond love and sex in a wedding. But I did not wed with Creon's daughter for love. Nor to father more children. I wed with a princess in order to obtain the social position and the security to which my own royal blood entitles me!"

"You unleash your serpent's tongue against me, Medea, as if I am the cause of your problems. But you are to blame! Where was your judgment? Can you never be silent? Can you never be still? Your ranting and raving against the royal family have brought your exile upon you! Did you think Creon would not hear of your threats? He is no fool, Medea! Like any man of honor, he must protect himself and his family! And so, you have made your fate far worse than it would have been. For I was not wedding with Creon's daughter for myself alone. You and your sons would also have profited from it. Surely it is a shame that women are necessary in order to have children. For it is women who bring trouble into the world!"

"But you do not realize how fortunate you are, Medea! For Creon has only decreed exile for you. He could have decreed death! He even gives you this day to make your plans. In fact, that is why I have come, to offer my help. Your heart floods with hatred for me. But my heart overflows with good will toward you. And so, how can I help you?"

So Jason spoke. And to his words, Medea replied, "Jason, I wish your good deeds were as many as your words. For then, you would be godlike! And speaking the truth is not a disease, Jason! It should not cause your heart to panic and your feet to run from it! Why, it is easier to find a small flower beneath the dead branches of a tree that lies fallen in a forest than it is to uncover the truth in what you have said! For just as a swollen stream buries its shores beneath its waters, so your words conceal the shameful injustice of your behavior."

So Medea spoke. And to her words, Jason replied, "Enough of what is past, Medea. Instead, tell me how I can help you. I have come to offer you money. And I will give you introductions to my friends. For if you approach them, I want them to help you. Do not be foolish, Medea. Accept my offer. Then you will not be condemned to wander from place to place. You will not have to be a stranger. And you will not have to go from house to house, begging for food and shelter from people who will lock their doors against you."

"But before you respond, Medea, I want something from you in return. Something that is already mine. Give me my sons, Medea. For I am the father of your boys. And I love them with a father's love. Exile will surely be too harsh for them. With me, they will prosper. And here, they will comfort my heart as much as they would comfort yours in your exile. So give me my sons, Medea. For they mean more to me than my life! Before I would part with them, I would rob my eyes of their sight. I would chop off my own limbs. And I would even welcome the embrace of Thanatos. For without my sons, I would rush to give that dreadful god the wind of life that blows through me!"

So Jason spoke. And to his words, Medea replied, "Accept help from you, Jason? Never! And not in any form! Nor will I accept anything from your friends. For your base nature surely taints whatever you touch! And one can never trust a gift from an enemy! And I will not give up my sons, Jason. They mean more to me than they mean to you."

For Creon's daughter is sure to give you others. And your new sons will replace mine in your heart. Creon has banished my sons. I will take them with me into exile. And there, no matter what fate brings, they will lighten my burden.

"And so, Jason, you can do nothing for me. But at least I have discovered something that is dearer to you than your own life! But I wish you valued me as much as you value the sons I have given you. For then, you would not have broken your wedding vows! Why is it, Jason, that your eyes can look upon Shining Helios's golden rays and see them? And yet, you look upon your own thoughts and deeds and do not see the shame of them? Either you no longer honor and respect the deathless gods. And so, you easily break your wedding vows—your sacred promises. Or else, you think that the Olympian gods have created new laws. And that those who walk the earth are now free to lead their lives as they choose!

"Whatever thoughts flood your mind, Jason, I now leave you to the deathless ones, to those who rule the earth on which we live, as well as the world above and the world below. Who you are will surely determine what will become of you. And in the end, the deathless gods will deal justly with you."

So Medea spoke. And in response to her words, Jason replied, "Call upon the deathless gods, if you will, Medea. But the judgment of the greatest Olympian gods, even that of Far-seeing Zeus, Father of Gods and Mortals, does not flood my heart with terror. For Father Zeus honors justice on earth as he does on Mount Olympus. And he has surely looked down from his palace and witnessed my generous offers to help you. And he has witnessed your foolish refusal to accept them. And so, I have nothing to fear."

