

Apollonius Rhodius 3: loeb translation (Race):

Come now, Erato,¹ stand by my side and tell me how from here Jason brought the fleece back to Iolcus with the aid of Medea's love, for you have a share also of Cypris' power and enchant unwed girls with your anxieties; and that is why your lovely name has been attached to you.

In this way² the heroes were waiting out of sight in ambush within the dense reeds, but Hera and Athena took note of them and went to a room away from Zeus himself and the other immortal gods and began making plans. Hera opened by testing Athena:

"You yourself be first now, daughter of Zeus, to initiate a plan. What must we do? Will you contrive some trick whereby they might seize Aeetes' golden fleece and take it to Hellas? After all, he is not one they could win over and persuade with gentle words. Indeed he is terribly arrogant, but nonetheless one should not turn away from any attempt."

Thus she spoke, and Athena answered her at once:

"I too, Hera, have been pondering in my mind those things you openly ask about, but so far I cannot think of any such trick to tell you that will bolster the heroes' courage, although I have mulled over many plans."

She spoke, and they fixed their eyes on the ground in front of their feet, separately brooding within themselves. Presently, Hera was first to have an idea and to make this proposal:

"Come, let us go visit Cypris and together approach her and urge her to speak to her son, in hopes that he will be persuaded to shoot Aeetes' daughter, expert in magic drugs, with his arrows and enchant her with love for Jason, for I think that with her counsels he will take the fleece back to Hellas."

Thus she spoke, and her shrewd idea also pleased Athena, and once again she answered her with gentle words:

"Hera, my father bore me without knowledge of his arrows,³ nor do I know of any enchantment to induce desire. But if you yourself approve of the plan, truly I would follow along, but please do the speaking when making the request."⁴

She spoke, and they sprang up and went to the great house of Cypris, which her lame husband had built for her when he first took her as his wife from Zeus. They entered the courtyard and stood within the portico of the room where the goddess shared the bed of Hephaestus. But he had gone off at daybreak to the anvils of his forge in a vast cavern in the Wandering island,⁵ where he forged all his ingenious works by the blast of fire. She, then, sat all alone at home on an inlaid seat facing the door. Having let down her hair over her white shoulders on either side, she was parting it with a golden comb and was about to braid the long curls. But when she saw the goddesses before her, she stopped and called them inside, rose from her seat, and had them sit in chairs. And then she herself sat down and tied up her uncombed hair with her hands. With a smile she addressed them thus with wheedling words:

"Dear ladies, what purpose or need brings you here like this after so long? Why have you both come, being infrequent visitors in the past because you are most important goddesses?"

Hera, in answer, addressed her with these words:

"You can be sarcastic, but our hearts are being shaken by disaster, for already Jason is mooring his ship in the Phasis river with all the others who are following him in quest of the fleece. To be sure, we are extremely worried for all of them, since their task looms near, but especially for Jason. I would safeguard him, even if he voyaged to Hades to free Ixion from his bronze fetters down there,⁶ with all the strength that is in my body, to insure that Pelias not make a mockery of me by escaping his evil doom, he who haughtily deprived me of honor in his sacrifices. Furthermore, even before that, Jason became greatly beloved by me, ever since he met me by the streams of the flooding Anaurus, when I was testing men's

righteousness, and he was returning from the hunt. All the mountains and high peaks were being sprinkled with snow, and down from them torrents were tumbling in crashing cascades. And in my disguise as an old woman he took pity on me and lifting me onto his own shoulders proceeded to carry me through the rushing water. That is why he is ceaselessly held in highest honor by me—nor will Pelias pay for his outrage, unless you grant his return home.”

Thus she spoke, and speechless amazement seized Cypris. She was awestruck to see Hera beseeching her, and then she addressed her with gentle words:

“Mighty goddess, may nothing be more vile to you than Cypris, if indeed, when you desire something, I slight you, either in word or in any deed which these hands might perform, weak as they are; and let there be no favor in return.”

Thus she spoke, and again Hera judiciously replied:

“We have not come in need of force or strength of hands. No, just calmly call upon your son to enchant Aeetes’ daughter with desire for Jason, for if she will give him kindly advice, I believe that he will readily seize the golden fleece and return to Iolcus, because she is very cunning.”

Thus she spoke, and Cypris said to both of them:

“Hera and Athena, he would obey you much more than me, for impudent as he is, he will have at least a little respect in his eyes for you, whereas he pays no attention to me and incessantly picks a quarrel and belittles me. Moreover, vexed by his bad behavior, I became angry with him and was determined to break his evil-sounding arrows, bow and all, before his very eyes, for in a tantrum he threatened that if I did not keep my hands off him while he still controlled his temper, I would thereafter have only myself to blame.”

Thus she spoke, and the goddesses smiled and looked at each another. But in exasperation she spoke again:

“My troubles are a joke to others and I ought not tell them to everyone, for it is enough that I know them myself. But now, since this is pleasing to both of you, I will make an attempt and coax him, and he will not disobey.”

Thus she spoke, and Hera took her slender hand and with a gentle smile said in reply:

“Now, Cytherea, do this task right away just as you propose, and do not be at all cross or quarrelsome with your son out of anger, for he will stop this in the future.”

