

ARISTOPHANES'
"ACHARNIANS"
Produced in 425BCE

TRANSLATED BY
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Dramatis Personae

DICAEOPOLIS:

A mild-mannered farmer

XANTHIAS:

A Slave to Dicaeopolis

A SECOND SLAVE TO DICAEOPOLIS

A DAUGHTER TO DICAEOPOLIS

A WIFE TO DICAEOPOLIS

EURIPIDES:

The Athenian tragedian

KIFISOPHOS:

A slave to Euripides

LAMACHUS:

A bombastic general

FOUR SLAVES TO EURIPIDES

FOUR MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

MAYBEGOD:

A peace negotiator

TWO AMBASSADORS TO THE PERSIAN COURT

PSEUDOARTABAS:

"The King's Eye"

TWO EUNUCHS TO PSEUDOARTABAS

THEORUS:

Ambassador to Thrace

FIVE ODOMANTIAN SOLDIERS

MEGARIAN:

A mild-mannered pauper

TWO DAUGHTERS TO THE MEGARIAN

BOETIAN:

A mild-mannered merchant

ISMENIAS:

His slave

INFORMER

NIKARHOS:

Another informer.

MISS PEACE

DERKETES:

A wealthy farmer

BEST MAN

BRIDESMAID

HERALD A
HERALD B
CHORUS:
LACRATIDIS
MARILADES
DRAKYLOS
EUFORIDES
PRINIDES
OTHER MEMBERS
TWO ARCHERS (Female)
TWO FLUTE PLAYERS *Following the Boetian*
CROWD AT THE PNYX

ACT ONE

Scene 1

The stage is divided into two parts. On Stage Left is Dicaeopolis' house. Front door aspect. On Stage Right is a building which will serve as first, the Pnyx, then Euripides' house –both front door aspect and indoors and finally as Lamachus' house, front only. Both houses have a window through which the audience may witness indoor business. Next to Dicaeopolis' house is an altar to Dionysus. The Pnyx has benches around for the people to sit upon and tables for the Executive Committee.

Day. The Open Air Assembly Pnyx. Dicaeopolis is standing, all alone, waiting. Next to him is a sack of garlic which he has brought from his farm. He keeps moving it about to be near him, whenever he moves. He's slowly pacing up and down, shaking his head, despondency slowly giving way to anger and, between comedic pauses, he farts, scratches his bum and inguinal area, stares tearfully into the distance, scratches the ground with his feet, sits down, stands up, frets with anxiety and impatience.

Dicaeopolis: Looks into the distance again and this time, yells angrily
Buy! Buy! Buy! Sell! Sell! Sell!

Sighs several times before he speaks and when he does so, his speech is ponderous, agonised and peppered with more sighs. God, there are so many things that eat away at my poor little ticker! Oh, yes! So many worries! And the pleasures? *Shakes his head despondently* So few pleasures! *Thinks while counting on his fingers. First in one hand, then in the other, then back to the first hand... Drops his hands to his side in despair.* Four, to be utterly precise! Four! Whereas my pains! *Shows his two hands –that's what he was counting after all!* The pains I've suffered were... b'zillions! Heaps and heaps of them! *More sighs* Let me see, now. Which of these pleasures were really worthy of the name? Oh, yes! *Laughs* I remember now! This was a real delectation, this one! It gave my soul something to be really chirpy about. That was when our leader, Cleon had to vomit back the five talents *shows the fingers on his hand again* –count them – five talents, to the Treasury! Five talents –that's *Back to counting his fingers again.* That's... let's see, six thousand drachs to a talent... that makes... Ooooooh, a lot! Hahaha! He had ripped off our allies by promising them that he could persuade our council to lower their taxes, so they gave him a neat little bribe of all these drachmas. But the Knights sniffed out the job and so they made him cough it all up again. Hahaha! What a beautiful job the Knights did on him! I love them for that! Men and deed, worthy of Greece! *Thinks for a little while and a thought saddens him.* But then, there was this tragic torture I had to endure. While I was at the theatre, expecting some brilliant Aeschylean thing, I hear the words, "Permission granted for Theognis to direct his chorus!" Grrr! Theognis! Cold, cold-hearted creep. That's why they call him "Snowy, Old Snowy," they call him!