So Jason spoke. And in reply, Medea asked, "Nothing to fear, Jason? Can you know so little about yourself? And can you know so little about the deathless gods? Listen. And learn what can happen to a man like you! For as we stand here face to face, I call upon Father Zeus, who honors and protects sacred promises and those who make them. And I call upon Mother Hera, Protector of the Wedding-bond.

"Father Zeus and Mother Hera, look down and see how I suffer. See how Jason has betrayed me. See how he has abandoned me after all I have done for him! And see

how he has deserted me when I am a stranger in a strange land! Let my plight cause your hearts to flood with pity for me. And so, help me! Defend me! Protect me!

"Father Zeus and Mother Hera, may Jason reap the seeds he has sown. May I see Jason and his new lady ruined! And then, destroy Jason! For he has forgotten his sacred vows. And so, may he suffer a fate far worse than death. May he live to the end of his days always condemned to wander. And wherever he wanders, may he always be a stranger. May he find no friend to give him comfort. May no home become his refuge. May Hunger and Thanatos always follow, like dogs, at his heels. And may they be his only companions. May Time, who ravishes all Mother Gaea's children, wither his face and form. And only then, may Thanatos embrace him. And may Jason die alone, without honor, and without respect."

So Medea prayed. And then, she said, "Now leave my house, Jason. And return to your new bride. For I have nothing more to say to you. I have flooded your ears with my prayers to Father Zeus and Mother Hera. Now let your mind, if it will, flood with thoughts of those prayers."

But Jason only stood silent and still. And so Medea took him by the arm and silently ushered him out of the house that they had once shared. And then, Medea stood, silent and still. For her eyes remained flooded with the sight of Jason's retreating figure until, at last, he disappeared.

Chapter 5

King Aegeus arrives in Corinth and speaks with Medea. Then Medea sends Glauce beautiful gifts, and Glauce permits Jason to keep his sons.

And it came to pass that, while Medea was standing in front of her house, her eyes suddenly flooded with the sight of King Aegeus of Athens. Medea knew the aged king. And so, swift as the wind, she exclaimed, "Welcome to Corinth, Aegeus! What brings you to Creon's kingdom? I hope that all goes well with you!"

"Warm greetings to you, Medea!" Aegeus replied. "The sight of you floods my heart with joy! But I live with a heart that overflows with sorrow. For I am an old man. And I still have no child. I fear that the time will soon come when I will look my last on

light and life. And then, no son will live after me. And no one of my blood will inherit my royal scepter, my throne, and my kingdom. And so, I am returning from Delphi. For I have asked the oracle of Far-shooting Apollo to advise me.

"But forgive me, Medea. I have spoken too long of my own problems. And I fear that all is not well with you. For my eyes flood with the sight of the tears that flow freely from your eyes. So tell me, my friend. What has happened to make your own heart flood with sorrow?"

So King Aegeus spoke. And in reply, Medea declared, "Oh, Aegeus! I fear that the source of my grief will make your heavy heart overflow with sorrow. For my wedded lord has abandoned me! He has left me in order to wed with Creon's daughter!"

"Abandoned you? Jason? Surely my ears deceive me, Medea!" exclaimed Aegeus. "And surely my mind floods with words you have not spoken! For I have always considered Jason to be an honorable man. And a man of honor remains loving and loyal toward his wedded lady. For such a man would not bring shame upon his own name. And so, swift as the wind, let your words now tumble forth like a river that is swollen with spring rain. And tell me exactly what has happened."

So King Aegeus spoke. And in reply, Medea declared, "Jason's eyes can look upon Shining Helios's golden rays and see them. And yet, he can look upon his own thoughts and deeds and not see the shame of them. For his eyes flood with the sight of a beautiful young princess and the great king who is her father."

"Ambition floods the eyes of many who walk the earth, Medea," responded Aegeus. "It blinds them, and so, they act recklessly. And then, the gods punish them for it. But tell me about Creon, Medea, He knows that you are Jason's wedded lady. And so, surely he did not want Jason to wed with his daughter!"

