

ARISTOPHANES'
"KNIGHTS"

Date of 1st production 424 BC
Awarded the 1st prize at the Lenea Festival

TRANSLATED BY
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DRAMATIS PERSONAE

Demos

(An elder representing Democracy)

Demosthenes

(Slave of the House)

Nikias

(Slave of the House)

Paphlagon

(Boss of the house slaves)

Sausage Seller

(Eventually revealed as Agorakritos)

Chorus

(Of Athenian Knights, led by Panaetius and Simon. Long-haired, fashion-conscious, young aristocrats.)

SILENT CHARACTERS

Peace Treaty 1

(Young girl)

Peace Treaty 2

(Young girl)

More slaves of the House

In front of Demos' house which symbolises the Athenian Parliament. A garland of wheat hangs on the door.

Across the stage from that door is a huge rock, which will later (l. 763ff) be used to represent the Pnyx (the official meeting place of the Athenian democratic assembly). Perhaps some writing on the rock could announce that.

Demosthenes and Nikias rush out of the house, in pain and both farting loudly and relentlessly.

They've been beaten severely by their immediate boss, Paphlagon and so they are hopping about and nursing their aches and pains. The loud farting goes on through their dialogue and intensifies during lines 8-12.

Demosthenes:

Ouuuuuuuch! Fuuuuuuck! Zeuuuus! Bloody Hades! Ouuuuuch!

Damn this new boss from Paphlagonia! What a bastard! Kill him, Zeus! Kill him all you gods! All these damned orders and commands of his! All this beating!

Didn't waste one second, the bastard! One minute the chief hires him and the next he has all the slaves rounded up and have the crap beaten out of them! They're all running around with huge sores all over their bodies! *(Yells towards the house)*

Bastard!

Nikias:

Crap on all the Paphlagonians and heaps more crap and stink on our Paphlagonian boss! Him and all his hellish tricks!

Demosthenes: (*Examining Nikias' wounds. Sympathetically*)

Poor man! Poor, poor man! How are you coping with it all, ey Nikias, old pal?

Nikias:

I'm not! Not at all and by the looks of it, Demosthenes, I'm coping about as badly as you are.

Demosthenes:

Come here then and let's send the bastard an airy tune.

Their wailing is accompanied by their farting

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Together:

Woouoo... Woouoo... waououoo... ououoo... Waouoo...

Demosthenes:

Stop! Hang on! Hang on a minute there Nikias, my pal! What's the point of all this wailing, mate? We should be putting our heads together to find a way of getting out of this predicament! Escaping. Crying won't do us any good.

Nikias:

Escaping... Yes... I concur... We should be escaping... How? Any ideas? Speak Demosthenes!

Demosthenes:

Who me? No, you speak first my dear Nikias... Come, let's not pull ranks on each other!

Nikias:

Nah, not me, mate! By Apollo, I'd never speak before you do. No, no, no! You go first!

Demosthenes:

Oh, come on man! Speak! You tell us your idea first and then I'll tell you mine!

Nikias:

All right, then. To quote, Euripides, "Speak thou the speech I must bespeak!"

Demosthenes: (*Puzzled*)

Huh? I've got no idea what you're on about! What speech should I bespeak?

Nikias:

Hmmm... let's see, how can I put this more clearly... more... poetically... how would Euripides put it? I know, I know:

He kneels before Demosthenes

Demosthenes: (*Shocked at the gesture*)

Oh, no, no, no, no! Stop that! Don't do the herb-seller's prayer to me, Nikias, please! Euripides' mummy would be most upset. Say what you want to say... heroically, like the brave soldier that you are... or was! Like the general that you are... or was! Tell us how to get out of this Paphlagonian's grips!

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Nikias: (*Gets up*)

Fine. All right... Let's see... I know, say quickly, "off pee."

Demosthenes: (*puzzled*)

Off pee?

Nikias:

Now, straight after that say, quickly, "souta here!"

Demosthenes: (*Puzzled again*)

Souta here?

Nikias:

Wonderful! Now, pretend you're wanking and talking at the same time and with the same rhythm... like, start slowly and then go faster and faster, putting the two phrases together: "off pee" and "souta here."

Demosthenes: (*Lifts his phallus up and pretends to be wanking*)

Off pee souta here, off pee souta here, off pee souta here, piss off outa here, piss off outa here, piss off outa here...

Nikias:

Perfect, isn't it? Let's just piss off outa here!

Demosthenes:

Hehehe, sure is but I'm afraid doing this is going to get me... excoriated! No, no, it won't do; it's a bad omen, this!

Nikias:

Excoriated? What are you on about, man?

Demosthenes:

Excoriation; it's the wanker's curse, Nikias! Can't do that for ever.

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Nikias:

Hmmm... only one thing left to do then, I reckon: Go and pray to the gods. Go kneel before their statues and pray like buggery!

Demosthenes:

Statues? What statues? You don't believe in the gods, do you, man?

Nikias:

Yeah, of course I do! I believe in the gods! All of them!

Demosthenes:

Do you? But what evidence is there that they even exist?

Nikias:

Evidence? Evidence? The evidence is that all of the holy buggers up there hate me! Isn't that evidence enough for you?

Demosthenes:

Indeed! I must admit, yes, that is absolute proof they exist! But we still have to think of something! Something... different.

(Indicating the audience)

Look, shall I explain our situation to the good folk out there?

Nikias:

Good idea, Demosthenes but, before we do that, let's ask them something. Let's ask them if they're enjoying our words and deeds so far in the proceedings. *(Turning to the audience)* Just look like you're happy, folks!

(Both encourage the audience to look happy)

Demosthenes:

Right. Now I'll tell them all about it, right?

Nikias nods in agreement

You see, folks, we two are the servants of a man called Mr Demos. He lives here, in Parliament Lane. Uncivilised old prick. Likes chewing his beans raw. Half deaf and fully grumpy.

Well, this old man went to the market, last market day and came back with this new slave. A tanner, a leather beater, Paphlagon by name. A real crim. A slimy, sleazy con artist. Well, this leather beater took the measure of our boss in no time! He knew exactly what our master loved –loved it more than anything else on earth, so... he, the new boss, started kneeling before him, flattering him, conning him, licking his bum... yum, yum, yum... tricking the old codger, twisting and turning his little brain, making it soft with little offerings of his little off-cut bits of scrap leather.

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"Oh, dear mister Demos! Come," he'd tell him, "Come, Mr Demos, be the judge on one more case and then I'll draw you a nice warm bath. Just one more case. Look, here's your fee. Gone up to three obols now, isn't that nice? Come, take it! You can gobble it all up in one mouthful, if you like, or just nibble at it, a bite at a time... make it last... shall I serve it up to you as a little snack?" And immediately the slimy bastard grabs all of our hard work, everything we had prepared for the boss and offers it to him as if it was his own work!

Bastard!

Just a few days ago I had created for him a lovely, yummy little morsel: the whole victory of Pylos, stuffed full of Spartan soldiers with their hands up. Had it all ready to present to our boss but what did this new sly shit-slave do? He tricks me into looking the other way, slips behind me, snatches the dish right off my table and in seconds he delivers it to the boss! "Here, Master, look what I've cooked for you!" He says to him grinning.

My own dish, my own hard-won victory, my own doing!

Bloody Paphlagonian leather beater!

He keeps us all out of the house and away from the boss so we won't be able to speak to him, advise him, give him any clues... and so, now he's the only one who can whisper in his ear. Walks behind Mister Demos all day long. Everywhere.

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Stands around his dinner table with a leather swatter and wacks the crap out of every lobbyist that comes near him. No one else can get to our Mister Demos, no one!

And then, this slimy thug finds out our boss is a superstitious old fool so he goes and concocts all sorts of oracles for him. Sings to him a whole lot of bullshit prophesies and oracles to keep him happy and quiet. This bloody leather-beater spins lies about all of us. Then he chases us all around the place and whips us mercilessly! He blackmails, us, intimidates us, frightens us, takes bribes from us, terrifies the crap out of us. "See how I got your little mate, Hylas, whipped? Obey me or else you'll cop it, too!"

Today will be your last day!" So, we obey. We say, "Yes sir, no sir, three bags full of shit sir," because if we don't, the boss will beat us so hard, we'll be filling up not three but eight bags of it... shit that is. *(Takes Nikias by the hand and walks a couple of steps. He whispers to him so as not to be heard by anyone in the house.)*

So, mate, let's work out our options. Where do we go from here? Whom do we see?

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Nikias: *(Thinks for little while, counting his options in the fingers of both hands and his toes. Finally he points towards the crowd)*

The best option, as I see it, is to run off in there...

Demosthenes:

In there where? Paphlagon's got the whole ground covered. The whole earth, even. He'll get us wherever we go. He's everywhere. One foot in Pylos and the other in Parliament. He's everywhere I tell you! I can see his bumhole in the sky when I'm walking the streets of Queer-land and I can see him in the streets of Bribe-ronia and I can see his brain checking wildly the streets of Klepto-mania! He's omnipresent I tell you! Omni-blood-everywhere!

Nikias:

Well, then, next best option is suicide.

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Demosthenes:

Agree. Work out now, dear Nikias, the best way to do that... the most heroic way of doing it.

Nikias: *(After a short time of thinking)*

Got it! We'll choose the most heroic of them all: We'll do it the way Themistocles, Greece's greatest Naval Commander did it! We shall drink bull's blood!

Demosthenes: *(Shakes his head violently)*

Oh, no, no, no! No bull's blood for me! Forget it. Let's just go and drink a lovely glass of wine and toast to the benevolent spirits... perhaps they'll send us some good ideas.

Nikias: *(To the audience)*

Hahaha! That's my mate, Demosthenes, all right! Any excuse to get pissed!

Listen, my good lad: How's a drunk supposed to be able to come up with a good idea? Can't ever been done!

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Demosthenes: *(Outraged at the suggestion)*

Is that right? Is THAT right? You... you horrible little globule of slime! You... you dare deny the spiritual inspiration of wine?

Can't you see? It's with wine that the poor become rich, gain success in business and in court, enjoy life, help their mates... Go on, off with you! Go and get me a jug of wine to wet my wit, help it come up with something... witty! Go on!

Nikias:

Damn it! You and your drinking are going to get us and into an awful lot of trouble one of these days!

Demosthenes:

Into an awful lot of joy, you mean! Go on, off you go! Get me the wine, now!

(Nikias exits into the house)

Now, let's see... *(looking around him on the floor)* I'm going to lay myself down right here so that when I do get pissed -I mean when the ideas start flowing- I'll have all this place around me to spread out all my plans and designs and thoughts and schemes.

Demosthenes lies down for a few seconds before Nikias comes in. He is holding a wine jug, a cup and a garland.

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Nikias:

Just as well I didn't get caught pinching this stuff for you!

Demosthenes:

Yeah? What's Paphlagon up to in there?

Nikias:

Slashed to the eyeballs! Stretched out on his wide arse and he's snoring away. Stuffed himself with all the salty morsels and then drunk himself into a stupor. Bastard!

Demosthenes:

Go on, then, pour me some wine... make it a double!

Nikias: *(Pours some wine into the cup and offers it to Demosthenes)*

Here you are mate. Sink one for the good spirits. And put this on. *(Offers him the garland which Demosthenes dons.)*

Demosthenes: *(Drinks a gulp)*

Mmmm, yes! Good stuff this. Pramnian wine! From Pramnia! Unbeatable! Here's to the good ol' Pramnian Spirit! *(Suddenly a thought occurs to him. Looks up into the sky.)* Good Lord! Hey, Spirit, was that your idea or mine? I don't think it was mine!

Nikias:

What? What idea? Tell me!

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Demosthenes:

Quick, Nikias, run and pinch all of Paphlagon's oracles while he's asleep! Bring them all out here!

Nikias: *(Reluctant. Leaves the jug on the ground)*

But... Oh, all right, then but I hope we don't turn this good spirit of yours into something nasty!

Exit Nikias

Demosthenes:

Right then! Time now to lubricate my wit and help it produce some more clever thoughts... *(drinks a little more and contemplates for a while.)*

Enter Nikias brandishing a scroll and chuckling

Nikias:

By Zeus! How that Paphlagon snores and farts! Loud enough to rise the heavens even higher! No wonder he didn't notice me when I snatched this from under his armpit! This is his proudest oracle, this one! Guards it with his life.

Demosthenes:

O, wise friend! Mate! How clever you are! Let me have it. I want to see what it says... *(He hands Nikias his cup)* Quickly, pour me another drink! Now... let's see... what have we got here... Oh!

What devastating prophesies! Oh what stirring oracles! Hurry up! Give me the wine!

Nikias obeys and Demosthenes guzzles down the wine

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Nikias:

Here you are... what's in the oracle?

Demosthenes:

... Pour me another wine!

Nikias:

"Pour me another wine?" Is that what's in there? All that writing?

Demosthenes:

Oh, holy Bakis, Lord of the prophets!

Nikias:

What? What does it say?

Demosthenes:

Quick, another drink!

Nikias:

Goodness! What a piss pot that Bakis is!

Demosthenes:

Aha! You shitbag! You nasty little shitbag, Paphlagon! No wonder you were hiding this so tightly!

You... you rotten... He was packing his daks with fear, the old bastard. You should see what the oracle says about him!

Nikias:

What? What's it say?

Demosthenes:

It tells about our scumbag's death!

Nikias:

It does? How will it happen?

Demosthenes:

It'll happen like this: first a rope seller will come into focus... he'll manage all the affairs of Greece...

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Nikias:

That'll be seller number one. Then what happens? Tell us!

Demosthenes: *(searches the scroll again)*

Then... then another seller will arrive. This one sells sheep.

Nikias:

That's two of them now. What's this one going to do?

Demosthenes:

Well, he's going to take over from the rope seller and then someone else is going to take over from him... someone even more of a shitbag than this one and then... then that'll be the end of him... eh... of the new seller that is. Then that new seller will be succeeded by a... why, look! He'll be followed by our very own leather seller, our very own hide beater, the disreputable thief and squealer, Mister Paphlagon himself! Voice as loud as a thunderous, chunderous torrential cataract!