My God! Can you imagine how that froze my heart? *Back to thinking. This time it's a happy thought.* But then again, what a joy it was to have that crap lyre-player, Moschus, followed by divine Dexitheus! Oh, what a delightful voice that boy has! He came on to sing some lovely Boetian songs. Absolute delight! *Back to thinking. Sigh of sadness again.* Completely the opposite of what happened this year! Disgusting! Damn near killed myself trying to look away when that gruesome sight of a flute player, sneaked onto the stage to play his martial airs. Tararam, tararam, tararararrarram! Horrible, stuff, just horrible... believe me, it was horrible! *Looks around him, anger swelling.* But, my God! My eyes have never burned so much as they do now at the sight of this. Not since mummy gave me my first bath, did they burn so much! *Waving his arms about, indicating the emptiness of the place* Look at this! You wouldn't believe it but this is a proper, normal day for the sitting of the Assembly. Yet, look at it! The place is deserted! Totally! They're all at the market, gossiping as usual or running up and down the place trying to avoid the staining rope of the cops when they try to round them up. Even the Executive aren't here yet. They'll come late – as per always!- all in one go, preferring to push and shove each other to get to the front row, rather than to talk about peace. Oh, Athens, Athens! My poor little country! What are you doing? What are you on about these days?

Here I am, as per always the first one here and as per always, I sit and wait. And wait, and wait! And, what can I do with myself? All alone, here? *Groans* I groan, and groan and I yawn and I gawk... *Stretches his limbs* and I stretch and I scratch and... *Farts loudly, then chuckles* and I fart and fart – pooh, stinky garlic farts! Then I don't know what else to do... *Scratches his groin* so I start scratching... pictures on the ground, start tearing at my pubes... I ponder about life... I look far towards my fields and I long for peace! Peace! How I long for peace! *Deep sigh.* I hate the city... but I love the village! I love the village! None of this, “I need to buy coal,” or “I need to buy vinegar” or oil or... or anything! We know nothing of “buying” up there. We supply everything ourselves – we gave “buying” the axe! Peace! Here I am then, absolutely determined to scream and shout and swear at the speakers if any of them want to talk about anything else but peace. □ *Enter the Executive Committee, a Herald, two archers and a crowd, jostling for the front seats.* □ Ah! Here they are. It must be midday! What did I tell you? They're pushing and shoving each other to get to the front planks. Pushing, pushing, pushing! Everyone is pushing!

Herald: *Directing everyone*

This way! This way please! Come in through, into the consecrated area, please! This way!

Enter Maybegod, last of all and looking concerned.

45

Maybegod: *To Dicaeopolis*

Has anyone spoken yet?

Dicaeopolis shakes his head.

Herald:

Right! Is there anyone who wishes to speak?

Maybegod:

I do!

Herald:

Who are you?

Maybegod:

I am Maybegod:

Herald:

Maybegod? You mean, you are not a mortal?

Maybegod:

No, not a mortal. I am immortal! Because Maybegod senior married Demeter and they gave birth to Triptolemos. By him was born Keleos who wedded grandma –that's Faenarete- from whom emerged Lycinos and from Lycinos came I! That's me! Immortal Maybegod! And as such, the gods have entrusted me –me alone- with the peace negotiations with Sparta! But, men, though I am immortal, I still need financial support but *pleads* The Executive will just not give me that support!

Herald:

Archers! Out with this idiot!

The archers come and grab Maybegod.

55

Maybegod:

Oh Triptolemos and Keleos, have you forsaken me?

Maybegod is thrown out of the pnyx by the archers.

Dicaeopolis:

Unfair! Unfair! The Committee is being unfair to the Assembly by throwing out a man who wants to negotiate peace and to rid us of our war shields!

Herald:

You, sit down and shut up!

Dicaeopolis:

I will not sit down and shut up until you start discussing peace!

Herald:

Our ambassadors from The King's Court!

Dicaeopolis:

Which King's Court? I hate all these wanky, peacocky feathery, crappy ambassadors!

Herald:

Quiet!

From Stage right enter slowly and, pompously feigning dignity, the Persian ambassadors dressed in overdone Persian garb. Their phalluses protrude through their many feathers.

Dicaeopolis:

Oh, Ekvatana, baby! Look at those posers!

65

Ambassador: *Addressing the Executive Committee. Angrily.*

Gentlemen! You have sent us to the Great King on a salary of two drachmas per day. That was over ten years ago, during the archonship of Euthymenes!

Dicaeopolis:

Ah, the poor little drachmas!

Ambassador:

And we have suffered terribly. We were thoroughly bored as we strolled under the sun umbrellas along the plains of Carystros, lying in those luxurious coaches... we nearly died of it all!

Dicaeopolis:

While I was taking it easy, sleeping on crap beds at the battlements!

Ambassador:

And wherever we dined, the hosts would always force us to drink out of golden goblets and crystal cups! All that sweet, unmixed wine!

