

ARISTOPHANES'
“WOMEN IN PARLIAMENT”
(also known as “The Assembly Women”)
κκλησιάζουσαι
Written 390BCE

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©2004

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DRAMATIS PERSONAE

PRAXAGORA

(An Athenian woman)

FIRST WOMAN

(A neighbour of Praxagora)

SECOND WOMAN

(Another neighbour)

BLEPYRUS

(Praxagora's husband)

NEIGHBOUR

(Neighbour and friend of Blepyrus)

CHREMES

(A citizen of Athens)

MAN

(Another citizen of Athens)

FEMALE HERALD

FIRST OLD WOMAN

(An old prostitute)

GIRL

(A young Prostitute)

EPIGENES

(A young man)

SECOND OLD WOMAN

(Second old prostitute, uglier than the first)

THIRD OLD WOMAN

(Third old prostitute, ugliest of all)

MAID

(Of Praxagora)

CHORUS OF ATHENIAN WOMEN

TWO GIRLS

(Silent)

SICON & PARMENON

(Neighbour's slaves -silent)

Night. A street in Athens where three houses form the background of the stage. In the centre there is a small stone platform which will also be used as a seat.

Enter PRAXAGORA dressed in men's clothes (complete with phallus). She is walking, bent over a walking stick and looking through the dim light of a lamp she's carrying.

She waves her lamp searching up and down the street and while doing so she addresses her lamp, in the manner of a poet satirising another, in this case, Eurypides: Full of airs and pomposity.

Praxagora:

O light of my lamp!
Bright light in this lamp,
This well crafted lamp,
This lamp built on a wheel by inventors with good aim.

Let me tell of your birth and of your charms:

The potter's wheel spun you and gave you

A face

And thus your function is placed within

Your nostrils

A function as bright as the sun's

Rays!

So then,

O, light of my lamp,

Let your light give out the signal we women have

Arranged.

She waves the lamp towards the windows of the other two houses again

To you, alone, o light of my lamp, we'll reveal all

And we're right to do so for you,

Alone

Stand near us in our bedroom

When our body tangles with another in Aphrodite's

Knots of prurient passion.

You alone,

O light of my lamp,

Can stand by and

Watch our bodies bend into taut bows

And no one will send you away.

You alone,

O, light of my lamp

Can look so closely into those nooks and crannies

Between our thighs where no one else can look

And singe the curls that blossom therein!

And

You, alone, stand by when to our

Pantries we run to steal the flour

And

Bacchus' wine. You see us then and help us

But

You don't show and tell our neighbour!

That's why you, alone will learn what decisions

We, women made at Demeter's festival the Scira.

To the audience

Here we are! Minutes only before Parliament starts and not a woman in sight! It's damned near daylight!

Walks up and down anxiously.

Not a single one of them!

Chuckles. She just remembered a malapropism uttered by a certain Phyromachus.

He he! Remember Phyromachus? He once called us, "whore's bums!" Hehehehe! Whore's Bums!

She shrugs her shoulders.

Pause

Well, we should get in there, in Parliament, quietly and quietly plonk our whore's bums on our seats nice and early. Make no noticeable fuss at all.

Pause

What on earth is keeping them? Haven't they sown together the false beards that I've told them to get?

Maybe they've found it difficult to run off with their husband's clothes.

She suddenly sees something in the distance (Stage Left)

I wonder what that light is. It's coming this way. I better hide somewhere in case it's a man.

She moves back and hides the lamp behind her. A woman, dressed in man's clothes and carrying a

dimly-lit lamp and a bundle appears. She waves her lamp to the others behind her and they follow her onto the stage.

First Woman:

We've got to hurry, girls! The cock crowed twice already!

32

Praxagora:*Relaxes and moves forward towards them.*

I was up here all night, waiting for you, girls!

Hang on. Let's get my neighbour out without her getting caught by hubby. Let's scratch softly at her door.

She does so. A minute later the SECOND WOMAN comes out to join them. She's dressed in men's clothes

36

Second Woman:

I had just put on my sandals when I heard your scratching. I couldn't sleep all night either. My hubby is an islander, you know. From Salamis. Just loves his little oar. He had me sailing round and round in that bed all night, non-stop! I've only just managed to steal his cloak!

Praxagora:*Looks in the direction of Stage Left.*

Ah! Here they are! Cleinareti, Sostrati... and Philaneti! Come on then, move it girls!

Enter the three women.

Glyki said the last one to get here will be paying a fine. Three jugs of wine and a sack of chickpeas.

46

Second Woman:

Laughs at the sight of Melistichi in the distance.

Ahahaha! Here's Melistichi, Smicythion's wife! Look at her run in her husband's boots! And there I was thinking that, what with her queer husband, she'd be the first one to be able to get away!

First Woman:

And... here's the innkeeper's wife, Mrs Lush herself, complete with her torch.

51

Praxagora:

And there's Mrs Generous and Mrs Happy and, behind them, a whole lot of women... The absolute cream of Athenian women!

Enter THIRD WOMAN puffing.

Third Woman:

What a nightmare it was to get away from my husband, girls! Up all night, coughing and splattering, coughing and splattering! All night! No wonder though, he gorged himself on my short'n curlies for his supper!

Laughter and nods all round.

Praxagora:

Now, ladies! Now that you're all here, sit down and let me ask you a question!

They all sit around her.

Right. Have you all done what we said we would, back at Scira? At Demeter's festival?

60

First Woman:

She raises her arm that shows a huge tuft of hair under her armpit.

Sure did. I've let the hair of my armpits grow so long that a lion could get lost in it, just like you've told us! Then, whenever my husband went off to the market, I'd get the oil out, splash it all over me and stand out in the sun all day to get my body all black.

Second Woman:

Me, too, Praxagora. The first thing I did was to throw the razor out of our house, so that my hair would grow so much, I won't look at all like the attractive woman that I really am.

She gets up to show her hairy legs, ears, nostrils, etc Laughter and applause all round.

Praxagora:

And have you all got the beards?

70

First Woman:

Pulls one out of her bundle.

Here! Look at this one! By Hekate, isn't it great?

Second Woman:

And look at mine, too, Praxagora! Isn't it great? Better even than that mop which shields Epicrates' face!

Praxagora:*To the rest of the women*

You too? All of you?

First Woman:

Yeap. Nods all round. They've got them, all right!

Praxagora:*She walks around them, looking pleased.*

Good. Looks like you've done everything as we said.

Points at the items she mentions.

Spartan boots...walking sticks...men's cloaks... Right! You've got everything, I see.

First Woman:*Brings out a huge, thick truncheon out of her bag.*

And I even knocked off my husband's truncheon, when he was asleep. Poor Lamius!

Second Woman:

That must be the truncheon he swings when he needs to fart!

Praxagora:

By Zeus the Saviour! With a stick like that, plus Argus' leather jacket and thousand eyes and old Lamius would be a great shepherd to gather us for our city's executioner!

All right! Now while there are still stars in the sky, let's get to the next thing.

Parliament is opening at Dawn and we're prepared for Parliament. Right, sisters?

First Woman:

Absolutely, by Zeus! And we've got to get in there early and sit ourselves directly in front of the Chairman's stone platform.

Second Woman:*She takes out of her bag some knitting*

Absolutely, by Zeus! That's why I've brought along my knitting. Get some done before the place fills up.

Praxagora:

While the place fills up, you idiot? Knitting?

90

Second Woman:

Absolutely, by Artemis! Why not? Don't you think I can knit and listen at the same time? My kids are totally naked!

Praxagora:

Listen to you, woman! Here we are trying to hide our body and you're talking about knitting!

We've got to get in there early, girls! We'd deserve what we'd get if, suddenly, when all the people are there, one of us has to climb over them to get herself a seat but her cloak gets stuck somewhere and off she goes, showing her pubes to everyone!

Remembers something and chuckles.

Phornisius' beard, ey? What a stack of pubes that beard is! Hehehe!

Catches herself

Right! Now, if we get there first and take our seats before all the others, hold our man's clothes tightly wrapped around our body and have our beards with us and let them roll out in front of our face, no man will suspect a thing.

Beards, ey? Even a woman-looking man, like Agyrius looks like a man-looking woman, now that he's wearing Pronomous' beard!

Agyrius, ey? Remember him! That crooked, filthy rich politician! Agyrius! Rules the whole city, the bastard! It's because of him that we should try and accomplish this daring deed today, girls;

Applause

And! And we should do it before Dawn arrives.

Loudly, intently.

Let's hope to take the power in our hands, sisters! Let's save our city!

Applause

Pause. Relaxes her tone.

Because for a long time now, our city has been going nowhere at a fast oar!

110

Third Woman:

But Praxagora, how could we, a group of women, with women's brains make convincing speeches?

Praxagora:

We can make excellent speeches exactly because we are women! Better than any man can. They say that bugged youths make splendid orators, don't they? Now, do we women know about fucking or don't we? We're naturals, right?

Applause and "right, too right, Praxagora, we know a thing or two about that!"

115

First Woman:

Oh, I don't know, really. Lack of experience is a dreadful thing, you know. I mean about speeches.

Praxagora:

But that's precisely why we're here, darling; to get ourselves all prepared with what we're going to say in there. Now, put your beards on quickly and, those of you who are ready to speak go ahead and speak!

First Woman:

Ha! We're all ready Praxagora! Who among us is not an absolute specialist in the art of talking, ey? Fucking and talking! We're brilliant!

Praxagora:

Put your beards on then and act like you're a man. I'll put mine on and then I'll wear these garlands if I want to make a speech.

Women put their beards on and fool around pretending to be acting like men; swinging their phalluses about, yelling "hohoho" raising their hands to show their muscles... etc.

Second Woman:

After putting her beard on, takes a mirror out of her bag and looks into it. She is shocked.

Ooooooh! No! Sweetheart, Praxagora, look! Come and see just how ridiculous we look! This is awful!

Praxagora:*Approaches and takes a look.*

But why, darling? What's so ridiculous about it?

Second Woman:

But... with these black beards on our fair faces we look like someone stuck a squid on our heads grilled on charcoal!

Praxagora:

Ignoring her, calls out as if she is the clerk of the Parliament:

Purifier! Let the Purifier sanctify this place with the sacrificial cat!

Whispers among the women such as "Shouldn't it be a piglet? Is that Persephone's cat? Poor thing!"

A "Purifier" walks around with a cat, then takes it behind the curtains a moment after which we here the cat being slaughtered.

Praxagora:

Right! All of you, girls now gather around.

Indicating someone among them.

Ariphrades, stop that chatter! Move closer please and take your seat. Now! Who wishes to address Parliament?