Nikias: *(Calculates)*

Soooo, the sheep seller man is slaughtered by the leather seller man?

Demosthenes:

Yeap!

Nikias:

Oh, poor us! Couldn't you find another seller somewhere, to slaughter this one?

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Demosthenes:

Well, I can see another one here... one whose trade is very... inspiring!

Nikias:

Who? Tell me, please!

Demosthenes:

You want me to tell you, do you?

Nikias:

Of course I do. Who is it?

Demosthenes:

Well then, let me tell you. The seller who'll slaughter our Mister Paphlagon is a... he's... another seller... he's a sausage seller!

Nikias:

Good Lord, Poseidon! A sausage seller! A sausage seller, ey? And where do we find one of them?

Where do we find a sausage seller?

Demosthenes:

Don't know but let's go look for him...

Suddenly the sausage seller is heard in the wings plying his trade

Sausage Seller: *(Within)*

Sausages! Buy your lovely sausages here! Sausages, cow's tripe, hog's guts and bellies, morsels of all sorts!

Nikias sees him in the distance.

Nikias:

Hang on... Talk of divine intervention! Here's the boy himself. Looks like he's on his way to the meat market.

Enter Sausage Seller carrying his box of sausages and strings of them around his neck. On his belt there is an array of butcher's knives and cleavers.

Demosthenes: *Gets up and takes sausage seller by the hand.*

Oh my good, good man! Blessed boy! Come, come this way, matey...

You! You, my dear man are our saviour! Ours and our city's! Come!

Sausage Seller:

What? You talking to me? What d'you want?

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Demosthenes:

Come over here mate. Come! Let me tell you just how fortunate you are, young man! How very, very lucky, how blessed by the very Heavens you are!

Nikias:

Right! Take that box off him, Demosthenes and explain to him what the gods say in that oracle. In the meantime, I'll go and check what Paphlagon is up to.

Exit Nikias into the House.

Demosthenes:

Now, mister sausage seller man, first, put down this box of yours. *Sausage Seller obeys.* Now, kneel down and thank mother Earth and all the gods above. *Sausage Seller hesitates but finally obeys.*

Sausage Seller:

Right! What's all this about, then?

Demosthenes:

This, young man, is all about you getting filthy rich! It's about you being in a whole lot of very good luck. You might not account for much right now but by tomorrow, mister sausage seller man, you'll be

a very great man! A very great, super great man! Immensely big! Enormous! You'll be the head of this great city of ours. You'll be the Supreme Leader of Athens!

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Sausage Seller: *Highly annoyed*

Look, mate, can you stop this bullshit and let me do my work? *Pointing at his box* I've gotta wash these guts here and go sell all these snags! I got no time to waste on this sort of dumb piss-farting around!

Demosthenes:

Wash guts? Wash guts? You fool! *Pointing into the audience.* Look there! There! See? See all those... that crowd in there?

Sausage Seller *After peering into the audience and showing distaste.*

Yeah...

Demosthenes:

They're all yours! Every single one of them! You'll be able to do anything you want with them! You'll be the boss of the market, the chief of the harbour, the Lord of our Parliament. You'll be able to shove it up the Council, lock up the generals, tie chains around anyone you want and throw them in the clink for ever. Choose the best fucks in the Senate! All yours, mate!

Sausage Seller:

Who, me? You talking about me?

Demosthenes:

Of course, I'm talking about you! Here! Climb on this box of yours. *Sausage seller obeys.* Now look out there... far as you can... check out all the islands out there!

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Sausage Seller:

Oh, yeah! I can see them!

Demosthenes:

Yeah? And do you see all the ports and all those cargo ships?

Sausage Seller:

Yeah...

Demosthenes:

See how well you're doing already? Now swing one of your eyes –the right one- over towards Caria... that way.... And then the other one –the left one- towards Carthage... that way.

Sausage Seller:

By Zeussy Zeus! I'm doing so well I'm going cross-eyed!

Demosthenes:

No, you're not. You're going to be rich! All this stuff will be yours to buy and sell; to trade with, to make money with, to become the biggest man in town. *Waves the scroll at him.* It says so in here, in this oracle. It's a prophesy, sausage man. You can't go wrong!

Sausage Seller:

Oh yeah? So give us a clue: how does a humble little snag monger like me gets to become a big boss like the one you're talking about?

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Demosthenes:

Easy! You've got all the credentials! Rude, crude and shameless! Perfect for becoming big and powerful! The most important qualifications for a politician.

Sausage Seller:

Nah... Don't reckon I could take it on... don't reckon I'm good enough, being such an important man, I mean!

Demosthenes:

Oh no! Don't tell me! Don't tell me you've come from some highly cultivated and noble family and you've got a bit of a conscience in you... have you? What makes you say you're not good enough?

Sausage Seller:

Cultivated and noble family? Hell no! Nah, my whole family is a bunch of no-hopers. The lot of them.

Demosthenes:

Phew! You got me worried there for a second. Well then, that's perfect! Congratulations. You've got the job. Your background is a fertile ground for politics! You're one lucky boy!

Sausage Seller:

Mate, I can barely read or write, let alone educated! I know nothing about nothing!

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Demosthenes:

Please! Don't toss away what gifts the gods have conferred upon you, gifts that are inscribed here in this oracle! Ignorance is bliss, snag man! Ignorance and uselessness! Perfect for a politician's job! The rest, honesty and education are distinct impediments. Be thankful for your qualities. Only slight problem here is your abject poverty.

Sausage Seller:

So... what does that oracle of yours really say about me?

Demosthenes:

Ah, it's a beauty, my friend! By all the mighty gods in Heaven! Very nicely worded, very... very wisely enigmatic. Look: *Unrolls the scroll and reads from it*

"And so, I say, when the starving leather-beating, humungous eagle grabs with its hooked talons the dumb and blood-thirsty serpent and gobbles it up in its crooked beak, then, indeed, it shall be when the garlic-stinking puke of Paphlagon shall be spilled about us, ay, yes, indeedee, and when the Gods shall endow the seller of guts with great powers, unless he chooses to eschew this benefit and continue selling his sad snags."

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Sausage Seller: *Looking terribly puzzled*

Ah... yeah... right. Please explain? What's it really saying about me?

Demosthenes: *Pointing at someone in the audience*

See that guy there? There! Over there. That's Paphlagon, over there. He's the huge leather-beating eagle.

Sausage Seller:

Oh, yeah... what about the "hooked talons?"

Demosthenes:

The "hooked talons?" That's obvious. He's got hands the shape of hooks and he uses them to snatch and grab stuff from people's pockets and from tables and...

Sausage Seller:

I see... what about the serpent thing you said?

Demosthenes:

The serpent? Eh... see, the serpent is long, right? Long like a sausage and... and both, serpents and sausages gobble up blood, right? They're blood thirsty things. And that's what's in the oracle: the dumb serpent will gobble up the humungous eagle... (*realises he's got it back-to-front*) that's if it's not gobbled up by all these weasel-words I'm babbling... see what I mean?

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Sausage Seller:

Yeah, I see. All them words are good but, still, it sounds a bit dodgy to me, amazing really, me being the boss of all them people out there.

Demosthenes:

No probs, mate! Easy work for someone like you. Just do what you do well, boy! Just do what you do well! Shove all their businesses in a big bowl, mash them all up, slop in a bit of butter and make the people happy with a few sweet little words cooked up in the Parliament's oven. No probs, mate!

You've got all the ingredients and condiments you need to become a tyrant: You've got vulgarity, you've got a crass voice, shit family background, the cunning of a market place rat... you're a fully baked politician, mate! And, what's more, you've got the backing of the oracle of Delphi!

Here! Take this garland and put it on your head. *Sausage Seller obeys*. Now take this cup and pour a libation to the god... God Dickhead... and go defend us against that idiot in there.

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Sausage Seller:

Oh yeah? Me and what army? That man in there terrifies the rich and makes the poor shit themselves!

Demosthenes:

What army? What army? The army of a thousand noble Knights, my boy! One thousand Knights will be right behind you. Brave warriors the lot of them. They hate that bastard. They'll be right behind you. Them and all the good, intelligent folk and those in that crowd out there who are honest and noble and me and the god... we'll all help you. What more do you want? He looks gruesome, by the way, because our mask makers didn't want to make a mask for him and because no actor wanted to take on his role, but don't be afraid because our audience here is very clever and they'll recognise him immediately.

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Nikias: *Within*

Oh, Lord! Oh, no! Help! Paphlagon is going out!

Enter Paphlagon, followed by Nikias. Paphlagon is wearing the wreath of high office.

Paphlagon:

By the dozen gods of Mount Olympus! You two bastards won't get away with scheming all these plots against our boss! *Indicating the cup in the sausage seller's hand.* What's that Chalcidian cup doing out here, ey? This can only mean one thing: You're plotting with them. You're getting the Chalcidians to start up an insurrection! A rebellion! That's it for you two! Now you're stuffed! Sprung! You're both dead meat! Pissy little shit bags the two of you!

The sausage seller becomes extremely frightened and turns to run away.

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Nikias:

Hey! Hey, mister sausage seller man! Hey, my noble friend! Don't run away! What are you frightened of? Come back! Don't leave us. Don't turn your back upon this worthy battle!

(Suddenly a cloud of dust is bellowing in from the wings: Stage Left)

(Nikias calls out into the wings)

Hey, Simon, Panaetius, gallant knights, come, rush out over here to our aid. We need you! The time has come. Take over the right wing! Sausage seller, no! Don't run away, come back and let's stand fast. Our cavalry is here. Look over there. You can see the clouds of dust they're raising from here. Look! They're rushing in to help with our battle. Come, men, chase the bastard! Fight him, turn the nasty shit back!

Enter the Knights, (members of the Athenian aristocracy) headed by Simon and Panaetius.

Simon: *To the sausage seller*

Go for it, sausage man!

Beat the crap out of the rotten bastard!

Rotten, rotten shit of a man!

He's the one who spins our cavalry into a chaotic confusion.

Beat this bloodsucking tax collector,

Beat this gloated, bloated beast,

Beat this nightmare of voracious avarice!

Beat this shit,

Beat this shit,

Panaetius:

Let me repeat this, let me repeat this, let me repeat this again

'Cause he repeats his nasty deeds over and over every day:

I said,

Beat this shit of a man!

(The sausage seller takes the chain of sausages off his neck and pursues Paphlagon, occasionally beating him with them. The chorus of Knights, along with Nikias and Demosthenes, surround Paphlagon and adds to the mallee.)

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Simon:

Beat the bastard well and proper!

Chase him all around!

Yea, that's it! Fuck the bastard!

Shove it right up him!

Beat him with your snags, snag man!

Abhor him like we do!

Yell out a fierce war cry! Attack! Attack! Attack!

This shit of a man!

Panaetius:

Careful! Don't let him run away now!

The sly bastard knows all the streets the cowards use to escape.

He's another Eucrates, this one:

Down with his spear and off to the market to sell his wares!

Leave the battle for the brave! That's our Eucrates!

Paphlagon:

Ouch, ouch! Ohhhh! Help!

To the audience

Friends, elder jurors, brothers of the courts, whose wages I've increased to three obols a day –three!- and whose business I've helped grow with lots and lots of judgements. Good judgements or bad, it made no difference to me! Just shouted them out and passed them on to you!

Come, help me! The conspirators are beating me up!

Ouch, ouch, Oh!

Help me!

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Panaetius:

Too right! Of course we are! You're a thief, a crook, an embezzler! You strip the public purse bare even before you get elected. You're just another mongrel who squeezes all the prospective magistrates for bribes...

Simon:

... like a fig picker squeezes his figs, checking them all out: Is this one ripe? Is this one green? Is this one still raw?

Panaetius:

Same with all the poor folk out there. You go round checking every single one of them out. Spy on them. Are they rich? Are they innocent, are they dumb little sheep? Do they shake and tremble with fear in the courts? Then, when you find your mark, some poor, ignorant suck who doesn't give a stuff about politics, you drag him from whatever colony he lives in –Gallipoli or wherever, hook him up with all the defamations you can, drop him to his knees, rip his arm off and let him cop it from behind.

Paphlagon:

You! You Knights! What are you attacking me for? Can't you see? It's for you lot that I'm getting beaten! They're beating me up because I was about to move a motion in Parliament to have a monument erected in your honour. To acknowledge your bravery! That's why they're beating me up!

Simon:

Liar! Bloody liar! Slippery sleazebag! Oh, the lengths this prick will go to, to screw us! Thinks we're all senile old men!

Paphlagon tries to run away.

Panaetius:

Wow there! You trying to escape this way, are you? Well, just try and you'll cop this (*swings his phallus threateningly*)

Paphlagon tries the other side

Simon:

O, no, you don't! Come this way and you'll cop this between your legs! (*Also swings his phallus threateningly*)

Everyone is beating Paphlagon

Paphlagon: *Shouting at the audience. Pleading.*

Ouch! Ouch! Ah! Come on, folks! Citizens of Athens! Look! Look at the sort of wild beasts that are bashing me up!

Sausage Seller:

Always shouting, your bastard! Always shouting and always stuffing up our city! Destructive mongrel!

Paphlagon:

And I'll aim my loud voice to you first...

Panaetius:

Ha! You? You think you can outshout a sausage seller? Good luck! Go on, have a go! We'll give you first prize if you do but I bet he'll get the first prize in vulgarity! Beat the bullshit out of you!

Paphlagon: *Shouts*

I... accuse... this... man... of... of... of... stealing the... stealing the... decking planks of our fighting ships and... and... selling them to... selling them to the Spaaaartans! For them to build their triremes and attack us!

280

Sausage Seller: *Trying to outshout Paphlagon*

By Zeus! And I... I... accuse... this... man of... of... of... trotting off into Parliament with an empty gut and trotting back out of it with a stuffed one!

