

# THE ARGONAUTS

BY

ALEISTER CROWLEY





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SOCIETY FOR THE PROPAGATION OF RELIGIOUS TRUTH  
BOLESKINE, FOYERS, INVERNESS

1904



# ARGONAUTAE

ACTUS  
PRIMUS

JASON





JASON.

B

AFFECTIONATELY TO THE AUTHOR OF

'ION';

ADMIRINGLY TO

DR. A. W. VERRALL

AND

THE REV. F. F. KELLY

ON

THE

OCCASION

OF

MY VOYAGE OF 1904

## ARGONAUTAE.

### *ACTUS PRIMUS.*

PELIAS. JASON. *Semi-chorus of Iolchian Men.*  
*Semi-chorus of Iolchian Women.*

SCENE : *The Throne-chamber of KING PELIAS.*

#### SEMI-CHORUS OF MEN.

The prophecies are spoken in vain,  
The auguries vainly cast,  
Since twenty years of joyous reign  
In peace are overpast;  
And those who cursed our King's desires  
Are branded in the brow for liars.

#### SEMI-CHORUS OF WOMEN.

We heard the aged prophet speak  
The doom of woe and fear.  
We wait with blanched and icy cheek  
The one-and-twentieth year:  
For Justice lies, as seeds lie, dead,  
But lifts at last a Gorgon head!

#### MEN.

What fear can reach our Thessaly?  
What war disturb our peace?

*ARGONAUTAE*

Long stablished is young amity  
 Maid-blushing over Greece:  
 And fair Iolchus stands sublime,  
 A monument to lesson time.

## WOMEN.

But if such fear were come indeed,  
 Who reads the riddle dread  
 Spoken in frenzy by the seer  
 Against the royal head?  
 We know the Rhyme's involving spell—  
 Its purport is impenetrable.

## MEN.

We heard his foolish maundering:  
 But, bred in wiser ways,  
 We have forgotten: do ye sing  
 The rune of ancient days!  
 To-day his curse cacophonous  
 Shall earn at least a laugh from us!

## WOMEN.

“O! when the armed hand is nigh,  
 Iolchus shall not see  
 Peace shining from Athena's sky  
 Until the Fleece be free;  
 Until the God of War shall scorn  
 The sting, and trust him to the horn.

“Until the Sun of Spring forsake  
 His eastern home, and rise

*ACTUS PRIMUS*

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Within our temple-walls and make  
One glory of the skies—  
Until the King shall die and live,  
Athena never shall forgive.”

MEN.

Surely, O friends, at last 'tis clear  
The man was mad indeed!  
Such nonsense we did never hear  
As this prophetic screed!  
More, as 'tis never like this land  
Should ever see an armed hand.

JASON.

Where is the son of Tyro and Poseidon?

MEN.

Iolchus' King has here a dwelling-place.

WOMEN.

See you the sword shake—and the iron hand  
Not shaking? The man's mood is full of wrath.

MEN.

Peace, foolish! Were it so, we would not see.

WOMEN.

Ay me! this stranger seems most ominous.

JASON.

Where is the son of Tyro and Poseidon?

MEN.

This is the Palace-place of Pelias,  
Son of Poseidon, of Iolchus King.

JASON.

Iolchus' King is here, in very truth.  
Where is the son of Tyro?

MEN.

Who art thou?

JASON.

Know me for Jason and great Aeson's heir.

MEN.

We learn good news, most enviable sir;  
That Aeson hath such grand inheritance.

JASON.

You have grown fat beneath an evil rule.  
Your period is at hand. Go, one of you,  
And drag the impious wretch before my sight!

MEN.

Aeson? Thy father?

JASON.

Play not with my wrath!  
My mood is something dangerous.

MEN.

Dangerous sir,  
I go indeed, to bring some danger more  
Hither.

JASON.

Poltroonery dislikes the wise.  
Fair maidens, I salute you pleasantly.

*ACTUS PRIMUS*

7

WOMEN.

Welcome, O welcome to the land,  
Young heir of prophecy!  
The arméd hand, the glittering brand,  
The scabbard's jewellery!  
That wealth avails not: cast it down!  
The sword alone may win the crown!

JASON.

Ye languish wretched in the tyrant's rule?

WOMEN.

Most happy are we, King. But change is sweet.

JASON.

A short-lived omen of success to me.

WOMEN.

Nay, but adventure and the prophecy!

JASON.

I see I have but small support in you.

WOMEN.

Not so, great Jason! Had I suffered much,  
My spirit had been broken to the scourge.  
Now, being strong and happy, with what joy  
I cry: Evohe! Revolution!  
I have grown weary of this tiresome peace.

JASON.

I promise you intense unhappiness.

WOMEN.

Here is the ugly monster! Out! To think

We once believed him reverend and refined,  
Saw majesty in all that tottering gait,  
And honour in the goat-like beard of him!

FIRST WOMAN.

A week ago your blue eyes were in tears,  
Sidelong regarding the old mountebank.

SECOND WOMAN.

To-day I would not be his concubine  
For all Iolchus—for all Thessaly!

THIRD WOMAN.

I see the same glance seek out Jason now.

SECOND WOMAN.

Ay, there's a man! What muscles! What fine fire  
In the quick eye! What vigour and warm strength!

FIRST WOMAN.

Yes, in your wishes. But indeed he is  
A proper man. Away, you ancient egg!

PELIAS.

With what audacious foot and impious voice  
Strides this young man and talks? Let him advance,  
Trembling at our offended majesty.  
Who art thou whose rude summons startles us  
From work of state to listen a young mouth  
Beardless? Speak, man, for shortly thou shalt die.

JASON.

Athena speaks.



*ACTUS PRIMUS*

9

WOMEN.

Ah, there's a fine retort !

PELIAS.

Goddesses speak and men list reverently.  
Could she not find a fitter messenger?

JASON.

Her cause is Jason's. Jason therefore speaks.

PELIAS.

Aha! A suppliant to our clemency!  
I did mistake the gesture and the sword  
Angrily gripped, the foot flung terribly  
Foremost, the fierce, constrained attitude.  
But—as a suppliant! Tell thy woeful tale,  
Sad youth! Some woman thou hast loved and lost?

JASON.

Thou hast robbed me of this kingdom. Thou hast kept  
My father (poor half-witted man!) a slave  
And parasite about thy court (one grief  
The more I add to this account of thine!)  
Myself a babe thou didst seek out to slay,  
And, I being hid, with fish-hooks bent with lies  
And gilded with most specious promises,  
Cunningly angled for old Chiron's grace  
To catch me yet. Athena hears me swear  
To right all this—nay, answer me before  
Anger get all the spoil of me, and drink  
Thy life-blood in one gulp! Descend that daïs!

Bend thou a suppliant at my awful knee,  
And thus—perhaps—at least get grace of life.

PELIAS.

And if I say I will not yield the throne?

JASON.

I am of force to take it.

PELIAS.

Are my friends  
Not faithful? Who draws sword for Pelias?

MEN.

Shall we not slay thee this presumptuous fool?

JASON.

I am of force, I say. I wrestled once  
From sunrise to sunset with Heracles,  
Great Heracles! Not till the full moon rose  
Availed his might to lay me prone. Beware!  
Ye weakling knaves! I am of force, I say.

PELIAS.

Rebellious youth, the justice of thy cause  
And force I will admit—where force goes far.  
But think'st thou wait no wild Erinnyes  
For thee a guest in these my halls, for thee  
Whose hands are dipped not yet in blood so deep  
As to have murdered an old man, and him  
Thy father's brother?

*ACTUS PRIMUS*

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JASON.

Justice covers all.

The Furies cannot follow if a man  
To his own heart be reconciled. They feed  
On his own bosom, nay! are born thereof.  
An alien clan he might elude, but these,  
Blood of his blood, he shall nor slay nor 'scape.  
My heart hath never pastured on regret  
Or pang for thee. My justice covers all.

PELIAS.

That one word "justice" covers all indeed  
To thine own self. But think'st thou for a word  
To ruin many years of commonweal,  
And poison in an hour the politics  
Of states and thrones for—justice? Thou art just;  
But wisdom, but the life of innocents,  
The happiness of all, are better served  
By solemn thought and weighty counsel held.

JASON.

This is more simple. I abolish thee—  
One sword-sweep—and assume thy "politics."

PELIAS.

Thou art this "simple"! Will my liege allies  
(Willing with age and wisdom to accord)  
Not tremble at thy firebrand breed, not think  
Who hath in blood, an old man's blood, made fast  
A perilous footing, may betimes discover  
More "justice"—and invasion footing it

Hard after? Wilt thou plunge all Thessaly,  
 All Greece, in haste and sudden armament,  
 Fury of thought and frenzy of deed, at once  
 For justice? Wouldst thou be so violent  
 For justice, save in thine own cause, O boy?  
 And wilt thou pity not the happy days  
 And storm-unshatteréd abodes of Greece?

JASON.

Athena, who is Justice, also is  
 Wisdom: and also "She who buildeth towns."

PELIAS.

Think also, I am born of deity.  
 I am inured to majesty; I know  
 How venerable is the sight of kings,  
 And how the serpent Treason writhes beneath  
 The royal foot, conscious of its own shame,  
 And how the Lion of Rebellion cowers  
 Before the presence of a king unarmed,  
 Quelled by one mild glance of authority.

JASON.

A king unjust is shorn of majesty.

PELIAS.

Still the one fool's-word—justice—answers all.  
 Would thou wert older and more politic!

JASON.

Would I were liar with thine own foul brand!  
 The gods are weary of thy cozening.

PELIAS.

To proof, then, boy. I lay my sceptre by,  
Put off my crown, descend the steps to thee.  
Here is my breast. Look firmly in my face,  
And slay me. Is there fear writ large and deep  
In mine old eyes? Or shudderest thou with fear?

JASON.

More hate than fear. In sooth, I cannot strike.

PELIAS.