75

Dicaeopolis:

Oh, Athens, great city of Kranaos! Can you feel how these ambassadors are mocking you?

Ambassador:

That's because the barbarians consider real men only those who drink and eat a great deal.

Dicaeopolis:

Whereas we, here in Athens consider real men those who fuck or get fucked a great deal!

80

Ambassador:

At the end of the fourth year, we arrived at the Great King's Court but he had to vacate... he took his army and went off looking for a dunny. And there they all sat and shat, for eight months! Made huge mountains of gold! Mountains and mountains of it!

Dicaeopolis:

Affluent effluence! Hahaha! Eight months, hey? *Yells so that the ambassador may hear him* I wonder how long it took him to gather this huge... bumhole of his, back together again?

Ambassador: *Responding to Dicaeopolis*

A full moon! Then he came back home and made us eat oxen, roasted whole in the bread oven!

Dicaeopolis:

Buuuull- shit! Who ever saw oxen roasted in bread ovens?

Ambassador: *Still with Dicaeopolis*

Swear to Zeus and hope to die! Then he served us a huge bird... Real huge, it was, three times the size of Cleonymus' bum! This bird was called... *trying to remember* Lyre, no, Ripper!

90

Dicaeopolis:

You're the liar! You're the one who's ripped us off with shitful lies like this –ripped us off of our two drachs per day! Per every day!

Ambassador:

And now, we have come here bringing with us, Pseudoartabas, who's called. "The King's Spy," errr, I mean, "Eye."

Dicaeopolis:

I wish the crows would rip your eye out mister Ambassador!

Herald: *Yells*

The King's Eye! All stand for the King's Eye!

Enter "The King's Eye" Pseudoartabas with his two eunuchs. Their attire is even more contrived than that of the Ambassadors' and the manner and air of Pseudoartabas is even more pompous and condescending. He is wearing a frightening mask upon which is painted a huge eye, much like those one sees at the sides of the front of old Persian ships.

Dicaeopolis:

Great Hercules! Oh my, oh my, oh my, oh my God! Man what an eye! What do you use it for, as a look out? Are you the one on the ship who shouts out the warning, "war ship ahoy!" or are you the eye on the ship's nose searching for a shit house, I mean, ship house? And what a piece of beaten hide surrounds it!

Ambassador:

Right! Pseudoartabas, now please tell the Athenians what the Great King has sent you to say.

100

Pseud: *Makes rude gestures, swinging and pointing first at his bum, then at his phallus*

Artaman exarzan! Colo megaló, holo satra!

Ambassador: *To the people*

Did you all get what he said?

Dicaeopolis:

Not me, no!

Ambassador:

He said that the Great King will be sending you all a great deal of gold *Leans to Pseudo and whispers in his ear* Say the word “gold” loudly and clearly.

Pseud:

Greeks him muchy bummy hole not get him muchy goldy.

Dicaeopolis:

Now, that was clear enough all right! Damned idiot!

Ambassador:

Yeah? What did he say?

Dicaeopolis:

What did he say? He says we’ve got overused bum holes and so we won’t get any gold from the damned barbarians!

Ambassador:

No, you’re wrong. He didn’t say “bums,” he said “tons!” He means the King is going to send us tons of gold!

109

Dicaeopolis:

Tons, my bum! You’re just as big a wanker as he is! Ah, forget it! *Piss off!* I’ll ask the questions from now on. *To Pseudoartabas* Come now, you... King’s prick! Talk to me and be clear about it or else I’ll be painting your bum Sardinian red. Now! Is that great king of yours going to send us any gold? *Pseudoartabas shakes his head* So... these ambassadors here are lying to us? *This time he nods.* *Dicaeopolis is highly surprised.* Now... that was a real Greek nod that one, wasn’t it? No doubt about it... *Looks closely at him and at the eunuchs* These wankers are all from around here! These eunuchs... Aha! I recognise one of them! That one there! He’s Cleisthenes, the son of Sybirtius, that one! But... *Looks closer* Cleisthenes didn’t have a beard... *Looks even closer at him until the penny drops* It is you! You, with your hot, passionate – and smooth-shaved bum! Did you really think you could fool us, pretending to be a eunuch with this monkey beard? And this one? Isn’t he Stratos?

123

Herald:

You! Shut up and sit down! Ahem! The Assembly invites The King’s Eye to the Prytaneum!

Ambassadors, Pseudoartabas and his eunuchs leave the Pnyx. While Dicaeopolis speaks the Executive Committee prepares the next item in the agenda.