First Woman:

Me!

Praxagora:

Good. Put the garland on and good luck!

First Woman:*Puts it on.*

Done.

Praxagora:

Go on, then!

First Woman:

What, make a speech on a dry throat?

Praxagora:

What do you mean? You want a drink? Now?

First Woman:

Of course! Isn't that why men put on the garland? I'd like some wine, please!

Praxagora:

Get out of there! Is that what you'd be doing in the real Parliament?

135

First Woman:

Whaaaat? Don't they drink in the real Parliament?

Praxagora:

Don't be silly, girl!

First Woman:

Of course they do, by Artemis! Absolutely! And it's the totally unadulterated strong stuff! Who else but drunks would come up with laws like those they do? Not only that but they also go on with libations, *mimicking* "By Zeus this and by Zeus that!" one libation after another with loong prayers

and loong gulps of wine and then go on yelling at each other like drunks and then the archers come along and remove the drunkest of them! Sure they drink! All the time!

Praxagora:

Come on, enough. Off you go! Go and sit down. You are worthless to our cause!

145

First Woman:*Coughs*

By Zeus! I reckon I'd be far better off without this beard. I'm dying of thirst!

Praxagora:

Anyone else wishing to address the Parliament?

Second Woman:

Me!

Praxagora:

Go on then, put the garland on! *Sarcastically* Oh, we're doing just fine so far. Now, speak loudly, just like a man. Lean your body well over your stick.

The Second Woman makes play with the phallus before correcting herself and leans over the walking stick.

Second Woman:*Speaking to the Parliament*

Ahem! Now, my thinking is that I'd rather a better orator came up to speak on our behalf and defend our drinking rights, letting me stay sitting down and resting but, never mind! Now! Ahem! My view is that we shall not let a drop of water pollute our bars. Not a drop! Get rid of all the water kegs in bars! Dreadful policy, by Demeter and Persephone, dreadful, whoever invented it!

156

Praxagora:*Interrupts her and corrects her.*

Stop, you idiot! By Demeter and Persephone? The two goddesses? Two GODDESSESS? What were you thinking?

Second Woman:

What's up, Praxagora? I didn't ask for a drink, did I?

Praxagora:

No, of course you didn't ask for a drink but you swore by the two Goddesses. You're supposed to be a man, not a woman. The rest of the speech though, was sheer eloquence!

Second Woman:

Oh! You're so right, by Apollo!

160

Praxagora:*Interrupts her again and takes the garland off her head.*

No, stop.

She addresses the rest of the women.

Look, girls! I'm not making the slightest move from here until I know we have perfected everything.

We are simply not going into Parliament like this!

Second Woman:

Let me have the garland. I want to speak again. I believe I've got it perfect now.*Praxagora hands her the garland*

Second Woman:

Ahem! My belief dear, seated ladies is –

Praxagora:*Interrupts her*

No, no, no! Look at us you blockhead! What are we again? We are MEN! We are NOT ladies!

Second Woman:*Points at the audience.*

It's that fairy, Epigonus, out there. My eyes fell on him and for a minute I thought I was addressing women!

Praxagora:*Guides the woman away angrily.*

Come on, off you go, you twit. Sit down with the others. I've got a hunch that I had better take the garland myself and speak on behalf of all of us.

Puts the garland on.

Now! Ahem! I beg the gods that they fulfil all our wishes.

I am as much a part of this country as all of you, men. I am truly anxious, truly sad about the dreadful state of our city's affairs.

You're always electing awful leaders! Awful! And if one of them gets something right for one day and he's useful, he gets all sneaky and dodgy and completely stuffs up everything for the following ten days! Then you get another leader and he's even worse than the last one! I know it's damned hard to put brains into a thick skull but you're always sending away those who love you and approach those who hate you. You're always afraid of the wrong lot of people!

There was a time when Parliament hardly ever met but we did know what a bastard Agyrrios was. Now though, when we do meet, what you do is get abundant praise from the man who draws a leader's salary whereas he who draws none and tells you that all those who attend Parliament do so just so they can get paid, you condemned him to death!

Applause all round interrupts her speech.

Second Woman:

By Aphrodite, how well you spoke, Praxagora!

190

Praxagora:

Charming! Superb! Once again, you twit, you swore by Aphrodite! How would we look if you did that in the House?

Second Woman:

I wouldn't be doing that in there.

Praxagora:

Stop doing it now!

Continues

Right! And then there's this... this "Coalition of the Willing" treaty we've just signed against the Spartans. When we were all debating it here, every one of us was shouting that if we didn't sign up the city would be ruined; then when we did, every one of us had changed his mind –AND the man who put the proposal up, shot through!

Then we get another proposal, say to launch a fleet of ships. What happens? Well, the wealthy will vote "yes" but the poor and the farmers will vote the opposite.

One minute you get vicious against the Corinthians to which they reply in kind and the next they're "great" so you're "great" is back again!

Those from Argos are uneducated fools yet General Hieronymus is an absolute genius!

We get a slight chance at peace but then, our General Thrasyboulos, goes off screaming that he wasn't consulted!

Applause all round again

First Woman:*Indicating Praxagora*

Hey, this guy is smart!

204

Praxagora:

Now that's a good way to praise me.

Back to her speech

And you, fellow citizens of Athens, yes, you alone are the cause of all this mess. You come here, draw your funds and use them for your own personal purposes while the city rolls downhill, like our poor Aesimus.

Yet, there's hope! There's hope if you listen to my proposal and it is this: I propose that we hand the city over to the women. Who better to run the city than they who run our households? They are the managers and treasurers of our house.

Applause again

All women together:

Yeaeaeaeae!

First Woman:

Indeed, kind sir! Please go on!

214

Praxagora:*Continues with the speech*

And let me prove to you just how much better they are equipped up here (*indicating the brain*) than us. Number one, they dye their wool in hot water. Each and every one of them! They've never strayed from that ancient custom. If a system works, they'll stick with it; not like this Parliament where we're always fiddling with everything, trying to change it this way and that, looking for some new way to do the same thing. Totally different to the women who:

Do the frying seated, just as they always did.

Carry things on their head, just as they always did.

Carry out the festival of Thesmophoria, just as they always did.

Bake their sweets, just as they always did.

Fuck with their husbands, just as they always did.

Have their secret lovers, just like they always did.

Do that little extra bit of shopping for themselves, just as they always did.

Love their wine straight off the bottle, just like they always did.

Love their fucking, just like they always did.

Takes a deep breath

For all these reasons, gentlemen, I say, let the women govern the city! Don't start analysing and debating it all, trying to be convinced by the argument. Just hand it over to them. We need only to consider the following:

Being the mothers of our soldiers, they'd want to protect them as best they can; and... and think how much bigger the rations would be and how much faster they'd reach our soldiers when they're fighting! Then, so far as the treasury is concerned, women know all about money. They've learnt the game a long time ago. A woman will never be diddled by anyone if she's the leader –women are the absolute masters at diddling!

I'll stop here now. If I have convinced you you'll have wonderful lives.

241

Second Woman:

What a sweet woman you are, my Praxagora! Where did you learn all this, darling?

Praxagora:

My husband and I lived near the Pnyx, where Parliament met when we were all thrown out of Athens. I've learnt by listening to the speeches of the other orators.

First Woman:

Ah! That's why you're so awesome, so brilliant! Well, then. If you pull this off and we get the leadership of the city, we shall elect you General! But then what if Cephalus, our famous orator and potter gets up and insults you? How will you tackle him?

Praxagora:

I'll simply say he's out of his kiln!

First Woman:

Nothing new in that, Praxagora. You need to say something else.

Praxagora:

In that case, I'll say, he's a phlegmatic, black-livered madman!

First Woman:

Nahhh, nothing new in that either, Praxagora.

Praxagora:

Well then, I'll just say his pottery stinks and so will his work on the city!

First Woman:

And what if crusty-eyed Neocleidis starts insulting you as well?

255

Praxagora:

What I'll say to him is, "Neocleidis, go and shove your crusty eyes up a dog's bum!"

First Woman:

But what if they try to fuck you?

Praxagora:

Darling! I'm very well versed in fucking. I'll fuck them back!

First Woman:

Ah! Something else we haven't thought of! The archers. What if the cops do the drag on you? One from the front and one from the back?

259

Praxagora:

I'll just stick my elbows out, like this. They won't be able to grab me by my waist.

Chorus:

And if they do lift you up in the air, we'll scream at them to let you go.

First Woman:

Right. We've got all that under control... all, that is, except the fact that we mustn't forget to raise our hands when we vote, like the men do. We women are used to raising our legs, instead!

266

Praxagora:

Hm, that's a toughie, that one. Nevertheless, we've got to vote, so remember: Raise your right hand. Pull the cloak down and raise it bare.

All right. Now, just lift up your skirts and put on those Spartan boots... and hurry! That's right, just as you see your husbands wearing them when they go off to Parliament or whatever. Now tie on your beards, all of you. Properly! Done? Good. Now put on your husband's cloak and be careful how you do that also. Good! Now, let me see you leaning on those walking sticks. That's right. Good, and, as you're heading off start singing some song that the old men sing. Sing it like the peasants do.

Chorus:

Quite right. Well said!

279

Praxagora:

Let's go then. I think there are women going to Parliament from the farms, as well, so let's get there before they do. We've got to hurry because you know what it's like with payment in Parliament: either you're in by Dawn or you're given bugger all!

Exit Praxagora and the two women.

285

Chorus:

Well, men, time for us to trot off. And remember, the word is "men." That's the word we've got to use all the time from now on. Don't forget that because our life will be in great peril if we get caught dressed up like this and for such a secretive venture.

So come on, men! Let's be off to the Parliament.

The Chairman has issued the warning:

Be there at the crack of Dawn,

Be there covered in dust,

Be there happy to have garlic for lunch

Be there with eyes rubbed black

Or else not a penny you'll get

For your trouble.

Pointing at some "men" who immediately stand "erect."

Hey, there Tom and Dick and Harry,

Look sharp and get moving!

You've got a role to carry,

Play it well, don't falter

When we get our tickets

At the Parliament's entrance,

Be sure we sit together

And together we vote as we ladies please.

Oh, no! I said "ladies" the fool.

I meant to say, "men" of course!

It's time now, let's go. The men from the bush are going to be there too, so we'll need to push in.

Damn them! When the pay was an obol a day they'd run off to the garland shop instead, and there they'd sit on their bums and gossip all day rather than attend to the city's affairs.