She spoke and left her seat. Athena accompanied her, and the two of them set out to go back. But Cypris herself went down the glens of Olympus to find her son. And she found him off in Zeus’ fertile orchard, not alone, but with Ganymede, whom Zeus had once settled in heaven to live with the immortals, smitten with longing for his beauty. The two of them were playing for golden knucklebones, as boys who are playmates do. And by this time greedy Eros was holding the palm of his left hand completely full of them up under his breast, standing upright, and the sweet blush of his complexion bloomed on his cheeks. But the other boy sat crouched nearby, downcast in silence. He had two knucklebones left, which he threw one after the other still in vain, and was infuriated as the other laughed out loud. And then, after immediately losing these in addition to the others, he went away empty-handed and helpless, nor did he notice that Cypris had approached. She stood in front of her son and at once took hold of his chin and said:

“Why are you gloating, you unspeakable rascal? Is it because you cheated him as usual and unfairly triumphed over that naive child? Come, be kind to me and do the task I tell you and I will give you Zeus’ gorgeous plaything, that one his dear nurse Adresteia made him when he was still a babbling infant in the Idaean cave—a perfectly round ball; no better toy will you get from the hands of Hephaestus. Its segments are made of gold and around each of them wind two circular bands; the seams are hidden, for a dark-blue spiral runs over them all. And if you toss it in your hands, it throws off a flaming trail through the air like a star. I will give

it to you, but you must shoot Aeetes' daughter and enchant her with love for Jason. Let there be no delay, for then my gratitude would be less."

Thus she spoke, and welcome to him were the words he heard. He dropped all his playthings and with both hands grabbed hold of the goddess' tunic on both sides and clung tightly. He begged her to hand it over right away, then and

there, but she entreated him with gentle words, drew his cheeks to her, held him tight and kissed him, and replied with a smile:

"Let my witness now be this dear head of yours and my very own, that I will truly give you that gift and not cheat you, if you will strike Aeetes' daughter with your arrow."

She spoke, and he gathered up his dice and, after carefully counting all of them, tossed them into his mother's radiant lap. At once he slung on by its golden strap his quiver that had been leaning against a tree-trunk and took up his curved bow. He traversed the fruit-filled orchard of mighty Zeus and then passed through the ethereal gates of Olympus. From there a path descends from heaven; and two peaks of lofty mountains uphold the sky, the highest points on earth, where the risen sun grows red with its first rays. And beneath him at times appeared life-sustaining earth and cities of men and divine streams of rivers, and then at other times mountain peaks, while all around was the sea as he traveled through the vast sky.

But the heroes,⁷ remaining apart in ambush on the benches of their ship within the backwater of the river, were holding an assembly. Jason himself was speaking, while they listened in silence, each sitting in place row upon row:

"My friends, I will state what I myself favor, but it befits you to accomplish its end. For in common is our need, and common to all alike is the right of speech. And if anyone withholds his thoughts and counsel in silence, let him know that he, and he alone, deprives this expedition of its return home. The rest of you, then, remain quietly with your weapons on the ship, but I shall go to the palace of Aeetes, taking along Phrixus' sons⁸ and two comrades as well. Upon meeting him I will first test him with words to see if he might be willing to hand over the golden fleece out of friendship, or else not, but trusting in his power will treat our coming lightly. For in that way, having first learned his wickedness⁹ from himself, we will consider whether to engage him in battle or whether some other plan will aid us if we refrain from fighting. Let us not merely by force, before at least testing him with words, deprive him of his own possession. No, first it is better to meet with him and seek his favor with speech. Often, you know, that which prowess could scarcely accomplish, speech easily brings to a proper conclusion, when it is appropriately soothing. And once before he took in blameless Phrixus, who was fleeing his stepmother's treachery and his father's sacrifices,¹⁰ since all men everywhere—even the most shameless of men—respect the rule of Zeus Xenius and heed it."

Thus he spoke, and the young men approved Jason's words with one voice, nor was there anyone who urged something different. Thereupon he summoned Phrixus' sons, along with Telamon and Augeas, to accompany him, and he himself took Hermes' scepter. Then at once they passed from the ship to dry land, beyond the reeds and water, onto the rising ground of the plain. This plain is, I believe,¹¹ called Circe's, where many tamarisks and willows grow in rows, on whose topmost branches hang dead bodies bound with cords. For to this day it is a sacrilege for Colchians to cremate men who have passed on, nor is it permitted to bury them in the ground and raise a mound over them, but rather to wrap them in untanned oxhides and suspend them from trees far from the city. And the earth shares an equal portion with the air, since they bury their women in the ground. For that is the manner of their custom.

As they proceeded, Hera with friendly devising placed a thick mist throughout the city, so they might elude the numberless race of Colchians as they went to Aeetes' palace. But as soon as they came from the plain to the city and to the palace of Aeetes, Hera then again

dispersed the cloud. They stood in the vestibule, amazed at the king's courtyard and at the wide gates and columns that rose up in rows around the walls; and up above the house a stone entablature rested upon bronze capitals. Then they calmly crossed the threshold. Near it, vines covered with green leaves rose high up in full bloom, and beneath them ran four ever-flowing springs, which Hephaestus had dug. One gushed with milk, another with wine, the third flowed with fragrant oil, while the last poured forth water, which, it is said, grew warm when the Pleiades set,¹² but in turn at their rising bubbled forth like ice from the hollow rock. Such, then, were the wondrous works in Cytaean¹³ Aeetes' palace that Hephaestus the craftsman had contrived. And he fashioned for him bronze-hooved bulls, and bronze were their mouths, through which they breathed a fierce blast of fire. He also forged a plow, all of one piece, made of strong adamant, repaying a favor to Helios, who had taken him in his chariot when he was exhausted from the fighting at Phlegra.¹⁴ And here a central door was forged,¹⁵ and next to it were many well-built double doors and rooms in both directions, while an ornate colonnade ran all along both sides. At angles on either side stood taller buildings. In the loftiest one lived King Aeetes with his wife, while in the other lived Aeetes' son Apsyrtus, whom the Caucasian nymph Asterodeia bore before Aeetes had made Eidyia, the youngest daughter of Tethys and Ocean, his wedded wife. And the sons of the Colchians called him by the name Phaethon,¹⁶ because he outshone all the young men. But in the rooms lived the servants and Aeetes' two daughters, Chalciope and Medea. It was the latter whom they [encountered]¹⁷ going from one room to another to visit her sister. For Hera had detained her at home, though before that she was not often in the palace, but spent all day tending Hecate's temple, since she herself was the priestess of the goddess. And when she saw them approaching, she screamed. Chalciope heard it clearly, and the maids threw their yarn and spindles at their feet and all ran out in a throng. And Chalciope, in their midst,¹⁸ saw her sons and threw high her hands in joy; and likewise, when they saw their mother, they held out their arms and embraced her joyfully. And she sobbed as she said this: "So after all then, you were not going to abandon me in your thoughtlessness and wander far away, but fate has turned you back. Poor me! What a longing for Hellas you conceived from some dreadful delusion on the orders of your father Phrixus! As he was dying, he gave commands that brought terrible pains to my heart. Why should you go to the city of Orchomenus, whoever that Orchomenus is, to get Athamas' possessions, and leave your mother in grief?"