Dicaeopolis: *To the audience*

Doesn’t this sort of stuff make you homicidal? Here I am, straining to survive from one day to the next while the doors to the dining halls are never shut for these crooks! *Thinks for a moment* Right!

That’s it! I thought me a great and mighty thought! Now where’s my little Maybegod?

Maybegod pokes his head from behind a wall.

Maybegod:

Here I am! Right here!

130

Dicaeopolis:

Here, Maybegod. *Searches in every pocket and fold of his cloak and tunic and gathers up some coins. Counts them and hands them to Maybegod* Take these eight drachmas of mine and go and make peace with the Spartans for me, my children and my nearest and dearest! *To the Executive Committee* And you, gentlemen, you can go on with your ambassadorising and with your looking like idiotic dorks! *Maybegod chuckles with sly joy and runs off.*

Herald:

Let Theorus, ambassador from the court of Sitalces, King of Thrace, approach!

Enter Theorus, dressed in equally exaggerated Thracian clothes.

Dicaeopolis: *To the audience*

Here we go again! Another costume, another wanker!

Theorus:

We would have not stayed in Thrace for so long...

Dicaeopolis:

...if your salary wasn't so great!

Theorus:

If the whole of Thrace wasn't covered with snow...

Dicaeopolis: *To the audience*

That's the time when Theognis, old "swow," I told you about, produced his tragedy. Sure brings on the winter with his tragedies, that boy! Brrrr!

141

Theorus:

I was drinking with Sitalces during all that time. He loves the Athenians so much! He adores them, you know! He lusts after them! So much so that he had covered all his walls with graffiti, saying, "Athenians are beautiful!" And his son, the one we made an Athenian citizen, he was eager to come to Athens and eat some of our sausages during our Cheater's festivals, so he begged his father to come to the aid of his newly adopted country. To which his father agreed and took an oath and swore that he would help the Athenians by sending them so huge an army that when they saw it they'd think a plague of locusts had descended upon them!

151

Dicaeopolis: *To the audience*

I'd be buggered if I believe any of this... except the locusts bit!

Theorus: *Indicating behind the curtain*

So he has sent you these here soldiers. They are from one of the most genuine war-loving tribes in Thrace.

Dicaeopolis: *To the audience*

Now this will be good! We'll get to see the real colour of their money!

Herald:

Ahem! The Thracians whom Theorus has brought – please approach!

A motley band of soldiers, ill equipped, ill dressed, looking as if they're starved and not at all "war loving" are ushered in. Their phalluses look "strange."

Dicaeopolis: *Laughs heartily as he mocks them*

What is this ugly lot of Dickyskins? In fact... *He approaches them for closer scrutiny* talking about Dickys...

Theorus:

You are looking at the Odomantian Army, sir!

Dicaeopolis:

Odomantian what? *Pointing at their phalluses* And who snipped off the figskins from their Odomantian pricks?

Theorus: *Like an insulted salesman*

These here soldiers –if you give them a mere two drachs a day they'll have the whole of Boetia conquered!

Some soldiers have discovered Dicaeopolis' sack of garlic and they're furtively eating it.

161

Dicaeopolis:

Two drachs for these halfcocks? Oh, God! What tears would flow from the eyes of those true soldiers, those rowers who fought the really great battles, our city savers, if they heard of this outrage. Two drachs a day –for snipped Dickys!... *Sees the soldiers tearing hungrily at his garlic* Oi! Shit! Stop that you rotten buggers! Leave my garlic alone! *Grabs a spring garlic from the teeth of one of the soldiers* Give it back!

Theorus:

Oh no! Oh, no! Poor fool. Don't go near them, now, you idiot! Once they get a bit of garlic into them they get so horny they turn into fighting cocks!

Dicaeopolis: *At the Exec. Committee. Fuming with anger*

Are you lot going to sit there and watch as a bunch of barbarians do this to me, in my own country? *No response from the Committee* Right! Then I insist that no discussion should take place about the salary of these... Thracians... The Assembly should be dismissed –right now! Zeus has spoken. He has sent us a signal. I have felt a drop of rain on my head!

Herald:

Right! The Assembly is dismissed! The Thracians may come back the day after tomorrow.

All stand up and leave, while Dicaeopolis is fighting with one of the starving Thracians over his garlic.

Scene 2

The Pnyx is cleared Of people, benches and tables and turned into the front of Euripides' house, perhaps while the following is going on. Outside Dicaeopolis' house. Dicaeopolis is examining the strings of garlic hanging from the eaves of his house. He is shaking his head at the small number remaining.