Demosthenes:

By Zeus, that's right! Not only stuffed his guts but also ran off with all sorts of goodies: bread, meat, fish, you name it! Even Pericles wasn't allowed to get to that stuff!

Paphlagon:

Right! That's it, you two! You're gonna die!

Sausage Seller: *Even louder*

I can shout three times louder than you!

Paphlagon: *Continues the shouting contest*

Oh, yeah? You haven't heard me using my lungs yet! I'll... I'll outlung you!

Sausage Seller:

Is that right? And I'll crow you down with my crow's crow!

Paphlagon:

I'll shout out slander, if you ever become a general!

Sausage Seller:

You do that and I'll do you doggy style!

290

Paphlagon:

I'll tie you up with a web of lies!

Sausage Seller:

You won't be able to escape me, boy!

Paphlagon:

Oh, yeah? Look me in the eye and say that! Go on!

Sausage Seller brings his face close to Paphlagon's. A staring contest begins

Sausage Seller:

I'm a market boy meself, you know! Born and raised in it!

Paphlagon:

One word from you and I'll turn you into a sack of minced meat!

Sausage Seller:

Ha! One word from you and I'll turn you into a sack of shit!

Paphlagon:

At least, I admit that I'm a crook. You don't even do that!

Sausage Seller:

By Hermes, the guardian god of the marketplace! So do I!

Paphlagon:

And when I get caught –if I get caught- I go ahead and perjure myself. Swear black and blue I didn't do it!

Sausage Seller:

You're a crook, all right! Perjury is a tool that belongs to others.

Paphlagon:

Listen, mate! I'll have you before the judges for stealing all the gizzards from the sacrifices and you don't give them their tithes. It's ten percent you know! It should go to the judges. You take it all and keep it for yourself.

Simon: *To Paphlagon*

You! You disgusting loud mouth! You've flooded the whole city with your stinking sleaze! Parliament, Tax Office, the whole Bureaucracy, all our courts! You destroyed them all with all your shit-stirring. Our whole country is fucked up because of you. You shout down anyone and everyone who stands in your way. You get up onto the high cliffs of our city and watch the tax collectors like fishermen watch the tuna.

312

Paphlagon:

Oh, I know! I know how all this shit got started!

Sausage Seller:

Sure you do. You know all about shit, just like I know all about making snags. You're the cleverest shit in town. You used to slice up ox hide so cleverly, fluffed it up so well, that when the poor farmers bought your stupid shoes they thought they bought shoes with a thick sole on them but by the end of the day, the bloody things flattened out to two hands wide!

Demosthenes:

Exactly! Bastard did it to me once! Zeus knows it! Same shit job. The whole town laughed at me and those stupid shoes! All my friends made fun of me. By the time I got to the market, my feet were swimming in those shoes.

322

Panaetius: *To Paphlagon*

Admit it! You have the gift of bullshit! Bullshit, the single protector of orators and politicians! That's what you're relying on to harvest the grapes picked by the wealthy foreigners. You're the first in line to rip them off. Poor sucks like Hippadamus' son haven't got a chance in the world because of you. The

son of the greatest architect on earth can only sit by the side lines and cry at the injustice. Ah, but now I feel much better. *Indicating the sausage seller.* Now I know there's someone who's a better crook than you. Better in chicanery, more bold, a better rip off merchant!

Simon: *To Paphlagon*

Come, my friend! You're a man born and raised in the marketplace, the place where the great men are made! Come now, show this bastard that noble upbringing is worth nothing!

335

Sausage Seller:

Now let me tell you what sort of a man this one is!

Paphlagon:

What? Shouldn't I be allowed to speak first?

Sausage Seller:

Zeus, no! I'm a crook as well, you know!

Demosthenes: *To sausage seller*

Pssst! And if that won't knock him out, tell him that you've come from a whole line of crooks.

Paphlagon: *Angry*

Come on! Let me speak now!

Sausage Seller:

No way!

Paphlagon:

Yes way!

Sausage Seller:

Let you speak before me? By Poseidon, no way! I'll fight you for it right now.

Paphlagon:

Oh, I'm going to blow up!

340

Sausage Seller:

And I still won't let you speak first.

Demosthenes: *To the sausage seller*

Yeah, let him blow himself right up! By all the gods!

Paphlagon:

What the hell makes you think you've got any hope of arguing against someone like me?

Sausage Seller:

Because I too, am an orator... and I, too can sleaze everything up!

Paphlagon:

Ha! You? You an orator? I can just hear the lovely oration you'd be making at the sight of a freshly slaughtered plaintiff! I know how you'd be handling the poor bastard. I know what must have happened to you to make you so cocky: You've most probably gone and done what many others have gone and done before you: won some minor case against some poor migrant and then started walking around the city, gloating over that tiny case, thinking about it and blurting out your speech over and over again, drinking gallons of water and annoying your poor friends with your boasting about being the world's greatest orator! Stupid fool! Madman!

350

Demosthenes:

And you? What sort of drink have you drunk to get the whole city stunned into silence with your endless blather?

Paphlagon:

Me? I'm inimitable! Incomparable! Mate, I could just sit me down, right now, eat a whole plate of hot tuna, guzzle down a whole jug of strong, undiluted wine and then go and screw the whole herd of the generals in Pylos... all without blinking an eyelid!

Sausage Seller:

Oh, yeah? Mate... mate... I could just sit me down right now and after wolfing down a whole cow's tripe and a whole hog's belly... complete with all their gravy and juice and... I could... I could – without bothering to wash my hands, mind- I could de-throat all the politicians and orators in town and... and sexually molest Nikias!

Nikias: *shocked at the suggestion*

Oi! I... I liked all the other stuff about the cow's tripe and the pig's belly and de-throating the politicians but I'm worried about you sucking up all the city's gravy... all on your own, I mean.

361

Paphlagon: *To the sausage seller*

Oh, yeah? But you're not going to eat all of the Milesians' big fish and then turn them round and fuck 'em like you did last time!

Sausage Seller:

...and then I'll eat half a bull and buy myself some metal mines!

Paphlagon:

Listen, mate! I can jump into the Council and while it's still sitting, screw every one of them! Bugger the whole lot of them!

Sausage Seller:

I'll... I'll... I'll spin you round and stuff your arsehole full of meat, like I do me snag skins!

Paphlagon:

Oh yeah? And I'll pick you up by your bum, tip you upside down and drag you, head down outa of here!

Demosthenes:

Oh, how delightful! Poseidon, my god! Me, too, me too! Lift me up by the bum, please!

Paphlagon:

To the pillory, with you! Oh, I'd love to lock your head into one of those stocks in the market place!

Sausage Seller:

I'll... I'll... I'll drag you to the courts and charge you with cowardice!

Paphlagon:

I'll stretch your hide across my tanning bench!

370

Sausage Seller:

Oh, yeah? And I'll... I'll... I'll... skin you alive and make a thief's pouch out of you!

Paphlagon:

I'll rip your eyebrows off... one by single one!

Sausage Seller:

Oh yeah? And I'll... I'll... I'll make minced meat out of your whole body!

Paphlagon:

I'll rip your eyelashes off... one by one!

Sausage Seller:

I'll rip your guts out!

Demosthenes:

And! And what's more, we're going to do to him what the cooks do to their animals before they slaughter them, ey? We'll shove a pole down his throat, pull his tongue right out and while he's gaping we'll go round the back and thoroughly check his bumhole for worms! Good and proper!

381

Panaetius:

Oh, yes, my friends! There are things in the world that are hotter than fire itself and there are words that are more disgusting than the most disgusting acts on earth!

Now this matter here isn't a small one at all! Not very small at all!

Simon: *To the sausage seller*

Come on then, my good man! Grab him, grab him hard and spin him round. You've already got him by the waist. Put your heart into it. Charge, man! Toss him about, drop him on the ground. Then you'll see what a coward he is! I know what he's really like! I know this bastard well!

389

Sausage Seller:

That's the way he's been all his life! A hero in his own image. He's a crook, a thief!

Someone else's harvest somehow always ends up being his own crop.

Like... first he steals all that Spartan wheat in Pylos, then he brings it over here to dry and then he sells it all back to the Spartans! Disgusting!

Paphlagon:

I'm not worried about you lot! So long as the politicians sit in the Council and the people sit gawking stupidly out there, *indicating the audience* I fear nobody!

Simon:

Disgusting creature! Callous, crass, reckless and shameless! Doesn't even blush any more! By the gods, I hate you! I swear I hate you and if I don't hate you enough, may I be reborn as a rug in pissier Cratinus' house, or as one of those chorus women in a Morsimus tragedy.

You've got your fingers in everyone's pie, Mister Paphlagon! Inside everybody's business! There you are, gobbling up its profits with bribes. By Hermes! I hope you puke up all those profits, puke them up

as quick as you pluck them out! That'll be the moment I'll be able to sing, "Drink, drink and drown your misfortune!"

Panaetius:

Ha! And I can just see Ulius' old son, the tax inspector who chases bits of crumbs everywhere, sing heartily, an ode to Bacchus, the god of the drunks.

409

Paphlagon:

By Zeussy, Zeus! Zeus help me! There's no way I'm going to let you beat me in sleazemanship! Lose this contest and I'll ban my own self from sharing the morsels dished out at Zeus' Feast Of Market Fatsos!

Sausage Seller:

No way! All the beating and the knife wounds I've received ever since I was a toddler will be for nothing if I can't beat you in this little game! No way! Look at me! I've grown this big on simple table scraps, table crap that was tossed away. I'm a hardened man! Well trained as a sleazebag!

Paphlagon:

Table scraps, ey, dog food, ey? You grew up on dog food, you sad sod but you don't have the face to beat someone with the face of a dog, not a baboon, like me!

Sausage Seller:

Monkey, ey? I swear that I was the biggest monkey in the world, when I was a kid! Full of monkey tricks, I was. I'd go over to the butchers' and I'd make them look up into the sky, saying, "look, guys, Spring's here! Look, there's a swallow up there!" And the moment they raised their heads up, I'd nip around and steal a sausage!

421

Demosthenes:

Well done, my boy! What clever cleaver tactics! Brilliant planning! There you were, getting your meals ahead of everyone else: nettles while they're still tender, at the first sighting of a swallow! At the break of Spring.

Sausage Seller:

Ha! And I'd never get caught in the act, either, 'cause the moment someone saw me, I'd shove the meat between my legs and swear black and blue that I'd done nothing! I'd say I was fully and totally innocent! One day a politician saw me going through the motions and said, "No question about it! This boy will rule the city one day!"

Demosthenes:

That politician was a prophet! Still, he saw what you did: you told lies and you took meat up your bum!

429

Paphlagon:

I'll get you! I'll get you, you two! I'll crap on this... this nonsense! Sleazebags, my arse! I'll fall on you like a ton of bricks! Like a hurricane! I'll spin the whole world around and upside down! The whole lot: Earth, sea, everything. I'll have it shaken all up!

Sausage Seller:

Oh, yeah? Oh, yeah? Well, let me tell you, I'm gonna... I'm gonna pick all my snags up, wrap them around my neck, surf the waves and yell back at you: Suck that, you bastard!

Nikias:

And I'll keep my eyes on the pumps... in case we take in water!

Paphlagon:

By Demeter! No way! You're not going to escape that easily with all that cash you've pinched from the Athenian folk!

Demosthenes: *To the sausage seller:*

Ahoy there, sausage man! Loosen your sails a bit now! I can see one hell of a freezing wind blowing up a crook's storm!

Sausage Seller: *To Paphlagon*

Listen, you! I know all about the ten talents you stole from the city on that Potidea siege thing we did.

Paphlagon: *Whispering slyly*

Oi, you... you want one of them talents to shut your trap?

440

Nikias: *Who had overheard*

Yeap! Our man here will accept your bribe, sir. Right! Loosen your ropes, now, the wind's dying.

Paphlagon:

Ha! Gotsa! You'll be charged with bribery! Four of them! Four charges at one hundred talents each!

Sausage Seller:

And you! You'll... you'll... cop twenty charges for draft-dodging and more than a thousand charges for stealing funds!

Paphlagon:

I'll bring charges against your heritage! You're from a family that committed sacrilege against our goddess. Your people had killed people in Athena's temple!

Sausage Seller:

And I'll dob you in because your grand pappy was one of the bodyguards that...

Paphlagon:

Bodyguard? Whose bodyguard? What are you on about, sausage man? Go on, tell us! This'll be good!

Sausage Seller:

Yeah, he was one of the bodyguards of the wife of one of our tyrants. Hippias. Byrsine.

Paphlagon:

You dirty snotbag!

450

Sausage Seller:

Sleazebag, scumbag!

Demosthenes: *To the sausage seller*

Go on! Clobber him, like a man!

Sausage Seller does so. The rest of the chorus joins in

Paphlagon:

Ouch! Ouch! Ouch! I'm being clobbered by the conspirators! Help!

Nikias:

Go for it man! Give him a man's beating! Harder! Hit him, sausage man! Hit him with your snags and with your tripe! Make him puke out all his nastiness!

Simon:

Yeah, that's it, sausage man! What a lovely cut of meat you've turned out to be! More guts than all the men in town! You're our hero! You've saved Athens and all her citizens! What a brave – what a manly attack you've launched against him with your verbiage!

Panaetius:

With what words can we praise you, to thank you for the joy you've given us? Words fail us!

461

Paphlagon:

By Demeter, I wasn't wrong! Not wrong at all! I knew what you were all up to straight from the start! I knew straight from the start how you had all glued and nailed this scheme together! I had it worked out it all along!

Sausage Seller:

And I... -don't you worry, I... I know all about your underhanded work at Argos. There you were, pretending to be building an alliance with the Argives while, all along you were doing your own wheeling and dealing with our arch-enemy, the Spartans!

Demosthenes: *To sausage seller*

Oh no, sausage man! Did you hear that? I think you'd better use one of those... technical words the cart makers use in their workshop, now!

Sausage Seller: *Answering Paphlagon*

"Glued and nailed this scheme, ey?" And I know exactly why your bellows were working: to weld together the shackles of the prisoners!