Thus she spoke. And last of all Aeetes came forth, and Eidyia herself, Aeetes' wife, came out when she heard Chalciope. Immediately the whole courtyard was filled with noise. Of the many servants, some were busy preparing a great bull, others were chopping dry kindling with bronze axes, and others were boiling bath water on a fire. And there was no one who was slacking from toil in serving the king. [upto 274]

AR 3.275ff:

In the meantime, Eros arrived unseen through the bright air, full of turmoil,¹⁹ as when a stinging fly attacks grazing young heifers—the one cowherds call the gadfly. And quickly, at the base of the doorpost in the vestibule, he strung his bow and from his quiver took an arrow never shot before, bringer of much sorrow. From there, with swift steps he crossed the threshold unobserved, as he looked keenly around. He crouched down small at the feet of Jason himself, placed the arrow's notches in the center of the bowstring, pulled it straight apart with both hands, and shot at Medea; and speechless amazement seized her heart. He darted back out of the high-roofed hall, laughing out loud, and the arrow burned deep down in the girl's heart like a flame. She continually cast bright glances straight at Jason, and wise thoughts fluttered from her breast in her distress. She could remember nothing else, for her heart was flooding with sweet pain. And as when a woman piles twigs around a flaming brand, a working woman whose task is wool-spinning, so as to furnish light under her roof at

night as she sits close by,²⁰ and the flame rises prodigiously from the small brand and consumes all the twigs together—such was the destructive love that curled beneath her heart and burned in secret. And her tender cheeks turned now pale, now red, in the distraction of her mind.

Now when the servants had set out the feast prepared for them and they had refreshed themselves with warm baths, they gladly satisfied their hearts with food and drink. Thereafter Aeetes questioned his daughter's sons, encouraging them with these words:

"Sons of my daughter and of Phrixus, whom I honored above all other guests in my palace, how is it that you have come back to Aea? Did some disaster thwart you as you were hastening on your way? Indeed, you would not believe me when I told of the immense distance of the trip. For I noted it once after taking a ride in my father Helius' chariot, when he was taking my sister Circe to the western land and we came to the coast of the Tyrrhenian mainland,²¹ where she dwells to this day, very far from the Colchian land.²² But what pleasure is there in words? Tell me plainly what things got in your way, and who these men are that accompany you, and where you came ashore from your hollow ship."

Such were his questions, and Argus, fearing for the expedition of Jason, answered him gently, ahead of his brothers, for he was the eldest.

"Aeetes, furious storms soon broke that ship apart, and as we huddled on timbers a wave cast us forth onto the dry land of Enyalios' ²³ island in the dark of night. And some god saved us, for even those birds of Ares that formerly nested on the deserted island we found no longer there, but these men had driven them off, having disembarked from their ship the previous day. And the will of Zeus, taking pity on us, or some fate, detained them there, for they immediately gave us both food and clothing in abundance upon hearing the famous name of Phrixus—and yours as well, for they are on their way to your city. And if you want to know their mission, I shall not conceal it from you. A certain king, eager to drive this man far away from his homeland and possessions because he surpassed by far²⁴ all the Aeolidae with his prowess, sends him to voyage here, all helpless.²⁵ And the king asserts that the race of the Aeolidae will not escape from the heart-grieving wrath and anger of implacable Zeus nor the unbearable pollution and retribution stemming from Phrixus,²⁶ until the fleece comes to Hellas. But Pallas Athena built their ship, one not at all like the ships found among the Colchian people—the worst one of which we happened to have, for the violent sea and wind completely demolished it. But theirs holds firm in its wooden pegs, even when all the storm-winds bear down on it, and it runs equally well by wind as when the men themselves propel it unceasingly by rowing with their hands. Having gathered on it the best of the heroes from all of Achaea, he has come to your city, after wandering to many cities and on the depths of the loathsome sea, in hopes that you will give it to him. And as you yourself prefer, so shall it be, for he does not come to use force of arms, but is eager to give you worthy recompense for the gift—having heard from me that the Sauromatae are bitter enemies of yours, he will subdue them beneath your scepter. And if indeed you also desire to know the names and lineage of these men, I will tell you everything. This man on whose behalf the others gathered from Hellas, they call Jason, son of Aeson who was Cretheus' son. And if he truly is from the race of Cretheus himself, then he would be our kinsman on our father's side, for Cretheus and Athamas were both sons of Aeolus, and Phrixus in turn was the son of Athamas who was Aeolus' son. And this man you see here, if you have heard tell of a son of Helius, is Augeas, and this is Telamon, son of most glorious Aeacus, and Zeus himself fathered Aeacus. And likewise all the other comrades who follow him are sons or grandsons of immortals."