"He who is both a king and a father blessed their wedding, Aegeus!" exclaimed Medea. "Creon considers Jason to be the greatest Hellenic hero. And he could not resist such a fine wedded lord for his daughter. And now, Creon has banished me from Corinth."

"Surely Creon should know better!" exclaimed Aegeus. "For with age should come wisdom. Could Jason not soften his hard heart?"

"Jason has done nothing to temper Creon's decree. Instead, he has hardened his own heart against me," explained Medea. "He tells me that I have brought exile upon myself. And that I deserve my fate. And so, he has not only betrayed me. He has abandoned me. And a woman, if she is to survive, must have a man who will help and protect her."

So Medea spoke. And in reply, Aegeus declared, "Medea, these sorry deeds flood my heart with waves of terror and pity! Not so much for you—though you are now in a dreadful state. But for Jason and Creon, and even for Creon's daughter. For those who dishonored you are inviting the gods to judge them. And all who walk the earth should honor the deathless gods and respect their power! But what has been done cannot now be undone. And so, how can I help you, Medea? For your heart overflows with sorrow. And Far-seeing Zeus smiles on the man whose heart floods with pity for one who suffers."

So King Aegeus spoke. And in response, Medea fell to her knees before him and said, "I now clasp your knees as a suppliant, Aegeus. I take your beard in my hand. And before you, I hereby take the sacred oath of my people. And with the great, deathless gods of earth and sky as my witnesses—you, Mother Gaea, who are the mother of all that lives and all that has died and who are first among all who are more than mortal—and you, Shining Helios—dear grandfather!—whose gold-yoked chariot crosses the heavens each day so your golden rays will bring light to all who walk the earth—I give you my sacred word, Aegeus, that I am not to blame for Jason's behavior.

"And I give you my sacred word, Aegeus, with the great deathless gods of your people as my witnesses—Far-seeing Zeus, Lord of Justice, and White-armed Hera, Protector of the Wedding-bond—that I am not to blame for Jason's behavior. I have been a loving and loyal lady to my wedded lord. And I have given Jason two sons. And so, if your heart truly floods with pity for me, then rescue me, Aegeus! For I have no family, no home, and no homeland. Befriend me, Aegeus! Let your home, your palace in Athens, be my refuge. And in return, I promise you the children for whom you long. For I possess powerful herbs. And my chants will bring this to pass.

"And if you will help me, Aegeus, just as I have given you my sacred word, now give me yours. For your oath will protect us if my enemies come to Athens and ask you

to banish me. And just as I have called the gods of your people to witness, I now ask you to call the gods of my people to witness."

So Medea spoke. And with these words, the king of Athens took her arms and raised her to her feet. And then, he said, "Dry your tears, Medea. And come to me in Athens. For before you and the great deathless gods of earth and sky, both those of the Colchians and those of the Hellenes, I give you my sacred word, Medea, that I will protect you from anyone who seeks to harm you! Come to me in Athens, Medea. And I give you my sacred word that my palace will be your home for as long as you wish. But I cannot help you leave Corinth, Medea. For here, I am Creon's guest. He is my friend. And so, he is also a friend of Athens."

So King Aegeus spoke to Medea. And to his words, Medea replied, "Aegeus, your words have caused my sorrow to melt away like spring snow beneath the golden rays of my grandfather's gold-yoked chariot! And in its place, gratitude now floods my heart. May you fare well on your journey! Before long, you will see me in Athens. There, I will take refuge with you. And there, I will return your kindness!"

So it came to pass that King Aegeus went on his way. And just as a wolf stands outside a sheep-fold, staring into the pen and looking for a way to spring on a sheep and carry it off, while the sheep are not yet aware of their coming terror, and nearby, the shepherds and their dogs doze peacefully, as yet unaware of the wolf's presence, so Medea's mind now flooded with thoughts about how she could avenge Jason's betrayal and abandonment.

