

# CLCV 224

## Creative Project

### Medea Kills her Children After being Tricked By Zeus

Joseph F. Specht IV

December 14, 2024

*My reception begins when Medea begins talking to herself after the chorus discusses Aegeus' exit. This begins at roughly line 760. I have included the first paragraph from the text as to maintain continuity and flow, however, the rest of my interpretation is over 700 words.*

#### **Medea**

Zeus, and Dikā, daughter of Zeus, and the Sun's light! |765 Now, philai, I will triumph over my enemies [ekhthroi], and I have started on the path. Now I have good hope that my enemies [ekhthroi] will pay the price of [kakos]. Where in my plans I had most distress, this man has shown forth to be a haven. |770 To him I will make fast the cables of my ship when I go to the city and polis of Athena.

*Beginning of my section: Enters Zeus disguised as Athena.*

#### **Zeus Disguised as Athena**

You are to travel to the city of my namesake? I have heard your pleas mortal, what ails you?

#### **Medea**

Dear Athena! Oh gracious goddess of wisdom! You heard my pleas in my most dire hour. For I have nothing left. My former lover, the father of my children, Jason has betrayed me. He has abandoned his wife and progeny for the princess of this land. After everything I have done for him, he crosses me. Not only does he cross me, he forsakes his children to a life of pauperism and low status. For my loyalty towards him was for naught, he is a weak man who would have died a thousand times without me! I beg of you Athena,

what ever shall I do? What can I do to make this sinner repent?

**Athena**

Mortal, I can see the gravity of your situation. You have no options left, except for the most grievous of them all. You must slay your children by your hand. For letting your children live will shepherd them to a grizzly end in due time.

**Medea**

My children? Kill my children with my own hands? How could you command a mother to do such a thing while having no inclination what it takes to rear a child! Blasphemy! You call yourself the goddess of wisdom while disseminating treason against the gods themselves. You must tell me what fate has yet to befall my innocent children.

**Zeus**

Mere mortal, you dare speak to me with such indignation! You are addressing the ki... one of the most revered gods of the Olympian pantheon second only to the mighty king of the gods Zeus. I am Athena, goddess of wisdom, daughter of Zeus, and I have seen the future. Apollo has shown it to me. I understand my request is to sacrifice everything you hold in your heart, but a swift death by your loving hands is a mercy compared to the torturous subjugation the remainder of their lives entails.

**Medea**

Goddess Athena, forgive my disobedience, but lowering myself to the idea of murdering my children is inconceivable to me. Nothing gives the ruinous abyss I dread to call a life meaning aside from my children. For I am also their mother, I created them inside me. Asking me to take the life I breathed into their nascent forms betrays every fiber of my being. Even knowing their lives will be wretched gives me little solace in the thought of their demise.

**Zeus**

Mortal, I cannot understand your pain as I have borne no children of my own. However, I have seen the future your children are beholden to and it is enough to make a god tremble. Medea, you would be saving your children a life of torment by unshackling them from this world. I know this may be difficult to understand, but the best thing for your children is a swift death.

**Medea**

Athena, how I wish I could believe you. You have accrued the wisdom of an infinite number of lives, yet nothing assuages the unease I feel. Would depriving them of life not be the most egregious transgression against the sacred values of philia? We mortals hold physical form for such an ephemeral span and to hasten my children to their end cannot be just. Can it? If what you say is true and I cannot bring myself to kill them, may Zeus strike them down! Smite them today!

**Zeus**

Your obdurance is justified in its entirety, but hear me when I say this. Your children will have lives the reprobates in the lowest depths of Tartarus would not envy. You are a good mother, a strong warrior, and a beautiful woman. Your heart is where it needs to be, so do it for them. For the children you hold so close in your heart. Charon will guide their souls to a peaceful asylum free from the horrors of this life.

**Medea**

I concede. I love my children and will do what is best for them. If taking their lives by my hands is what needs to be done, I will carry out my duty. The only pride I derive from this is their father will suffer far worse than me. He does not know the mercy I am granting *our* children. Athena, I will do it. I will strike down my fledglings with my own hands.

**Zeus**

You will see this is the only way forward my child. In time, you will see this as a blessing.

---

*After the conversation between Zeus and Medea, the story continues as usual until the end. At the end of the story, Medea is flying away in her chariot and then Zeus disguised as Athena appears again.*

---

*Enter Zeus still disguised as Athena.*

**Medea**

Athena I have done it! I killed my children with my own hands. Watching the life fleet from their eyes was harrowing, worse than I could have imagined. You foretold a prophecy divined by Apollo how could I refuse. I know their souls are in a tranquil cove in the cacophonous sea of the afterlife.

**Zeus** *Discarding the disguise and revealing his true form*

Medea, behold my true form. It is I Zeus, king of the gods, king of Olympus and I am here for you. I fell in love at the first sight of you – your beauty enchanted a god! Forgive my deception, but I tricked you. There was no Apollonian prophecy. I convinced you to kill your children to take your hand. Will you be my bride?

**Medea** *Dropping to her knees*

I slew my own children for nothing? I, their mother, stole the fire I gave them. What have I done. *Cries out in agony* How could this be? What have I become? Am a monster? No, you made me a monster! You coerced me to kill my children for what? To take my hand for yourself?

**Zeus**

I never made you a monster, you were one before! Were your own brother not your mother and father's child? Was the uncle of your former husband not the father to so many children? Lest we forget the new bride Jason took the hand of in marriage. The malediction plaguing your necrotic heart led to the suicide of Creon who could not bear living without his precious Glauce. You have committed the same evil against others. Your delusion is your other murders are somehow a lesser evil because it affects your less. You mortals are pitiful! You admitted it yourself, mortal lives are ephemeral compared to the eternity I have lived. What you have done today is inconsequential when considering all of my domain. For now, I cannot stand to look at you. May we meet in another time.

*Zeus exits and the play ends with Medea sitting broken on the floor.*