

# THE WOMAN OF ANDROS

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## The Woman of Andros by Terence

### Story

Terence's first play, *The Woman of Andros* (166 B.C.E.), is a complex situation comedy with a happy ending. It involves marital desires and plans, and tricks galore played by a crafty servant.

Simo, the father of a spoiled young man around town, Pamphilus, is anxious to nail him into a good conservative marriage, which will bring two prosperous families together. Unfortunately for dad, however, the young man has fallen for Glycerium, the sister of a whore. Chremes, the father of the girl Simo favors, has hitherto been impressed by the good reputation of Pamphilus, but having learned about Glycerium he withdraws the offer of his daughter's hand. Simo, meanwhile, continues with his plans for the nuptials between his son and Chremes' daughter.

Davus, the roguish slave of Pamphilus, is working in the background for his master, trying to undermine the staid marriage Pamphilus dreads. In the course of his planning, Davus also announces that Glycerium claims to be a free-born citizen of Athens, shipwrecked in childhood, and not of lower class birth. Although Davus scorns this idea, he sees that it plays into an eventual union of Pamphilus with Glycerium. Meanwhile we learn that Glycerium is just about to give birth, another landmark in her relation to her lover, Pamphilus—who continues to adore her. Davus contrives the idea that Pamphilus should tell his father, Simo, that he is prepared to marry Philumena, Chremes' daughter. Davus believes that Chremes will at that point decide to cancel his daughter's marriage—he will have heard enough about Pamphilus' outrageous reputation—and that Pamphilus will then be free to marry Glycerium. Simo accordingly demands that Pamphilus should marry Philumena that day, and is amazed to hear that his son—who is in on Davus' plot—agrees.

The problematics of Pamphilus' marriage to Philumena are increased when Simo learns that Glycerium has given birth, or that such a rumor is abroad. It seems more than likely that by now Chremes has canceled his daughter's wedding, and when the two dads meet in town, Simo begs Chremes to reconsider the match between their two children. Simo assures Chremes that Glycerium is just faking childbirth. It looks as though Pamphilus is going to be trapped in the wedding to Philumena. Davus is at the end of his ingenuity on behalf of his master.

In the last act Davus comes on what seems a solution. He hurries to Glycerium, who has truly given birth, and asks Mysis, Glycerium's maid, to take the baby and place it on Simo's doorstep, where Chremes will come on it. He does, and once and for all cancels his daughter's marriage, convinced of the rascality of Pamphilus.

At this point a fatal turn of events bursts onto the scene. Crito, a relative of Glycerium, arrives in Athens with the news that he wants to claim the estate of Glycerium, whose mother has died. Glycerium, Crito insists, is an orphan. Upon further prompting, Crito reveals that Glycerium is the niece of a noble Athenian who had been shipwrecked on their island, Andros, while searching for his brother. Chremes declares that he is that brother, and, turning to Glycerium, gives her a ten talent dowry, to support her marriage to Pamphilus.

### Characters

**Pamphilus** is the spoiled young man around town whose irresponsible passion for Glycerium is ultimately justified, by the discovery that she is a bone fide Athenian citizen, and appropriate marriage partner. Pamphilus has no values except his own pleasure.

**Davus** is the canny slave, of Roman comedy, ready with all kinds of tricks to protect his master, and to further his master's schemes. He is ingenious, but in the end works only for the benefit of others.

**Simo** is the solicitous dad, easily duped by his son, who is trying his best to consolidate a wealth and status preserving marriage—and who, in spite of himself, ends up on the winning side. He is clueless, when it comes to the motivations of his son.

### **Themes**

**Destiny wins in the end.** Without the help of Crito, who comes in at the end with news about Glycerium's ancestry—her personal destiny—it is hard to imagine a resolution to the tangle of personal conflicts which make up this play. Destiny is the *deus ex machina* here.

**Character and formula in drama.** Stock characters play off against one another, in this consummate Roman comedy. There is the classic slave, Davus, the out of it dad, the young woman of ill repute, the rebellious young son. Character types dominate the action of this play, suggesting that literary character can be one-dimensional, while meeting all the requirements of an entertaining show.