And it came to pass that Medea prayed to the goddess whom she served. "Oh hear me, Night-wandering Hecate—Great Goddess from grim Hades' lifeless kingdom—as I now call upon you," she prayed. "Help me as I avenge Jason's betrayal and abandonment. For Creon's daughter must regret the day her eyes ever flooded with the sight of my wedded lord! And her father must regret that day, as well!"

"Help me, Lady Hecate, as I contrive to bring Jason to his knees. And by this act, may I raise myself. I have no choice. If I let Jason abuse me, and yet I do nothing, my enemies will laugh at me. And their laughter will echo from the hills and roof-tops of Corinth. And wherever I walk upon Mother Gaea, I will hear it mock me.

"Help me, Lady Hecate, as I send Jason's sons forth to Glauce bearing wedding gifts—a beautiful, finely-woven robe in which to wrap her lovely form, And a beautiful wreath of shining gold to wear upon her lovely brow. Let my evil gifts arrive clothed in the innocence of beauty. And when Glauce unwraps them, swift as the wind, let her heart flood with waves of love and longing for them. And let her hands hunger to hold them and put them on.

"Surely Jason has told Glauce that he wants to keep his sons. And so, she will think I have sent her these gifts to make her heart flood with love for his children. And that will be the beauty of my deception! For with your help, Lady Hecate, I will have soaked my gifts in a poison that no mortal eye can see. Glauce's fingers will touch them without harm. But the poison will do its work when she wears them. May Glauce then forget her love for Jason. And instead, may she long for the embrace of Thanatos! May her screams fly through the walls of her palace. Swift as the wind, may they flood my ears. And like sweet music, may they soothe the wrath that floods my heart!"

So Medea prayed. And so she planned to avenge Jason's betrayal and abandonment. And just as the flames of a raging fire fly through a parched forest on the swift wings of the wind, leaving every tree charred and lifeless in their wake, so Medea now prepared to let her blazing fury rage through the royal palace of Corinth until Thanatos embraced Creon's daughter—and the king, as well.

"And I must not spare our sons!" Medea now silently exclaimed. "For surely, life without the love of family is worse than death! Jason has let selfishness and cruelty flood his heart. And to punish him, I must deprive him of everything he loves. Without Glauce, he will have no royal wealth, no princely power, and no other children. And then he will turn to our sons for comfort. Already, he has told me they are dearer to him than life! So now, he must lose them! For only when Jason is alone, with no source of comfort, will I have avenged his betrayal and abandonment.

"Oh, Hecate—Night-wandering Goddess whom I serve—may my unspeakable deed teach Jason, and anyone else who would dishonor me, that Far-seeing Zeus, Lord of Justice, still rules those who walk the earth! May it teach Jason that, like men, women possess courage, strength, and skill. And may it teach Jason that I am as fearsome a foe as I am a helpful friend.

So Medea prayed. And she now sent for Jason and their sons. And when they had gathered around her, she declared, "Jason, open the doors of your mind to my words. For, like well-aimed arrows, they will fly forth straight and true. Please forgive me for flooding your ears with foolish talk. When you took Glauce for your wedded lady, panic reared its frightened head. And swift as the wind, my common sense fled. But that is past now. And may the love we once shared help you to forget how my heart flooded with rage toward you. Your new wedding is surely in my own best interest. And Creon should permit you to rear our sons. This is your desire as well, Jason. And so, do your best to persuade him.

"I will send your new lady beautiful gifts—a finely-woven robe and a golden wreath. Grandfather—Shining Helios—gave them to my family long ago. And they are a wedding dowry fit for a goddess! So let our sons now carry these gifts forth to Glauce. And may her heart, in loving them, flood with love for our sons, as well."

So Medea spoke. And in response, Jason declared, "Medea, do not sacrifice gifts Shining Helios gave your family! For Glauce neither needs nor wants them, great as they are. Yet she will gladly honor my request to rear our sons. For her heart floods with love for me!"