Now that the pay is a bit more they come and they jostle and shove for a seat! Ah, bring back the days of our generous General Myronides! When he ruled no one dared ask for a handful of silver to serve our city. People would come with lunch sack, a crust of bread a drink, a pair of onions and three olives!

Now they act like common bricklayers, asking for three obols a day while doing their civic duty.

From Praxagora's door enter Blepyrus. He is wearing a long fine, lacy, white, diaphanous ladies' shawl over his shoulders and women's shoes with long straps, dragging loosely around his feet.

He has just got up out of bed.

His face is twisted with pain and he has a tight, anxious grip of his bum with one hand, hoping to control his bowel.

311

Blepyrus:

What on earth is going on around here? Where has my wife run off to?

Looks around him.

It's damned near Dawn and I still can't find her.

There I was, wide awake half the bloody night, desperate for a shit, desperately struggling to find my shoes and cloak in the dark, searching everywhere – but everywhere!- and nothing! I couldn't find a thing. In the meantime, there's Mr Bum- opener, banging at my rear entrance. What could I do? I grabbed my wife's cute little shawl and her cute little Persian slippers and rushed out here looking for a place to shit! I'm busting for one!

He looks around anxiously. Runs off Stage Left, farts and immediately runs back on stage again. Still anxiously, he sits down mid-stage to shit.

At night, anywhere is all right because no one can see you.

But then he peers into the audience, feels uncomfortable, farts, gets up and rushes out Stage Right.

More farting before he rushes back on stage again, anxiously holding his bum.
What an idiot I was, getting married at my old age! I deserve a few good bruises for that... as a memento of the occasion. Looks around for his wife. Wherever she went it wouldn't be healthy for our relationship, I can tell you that for sure... Anyway, a man's got to do what a man's got to do.
He rushes back to Stage Right. Again more farting, some groaning and the final herald of evacuation.
Pause.

He enters the stage, still feeling "pressed" however. He obviously did not manage to ease himself totally. He holds his stomach tightly and alternates between that and checking his hands, shawl and slippers. When he turns around we see a yellow patch on the shawl.
From the opposite house we hear the creaking of the window shutters opening. Slowly we see the NEIGHBOUR. He is holding a lamp which he waves about trying to see into the street.

Neighbour:

Who is it? Who's there?

Waves the lamp and peers into the darkness

I don't suppose it's my neighbour Blepyrus, is it? Surely not!

Peers some more.

Blepyrus is trying to escape but he's unsuccessful. He is still gripping his stomach.

By Zeus, it IS the very man! Blepyrus!

Peers some more.

Hey... what's that yellow patch all over your back? Ha! I see you must have met our famous poet Kinesias. He's sprayed your arse with some of his shitty verses! Hahahahaha!

Blepyrus:*Gives up any attempt to escape. Farts.*

Nononono! I've come out here wearing my wife's yellow shawl. She loves wearing this little thing.

Neighbour:

Where's your cloak?

Blepyrus:

I wish I could tell you. I've looked for it among the sheets and blankets but just couldn't find it.

335

Neighbour:

Why didn't you ask your wife to tell you where it is?

Blepyrus:

Mightily uncomfortable. Every sentence an obvious indication of defeat and despondency.

No, by Zeus, I couldn't ask her. She sneaked out on me. I'm afraid I'm about to cop some new worry from her.

Neighbour:

Also begins to confess awkwardly.

Eh... Same damned thing happened to me, by Zeus! Same thing exactly! My woman took off with my vest. I love that vest! Not only that but she's taken my boots as well! Couldn't find them anywhere!

Blepyrus:

Me too! My Spartan boots have also gone. Nowhere to be found, nowhere to be seen! But I just had to have a bog, so I've just slipped into these little high heels and rushed out here. I couldn't very well shit in our blanket, I've just had it washed.

Neighbour:

I wonder what's going on? Perhaps some friend of hers invited them for breakfast.

Blepyrus:

A, ha! That's most probably what it is! So far as I know my woman is no slut.

351

Neighbour:

Oh, well. I can see the length of a ship's cable of shit on your back... I... I've got to go to Parliament now. That is, if I can find my cloak! It's the only bloody cloak I possess!

Blepyrus:*Holding his stomach tightly and anxiously and with excruciating pain*

Me, too. As soon as I... finish my... as soon as I get rid of....

By Zeus! I need a shit badly! My bloody bum hole is totally blocked by some wild choke pear or something. Nothing can get out of there.

Neighbour:

The sort of blocking our Thrasyloulos did to the Spartans?

Blepyrus:

Yes, by Dionysius!

Show of agony

It sure got me in a tight spot.

Neighbour, chuckles, waves good bye and goes back inside his house.

To the audience

What the hell am I going to do now? And not only now but what will happen when I eat something?

Anxiously

Where will all the shit flow?

Indicating his bum.

This mister Wild Pear has locked and thoroughly bolted the rear exit...

Anxiously peering into the crowd

Is there a doctor in the house? Can someone go and get me one? Who though? Who's a good bum purger, I wonder... Anyone know Aminos? No? Anyhow he'll probably say no.

Spins around anxiously, urgently and in sheer agony.

Somebody please call Antisthenes, hurry! Do whatever it takes. He's the one! When it comes to groaning, moaning and whining he knows a bum hole that needs licking! Not a great doctor but what a politician, ey?

He falls to his knees in agony then raises his hands in prayer

Oh, Ilithia! Goddess of the pregnant womb! I beg you! Don't ignore my pain!

Here I sit, trying to shit but the gate's shut and bolted!

They'll turn me into a potty for some comic stage!

Blepyrus squats and looks around him. He tightens his face as he tries variously to evacuate.

Occasionally he'll check to see whether he's done anything. Time passes as the light on the stage increases gently. Suddenly he realises he's about to be freed of his burden. He picks up the lengthy shawl and runs behind the curtain on Stage Right.

Enter Chremes Stage Left, carrying a shopping bag. He looks across and sees Blepyrus.

372

Chremes:

Oi! What do you think you're doing down there!

Suddenly shocked by the realization.

You're NOT dropping a bog, are you?

We hear the loud noise of the long anticipated evacuation.

Then, with a look of relief on his face, he enters the stage.

Blepyrus:

Who, me? O, nonononono!

Looks back to where he was.

At least not any more. Here I am, finally standing up!

Chremes:

Still suspicious. Looks around and there's a short game of "hide the sin."

Why are you wearing your wife's shawl?

Blepyrus:

This little ol' thing? Just grabbed it in the dark by mistake.

Changing the subject.

Tell me, where are you coming from?

Chremes:

From Parliament.

Blepyrus:

Is it out already?

Chremes:

Been out since the break of day, by Zeus!

Laughs.

You should have seen the late-comers! They were sprayed with so much ochre, there was ochre all around! What a laugh!

Blepyrus:

So, you did get your three obols, I presume.

380

Chremes:

I wish! No, I was too late! Shame! Shame! I've got to explain to my purse now why it's empty!

Blepyrus:

So... you got absolutely nothing then?

Chremes:

Absolutely nothing... except my shopping bag.

Blepyrus:

But why were you late?

Chremes:

A huge crowd of men turned up. Like never before. They just all turned up at the Parliament. Just like that, the whole throng together, and at the same time. I took one look at them and thought they must have all been cobblers. Pale. As if the sun never saw their faces. The whole place was pale... so neither I nor a whole lot of others near me got any money.

Blepyrus:

So, I won't get anything either if I go, ey?

390

Chremes:

Where from? You'd never get anything after the cock's second crow!

Blepyrus:

Oh no! Bugger me dead!

He falls to his knees and prays, mocking Aeschylus the tragedian

"Oh Antilochus, do not lament the loss of the three obols

but do lament the living man! Me, Blepyrus, for all I had is no more!"

Gets up again.

But what the hell was it that brought out such a huge throng, so early?

Chremes:

What else but the fact that the Chairman has placed in the agenda the question about how to save the city. There he was, the first of them all, Mister Crusty Eyes Neocleidis, jumps up out of his seat, gropes his way to the speaker's chair and gets ready to speak. The crowd though, begins to yell, "get off!" And "How dreadful it is that this person dares to lecture us on the ways of saving our city when he can't even save his own little eyeballs?" To which old Neocleidis looks all round him and yells, "what the hell can I do about it?"

Blepyrus:

I'd have told him, "grind a bit of garlic with the milk of the fig tree, add some sow-thistle and apply it on your eyelids every night." That's if I was there... but I wasn't!

Chremes:

Then, out comes our real genius, Eveon, wearing absolutely nothing, though he tried to convince the people that he was, indeed, wearing a cloak. His words were very... democratic! He said, "As you can see, folks, I'm also in need of salvation. Just a mere silver drachma would do it, really. Anyhow, I'm still going to tell you how you can save the city and its people. The moment the sun turns his back on us and is replaced by winter, the manufacturers of clothes should give cloaks free to anyone who asks for them. That way, no one among us will catch pleurisy. As well, those who don't own a bed or a blanket, should go to the tanners – after they've had a wash – and if a tanner dares slam his doors to him, well, we should fine him three furs."

421

Blepyrus:

By Dionysus! What helpful ideas! And he should have added that our great grain mogul, Nausicydis, and other grain dealers should also give away to the poor, three kilos of grain for their supper or else these dealers would end up crying for a long time. Now that suggestion would get Eveon unanimous agreement!

Chremes:

Then, after Eveon a pale, handsome young man who looked just like our General Nikias, jumped to his feet and spoke to everyone. He... he argued that we should hand over the running of Athens to the women! Well! Everyone thundered with cries of "well said!" They were all those cobblers I was telling you about. But then the farmers began whispering and whining.

Blepyrus:

Because, by Zeus, they've got brains!

Chremes:

But they were fewer in number so the speaker told them to shut up. He said a whole lot of good things about the women but he said some nasty things about you!

Blepyrus:

Like what?

Chremes:

First, that you're a right old bastard!

Blepyrus:

What about you? What did he call you?

Chremes:

I'll tell you in a minute. Then he called you a thief.

Blepyrus:

Me? Only me?

Chremes:

That's right, only you. And, by Zeus, he called you an informer as well.

Blepyrus:

Just me?

Chremes:

That's right, Blepyrus. You and Indicating the audience most of these people here, too! Thieves and informers. Dobbers. Squealers. Right old bastards the bloody lot of them.

445

Blepyrus:

Stares at the audience for a minute.

Indicating them.

Well, that's true. That's undeniable, by Hermes.

Chremes:

And he also said that whilst we, men, all cheat each other and don't return borrowed things, the women, help each other, lend each other anything from dresses to jewellery, money, cups and saucers and they do it alone and without the presence of witnesses and wankers; and they return everything on time.