470

Demosthenes:

Hahaha! *To the sausage seller* Brilliant! Brilliant! Now give him a nailing for every one of his gluing!

Sausage Seller: *To Demosthenes*

And he's still got his little conspirators working those bellows for him on the side of our enemies, even now!

Back to Paphlagon: You can try and offer me all the bribes you want –silver, gold, anything, or you can even send your little mates around to pay me a visit, if you want but you're not going to stop me from telling the Athenians all about your nasty deeds!

Paphlagon:

Who me? No way! I'm heading off to the Council right now, to tell them all about your little secret conspiratorial schemes, your little night meetings in the city, all those sly plans with the Persians and their King! And as for that sleazy, cheesy, business with the Boetians – mate!

480

Sausage Seller: *business-like*

Oh yeah... eh... tell me, what does one pay for cheese in Boetia these days?

Paphlagon: *As he escapes and rushes out, to the sausage seller*

I'll have you skinned, alive! Stretch out your hide good and proper! By Heracles!

Exit Paphlagon

Nikias:

Now my friend, you're going to show us just what sort of a brain you have, sharp or dull. You said you've shoved that piece of meat up your bum, well, you better run straight after him to the council because he's going to dob us all in. He'll outrage all the councillors with that screeching voice of his!

Sausage Seller:

Sure, I'm off right now. Ah... let me leave all my bellies and knives here with you first. *Takes all his knives off his belt and places them on his meat box.*

Demosthenes brings out a little flask of oil, tips some oil on his hands and tries to rub it into the sausage seller's neck.

490

Demosthenes:

Here, sausage man. You better rub some of this around your neck, like the wrestlers do, so you'll be able to slip away from all his sleazy tricks.

Sausage Seller:

Yeah, that's great! What a good coach you'd make for a wrestler!

Nikias brings out of his cloak a handful of garlic and offers it to the sausage seller.

Nikias:

And this. Take this and gobble this up.

Sausage Seller:

Why? What is it?

Nikias:

It's garlic. Come on, eat it! Fighting cocks can never win a match without it. It'll improve your fighting no end.

Sausage seller wolfs it down

Sausage Seller:

Right then, I'm off!

Sausage Seller begins to exit

Demosthenes holds him back to give him his final advice

Demosthenes:

Don't forget now! Show him your teeth! Bite him, bullshit him, rip his coxcomb off his stupid head and don't come back here before you tear those... caruncles of his, right off his throat! Tear those turkey wattles off with your teeth!

497

Panaetius:

Go, go! The best of luck with you and I hope you succeed in achieving our goals. Let Zeus, the protector of the marketplace look over you and grant you victory!

Let us see you back here wearing the crowns of a victor!

Exit Sausage seller

Simon: *To the audience*

Now, you lot! Connoisseurs of good poetry, one and all, listen to our own little verses!

Had one of the producers of comedy from the old school asked us to make this little speech, in the middle of this comedy, he'd have bugger all hope! But this time, we've got a poet who's worthy of it and who deserves to be heard.

510

Panaetius:

He's a brave boy, that one. He hates the same people we hate, he's brave enough to tell the truth and brave enough to walk right up, dead against every typhoon and tempest, Paphlagon being one such example, and tell him to his face exactly what he thinks. That's what our poet, the great Aristophanes is like and that's why we're going to make this speech.

Simon:

As for those of you who kept asking ask him why had he not written a play before, let us inform you that he has asked us to inform you that it wasn't because he lacked the brains to do it but because, to bring a comedy onto the stage is an extremely difficult thing. It's a job far more difficult than all the others!

Panaetius:

Many have tried and many have failed abysmally!

Simon:

And he knows very well just how unreliable you all are, out there! He saw all those other poor poets, totally abandoned by you the very moment they grew a little older!

520

Panaetius:

That's what had happened to the late Magnes, poor man, whose hair grew white, waiting for your acclaim, even though he had beaten so many rivals and had won so many prizes in his earlier years. The poor bastard had given you his all! From him you heard every possible vocal style.

Simon:

All the humming, all those lovely sounds of birds on the wing, all those equally charming Lydian sounds and those enchanting sounds made by mozzies, all that beautiful work was all in vain! Poor bastard, he even painted himself green – made himself look like a frog, for you! All to no avail! Of course, while he was young, he was everyone's hero but then, when he grew a little old, you – you had completely abandoned him! Abandoned him just like his muse did.

Panaetius:

Then our poet's mind also visits Cratinus. Now that was yet another poet who, with your backing and accolades used to glide along through peaceful glens like a happy river, uprooting whole forests of enemy oak trees and plane trees and taking them along with him. The boy was so famous that in every drinking party you'd hear people singing his very words:

530

Simon: *singing*

"Oh, the sleaze that's in my sleazebag will buy me a bribe..." or the other one, "Oh, craftsmen of crafty poems..." What a grand name Cratinus was once! Now, you can all see him, a pitiful sight, blabbering and muttering, blabbering and muttering in the street, his lyre's strings worn out, his tuning keys all gone, harmony stuffed, all flats and no sharps, totally unbearable to the ear...

Panaetius:

...and still you feel no pity for the old bloke. You've abandoned him just like you did with that lovely flute player, Konnas. So now, we get to see poor old Cratinus, shuffling about our streets, wearing crowns of withered branches on his head, dying for a drink who, after all these victories, he should be drinking free at the Prytaneum and, instead of muttering and gibbering to himself, he should be sitting right here, in the front row, next to Dionysus himself!

Simon:

And then there was Crates! Poor bastard Crates! The crap he had to endure from you lot. He got the first prize three times –yes three bloody times- and you still poured the scorn and the verbal beatings on him! Shame, on you! What a lovely little oven that mouth of his was! He used to bake up the wittiest little cookies for you. All for free! Used to send you home with your bellies full of all those beautiful little jokes of his.

540

Panaetius:

Barely made a living out of it. Just managed to survive, that's all. Win one day, lose the next... just barely made it! And that's the sort of stuff that made our poet, our great Aristophanes, delay his outing.

Simon:

And then there's the other thing. See, our poet reckons that one needs to do a stretch at the oars before one gets to steer the wheel. Then, only after he gets the oars and the wheel right, should he stand at the prow of his own ship, check out the ways of the winds and navigate the ship himself.

Panaetius:

So come on folks! Applaud the great man. He's been circumspect, modest and he simply refused to jump onto the stage and start spewing out nonsensical verses like many others! Come on! Your applause, please folks and make it loud! Make it an eleven-oar applause, worthy of a victor of our Lenean Festival!

Folks, the Eleven-oar Salute, please!

Everyone on the stage applauds

We should send our poet from here, happy with success, joy glistening all the way to the bald patch on his head!

551

Simon: *Praying*

Oh, Lord! Oh, Lord, protector and lover of horses!

Lover of the brazen clang and thud of the horses' hooves, lover of the horses' neighing. Lover, too, of the swift war ships with their blue emblems of rams at the prow!

Oh, God, whose heart gladdens at the sight of the rich booty those ships carry! A heart that also gladdens at the sight of young men in contest, particularly when they climb proudly upon their chariots chasing their Fate -victory or defeat, no matter!

Come, God of the horse, come now and join our dance!

Poseidon, God of the golden trident, come join us!

561

Panaetius:

God, chief of the dolphins!

God whose name is praised at Sounion!

God, son of Kronos, Geraestus!

God, most loved by the folk of Phormion to whom you granted a naval victory!

God most loved by all the citizens of Athens at this hour of their naval need!

Simon:

We, the city's Knights are here to praise our forefathers, men, true and worthy of the goddess's long temple robe. Men whose bravery on land and sea always brought victory to us and glory to our city!

Not one of them was a coward, like those who check fearfully the numbers on the enemy's side but, instead, their brave heart always rose up in defiance!

You could see them in the battle: if any of them hit the dirt, they'd quickly get up, pretend nothing happened, dust their shoulder off and get back into the bloody thick of it.

And you wouldn't see any of them running up to Cleainetus, Cleon's father, begging for some subsidy or other. Not like the new lot of soldiers. You'd have to give this lot the best seats in the house here plus a free meal before they'd go off to war to fight for their country!

Our only wish is to be given the chance to fight the glorious fight to protect our gods and our city. No need for subsidies for us. We need nothing more...

Panaetius:

... that is to say, nothing except for this little bit: When we do bring Peace home, don't go on at us about our long hair...

Simon:

Or our sweat scrapers and other beauty items we use.

581

Panaetius: *Praying*

Oh, grand goddess Athena, protector of our city, Athens, the holiest land of them all! The land with the most victories, the most poets and the most power!

Come, goddess!

Come and bring with you our comrade in arms, in all our expeditions, in all our fights! Bring Victory with you!

She is our partner, too, in our plays. Victory joins us and helps us against our opponents.

590

Simon:

Come, Palas, Athena, manifest yourself before us and grand victory to these Knights, these gentle, gentle men!

Grant them victory now, just like you did before, dear Athena!

Panaetius:

And, us being Knights, we want to say a few good words in praise of our horses.

Praise the magnificent accomplishments of our very own cavalry. They certainly deserve it. They've been with us to every battle and expedition and showed their bravery. We know their deeds on land very well and we stand in absolute awe of them! And when we think of how those horses just jumped into the cargo ships –just like human soldiers- after first getting their rations organised and packing their sacks with garlic and onion. Then, there they were, just like us, their human partners, they took a hold of the oars and plunged them into the sea, all the while singing out “Hippo, hippo, heave! Hippo, hippo, heaaaaave! Come you lot! Heave I say, heave hard at your oars! What are you up to, Samfora? Plunge your stupid oar into the sea and heave harder!”

Simon:

Then, after that adventure in the sea, off they hop ashore, in Corinth and the younger colts straight away trotted off and with their hooves dug out trenches and rushed about to try and find food for us all. And the poor things, instead of chomping at that Persian dish, the clover, they ate the crabs that beached themselves, or they'd even fish them out of the ocean. I heard Theorus say that one of the crabs was so pissed off at getting plucked out of the sea that it prayed to Poseidon: “Oh, my god,

Poseidon,” it said, “is there no way we can escape these awful Knights? They’re everywhere: in the deep, in the shallows and on land!”

Enter Sausage Seller, dusting himself off, the grin of victory on his face.

611

Panaetius:

Mate! Beloved buddy! Cobber! Digger, old pal! You’re back! Blessed be the gods for that! We were so worried about you!

Simon:

How did you go, sausage man?

Sausage Seller:

How’d you reckon I went? Henceforth call me... Victoropoulos!

Cheers all around

Simon:

Yea! Hip pip, Hurray! Hip, pip, hurray! Thank you gods!

Joy, oh, joy!

What a great man you are! Great speaker, great doer! Great bloody everything!

619

Panaetius:

What happened? What did you do?

Tell us the full story, sausage man. I’d travel a long way to hear this, if I had to. Tell it all as it happened. Leave nothing. We all want to hear this!

Sausage Seller:

Sure is worth hearing this one!

Well, I left here straight after him, see? Hot on his heels, I was. Caught up with him at the Assembly. You should have heard the bastard! Shouting off, loud as loud can be, insulting you Knights with shrill and nightmarish words! He was pushing them all off the cliff, he was, with his disgusting rubbish about you lot being conspirators.

630

They nearly believed him. You should have seen the councillors. Their ears pricked and bulged by his words, lying bloody words shooting forth like weeds that take over the whole garden. And their eyes bulged and turned a sickly yellow, mustardy sort of colour. You should have seen them! They were on fire. Eyebrows all in knots!

Well, when I saw all this, when I saw that they were in his throes and believing all his bullshit, I got up and shouted out a prayer to my gods.

“You gods!” I prayed. “You Gods of Bragging! You, Gods of Bullshitty! You, Gods, the champions of all the idiots! You, Gods of Conartistry! Gods of Sleazemanship and you, Zeus, God of the marketplace where I was born and bred! Give me strength! Give me the filthiest tongue and the dirtiest possible mouth!” That’s how I prayed and, bugger me dead, if some bastard didn’t show his approval of my prayer by farting right there and then! On this side, of me. My right side. My lucky side!

640

Well, I bowed to the good man in acknowledgment and immediately swung my bum into action, pushing down all the little fence rails with it. Then I opened my mouth wide, like this and bellowed at the Assembly as loudly as I could:

“You! You... Councillors! I’ve got good news for you!” I said to them. “News that are so good, I want to make sure that I’m the first to announce them to you. It’s the price of sardines, folks! It’s the best it’s ever been since the outbreak of the war!”

Well, you should have seen their faces then! Turned nice and happy right there and then. They wanted to give me a hero’s garland for telling the good news. So I gave them my advice. I said to them that if they wanted to get their fair share for the price of an obol, they should rush down the market and buy themselves all the plates they can. Corner the market. And keep it all a secret.

650

They applauded me loudly then and gawked at me awestruck.

But then, that bastard, Paphlagon, who knew how to press the Councillors’ buttons, got up and said, “Men, these auspicious news should move us to make a sacrifice to our goddess! I suggest we should slaughter one hundred cows!”

And damn it, all the damned Councillors agreed with him!

Of course, I didn’t want to be beaten by that pile of bull crap, so I suggested that we should really sacrifice two hundred cows and to promise a thousand goats to Artemis, the Goddess of the wild beasts, if the price of sardines falls to one hundred an obol.

661

That made all the councillors turn their heads to me again.

At which point, Paphlagon got totally angry and frustrated and completely lost it! Started waffling on and on about all sorts of stupid things, so the Magistrates and all the cops got up and started dragging his sorry bum out of the place. All the Councillors then began shouting about the price of fish. Poor Paphlagon kept yelling back at them, pleading with them, “Hang on! Hang on!” He was yelling at the top of his voice. “Let me tell you what the Spartan herald had to say, first! He wants to negotiate a Peace Treaty with us!” But, of course, the Councillors shouted him down.