Saying such things, Argus sought to win him over, but the king became furious at the words he was hearing and his mind rose high in anger. He spoke full of wrath and was especially vexed at Chalciope's sons, because he thought it was on their behalf that the strangers had come. His eyes flashed out beneath his eyebrows in his rage:

“Won’t you get out of my sight at once, you scoundrels, and go back, deceptions and all, from this land before one of you, to his regret, sets eyes on the fleece and on Phrixus?²⁷ You banded together immediately and came here from Hellas, not for the fleece, but for my scepter and royal throne. If you had not first touched my table, I can assure you that I would have cut out your tongues, chopped off both hands, and sent you forth with only your feet, so that you might be prevented from setting out a second time, and because you have attributed such lies even to the blessed gods!”²⁸
[upto 381]

Thus he spoke in anger, and mightily from deep down swelled the mind of Aeacus’ son,²⁹ and his heart within longed to utter a deadly threat in defiance, but Jason checked him, for he himself first answered with gentle words:

“Aeetes, please show restraint concerning this expedition. For we do not at all come to your city and palace for the reason you apparently think, nor yet because we are eager to do so. Who would willingly dare to cross so great a sea for someone else’s possession? No, a god³⁰ and the dire command of an insolent king urged me. Grant a favor to your suppliants, and I shall bear to all Hellas your marvelous reputation. Furthermore, we are ready right now to make you a swift repayment in war, whether it be those Sauromatae or any other people you desire to subdue beneath your scepter.”

Thus he spoke, reassuring him with a gentle voice, but the other’s heart within his breast was pondering two different courses, whether he should attack and slay them on the spot, or should make a test of strength. The latter seemed better to him on consideration, and he said to him in reply:

“My guest-friend, why should you tell me all these details from beginning to end? For if truly you and your men are descendants of gods or have come in other respects not a bit inferior to me to gain the possessions of another, I shall give you the golden fleece to take, if you wish, after you have undergone a test, for when it comes to noble men, I do not begrudge anything, as does that ruler in Hellas³¹ you yourselves tell of. And yours shall be a test of mettle and strength, one which I myself can accomplish with my hands, even though it is deadly. I have two bronze-hooved oxen that graze in the plain of Ares, breathing fire from their mouths. I yoke and drive them over Ares’ hard fallow field of four acres, which I quickly cleave with a plow as far as the headland and cast in the furrows not seed that produces Demeter’s grain but the teeth of a dread serpent that grow into the form of armed men. These I slay on the spot, cutting them down with my spear as they come at me from all sides. In the morning I yoke the oxen and at the hour of dusk I stop my harvesting. And for your part, if you accomplish such deeds as these, then on that very day you shall take that fleece back to your king’s abode, but until then I will not surrender it, and do not expect me to do so, for indeed it is unseemly for a man of noble birth to yield to an inferior man.”

Thus he spoke, and in silence Jason fixed his eyes in front of his feet and sat like that, speechless and helpless in his distress. For a long time he turned over and over a plan of action, but could find no way to accept the challenge with confidence, for the task seemed enormous. But at last he answered and addressed him with astute³² words:

“Aeetes, truly it is with justice that you constrain me so very much. Therefore, I too shall endure that contest, although it is overwhelming, even if it is my fate to die. For nothing else more horrible will befall men than evil necessity, which compelled me to come here at a king’s command.”

Thus he spoke, stricken with helplessness, and with terrifying words the king addressed him in his distress:

“Go now to join your crew, since you are so eager for toil. But if you should be afraid to put the yoke on the oxen or else shrink from the deadly harvest, then I myself shall see to all the details,³³ so that another man as well may shudder to approach³⁴ a superior man.”

[439ff] Thus he spoke in blunt terms. Jason rose from his seat, as at once did Augeas and Telamon, but only Argus followed, for in the meantime he had nodded to his brothers to remain there longer. They proceeded from the hall, and marvelously among them all did Jason stand out for his beauty and grace, and the girl, fixing her eyes upon him at an angle, gazed from beside her shining veil, smoldering with grief in her heart, while her mind, creeping like a dream, fluttered after his footsteps as he went. And so they left the palace in distress, while Chalciope, guarding against Aeetes' anger, swiftly retired to her room with her sons.

[451ff] And Medea likewise left after her, and in her heart mulled over and over all the concerns that the Loves³⁵ stir up, and right before her eyes everything was still visible to her—what he himself was like, what clothes he was wearing, what he said, how he sat on his chair, and how he walked to the door. As she pondered, she did not think that any other man was like him, and ever in her ears rang his voice and the honey-sweet words he had spoken. She was afraid for him, lest the oxen or else Aeetes himself would kill him, and she lamented as if he were already dead and gone, and in her grief tender tears of most profound pity ran down her cheeks. Softly sobbing, she uttered plaintive words: “Why is this sorrow gripping poor me? Whether he goes to his death as the best of all the heroes or the worst, let him go—yet I truly wish that he had escaped unharmed—yes, mighty goddess, daughter of Perses,³⁶ grant this at least, that he escape death and return home. But if it is his fate to be killed by the oxen, let him learn ahead of time that I for one take no delight in his evil demise.”

In this way then was the girl's mind beset with anxieties.

But when the heroes had left the people and the town by the same road on which they had previously come up from the plain, then Argus addressed Jason with these words:

“Jason, you will not think much of the plan I am going to propose, but we really must not forgo an attempt in our distress. You yourself have previously heard me tell of a certain girl who concocts drugs with the guidance of Hecate, daughter of Perses. If we could persuade her, I think there will no longer be any fear of your being defeated in the contest. But I am terribly afraid that my mother will not undertake this for me [upto 481]. Nevertheless, I shall go back again to beg her, for a common destruction hangs over us all.”