174

Dicaeopolis:

Damned thieves! Odomantian soldiers! Thieves, damned thieves the lot of them! Halfcocks and thieves! They've eaten all my garlic! I've hardly got any left. *Sees Maybegod approaching, out of breath* Maybegod! You're back from Sparta already!

Maybegod:

Quick, Dicaeopolis, I've got to run! The Acharnians are chasing me.

Dicaeopolis:

Why, what's up?

Maybegod:

I was on my way here, bringing you the peace treaties I've signed for you with Sparta, and I was running as fast as I could but then, somehow, some old Acharnians, tough bits of stick the lot of them, hearts of oak, twisted old soldiers from the days of Marathon, tough as maple and steel and rock, sniffed me out and they all came after me, yelling at me, "you, most god-cursed creature. You're bringing peace treaties from Sparta while our vines are lying there, destroyed by them?" Then I saw they were gathering stones and putting them in their cloaks, so I ran. They're still following me with shouts.

186

Dicaeopolis:

Never mind their shouting. Have you brought me the treaties?

Maybegod:

Of course! *Brings out of his cloak three small wine bottles* I brought you three types to try. *Hands him one* Here! This one here is a five-year one. Taste it!

Dicaeopolis: *Takes the top off and takes a sniff*

Yuk! Poh!

Maybegod:

What's wrong?

Dicaeopolis:

It's awful! Stinks of tar and ship building!

191

Maybegod: *Hands him another bottle*

All right, taste this one, then. It's a ten-year treaty. What do you think?

Dicaeopolis: *Smells this one also and is still unsatisfied*

Naaaah! Very sour! It really smells strongly of delegates going around the cities urging their allies to get a move on with the war preparation.

Maybegod: *Anxious that the Acharnians might appear any second, hands him a third bottle*

Well, this one is a thirty-year treaty. Both, for sea and land. Quick, have a taste!

Dicaeopolis: *Smells it and finds it most agreeable.*

Mmmm! What a delicious, scrumptious aroma. *Smells again* Ah, yes! This is the scent of Dionysiac festivals, of nectar and of... *takes another whiff* let me see, subtle but assertive traces of... of ambrosia! This truce here does not utter words like, "take three days' provisions and head to the front!" No this... *Takes yet another whiff, then puts his ear to the mouth of the bottle* This says, "you may go wherever you wish!" Mmmm! Yes! I'll take this one and pour libations and drink it to the very last drop and wish the Acharnians all the joy in the world.

Loud shouting of the approaching Acharnians.

And I, now that I've excluded myself from the war, I shall go to my fields to celebrate the Dionysiac festival.

Maybegod: *Aware of the noises*

And I shall rush off before the Acharnians get me!

Exit Maybegod, stage Left and Dicaeopolis goes into his house. A moment later the chorus rushes in, Stage Right. They are the Acharnians who are pursuing Maybegod. Very old, out of breath, in pursuit of Maybegod. They are running all around the stage looking for him.

204

Lacratides: *Out of breath*

Ask every one, everywhere! Ask all the people ask them about this traitor. Come on, this way. The city needs to capture him. Tell me if you see this evil truce bearer anywhere. *Overtaken by*

despondency. Ach! He has run off! Escaped! We've lost him! God, I am so old! I hate my old age! *He's being overwhelmed by nostalgia.* There was a time when... when I could run so fast—even with a sack of coals on my back, I could and did outrun real athletes. Kept up with Phaylos once. Pythian champion! This traitor here wouldn't have a hope in Hades back in the old days. I don't care how fast he can run! He wouldn't be escaping me so lightly back then. But now!

Marilades:

But now, now, poor old Lacratides! You've lost your limbs, and your legs are getting heavier and heavier by the day and the traitor has escaped us!

Lacratidis:

No! Let's go after him, Acharnians. No one should be able to boast that they've escaped us! Us, Acharnians, even at our age.

225

Drakylos:

Despairing Zeus, almighty! Who would dare sign treaties with the enemy now? We need the war to continue so as to avenge our ruined farms!

Prinides:

And I won't stop fighting until I plunge—full vengeance!—like a sharp, painful rod deep into their flesh. That should stop them from setting foot upon our vineyards again!

Lacratides:

I shall seek this man out from place to place even if I have to go all the way to Palene, and when I find him I shall enjoy stoning the traitor—to death!

Dicaeopolis: *Shouts from within his house*

Quiet! Quiet please, all! Reverence from all of you, please! Reverence!

238

Lacratides:

Sushhh Quiet a minute! Listen friends... Did you hear that? *They all prick their ears* He's after reverence! Listen!