A king is not so slain—except a madman  
May fall upon him with averted head.  
Indeed, I conquer. [*Aside.*] Even so, beware!  
Victory ill-nurtured breeds the babe defeat.  
[*Aloud.*] Listen, my brother's son! Nay, stoop not so,  
Bending ashamed brows upon the earth!  
I am well weary of the world of men.  
I grow both old and hateful to myself,  
Most on the throne: power which to youth is sweet  
To age looks fearful. Also I have wept—  
Alas! how often!—and repented me  
Of those unkingly deeds whereby I gained  
This throne whose joy is turned to bitterness.  
I will make peace with thee, and justice still  
Shall have a home and shrine in Thessaly.  
Be patient notwithstanding! Prove thyself  
Valiant and wise—and reign here! If in sooth  
An aged counsellor, whose reverend hair  
Commands a hearing, may assist at all,

Wisdom to wisdom added, I am here.  
 Yet would I rather slide into my grave,  
 Untroubled with the destinies of states,  
 Even of such an one so dear to me  
 Who thus a score of years have nurtured it.

JASON.

I hear thee. Thou art grown like royal wine  
 Better with age. Forgive my violence!

PELIAS.

[*Aside.*] The fish bites hard. [*Aloud.*] There is a prophecy:  
 "Once stirred, Iolchus never shall know peace  
 Till in its temple hangs the Golden Fleece."  
 Now thou hast so disquieted our days,  
 The time is come: seek thou Aea's isle,  
 And hang this trophy on our temple walls!

JASON.

Tell me what is this fleece.

PELIAS.

Let women sing.

WOMEN.

In Ares' grove, the sworded trees,  
 The world's heart wondering,  
 Hangs evermore the Golden Fleece,  
 The glory of the spring,  
 The light of far Aea's coast,  
 Such glamour as befits a ghost.

*ACTUS PRIMUS*

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Before that glittering woof the Sun  
Shrinks back abashed in shame,  
The splendour of the shining one,  
One torrent-fleece of flame!  
What heart may think, what tongue may sing  
The glory of the golden thing?

About the grove the scorpion coils  
Inextricably wind  
Within the wood's exceeding toils,  
The shadow hot and blind;  
There lurk his serpent sorceries,  
The guardian of the Golden Fleece.

The dragon lifts his nostrils wide  
And jets a spout of fire;  
The warrior questing turns aside,  
Not daring to desire;  
And Madness born of Ares lurks  
Behind the wonder of his works.

Be sure that were the woodland way  
Tracked snakewise to the core,  
The dragon slain or driven away,  
The good Fleece won by war,  
Not yet should Ares sink his spear,  
Or fail of flinging forth a fear.

The torch of Madness should be lit,  
And follow him afar;

Upon his prow should Madness sit,  
 A baleful beacon-star;  
 And in his home Despair and Strife  
 Lie in his bosom for a wife!

But oh, the glory of the quest,  
 The gainless goodly prize!  
 The fairest form man e'er caressed,  
 The word he heard most wise;—  
 All lures of life avoid and cease  
 Before the winning of the Fleece!

O nameless splendour of the Gods,  
 Begotten hardly of Heaven!  
 Unspoken treasure of the abodes  
 Beyond the lightning levin!  
 No misery, no despair may pay  
 The joy to hold thee for a day!

JASON.

Athena's servant recks not much of Ares.

PELIAS.

Are thine eyes kindled at the golden thought?

JASON.

Mine eyes see farther than the Fleece of Gold.

PELIAS.

What heroes can attain so fair a thing?

JASON.

I have some friends who would esteem this quest



*ACTUS PRIMUS*

17

Lightly—a maiden's pleasure-wandering  
Through liliated fields a summer's afternoon.

PELIAS.

The Gods give strength! I pray them send thee back  
Safe to this throne.

JASON.

I will not see thy face  
Ever again until the quest be won.  
Rule thou with justice in my sacred seat  
Until I come again.

PELIAS.

The Gods thy speed.

MEN.

The hardy hero goes to find  
The living Fleece of Gold;  
Or else, some death may chance to bind  
Those limbs of manly mould.  
In sooth, I doubt if I shall earn  
The singer's fee for his return.

PELIAS.

Think now—I feared that fool. It must be true  
That guilt is timorous. Ay! when danger's none!  
Let but swords flash—and guilt grows God for might!  
Indeed I rule—until he come again.  
Ay, when the stars fall, Jason shall be king!

EXPLICIT ACTUS PRIMUS.

C



# ARGONAUTAE

ACTUS  
SECUNDUS

ARGO



ARGO.

TO THE HON. P. RAMANATHAN, C.M.G.

AND

RUDYARD KIPLING

ON

THE OCCASION

OF

SUNRISE

# ARGONAUTAE.

## *ACTUS SECUNDUS.*

ARGUS *the son of* PHRIXUS, JASON, HERACLES, CASTOR,  
POLLUX, THESEUS, ORPHEUS. *Chorus of* Heroes.  
*Chorus of* Shipbuilders.

SCENE: *An open place near Iolchus.*

### CHORUS OF SHIPBUILDERS.

The sound of the hammer and steel!  
The song of the level and line!  
The whirr of the whistling wheel!  
The ring of the axe on the pine!

The joy of the ended labour,  
As the good ship plunges free  
By sound of pipe and tabor  
To front the sparkling sea!

The mystery-woven spell!  
The voyage of golden gain!  
The free full sails that swell  
On the swell of the splendid main!

*ARGONAUTAE*

The song of the axe and the wedge!  
 The clang of the hammer and chain!  
 Keen whistle of chisel and edge!  
 Smooth swish of the sliding plane!

Hail to the honour of toil!  
 Hail! to the ship flown free!  
 Hail! to the golden spoil,  
 And the glamour of all the sea!

HERACLES.

A good stout song, friend Argus, matching well  
 The mighty blows thou strikest: yet methinks  
 One blow should serve to drive yon nail well home  
 Where thou with tenfold stroke——

THESEUS.

Good Heracles!  
 Not all men owe thy strength——

ARGUS.

Nay, let him try!  
 Take my toy hammer!

HERACLES.

I have split the wood!

THESEUS.

Vexation sits tremendous on his brow.  
 Beware a hero's fury! Thou art mad,  
 Argus, to play so dangerous a trick.



*ACTUS SECUNDUS*

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ARGUS.

True, Theseus—if he had but hit his thumb!

CASTOR.

Cease this fool's talk. The moon waits not the work.

POLLUX.

The sun will sink no later for your pleasure.  
On to thy work, man.

THESEUS.

He that traps a lion  
And baits him for an hour, and lets him go,  
Does well to think before he tempt again  
The forest paths.

HERACLES.

The wise man wisely thinks  
That nothing is but wisdom—and myself  
Think strongly that no other thing exists  
But strength: so with his subtleties of mind  
He baffles me; and I lift up my club,  
And with one blow bespatter his wise brains.

JASON.

Ay, not for nothing did the darkness reign  
Those eight-and-forty hours, O Zeus-begot!

THESEUS.

Tell me, friend master, how the work goes on.  
When shall our gallant vessel breast the deep?  
When shall we see the sun sink o'er the poop,  
And look toward moonrise, and the land be lost,

And the perched watcher on the mast behold  
The melting mirror of the ocean meet  
The crystallizing concave of the sky?

ARGUS.

All this shall happen when the work is done.

JASON.

How many moons, friend fool, before that day?

ARGUS.

These things are known not even to the Gods.  
Except the Father only.

HERACLES.

Fools must talk.

ARGUS.

I talk, divulging nothing.

HERACLES.

I strike thee,

Yet act not.

ARGUS.

Hero, stay that heavy hand!  
The ship shall sail ere spring.

THESEUS.

But now you talk  
More as befits a workman to a king.

JASON.

Be gentle now, my friends! These shipbuilders,  
Reared in the rugged borders of the North,

*ACTUS SECUNDUS*

7

Have northern manners; surly if attacked  
But genial when——

ARGUS.

The proper treatment is  
Kindness—like lions whom Demeter tamed.

THESEUS.

I promise thee, the next time thou art wroth,  
A second kindness from Alcides' hand.

ARGUS.

Spare me that, King, and take, thyself, a club.

JASON.

King Theseus, thou art far reputed wise.  
Hast thou not learnt a lesson from the hap  
Of Heracles supreme in—shipbuilding?  
I by my meekness will abash thy strength.  
Good Argus, thou art unsurpassed in art  
To curve the rougher timbers, to make smooth  
The joints and girders, and to plane and work  
The iron and the nailheads, and to lift  
Row after row the tiers of benches thrice  
In triple beauty, and to shape the oars,  
To raise the mast——

ARGUS.

Thy knowledge staggers me!  
How wast thou thus instructed?

JASON.

By much thought.

To clamp the decks——

ARGUS.

I stand with brows abashed.

Thou art the master—build the ship thyself.

JASON.

Nay, but my knowledge is of mind alone.

I cannot so apply it as to build

An Argo.

ARGUS.

Yet I verily believe

Such mind must pierce far deeper than these names,

Seeking the very nature of the things

Thou namest thus so pat. Perchance to thee

These logs, nails, bolts, tools, have some life of sense,

Some subtle language. Tell us what they say!

THESEUS.

'Tis but a giber—leave the churl alone.

JASON.

Indeed I spake of things I knew not of.

ARGUS.

You speak more wisely when you float away

Into pure dream, and talk of mystic things

That no man born of woman understands,

And therefore does not dare to contradict.

*ACTUS SECUNDUS*

9

JASON.

He who speaks much and bitterly at last  
Lays himself open to retort. I think  
I never heard such contradictions fly  
As when men talk of gods—that never were!

ARGUS.

Thou wouldst do better to leave men alone.  
The wisest talk is folly when work waits.  
Look! how these sturdy villains gape around,  
Fling down their task, and hang upon the words  
That flow like nectar from your majesty.

CASTOR.