670

“Peace Treaty?” they asked scornfully. “A Peace Treaty now? Yeah, right! What convenient timing! A Peace Treaty now that they’ve heard the price of fish has plummeted? How bloody wonderfully convenient of them! No way! Let the war drag on!”

Then they told the Magistrates to adjourn the meeting and they ran off in all directions trying to get out of the place, jumping over all the little fence rails in the process. Myself, I ran across the city and got to the market first where I bought all the coriander and the leeks, which I handed out to the Councillors as gifts to garnish their sardines with... the sardines they’d never find! Hahaha!

680

The fools, they all cheered and praised me to high heaven! I’ve got all them Councillors in my pocket, I tell you, every one of them! Every one of them, bought for the mighty price of an obol’s worth of coriander! Hahahaha!

Simon:

Your deeds are worthy of your good luck!

That degenerate has found his match: another man even more degenerate than him, capable of even more sleazemanship.

Panaetius:

Now be careful my sausage man. There are more battles ahead. Fight like a hero. We’re right behind you – but then you already knew that.

691

Sausage Seller: *Looking into the distance within*

Ah, there he is! I can see our leather beater coming now. Look at him! Looks just like a hurricane that’s about to burst. Full to the brim with angry wind and blustering devastation. Ready to spin me about, I guess. Knock me off me feet. What a frightful sight!

Enter Paphlagon fuming with anger.

Paphlagon: *To the Sausage Seller*

Oh! Oh! Damn! If there’s any hint of my old gift to lie is left in me I’m going to destroy you! And if I can’t destroy you, then... cut me up into little pieces!

Sausage Seller:

Hahaha! What a joke all your blustering is! It sure makes me laugh! Hahahaha! You’re sooooo funny! All your lovely threats! Dance music to my ears, it is! Look! *He begins to “dance”* I’m dancing, I’m hopping, I’m... *cups his hands around his mouth and calls out*, Cock a doodle doooooo! Hahahha!

Paphlagon:

By the goddess Demeter! Let me die if I don’t destroy you once and for all! Let me die! Get rid of you from the face of this earth! Devour you whole!

700

Sausage Seller:

Oh yeah? It’ll be me who’ll be doing the devouring! I’ll gobble you all up –even if it means I’ll burst my guts doing it!

Paphlagon:

By the gods! By the honorary theatre seat I was given after my efforts in the battle of Pylos! By the... I’m going to have you disappear! You’re going to vanish, snag man!

Sausage Seller:

Oooooh! The honorary theatre seat! Oooh!

By the gods, how I wish you lose that front row seat and be made to sit in the last row!

Paphlagon:

By all the heavens! I’ll have you locked up in a pillory for this!

Sausage Seller:

Temper, temper, now! *Goes to his box of sausages*. Now what could I give you to gobble up and relax, ey? Now let’s see... what would wet your appetite now...*Pulls out a pig’s ear* Here we are. A pig’s skin wallet?

Paphlagon:

I'll tear your guts out with my own fingernails!

Sausage Seller:

And I'll... I'll... I'll tear away all the fine dinners you get for free at the Council... with my own fingernails!

710

Paphlagon:

I'll drag you before our boss in there, Mr Demos! He'll give me my justice!

Sausage Seller:

And I'll drag you there, too, and tell him even more lies about you!

Paphlagon:

The boss doesn't listen to the likes of you, you snagshit, whereas he listens to my every word. I can run rings around his little brain!

Sausage Seller:

Ha! You're that certain you've got our boss completely in you grubby little pocket, are you?

Paphlagon:

You bet, I am! I know exactly what little morsels his heart desires.

Sausage Seller:

Yeah, you certainly do! And you feed him just like a nanny feeds someone else's baby! Disgustingly!

You pick up a bit of food, chew it thoroughly first and then stick a bit of it in his mouth! You wolf down three spoonfuls to his one!

Paphlagon:

That's me, all right! I can make Democracy fat OR lean! That's where my expertise is.

Sausage Seller:

Identical expertise to that of my bum hole!

Mocking laughter from everyone else on the stage which angers Paphlagon

Paphlagon:

Oh yeah? Oh, yeah? Right! Let's go! Let's go before the Demos right now! You're not going to beat me at this, you... you snag seller!

Sausage Seller:

No objections here! Come on, let's go! Move! *Addressing the audience* Clear the way, please! Don't anyone hold us back! We're going to the big boss!

They walk over to the house and Paphlagon bangs at the door. As they do the Harvest Wreath falls to the ground.

Paphlagon:

Oh, Mister Deeeemos! Come on out here, please, dearie!

Sausage Seller: *Also bangs at the door*

Yes, Mister Demos, please do come out here! Please... dearest!

Paphlagon:

Please do come out here, Mister Demos! Come and see what insults I've got to endure out here. Unbearable stuff!

Demos: *Within*

What? What on earth is going on? Who's banging at my door? All this noise! Go away! *Appears at the door. He is an old, grouchy man, bald, with a bent back and walking with the aid of a walking stick. What do you want? Looks at the wreath on the ground.* Oh, damn you! Look at what you've done! You've completely destroyed my New Harvest garland! What is it, ey? Paphlagon, what's wrong? Who's insulting you, ey?

730

Paphlagon:

He is, boss! He and these young thugs are beating me up... and it's all because of you!

Demos:

Because of me? What on earth do you mean?

Paphlagon:

Yes, because of you! Because I love you, boss and because... because I fuck you!

Demos: *To the sausage seller*

And you! Who are you?

Paphlagon:

Me? I... I... I'm his rival. I want to fuck you, too! I've been in love with you for a long time now.

Lusted after you for years. *Indicating the audience* Just like every other honest and virtuous citizen out there. We all want what's best for you, Mister Demos but this bastard here constantly prevents us from

doing anything about it.

And you! You behave just like the young boys behave, Mister Demos. They always turn their bum away from the fine and virtuous men but they give it readily and happily to all the lamp sellers and all the cobblers and all the shoe makers and all the leather beaters...

741

Paphlagon:

That's because I look after our him!

Sausage Seller:

Is that right? And, tell me, how exactly do you do that?

Paphlagon:

How? How do you mean, "how?"

Pylos, that's how! The moment our generals shot off out of the battlefield down there, I dashed over to that island in my ship and came back home dragging all with all the Spartans behind me! That's how!

Sausage Seller:

Ha! And I... I was casually walking around one day, when, suddenly, I dashed into a shop and pinched a pot of food someone else was cooking. Get it? Someone ELSE was cooking!

Paphlagon:

Boss, I reckon you should get the Assembly together for them to judge which one of us loves you the most.

Sausage Seller:

I agree, Mister Demos. Get them to sit in judgement but not at the Pnyx, though...

750

Demos:

Absolutely not! I would never call on the Assembly to sit anywhere else.

To the Pnyx everyone! We're all going to the Pnyx!

Demos walks over to the great rock of the Pnyx and sits on it.

Exit Demosthenes and Nikias into the house. The rest gather around Demos.

Sausage Seller: *Quietly to Panaetius*

What crappy luck! When the old man is at home he's the sharpest wit on earth but when he goes and sits himself on that throne, listening to petitions, he's... he's an absolute dork! Gawks and gapes like someone chewing on dried figs!

Panaetius: *To the sausage seller*

It's now or never, sausage man! Show him what you've got. Spread all your wears in front him. Set all your sails up, get all your gear together, arm yourself for victory! Use clever, unbeatable and brave stratagems. He's a sly bastard, our Paphlagon is! Finds pathways where no pathways exists. Rat cunning! Jump on him with all your might!

761

Simon:

And listen! Jump on him before he's got time to jump on you! Bring your ship right next to his and drop your iron balls into it! Sink it!

Paphlagon: *Falls to his knees and prays*

Oh, Lady Athena! Oh, Protector of our city!

Next, after our city's most famous bum beaters and whores -these being, the boy Lysicles and the girls, Cynna and Salabaccho, I am the best at that occupation and, being the best, dear goddess, grand me that I go on having my meals free at the expense of the taxpayer at the great Prytaneum. Free and without having to do anything for the city in return.

Turning to Demos

As for you, Mister Demos, if you ever happen to get the slightest inkling of a thought that I hate you or that I no longer stand alone – at the head of the battle line!- to fight for your greater glory, then do let me die! No, indeed, you can have me be sawn up into many, many little strips. Turn me into horse harnesses, if you want!

769

Sausage Seller:

Me too, me too, Mister Demos! If you ever think that I don't love you and adore you, cut me up into little pieces and turn me into a souvlaki! True! If you don't believe me then, let them pound me onto that rock, turn me into mince, add a bit of cheese, shove a long hook between my balls and drag me all the way to the Potter's District, where all the whores hang out.

Paphlagon:

No way, boss! It's impossible for anyone to love you as much as I do. Can't happen! To begin with, while I was your Councillor, I increased the country's wealth heaps... either by shackling some men on

the pillories, or by hanging others or by torturing some... couldn't give a stuff about their individual situations or their needs. All I cared about was your coffers. To make you happy!

Sausage Seller:

What's so special about that? I can do all that, for you also! Easy. Just grab the loaves of bread that others have cooked and pass them on to you.

Now let me prove to you that this man neither loves you nor is he faithful to you.

780

He tells you all this bullshit so he can warm his bum at your fireplace.

Look at him! There you are, a true hero, defender of your country, victor over the Persians, a man who made us all boast grandiloquently about our glorious heroism... *One of the chorus shoves a cushion in the sausage seller's hand* ...there you are, boss, still sitting on a hard rock; but does he care? No, not even a tiny bit. Whereas I, I, Mister Demos have made a special cushion just for you... and *offering the cushion* here it is. Hold on, stand up a minute... now you can sit down again. There you go! That will protect that lovely bum of yours that had to sit by the oars at the sea battle in Salamis.

Demos: *To the sausage seller*

And who are you, my fine young man? You're not one of the descendants of the lovely, famous Harmodius clan, are you? Your behaviour here today shows an excellent, public-spirited soul. A very Democratic mind, indeed! Remarkable stuff!

Paphlagon:

What? *To the sausage seller*: One bit of woeful arse-licking and you've won him over! That's not fair!

Sausage Seller:

"Woeful?" You had him won over with even more woeful little tricks! Pitiful stuff!

790

Paphlagon: *To Demos*

Boss, I stick my head on the line and say that no one loves you more than me. No one! And no one fought more bravely for you than me!

Sausage Seller:

Yeah right! You love our Mister Demos? You had the poor bugger living in barrels and birds' nests and shacks for the last eight years. Wouldn't give a stuff about his living conditions all that time. You had him locked up and bled to death! And then, when a Peace treaty was proposed to you by Archeptolemus, you tore the thing up into little pieces and kicked the bums of all his emissaries out of town!

Paphlagon:

Sure I did! I wanted our Mister Demos to rule over all of Greece. I'm only practicing what was said in the oracle, *Takes out of his pocket a scroll which he unfolds and reads*... right here. Here it is: "Mister Demos will be hearing cases in Arcadia for five obols a piece, if he stays as leader." See? In any case, I'll be making sure he gets fed well and looked after and that he gets his three obols... by hook or by crook. I'll get it for him!

800

Sausage Seller:

By Zeus! That's bullshit! You're not interested in making our boss here ruler of all Greece! You're only worried about how you can rip all our allies off with more levies and taxes and bribes, without him being able to detect your sleazy work, because of all the turmoil the war is causing. You're after praise and respect from him by making sure he suffers through poverty and deprivation and with your three damned obols!

But when the war is over and Mister Demos is sitting peacefully at his farm, his soul rejuvenated with some good bread made out of real wheat, when he's out there, chatting away with his mates while sucking on some juicy olives, he'll get to do some thinking. And he'll work out just how much stuff you stole from him, just how much you've tricked him out of with those damned three obols of yours. And then... that's when he'll turn around and, with that true farmer's anger of his, he'll run after you and, when elections come, he'll slap you with a vote against you!

You know all this. You know well that that's what he's going to do and that's why you want to trick him with all this bum-licking and pampering and conjuring of fancy dreams.

810

Paphlagon:

Oh! You disgusting little man! How awful! What a terrible thing it is for you to say all these lies about me! In front of everyone, too –the whole city of Athens- and in front of our good Mister Demos! All this awful stuff even though I've served him so well! Let me tell you, sausage man, I've served him even better than our esteemed General Themistocles. I've done more good work for our city even than Themistocles himself!

Sausage Seller:

Oh, dear ME! Now I've heard everything! Let me quote Euripides: "Oh, dear Argives, listen to his words!" Dear, dear, dear ME! *To the audience*

The stupid leather beater is comparing himself to Themistocles! Dear, dear, DEAR!

To Paphlagon

Listen you! Themistocles came into Athens when Athens' table was full but he got that table even fuller –spilling over the sides with food, it was, when he came round! Piraeus was one of them things he added to it and... and without touching any of the old fish on it, he added some new ones. But what did you do? Your achievement was to put up little walls everywhere in the city, chant little oracles to them and turn them all into small-minded little villagers!

Wow! What a match you'd make with Themistocles! And that poor bastard is exiled while you - You... you're still here, licking your fingers, smothered in the delicious Achilles Cakes!

820

Paphlagon: *To Demos*

Listen to him, Mister Demos! He's saying all this stuff about me because he's jealous. Jealous of my love for you!

Demos: *To Paphlagon*

Enough! Enough crap out of you! You've been ripping me off with your shameful ways for far too long!

Sausage Seller:

Oh, my darling, Mister Demos! He's such a nasty, nasty piece of work, this man is! Full of shameless deeds. The moment he sees you yawn a bit, for example, off he goes to the government's auditors and treats them like he treats his cabbages: rips out their hearts and gobbles them all down. Then, he sponges off all the people's gravy with both his hands. Result? Our Treasury is empty!

Paphlagon:

You're not going to get any joy out of this! I'm going to charge you with having stolen thirty thousand drachmas!

Sausage Seller:

Ooooh! Thirty thousand drachs! Look at you, big boy!