Prinides:

That's the very man we're after! Let's get out of the way and hide. I think he's about to come out for a sacrifice.

Dicaeopolis comes out of his house, followed by his daughter and two slaves. He's carrying a pot, his daughter a basket and one of the slaves, Xanthias, a standard, which is a huge phallus and which he is holding it rather carelessly, irreverently. Dicaeopolis' wife is inside the house, standing by the window, watching them.

Dicaeopolis:

Reverence, reverence all! Basket bearer at the front! Xanthias! Hold that cock straight! Put the basket down here, please daughter, so that we can begin the sacrifice.

They walk to the altar of Dionysus upon which the daughter puts the basket.

245

Daughter:

Mum, bring me the ladle so that I can spread the sacred potion on the bread.

Mother obeys daughter, who, solemnly pours the potion onto the bread. Dicaeopolis observes and when she's done he takes up a reverential attitude and, with a supervisory glance all around him, demands attention from all.

Dicaeopolis:

Right! *Xanthias takes this as a cue to stand straight again and to make sure that the phallus he's holding stands equally as respectfully. The second slave also adjusts his posture* We're all ready! Oh, Great Lord, Dionysos! I'm sending you this offering as thanks for allowing me, along with my own folks, to celebrate the Rural Dionysia and for releasing us from the burdens of war. Through our offerings I ask you, Lord, to let our Thirty-year Peace Treaty be joyous to us all. *To his daughter* Now, sweetie, mind how you carry the basket around. *Daughter picks up the basket* Hmmm! Darling, you are so beautiful that you've got to make yourself look ugly. Pretend you've just eaten something sour and make an ugly face. *Daughter tries.* That's it! *She walks ahead a little and Dicaeopolis talks sarcastically behind her back, as if she can't hear him* Oh, yes! Oh, how happy the man who'll marry you will be, my darling! Oh yes! And, no doubt the two of you will produce a couple of little weasels, just like you: morning farts instead of morning fucks... lazing about all day! Hehehe! *Louder now, addressing her* And watch out that no one in the crowd *It's only the four of them but he looks suspiciously at the two slaves* pinches your little jewels. *To Xanthias* Xanthias! You and I will walk behind her bearing the sacred phallus. *Chides him* Erectly! *Xanthias adjusts* I shall now sing the phallic song. You, wife, watch from the house. *Intones religiously as they start walking around the altar.*

Oh, Phallus, loving boy of Dionysos, orgy lover, night wanderer, seducer of all, pederast! I greet you again, after six long years! I have returned to our village with my heart full of joy because I made a truce with the Spartans, and got myself rid of the bothersome business of war and of all the Lamachuses, war-mongering generals, one and all! Oh, Phallus, Phallus! Stops singing as he falls deep into a fantasy What joy, Phallus, oh Phallus, my Phallus! What a joy it would give me – oh what a joy, if somehow you grant it that, one fine day, I find Strymodorus' slave, Thraca – oh, that girl who right now is at the peak of her beauty!- what joy it would give me, if I, accidentally on purpose, walking around Mount Phelleus, I find her stealing wood and I catch her from behind, grab her tightly under her arms, throw her to the ground, play with her and... take the pip right out of her cherry! The other participants are surprised by the lewdness of his ecstasy and Slave 2 taps him on the shoulder. Dicaeopolis snaps out of it and sighs. Then he regains his composure and continues the prayer. Oh, Phallus, Phallus, my dear Phallus! Come drink with us now and revel with us and, in the morning you'll drink a cup of my peace wine and I shall hang my shield over the smoking hearth.
Suddenly the Acharnians jump out in front of them yelling and throwing stones at them.

280

Lacratidis:

That's him! That's the man! Stone him, stone him! Hit the despicable man, hit him! Come on, men, stone him!

Dicaeopolis' people drop everything –basket, pot and phallus- and flee into the house, slamming firm the door behind them.

Dicaeopolis:

From the window Great Hercules! What's this? Watch out, you'll smash my pot!

Marilades:

We're aiming at your head, you disgraceful droplet of snot!

Dicaeopolis:

But why, dear, elderly Acharnians?

Drakylos:

You dare ask why? You slimy, disgusting, traitor! You dare look us in the face after you went and signed up a treaty with our enemy, all on your own?

Dicaeopolis:

Ohhhh, the Peace treaty! Well, you obviously don't know why I did that. Listen and let me explain to you why I did that.

Euforides:

Listen to you? Listen to a dead man? We'll burry you with our stones in a minute!