In truth, my friend, if you would wear your crown  
This side of Orcus, you should go away.

POLLUX.

Ay! let the men work! For a mind as yours  
Is good, and skill as theirs is also good.

CASTOR.

But mix the manual and the mental—well,  
No ship was built by pure philosophy.

POLLUX.

Nor yet designed by artisans.

JASON.

Enough  
Come, great Alcides, it is time to go.

ARGUS.

A fool allows a moment's irritation

To move the purpose of a thousand years.  
Go, go!

HERACLES.

Remember! We are met this day  
To call upon the name with praise and prayer  
Of great Athena, since our ship is built  
With sculptured olive pregnant in the prow,  
And all the length of pine is coiled and curled  
With the swift serpent's beauty, and the owl  
Sits in huge state upon the midmost bench.  
Thus, therefore, by the manifest design,  
Joining the wisdom to the power and will,  
We build the Argo.

ARGUS.

What a heavy club  
We carry! And how well becomes our figure  
The lion's skin!

HERACLES.

Be still, thou art an ass!

ARGUS.

The fabled ass, O Zeus-descended one?

HERACLES.

What ass?

ARGUS.

The one that wore the lion's skin!

THESEUS.

This fellow were beneath a man's contempt.  
How should a God-born heed him?

*ACTUS SECUNDUS*

11

JASON.

We are here,

Then, to invoke Athena, immolate  
The sacred cock upon her altar-stone,  
That She, who sprang in armour from the brain  
Of the All-Father, may descend to bless  
Our labours, since delay grows dangerous,  
If haply by Her power and subtlety  
She please to aid the work, and to perform  
A prodigy to save us! Mighty Queen,  
That art the balance and the sword alike  
In cunning Argus' brain——

HERACLES.

Ay! Mighty Wisdom,

Who thus can overshadow such a fool,  
And make him capable to build a ship.

ARGUS.

O Thou! Athena, whose bright wisdom shone  
In this beef-witted fellow, making him  
Competent even to sweep a stable out!  
Glorious task!—I shall return anon.

JASON.

Nay, follow not! The Goddess were displeased,  
Coming, to find our greatest hero gone.

THESEUS.

This is the midmost hour of day.

JASON.

Arise,

All heroes, circling round the sacred stone  
In beautiful order and procession grave,  
While our chief priest, our mightiest in song,  
The dowered of Phoebus, great Oeager's heir,  
Invokes that glory on the sacrifice  
That kindles all its slumber into life  
And vivid flame descending on the wheel  
And chariot of lightning, licking up  
The water of the loud-resounding sea  
Lustral, poured seven times upon the earth  
And in one flash consuming wood and stone  
And the sweet savour of the sacrifice.

ORPHEUS.

But when the flame hath darted from the eye  
Of my divine existence, and hath left  
Nothing, where was the altar and the earth,  
The water and the incense and the victim—  
Nothing of all remains! Then look to it  
That ye invoke not Wisdom by the Name  
Of bright Athena!

JASON.

We are here to call  
Upon that Wisdom by that mighty Name!

ORPHEUS.

Who calleth upon Wisdom is not wise.  
Is it not written in the Sibyl's book



*ACTUS SECUNDUS*

13

That Wisdom crieth in the streets aloud  
And none regardeth her? Obey my voice.

JASON.

O master of Apollo's lyre and light!  
We are not wise—and for that very cause  
We meet to-day to call on Wisdom.

ORPHEUS.

Well!

The altar stands, shadowing the Universe  
That with my fire of Knowledge I destroy—  
And there is Wisdom—but invoke Her not,  
Friends, Who is only when none other is.

JASON.

Let us begin: the hour draws on apace.  
Drive off the demons from the sacrifice!

ORPHEUS.

Let all the demons enter and dwell therein!  
My friends, ye are as ignorant as priests!  
Let there be silence while the sleeper wakes!

O coiled and constricted and chosen!  
O tortured and twisted and twined!  
Deep spring of my soul deep frozen,  
The sleep of the truth of the mind!  
As a bright snake curled  
Round the vine of the World!

E

*ARGONAUTAE*

O sleeper through dawn and though daylight,  
O sleeper through dusk and through night!  
O shifted from white light to gray light,  
From gray to the one black light!  
O silence and sound  
In the far profound!

O serpent of scales as an armour  
To bind on the breast of a lord!  
Not deaf to the Voice of the Charmer,  
Not blind to the sweep of the sword!  
I strike to the deep  
That thou stir in thy sleep!

Rise up from mine innermost being!  
Lift up the gemmed head to the heart!  
Lift up till the eyes that were seeing  
Be blind, and their life depart!  
Till the Eye that was blind  
Be a lamp to my mind!

Coil fast all thy coils on me, dying,  
Absorbed in the sense of the Snake!  
Stir, leave the flower-throne, and up-flying  
Hiss once, and hiss thrice, and awake!  
Then crown me and cling!  
Flash forward—and spring!

Flash forth on the fire of the altar,  
The stones, and the sacrifice shed;

*ACTUS SECUNDUS*

15

Till the Three Worlds flicker and falter,  
And life and her love be dead!  
In mysterious joy  
Awake—and destroy!

JASON.

It is enough!

HERACLES.

Too great for a god's strength!

THESEUS.

Speak!

CASTOR.

Change! Not to be borne!

POLLUX.

But this is death!

ORPHEUS.

Let the light fade. The oracle is past.

JASON.

The Voice is past. We are alive again.

ORPHEUS.

What spake That Silence?

HERACLES.

“This is not a quest  
Where strength availeth aught.” I shall not go.

JASON.

Nay, brother. The voice was: “The end is sorrow!”

THESEUS.

Ye heard not, O dull-witted! Unto me  
(Alone of all ye wise) the great voice came,  
"The Gates of Hell shall not in all prevail."

CASTOR.

I heard, "Regret not thy mortality!  
Love conquers death!"

POLLUX.

But I, "Regret not thou  
Thine immortality! Love conquers life!"

ORPHEUS.

A partial wisdom to a partial ear.

JASON.

But what speech came to thee?

ORPHEUS.

I heard no voice.

ARGUS.

What means this? Here's my labour thrown away,  
My skill made jest of, all my wage destroyed  
At one fell stroke.

JASON.

What? Is the Argo burnt?

ARGUS.

Burnt! Should I then complain? The ship is finished.

JASON.

The Goddess, furious at thine absence, Argus,  
Hath frenzied thee with some delusion.

*ACTUS SECUNDUS*

17

HERACLES.

Calm!

Control thy madness! I am sorry now  
My pungent wit so shamed his arrogance  
As made him seem to scorn Athena.

ARGUS.

Thou!

But see me, I am ruined. The good ship  
Is finished! Where's my daily wage?

JASON.

Be sure

I pay thee treble if thy tale be true.

ARGUS.

Ay! treble nothing! I shall buy a palace.

JASON.

Treble thine utmost wish.

ARGUS.

Two evils then

Thou pilest on one good! But come and see!  
The Argo is discovered.

CHORUS OF HEROES.

By Wisdom framed from ancient days  
The stately Argo stands above;  
Too firm to fear, too great to praise,  
The might of bright Athena's love!  
Oh! ship of glory! tread the foam,  
And bring our guerdon from its home!

*ARGONAUTAE*

The silent thought, the hand unseen,  
The rayless majesty of light  
Shed from the splendour of our Queen  
Athena! mystery and might;  
These worked invisibly to bring  
The end of triumph to our King.

Great Jason, wronged by hate of man,  
Shall pass the portals of the deep;  
Shall seek the waters wide and wan;  
Shall pass within the land of sleep;  
And there the guardians of the soil  
Shall rest at last from pain and toil.

O ruler of the empyréan,  
Behold his fervour conquering  
The fury of the breed Cadmean,  
The dragons of the Theban king;  
And armed men shall spring from earth  
In vain to ward the gloomy girth!

But thou, Athena, didst devise  
Some end beyond our mortal ken,  
Thy soul impenetrably wise  
Shines not to us unthinking men,  
O guard the warrior band of Greece,  
And win for us the Golden Fleece!

*ACTUS SECUNDUS*

19

By miracle this happy day  
The ship is finished for our quest.  
Bring thou the glory from the gray!  
Bring thou our spirits into rest!  
O Wisdom, that hast helped so far,  
Sink never thou thy guiding star!

CHORUS OF WORKMEN.

Then let us gather one and all,  
And launch our dragon on the main  
With paeans raised most musical,  
Until our heroes come again.  
With watching and with prayer we wait  
The imperious Destinies of Fate!

EXPLICIT ACTUS SECUNDUS.





# ARGONAUTAE

ACTUS  
TERTIUS

MEDEA



MEDEA.

TO  
WHOMSOEVER  
AND  
THE BRITISH ARMY  
ON  
THE OCCASION  
OF  
READING 'MAN AND SUPERMAN'

# ARGONAUTAE.

## *ACTUS TERTIUS.*

AEETES, JASON, MEDEA, Messengers, *Chorus of Heroes.*

SCENE : *The palace of AEETES.*

AEETES.

Were this man son of Zeus, beloved of Heaven,  
And skilled with very craft of Maia's son,  
Stronger than Phoebus, subtler than the Sphinx,  
This plague should catch him, nor my wisdom spare.

CHORUS OF HEROES.

Thus hast thou sent him unto Hades, king.

AEETES.

Not otherwise were such gain possible.  
Ye are the witnesses that with much skill,  
And eloquence of shining words, and thought  
Darkling behind their measured melody,  
I did dissuade him.

CHORUS.

Such an enterprise  
After such toils no man should lightly leave.

Remember all the tasks impossible  
 This hero hath already done, before  
 He ever touched this sounding coast of thine.

AEETES.

Alas! but now his weird is loneliness!

CHORUS.

Was that from Destiny, or will of thine?

AEETES.