There you go doing useless stuff again! Slapping the sea with the flat of your oars, you are now! Bloody useless! You disgusting little wretch, you... you... you're the most despicable man in Athens! May Demetre be my witness and may I fall down and die if I don't get to prove that you ripped off Mytilene of more than forty minas in bribes!

Panaetius: *To the sausage seller*

O, brave man, you! You've shown yourself to be a true philanthropist! How I envy your eloquence! If you can continue your attack in this way you'll be the greatest man of all the Greeks. You'll be able to rule Greece all on your own and you'd be using a trident to govern our allies –stirring them and shaking them out of their money!

841

Simon:

And, listen: don't let go of him! He's given you something to grab him by. With arms like yours it shouldn't be too difficult.

Paphlagon: *To Panaetius and Simon*

Oh, no, no, no, my dear nobles! By Poseidon! Things haven't got to that point yet! No way! Because, I, personally, have committed such a great and wonderful deed that if I say it, it will shut the mouths of all my enemies! World wide! At least, while those shields I brought from Pylos are still on display.

Sausage Seller:

Aha! Gotsya! The shields! Now I've got something to really kick your bum with!

If you really loved Mister Demos you would have thought more about how you should have those shields displayed at the temple. It was a sneaky thing, Mister Demos, hanging those shields up there, complete with their handle straps. He did that so as to stop you from punishing him.

850

Did you notice all those other tanners and honey makers and cheese sellers, hanging around him? They're a notorious band of crooks, Mister Demos and, if you ever think of punishing this guy with ostracism and the like, all those crooks will run into the temple one fine night, pull down those shields and take over all the gates to our grain stores.

Demos:

Is that so? Dear, dear! Poor me! Are the straps still on the shields, are they?

To Paphlagon So, how long have you been ripping our citizens off at the scales, ey? You, sneaky little thief!

860

Paphlagon:

My Lord, don't listen to him! Never believe that you can find a better friend than me, here. It was I, alone who quashed a whole uprising against you! All those conspirators were stopped by me and me alone! There's nothing underhanded that's going on in our city that I don't know about! I bang it on the head the very moment it appears. Stop it dead on its tracks!

Sausage Seller:

Ha! Just like one of those fishermen who catch eels: While the waters are all calm and still they catch nothing, so they stir the waters, make them all dirty and muddy and up come the eels! And that's how you get to make your catch, as well. You stir the city, make it all dirty and muddy and then you grab the conspirators.

Listen! Here you are, making all this money from your leather beating and your shoe making – all this money! But have you ever given our Chief, here, even a small patch of leather for his shoes? No! And then you say you love him! Yeah, right!

870

Demos:

Too true, by Apollo! Too true! Not a single patch of leather!

Sausage Seller:

Now do you see what's he really like Mister Demos? But look! *Takes a pair of shoes out of his clothes and offers them to Demos.* Look here. Look what I bought for you! A pair of shoes! My gift to you, Mister Demos!

Demos: *Takes the shoes and admires them. Puts them on, walks about and is pleased with them. Sits back down onto the rock.*

Why thank you, sausage seller! Thank you, indeed! And I find you, you of all other men, the most devoted and loving friend of the Athenian People and of my toes!

Paphlagon:

What an awful world we live in when a pair of shoes can have so much sway over our Democracy! Did you forget all the really important stuff I did for you, boss? Did you forget that I got rid of all the queers from the city and that I had that hook-nose, Grypus written off our Citizen Rolls?

Sausage Seller:

What IS awful is the fact that you've made yourself the city's Chief Examiner of Bumholes so that you can judge who's a bugger and who's not and then send them out of our city! Even that job you took on because of fear that these buggers would become politicians!

880

You wanted to become a politician yourself, so you've cut down the opposition... all the while, of course, you were paying no attention to the fact that our old Mister Demos, here, doesn't even have a cape to his name! At his age, without a cape and in the middle of Winter! You couldn't give a stuff about his suffering, whereas I... I brought him this: *Pulls out a cape and puts it around Demos' shoulders*

There you go, Mister Demos! Wear it in good health.

Demos:

Ohhhh! Even Themistocles never thought of this! Sure, handing me the city of Piraeus was a grand thing he did but this... this lovely cape is, to my mind, an even better initiative.

Paphlagon:

Damn you, you bastard! You're beating me with these bloody monkey tricks of yours!

Sausage Seller:

Hahaha! No, I'm only doing what a man does when he's in a party and he's got to go out for a shit: he borrows someone's slippers, so, I just borrowed your own tricks.

890

Paphlagon: *Takes off his leather overcoat*

Oh yeah? Well you can't beat me when it comes to licking bums! I'm going to put this over his shoulders, so suffer, you stupid bastard.

Paphlagon goes to Demos and offers his overcoat. Demos is repulsed by its stench

Demos:

Poh! Get away from here! Poh! Take that stinking old hide away from me!

Sausage Seller:

You see? You see that, Mister Demos? He's trying to suffocate you by wrapping you up in this stinking piece of skin. It's not the first time, either. Remember when the price of fennel fell?

Demos:

Sure, I remember.

Sausage Seller:

Well, he was the cause of that fall in the price of fennel! He did it so that all the jurors would eat tons of it and when they'd be sitting in court, they'd fart each other to death!

Demos:

That's exactly right! That's what I was told, too, by a man from Turd City, in Sicily!

900

Sausage Seller: *To the audience*

And you all farted that much... you all farted that much... that much, that your bum holes turned fire red! Bright red, like a fireplace!

Demos:

A blushing trick that one!

Paphlagon:

You rotten piece of shit! You... you upset me so much with your disgusting fucking swearing!

Sausage Seller:

That's because the goddess herself has called on me – ordered me to beat you at bum-licking!

Paphlagon:

No way! You're not beating me at this game...

Turns to Demos

Boss, just for you, just to show you how much I love you... I'll serve you up –for free, mind, for free – a bowl of... a full bowl of money. Public Servants' wages. All for you to slurp it all up! All for free!

Sausage Seller: *Pulls out a little jar and offers it to Demos*

And I, I'll give you this, boss. It's a jar of medicinal ointment for you to rub over all those blisters you get on your shins.

Paphlagon:

Here! Let me pluck out all of your grey hairs, boss. Make you look all young and handsome again.

Sausage Seller: *Pulls out a rabbit's tail and hands it to Demos.*

Here, Mister Demos! Look at what I've got for you! A bunny's little tail to pat your little eyes with.

910

Paphlagon: *Offers his head*

Here, boss! Blow your nose and wipe it on my head! Right here. Come on, blow your nose on my head!

Sausage Seller: *Tries to outbid Paphlagon*

Me, too! Me too! Here, wipe your nose on my head, instead!

Paphlagon: *To the sausage seller. Fuming with anger.*

Listen you! I'll make a captain out of you! The captain of an old, dilapidated trireme that you'd have to spend buckets of money on to fix it and refurbish it... and I'll make sure, also, that you're given rotten sails!

919

Sausage Seller: *Appealing to the audience*

Ohhhh! Look at this! Look at this, folks! Stop him! Stop him, somebody! The guy's gone off his head! Lost it! I can see the bubbles rising to the surface. He's going to boil over! Quick, someone! Get a couple of sticks and skim off some of those threats he's making.

Paphlagon:

Oh! You... you... you're going to pay me back for this. Big time! I'm going to squeeze the crap out of you with taxes. I'm going to register you as a rich man!

Sausage Seller:

Well, myself, I won't be making any threats to you, mate! On the contrary, I'll make a wish for you: May you rejoice at the sight of a sizzling squid in your frying pan and may you sit down to enjoy that meal.

930

May your thoughts go to the gathering of all the folk from Miletus of whom you'll order an increase in their taxes, which, your thoughts will conclude, you will achieve and that you'll make lots of rip-off money.

May you get a visitor while you're enjoying your meal of that squid and may that visitor tell you that you must hurry to the Assembly to collect your money...

And... while you're rushing to get the meal down, you choke to death!

941

Simon:

Hahaha! Now that's a beauty! By Zeus! By Apollo! By Demeter! That's a great wish!

Demos:

Hahaha! That's what I reckon, too! Makes a good wish, that sausage seller man! And he looks like a good chappy in all other aspects, too. No one of his ilk, no one of that low, down market lot of commoners can match him.

To Paphlagon

And you, Paphlagon, all this bullshit about how much you love me has given me the utter shits! Hand me back my ring! You won't be my treasurer.

949

Paphlagon: *Hands Demos the ring*

Here! Take the bloody ring! Take it but remember: If I'm not going to be your treasurer any more, then the man who'll replace me will be an even greater crook!

Demos: *Examines the ring carefully, suspiciously.*

Hang on! This doesn't look like my ring! The seal is different. I suppose it could be my eyesight...

Sausage Seller:

Let me have a look, Mister Demos. *Takes ring from Demos and examines it.* What was engraved on your seal?

Demos

Stuffed cabbage leaf... with beef dripping.

Sausage Seller:

Nope. Can't see that on this ring.

Demos:

Are you sure? You can't see the stuffed cabbage leaf on there? Well, what can you see on it?

Sausage Seller:

I see a huge Stork, Mister Demos. Standing on a rock squawking just like a mad politician.

Demos:

Oh, no! Good grief!

Sausage Seller:

What's up, Mister Demos?

Demos:

Hell! Take it away! Take it away. I don't want to see it. The bastard! That's not my ring! That's my enemy's ring! That's Cleonymus' ring that one! Here! *Searches through his clothes and finds another ring which he offers to the sausage seller.* Here, take this one. You wear it! You'll be my treasurer from now on!

960

Paphlagon:

Wow, there! Hold on a minute! Not so fast, boss! Wait. Wait till you hear my oracles first!

Sausage Seller:

Then he'll have to hear mine, too.

Paphlagon: *Looks skyward and pretends to have received divine inspiration*

If you heed the words of a sausage seller, you'll... you'll become a skinful of wind!

Sausage Seller: *Also pretends to have received divine inspiration from above*

If Mister Demos heeds the words of a leather beater he'll get his dick's skin chopped off... all the way up to his short and curlies. Chop, chop, chop!

Paphlagon:

No, boss! I've got oracles at home that tell me that you'll be wearing a wreath of roses and... and you'll be the ruler of every country on earth!

Sausage Seller:

That's nothing, Mister Demos! I've got prophesies at home that paint you on a golden chariot, wearing a golden and bejewelled crown and a huge crimson gown, driving Athens' toy boy –and his pimp-straight into court!

970

Demos: *To the sausage seller*

Proof, please! Go and get those oracles of yours so this man can hear them.

Sausage Seller:

Done!

Demos: *To Paphlagon*

You, too! Off you go!

Paphlagon:

No probs!

Sausage Seller:

Right! Off we go then!

Exit Sausage Seller and Paphlagon

Panaetius:

What a brilliant day that would be for us and for our visitors when Cleon gets his arse kicked in! But, damn it!

980

There are still all these old stodgy legal types out there, that hang around in the courts, crapping on about Cleon, saying things like, "If we hadn't made Cleon a big knob then we'd still be missing out on the two most useful kitchen implements, the pestle and the shit-stirring spoon!"

But the thing that astonishes me is his swinish education! Real pig pen stuff!

990

His classmates used to say that Cleon could only tune his little lyre up to play Dorian music. He refused to learn how to tune it up for other styles of music, so his music teacher expelled the idiot from his school, saying "this boy can only play the songs of 'Bribery.'"

Enter Paphlagon, carrying a basket full of scrolls

Paphlagon:

Here boss! Look at all these oracles... and there's lots more where these came from!

Enter Sausage Seller carrying an even bigger basket full of scrolls

Sausage Seller:

Damn it, Mister Demos! I need a shit, after carrying this lot! And that's not all of them, either!

Demos:

What's all this stuff?

Paphlagon:

Oracles, boss.

Demos:

All of them?

Paphlagon:

Ha! You look surprised, boss! By Zeus, I can tell you: back home I've got a huge box that's spilling over with them!

1001

Sausage Seller:

But I've got a whole loft and two houses besides, all full to the brim with them!

Demos:

Let me see them. Who wrote this stuff?

Paphlagon:

A very famous prophet... Backis.

Demos:

And yours?

Sausage Seller:

Eh... Glanis, boss. Backis' older brother.

Demos:

So, what are they all about then?

Paphlagon:

Everything, boss: They're about Athens, about Pylos, about you, about me... about everything!

Demos:

And yours?

Sausage Seller:

Mine, Mister Demos? Mine are about Athens... and about lentils... and about the Spartans... and about the new mackerel... and about all those bastards in the market who sell us short with the flour... about you... about me... *Aside* Oh, damn all this bullshit! I had enough of this. Let him go and suck his own dick!

1011

Demos:

Well then, get ready to read them to me, especially the ones that talk about me. I enjoy them a lot... the bit about me becoming a great eagle in the great clouds!

Paphlagon:

Sure, boss. Now listen very carefully. *Opens one of the scrolls and reads.*

"Mark well, Erechtheus' son, and know the prophecies that Apollo has uttered for you from deep within his shrine and from his divine tripod. The god orders you to protect the holy, sharp-toothed dog,

Cleon, who now stands and gawks before you and who protects you with his loud bark. It is he who will bring your much profit. And if you do not do Apollo's bidding and protect this dog, he'll be destroyed by the many ravens who croak endless insults against him!"

1021

Demos:

By holy Demeter! Now that's one prophesy I don't get. What's with Erectheus and the ravens and the dog?

Paphlagon: *Rolls his eyes at Demos' idiocy*

I'm the dog, boss! Me! I'm the dog because I bark away your enemies. Phoebus Apollo is telling you to look after me, protect me!

Sausage Seller:

Rubbish! That's not what the oracle is saying! This mangy dog here is munching up your prophecies like he munches up your breakfast! I can tell you exactly what that dog is all about!

Demos:

All right, then. Tell me! Hang on a minute, I'll get a rock first, just in case that oracle dog tries to bite me!

