

Medea

by Christopher Durang and Wendy Wasserstein

The Play: A sketch written for the Juilliard School's Drama Division's twenty-fifth anniversary, April, 1994. The subject draws on Euripides' tragedy, *The Trojan Women*.

Time and Place: The stage of a drama school. The present.

The Scene: *The actress playing Medea comes to introduce the evening.*

• • •

ACTRESS: Hello. I am she who will be Medea. That is, I shall play the heroine from that famous Greek tragedy by Euripides for you. I attended a first-rate School of Dramatic Arts. At this wonderful school, I had classical training, which means we start at the very beginning, a very good place to start. Greek tragedy. How many of you in the audience have ever acted in Greek tragedy? How many of your lives are Greek tragedy? Is Olympia Dukakis here this evening? As an actress who studied the classics, one of the first things you learn in drama school is that there are more roles for men than for women. This is a wonderful thing to learn because it is true of the real world as well. Except for *Thelma and Louise*. At drama school, in order to compensate for this problem, the women every year got to act in either *The Trojan Women* or *The House of Bernardo Alba*. This prepared us for bit parts in *Designing Women* and *Little House on the Prairie*. Although these shows are canceled now, and we have nothing to do. Tonight, we would like to present to you a selection from one of the most famous Greek tragedies ever written, *The Trojan Women*. Our scene is directed by Michael Cacoyannis and choreographed by June Taylor. And now, translated from the Greek by George Stephanoulous, here is a scene from this terrifying tragedy.

The Merchant of Venice

by William Shakespeare

The Play: Antonio, a Venetian merchant, assists his friend Bassanio in wooing the beautiful young heiress, Portia. Antonio's good intentions land him in debt to the moneylender Shylock, however. When Shylock attempts to collect his interest payment of a pound of flesh Portia successfully defends Antonio disguised as a judge, and all ends happily except for Shylock.

Time and Place: Venice, Italy. Circa 1596.

The Scene: *In the following speech (I, ii) we meet Portia for the first time as she considers the strengths and weaknesses of her various suitors.*

• • •

PORTIA: By my troth, Nerissa, my little body is aweary of this great world.

If to do were as easy as to know what were good to do, chapels had been churches, and poor men's cottages princes' palaces. It is a good divine that follows his own instructions; I can easier teach twenty what were good to be done than to be one of the twenty to follow mine own teaching. The brain may devise laws for the blood, but a hot temper leaps o'er a cold decree; such a hare is madness the youth to skip o'er the meshes of good counsel the cripple. But this reasoning is not in the fashion to choose me a husband. O me, the word 'choose'! I may neither choose who I would nor refuse who I dislike, so is the will of a living daughter curbed by the will of a dead father. Is it not hard, Nerissa, that I cannot choose or be, nor refuse none?

[NERISSA: First, there is the Neapolitan prince.]

PORTIA: Ay, that's a colt indeed, for he doth nothing but talk of