I love him little. Yet my words were true,  
 Nor would it skill him aught if myriad men  
 Bucklered his back and breast. For when a man  
 Batters with sword-hilt at the frowning gates  
 That lead to the Beyond, not human force—  
 Hardly the favour of the gods themselves—  
 Shall stead him in that peril.

CHORUS.

Yet we know  
 Courage may conquer all things.

AEETES.

Such a man  
 Is greater than the gods!

CHORUS.

If only he  
 Know who he is—that all these gods and men  
 And things are but the shadows of himself!

AEETES.

I cannot give you hope. Await the end.

*ACTUS TERTIUS*

5

CHORUS.

We fear indeed that in the trap  
Of wiles our king is taken.  
Lachesis shakes a careless lap  
And dooms divine awaken!  
A desolate and cruel hap  
In this sad hour is shaken.

The desperate son and violent  
Of Helios hath designed  
A fate more hard than Pelias meant,  
Revolving in his mind  
Mischief to catch the coiled ascent  
Of groaning humankind.

O bright Athena, hitherto  
Protectress of the quest,  
Divide the deep descending blue!  
Be present, ever-blest!  
Bring thou the hero Jason through  
To victory—and rest!

MEDEA.

Not by Athena's calm omnipotence,  
O heroes, look for safety! Little men,  
Looking to God, are blinded; mighty ones,  
Seeking His presence, reel before the glance;  
And They, the greatest that may be of men,  
Become that Light, and care no whit for earth.

But all your prayers are answered by yourselves,  
As I myself achieve this thought of mine.

CHORUS.

To me thou seemest to blaspheme the gods.

MEDEA.

Belike I seem, O ye of little wit.

CHORUS.

Surely thy tender years and gentle looks  
Belie such hatred to our king! I scorn  
To triumph on an enemy once fallen.

MEDEA.

Fools always! I am tenderer than my years,  
And gentler than my glances.

CHORUS.

Sayst thou—what?

MEDEA.

Ye know me a most powerful sorceress.

CHORUS.

So I have heard, O lotus-footed one!  
Nathless I see not any miracle.

MEDEA.

Last night the heavy-hearted audience  
Broke up, and Jason wended wearily  
His way, oppressed by direful bodements of  
The fate of this forenoon. I saw him go  
Sad, and remembered how sublime he stood,



*ACTUS TERTIUS*

7

Bronzed with a ruder sun than ours, and scarred  
(Rough tokens of old battles) yet so calm  
And mild (with all that vigour) that to me  
Came a swift pity—the enchanter's bane.  
That I flung from me. But my subtle soul  
Struck its own bosom with the sword of thought,  
So that I saw not pity, but desire!

CHORUS.

Surely a bane more potent than the first.

MEDEA.

Love is itself enchantment!

CHORUS.

Some kind god  
Whispers from this a little light of hope.

MEDEA.

Only the hopeless are the happy ones.

CHORUS.

But didst thou turn him from his gleaming goal?  
Cover that shame with sweeter shame than this?

MEDEA.

Thou knowest that his vigil was to keep,  
Invoking all Olympus all the night,  
And then to yoke the oxen, and to plough  
The fearful furrow, sow the dreadful seed,  
Smite down the armies, and assuage the pest  
Of slime thrice coiled about the sacred grove.

CHORUS.

Thy bitter love disturbed that solitude?

MEDEA.

Not bitter, heroes. See ye yet the end?

CHORUS.

Our good quest ended by thy father's hate,  
And by thy own hour's madness! This I see.

MEDEA.

But if he gain the Fleece?

CHORUS.

A blissful end.

MEDEA.

This end and that are moulded diversely.

CHORUS.

Riddle no more, nor ply with doubtful hope  
Hearts ready to rejoice and to despair  
Equally minded.

MEDEA.

At the midmost hour,  
His mind given up to sleepless muttering  
Of charms not mine—decrees Olympian—  
All on a sudden he felt fervent arms  
Flung round him, and a sweet hot body's rush  
Lithe to embrace him, and a cataract  
Of amber-scented hair hissing about  
His head, and in the darkness two great eyes  
Flaming above him, and the whole face filled

*ACTUS TERTIUS*

9

With fire and shapen as kisses. And those arms  
And kisses and mad movements of quick love  
Burnt up his being, and his life was lost  
In woman's love at last!

CHORUS.

Unseemly act!

Who dared thus break on meditation?

MEDEA.

I.

CHORUS.

Surely thy passion mastered thee, O queen!

MEDEA.

I tell you—thus the night passed.

CHORUS.

Verily,

The woman raves.

MEDEA.

Such victory as this

Outsails all shame. Before the dawn was up  
I bound such talismans about his breast  
That fire and steel grow dew and flowery wreaths  
For all their power to hurt him. Presently  
I made a posset, drugged with somnolence,  
Sleepy with poppy and white hellebore,  
Fit for the dragon. This was my design.

CHORUS.

Beware thy father's anger when he finds  
His plans thus baffled! He will murder us.

G

*ARGONAUTAE*

MEDEA.

Heroes indeed ye are, and lion hearts.

CHORUS.

No woman need school me in bravery.

MEDEA.

Rather a hare.

CHORUS.

Most impudent of whores!

MEDEA.

But when my husband comes victorious  
Fleece-laden, he will rather——

CHORUS.

Wilt thou then

Further my ruin, making known this shame?

MEDEA.

Here is the Argive sense of gratitude.  
Let me stir up its subtler thought, and show  
What favours ye may gather afterward  
From hands and lips ye scorn—not courteously.

CHORUS.

What? Canst thou save me from this newer doom?

MEDEA.

I love your leader with no mortal love,  
But with the whole strength of a sorceress.

CHORUS.

It seems indeed thy hot will can bewitch  
Our chaste one with one action impudent.

*ACTUS TERTIUS*

11

MEDEA.

I will not leave him ever in the world.

CHORUS.

Persistence in these ills—will cure them not.

“Worst” is the hunter, “worse” the hound, when “bad”  
Is the stag’s name.

MEDEA.

We rule Iolchus’ land.

CHORUS.

Indeed the hunter follows. I despise  
Lewd conduct in the lowest, and detest  
Spells hurtful to the head, when ancient hags  
Brew their bad liquors at the waning moon,  
Barking their chants of murder. But to rule  
A land, and wive a king, and breed to him  
Kings—then such persons are unsuitable.

MEDEA.

Unless these words were well repented of  
I might transform ye into——

CHORUS.

Stay, great queen!

MEDEA.

Well for your respite comes this messenger.

MESSENGER.

Queen and fair mother of great kings unborn,  
And mighty chosen of the land of Greece,  
A tidings of deep bliss is born to you.

*ARGONAUTAE*

CHORUS.

Tell me that Jason has achieved the quest.

MESSENGER.

Truth is no handmaid unto happiness.

CHORUS.

What terror dost thou fill my heart withal?

MEDEA.

O timorous heroes! Let the herald speak!  
Who meets fear drives her back; who flees from fear  
Stumbles; who cares not, sees her not. Speak on!

THE MESSENGER.

Terrible bellowings as of angry bulls  
Broke from the stable as the first swift shaft  
Of dawn smote into it: and stampings fierce  
Resounded, shaking the all-mother earth.  
Whereunto came the calm and kingly man,  
Smiling as if a sweet dream still beguiled  
His waking brows; not caring any more  
For spring or summer; heeding least of all  
That tumult of ox-fury. Suddenly  
A light sprang in his face; the great hand shot  
Forth, and broke in the brass-bound door; the day  
Passed with him inwards; then the brazen hoofs  
Beat with a tenfold fury on the stone.  
But Jason, swiftly turned, evaded these,  
And chose two oxen from that monstrous herd  
To whose vast heads he strode, and by the horns

Plucked them. Then fire, devouring, sprang at him  
From furious nostrils: and indignant breath,  
Fountains of seething smoke, spat forth at him.  
But with no tremor of aught that seemed like fear  
Drew them by sheer strength from their place, and yoked  
Their frenzy to his plough, and with the goad  
Urged them, thrice trampling the accurséd field  
Until the furrows flamed across the sun,  
Treading whose glory stood Apollo's self  
As witness of the deed. Then a last thrust  
Savage, drove them less savage to their stalls,  
And Jason turned and laughed. Then drew he out  
The dreadful teeth of woe, Cadmean stock  
Of Thebes' old misery, and presently  
Pacing the furrowed field, he scattered them  
With muttered words of power athwart the course  
Of the bright moon, due path of pestilence  
And terror. Ere the last bone fell to earth  
The accurséd harvest sprang to life. Armed men,  
Fiery with anger, rose upon the earth  
While Jason stood, one witnessing a dream,  
Not one who lives his life. The sword and spear  
Turn not to him, but mutual madness strikes  
The warriors witless, and fierce wrath invades  
Their hearts of fury, and with arms engaged  
They fell upon each other silently  
And slew, and slew. As in the middle seas  
A mirage flashes out and passes, so  
The phantoms faded, and the way was clear.

Thus, stepping ever proud and calm, he went  
Unto the grove of Ares, where the worm,  
Huge in his hatred, guarded all. But now  
Sunk in some stupor, surely sent of Zeus,  
He stirred not. Stepping delicately past  
The dragon, then came Jason to the grove  
And saw what tree umbrageous bore the fruit  
That he had saddened for so long. And he,  
Rending the branches of that wizard Oak,  
With a strong grasp tore down the Fleece of Gold.  
Then came a voice: "Woe, woe! Aea's isle!  
The glory is departed!" And a voice  
Answered it "Woe!" Then Jason seemed to see  
Some Fear behind the little former fears;  
And his face blanched a moment, as beholding  
Some Fate, some distant grief. Then, catching sight  
Now of the glory of his gain, he seemed  
Caught in an ecstasy, treading the earth  
As in a brighter dream than Aphrodite  
Sent ever to a man, he turned himself  
(We could not see him for the golden flame  
Burning about him!) moving hitherward.  
But I took horse and hasted, since reward  
May greet such tidings, and for joy to see  
Your joy exceed my joy.