Blepyrus:

Yes, by Poseidon! We cheat even with witnesses present!

454

Chremes:

And he went on and on about all this, praising them. Gave a whole eulogy on them! They don't snitch, don't sue, don't destroy our democracy... lots of other great virtues.

Blepyrus:

And what did he propose?

Chremes:

That the city be turned over to the women. It was thought that this was the only thing the city hasn't ever tried.

Blepyrus:

And this proposal passed?

Chremes:

My words exactly. Absolutely!

Blepyrus:

And these women are now in charge of everything that we were in charge of?

Chremes:

Yep. Exactly right. They're in charge.

460

Blepyrus:

So... instead of me going to court, from now on it'll be my wife?

Chremes:

Nor will you be raising your children any more. Your missus will be in charge of that.

Blepyrus:

So... I won't need to moan and groan every morning, worrying about our daily bread?

Chremes:

By Zeus, no! Oh, no, mate! From now on, it's the wife who'll be doing all the worrying. No need to moan, groan or worry about a thing. Just stay home and...

Blepyrus farts.

...fart all day!

Blepyrus:

Hmmm. I... I fear for us, you know? I fear that for men of our age, when these women take over they'll force us... they'll force us to... well, you know, to...

Chremes;

To do what?

Blepyrus:

What else? To have sex with them, man! And if we won't be able to do it then we won't even get breakfast!

Chremes:

Stupid man! You can do this, can't you? Indicates cunnilingus. Do it and you'll get both, breakfast and sex!

Blepyrus:

But it sure is awful when you're forced to do it!

Chremes:

But if it's the will of the city then everyone must obey.

Blepyrus:

Yes, I suppose. There is an old wife's tale that no matter how stupid or moronic our city's advice, things will still turn out for the best.

Chremes:*Raises his hands in prayer.*

Well, Goddess Athena and all the rest of you gods, I sure hope that things do turn out for the best. I've got to go. Cheers, mate!

Exit Chremes Stage Right. Blepyrus goes back into his home.

A second after Chremes disappears, we hear him yell in anger because he had stepped upon Blepyrus' shit.

Enter the women, dressed in men's clothes and stamping their feet. (Care should be taken not to drown the voice of the speaker.)

Mrs Lush:

Let's go, girls!

Are there any men following us? Take a good look all around.

There are lots of sleazy bastards around, checking out the shape of our bums. Watch out for them, you never know one of them might be right up you. And stamp your feet loudly as you go along and keep your cloaks tightly wrapped.

Mrs Generous:

Stay close and look about you carefully. That's right, look both left and right!

If this thing gets out and our husbands find out, both, shame and catastrophe will fall upon us and upon our scheme.

Mrs Happy:

Here we are, girls. This is where we've started off on our journey to Parliament.

Kick the dust high!

Shouts of jubilation.

There's our good General's house.

Indicates Praxagora's house.

She came up with the plan that the citizens of Athens have enacted.

More shouts of jubilation

Right. Now there's no need to have these beards hanging off our faces any more, so take them off.

Someone might see us in the full light of the sun, so let's go there by the wall's shade. Keep your eyes peeled girls. Change your clothes again, change them back to as you were before.

Mrs Lush:

Hurry up! I can see our General coming this way now. She's back from Parliament. Hurry everyone.

Get rid of all that facial hair. Ghastly stuff we had to put up with all this time.

Women take off the beards and are in various states of clothes-changing when Praxagora enters.

504

Praxagora:

Wonderful, girls! Success! Luck on our side and things turned out as we wanted them to turn out.

That's right, hurry now and get these cloaks off you before anyone sees you. Your shoes, too. You, Sostrati, undo those Spartan horse reins!

Indicating the laces on the Spartan Boots.

All of you, throw away the walking sticks and you, Mrs Lush, get all this stuff together. Indicating the shoes, clothes, sticks etc.

I think I better sneak back into the house before hubby sees me. I better put his cloak and all this other stuff back where I took it from.

Mrs Lush and other women gather all the clothes.

Mrs Happy:

All done, o, great one! We got rid of everything just as you said. Now please guide our next move, Praxagora and tell us how to do well whatever you ask of us; because never in my life have I met a woman as awesome as you! That's for sure!

Praxagora:

Then wait for me here and I'll make you all my counsellors for the office they've elected me. You were absolutely manly back there, with all that clamour and hassle that was going on, too!

Enter Blepyrus from his house, sees his wife and yells with anger.

Blepyrus:

You! It's you! Where have you been, Praxagora?

520

Praxagora:

Since when is that your business, Blepyrus?

Blepyrus:

Oh, that's charming! That's very charming indeed! My business! And what innocence I see in your face!

Praxagora:

Oh, no! You're going to start yapping on about being at my lover's house, now, right?

Blepyrus:

One lover? ONE lover? More like a fleet of them!

Praxagora:

Don't aggravate yourself; it's easy to check me out.

Blepyrus:

What do you mean? Check you out, how?

Praxagora:

Come and smell my hair. See if there's any perfume in it.

525

Blepyrus:

What do you mean, perfume? Since when do you women need perfume in your hair to get a fuck?

Praxagora:

Well, I do... unfortunately.

Blepyrus:

So why did you run out of the house with my clothes so early and so quietly?

Praxagora:

A woman, a close friend of mine was overcome by great pain in the middle of the night and I had to go and see her.

Blepyrus:

So why didn't you say something before you ran off like that?

Praxagora:

Surely you understand I had to think about the condition the poor pregnant woman was in, darling.

Blepyrus:

Still, you could have told me first! There's something awful in all this!

Praxagora:

I swear by the two goddesses. The woman who came for me told me to get there as quickly as possible, so I went just as I was.

535

Blepyrus:

Well then why not wear your own cloak? But no! You had to run off with my cloak and throw your shawl over me, leaving me looking like a corpse ready for the hearse! A wreath and an urn and I'd be ready.

Praxagora:

It was freezing outside, darling and I'm thin and feeble of health. That's why I needed this to keep warm, but you! I left you in your blankets, all warm and snug.

Thinks a little

Blepyrus:

But with you ran off the stick and the Spartan boots. Why is that?

Praxagora:

So I can save your cloak from thieves. I took the stick, wore the Spartan boots and stomped my feet on the cobble stones, making as much noise as I could, so that the thieves would think I was you.

Blepyrus:

Have you any idea how much wheat I could have got us with the three obols I'd be given if I'd got to Parliament? A whole bucket of it! Nearly twenty litres of it!

550

Praxagora:

Ah, don't worry, Blepyrus, she had a boy!

Blepyrus:

Who had a boy, Parliament?

Praxagora:

No, stupid, the woman I went to. She had a boy so I'll be getting a gift worth much more than the miserable three obols... So Parliament sat?

Blepyrus:

By Zeus, yes! Don't you remember? I told you yesterday!

Praxagora:

Ah, yes! Now I remember.

Blepyrus:

Well, have you heard what was decided?

Praxagora:

Not me. How could I?

Blepyrus:

Well, my darling wife, sit yourself down and enjoy your cuttlefish. They've voted to hand the city over to you women.

Praxagora:

To do what with it? Is there some weaving to be done?

She seats at the platform

Blepyrus:

God no. They want you to govern!

Praxagora:

Govern? Govern who?

Blepyrus:

Every bit of the city's business.

Praxagora:

By Aphrodite! What a blessed future this city will have!

Blepyrus:

Blessed? How is that going to happen?

Praxagora:

In many ways. From now on no one will dare behave shamefully in this city. And there'll be no more perjurers or sycophants –

Blepyrus:Interrupts her

Good gods! Please! Don't do that. How will we make a living?

Neighbour's door opens and neighbour enters

Neighbour:

Come on, mate, let your missus talk!

565

Praxagora:

Right! There'll be no more purse snatchers, no more envy, no more nudity, no more poverty, no more disputes, no more repossessing...

Neighbour:

By Poseidon! That would be fantastic – if she's not lying, that is!

Praxagora:

I'll show you whether I'm lying or not. You be my witness and when this becomes true, hubby here will shut up with his constant criticism!

Mrs Lush:

Now is the time when you need to use your mind, Praxagora!

A powerful mind, packed to the brim with wisdom and prudence, to defend our sisters.

Your lips never cease to utter the wise words that benefit our people in a myriad of ways.

Mrs Generous:

Now is the time, Praxagora, to show us just what your mind can do.

Mrs Happy:

Our city needs some wise person's solution.

Mrs Lush:

Tell us all about it.

Mrs Generous:

Make sure that nothing is said or done before.

Mrs Happy:

Pointing to the audience

The folk out there hate to see repeats.

Mrs Lush:

All right then, don't waste any time. Begin immediately.

Mrs Generous:

Put your ideas in practice straight away.

Mrs Happy:

Spectators love quick action more than anything else.

Praxagora:

Mrs Lush, Mrs Generous and you, too, Mrs Happy, I'm certain that my ideas are useful but I'm not so sure that the spectators will like the new action. That's the stuff which worries me about this lot.

(Peers into the audience). I think they prefer to watch the old ancient action, instead.

586

Neighbour:

Ohhhh, no, don't worry Praxagora. So far as that goes, have no fear. Our way is to always abandon the old and well tested ideas and embrace the new ones.

Praxagora:

In that case, I don't want anyone to argue with me or to interrupt me until she has listened to the whole speech and has a full understanding of my whole plan.

Pause as she waits for a response

Good. Now, I suggest that all things be owned by everyone in common and everyone should be able to draw a pay and have an equal standard of living. They should all draw pay from the same funds. Let's have no more of this rich man-poor man stuff. None of this, one man farming huge paddocks and the other owning less land than what he needs for his grave. None of this one man owning a crowd of slaves and another not even a single servant. My law says, one law for everyone, one standard for all.

Blepyrus:

How can you make one law for everyone?

595

Praxagora:

Easy. Remember this motto: The only thing you'll eat before me is shit! The rest is equal time, equal serve.

Blepyrus:

You're making shit-eating a common practice too, are you?

Praxagora:

No, Blepyrus, but you've interrupted me. I was about to explain that very thing. The first thing I'll do is to put common ownership to all the land. The same with the money and every other thing which is, at the moment, owned by individuals. And it is this common wealth that we women will harvest with prudent saving and a careful intelligence.

601

Neighbour:

What about those among us who possess no land but who have loads of silver and gold coins, like the Persian Darics for example?

Praxagora:

Well, they'll just have to deposit it to the central fund.

Blepyrus:

And if they doesn't deposit it then they'll have to lie and commit perjury... which is the way they've got it in the first place! Hahaha!

