

Come and release him from death.
Stop murderous Hades.

PAPAI! [*cry of sorrow*] O Admetos, what suffering is yours,
deprived of your wife. 200

AI AI! [*cry*] A man might cut his throat or hang himself.

This day you will see your best-loved wife
go down to death.

Look, look, she comes, he is leading her out.

Cry aloud!

Lament, land of Admetos,
the noblest of wives is fading away
underground to Hades.

Marriage, I think, is no glad state,
to judge from the past as well as this poor king. 210
Once he loses his woman
he'll live something not quite a life.

[enter Alkestis from palace with Admetos, two children, some servants]

ALKESTIS

O Helios! O light of day!
O racing clouds and motions of heaven!

ADMETOS

They look, they see us suffering.
We did no harm to gods and yet you die.

ALKESTIS

My house! My home!
My bridal bed! My father's land!

Alkestis

ADMETOS

Lift yourself, O my dear, do not betray.
Beg the gods to pity us.

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ALKESTIS

I see the black boat on the black lake.
I see the old man who ferries corpses across,
hand on the rudder,
Charon is calling my name.
Why do you linger? Time to leave. Hurry Alkestis!
Charon calls.

ADMETOS

Bitter crossing. OIMOI! [*cry*] Poor lady, what pain is ours.

ALKESTIS

He is pulling, pulling—don't you see?—pulling me away
to the place where the dead gather.
I see his blue eyebrows, black wings beating—Death!
Let me go, Admetos, what are you doing? Let go.
The dark road opens before me.

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ADMETOS

Pity your loved ones! Pity most of all me!
This grief we share.

ALKESTIS

Let me go, lay me down, my feet falter.
Hades is near.
Night and shadows steal over my eyes.
Children, your mother

no longer is.

Farewell, little ones, in the light.

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ADMETOS

OIMOI! [*cry*] Your word is pain.

Greater than any death.

Do not, I pray you, betray me!

Do not orphan your children—
rise! Fight!

Your dying is my dying.

In you I exist—to live or not.

And I worship your love.

ALKESTIS

Admetos, you see my condition.

Now listen to my dying wish.

Because I prize you more than my own living soul,

I die—I did not have to die—for you.

I could have married some other man of Thessaly,

I could have dwelt in a princely house.

I did not want to stay alive without you, Admetos,

without a father for my children,

although I was young and I loved being young.

Your parents betrayed you.

It would have been a beautiful gesture, a noble gesture,

for them to save your life. (By dying)

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And you were their only son, no hope of more.

So you and I could have lived our remaining lives.

You would not be left alone to mourn me

and see your children motherless.

Well, some god worked things out this way.