MEDEA.

Reward indeed  
Awaits thee from such folk as us, who stand



*ACTUS TERTIUS*

15

In fear of life, when great Aeetes hears  
This news, and how all came.

MESSSENGER.

My lady's smile  
Is the reward I sought, not place nor gold.

MEDEA.

Thou hast it, child.

SECOND MESSENGER.

The hero is at hand.

CHORUS.

O happy of mortals!  
O frontier of fear,  
The impassible portals!  
Ye heavens, give ear!  
Our song shall be rolled in the praise of the gold, and its  
glory be told where the heavenly fold rejoices to  
hold the stars in its sphere.

O hero Iolchian!  
Warrior king!  
From the kingdom Colchian  
The Fleece dost bring!  
Our song shall be sung and its melody flung where the  
Lyre and the Tongue are fervid and young, all  
islands among where the Sirens sing.

Thou bearest, strong shoulder,  
 The sunbright fleece!  
 Glow swifter and bolder  
 And brighter—and cease!  
 O glory of light! O woven of night! O shining and  
 bright! O dream of delight! How splendid the  
 sight for the dwellers of Greece!

Gained is the guerdon!  
 The prize is won.  
 The fleecy burden,  
 The soul of the sun!  
 The toil is over; the days discover high joys that hover  
 of lover and lover, and fates above her are fallen  
 and done.

## JASON.

Queen of this people! O my heart's desire  
 Spotless, the Lady of my love, and friends  
 By whose heroic ardours I am found  
 Victor at last, well girded with the spoil  
 Of life in gleaming beauty, and this prize  
 Thrice precious, my Medea—all is won!  
 Needs only now the favouring kiss of Eurys,  
 Bright-born of Eos, to fulfil for us  
 The last of all the labours, to inspire  
 The quick-raised sail, and fill that flushing gold  
 With thrice desired breath, that once again

*ACTUS TERTIUS*

17

Our prow plunge solemn in the Argive waters  
To strains of music—victory at peace  
Mingling with sweeter epithalamy—  
To tell our friends how happy was the quest.

MEDEA.

But not those strains of music, though divine  
From Orpheus' wingéd lyre, exalt at all  
Our joy to joy, beyond all music's power!

CHORUS.

I fear Aetes and the Pelian guile.

JASON.

Fear is but failure, herald of distress!

MEDEA.

What virtue lives there in the coward's heart?

CHORUS.

In sooth, I have no fear at all—to flee.

JASON.

Night, like a mist, steals softly from the East.  
The hand of darkness gathers up the folds  
Of day's gold garment, and the valleys sink  
Into slow sadness, though the hills retain  
That brilliance for a little.

CHORUS.

Let us go!

Methinks that under cover of the night  
I may escape Aeetes.

JASON.

If he chase,  
Our Argo is not battered by rough winds  
So far but what some fight were possible.

MEDEA. [*Leads forward ABSYRTUS.*]

I know a better way than that, my lord.  
This boy shall come with us.

JASON.

Ah, not to Greece!  
Aea needs to-morrow's king.

MEDEA.

"With us"  
I said. "To Greece"—I said not.

CHORUS.

What is this?  
Thou hintest at some dangerous destiny.

MEDEA.

Come, love, to the long years of love with me!

JASON.

Form, heroes, and in solemn order stride;  
The body-guardians of the Golden Fleece!

*ACTUS TERTIUS*

19

MEDEA.

Guarding your king and queen on every side—

CHORUS.

We sail triumphant to the land of Greece.

MEDEA.

A woman's love, a woman's power be told  
Through ages, gainers of the Fleece of Gold.

EXPLICIT ACTUS TERTIUS.



# ARGONAUTAE

ACTUS  
QUARTUS

SIRENAE





SIRENAE.

H

To  
COUNCILLOR VON ECKARTSHAUSEN  
AND  
LAURA GRAEME,  
LUCILE HILL,  
MARY BEATON,  
ON  
THE OCCASION  
OF  
HOMECOMING

# ARGONAUTAE.

## *ACTUS QUARTUS.*

JASON, MEDEA, ORPHEUS, THESEUS, HERACLES,  
*Chorus of Heroes, the Sirens.*

SCENE: *The Argo.*

MEDEA.

Ay! I would murder not my brother only,  
But tear my own limbs, strew them on the sea,  
To keep one fury from the man I love!

CHORUS.

This act and speech are much akin to madness.

MEDEA.

Remember that your own skins pay the price.

CHORUS.

I now remember somewhat of the voice  
Of the oracle, that Madness should hunt hard  
On the thief's furtive track, upon the prow  
Brooding, and at the table president,  
And spouse-like in the bed.

*ARGONAUTAE*

MEDEA.

But this is like  
That Indian fable of a king: how he,  
Taking some woman—an indecent act  
Not proper to be done!—against the will  
Of priests or princes, sought the nuptial bed  
And

“Climbed the bed’s disastrous side,  
He found a serpent, not a bride;  
And scarcely daring to draw breath,  
He passed the dumb night-hours with death,  
Till in the morning cold and gray  
The hooded fear glided away.  
Which morning saw ten thousand pay  
The price of jesting with a king!”—

JASON.

Indeed these toils and dangerous pursuits,  
Labours and journeys, go to make one mad.  
Well were it to beguile our weariness  
With song.

MEDEA.

And here is the sole king of song.

ORPHEUS.

My song breaks baffled on the rocks of time  
If thy bewitching beauty be the theme.

MEDEA.

Sing me thy song, sweet poet, of the sea

*ACTUS QUARTUS*

5

That song of swimming when thy love lost sense  
Before the passion of the Infinite.

JASON.

The more so as my master warns me oft  
Of late how near that island is, where dwell  
The alluring daughters of Melpomene.

ORPHEUS.

Light shed from seaward over breakers bending  
    Kiss-wise to the emerald hollows: light divine  
    Whereof the sun is God, the sea his shrine;  
Light in vibrations rhythmic; light unending;  
Light sideways from the girdling crags extending  
    Unto this lone and languid head of mine;  
    Light, that fulfils creation as with wine,  
Flows in the channels of the deep: light, rending  
    The adamantine columns of the night,  
    Is laden with the love-song of the light.

Light, pearly-glimmering through dim gulf and hollow,  
    Below the foam-kissed lips of all the sea;  
    Light shines from all the sky and up to me  
From the amber floors of sand: Light calls Apollo!  
The shafts of fire fledged of the eagle follow  
    The crested surf, and strike the shore, and flee  
    Far from green cover, nymph-enchanted lea,  
Fountain, and plume them white as the sea-swallow,  
    And turn and quiver in the ocean, seeming  
    The glances of a maiden kissed, or dreaming.

*ARGONAUTAE*

Light, as I swim through rollers green and gleaming,  
 Sheds its most subtle sense to penetrate  
 This heart I thought impervious to Fate.  
 Now the sweet light, the full delight, is beaming  
 Through me and burns me: all my flesh is teeming  
 With the live kisses of the sea, my mate,  
 My mistress, till the fires of life abate  
 And leave me languid, man-forgotten, deeming  
 I see in sleep, in many-coloured night,  
 More hope than in the flame-waves of the light.

Light! ever light! I swim far out and follow  
 The footsteps of the wind, and light invades  
 My desolate soul, and all the cypress shades  
 Glow with transparent lustre, and the hollow  
 I thought I had hidden in my heart must swallow  
 The bitter draught of Truth; no Nereid maids  
 Even in my sea are mine; the whole sea's glades  
 And hills and springs are void of my Apollo—  
 The Sea herself my tune and my desire!  
 The Sun himself my lover and my lyre!

CHORUS.

This song is sweeter than the honeycomb.

MEDEA.

Nearly as sweet as good friends quarrelling.

JASON.

Look, friends, methinks I see a silvern shape  
 Like faint mist floating on the farthest sea.

*ACTUS QUARTUS*

7

MEDEA.

I see a barren rock above the tides.

JASON.

I hear a sound like water whispering.

MEDEA.

I hear a harsh noise like some ancient crone  
Muttering curses.

JASON.

Now I hear a song.

'Tis like some shape of sleep that moans for joy,  
Some bridal sob of love!

MEDEA.

O Son of God!

My poet, swiftly leap the live lyre forth!  
Else we are all enchanted—yet to me  
This song is nowise lovely. But in him  
I note the live look of the eyes leap up,  
And all his love for me forgotten straight  
At the mere echo of that tune.

ORPHEUS.

Hark, friends!

Aea's tune—my Colchian harbour-song!

I hear the waters faint and far,  
And look to where the Polar Star,  
Half hidden in the haze, divides  
The double chanting of the tides;

*ARGONAUTAE*

But, where the harbour's gloomy mouth  
Welcomes the stranger to the south,  
The water shakes, and all the sea  
Grows silver suddenly.

As one who standing on the moon  
Sees the vast horns in silver hewn,  
Himself in darkness, and beholds  
How silently all space unfolds  
Into her shapeless breast the spark  
And sacred phantom of the dark ;  
So in the harbour-horns I stand  
Till I forget the land.

Who sails through all that solemn space  
Out to the twilight's secret place,  
The sleepy waters move below  
His ship's imaginary flow.  
No song, no lute, so lowly chaunts  
In woods where still Arisbe haunts,  
Wrapping the wanderer with her tresses  
Into untold caresses.

For none of all the sons of men  
That hath known Artemis, again  
Turns to the warmer earth, nor vows  
His secrets to another spouse.  
The moon resolves her beauty in  
The sea's deep kisses salt and keen ;



*ACTUS QUARTUS*

9

The sea assumes the lunar light,  
And he—their eremite!

In their calm intercourse and kiss  
Even hell itself no longer is;  
For nothing in their love abides  
That passes not beneath their tides,  
And whoso bathes in light of theirs,  
And water, changes unawares  
To be no separate soul, but be  
Himself the moon and sea.