So Jason spoke. And to his words, Medea replied, "Jason, great gifts influence even the deathless gods! And to all who walk the earth, a fine gift of gold is worth more than ten thousand words. So I gladly give Glauce these gifts. And if it would spare our sons a hateful exile, and if it would persuade you to rear them, I would gladly give up light and life! And so, Jason, let our sons now go forth, with their tutor, to the royal palace. But go forth with them. For our sons must put my gifts into Glauce's hands."

"Since your heart floods with generosity, Medea, I am happy to honor your wishes," replied Jason.

So it came to pass that Medea now called for the gifts that she had so carefully prepared and wrapped. She put them into her sons' hands. And then, they went forth to Creon's daughter. And their tutor and Jason went forth with them.

And just as Shining Helios's golden rays melt the winter snow that covers the mountain meadows—and the mountain streams become swollen rivers that tear down into the valley below and sweep away farms, villages, and even towns in their blind fury,

so Medea's heart now overflowed with rage toward Jason as she sent Glauce these wedding gifts. For the wrath of a spurned lady is greater than a spear that soars forth in swift flight, greater than a raging storm, and greater than a blazing fire. For a love that changes to hate knows no limits and fears nothing, not even the embrace of Thanatos.

And it came to pass that the tutor soon returned with Medea's sons. "Lady, Princess Glauce has accepted your wedding gifts," he reported. "And they have flooded her heart with joy! For she will let your sons remain with their father."

So the boys' tutor spoke. Then Medea gathered her sons to her and exclaimed, "Let your hearts now flood with joy! For you have been spared the harsh life of exile. Instead, you are going to a new home. And there, you will live with your father and a new mother. And so, I now embrace you, my dear ones. And I now bid you farewell. For I must. I kiss your hands, your cheeks, and your lips for the last time. And tears flow freely from my eyes. For I love you! And without you, my heart will know only sorrow. But you will have happy lives in your new home. And that thought comforts me. And so, leave me now, children. And go inside. For I have much to do, and little time, before I leave Corinth."

So Medea spoke to her children. And obediently, they left her.

Chapter 6

Medea hears of the death of Glauce and Creon. Then she kills her children. Jason confronts Medea. Medea then reveals his future and departs.

And so it came to pass that Medea was alone once again. And now her mind flooded with waves of conflicting thoughts.

"Oh, heart! How you flood with a mother's love and anguish!" she silently exclaimed. "For just as Grandfather's golden rays melt the spring snow, and it swiftly streams away, so my sons' smiling faces have now melted the wrath that flooded you. And swift as the wind, it too has flowed away. I cannot kill my sons! Why should they suffer for their father's dishonorable deeds? Why should I deprive them of their growing up, their wedding, and their happy times? For they carry no blame upon their small shoulders!"

"And surely this unspeakable deed would hurt me twice as much as it would hurt Jason! I would never be able to share my sons' thoughts, their deeds, and their happiness. And when it comes to pass that Time, who ravishes all Mother Gaea's children, makes me old and withered, my sons would not be there to care for me and to comfort me. And when Thanatos embraces me, they would not be there to wrap my body in its last cover and place it in Mother Gaea's arms. And so, I will take my sons with me into exile. It will be harsh on them. For they are very young. But they will still look on light and life. And no matter what fate brings, their presence will lighten my burden!

"Oh, heart! You may not flood with a mother's love and anguish! For I cannot let Jason abuse me! Or he will laugh at me! Everyone will laugh at me! And their laughter will echo from the hills and roof-tops of Corinth. And wherever I walk upon Mother Gaea, I will hear it mock me. And so, heart, you must flood once again with wrath! For Jason must suffer just as he has made me suffer!"

So Medea mused. And then, she silently asked, "Why do I torment myself like this? Why do I think of choices when I have no choice! The poisoned robe and wreath must now be feeding on Glauce's flesh. And surely Thanatos has already embraced her. And since my sons gave Glauce these gifts, surely the hearts of the people will flood with rage toward them. And if my sons must die, then I, the mother who gave them life, must be the one who kills them. But these are empty words. It is you, heart, and not the people of Corinth, who are to blame! For rage and not moderation rules you. And your rage compels me to commit this unspeakable deed.