1030

Sausage Seller: *Unfolds a scroll and reads.*

"Mark well Erechtheus' son the dog called Cerberus who makes slaves out of men! While you are having you supper, he watches, wagging his tail, until he finds you looking the other way, he snatches your food and, at night while you're deep in your slumber, he secretly glides along into you kitchen, just like a dog and licks all your plates and runs off with your islands!"

Demos:

Ah, now, by Divine Poseidon, that's much better,!

Paphlagon:

No, mate, no! Listen to this first and then make up your mind. Listen:

Reads "A birth will take place in our holy city. The birth of the lion that will fight for the people of Athens as if they were the lion's very own cubs. It will fight bravely the huge horde of gnats that will attack them. And if you want to protect that lion, build a huge wooden wall with iron towers all around the city."

Now do you know what all that means, boss?

1041

Demos:

No, by Apollo, I don't!

Paphlagon: *Rolls his eyes again, in frustration*

It's Apollo, boss! Apollo is telling you that you've got to protect me because I'm the lion he's promised you! Me!

Demos:

Yeah? Is that right? Lion, lying, who's the lion and who's the liar, ey? One and the same?

Sausage Seller:

Ha! He's neglected to tell you a bit more about that oracle, Mister Demos. What Apollo meant was that you should protect this guy inside a wall made of wood and iron!

Demos:

What? What does Apollo mean by that?

Sausage Seller:

The god is ordering you to put him in the public pillory, Mister Demos. Wood and iron with five holes in it, see? *Demonstrates someone being in a pillory.*

The pillory. Lock him up in one of those. That should keep the bastard... safe!

1050

Demos:

Hahaha! I believe that this is one prophesy that has imminent and immediate potential!

Paphlagon: *Quickly opens a scroll and reads from it*

Nah, don't trust him, boss! Listen: *Reads*

"Envious crows crow but you must keep your love for the hawk who delivered into your hands the Spartan ravens... in shackles."

Sausage Seller:

Yeah, he was pissed as a fart when he tried that one! *Reads from a scroll*

"Oh, son of Cecrops! You've been given such bad counsel! Think not that this achievement is a great

one. Would not a woman bear a burden if the burden was put upon her by her husband? But put her into battle with an enemy and she'll shit herself."

Paphlagon: *Another scroll*

Hang on, boss! Look at what Apollo is saying about Pylos:

"Pylos in front of Pylos..."

Demos:

Ey? What's he mean by "Pylos in front of Pylos?"

1060

Sausage Seller:

Hahaha! *Brandishing his phallus* The god is saying that the leather beater will be ravishing a whole lot of pylons in the bath houses!

Demos:

What? So... am I going to miss out on my pylon tonight?

Sausage Seller:

Yeap! He's run off with all of them. No pylons for you tonight, Mister Demos but listen to this. Listen to it carefully because it's about our fleet...

Demos:

Go ahead but read how my sailors are going to get their wages.

Sausage Seller: *Reads from scroll*

"Oh, Aegeus' son! Beware of the foxdog who'll try to outfox you! He is a conman, fast-footed and totally conniving. His treachery is lethal."

Did you get that, Mister Demos?

Demos:

The foxdog is our famous pimp, Philostratus, right?

1070

Sausage Seller:

No, Mister Demos. That's not what the oracle is about. This one is telling you not to keep giving in to this leather beater's constant demands about more swift ships. He uses them to go and harass our island allies for more revenue and bribes. Apollo is telling you not to give him those ships!

Demos: *Puzzled*

Huh? What's a trireme got to do with a foxdog?

Sausage Seller: *His turn to roll his eyes*

Because, Mister Demos, both, the trireme and the foxdog are very fast: Fleetfooted foxdog, a fleet of triremes, see?

Demos: *Still puzzled*

But... how did the dog get attached to the fox?

Sausage Seller:

Apollo says that the soldiers are like foxes, they eat all our grapes, out in the paddocks.

Demos:

I see... and where are all the wages for these foxes... I mean, soldiers?

Sausage Seller:

I'll have it here for you in three days, Mister Demos but lend your ear to this oracle *Reads* "Apollo, the son of Leto orders you to beware of the tricks of the trickster, Palmolene!"

1082

Demos:

Pamolene? Who or what is Palmolene?

Sausage Seller:

This man's hand, Mister Demos. Paphlagon's hand. That's what Palmolene is! Because he's always nattering on about "put some money in the palm of my hand!"

Paphlagon:

No, no, no, boss! He's got the whole oracle wrong! By Palmolene, Apollo means the hand of Diopieithes. His hand is crippled and he's always barking against atheists and philosophers. But hang on, let me read you what this oracle here says... it's a flighty one this one. Talks about you being a soaring eagle -king of the whole earth.

Sausage Seller: *Brandishes another scroll*

I've got one too! One that says you'll be king of the whole earth and the Red Sea, too. You'll be judging cases in places as far as Ecbatana, munching on some lovely salted bikkies.

1090

Paphlagon:

Wait! Wait a minute! I had a dream! I had a dream! I dreamed that our goddess, Athena was pouring health and wealth all over Mister Demos' head! With a huge ladle!

Sausage Seller:

Me, too! I dreamed a dream, too, Mister Demos! The goddess herself appeared. The very one, Athena! She came out of the Acropolis with an owl on her shoulder and she poured a whole jug of ambrosia on your head and a jug of garlic dip over his!

Demos:

Hahaha! That Glanis! No one sharper than that man!

Now, sausage man, I make you my Chief Adviser and give you the responsibility of looking after me in my old age and the duty of teaching me all about the new ways of the world.

1100

Paphlagon:

Nooooo! Not yet, boss, not yet! Let me be the one who serves you your daily barley and looks after your affairs.

Demos:

No! No, I don't want to hear the word "barley" ever again! You and your little boyfriend, Thufanes have cheated me for long enough.

Paphlagon:

Alright, alright! I'll supply you with fully processed barley flour!

Sausage Seller:

Barley cakes from me! Splendidly turned... as well as a full meal, fully prepared for you. The only work you'll ever need to do from now on is to move your jaws up and down.

Demos:

Right then you two! Go do your stuff and do it quickly because the one who looks after me the best will get to hold the reins of Government.

Paphlagon: *Rushing to the doors of Parliament*

I'm running in first!

1110

Sausage Seller:

No you don't! I'm going in first!

Sausage Seller and Paphlagon fight each other to enter Parliament. The Sausage Seller wins.

Panaetius:

What power you have Mister Demos! The whole world fears you like they fear a Dictator! They tremble at your feet!

But, alas, Mister Demos! How easily you're tricked! You love praise so much that people use it on you to get their way with you. You stand around, gawking like an idiot and listening to every politician! Your head is here but your brain is on a journey!

Demos:

You are stupid, the lot of you! You and your long hair. No brains!

See, you think that I'm dumb but I put that act on, on purpose. I'm not dumb! I just pretend to be dumb.

I love my daily mash—love it to death and to get it, well, in order to get my lovely mash every day, I just fatten up some fool of a politician who'll take care of that and who'll take care of my safety as well. And then, when I've fattened him up enough, I simply bash the crap out of him and send him off on his way. I'm not dumb, you dummies!

1131

Simon:

If that's the case, Mister Demos, if you're really just feeding them in the Prytaneum as if they're public sacrifices so they can look after you, then good on you. Well done. That way, if one day you happen not to have anything to eat, you simply slaughter one of them—the fattest of the lot— and there's your dinner!

1141

Demos:

They think they're smart and can trick this old codger but you just watch me. Watch with what cleverness I reel them in. I spy on them constantly. My eyes are upon them all the time and when they do rip me off, I get them to spew it all out again at the polling booth. That's where all things are measured and weighed. The ballot box is my justice calculator.

Paphlagon and Sausage Seller enter arguing.

Paphlagon:

Get out of the bloody way, you!

Sausage Seller:

No, you bumhole, you get out of the bloody way!

Paphlagon:

I've been trying to serve you for the last three terms, boss! Three terms!

Sausage Seller:

Me? I've been at it for the last ten terms –no, the last twelve terms No, wait! The last thousand terms... thousands and thousands of terms...

Demos:

And I've been sitting here waiting for you for the last million and bzillion terms. Sick of waiting for you two. Sick and tired of waiting!

Sausage Seller:

You know what you should do, Mister Demos?

Demos:

Whether I do or not I can see you're going to tell me anyway.

Sausage Seller:

I reckon you should put both of us at the starting line and let us run. Give us both an equal go at serving you.

1160

Demos:

I agree! We should do just that. Off you go then.

Sausage Seller and Paphlagon place themselves side by side.

Both:

Ready, steady...

Demos:

Go!

Sausage Seller:

Hey, no cheating!

The two rush back into the house.

Demos:

By Zeus! These two are going to make a very happy man out of me today... if I play hard-to-get!

Enter Sausage Seller and Paphlagon each carrying a basket. Paphlagon also a stool and Sausage Seller, a table.

Paphlagon: *Brandishing a stool*

Here, boss! Look, I'm the first one to bring something for you. Look, a stool for you!

Sausage Seller: *Brandishing a table*

Yeah, but I'm the firstest to bring you a table! Here!

Paphlagon: *From the basket takes out a cookie.*

Look here, boss. What do you see? Yeas, that's right, boss. It's a cookie. Just for you! It's made from special barley grain imported from Pylos.

Sausage Seller: *Offering a pastry sweet the shape of a long finger.*

Here Mister Demos. I've brought you some crusty sweets. Baked by the goddess' very hands. Her own beautiful, ivory hands made them. Look. Here you can see her finger.

1170

Demos:

Good, gracious goddess! What an enormous finger you've got!

Paphlagon:

Here, boss. A pea soup for you. Look! Stirred by Athena, protector of our soldiers who defeated the Spartans at Pylos. Mmmm, the aroma! Mmmm delicious!

Sausage Seller:

Mister Demos! I can tell how much the goddess loves you and wants to protect you. See? She's holding a huge pot of beef stew over your head!

Demos:

But of course she is. Of course she is! If our goddess wasn't holding pots over our heads, there wouldn't be a city here!

Paphlagon:

Ah... look, here boss! A filet of fish. Courtesy of Athena, the terror of armies!

Sausage Seller:

And here, we have beef soup, with a chunky piece of tripe and gut. With the compliments of Athena, daughter of Almighty Zeus.

1180

Demos:

How nice of the goddess to remember the lovely big robe we gave her!

Paphlagon:

The goddess of the Spinning Plumes bids you to take a bite of this here fine rolling roll, so that our rowers can row well on the rolling waves of the sea.

Sausage Seller: *Hands him a bulging bag.*

Then you'd better take these too, Mister Demos.

Demos: *Looks into the bag*

What? What am I supposed to do with all this belly tripe?

Sausage seller:

Our goddess is obviously watching over our triremes, Mister Demos. And she wants you to fill the ships' bellies with them. Here, take this drink, too. It's two parts wine, three parts water.

Demos: *Takes a sip*

Mmmm, by Zeus, it's good! The three parts of water fit in very nicely.

Sausage Seller:

Sure it is. Athena was born at Third Island and so she thirdered the wine.

1190

Paphlagon:

Ah, but now you must have a piece of this here lovely cake... made by my own hands.

Sausage Seller:

No, no, no! Take this one. It's a whole cake! Take it all!

Paphlagon:

Ah, but you haven't got a rabbit for him! I do! Here, boss! *Pulls a cooked rabbit out of the basket and offers it to Demos*

Sausage Seller: *Aside*

Damn it! A rabbit! Now where can I get a rabbit? Hmmm, I think it's time for some real magic!

Paphlagon: *Brandishing the rabbit at the Sausage Seller*

Hahaha! Are you watching, you fool? Look! A rabbit!

Sausage Seller: *feigning scorn*

Ha! Who cares? *Indicating the wings* Look! I can see some ambassadors bringing me bags and bags of silver!

Paphlagon: *Drops the rabbit as he tries to look for the ambassadors*

Where? Where?

Sausage Seller: *Snatches the rabbit*

What does it matter where? Nothing to do with you... *Offering the rabbit to Demos.* Hey, darling Demos, look what I've got for you!

1200

Paphlagon:

Oi! You bastard! You've pinched my rabbit! That's not fair!

Sausage Seller:

Quite fair, quite fair! You did the same with the Spartan captives at Pylos!

Demos: *To the sausage seller*

Hahahaha! How the hell did you get the idea to pinch his rabbit?

Sausage Seller:

Inspired by the goddess herself, Mister Demos. I was just her... instrument of theft.

Paphlagon:

Yeah, but it was I who took the risk and I who cooked it!

Demos: *To Paphlagon*

Piss off! I only ever thank the man who serves things up to me.

Paphlagon:

Bloody Hell! I'm going to get beaten at my own game of sleazemanship! Can't have that!

Sausage Seller:

Well, now, Mister Demos. Why not make a decision right here and now? Decide who's the best man to serve you and your guts.

Demos:

Hmm... but what should I use as criteria? How can I prove to the people that I made the right decision here?

1211

Sausage Seller:

I reckon if you just go to our baskets and examine each of them carefully, the criteria will be clear and obvious to you. No need for you to say a word, just examine the baskets!

Demos: *Opens Sausage Seller's basket*

Hmm... lets see... what have we got here?

Sausage Seller:

See, daddy? It's empty! Nothing there 'cause I gave it all to you already! It's on your table there!

Demos:

By Zeus, that's right! Now, I can see that this is a basket that thinks well of Demos.

Sausage Seller: *Walks over to Paphlagon's basket and opens it for Demos*

Now look in here, Mister Demos. What do you see?

Demos:

By Zeusey, Zeus! The damned think is clogged with stuff! Lord! Look at all this huge cake he put aside for himself! And the bastard only gave me thiiiiis much! A tiny, tiny bit!

1221

Sausage Seller:

That's the sort of work he's been up to for a long time. He'd cut a little bit of the treasury for you and then he'd pocket all the rest for himself.

Demos: *To Paphlagon*

You! You rotten slime bag! You rob me left, right and centre, even though I've put a crown on your head and showered you with gifts!