Not all the wealth that flowers shed,  
And sacred streams, on that calm head;  
Not all the earth's spell-weaving dream  
And scent of new-turned earth shall seem  
Again indeed his mother's breast  
To breathe like sleep and give him rest;  
He lives or dies in subtler swoon  
Between the sea and moon.

So standing, gliding, undeterred  
By any her alluring word  
That calls from older forest glades,  
My soul forgets the gentle maids  
That wooed me in the scarlet bowers,  
And golden cluster-woof of flowers;  
Forgets itself, content to be  
Between the moon and sea.

*ARGONAUTAE*

No passion stirs their depth, nor moves;  
No life disturbs their sweet dead loves;  
No being holds a crown or throne;  
They are, and I in them, alone,  
Only some lute-player grown star  
Is heard like whispering flowers afar;  
And some divided, single tune  
Sobs from the sea and moon.

Amid thy mountains shall I rise,  
O moon, and float about thy skies?  
Beneath thy waters shall I roam,  
O sea, and call thy valleys home?  
Or on Daedalian oarage fare  
Forth in the interlunar air?  
Imageless mirror-life! to be  
Sole between moon and sea.

## CHORUS.

No song can lure us while he sings so well.

## JASON.

But look! I see entrancing woman-forms  
That beckon—fairy-like and not of earth.  
So, fitter than the bed of this my queen  
To rest heroic limbs!

## MEDEA.

The wretched one!  
Thou knowest that their kiss is death!

*ACTUS QUARTUS*

11

JASON.

Perhaps.

It were their kiss.

MEDEA.

Are not my kisses sweet?

JASON.

Listen, they sing. This time the words ring true,  
Sailing across that blue abyss between.  
Like young birds winging their bright flight the notes  
Glimmer across the sea.

MEDEA.

They sing, they sing!

PARTHENOPE.

O mortal, tossed on life's unceasing ocean,  
Whose waves of joy and sorrow never cease,  
Eternal change—one changeless thing, commotion!  
Even in death no hint of calm and peace!—  
Here is the charm, the life-assuaging potion,  
Here is a better home for thee than Greece!  
Come, lover, to my deep, soft, sleepy breast!  
Here is thy rest!

O mortal, sad is life! But in my kisses  
Thou may'st forget its fever-parchéd thirst.  
Age, death, and sorrow fade in slender blisses:  
My swoon of love drinks up the draught accurst.  
And all thy seasons grow as sweet as this is,  
One constant summer in sleep's bosom nursed.

*ARGONAUTAE*

All storm and sunlight, star and season, cease  
Here is thy peace.

O mortal, sad is love! But my dominion  
Extends beyond love's ultimate abode.  
Eternity itself is but a minion,  
Lighting my way on the untravelled road.  
Gods shelter 'neath one shadow of my pinion.  
Thou only tread the path none else hath trode!  
Come, lover, in my breast all blooms above,  
Here is thy love!

MEDEA.

My poet, now! The one song in the world!

ORPHEUS.

Above us on the mast is spread  
The splendour of the fleece!  
Before us, Argive maidens tread  
The glowing isles of Greece!  
Behind us, fear and toil are dead:  
Below, the breakers cease!  
The Holy Light is on my head—  
My very name is Peace!

The water's music moves; and swings  
The sea's eternal breast.  
The wind above us whistles, rings,  
And wafts us to the West.

*ACTUS QUARTUS*

13

Greece lures us on with beckonings  
And sighs of slumber blest.  
I am not counted with the kings—  
My very name is Rest!

Medea shoots her sweetest glance  
And Jason bends above—  
Young virgins in Iolchus dance,  
Hearing the news thereof.  
The heroes—see their glad advance!  
Hath Greece not maids enough?  
I lie in love's ecstatic trance.  
My very name is Love!

LIGIA.

Come over the water, love, to me!  
Come over the little space!  
Come over, my lover, and thou shalt see  
The beauty of my face!  
Come over the water! I will be  
A bride and a queen and a lover to thee!

Come over the water, love, and lie!  
All day and all night to kiss!  
Come over, my lover, an hour to die  
In the language-baffling bliss!  
Come over the water! Must I sigh?  
Thy lover and bride and queen am I!

*ARGONAUTAE*

Come over the water, love, and bide  
An hour in my swift caress!  
So short is the space, and so smooth the tide—  
More smooth is my loveliness!  
Come over the water, love, to my side!  
I am thy lover and queen and bride!

MEDEA.

Sing, poet, ere the rash fool leap!

JASON.

Ah, Zeus!

ORPHEUS.

The hearts of Greeks with sharper flames  
Burn than with one fire of all fire,  
We have the Races and the Games,  
The song, the chisel, and the lyre;  
We have the altar, we the shrine,  
And ours the joy of love and wine.

Why take one pleasure, put aside  
The myriad bliss of life diverse?  
Unchanging joy will soon divide  
Into the likeness of a curse.  
Have we no maidens, slender, strong,  
Daughters of tender-throated song?

I swear by Aphrodite's eyes  
Our Grecian maids are fairer far!  
What love as sweet as theirs is lies

In Sun or planet, moon or star?  
What nymphs as sweet as ours are dwell  
By foreign grove and alien well?

With every watchman's cheery cry,  
"Land ho!" through all the journeying years  
Our ever-hoping hearts reply,  
"A land of bliss at last appears."  
But what land laps a foreign foam  
So sweet as is the hero's home?

At every port the novel sights  
Charm for an hour—delusive bliss.  
On every shore the false delights  
Of maidens ply the barbarous kiss.  
But where did hero think to stay  
Lulled in their love beyond a day?

No shoreland whistles to the wind  
So musically as Thrace: no town  
So gladdens the toil-weary mind  
As brave Athenae: no renown  
Stands so divine in war and peace  
As the illustrious name of Greece.

This island of the subtle song  
Shall vanish as the shaken spray  
Tossed by the billow far and strong  
On marble coasts: we will not stay!

*ARGONAUTAE*

Dreams lure not those who ply the sail  
Before, the home! behind, the gale!

JASON.

Ah! I am torn, I am torn!

MEDEA.

God's poet, hail!  
Help us, Apollo! Light of Sun, awake!  
This is the desperate hour.

JASON.

I have no strength.

MEDEA.

Beware the third, the awful ecstasy!

ORPHEUS.

A higher spell controls a lower song.  
Listen, they sing!

JASON.

Joy! Joy! they sing, they sing!

LEUCOSIA.

O lover, I am lonely here!  
O lover, I am weeping!  
Each pearl of ocean is a tear  
Let fall while love was sleeping.

A tear is made of fire and dew  
And saddened with a smile;  
The sun's laugh in the curving blue  
Lasts but a little while.



*ACTUS QUARTUS*

17

The night-winds kiss the deep: the stars  
Shed laughter from above;  
But night must pass dawn's prison bars:  
Night hath not tasted love.

With me the night is fallen in day;  
The day swoons back to night;  
The white and black are woven in gray,  
Faint sleep of silken light.

A strange soft light about me shed  
Devours the sense of time:  
Hovers about my sleepy head  
Some sweet persistent rhyme.

Beneath my breast my love may hear  
Deep murmur of the billows—  
O gather me to thee, my dear,  
On soft forgetful pillows!

O gather me in arms of love  
As maidens plucking posies,  
Or mists that fold about a dove,  
Or valleys full of roses!

O let me fade and fall away  
From waking into sleep,  
From sleep to death, from gold to gray,  
Deep as the skies are deep!

*ARGONAUTAE*

O let me fall from death to dream,  
 Eternal monotone ;  
 Faint eventide of sleep supreme  
 With thee and love alone !

A jewelled night of star and moon  
 Shall watch our bridal chamber,  
 Bending the blue rays to the tune  
 Of softly-sliding amber.

Dim winds shall whisper echoes of  
 Our slow ecstatic breath,  
 Telling all worlds how sweet is love,  
 How beautiful is death.

MEDEA.

Sing, Orpheus, this doth madden them the most.  
 Should one man leap—This tune is terrible !

ORPHEUS.

I am not moved, although I am a man.  
 So strong a safeguard is cool chastity.

MEDEA.

But love thou me ! My husband is distraught.

ORPHEUS.

Madness is on him for thy punishment.

MEDEA.

Sing, therefore !

ORPHEUS.

This last song of theirs was sweet.

*ACTUS QUARTUS*

19

MEDEA.

Thine therefore should be sweeter.

ORPHEUS.

The Gods grant it!

Lift up this love of peace and bliss,  
The starry soul of wine,  
Destruction's formidable kiss,  
The lamp of the divine :  
This shadow of a nobler name  
Whose life is strife, whose soul is fame !

I rather will exalt the soul  
Of man to loftier height,  
And kindle at a livelier coal  
The subtler soul of Light.  
From these soft splendours of a dream  
I turn, and seek the Self supreme.

This world is shadow-shapen of  
The bitterness of pain.  
Vain are the little lamps of love !  
The light of life is vain !  
Life, death, joy, sorrow, age and youth  
Are phantoms of a further truth.

Beyond the splendour of the world,  
False glittering of the gold,  
A Serpent is in slumber curled  
In wisdom's sacred cold.

*ARGONAUTAE*

Life is the flaming of that flame.  
Death is the naming of that name.

The forehead of the snake is bright  
With one immortal star,  
Lighting her coils with living light  
To where the nenuphar  
Sleeps for her couch. All darkness dreams  
The thing that is not, only seems.

That star upon the serpent's head  
Is called the soul of man :  
That light in shadows subtly shed  
The glamour of life's plan.  
The sea whereon that lotus grows  
Is thought's abyss of tears and woes.

Leave Sirenusa ! Even Greece  
Forget ! they are not there !  
By worship cometh not the Peace,  
The Silence not by prayer !  
Leave the illusions, life and time  
And death, and seek that star sublime—

Until the lotus and the sea  
And snake no longer are,  
And single through eternity  
Exists alone the Star,  
And utter Knowledge rise and cease  
In that which is beyond the Peace !