"I am not a fool! I know that passion is moderation's great enemy. And I know that those who permit passion to rule in place of moderation cause their own suffering. But passion's heart floods with contempt for moderation. For it is strong, And moderation is weak. Just as spring snow melts beneath Grandfather's golden rays, so moderation melts beneath passion's gaze. And just as a stream that is swollen from heavy spring rains rushes down the mountain-side, and as it flows, it tears loose the great boulders and uproots the towering trees that would break its path, so the rage that floods you, heart, pushes aside every attempt of my mind and my love for my sons to restrain my hands.

"But a mother's heart floods with a mother's horror at what I am now about to do. My cheeks are pale from the tears that flow freely from my eyes. My arms hang motionless from my shoulders. And my legs quake with terror. For what mother can kill her children?"

So Medea mused. And with these thoughts, it came to pass that one of Jason's servants came rushing toward her.

"Escape while you can, lady!" he exclaimed. "For your gifts have destroyed the princess! And the king, too, has given up light and life! The sight flooded my eyes. And I could not tear them away, despite the horror of it!"

So the servant spoke. And to his words, Medea replied, "Welcome! I have been longing to hear news of my gifts. So swift as the wind, tell me everything!"

So Medea commanded Jason's servant. And in reply, he declared, "Lady, open the doors of your mind to my words. For, like well-aimed arrows, they will fly forth straight and true. I accompanied Jason and the children into Princess Glauce's private room. And when her eyes flooded with the sight of your sons, her heart flooded with waves of disgust and anger. And so, she turned away from them. But swift as the wind, my lord and master corrected her. 'Glauce, you must love my sons! For I love them,' he declared. 'So accept the wedding gifts they now bring you. And ask your father to let them remain with us. For they are innocent. And exile will be too harsh for them.'

"So Jason spoke to the princess. And so, she took your gifts from the boys' hands and unwrapped them. When her eyes flooded with the sight of their beauty, her heart flooded with delight. And swift as the wind, she agreed to accept your sons. Then Jason and the tutor took hold of the boys' hands. And they left the princess to enjoy her new gifts.

"Swift as the wind, she now put on the beautiful robe and wreath. She picked up a bright mirror. And, with her face wreathed in smiles, she carefully arranged her hair. And she admired her lovely reflection. Then her heart overflowed with joy. And so, she danced around the room.

Then, swift as the wind, her face grew as white as new-fallen snow. Foam began to stream forth like a river from her mouth. Her limbs began to shake like trees beneath the blows of a storm-wind. And her heart flooded with such agony that her screams

surely flew through the walls of the palace. At last, she was no longer able to stand securely on her feet. And she fell into the nearest chair.

"At first, her servants stood silent and still. For sight of their lady's agony flooded their eyes. Then their hearts flooded with terror. And they fled from her room, screaming for the king and for help. Meanwhile, the princess's eyeballs rolled up into her head. For her wreath had become a crown of fiery flames. Her robe had fastened itself to her skin. And there, too, fiery flames were now feasting on her flesh.

"The poor princess now got up from her chair and began to run madly around the room. Just as when a shepherd finds a great swarm of bees living within a crevice of a rock, and he lights a torch and smokes them out of their hive, for he wants to collect their honey so it will sweeten his bread, and the bees fly round and round in confusion as they try to escape from their hive, darting this way and that through the smoke, so Princess Glauce now ran round and round her room, turning this way and that, as she tried to shake the blazing crown from her head. But she only fanned the fiery flames.

"Then King Creon ran into the room. And swift as the wind, he tripped over his daughter. For she lay on the floor at his feet. And when she flooded his eyes, his heart flooded with waves of love and pity and sorrow. He fell to his knees. He gathered her blazing form to him. And he embraced her. Her head was a mass of fire and blood. And her body was a mass of fiery, torn flesh and scorched, bloody bones. Yet a father's mind must have flooded with the hope that, if he smothered what remained of the flames, his daughter would look, once again, upon light and life. But her heart had long since overflowed with unbearable agony. And when Thanatos had embraced her, she had welcomed him.

