

Excerpt from 'Splendid Productions' Medea'

By Euripides

Adapted by Ben Hales, 'Argonauts' scenes by Mal Smith

PROLOGUE: CHORUS OF GRANS

Three old women in headscarves – the Grans – are pre-set as if they are audience members as the rest of the audience arrives.

They are engaged in Grandmotherly activities¹. They treat the audience like they are grandchildren, or children they are used to looking after – they are fond of them but not indulgent.

For the time it takes for the audience to arrive, the Grans are only allowed to use the words 'Oh dear', although there is no limit to the range of meanings expressed by the line. Eventually Gran 2 begins to speak normally:

- Grans** *(endlessly)* Oh dear...
- Gran 2** *(eventually)* It never stops, does it?
- Gran 3** Well, there's always something to do isn't there?
- Gran 1** It's tiring... Are you all right?
- Gran 3** Hungry?
- Grans** Warm enough? Cold enough?
- Gran 3** Do you want a story?
- Gran 2** Oh yes, a story.
- Gran 1** I know a story. You are young, that makes you ignorant.
- Gran 3** This story is three thousand years old. That makes it wise.
- Gran 2** Have you ever been in love?
- Gran 1** Have you ever really been in love and then had your heart broken?
- Gran 3** Think of your first kiss. How did you feel about them then?
- Gran 2** Compare that with how you felt when it went wrong.
When you walked away in different directions.
How can one person make you feel such opposite things?
- Gran 1** Yes, love is a war.
It was us against the world.
Then it was me against you.
What's the worst thing you've ever done?
- Gran 2** What's the worst thing you've ever thought about doing?

¹ In our production, Gran 1 was knitting, Gran 2 completing a book of Wordsearches, and Gran 3 was reading a romantic novel.

Gran 3 This story happened one afternoon in ancient Corinth, in Greece. It's a story about a family, a man called Jason and a woman called Medea...
The final scene: a mother has killed her children.

FINAL SCENE: A MOTHER HAS KILLED HER CHILDREN

Enter Jason, agitated. He sees Medea's bloody hands.

Jason Where are they? Medea? Where are my boys?

Medea They're outside.

Jason What have you done?

Medea You know what I did for you, and how you repaid me. If you thought I would let you dishonour my bed, lie in the arms of another woman and laugh at me, then you truly do not know me. I will not be a victim.

Jason But... my sons. Our sons... You're their mother.

Medea My children are the most precious thing in the world to me.

Jason And to me!

Medea Exactly.

Medea looks out towards the boys. Following her gaze, Jason turns and with growing horror begins to walk towards them.

Gran 3 *(interrupting suddenly)* But that bit's not for now. That comes later...
You wouldn't want people to judge you by the worst thing you've ever done, would you?
You see, every person has more than one story in them. Jason and Medea, they were happy once. Oh, and Jason used to be... magnificent!
Scene one: behold the mighty Argonauts!

SCENE 1: BEHOLD THE MIGHTY ARGONAUTS!

In a complete change of style, the Argonauts are loud, fast and clownish. The lines are split between them or in chorus.

Argonauts AAAAAAAHHHHHHH... Ancient Greece!
Where Greece is, but a long time ago!
A land of monsters and gods
Where men were heroes and women were beautiful
Join us in our tale and witness:
Great courage!
Intrigue!
Catharsis!
Treachery!
Tragedy, tragedy, tragedy!
And hubris...!
(Explaining to the audience condescendingly) Pride comes before a fall,
dummies!
And... heroism!
We recall the glorious deeds of men long ago!
A hero, Jason, and his Argonauts...
Who propelled the mighty Argo
Between the clashing rocks
To gain the Golden Fleece.
Jason and his fifty strong warriors:
The most masculine group of manly men
The world has ever seen!