*ACTUS QUARTUS*

21

JASON.

Those isles have faded : was this vision true ?

HERACLES.

I know not what hath passed : I seem asleep  
Still, with the dream yet racing in my brain.

THESEUS.

There was a sweetness : whether sight or song  
I know not.

JASON.

But my veins grew strong and swollen,  
And madness came upon me.

MEDEA.

You are here,  
Let that suffice. Remember not !

ORPHEUS.

But now  
I see the haze lift on the water-way,  
And hidden headlands loom again.

JASON.

I know  
The pleasant portals.

CHORUS.

Here is home at last.

ORPHEUS.

The sunset comes: the mist is lifted now  
To let the last kiss of the daylight fall  
Once ere night whisper "Sleep!"

K

*ARGONAUTAE*

JASON.

And see! the ship

Glides between walls of purple.

MEDEA.

The green land

Cools the tired eyes.

CHORUS.

The rocks stand sentinel.

MEDEA.

Let still the song that saved us gladden us.  
Lift up thy lyre, sweet Orpheus, on the sea.

ORPHEUS.

Over a sea like stained glass  
At sunset like a chrysopras:—  
Our smooth-oared vessel over-rides  
Crimson and green and purple tides.  
Between the rocky isles we pass,  
And greener islets gay with grass;  
Between the over-arching sides  
Our pinnacle glides.

Just by the Maenad-haunted hill  
Songs rise into the air, and thrill,  
Like clustered birds at evening  
When love outlingers rain and spring.  
Faint faces of strange dancers spill  
Their dewy scent; and sweet and chill  
The wind comes faintly whispering  
On wanton wing.

Between the islands sheer and steep  
Our craft treads noiseless o'er the deep.  
    Turned to the gold heart of the west,  
    The sun's last sigh of love expressed  
Ere the lake glimmer, borrow sleep  
From clouds and tinge their edges; weep  
    That night brings love not to his breast,  
    But only rest.

We move toward the golden track  
Shed in the water: we look back  
    Eastward, where rose is set to warn  
    Promise and prophecy of dawn  
Reflected, lest the ocean lack  
In any space serene or slack  
    Some colour, blushing o'er the fawn  
    Dim-lighted lawn.

And under all the shadowy shapes  
Of steep and silent bays and capes  
    The water takes its darkest hue;  
    Catches no laughter from the blue;  
No purple ray or gold escapes,  
But dim green shadow comes and drapes  
    Its lustre: thus the night burns through  
    Tall groves of yew.

Thither, ah thither! Hollow vales  
Trembling with early nightingales!

*ARGONAUTAE*

Languish, O sea of sleep! Young moon!  
 Dream on above in maiden swoon!  
 None daring to invoke the gales  
 To shake our sea, and swell our sails.  
 Not song, but silence, were a boon—  
 Save for this tune.

Round capes grown darker as night falls,  
 We see at last the splendid walls  
     That ridge the bay; the town lies there  
     Lighted (the temple's hour for prayer)  
 At grave harmonious intervals.  
 The grand voice of some seaman calls,  
     Just as the picture fades, aware  
     How it was fair.

JASON.

A thousand victories bring us to the shore  
 Whence we set out: look forth! The people come  
 Moving with lights about the anchorage  
 To greet the heroes of the Golden Fleece.  
 My Queen! Medea! Welcome unto Greece!

EXPLICIT ACTUS QUARTUS.



# ARGONAUTAE

ACTUS  
QUINTUS

ARES



ARES.

L

To  
COMMON SENSE  
AND TO THE  
QABALISTS  
CLERGYMEN  
PEERS  
ALCHEMISTS  
SUBALTERNs  
SORCERERS  
THIEVES  
NECROMANCERS  
MISSIONARIES  
LUNATICS  
DOCTORS  
AND  
ROSICRUCIANS  
PROSTITUTES  
AMONG WHOM I HAVE LIVED  
(BEING IN ENGLAND)  
ON  
THE OCCASION  
OF  
MY GOING AWAY

# ARGONAUTAE.

## *ACTUS QUINTUS.*

JASON, MEDEA, PELIAS, ACASTUS, ALCESTIS *and her*  
Sisters, MADNESS.

SCENE : *The Palace at Iolchus.*

MADNESS.

Black Ares hath called  
Me forth from the deep!  
Blind and appalled,  
Shall the palace high-walled  
Shake as I leap  
Over the granite,  
The marble over,  
One step to span it,  
One flight to hover,  
Like a moon round a planet,  
A dream round a lover!

How shall I come?  
Shrieking and yelling?

*ARGONAUTAE*

Or quiet and dumb  
    To the heart of the dwelling?  
Silently striding,  
    Whispering terror  
    Into their ears;  
Watching, abiding,  
    Madness and error,  
    Brooder of fears!

Thus will I bring  
    Black Ares to honour,  
Draw the black sting  
    Of the serpent upon her!  
How foolish to fight  
    With the warrior God  
Who brings victory bright  
    Or defeat with a nod,  
Who standeth to smite  
    With a spear and a rod!  
Here is the woman,  
    Thinking no evil,  
Wielding the human  
    By might of a devil!  
But I will mock her  
    With cunning design  
In my malice lock her.  
    The doom is divine!

MEDEA.

Ai! Ai! This rankles sorely in my mind

*ACTUS QUINTUS*

5

That Pelias should wander, free to slide  
His sidelong looks among our courtiers  
Ripe ever for some mischief. Yet methinks  
There is a wandering other than this present—  
Say, by the Stygian waves, unburied corpse!—  
But, for the means? It ill befits our power  
And grace—my husband's honour—to stretch forth  
The arm of murder o'er the head of age.  
But surely must be means——

MADNESS.

The prophecy!

MEDEA.

Happy my thought be! I have found it! Ha!  
“Athena shall relent not till the king  
Shall die and live.” Vainly the prophet meant  
Mere transference of the crown. I'll twist his saying  
To daze the children—fools they are! So mask  
Evil beneath the waxen face of Good,  
Trick out Calamity in robes of Luck—  
Come, children! Is the sun bright? And your eyes?

ALCESTIS.

Dear queen, all's well with us. Such happiness  
Crowds daylight—even sleep seems sorrowful,  
Though bright with dainty dreams!

FIRST DANAID.

But you are sad!

M

MEDEA.

I meditate the ancient prophecy.  
Thus a foreboding is upon my heart,  
Seeing some danger follow yet, o'erhang  
Our heads, poised gaily in incertitude!

SECOND DANAID.

Nay, grieve not, dear Medea! All men say  
The prophecy is well fulfilled.

MEDEA.

Ay me!

“Until the king shall die and live again.”

ALCESTIS.

What means that?

MEDEA.

I have meditated long.

SECOND DANAID.

To what sad end?

MEDEA.

At the full end I see

Allusion to my magic—to that spell

Whereby an old man may renew his youth.

ALCESTIS.

Our father!

MEDEA.

You have guessed aright, my child.

Your father must abandon his old age

And—by my magic—find sweet youth again!



*ACTUS QUINTUS*

7

DANAIDES.

But this is very difficult to do.

MEDEA.

For me such miracles are merely play,  
Serving to while away the idle hours  
While Jason hunts——

ALCESTIS.

How grand it were to see  
Our aged father rival the strong youths  
In feats of great agility!

MEDEA.

Agreed!

But surely you should work the charm yourselves.  
For children magic is a blithesome game!

DANAIDES.

Dear lady! teach us how to say the spell!

MEDEA.

Words must be aided by appalling deeds!

ALCESTIS.

O! O! you frighten us.

MEDEA.

Be brave, my child!

I too passed through unutterable things!

ALCESTIS.

Let me fetch father!

*ARGONAUTAE*

MEDEA.

Nay, consider first.  
Would he consent? The process is severe!

DANAIDES.

We know the sire is not exactly brave,  
Though very wise and good.

MEDEA.

'Tis clear to me;  
Without his knowledge we must do the deed.

ALCESTIS.

What is this "deed"?

MEDEA.

A caldron is prepared ;  
And, having hewn your father limb from limb,  
We seethe him in a broth of magic herbs.

ALCESTIS.

And then?

MEDEA.

The proper incantations said,  
There rises from the steam a youthful shape  
More godlike than like man. And he will fall  
In kind embraces on his children's necks.

ALCESTIS.

O queen, this process seems indeed severe.

MEDEA.

Without his knowledge must the thing be done..

*ACTUS QUINTUS*

9

DANAIDES.

This also seems to us no easy task.

MEDEA.

He sleeps through noon, while others are abroad.

ALCESTIS.

Let us make haste! Dear queen, how good you are!

MEDEA.

One thing remember! While you say the spell—  
Here is the parchment!—let no thought arise  
In any of your minds!

ALCESTIS. [*To her Sisters.*]  
Remember that!

MEDEA.

Else—Ototototoi!

FIRST DANAID.

What woe is this?

MEDEA.

The charm is broken.

SECOND DANAID.

And our father——

MEDEA.

Lost!

DANAIDES.

Ai Ai! Ai Ai! Ai Ai!

MEDEA.

Ai Ai! Ai Ai!

*ARGONAUTAE*

ALCESTIS.

Be brave, dear sisters, pluck your courage up !  
Easy this one condition ! All is safe.

MEDEA.

Haste then ! Good luck attend you ! When the hunt  
Returns, how joyful——

FIRST DANAID.

Striding vigorous  
The man renewed grasps Jason in embrace  
Worthy of Heracles.

ALCESTIS.

Thanks, thanks, dear queen !  
We go, we go !

MEDEA.

The Goddess be your speed !  
Thus will the danger pass ! That vicious fool  
Shall cease his plots against my best beloved.  
No taint of fell complicity shall touch  
My honour in this matter. I will sleep  
Through the delicious hours of breezy noon,  
Lulled by sweet voices of my singing maids ;  
Secure at least that no one will attempt  
To wreck my virtue or—restore my youth !