"Oh, Lady! When that sight flooded my eyes, my heart overflowed with sorrow! For there lay the great king on the floor with what remained of his beautiful daughter. And all his power and all his wealth could not help him! And as the king embraced her, his heart overflowed with grief. Tears flowed freely from his eyes. And his voice groaned as he cried out, 'My poor child! Who among the deathless gods has so cruelly destroyed you? Has Thanatos already embraced you? Why did he not seek me? For, without you, I would gladly welcome him!'

"So King Creon spoke. And soon he tried to separate himself from his daughter. But her robe was now feasting on his flesh as well as on hers. He tried to pull himself away from the greedy cloth. But it would not release his flesh. And so he found himself locked in an embrace, not just with his daughter's corpse, but with Thanatos! By now, his own heart overflowed with unbearable agony. And so, he welcomed the embrace of Thanatos.

"And now, Lady, I have told you everything! For the sights still flood my mind. The sounds still flood my ears. And my heart overflows with waves of grief and horror!" So Jason's servant spoke. And to his words, Medea replied, "You have been a fine witness. And my heart floods with gratitude for your loyalty. For you are Jason's servant. Now, leave me. For swift as the wind, the time comes when I must leave Corinth."

So Medea spoke. And with these words, once again, she was alone. And her mind flooded with thoughts. "Surely I am the most miserable of all who walk the earth!" she silently exclaimed. "For the time has come when I must act. And so, heart, become as hard and strong as a rock. Flood with hatred for Jason. And let that hatred leave no place for a mother's love. Mind, flood with the thought of a wedded lady's dishonor. And let that dishonor leave no place for a mother's thoughts. Hands, go forth to do what you must do. And eyes, restrain your tears!

"Oh, mind, heart, and eyes! For these moments only, forget my sons! For I have loved them with a mother's love. Later, for as long as I look upon light and life, you, mind, will flood with thoughts of this unspeakable deed. You, heart, will flood with waves of love and grief. And you, eyes, will mark my loss with tears that flow freely down my cheeks. But now, you must forget my sons!"

So Medea mused. And with these words, she gave her sons the powerful herbs that, long ago, she had given Apsyrtus. And then she killed them.

Then, swift as the wind, it came to pass that Jason appeared in front of Medea's house. His heart was flooded with waves of rage and grief. And when he saw servants standing outside, he asked, "Where is Medea? I have come for my sons! For the people of Corinth would make them suffer for their mother's unspeakable deeds. And I must protect them! But Medea will reap what she has sown!"

So Jason spoke. But the sight of Jason now flooded Medea's eyes. And before a servant could reply, she called out, "Jason, you will find no one within. Instead, cast your eyes upon the roof of the home you abandoned. For here we are! See how I have avenged your betrayal and your abandonment. Let the sight of your sons' corpses now flood your eyes, your mind, and your heart! And feel the loss that hurts more than death! My heart floods with joy that you have come, Jason! For the fiery flames of my revenge lick happily upon your knowledge of it. And surely my victory is greater because you have learned of your defeat from my own tongue."

So Medea spoke. And in response, Jason exclaimed, "Oh, Medea! Surely serpents flood your monstrous heart! You have destroyed me! For you have taken all that I have loved from me! My heart floods with grief! And my mind floods with anguish as I think of all I have lost!

"Swift as the wind, may the gods of your people—Mother Gaea and Shining Helios—now destroy you, Medea! For as long as the wind of life courses through you, you curse whatever you touch! Surely most cursed is the day I brought you on board the Argo! I was foolish enough to believe a barbarian could change by becoming the wedded lady of a Hellenic hero. But our ways have washed off your back like ebb-tides off the shore of the salt sea. No Hellenic woman would ever murder her own children. I should have chosen to wed with one of them! But foolishly I chose you. And grievously, I have paid for it! Now let me bury my sons. And never again let my eyes flood with the sight of you!"