Praxagora:

In any case, what use will it be to them? None!

Blepyrus:

Why not?

605

Praxagora:

Because there will be no one working because he's forced by poverty. None of us will be lacking in anything. We'll have bread, salt, fish fillets, cloaks to wear, wine to drink, garlands, chick peas, the lot. So what's the point in not depositing their coins? Let me know if you can see it.

Blepyrus:

But those men who have all this stuff do so because they're the biggest thieves around!

Praxagora:

That's right, darling! That's all due to the laws we have now, under the current system but when this new system is established and everything is deposited in a common fund and everyone would be living from it, how would it profit anyone to keep from depositing his stuff?

Blepyrus:

But then... if a man sees a lovely girl and he would just love to buy her for a night of... of games, he'll appear to the "common fund" draw out the price she's after and go off and screw her.

Praxagora:

No, there'll be no need to draw any funds. He'll be able to sleep with her for free. No charge, no price. These girls will also become part of the common property law. Men will be able to sleep with them whenever they want and, if they want, make babies with them.

615

Blepyrus:

Well! In that case, every man will be running to the prettiest girl for his fuck.

Praxagora:

No, all the ugly ones and the ones with the twisted noses will stand next to the cute ones; and if the man wants the cute one he'll have to fuck the ugly ones first.

Blepyrus:

By Zeus, Praxagora! What about us, oldies? If we've got to go with the ugly ones first, by the time we get back to the cuties, our cocks would be useless. There'll be nothing left in them.

Praxagora:

Hahaha! Don't worry, sweetheart, they won't be fighting over you. Don't ever be afraid of that.

Blepyrus:

Fight? What do you mean fight?

Praxagora:

I mean, the cute ones. They won't be fighting to fuck with you. Anyhow, this problem about a useless cock... it's there already with you, isn't it?

Blepyrus:

How wise you are about your own, womanish affairs. You've got it worked out so that no woman's hole is left empty but what about the men? What are you doing about us, because, as I see it, the cute women will go right past us ugly ones and go fuck with the handsome ones.

Praxagora:

The ugly men like you should follow the cute bums when the dinner party is over and watch where they take their public walks because my laws will prohibit the tall and beautiful women to sleep with those young men unless they first serve the wishes of you, the ugly and the short.

630

Blepyrus:

Hahaha! So now ugly-nosed Lysicrates will be lifting his nose up in pride along with all those perfectly-nosed handsome youths! Oh my!

Neighbour:

By Apollo, that's right! What a great idea and how Democratic! What a laugh it would be when a bright young stallion, wearing his golden rings is told by someone wearing crude clogs, "hey buddy, hold on a while, wait till I'm finished and then I'll let you have the leftovers!"

Blepyrus:*Thinks a bit*

But then this sort of life won't allow us to recognise our own kids.

Praxagora:

And why should we? This sort of life will make them consider all men past a certain age as their fathers.

Blepyrus:

Oh nononono, Praxagora! That's too worrying a thought for me. The kids already want to strangle their fathers, the ones they know for certain are their fathers. With your rules these kids will not only want to strangle them but shit on them as well!

641

Praxagora:

No, silly! The bystanders will step in and save them. Before my laws, no one would give a damn about who's beating whose father. Now though, if they hear that some man is being beaten, they'll be worried that the old man was their own father and they'd run to the old man's side.

Blepyrus:

Sure, Praxagora. Nothing wrong with what you're saying but... the thought of Mr Fatso and Mr Baldy coming up to me and calling me "daddy" puts the wind up me.

646

Neighbour:

Ha! I can think of something even more frightful!

Blepyrus:

Like what?

Neighbour:

If Mr Turdlover comes to you, calls you "pappy" and gives you a big smooch! Hahaha!

Blepyrus:

Just let him try! Boy will he regret it!

Neighbour:

And you, my friend would smell of heavenly mint!

Praxagora:

Nothing to worry about. Turdlover was born before our decree so he can't give you that kiss.

650

Blepyrus:

Decree or no decree, he'd still be sorry if he kissed me... but... who'll be doing the farming,

Praxagora?

Praxagora:

The farming will be done by the slaves. Your only concern will be to get all dressed up and oiled up around ten in the evening and go off to your dinner party.

Blepyrus:

Ah! Another valid question, I think, concerns clothing. What of them? Where do we get them from?

Praxagora:

Make use of what you've got now. Later we'll weave you new ones.

655

Blepyrus:

And then there's the question about fines. Suppose someone gets sued and the judges give him a fine. Where will he get the money, surely you don't think it's fair for him to extract it from the common funds!

Praxagora:

But there won't be any hearings, Blepyrus!

Blepyrus:*To the Neighbour*

Those words, my dear friend, will be your undoing!

Neighbour:

I think so too!

Praxagora:

But, darling what will anyone sue anyone for?

Blepyrus:

Ha! By Apollo! I can mention lots of things! First of all there's the situation where someone won't pay his debt.

Praxagora:

Where did the lender get the money from in the first place, if all the money belongs to everyone?

Obviously, he's a thief!

Neighbour:

Quite right, by Demeter! You're quite right!

Blepyrus:

All right, answer this question for me then: There's a dinner party and afterwards it gets all nasty, drunks fighting each other and so on. They'll end up getting to court and told to pay fines for assault. How will they do that? This will get you thinking!

665

Praxagora:

Whoever is fined will have his bread rations reduced. That reduction will hit him hard, in his belly! Next time he wants to assault anyone, he'll have to think twice about it!

Blepyrus:

So you think no one will be a thief?

Praxagora:

Why would he? He'd be stealing from something he's a shareholder in.

Blepyrus:

No more... stripping off in the middle of the night?

Neighbour:

Nope, not if you sleep at home!

Praxagora:

Not even as in the old days when you used to get out. No one will bother you because everyone will have everything they'll need for a happy life. If someone wants to strip you of your cloak then you just simply give it to him. What's the point of fighting about it when you can run off and pick a better one from the common lot?

Blepyrus:

What about gambling? Won't folk gamble with dice?

Praxagora:

What would be the point in that? To win what exactly?

Blepyrus:

And what sort of life-style will you create for the citizens?

Praxagora:

The same life-style for everyone. I'll turn the whole city into one huge, happy household by smashing down all the walls which now separate them and turn them into one building so that everyone can walk through everyone else's place.

675

Blepyrus:

That's silly. Where will we have our dinner?

Praxagora:

Dinner? I'll turn all the court rooms and all the covered footpaths into eating places.

Blepyrus: *Constantly trying to think of new objections*

What about Parliament and the speaker's platform?

Praxagora:

That's where I'll store all our cutlery, crockery, water jugs and suchlike. The children will be able to get up there and recite poems about heroes as well as about cowards with whom they'd be ashamed to share a meal.

Blepyrus:

By Apollo, that's a great idea! It sure makes me happy. Now, what about all those ballot boxes?

Praxagora:

The ballot boxes will be placed in the centre of the market place, by Harmodius' statue and I'll have an official who'll tell everyone which dining hall they should go. They'll draw a letter out of that box and the official will tell them to which hall that letter corresponds. The letter "B" for example will take you to the "Basilium" Dining hall. The letter "Theta" will take you to the neighbouring one and the letter "Kapa" will go to the hall where they sell the flour.

Blepyrus:

"Kapa" for capes?

Praxagora:

What do you mean, capes? They go there to eat!

Blepyrus:

What about those who won't manage to draw a letter? Will they be ejected out of the dining hall by all the others?

689

Praxagora:

That won't be happening with us, women. We'll be supplying every man with all his needs. Imagine this: Every man will be able to leave his dinner party drunk, still wearing his garland and carrying a torch to find his way home. And while he's walking, a woman will approach them and talk to them sweetly like this, "Come with us, sweetie, come to our place. There's a stunning looking girl in here." And from the second-storey window, another woman will call out, "Over here, darling. There's a beautiful young girl here, pale white skin... of course you'd have to screw me before you screw her." As well, the ugly men will run after the young, handsome studs and yell at them, "Ey! You there, young man, where are you going in such a hurry? In any case, you'll get no action in there even if you did go. These pretty ones in there will have to fuck the ugly folk, like me first, the ones with the flat noses. You... you can grab your two-fig branch and wank, there, in the doorway, if you're in too much of a hurry!"

So, tell me, men, did you like all this?

Both Men:

Totally!

Praxagora:

Well, then I'll go and find a girl with a loud voice to use as my crier and then go off to the marketplace to accept all the goods as they arrive. Being elected the leader, I need to do these things. Then I'll have to organise the dinner for you all so that you can all have your first orgy tonight.

Blepyrus:

We are starting the orgies tonight?

Praxagora:

My words, exactly. Then I'll want to stop all the prostitutes from trading.

Blepyrus:

Whaaaaat? But whyyyyy?

Neighbour:

Why? Isn't that obvious?

Indicating the chorus

She wants to put the whores out of business so that these ugly crows can get their young pricks!

According to the new laws!

Praxagora:

As well, the slave girls won't be allowed to adorn themselves in any way so as to steal the fervour of the young, free men. They'd only be allowed to fuck with other slaves and have their little pinkies trimmed in the manner of a woollen underskirt. Very rough!

She turns to leave. Blepyrus follows closely behind.

725

Blepyrus:

Praxagora, darling, I'd like to follow you around, so that everyone can see me beside you and say, "Well, look at that! That's the Commander's husband!"

Both, Blepyrus and Praxagora exit into their house.

Neighbour:

I better go too. If I've got to take all my possessions to the marketplace, I'd better get them all together and check out what I've got.

Exit Neighbour into his house.

From the Neighbour's house, we hear noises pertaining to the shifting of furniture, collecting household items, breaking things, etc. Eventually, Neighbour and his two slaves, Sicon and Parmenon enter, carrying the household items and one by one, line them up on the street. Neighbour talks fondly and emotionally to each of the articles. It is the separation of close friends.

While this is going on, a man enters, stands at a corner and watches the activity with some emotional involvement, yet with quite some state of perplexity.

Neighbour:

Come, my darling Sieve, pretty little thing, so white from all those bags of flour you've sieved. Come outside, my sweet and stand here, in front of the parade, the first of all my belongings. Now who's going to be my Number Two in the parade? Ah! The Casserole! Come out here, sweetheart! By Zeus! You're all black! Did Lysicrates use you to boil that black poison of his, to make his hair dye? Come, stand here, next to the Sieve. You, too, my Dresser, my box of scissors and eyebrow pluckers and make-up, come! Come my Water Jug.

To the slave carrying the jug.