CHORUS.

O sleep of lazy love, be near  
In dreams to lift the veil,  
And silence from the shadowy sphere  
To conjure in our lady's ear !—

*ACTUS QUINTUS*

11

The voices fall and fail;  
The light is lowered. O dim sleep,  
Over her eyelids creep!

The world of dreams is shapen fair  
Beyond a mortal's nod :  
A fragrant and a sunny air  
Smiles : a man's kisses vanish there,  
Grow kisses of a god ;  
And in dreams' darkness subtly grows  
No Earth-flowered bloom of rose.

O dreams of love and peace, draw nigh !  
Hover with shadowy wings !  
Let shining shapes of ecstasy  
Cover the frail blue veil of sky,  
And speak immortal things !  
Dream, lady, dream through summer noon,  
Lulled by the sleepy tune !

The sense is riven, and the soul  
Goes glimmering to the abode,  
Where aeons in one moment roll,  
And one thought shapes to its control  
Body's forgotten load.  
Our lady sleeps! Our lady smiles  
In far Elysian isles !

FIRST WOMAN.

Thrice have I crept towards the bed, and thrice

An unseen hand has caught the uplifted knife,  
A grinning face lurked out from the blank air  
Between me and that filthy sorceress.

SECOND WOMAN.

Daily I poison the she-devil's drink,  
And nothing harms her!

THIRD WOMAN.

I have a toad whose breath  
Destroys all life——

CHORUS.

Thou dealest in such arts?

THIRD WOMAN.

Ay! for this hate's sake. Are we sisters all  
Herein?

CHORUS.

True sisters!

THIRD WOMAN.

The familiar soul  
Sucks at her mouth—She sickens not nor dies;  
More poisonous than he.

FIRST WOMAN.

Ah! beast of hell!

What may avail us?

SECOND WOMAN.

Jason is quite lost  
In her black sorceries.

*ACTUS QUINTUS*

13

FOURTH WOMAN.

Our chance gone!

FIRST WOMAN.

Our life

Degraded to her service.

SECOND WOMAN.

We who are

Born nobly, are become her minions.

THIRD WOMAN.

Slaves, not handmaidens!

ALCESTIS.

Ototototoi!

Ai Ai! What misery!

FIRST WOMAN.

See! the lady weeps!

ALCESTIS.

Ai Ai! the black fiend, how he dogs my feet!

The fatal day! Ai! Ai!

CHORUS.

What sorrow thus,

Maiden, removes the feet of fortitude?

ALCESTIS.

Who shall arouse him?

CHORUS.

Peace, our lady sleeps

N

*ARGONAUTAE*

ALCESTIS.

Ah me! but she must wake! A black, black deed  
Hangs on the house.

MEDEA.

What meets my waking ear?

Alcestis!

ALCESTIS.

Ah, dear queen, lament, lament!  
I am undone by my own——

MEDEA.

What! the work?

ALCESTIS.

Alas! Alas! the work!

MEDEA.

Thy father?

ALCESTIS.

Slain

CHORUS.

Ai Ai! the old man slain!

MEDEA.

Ai Ai!

ALCESTIS.

Ai Ai!

MEDEA.

The strong spell broken?

ALCESTIS.

Nay, but thoughts arose,



*ACTUS QUINTUS*

15

So many thoughts—or ever I was ware—  
And he—the cauldron seethes——

MEDEA.

He rises not?

ALCESTIS.

Nought but moist smoke springs up.

MEDEA.

Alas! for me!

All is but lost.

ALCESTIS.

Canst thou do anything?

MEDEA.

Nothing. Ai Ai!

ALCESTIS.

Ai Ai!

CHORUS.

Ai Ai! Ai Ai!

JASON.

What! Shall the hunter find his joy abroad,  
And sorrow in his house?

MEDEA.

Thy very hearth  
Polluted with the old man's blood!

ACASTUS.

What blood?

Answer me, woman!

*ARGONAUTAE***MEDEA.**

To thy knees, false hound,  
Fawning to snap!

**ACASTUS.**

What misery, pale slaves,  
Lament ye?

**CHORUS.**

Ah! the ill omen! Ah, the day!  
Alcestis hath her sire in error slain.

**ACASTUS.**

Sister!

**ALCESTIS.**

O brother, bear thine anger back!

**ACASTUS.**

Speak!

**ALCESTIS.**

Ah, the prophecy! Ai Ai!

**CHORUS.**

Ai Ai!

**ACASTUS.**

What folly masks what wickedness? Speak on!

**ALCESTIS.**

I cannot speak.

**JASON.**

Speak thou, Medea!

*ACTUS QUINTUS*

17

MEDEA.

The child  
Hath hewn her sire asunder, seething him  
In herbs of sacred power.

ACASTUS.

By thy decree?

MEDEA.

Nay!

MADNESS.

Safer is it to admit to these  
Fools—charge the child with lack of fortune!

MEDEA.

Yea!

I bade her take a waxen shape, carved well  
To look like the old man——

ALCESTIS.

Nay! nay! the Sire  
Himself we stole on sleeping——

CHORUS.

Hewn apart!

Ai Ai!

MEDEA.

I said not thus!

ALCESTIS.

I am so wild,  
Bewildered with these tears.

ACASTUS.

Enough of this!

It is the malice of that sorceress  
Disguised—she well knows how.

CHORUS.

Thus, thus it is!

We know the witch's cunning.

JASON.

Dogs and fools!

For this ye die.

MADNESS.

Nobility and love

Urge my own sanction to support the wife!

JASON.

I bade my queen prepare this spell. Disputes  
Your arrogance my kingship?

ACASTUS.

Ay, indeed!

Now justice turns against thee, fickle jade  
As fortune. Mine is a boy's arm, but I  
Advance against thee an impervious blade,  
And give thee in thy throat and teeth the lie!

JASON.

Boy's bluster!

MADNESS.

Justice will be satisfied.

It will be best to flee!

*ACTUS QUINTUS*

19

JASON.

But what is this?

A sword? I scorn a sword. I scorn a boy.  
Let none suppose me fearful!

MEDEA.

Give not back!

MADNESS.

It will be finer far to go away  
As those disdaining aught but their own love.

MEDEA.

Ay! let us leave these folk's ingratitude,  
My husband! in thy love alone I rest.  
This splendour and this toil alike resume  
Our life from the long honeymoon of love  
We wish at heart.

JASON.

To Corinth!

MEDEA.

Creon bears  
The name of favourable to suppliants.

ACASTUS.

How virtue tames these tameless ones! To-day  
I am indeed a man.

MEDEA.

Thou brainless boy!  
Thus, thus, and thus I smite thee on the cheek—  
Thus, thus I spit upon thy face. Out, dog!

*ARGONAUTAE*

SEMICHORUS 1.

His patience shows as something marvellous.

SEMICHORUS 2.

Virtue takes insult from the fortuneless.

MEDEA.

The curse of Ares dog you into Hades!  
I have my reasons [*doubtfully*] ay, my reasons plain!  
Going, not forced.

CHORUS.

Yet going—that is good!

JASON.

To Corinth! Bride of my own heart, Medea,  
Well hast thou put thy power off for the time  
Preferring love to pomp, and peace to revel—

MEDEA.

And the soft cushions of the moss-grown trees  
To royal pillows, and the moon's young light  
To gaudy lamps of antique workmanship—

JASON.

And music of the birds to harps of gold  
Struck by unwilling fingers for gold coin.

MEDEA.

Come! lest the curse I call upon this house  
Eat us up also! May the red plague rot  
Their bones! I lift my voice and prophesy:  
The curse shall never leave this house of fear;  
But one by treachery shall slay another,

*ACTUS QUINTUS*

21

And vengeance shall smite one, and one lay bare  
Her breasts in vain for love: until the house  
Perish in uttermost red ruin.

CHORUS.

Bah!

Speared wild-cats bravely spit!

JASON.

To Creon, come!

MADNESS.

Black Ares hath chosen  
Me wisely, to send  
A doom deep-frozen  
From now to the end.  
Never the curse  
Shall pass from the house,  
But gather a worse  
Hate for a spouse.  
The lovers are better  
Escaped from my toils  
Than these in the fetter  
Of the golden spoils.

Yet still lies a doom  
For the royal lovers.  
Time bears in her womb  
That darkness covers  
A terror, and waits  
The hour that is Fate's.

*ARGONAUTAE*

The work is done. Let miracle inspire  
 Iolchian voices to the holy hymn,  
 Praise to black Ares, echo of this doom.

## CHORUS.

So fearful is the wrath divine,  
 That once aroused it shall not sleep,  
 Though prostrate slaves before the shrine  
 Pray, praise, do sacrifice, and weep.  
 Ten generations following past  
 Shall not exhaust the curse at last.

From father unto son it flees,  
 An awful heritage of woe.  
 Wives feel its cancerous prodigies  
 Invade their wombs; the children know  
 The inexpiable word, exhaust  
 Not by a tenfold holocaust.

Thus let mankind abase in fear  
 Their hearts, nor sacrilege profane  
 The awful slumber of the seer,  
 The dread adytum of the fane;  
 Nor gain the mockery of a fleece,  
 Losing reality of peace.

Hail to wild Ares! Men, rejoice  
 That He can thus avenge his shrine!  
 One solemn cadence of that voice  
 Peal through the ages, shake the spine



Of very Time, and plunge success  
False winged into sure-foot distress!

Hail to black Ares! Warrior, hail!  
Thou glory of the shining sword!  
What proven armour may avail  
Against the vengeance of the Lord?  
Athena's favour must withdraw  
Before the justice of thy law!

Hail to the Lord of glittering spears  
The monarch of the mighty name,  
The Master of ten thousand Fears  
Whose sword is as a scarlet flame!  
Hail to black Ares! Wild and pale  
The echo answers me: All Hail!

EXPLICIT ACTUS QUINTUS.

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