Paphlagon:

Yes but I was stealing for the benefit of Athens!

Demos:

Take off that crown immediately. Give it to me. I'm going to give it to this man here!

Sausage Seller:

Immediately, he said, you crook!

1229

Paphlagon:

No way! I've got an oracle here, a Pythian one that says exactly who's going to beat me in this contest!

Sausage Seller:

And it's my name that it clearly mentions!

Paphlagon:

Let's check to see if what you're right. Let me ask you a few questions, see if your answers confirm the oracle's words. Firstly: As a kid, whose school did you attend?

Sausage Seller:

I was brought up in the huge cooking pots in the district of the cooking houses. Taught by Mr Punchinthemouth!

Paphlagon:

What?

Aside

Damn, this oracle is very disturbing!

Regaining his cool

Right. All right. All right, then. Tell me: What about wrestling? Were you taught any wrestling in the gymnasias? And what style?

Sausage Seller:

The style that says that if you're caught red-handed pinching something, you must look them in the eye and say you're innocent!

1240

Paphlagon: *Aside, praying:*

Damn, it, Apollo! What are you trying to do to me?

Back to the Sausage Seller

Ahem! So... when you were growing up, what trade did you take up?

Sausage Seller:

Trade? Me? Well, sometimes I sold snags and sometimes I sold my bum!

Paphlagon: *To the audience*

Right! This looks like it's the end for me. I'm thoroughly stuffed. Just the tiniest hope on the horizon by the looks of things...

Back to the sausage seller:

Tell me then, snag man: Were you selling your snags at the market or by the city's gates?

Sausage Seller:

By the gates, of course. Where they also sell the cheap fish.

Paphlagon:

Bugger it! Oh ill-fated Paphlagon! The oracle comes true: "Roll away this poor wretch," it says. "Roll away!" *Takes off his wreath.* Oh dear wreath! I bid you farewell with great reluctance. You're off to other hands... *hands the wreath to Demos who places it onto the Sausage Seller's head.* The hands of another man who's no better thief than me but more fortunate, it seems.

1253

Sausage Seller: *Exultant*

Oh, Zeus of Greece! This is your prize!

Enter Demosthenes and Nikias from the house

Demosthenes:

Greetings and well done, victor of the crown!

Nikias:

Now don't forget who it was who made you one of the big boys. It was me, remember? So I've got a small favour to ask of you. Just one, just a small one: Make me your Phanos. Let me be the one who signs all the court documents.

Demos:

And now, sausage man, tell me your name.

Sausage Seller:

My name Mister Demos is Agorakritos. "Market's Choice." I've got that name given to me because I grew up grazing in the market place.

Demos:

Well then, I hereby commit myself to Agorakritos' supervision and he is henceforth, to be in charge of this man here, Paphlagon.

1261

Sausage Seller:

Have no fear boss! I'll look after you real well, you'll see! You'll realise that you've got the best man to lead this country of suckers!

Exit all but the chorus into Demos' house

Panaetius:

There's no greater joy than that derived when the riders of swift steeds sing, both at the beginning and at the end of a race, songs that are not taking the piss out of poor old Lysistratus' dick and not mocking the old codger, Theomantis just because he hasn't got a roof over his head! Poor bastard, he's always hungry!

1270

Simon:

Dear Apollo, you can see the poor man in your holy shrine at Delphi. There he is, every day, clutching your... holy quiver for dear life and crying the saddest tears as he prays to you, "Save me, dear God, save me from hunger!"

When you come to think about it, there's nothing wrong with mocking the crooks, really. It's actually quite an honourable thing for the virtuous folk to do, to mock them.

Panaetius:

Now, if the man who's about to hear harsh words from me, knew who I was talking about, there'd be no need for me to speak his name, would there? I love that man! Good mate of mine.

Now, those of you who can tell the difference between black and white and have some understanding of melody, would know Arignotus well and they can tell him apart from his brother who, of course, is of a totally different sort.

1280

Simon:

Now, his brother, unlike him, is an absolutely abominable, loathsome creature. His name is Arifradis and Arifradis just loves being a disgraceful loathsome creep. The worst creep of them all. Loves it!

He's an absolute shocker!

Panaetius:

And, believe me, I wouldn't be talking about this sleazebag if he was merely a common old sleazebag but he is disgusting! The pits! Horrible! Beyond disgusting and beyond the pits and beyond horrible!

Simon:

Grrr! He lathers up his tongue by conducting the most disgraceful fucking acts imaginable—unimaginable, really, and gets his beard all filthy by licking up the most disgusting... fluids in the brothels! You should see him sticking his eager nose into every whore's cunt! Filthy bastard. Slime

bucket. Just like Polymnestus and a close pal of Oinichus!

And, I can tell you, the man who doesn't think that this Arifradis is the most disgusting, foul creature on earth, won't be invited to drink out of my cup! That's for sure!

1290

Panaetius:

I get this worrying thought very often in the dark of the night: What on earth could be the cause of Cleonymos' unfathomable gluttony? I was told once that the guy often visits the houses of the rich and there he eats and eats and eats until they have to fall to their knees and beg him: "Great man," they cry, "pleeeeee, we beg of you, we're on our knees, pleeeeee leave! Leave before you eat everything, including our table!"

1300

Simon:

They reckon that one day all our war ships got together for a big meeting. The oldest and wisest of them all, a lovely old trireme got up and said to the rest of them, "now, young ladies, have you heard the news that's come out of the city? They're saying that Hyperbolus -that horrible, little war mongering drop of sour vinegar- has put in an order for one hundred of us, to be send off on an expedition to Carhydon!"

Panaetius:

Well, I am told, all the young triremes screamed with horror at the sound of that! "That's just awful! Intolerable! We won't do it!" One of them, a virgin still and yet to be touched by a male, yelled, "Lord, god who wards off all evil, I won't let Hyperbolus ride me! Never! If it comes to that, I'd rather stay here and rot, die an old maid, eaten away by termites!"

1311

Simon:

And another called out, "If I'm truly made of pine planks then I won't let him ride Nauphante, Nauson's daughter, either! By Zeus, I won't! If that's what turns the Athenians on, then, I suggest we all sail off to Theseum or find a haven in the shrine of the Holy Goddesses of Catastrophe! I won't let that bastard mock our city by becoming our captain!

Panaetius:

She said that if Hyperbolus wanted to go sailing then he should float himself off on those little platters of his, the ones he uses to show off his lamps in the market! He can go sailing off all alone, if he wants, all the way to buggery!

Enter Sausage Seller from Demos' house, now wearing a wreath and richly adorned clothes. He is parading proudly and feigns dignity.

Sausage Seller: *In a solemn, serious tone*

Ahem! Now, dear citizens, keep your selves and your vocabulary clean, please.

Keep it pure, for the gods. In fact, keep your mouths shut. No more swearing, please!

And have all these law courts that this city loves so much shut down for the day.

Good! And now, let the audience sing joyfully to our extraordinarily splendid luck!

Simon:

Oh, brilliant light of the goddess Athena! Protector of our islands! What good tidings do you bring for us? What will cause the air in the streets to be cluttered by the smells of roasting sacrifices?

1321

Sausage Seller:

I have "roasted" Demos and thereby I have turned an ugly man into a handsome one!

Panaetius:

What brilliant tricks you come up with, sausage man! Where is Demos now?

Sausage Seller:

He now lives in the old, violet-crowned Athens.

Simon:

How can we see him? What clothes does he wear now? What sort of man have you made of him?

Sausage Seller:

What sort of man is he? Well, he's just like he was when our great Generals, Aristeidis and Miltiades were his battle buddies.

A noise of gates opening within.

Ah! I think you'll see him now. I can hear the front gates of the Acropolis opening. Now, when you see him, I want you to cheer and applaud loudly.

Folks, here comes the Athens of old. The good old Athens. The delightful Athens, the Athens about which people sang many songs! The Athens that everyone praised! The Athens that was the home of Demos!

Panaetius:

Oh, sparkling and startling, violet-crowned, envy of the world, Athens! Show us your leader and the leader of your people!

Demos appears through fanfare and light effects from the rear of the stage. No longer bald, and now looking very young and handsome. On his flowing robe we can see a sparkling golden pin in the shape of a cricket.

His clothes are even more extravagant and youthful than those of the Sausage Seller and his face is lit up with joy.

He is accompanied by Nikias and Demosthenes. Nikias is respectfully carrying a long cape in his hands.

1331

Sausage Seller:

And here is the man himself! Look at him! A golden cricket on his lovely robe and looking absolutely gorgeous in his clothes, in the fashion of the days of his youth.

The smell you smell on him is not that of ballot shells but of peace treaties. The man has been bathed in myrrh!

Simon:

Glorious king of the Greeks! We congratulate you! Your deeds are worthy of our city and of the trophy of Marathon!

Demos:

Oh, most beloved Agorakritos! Come here to me! What a wonderful job you've done with me when you... roasted me!

Sausage Seller:

Who me? Well, mate! If only you knew what you looked like before and how you acted before and what I've managed to do with you... you'd be calling me God!

Demos:

Tell me, please. What was I like before? What did I used to do?

1340

Sausage Seller:

Well, to begin with, if someone at the council said to you, "Oh, Mister Demos, I love you so much, I adore you so much, I care for you so much..." if anyone ever started with words like that, man! You'd flap your hands about like a rooster, stick your horns high, like a stag and...

Demos:

Who, me?

Sausage Seller:

Yes you, boss. And that's how the scoundrel would trick you. Ran rings around you.

Demos:

You are joking! And I didn't catch on? They tricked me that easily?

Sausage Seller:

Sure did, boss! Your ears would flap open wide one minute, then shut tight the next, open wide and shut tight, open wide... they flapped about like little umbrellas! By Zeus, that was funny!

Demos:

Was I that stupid? Was I that slow?

1350

Sausage Seller:

Absolutely, boss!

And if, say a couple of politicians argued and one of them wanted you to built some long boats whereas the other wanted you to use the money to pay the State's wages, well, the wages man would win hands down!

What's up, boss? What's with the sad looks?

Demos:

I am ashamed of my past deeds. The errors of my old ways...

Sausage Seller:

No need to feel bad, boss. It wasn't your fault! It was the fault of all those crooks that tricked you.

Now let's try again. Suppose some foul dick-wick of a prosecutor says to you, "Judges, unless you convict this man, there'll be no flour for you," what will you say to him?

1362

Demos:

I'll grab him by the throat, lift him high up into the air, hang Hyperbolos around his neck and chuck him down the hell hole!

Sausage Seller:

Now you're talking! That's the way. Now tell me a bit about what sort of policies you're going to put to work.

Demos:

First thing first. All those oarsmen who are working on our long ships, well, when they return, they get their pay in full.

Sausage Seller:

Great! Now that'll make a lot of battered bums happy!

1369

Demos:

Then, once a soldier gets put on a list, he stays on that list. No list-hopping because of who you know! He'll stay on his original list.

Sausage Seller:

Now that'll take care of Kleonymus' shield!

Demos:

And I won't have any beardless men turning the market place into a lovers' meeting quarters!

Sausage Seller:

Is that right? What will our poor little darlings, Kleisthenes and Stratonas do then?

Demos:

All those bloody little kids who hang around the perfumeries all day long, twaddling on like... *Mockingly* "oh, that dear, sweet, dahhhling, genius Phaeax! What a sharp, sentient mortal he is, escaping his death sentence like that! What an eloquent, forcefully oratorical creature! A true intellectually verbose wordsmith! Effectively syllogistical, strikingly sententious and, oh, how he silences all his noisy detractors! Pure genius, dahhhling!" Zeus, how I hate that lot!

1381

Sausage Seller:

Hahaha! But when these kids get all loquacious you don't become all... digitalius, do you?

Demos:

No but, don't you worry! I'll put a stop to their petitions and all their decree writing! I'll make them all go hunting!

Sausage Seller:

Great!

Claps his hands and signals a boy, a slave, in the wings who enters carrying a folding chair. The boy has a particularly long phallus.

Now boss, take this little folding chair and this... big boy to carry it for you and, whenever you feel like it, you can get the boy to be your folding chair!

Demos:

Oh, what joy! I'm back into my old world!

Sausage Seller:

Well then, what would you say if I shoved a couple of thirty-year peace treaties in your hot little hands?

Claps his hands and shouts into the wings

Come! Come here, girls! Run, girls, run! Two lovely... treaties coming up!

Two beautiful, provocatively dressed young women, representing Treaties, enter. They approach

Demos and give him a hug.

1390

Demos:

Oh, glorious Zeusey, Zeus! Oh my! Oh, my darling gods and gorgeous goddesses! Oh... can I lay them down flat right now and... thirtyfy them? Where on earth did you find them?

Sausage Seller:

Where do you think, boss? Paphlagon was hiding them in your house so you couldn't get to them.

Now, here they are, standing right in front of you! A present from me, for you to take them back home with you, to your farms, to enjoy for ever!

Demos:

What about that nasty Paphlagon, over there, ey? Tell me how you're going to punish him for all the evil things he's done to everyone.

Sausage Seller:

Oh, nothing too drastic, really. Just give him my old job. Instead of stuffing up all our political affairs, he'll be stuffing dog meat and donkey meat into sausage skins. I'll get him his own snag stall by the

city gates and there he can swear at all the whores he wants, get himself pissed as a fart and gulp down all the sewage from the public baths.

1402

Demos:

Great idea! Good stuff. Right up his alley. Shouting matches with all the whores and all the public bath types. Perfect stuff and as a reward, I'm inviting you to be my guest at the Prytaneum. Sit where that bilious bastard used to sit and eat the free meals he used to eat.

Takes a cape from Nikias and hands it to the Sausage Seller

Now take this frog-coloured cape and put it on. *Sausage Seller obeys.* Now follow me, young man and *indicating Paphlagon*, someone please lead this prick to his new business address. Let our foreign friends whom he ripped off, see him for what he is!

Exit all

**End of Aristophanes'
"Knights"**