Jug Bearer, bring that cute jug over here... that's right, right here!

The other slave comes out holding a hand mill in the shape of a lyre.

Ah, my darling Lyre Mill! You, too, come out here and we'll make you the Musician of our parade!

The number of times you've woken me up for Parliament, with your delightful song. Early, so early in the morning, it was still night!

Now, who's got the tub?

A slave indicates he does.

Well, come on then, our here.

To the other slave.

You, bring out the honeycombs and place them next to the olive branches. And the two Tripods and the Oil Flasks. Bring them all down here.

All things are eventually brought out and arranged on the stage

All, here? Good. Now let all the little potlets follow from behind.

Pause

Man:

Snaps out of the involvement.

To the audience

Ha! Me? No way! I'd never deposit my possession to the common coffers. I'd be an idiot to do so and a bit screwed in the head, I think! By Poseidon, never! Not before I scrutinise the situation over and over again and think about it for a very long time. I'm not going to throw away the fruit of my labour and all those careful savings, just like that, thoughtlessly. I'd need to be convinced first about how the whole thing will turn out.

To the Neighbour

Hey, there! What's with all these household goods? Are you moving house or are you using them as collateral for a loan?

755

Neighbour:

Neither!

Man:

So why have you got them all lined up like that? Are you marching them off to Hieron's auction house?

Neighbour:

By Zeus, no! We're off to the marketplace. They'll be deposited to the city's coffers according to the new law.

Man:

You're giving them to the city?

Neighbour:

But of course!

Man:

What an idiot! By Zeus the saviour, what an idiot you are!

Neighbour:

What do you mean?

Man:

What do you mean, "what do I mean?" Look at you!

Neighbour:

What do you mean, "look at me?" Aren't I supposed to obey the laws of the city?

Man:

What do you mean "the laws of the city," stupid?

Neighbour:

What do you mean, "what laws?" The laws that have just been enacted!

Man:

What do you mean, "enacted?" How can you be so stupid?

Neighbour:

What do you mean, "stupid?"

Man:

What do you mean, "what do I mean by stupid?" I mean "stupid!" I mean you're the stupidest man of all!

Neighbour:

You mean... because I'm obeying orders?

Man:

I mean... Do smart men obey orders?

Neighbour:

But of course they do! Always!

Man:

No, that's not what the smart man does. That's the act of an idiot.

Neighbour:

So, you're thinking of not presenting your stuff?

Man:

I'm thinking of being very careful with this law. I'll see what the rest of the people do first.

Neighbour:

They're all getting their stuff ready to deposit them in the city's coffers, that's what they're all doing.

770

Man:

Sure, sure. I'll be convinced of that when I see it with my own two eyes.

Neighbour:

But the whole town is talking about it.

Man:

That's right, they're "talking" about it! Doesn't mean they'll be doing it.

Neighbour:

That's what they're promising to do. They're promising to take them in.

Man:

Of course, they are, of course they are!

Neighbour:

Man, you're stressing me out with all this doubt of yours!

Man:

Doubt? But of course, they'll doubt!

Neighbour:

Zeus fuck you man!

Man:

Fuck? Sure they'll get fucked. Do you think that those with a brain will turn in all their possessions?

Oh no! It's not part of our ethnic ethic.

Neighbour:

So you think we all should just... take from the city and give nothing back?

779

Man:

By Zeus, yes! Of course! Same with the gods. Check it out yourself. Every time we go there to pray to them, what do they do? There they are, hands stretched out, palms up, obviously not so that they may give but that they may be given something.

Neighbour:

Enough, you thieving wanker! Let me get on with it. I need to tie all this stuff together... Now where did I put my rope?

Man:

So, you're really taking them to the marketplace?

Neighbour:*Finds the rope, picks up the two tripods and ties them together.*

What do you think I'm doing with these tripods?

Man:

You're being totally stupid. What a moron you are, not waiting to see what the rest of the people do about this. At least then and only then –

Neighbour:*Interrupts*

And then do what, then!

790

Man:

Then, you wait even a little longer, and then a little longer, and then a little longer and then you forget it!

Neighbour:

For what reason?

Man:

We've got earthquakes happening all the time, fires, bad luck, black cat dashing across your path. Who knows what! Stuff which will put an end to all these handouts, you great ox!

Neighbour:*Gets back to his work*

What a fine ox I'd be if I got to the depository and there was no more room for me to deposit these things!

Man:

Ha! Are you worried you might miss your turn? Don't worry, mate. They'll manage to get them off your hands sooner or later.

Neighbour:

Now what do you mean?

Man:

What I mean is that I know these people in our Parliament really well. They rush to vote for something one day and the next they reject it.

Neighbour:

Don't worry, they'll all be there with their chattels.

800

Man:

And if they don't?

Neighbour:

Don't you worry, they will!

Man:

And if they don't?

Neighbour:*Annoyed*

Well then, we'll fight the bastards.

Man:

What if they're more than you?

Neighbour:

If there are more of them then I'll just leave it all to them. I'll just walk away!

Man:

What if they go and sell all your stuff?

Neighbour:

Shove off, will you?

Man:

What if I shove off?

Neighbour:

If you shove off you'll be doing us all a great service.

Man:

So... you really want to hand over all your stuff?

Neighbour:

Of course I do and I can see all my own neighbours doing so, as well.

Indicates the third house.

Man:

Ha! Antisthenes? Sure, sure! He'd rather have a thirty-day long shit than hand over his purse.

Antisthenes! Hahahaha!

Neighbour:*Charges towards him*

Damn you! Piss off!

Man:

And what about Callimachus, the dance teacher. Is he going to deposit anything?

810

Neighbour:

He's going to deposit more than Calias, that's for sure! The damned squanderer!

Man:

To the audience, anxiously.

This man is going to toss away his whole estate!

Neighbour:

You're exaggerating a bit, aren't you?

Man:

What do you mean, "exaggerating?" I see laws like this one enacted all the time... Remember the one on salt?

Neighbour:

Sure I do.

Man:

And what about when we all voted to bring in those stupid, useless copper coins. Remember that, too?

In one day out the next! Remember?

Neighbour:

Damn it, do I! I've lost so much money with that rubbish! I had just gathered all my grapes, sold them, got paid in those coppers and then went off to the market to buy barley. No sooner I open my bag to pay for it and the herald shouts, "no more coppers! No more coppers! We're only using silver now!" Bastard of a vote that one!

Man:

And then it wasn't that long ago that we all voted Euripides' laws for the two and a half percent tax hike which was to raise five hundred talents for the city! Five hundred talents! Wow, we all thought, what a golden boy this Euripides is. But then, a few days later, we checked it out thoroughly and what did we see? Bedbugs in Zeus' blankets! Bullshit! So, our so called "golden Euripides" ended up being our "bastard Euripides!"

Neighbour:

Not the same at all, mate! Just not the same. See, the place was run by us, the men those days. Now it's led by women! Very different!

Man:

Oh, women, or not, don't worry! I'll be very careful, by Poseidon! I don't want them pissing all over me!

Neighbour:

Pissing all over you? Pissing all over you? Mate, I really have no idea what you're crapping on about!

Enter a female Herald

834

Female Herald:

Hear me, hear me, hear me, all you citizens of Athens! All citizens are henceforth included in this proclamation.

All of you quickly go over to our Lady Commander's place so that Luck can declare where each of you will dine tonight. All the tables are now fully ready and loaded with every delicious morsel. The couches, too, are dressed with covers and cushions. The wine is being served and the girls who sell the scents are waiting for you. The fish fillets are being barbecued, the hares are on the spit, the bread rolls are in the oven, the garlands are being plaited, crunchies are being roasted, the young girls are cooking chick pea soup and Smoeus the cunt lover is there with them, in his riding suit, licking clean the women's bowls. Geron is there, also. He's thrown away his cheap old boots and worn our cloak and he's now wearing a brand new suit and new boots, and he's chatting up a young stud.

Come all you citizens of Athens, for all this is waiting for you. Your bread is waiting for you – all you need to do is... open wide!

Exit female Herald

Man:

Wonderful! I'll be off then. Why hang around here when all this is the city's will?

855

Neighbour:

Oi! Where do you think you're off to? You haven't deposited your stuff!

Man:

I'm off to dinner! Why?

Neighbour:

No way! They won't feed you before you deposit your household goods. Not if they have any sense, they won't!

Man:

Don't worry, friend. I will deposit them. Believe me, I will!

Neighbour:

When?

Man:

Don't worry, mate. I won't be holding anyone up.

Neighbour:

What do you mean, "I won't be holding anyone up?"

Man:

What do you mean, "what I mean?" I mean that there will still be others who will be depositing even after me. That's what I mean, what I mean!

Neighbour:

But still, you're going to dinner before you deliver!

860

Man:

Of course I will. What choice do I have? Right-minded people must obey the call of their city and run to help as best they can.

Neighbour:

What if they stop you?

Man:

I'll lower my head and walk through.

Neighbour:

They'll whip you.

Man:

If they dare do that, I'll sue them.

Neighbour:

Ha! They'll laugh at you.

Man:

Well, if they do that, I'll just stand in the doorway and...

Neighbour:

And what? Tell me what you would do?

Man:

I'd stand there, wait for the food to arrive and pinch it as it goes into the dining hall.

Neighbour:

You better walk after me then!

Turning his back on him

Sicon, Parmenon, pick up my goods!

Man:

Hang on! Let me help you with all that.

Neighbour:

Oh, nononono! It's all right. I can see it now. I'll be taking MY stuff in and you'll be pretending that my stuff is YOUR'S! No thanks! Come on boys!

Exit Neighbour and slaves

Man:

By Zeus! I need to think up some mechanism by which I can keep my property but still share in the free food the state is giving out to everyone. It needs to be brilliant, though. I just have to go and eat without delay.

Exit Man

The window of a house opens and a young girl appears. Then the door of the house next door opens and an old woman (FIRST OLD WOMAN) enters the stage. She walks up and down the stage, swinging her bag and bum, singing softly to herself but all the while searching the streets anxiously. The young woman from the window is also looking up and down the street.

877

First Old Woman:

I wonder why the men aren't here yet? They should have been here a long time ago! I've painted my face up with this beautiful white make up, I've put on my see-through, fuck-me please dress and... and? Well, all I'm doing is standing here, murmuring to myself a song and hoping to snap up a young passer by.

Pause

Come on, you Muses! Come into my mouth and find me one of those lovely, horny Ionian tunes.

Begins to sing "sweetly" a bawdy song.