Thus he spoke with kind intent, and Jason answered with these words:

“Dear friend, if you yourself approve, I do not begrudge it. Go off to your mother and urge her to action by pleading with wise words. But desperate indeed is our hope, when we have entrusted our return to women.”

Thus he spoke, and soon they reached the backwater. And their companions joyfully questioned them when they saw them in their presence, but in sorrow Jason spoke out these words to them:

“My friends, cruel Aeetes' dear³⁷ heart is thoroughly angry at us—but as to the details, it would serve no purpose for me to tell or for you to ask about them—and he said that two bronze-hooved oxen graze in the plain of Ares, breathing fire from their mouths. He ordered me to plow four acres of fallow land with them and said he would

610ff In the meantime, Argus had returned to the palace of Aeetes and with every sort of argument was pleading with his mother to beg Medea to help. And Chalciope herself had been considering it before this, but fear gripped her heart, lest perhaps her entreaties would be inappropriate and ineffective because her sister dreaded their father's deadly anger, or if she did yield to her prayers, that her deeds would come to light and be exposed.

As for the girl, deep sleep was furnishing relief from her troubles as she lay in bed. But soon deceptive, baleful dreams began to disturb her, as they do when a girl is in distress. She imagined that the stranger had accepted the contest, not at all because he desired to take back the ram's fleece, nor was it for that reason he had come to Aeetes' city, but to take her to his

own home as his wedded wife.

She dreamed that she herself competed against the oxen and very easily performed the task, but that her parents took back their promise, because they had not set the task for their daughter to yoke the oxen, but for him alone. Thereupon a contentious disagreement arose between her father and the strangers, and both sides turned the decision over to her to be as she desired in her own mind. And she immediately chose the stranger with no regard for her parents. Measureless grief seized them, and they shouted out in anger, and at their cry sleep released her. Shaking with fear, she bolted up and stared around and about at the walls of her room. With difficulty she collected her spirit back in her breast as before and brought forth a sorrowful voice:

“Poor me! How these dire dreams have frightened me! I fear that this expedition of heroes will indeed bring some great harm—my mind is all aflutter about the stranger. Let him woo an Achaean girl far away among his own people, and let my care be for virginity and the home of my parents. Yet nevertheless, I will make my heart shameless and, no longer remaining aloof, will test my sister, to see if she will entreat me to aid in the contest because she is distressed for her sons—that would quench the terrible pain in my heart.”

She spoke and rose up and opened the doors of her chamber, barefoot in a single gown.⁵⁴ And she truly desired to visit her sister and crossed the threshold to the courtyard, but for a long time she remained there in the vestibule of her room, held back by shame. She turned around and went back again, but once more came forth from within,⁵⁵ and again shrank back inside. Her feet carried her back and forth in vain: whenever she started forth, shame held her back inside, but while restrained by shame, bold desire kept urging her on. Three times she tried, three times she halted. The fourth time she whirled back around and fell face down on her bed. And as when a bride in her bedroom weeps for her youthful husband, to whom her brothers and parents have given her, and she does not yet associate with all the servants out of shame and discretion, but sits in a corner grieving—a husband some doom had slain before the two of them could enjoy each other’s counsels—and, although burning inside as she beholds her widowed bed, she wails in silence, lest the women criticize and scoff at her; like her did Medea lament. But suddenly in the midst of her weeping one of the servants approached and noticed her, a young girl who was her attendant. She immediately told Chalciope, who was sitting with her sons, pondering how to win over her sister. But nonetheless,⁵⁶ she did not disobey when she heard the servant’s unexpected report, but rushed in amazement out through her room straight to the room where the girl lay grieving and had scratched both of her cheeks. When she saw her eyes dimmed with tears, she said to her:

“Woe is me, Medea, why ever are you shedding these tears? What has happened to you? What terrible sorrow has come upon your mind? Has some heaven-sent sickness encompassed your body, or have you learned of some deadly threat from our father concerning me and my sons? I wish I did not behold this house of our parents or even this city, but lived at the ends of the earth, where not even the name of Colchians is known.” Thus she spoke. The girl’s cheeks blushed, and for a long time her virgin shame restrained her, although she longed to reply. At one moment her words rose up to the tip of her tongue, but at another fluttered deep down in her breast. Often they rushed up to her lovely lips for utterance, but went no further to become speech. At last she spoke these words deceitfully, for the bold Loves were urging her on:

“Chalciope, my heart is trembling for your sons, in fear that our father will slay them immediately along with the strangers. Such dreadful dreams have I been seeing just now while slumbering in a brief sleep—may a god make them unfulfilled, and may you never suffer painful sorrow on account of your sons!”

She spoke, testing her sister, to see if Chalciope herself would take the lead in begging her to

defend her sons. Utterly unbearable pain flooded Chalciope's heart in fear of what she heard, and she answered with these words:

"I too have been pondering all these things and came here myself, to see if you would take counsel with me and provide some help. Come, swear by Earth and Heaven that you will keep what I tell you in your heart and be my helpmate. I implore you by the blessed gods, yourself, and our parents, not to look on while they are piteously destroyed by an evil death. Otherwise, may I die with my dear sons and hereafter be a horrible Fury from Hades for you."

Thus she spoke, and immediately a torrent of tears burst forth, and from below she embraced Medea's knees with both hands and at the same time let her head fall onto Medea's lap.⁵⁷ Then, next to one another, they both made a pitiful lament, and the wailing sound rose through the house as they wept in anguish. Full of grief, Medea addressed her sister first:

"My poor sister, what remedy can I provide you, when you speak of such things as horrible curses and Furies? If only it were firmly in my power to save your sons. Let my witness be the mighty oath of the Colchians, which you yourself are urging me to swear, and great Heaven and Earth below, mother of the gods, that with all the strength in my possession, you shall not lack help, if what you request can indeed be accomplished."

