

MEDEA

Women of Corinth!
Here I am, and I beg you not to blame me.

Many people I know put on airs,
and lord it over others in private
and sometimes even shamelessly in front of everyone.
But if someone is simply quiet and keeps to herself,
she gets a reputation for not caring about others.
People are quick to judge a person on first sight
before they truly get to know her, 220
even if she's done them no wrong. It's not fair.
A newcomer has to learn to fit in.
Nothing is more obnoxious than someone
Offending the citizens of her new city
because she refuses to learn their ways.

My friends, I am the victim of a sudden blow
that has devastated me. Ruined me.
Nothing in life gives me pleasure any more; I want die.
The man who was everything to me – God, how I loved him! –
my husband has shown himself to be the worst of men.

We women are the most unfortunate
of all living creatures. 230
First our fathers have to buy a husband, pay him a dowry,
And then we must make him master of our body:
that's even worse than buying him.
Everything hinges on whether
we get a good or a bad husband:
divorce or remaining single is not an option.

It's a new way of life!
A wife has to be a fortune-teller to

know how to satisfy her husband's needs,
things she hasn't learned at home. 240

Life is enviable if we work this out
and our husband doesn't resent being married.
Otherwise life is hell.

It's easy for a man. If he gets restless,
he simply goes out and drowns his sorrows
in the company of some soulmate, male or female.

We don't have that option. It's him or nothing.

They say that living at home as we do
is a life free from care; no danger at all,
whereas men have to go out and fight.

Wrong! I'd rather go to war three times 250
than go through the pains of labour to give birth once!

It's different with you. You have your own city;
You can visit your parents; you enjoy life
and the company of friends.

I'm living in a foreign city
and now my husband has abandoned me,
after he carted off, like some foreign souvenir.

I don't have a mother, a brother,
or a relative to turn to now that
things have gone wrong.

Now I must ask a favor from you:
if I find some way to pay back my husband 260
for what I've suffered, please keep quiet.

In most things a woman
is full of fear and no warrior at all,
but if she is wronged in love
there is no mind more bent on bloody revenge.