295

Dicaeopolis:

Not before you listen to me, you won't! Please, dear friends, stop and listen to me!

Lacratidis:

Forget it! I won't let you spin us a story. I hate you more than leather beater leader of ours, Cleon, whose hide I'm going to turn into sandals for our brave, young Knights, one day. As for you, long speeches won't save you. Not after your treaties with the Spartans!

305

Dicaeopolis:

Dear friends! Forget the Spartans for a minute and let's talk about Peace. And then you'll see if I haven't done a good deed by getting this treaty.

Marilades:

Good deed? Good deed? How could it be a good deed? You've signed a truce with a people whose word is not bound by either altar or faith! They're infidels! No religion to put fear into them. Or Honour to their word. How could that be a good deed?

Dicaeopolis:

Because, men, we blame the Spartans too much! I know for certain that the Spartans are not the sole cause of all our problems.

311

Drakylos:

Is that right, you sly creep? They are not the cause of our problems? You dare say this to us so blatantly and expect us to spare you?

Dicaeopolis:

Not of all our problems, not all! In fact while I'm at it, I can prove to you that they are also the victims of many of our own doings!

Euforides:

Fuming with anger Ooooh! You dare defend our enemies like that! This is so awful! So terrible! Puts his hand to his heart Ohhhh! My heart is boiling!

Dicaeopolis:

If I'm not telling the truth and I can't convince the people, Indicating the audience I'll put my head on the chopping block!

Lacratidis:

Let's hurl our stones at this traitor, neighbours and beat him till he's as red as our necks!

321

Dicaeopolis:

What black anger is burning your heart, Acharnians! Will you not listen to me? Will you really not listen to me?

Marilades:

Absolutely not!

Dicaeopolis:

Oh well, then, it looks like I've had it!

Drakylos:

Kill me if I ever listen to you!

Dicaeopolis:

No, Acharnians, I beg you!

Euforides:

You're already dead, boy! You're gone, now! More stones thrown at them

Dicaeopolis:

Right! That's it! Now I'm going to show you! My blood for yours! I have here as hostage the dearest of your friends! He disappears into the house.

Lacratidis:

What does this threat mean, neighbours? Does he have one of our children inside? Is that what's giving him this courage?

Dicaeopolis comes back to the window. He's holding a pannier full of charcoal in one hand and a threatening dagger in the other. He's black all over from the coal dust. The Acharnians are horror-struck by this.

331

Dicaeopolis:

All right then. Cast your stones at me if you wish. But you'll never see this baby again! Now we'll see if any you love your coals as much as you all say you do! Come on, let's see! How much do you love your coals?

Lacratidis:

To his friends On, no! We're stuffed! We've had it now, men! Examines more closely the pannier and recognises it And that pannier! I recognise it. It's from my village. Shouts at Dicaeopolis No, don't! Don't do it! No! Your thinking is all wrong! Nononononono!

Dicaeopolis:

Feigns a murderous disposition I will! I'll kill this baby and you can scream all you like! I won't listen to your crap any longer!

336

Marilades:

No, please! This dear little basket is as old as we are. We grew up together... and we're from the same village... and we're both coal lovers. Don't kill it!

Dicaeopolis:

You wouldn't listen to me before, would you? Well now –

Drakylos:

No, no! Speak, if you want. Tell us whatever you like... that you love the Spartans... I'll let you say anything... I won't forsake my little coal basket!

Dicaeopolis:

First chuck away your stones!

The Acharnians do so.

Acharnians together:

There! Now put your dagger down!

Dicaeopolis:

Oh yeah? Check your cloaks please and see that there are no stones hiding in there!

The Acharnians all shake their cloaks to give proof that there are no stones "hiding." One last stone is heard dropping noisily.

Lacratidis:

See? They're all on the ground. See?

Prinides:

All shaken out. Stop stuffing around. At the count of three, put your dagger down. All together One... two... and three!

Dicaeopolis drops his dagger and comes out of the house.

347

Dicaeopolis:

Right! Well done! You've just managed to save the lives of some adorable little Parnethian coals, here. Imagine the howling you'd be making if I'd kill them! And if something did happen to them it would be the fault of their own neighbours. Shakes the black dust from his body Poor little basket. It got so frightened it spat out ink, like a do. God, you've got such awful manners, you Acharnians! All that shouting and stone throwing! So vulgar. You won't listen to me even when I offer to put my head on the block for my good arguments. I do love my life, you know!

Lacratidis:

Still angry Well, come on then! Bring out your block and start talking, you piece of chucked out scum.

Marilades:

Let's hear those great arguments of yours. I want to know what you think there is to say.