So Jason spoke. And to his words, Medea replied, "Call me what you will, Jason. But I have done what I had to do. I have caused your heart to overflow with agony. And I could only do this by taking all you loved from you.

"And now, I will not give you your sons, Jason. I, who gave birth to them, will bury them on the acropolis of Corinth, in the sanctuary of White-Armed Hera of the Heights. For there, none of my enemies will dare to desecrate their graves and violate their bodies. Tell the people of Corinth I command them to establish a sacred festival. For from this time forth, they must perform solemn rites that will atone for this impious murder."

So Medea spoke. And in response to her words, Jason prayed, "Father Zeus—Lord of Justice—look down from Mount Olympus. See how Medea has murdered her children. And see how she will not let me bury them. See that Medea is not a woman, but a monster! And so close your heart to her prayers. Close your ears to her curses. And punish her for her unspeakable deeds!

"Father Zeus—Lord of Justice—let your heart flood with pity for me. For I have lost my new wedded lady. And I have no children. Defend me against anyone who would seek to tarnish my name. For I am one of the greatest heroes of Hellas. I have won praise as a great leader. I have won the glory of the great deed. And I have acted as any Hellene would have acted in my place."

So Jason prayed. And to his prayer, Medea responded, "Jason, your winged words surely will reach the ears of Father Zeus, and Mother Hera, as well. But they know all I have done for you. And they know you have broken your wedding vows, your sacred promises. You have betrayed me. You have abandoned me! And so, you have dishonored me!

"Just as Shining Helios follows Blushing Eos at the start of each new day, you will now begin to reap the seeds that you have sown, Jason. You have let selfishness and cruelty flood your heart. And so, you have turned the hearts of the deathless gods against you. And from this time forth, until, at last, you give up light and life, they have condemned you to wander. And wherever you wander, you will be a stranger. You will find no friend to give you comfort. And no home to give you refuge. For all who walk the earth will now shun you. For no one who respects and fears the gods will dare to help a man whom the gods have condemned!

"Hunger and Thanatos will always follow, like dogs, at your heels. And they will be your only companions. And so, your heart will flood with waves of grief and despair. And you will walk with your head bowed toward those who live below the earth. For you will long for the embrace of Thanatos. But it is decreed that you will not soon give up the wind of life that blows through you. Your face and form will reveal how time, who ravishes all Mother Gaea's children, will continue to leave his mark on you. But the dreadful god will turn his back on you.

“And the years will follow one upon the other as the silver-yoked chariot of Silver-horned Selene follows the gold-yoked chariot of Gold-helmeted Helios across the heavens. At last, aged and alone, without honor, and without respect, it will come to pass that you will seek refuge beneath the shadow of the well-benched Argo. And there, while your eyes are closed in sorrowful sleep, the prow of your old ship will fall on your head. And only then will you look your last upon light and life.

"But before that day comes, Jason, may you gain wisdom through suffering. May you learn that no mortal knows what the new day will bring. Some find themselves raised up. Others find themselves brought low. If they are wise, mortals will expect the unexpected. For no one who walks the earth can presume to know the will of the deathless gods. And it is they who rule the earth on which mortals live, as well as the world above and the world below."

So Medea spoke to Jason. And with these words, it suddenly came to pass that a great chariot, drawn by two winged and fire-breathing dragons, came down from the heavens and landed beside Medea on the roof. She took the corpses of her sons and seated herself in the chariot.

And then she announced, "Jason, our sons will ride with me in this chariot that Grandfather—Shining Helios—has sent down to me in order to protect me from my enemies. I will bury our sons. And then, I will go forth to Athens. For there, King Aegeus will welcome me and give me refuge."

So Medea spoke to Jason. And with these words, she picked up the reins and drove off into the heavens. And as she left, Jason called after her, "Corinth is well rid of you, Medea! Bury my sons! And find refuge in Athens, if you can. But as you fly through the heavens, discover what I now know. Those who walk the earth bear the heavy yoke of suffering. But the deathless gods are not to blame. For there are no gods!"