Young Woman:

You putrid old trash! You're out before me today. You thought you'd check out the vineyard while no one is watching, and, while no one was watching, you thought you'd be able to pinch a bunch with your singing! But you do this, and I'll fight you: song for song! And I don't care if the audience out there finds the routine boring –it'll still be cute and comic!

First Old Woman:*Indicates her wide behind.*

Ha! Talk to this, woman and piss off!

To a piper, who could be among the chorus of women or behind the stage.

Come, you darling piper! Pick up your lovely little pipes and blow a tune worthy of you and me.

She begins to sing

The man who wants a good time

Should only sleep with me

Because the wise fuck comes not

With the young girl but with

Experienced grown up women.

Young Woman:

Don't turn away from the young ones

Their fluffy thighs are the home of tenderness

...a tenderness which turns to flower in their wondrous tits.

And you, old tart, though you've plucked away your moustache and you've plastered your face with white paint

Only Death awaits your caresses,

Only Death is your next bed mate.

906

First Old Woman:

Ooooh, I hope your cunt falls off, you bitch
And when lust sends you to your bed
With the promise of a fuck
You can't find your bumhole
From the hole you'd love to rub.
Or when you're in bed and hope to hold a man
tight and close, let a snake, appear instead
hissing in your armpits.

Young Woman:

To the audience this time
Now what will I do?
My man is not here yet
And I'm left here all alone
My mother's gone off somewhere
And I'll reveal no more

Back to the Old Woman

Well, old nanny, I beg you!
Please call Doctor Wanker
So you can get at least some joy,
Please nanny do it,
Ask him to let you play with his toy!
Please, ask the little boy!

First Old Woman: *To the audience*

I can see the poor love
Dying to do it the Ionian way
A dildo will send her desire away.
Back to the Young Woman:
Oh, I can see you dying to bend to your knees
And do it the Lesbian way.
A mouth, a head, a blow job
Will satisfy you desire and gob.

Young Woman:

But never will you take my toys away
And never will you kill my youth or
Steal my share of the fucks from me,
Not ever!

924

First Old Woman:

Well, bend your head like a skunk all you like and sing all the songs you want but no one will sleep with you before they sleep with me.

Young Woman:

Over my dead body! Skunk? "Bend your head like a skunk?" That's a new one for you, isn't it, old cheese?

First Old Woman:

Nope. Not new at all!

Young Woman:

No, of course not! Who can tell an old woman anything new?

First Old Woman:

Old woman? Girl, it isn't my age that you should worry about!

Young Woman:

What then? Your face plaster and your powder?

First Old Woman:

Listen! Why do you keep talking to me?

Young Woman:

What about you? Why are you still searching the street?

930

First Old Woman:

Me? I'm just singing a little song for my beloved... my young Epigenes.

Young Woman:

If you've got a boyfriend then his name must be Gero!

First Old Woman:

He'll show you, girl! He'll be visiting me before he'll be fucking you!

Enter Epigenes, wearing a garland and holding a torch. He is drunk. He has yet to see the women.

First Old Woman:

Here's my sweetheart!

Young Woman:

Ha! He's not here for your sake, you droopy flaps!

First Old Woman:

By Zeus, no way! No way you skinny little runt!

Young Woman:

Well, let us see. He'll tell us himself who he's after. I'm going inside.

Young Woman goes inside

First Old Woman:

I'll go inside, too. Just to show you how I know better than you.

First Old Woman goes inside

Epigenes:

How blissful it would be if I could go fuck a young woman straightaway instead of having to do it first with an ugly nose or an old hag! How can this be right for a free man?

He goes back and forth from one door to the other, torn between duty and desire. Finally he is about to knock on the Young Woman's door.

Enter First Old Woman again

First Old Woman: *With a thunderous voice*

By Zeus! You knock on that door and you might as well say goodbye to your cock!

These aren't the days of the great whore Charixede when we knew nothing about Democracy!

Nowdays, we've got to do things according to democratic and just laws, by Zeus, by Zeus!

To the audience

But I'll go back inside and see how he resolves this.

First Old Woman goes back inside.

Epigenes: *Almost in tears*

Oh, gods! Let me get this little beauty on her own. I've drunk and drunk and I'm now drunk because of her! Ohhhh the desire! Ohhhh the desire!

Epigenes walks back to the Young Woman's door. He is confused.

The Young Woman appears at her window again.

Young Woman:

I've tricked the cursed old woman. He he! She's gone back inside, the silly old woman. She thought I'd stay inside, too. Ahhhh! But there's the very object of my love. Here's my boy!

She begins to sing to him

Come, sweet lover, come to me!

Come share my bed, embrace me through the night

Those curly tresses bring Eros to my heart

Bring a crazy desire to my loins.

I pray to you Eros let me free and let

My boy come to me, and lie deep inside me.

Epigenes: *He knocks at the Young Woman's door*

Come, sweet lover, come to me!

You too, sweet lover, come to me!

Run down the steps and open this door

Or else I'll faint in front of it.

I'd rather faint between your legs

My love and crash between your bum's little mounds.

Oh Aphrodite, why spin my mind for this girl?

I pray to you Eros let me free and let

My girl come to me, and lie deep inside me.

He knocks at the Young Woman's door.

My words are far too weak to tell of the strength of my longing

You, though my sweetheart,

Open up for me and give welcome to my love

I beg you, sooth my pain.
He knocks at the Girls door
Aphrodite's bud! The golden work of a brilliant jeweller!
Muses' bee, Graces' baby,
Visor of the most tender
Open up for me and give welcome to my love
I beg you, placate my pain.

He knocks at the Young Woman's door.

Enter First Old Woman again

First Old Woman:

Hey, you! What's all this knocking? Are you looking for me?

Epigenes:*Shocked*

Hell! Wwwwwhy wwwould I be looking for you?

First Old Woman:

But you were banging on my door.

Epigenes:

I...I... I'd rather die!

First Old Woman:

Well then? What are you looking for, torch and all.

Epigenes:

I... I'm looking for someone from Wank City!

First Old Woman:

Who exactly?

Epigenes:

Who exactly? Well I'm not exactly looking for Mr Carpet Eater. You're probably the one who's expecting him!

First Old Woman:*Grabbing him by the arm*

By Aphrodite! Whether you like it or not, you're mine! Mine!

Epigenes:*Shakes himself free.*

Wait, woman, wait! We're not getting into the post-sixty-year-olds right now. We've postponed those for a while. Right now we're checking out the under twenty-year olds.

985

First Old Woman:

Under the previous Government, yes but under this one, sweetheart, you've got to enter us first!

Epigenes:

He who wants to play must play by the rules of the game.

First Old Woman:

But... you don't even eat your dinner by the rules of the game!

Epigenes:*Looks puzzled*

I... I'm sure you just said something but I just can't work it out. Now let me please knock on this door.

First Old Woman:

Not until you knock on mine first!

Epigenes:

But I told you, I don't need a knocker right now!

First Old Woman:

I know you love me darling! You're just shocked you've found me outside the house. Come, bring your lips closer to mine!

Epigenes:

Ehhh, No! Nonononono! I'm terrified your lover might appear any moment!

First Old Woman:

My lover? Which lover?

Epigenes:

The famous artist. Best artist in existence.

995

First Old Woman:

Oh yeah? And who might that be?

Epigenes:

You know, the one who paints all those funereal urns. Mr Death, himself and in person. You better run off or he might see you at your door.

First Old Woman:

I know, sweetheart, I know! I know exactly what you need to make you happy!

Epigenes:

By Zeus, and I know exactly what YOU need!

First Old Woman:

By Aphrodite! By the wonderful Aphrodite, who drew my name out of the lottery box. I'm not letting you go!

1000

Epigenes:

You're off your head, old woman!

First Old Woman: *Tries to grab him by the phallus but after a bit of a tussle he escapes.*

Blah, blah, blah! You're coming to my bed, darling. Right now! Follow me!

Epigenes:

By Zeus! Look at her! No need to buy a bucket grip. Look at these teeth! Just send an old hag like this down the well and use her to grab all those buckets!

First Old Woman:

Once again she reaches for his phallus. Again he escapes.

Enough playing hard-to-get, silly child! Come with me now! Here's a good boy!

Epigenes:

I don't have to, old girl. At least not unless you've deposited in the State Coffers, one fiftieth of my possessions.

First Old Woman:

Oh yes you do! By Aphrodite, you certainly do have to come with me! You young folk are my greatest desire! I just love fucking with you!

Epigenes:

No way. I shall never agree to fuck with you. I just hate doing it with old and ugly women. It won't work.

First Old Woman: *Brings a scroll out from under her skirt, an act that mortifies Epigenes.*

You might not like it but this little decree will make you.

Epigenes:

Hell! Wwwwwhat is that?

First Old Woman:

Hehehehehe! This, my darling boy, is a decree that says you've got to follow me!

Epigenes:

Hell! Rrrrrread out wwwwhat it says!

1015

First Old Woman:

All right, I'll read it for you.

Begins reading

"The women have hereby decreed that if a man desires to fuck a young woman, he may do so only after he fucks an old one. Further, should this young man refuse to obey by this statute, the older woman shall be authorised to drag the aforesaid young man by his cock, without any legal ramifications to her person or property!"

Epigenes:

Oh no! Oh nononono! Zeus help me! They're turning me into a victim of Procrustes. Too long for the bed and they chop it off. Too short for it and they stretch it! By Zeus, nooooooooooooo!

First Old Woman:

Our laws, young darling, must be obeyed!

Epigenes: *Thinks hurriedly and anxiously*

What if a mate or a neighbour comes along and gets me out of this mess with a financial arrangement?

First Old Woman:

But, darling, there is yet another law which says, men can only sign contracts below the value of one medimnus.

Epigenes: *Despondent*

Is there no reprieve?

First Old Woman:

Nope, no wiggling your bum out of this one, sweetie. It's your legal duty!

Epigenes:

Ha! I'll say I'm a businessman. You can never catch or prosecute businessmen!

First Old Woman:

Do that, honey and you'll be sorry!

Epigenes:*Deflated*

What can I do then?

First Old Woman:

Only one thing you can do, sweetheart: Follow me to my humble abode!

Epigenes:*Pleading*

Is this absolutely necessary?

First Old Woman:

Ohhhh, absolutely, necessary! More necessary than you can imagine! It's vitally necessary!

Epigenes:

Oh well! Get my death bed ready! Let flow the oregano all over it, break four vine branches to lay beneath me, spread the ribbons upon it, the funereal urns beside it and water jug by your entrance.

First Old Woman:

And don't forget the garland you'll be buying for me!