She spoke, and Chalciope answered with these words:

"Could you not then dare to contrive on behalf of the stranger, since he himself is in need as well, a trick or some plan with regard to the contest for my sons' sake? Indeed it is from him⁵⁸ that Argus has come, urging me to try to gain your help. While he was asking, I left him in my room to come here."

Thus she spoke, and Medea's heart within her leapt for joy. At the same time her lovely skin turned red, and a mist covered her eyes as she warmed with pleasure. She replied with these words:

"Chalciope, whatever you and your sons find welcome and pleasing, I shall do. May the dawn not shine in my eyes, nor may you see me alive much longer, if I hold anything of more importance than your life or that of your sons, who are my brothers, beloved guardians, and childhood companions. Likewise, I declare myself to be your sister and daughter, for you nursed me at your breast equally with them when I was a baby,⁵⁹ as I always heard from our mother in the past. But come, hide my kindness in silence, so that I can fulfill my promise without our parents' knowledge. At dawn I shall go to the temple of Hecate, in order to take the drugs for charming the oxen to the stranger on whose account this strife arose."

Thus Chalciope went back from the room and informed her sons of her sister's aid. But shame and terrible dread again seized Medea when she was left alone, to be devising such things for a man without her father's knowledge.

Then night was drawing darkness over the earth, and the sailors on the sea looked towards Helice and the stars of Orion from their ships,⁶⁰ and by now the traveler and gate-keeper were longing for sleep, and deep slumber was enfolding the mother whose children had died; and no longer was there barking of dogs through the city nor echoing sounds, but silence gripped the darkening night. But by no means had sweet sleep overtaken Medea, because in her longing for Jason many anxieties kept her awake, as she dreaded the great strength of the oxen that were going to make him die a horrid death in the field of Ares. Over and over the heart within her breast fluttered wildly, as when a ray of sunlight bounds inside a house as it leaps from water freshly poured into a cauldron or perhaps into a bucket, and quivers and darts here and there from the rapid swirling—thus did the girl's heart tremble in her breast.

Tears of pity poured from her eyes, and deep within a pain tortured her constantly as it smoldered through her body and along the delicate nerves and deep down beneath the nape of the neck,⁶¹ where the sharpest anguish penetrates whenever the tireless Loves inflict pains upon the spirit.⁶² At one moment she was determined to give him the drugs for charming the

oxen; at another by no means to give them but to perish herself as well; then immediately neither to die herself nor to give the drugs, but to endure her calamity in silence just as she was doing. Then she sat there in doubt and said:

“O poor me! Must I now be in misery wherever I turn? In every direction my mind is helpless, and there is no help for the pain, but it burns steadily just like this. If only I had been killed by Artemis’ swift arrows before I laid eyes on him, before Chalciope’s sons had reached the land of Achaea.⁶³ A god or some Fury led them here from that place to cause me pains full of lamentation. Let him perish in the contest, if it is his destiny to die in the field, for how without my parents’ knowledge could I prepare the drugs? And then, what story can I tell? What trick, what scheme will conceal my help?⁶⁴ If I catch sight of him alone without his comrades, shall I greet him? Unhappy me! Even if he perishes, I do not hope to find relief from anguish, for then he would cause me misery when he is deprived of life. Away with shame, away with glory! Once he is saved thanks to me, let him go unharmed wherever his heart desires. Yet for my part, on that very day when he completes his task, may I die, either by attaching my neck to a roof-beam or else by swallowing life-destroying drugs. But nonetheless, even though I am dead, people will hereafter look askance and reproach me, and far and wide the entire city will shout out my fate and the Colchian women will savagely revile me as they bear my story on their lips hither and yon: ‘She cared so much for a foreign man that she died; she disgraced her home and her parents by yielding to lust.’ What disgrace will not be mine? What distress is mine! Truly, it would be much better for me to quit life this very night in my room and by a mysterious death flee all evil reproaches before carrying out these shameful and unnamable deeds.”

She spoke and fetched a chest in which lay her many drugs, some good, some harmful. And placing it on her knees, she wept and soaked her lap with incessant tears that flowed in streams as she sat there, bitterly lamenting her own fate. She longed to choose lethal drugs to swallow and was already loosening the fastenings of the chest in her eagerness to take them out, unfortunate girl! But suddenly a dread fear of hateful Hades entered her mind, and for a long time she held back in dumbfounded silence. Around her appeared all of life’s heart-warming concerns: she remembered all the pleasures that exist among the living and recalled, as a girl would, her joyful age-mates, and the sun became sweeter for her to behold than ever before, as she truly grasped each of these with her mind. Then she put the chest back down off her knees, having changed her mind at the prompting of Hera; and no longer was she in doubt as to different plans, but longed for the rising dawn to appear quickly, so that she could give him the spell-casting drugs as she had promised, and meet him face to face. Again and again she loosened the bolts on her doors, peering for a gleam. And welcome to her was the light that Dawn cast, and people began stirring throughout the city.

Then Argus told his brothers to remain there longer to ascertain the girl’s state of mind and plans, while he himself left and returned in advance of them to the ship.

