

Messenger Monologue

[Context Only: When those two children, born of you, had entered in, Their father with them, and passed into the bride's house, We were pleased, we slaves who were distressed by your wrongs. All through the house we were talking of but one thing, How you and your husband had made up your quarrel. Some kissed the children's hands and some their yellow hair, And I myself was so full of my joy that I Followed the children into the women's quarters. Our mistress, whom we honor now instead of you, Before she noticed that your two children were there, Was keeping her eye fixed eagerly on Jason. Afterwards, however, she covered up her eyes, Her cheek paled, and she turned herself away from him, So disgusted was she at the children's coming there. But your husband tried to end the girl's bad temper, And said, "You must not look unkindly on your friends. Cease to be angry. Turn your head to me again. Have as your friends the same ones as your husband has. And take these gifts, and bid your father to relieve These children from their exile. Do it for my sake." She, when she saw the dress, could not restrain herself. She agreed with all her husband said, and before He and the children had gone far from the palace, She took the gorgeous robe and dressed herself in it; And put the golden crown around her curly locks, And arranged the set of the hair in a shining mirror, And smiled at the lifeless image of herself in it. Then she rose from her chair and walked around the room, With her gleaming feet stepping most soft and delicate, All overjoyed with the present. Often and often She would stretch her foot out straight and look along it.

But after that it was a fearful thing to see. The color of her face changed, and she staggered back, She ran, and her legs trembled, and she only just Managed to reach a chair without falling flat down. An aged woman servant who, I take it, thought This was some seizure of Pan or another god, Cried out, "God bless us," but that was before she saw The white foam breaking through her lips and her rolling The pupils of her eyes and her face all bloodless. Then she raised a different cry from that "God bless us," A huge shriek, and the women ran, one to the king, One to the newly wedded husband to tell him What had happened to his bride; and with frequent sound The whole of the palace rang as they went running. One walking quickly round the course of the race-track Would now have turned the bend and be close to the goal, When she, poor girl, opened her shut and speechless eye, And with a terrible groan she came to herself. For a twofold pain was moving up against her. The wreath of gold that was resting around her head Let forth a fearful stream of all-devouring fire, And the finely woven dress your children gave to her, Was fastening on the unhappy girl's fine flesh. She leapt up from the chair, and all on fire she ran, Shaking her hair now this way and now that, trying To hurl the diadem away; but fixedly The gold preserved its grip, and, when she shook her hair, Then more and twice and fiercely the fire blazed out Till, beaten by her fate, she fell down to the ground, Hard to be recognized except by a parent. Neither the setting of her eyes was plain to see, Nor the shapeliness of her face. From the top of Her head there oozed out blood and fire mixed together.

*Like the drops on pine-bark, so the flesh from her
bones
Dropped away, torn by the hidden fang of the poison.]*

*If wealth flows in upon one, one may be perhaps
Luckier than one's neighbor, but still not happy.*

[Begin monologue]

It was a fearful sight; and terror held us all
From touching the corpse. We had learned from what
had happened.

But her wretched father, knowing nothing of the
event,

Came suddenly to the house, and fell upon the
corpse,

And at once cried out and folded his arms about her,
And kissed her and spoke to her, saying, "O my poor
child,

What heavenly power has so shamefully destroyed
you?

And who has set me here like an ancient sepulcher,
Deprived of you? O let me die with you, my child!"

And when he made an end of his wailing and crying,
Then the old man wished to raise himself to his feet;
But, as the ivy clings to the twigs of the laurel,
So he stuck to the fine dress, and he struggled
fearfully.

For he was trying to lift himself to his knee,
And she was pulling him down, and when he tugged
hard

He would be ripping his aged flesh from his bones.
At last his life was quenched, and the unhappy man
Gave up the ghost, no longer could he hold up his
head.

There they lie close, the daughter and the old father,
Dead bodies, an event he prayed for in his tears.

[End monologue]

*[Context Only: As for your interests, I will say nothing
of them.*

*For you will find your own escape from punishment.
Our human life I think and have thought a shadow,
And I do not fear to say that those who are held
Wise among men and who search the reasons of
things*

*Are those who bring the most sorrow on themselves.
For of mortals there is no one who is happy.*