She grabs him by his phallus and pulls him behind her

1035

Epigenes:

Quite right, quite right! One of those waxen ones that go with funerals because, once we get in there you'll become a carcass.

Enter Girl

Young Woman:

Hey, Where are you dragging him?

Epigenes' phallus responds to the Girl's appearance

First Old Woman:

He's mine and I'm taking him inside!

Young Woman:

Now, that wouldn't be a wise thing you'd be doing there.

He's a baby and you're more like his mother than his bed mate! If you women go on establishing laws like this one, the whole world will be cluttered with little Oedipuses!

First Old Woman:*Outraged*

Oh! Oh! You... you... you little slut! You jealous little slut. You've just thought this excuse up out of sheer jealousy! Right! I'll leave him to you then but you'll pay for this! You'll get your punishment for this. That's for sure!

Drops his phallus violently and goes inside.

Epigenes:

By Zeus the Saviour, sweetheart! You've done me a huge favour by getting this old woman off my back. And just for that wonderful deed, this evening I'll reward you with a huge and thick gift.

Young Woman becomes excited and pulls Epigenes by the phallus

Enter Second Old Woman, uglier than the first.

Second Old Woman:*Thunderously, behind Epigenes*

Heyyyy! Where are you taking this man, girl? You're violating laws, here! The law is written in plain writing: This boy has to fuck me first!

Epigenes:

Jumps with horror. Girl drops the phallus.

Hell! Wwwwwhere did you spring out of? You... you... you evil looking bit of mmmmisery!

To the Young Woman

This ...this... this filthy piece of ugliness is more frightening than the last.

Second Old Woman:*Takes his phallus and pulls him in the opposite direction.*

Come over here, please!

Epigenes:*Trembling with fear. To the Young Woman.*

Ohhhh, Ohhhh, please don't let her drag me away, darling, please! I beg you!

Young Woman starts crying and runs away back into the house.

1055

Second Old Woman:

Silly boy! It's not me who's doing the dragging, it's the law!

Epigenes:

No, it's not the law at all. It's some sort of Empousa. Some weird beast... some big blister full of blood and ugly gore!

Second Old Woman:*Tugs sharply at his phallus*

Come on, you little wanker Come with me and stop whining!

Epigenes:

Hang on a minute, please! I... I need to go to the toilet first. It'll give me a bit of confidence.

Otherwise, I'll have to do something right here and you'll see me go all red and brown with fear!

Second Old Woman:

Come on, courage, darling. Keep going, you'll be able to do your shitting in the house.

Epigenes:

I'm afraid, once you get me inside, I'll be doing more than what I need me to do.

Indicating his testicles.

Look, I'll even leave you a couple of bits of excellent collateral!

Second Old Woman:*Takes a look at them then frowns*

Don't bother with the collaterals.

Enter Third Old Woman, even uglier than the previous two.

1065

Third Old Woman:*Thunderously from behind them*

Oi! Oi! Hey you! Where in Hades are you going with her?

Epigenes:*Before he sees her*

I'm the one who's been dragged away, darling and may you gain many blessing for not just standing there and watching my torture, whoever you are!

He turns and sees the Third Old Woman who has now approached them.

Bbbby Hhhhherakles! Bbbby Ppppan! Bbbby the Corybantes! Bbbby the Dioscuri! Woeeee!

Here's another horror to beat the other two! Wwwwwhat an awful sight! But what on earth is this...this thing? Somebody please tell me, I beg you! Is it some monkey splattered with make-up or some old carcass come up from the underworld?

Third Old Woman:

Enough with the comedy routine and come with me, you!

Second Old Woman:

No way! This way boy!

Third Old Woman:*She grabs another part of his phallus*

I'll never ever let you go!

Second Old Woman:

Nor will I!

Epigenes:

Stop! You'll break me in two, you evil Harpes!

Second Old Woman:

According to the law you've got to follow me!

Third Old Woman:

Wrong! The law says that if the next woman is uglier, she gets him.

Epigenes:

But... but if I lose my lot with you two stacks of misery, what will I have left for that gorgeous girl in there?

1081

Third Old Woman:

That's for you to work out. Right now you've got this to attend to!

Lewdly indicating her vagina

Epigenes:

All right then... Which of you do I fuck first so I can escape?

Third Old Woman:

Can't you see? Walk this way.

Epigenes:

Then tell her to let go!

Second Old Woman:

You're coming with me, big boy!

Epigenes:

Only if she lets me go.

Third Old Woman:

Certainly not, by Zeus!

Second Old Woman:

Nor me!

Epigenes:

Things would be rough if you two were captains of a ferryboat.

Second Old Woman:

Why is that?

Epigenes:

You'd be making your passengers very sick with all this pulling and tugging.

Third Old Woman:

Shut your face and come this way.

Second Old Woman:

No! Walk this way!

Epigenes:

This is Cannonus' law for sure. Which is to say that I've got to fuck my accusers... but... how could I possibly work two boats with a single oar?

Second Old Woman:

No problem. Straight after a potful of bulbs, you'll be right!

Epigenes has been dragged to the front door of the Second Old Woman

Epigenes:

Oh, poor me! Here I am! Dragged near the front door! Oh me!

Third Old Woman: *Yells at the Second Old Woman*

You think this is getting you the goods? Forget it! I'm charging right into the house as well!

1095

Epigenes:

Oh no! By the gods, oh no! Damn it, if I'm going to lose this battle let me at least suffer under one of you uglies, not both!

Third Old Woman:

Absolutely no choice in the matter, by Hekate!

Epigenes: *To the audience*

What a poor bastard I am, ey? Here I am, having to fuck a rotting hag all day and night, then, I'll have to jump off her and onto this old toad and start all over again! And this old toad is so old that I can see the funeral urn already standing by her cheeks. So aren't I damned? By Zeus the Saviour not only am I damned but I'm a heavily damned man and a poor suck at that, being forced to fuck these two beasts! Now, if I come up against some disaster while I'm on board these two rabid toads, bury me right at the mouth of the channel.

Indicating the Third Old Woman.

As for her, bury her alive in tar, put her feet in molten lead all the way up to her ankles and, instead of an urn stick her up on my grave.

The two old women drag Epigenes into the house and shut the door behind them.

Enter Praxagora's MAID, swinging a wine bottle. She is clearly drunk.

She addresses the chorus and the audience.

Maid:

Blessed, blessed, people! God's best country of them all! And of all, most blessed is my mistress herself, as well as all you women standing by your doors, neighbours, neighbours of the same neighbourhood, and me, too! I too, am most highly blessed, me, a maid with her hair washed in delightful perfumes. O, glorious Zeus!

Takes a sip

Ha! Most delightful though –more delightful than all these delightful aromas- are these delightful little bottles of Thasian wine! Zeus bless it, it stays in your head for such a delightfully long time, they're still in there when all the other wines have long lost their delightful bouquet and flown off!

So! These Thasian wines are absolutely the best! Oh, yes! They are certainly the best! By the gods!

If you drink these wines neat –no messing about with dirty water- they'll keep you chirpy and happy all the delightful night long, that is, if you pick the one with the most delightful bouquet!

Takes another sip

So!

Can one of you tell me where my master's got to? I mean, my mistress' master? I mean, my mistress' mister?

Chorus:

Hang around and I'm sure he'll be here soon...

Enter Bleepyrus with a girl in each arm. All are garlanded and well inebriated.

Chorus:

Here he is now. Looks like he's on his way to dinner.

Maid:

O, master! How delightful! You are so lucky! So delightfully lucky! Thrice delightfully lucky!

Blepyrus:

Me? I'm lucky?

1130

Maid:

You, of course, you! More than any other man in the world, by Zeus, by Zeus!

She looks around her

Who could be luckier than you, master?

There are thirty thousand citizens out there and they all had a delightful dinner. You are the only one left!

Chorus:

How lucky can you be!

Maid:

So!

So!

So!

Where are you off to now?

Blepyrus:

I'm off to dinner now.

Maid:

Ha! By Aphrodite you're the absolute last one of them all. But your wife still told me to pack you up and take you over there... You can take these little sweets with you. You'll find some wine from Chios still there and some other lovely morsels. So don't be late.

To the chorus and the audience

And you, too, folks! All of you who love us and you, too, judges of the play –those of you who are NOT looking elsewhere!- come, follow me. It's all on the house.

Blepyrus:*To the maid*

Well, come on, girl, be generous! Invite them all, for goodness' sake! Feel free to invite the old man, the young man, the baby! There's dinner for everyone, made to their palette... If they rush home!

Hahahahaha!

Me?

Fondles the girls lasciviously

I'm running off to have my dinner now and...

Indicating his phallus

Well, just as well I've got this little torch to show me the way home, ey?

Chorus:

So why hang around here? Off you go! Run! And while you're on your way down there, I'll sing a little table song...

But first, let me make a tiny suggestion to our judges, and it is this:

Judges!

The wise among you, think wisely and judge me as the winner!

The friends of good humour, think humourously and judge me the winner!

So, yes, it's almost the lot of you I'm addressing this suggestion and ask you to vote for me! Make me the winner!

Oh! And let not the fact that the draw of the lot brought me on the stage first hinder your decision.

Make me the winner!

Oh! And don't break your oath as judges. You must judge us fairly, not like sluttish whores who can only remember their last fuck. Make me the winner!

Pause

Hoorah, hoorah, hey, hey!

Come on, darlings, move to the rhythm of this dee-lightful tune and let's get ourselves to that dinner!

If dinner is what we want!

Hoorah, hoorah, hey, hey!

Kick your feet like the men from Crete

Dance to their own dee-lightful tune!

Feet are kicked high.

Blepyrus:

That's what **I'm** doing!

Hahahahaha!

Chorus:

And you, too, girls! So lithe, so supple, so... dee-lightful! Join us and move your bum! Kick high to our rhythm, for soon, you'll see food like you've never seen before.

Morsels like:

Greasy and salted saltfish and shark fish and catfish
And stinky skull fish and deadfish and braised beetles
And sparrows in oil and honey dripping from their beaks
And ring-doves and chook-cocks and baked swallows
And marrow from rabbits in wine cooked very fine
And covered in cheese and in vinegar and silphium
And...

Well, now that you've heard what's there, run, run raise the dust while you run and...

Bring a plate with you and... just in case, put some beans on it!

Blepyrus:

Oh ho! How happy our gullets and tongues will be!

1180

Chorus:

We won, we won, we won!

As one, one, one!

Kick your legs

Girls

Kick them high

Let's go to dinner

Let's say, hurray!

Hurrayyy!

Exit all

**END OF ARISTOPHANES'
"WOMEN IN PARLIAMENT"**