Now as soon as the maiden saw dawn appearing, with her hands she bound up her golden hair, which through her neglect hung down loose. She wiped⁶⁵ her tear-stained cheeks and freshened her skin with oil fragrant as nectar. She donned a beautiful robe fitted with elegantly curved pins, and upon her divinely beautiful head she cast a silver-white veil. And as she roamed there in the house, she trod the floor oblivious of the griefs—prodigious ones close at hand for her, and others destined to multiply thereafter. She called for her handmaids, twelve in all, who slept in the vestibule of her fragrant room, the same age as she and not yet sharing beds with husbands, and ordered them to yoke mules swiftly to the wagon, so they could draw her to the splendid temple of Hecate. Thereupon the handmaids set about preparing the wagon. She, meanwhile, took from the hollow chest a drug which they say is called Promethean. If, after appeasing the only-begotten Daira⁶⁶ with nocturnal sacrifices, a man should anoint his body with this drug, he would truly be impervious to strokes of bronze

and not yield to blazing fire, but for that day would be superior both in valor and might. It first sprouted when the flesh-eating eagle dripped the bloody ichor of tortured Prometheus to the ground on the cliffs of Caucasus. From it emerged a flower a cubit high above ground in color like a Corycian crocus,⁶⁷ supported by two stalks, but in the earth its root was like freshly cut flesh. Its sap, like the black juice of a mountain oak, she had collected in a Caspian shell to prepare the drug, after bathing herself seven times in ever-flowing streams,⁶⁸ and calling seven times on Brimo⁶⁹ the youth-nourisher, Brimo the night-wanderer, the infernal goddess, queen of the nether dead—all in the gloom of night, clad in dark garments. And with a bellow the black earth beneath shook when the Titanian⁷⁰ root was cut, and the son of Iapetus himself groaned, distressed at heart with pain. This drug she then took out and placed in the fragrant band that was fastened around her divinely beautiful breasts. She went outside and mounted the swift wagon, and two maidservants mounted with her, one on either side.⁷¹ She herself took the reins and a well-wrought whip in her right hand and drove through the city. The rest of the handmaids, holding on to the wicker basket of the wagon from behind, ran along the broad road and lifted their delicate robes up to their white thighs. And as when by the warm waters of Parthenius, or after bathing in the Amnisus river, Leto's daughter⁷² stands in her golden chariot drawn by swift deer and drives through the hills, coming from afar to partake of a savory hecatomb, and with her follow nymphs in attendance—some gathering from the very source of the Amnisus, others having left groves and peaks with many springs—and all around wild animals fawn on her, cowering with whimpers as she makes her way; thus did they hasten through the city, and all around them the people gave way as they avoided the eyes of the royal maiden. But after she had left the well-built streets of the city and, having crossed the plain, arrived at the temple, then at once she stepped down from her well-wheeled wagon, all eager, and said the following to her handmaids:

“My friends, I truly made a great mistake, and I did not realize that I should not go out among the foreign men who roam about our country, for the whole city is stricken with helpless dismay, and therefore none of the women who formerly gathered every day has come here. But since in fact we have arrived and no one else will come here, let us without restraint satisfy our hearts with gentle play,⁷³ and then, after plucking those beautiful flowers from the tender grass, we shall return at the same hour as usual. Furthermore, you might go back home with many presents today, if you will grant this desire of mine. For Argus tries to win me over with entreaties, as does Chalciope herself (but what you hear from me keep silently in your minds, so that word does not reach my father's ears): with regard to that stranger who agreed to compete with the oxen, they are asking me to accept his gifts and save him from the deadly contest. And I assented to their request and am asking him to come alone, apart from his comrades, to meet face to face, so that we can divide among ourselves any gifts he brings to give to us, and in return we can give him some other thing more baneful,⁷⁴ a drug. But please stay back when he comes.”

Thus she spoke, and the deceptive scheme pleased them all[upto 912]...

3.954-1136 “Again and again her heart broke in her breast, whenever she was unsure whether the sound that passed by was that of a footstep or of the wind. But before long he appeared to her longing eyes, striding on high like Sirius⁸⁰ from the Ocean, which rises beautiful and bright to behold, but casts unspeakable grief on the flocks. So did Jason come to her, beautiful to behold, but by appearing he aroused lovesick distress. Then her heart dropped out of her breast, her eyes darkened with mist of their own accord, and a hot blush seized hold of her cheeks. She had no strength to raise her knees and go backwards or forwards, but her feet were stuck fast beneath her. In the meantime, all her handmaids had withdrawn from them. The two stood facing each other in speechless silence, like oaks or lofty pines that stand

rooted quietly side by side in the mountains when there is no wind, but then, when shaken by a gust of wind, they rustle ceaselessly—thus were these two about to speak a great deal under the force of Love’s breezes. Jason recognized that the distress into which she had plunged was heaven-sent, and to reassure her spoke these words:

“Why, maiden, are you so afraid of me, when I am all alone? I assure you, I am not an insolent braggart as other men are, nor was I before, when I lived in my own country. So, young woman, do not be too much in awe of me either to ask for anything that pleases you or to say anything. But since we have come with good will for each other into this holy place where it is forbidden to do wrong, speak openly and ask questions. And do not deceive me with sweet words, now that you have promised your sister to give me heart-cheering drugs.⁸¹ I implore you by Hecate herself, by your parents, and by Zeus, who holds his protective hand over guests and suppliants—for I have come to you here as both suppliant and guest, at your knees because of compelling need—for without your⁸² aid I will not prevail in the dire contest. And thereafter, as is right, I would repay you with gratitude for your help, as befits those who dwell far apart, by making glorious your name and fame. And likewise the other heroes will celebrate you when they return to Hellas, and so will the heroes’ wives and mothers—who, I think, at this moment are sitting on the shore mourning for us—since you would dispel their grievous pains. Once upon a time Ariadne, Minos’ maiden daughter, rescued Theseus as well from terrible trials through her kindness, she whom Helios’ daughter Pasiphae bore.⁸³ But she, once Minos had calmed his anger, even boarded his ship with him and left her country; and even the immortals themselves loved her, and in the midst of the sky her sign, a crown of stars they call Ariadne’s,⁸⁴ turns all night among the heavenly constellations. Likewise, you too will have gratitude from the gods, if you save so great an expedition of heroic men. For truly, to judge from your lovely form, you seem to excel in gentle civility.”

