

SYNOPSIS OF *SORROW OF THE SEA MAIDENS*

(a two act drama: running time 100 minutes.)

TIME: The present and twenty years in the future.

PLACE: The fictitious island nation of Dolphina: A stylized set represents a bedroom, an office, parlor, porch, laboratory, and the shoreline and depths of the Caribbean Sea.

CHARACTERS: (four women and two men)

MIRABELLE FONTAINE, an Afro-Caribbean doula; mid-twenties and mid-forties

GWENDOLYN WELLES, an Anglo-American conservation biologist; mid-thirties

MARLIN WELLES, her husband, an Anglo-American molecular biologist; mid-thirties

FINOOLA WELLES, Gwendolyn's cloned chimera as a fetus and infant

DOCTOR HURLEIGH SWALES, an Afro-British physician; mid-thirties and fifties

ORMA SETIMBA, an Afro-Caribbean housemaid and cook; twenties

NERISSA BAPTISTE, Mirabelle's adopted daughter; mid-teens

PLOT SYNOPSIS: On the fictitious island of Dolphina, Gwendolyn Welles, a marine biologist, awaits the birth of her genetically modified daughter. In the last months of her pregnancy, an ultrasound image reveals the fetus has regressed to an amphibious stage, with webbed feet, hands, and gills. Her doctor recommend an immediate abortion, but since the oceans are rising from drastic climatic changes, Gwendolyn feels the world may benefit from a species that thrives on both land and sea. While nursing Gwendolyn through the pregnancy, a doula named Mirabelle bonds with her through daily swims in the sea. Months later, when the infant, Finoola, is born, she is a piscine mutation bearing no semblance to the daughter they'd imagined. Gwendolyn's husband demands she be euthanized, while Mirabelle and a devoutly religious maid insist she be allowed to live. Since they're unable to conquer their revulsion, Gwendolyn and her husband take an extended trip, leaving Finoola with Mirabelle who develops a genuine affection for her. When Gwendolyn returns, she decides to surgically alter Finoola to conform to acceptable images of human anatomy. Mirabelle feels this is unethical and a custody battle ensues, resulting in Finoola's foray into the ocean where she vanishes during a storm. Twenty years later, evidence of her survival appears in amphibious infants born to mothers who swam in the region.

THEMES: *Sorrow of the Sea Maiden* revolves around themes of love, loss, species extinction, and is an allegorical exploration of the catastrophic effects of climate change on our oceans and higher marine mammals. The play is also a futurist Frankenstein tale with women in the roles of the scientist, the assistant, and their customized creation. Instead of stitching cadavers, Doctor Welles employs her body to incubate an idealized being, a genetic experiment gone tragically awry while under the influence of Caribbean culture and religion.