Thus he spoke, honoring her, and she cast her eyes down and smiled with divine sweetness. Her heart melted within her as she was uplifted by his praise, and she raised her eyes and looked into his face; yet she did not know what word to utter first, but was bursting to say everything all at once. Casting off all restraint, she took the drug from her fragrant sash, and he received it at once into his hands with joy. And then she would even have drawn out her whole soul from her breast and given it to him, exulting in his need for her⁸⁵—such was the love⁸⁶ flashing its sweet flame from Jason’s golden head and captivating the bright sparkles of her eyes; and her mind within her warmed as she melted like the dew on roses that melts when warmed by the rays of the dawn. Sometimes they both fixed their eyes on the ground bashfully, but then again they cast glances at each other with loving smiles beneath radiant brows. And then at last the girl managed to address these words to him:

“Listen carefully now, so that I can devise help for you. After you go to meet my father and he gives you the deadly teeth from the snake’s jaws to sow, then watch for the time when the night is divided in the middle and bathe in the streams of a tireless river; and, alone, apart from all others, clad in dark garments, dig a round pit. Slay a female sheep in it and place the unbutchered carcass on a pyre which you have carefully erected over the pit itself. Appease Hecate, the only child of Perses, as you pour from a goblet libations of the hive-held labors of bees. Then, after you propitiate the goddess with due heed,⁸⁷ withdraw from the pyre and let neither the sound of footsteps make you turn back around, nor the barking of dogs, lest you invalidate all these rites and you yourself fail to return in good order to your comrades. At dawn moisten this drug, strip, and anoint your body as with oil; and in it there will be unbounded valor and great strength, and you would think it equal not to men’s bodies but to those of the immortal gods. Moreover, along with your spear let your shield and sword be sprinkled. Then the earthborn men’s spear points will not penetrate you nor the unbearable flame shooting from the deadly oxen. Not for long, however, will you remain in this state, but

for that day only. Nonetheless, you must never shrink from the contest. And I shall give you yet another piece of helpful advice. As soon as you yoke the mighty bulls and swiftly plow through all the hard field with might and main, and once those giants are sprouting up along the furrows when the snake's teeth are sown on the darkened soil, if you spot many of them arising from the field, without being seen cast a mighty stone, and over it, like ravenous dogs over food, they will kill one another; and you yourself hasten to rush into the fray. And as far as the contest is concerned, you shall bear the fleece to Hellas—somewhere far away from Aea. All the same, go where you wish or it pleases you to travel once you have departed.” Thus she spoke, and casting her eyes in silence before her feet, wet her divinely beautiful cheeks with hot tears, lamenting because he was about to wander on the sea very far from her. And again she addressed him to his face with these pained words and took his right hand, for indeed shame had left her eyes:

“And remember, if in fact you ever return home, the name of Medea, and likewise I shall remember you, although you are far away. And kindly tell me this. Where is your home? Where then from here will you voyage by ship over the sea? Will you perhaps go near prosperous Orchomenus or near the island of Aeaea?⁸⁸ And tell me about that girl, whoever she is that you named, the famous daughter of that Pasiphae who is related to my father.”⁸⁹ Thus she spoke, and over him as well, at the girl's tears, was stealing destructive love, and he answered in these words:

“Truly I do not think I shall ever, night or day, forget you, provided I avoid death—if I really do escape unharmed to Achaea, and if Aeetes does not set some worse trial before us. But if it pleases you to know about my country, I shall speak out, for greatly does my own heart also bid me. There is a land ringed by steep mountains, abounding in sheep and pastures, where Prometheus, son of Iapetus, fathered good Deucalion, who was the first to found cities and build temples to the immortals, and first also to rule over men. The neighboring people call this land Haemonia. And in it lies Iolcus itself, my city, and in it lie many others besides, where not even the name of the island of Aeaea is heard. Yet there is a story that once upon a time Minyas set out from there,⁹⁰ Minyas son of Aeolus, and founded the city of Orchomenus⁹¹ on the border with the Cadmeians. But why am I telling you all these pointless things about my home and Minos' daughter, far-famed Ariadne, by which splendid name they called that lovely maiden, whom you are asking me about? Would that, just as Minos back then came to an agreement with Theseus over her, so might your father be on our side.”

So he spoke, soothing her with gentle talk, but most bitter pains were troubling her heart, and in her sorrow she addressed him with fervent words:

“In Hellas perhaps it is noble to abide by agreements, but Aeetes is not such among men as you said was Pasiphae's husband Minos, nor do I liken myself to Ariadne. Therefore, do not speak of any guest-friendship, but simply remember me when you reach Iolcus, and I shall remember you even in spite of my parents. But from far away may some rumor or messenger-bird come to us when you have forgotten me, or may swift storm-winds sweep me up and carry me in person over the sea from here to Iolcus, so that I may reproach you to your face and remind you that it was through my help that you escaped—then may I appear unexpectedly at the hearth in your palace.”

Thus she spoke, letting pitiful tears stream down her cheeks, and he then said to her in reply: “Poor girl, let those storm-winds wander aimlessly, and that messenger-bird as well, for you are talking nonsense. If you come to those places and the land of Hellas, you will be held in honor and respect by women and men, and they will venerate you like a goddess, some because their sons returned home thanks to your counsel, but others because their brothers, kinsmen, and vigorous husbands were saved from so much harm. And in our wedding chamber you shall share our bed, and nothing shall come between us and our love, until fated

death enshrouds us.”

Thus he spoke, and her heart within her melted at hearing this, but nonetheless she shuddered to behold her destructive deeds.⁹² The poor girl! Not for long was she going to refuse to live in Hellas, for Hera had so contrived it that Aeaeon Medea would come to holy Iolcus as Pelias’ bane after forsaking her native land.”