Drakylos:

You chose the means of judgement so, go get your block!

Dicaeopolis goes into the house and comes out again with the chopping block which he puts down.

365

Dicaeopolis:

Here we are. One block to act as court. *Takes up posture as if to make a speech* Ahem! I am a bad speaker, I know but I just must speak. I shall speak plainly and freely. I'm not one to hide behind my shield, like some cowardly generals. I'll tell you of my views on the Spartans. *Looks about him with some trepidation* But I'm still very afraid though. Because I know for certain what peasants are like. They love it when some damned sycophant comes along and flatters them and their city-rightly or wrongly. The peasants just do not see that these mongrels are traitors who are in it for the money and for nothing more... As for the rest of the men, I know their souls. I know exactly what they'll do: They'll just bite my head off with their voting! That's what they did to poor Aristophanes last year when, in his play, he had a few words to say about Cleon. Well, Cleon immediately rushed him off to the Council and there spat out a whole tongue-torrent of spinning abuses and lies and crap about him that the poor man nearly drowned in all the injustice. So, in view of this, let me dress in the clothes which would draw the most pity from you. I need to look like a real pauper, a real beggar.

385

Lacratidis:

Why all these twists and turns and tricky delays? For all we care you can get yourself disguised as The Invisible Man, if you like! Go down to Hades, get Hieronymous' ugly, hairy helmet and cover your ugly face with it, or go and get one of Sisyphous' many tricks but this debate is not going to wait any longer!

The Acharnians recede to the background while the next scene unfolds.

Dicaeopolis: *To the audience*

This is where I must show what stuff my soul is made off! I know... I shall go over to Euripides.

Walks over to Euripides' house and knocks on the door. Hellooooo! Hey boy, are you there? Slave? Where are you?

Kifisophos: *Through a half-opened door*

Yes? Who is it?

Dicaeopolis:

Ah, Kifisophos! Is your master, Euripides home?

Kifisophos: *Ponderously, pseudophilosophically, condescendingly*

He is and he isn't... Work that out if you got the brains!

Dicaeopolis: *Tries to work it out*

He is and he isn't. How can that be?

Kifisophos: *Exasperated at Dicaeopolis' lack of intelligence*

Just as I said, old man! In and out... *sees that Dicaeopolis is lost* Look! His mind is wandering around looking for verses, so that's not in; but his body is there, lying down, constructing a play.

400

Dicaeopolis:

Oh, dear Euripides, how fortunate you are to have such a witty slave who can answer the door with such oh-so-clever remarks. Call him for me, please, Kifisophos!

Kifisophos:

That's impossible! *Slams the door in Dicaeopolis' face*

Dicaeopolis:

Impossible or not, I'm not leaving, even if I have to smash the door down. *Shouts* Hey Euripides! *No answer* Euripides! *No answer again* Hey Eury, boy! Can you hear me? Come on, Eury, you've let me in before so let me in again, now! Euryyyyyyy! It's me, Dicaeopolis Chollidis, your friend!

Euripides: *From within*

I've got no time to waste.

Dicaeopolis:

So, don't waste any time! Make it fast and roll down here!

Euripides: *From within*

Impossible!

Dicaeopolis:

No it's not!

Euripides: *From within*

All right. I'll roll down but I've got no time to waste!

Sounds of someone rolling down the stairs.

Scene 3

Continuing from previous scene. They've just entered Euripides' house. Euripides climbs back onto his bed, which is somehow raised precariously well above ground level. At his bedside comes and sits his slave, Kifisophos. On the wall and elsewhere hang various old rags and bits and pieces of theatrical costumes and other props. Both, Euripides and Kifisophos are wearing ragged clothes. From the scrolls and quills strewn about the bed it's obvious Euripides had been writing.

410

Dicaeopolis:

He's astonished to see the state of Euripides' habitat Dear Lord! Euripides!

Euripides: *Makes himself comfortable in his bed*

Yeah, what's with you?

Dicaeopolis:

Well... you sit yourself up there, in midair like a bird in a straw nest to do your writing! Why... why on earth can't you do it down here? On solid ground? No wonder all your characters are lame... and look at your clothes! Rags! No wonder your characters are also paupers and beggars... Remembers why he's there and kneels down and begs Ah, yes, beggars! Euripides, I beg you! On my knee caps. Lend me some rags from some old tragedy of yours so that I can make a long speech to the chorus – they'll kill me if I don't say it well.

Euripides:

Which rags do you want? The ones I used for Oeneus, that poor, unfortunate hero?

420

Dicaeopolis:

No, not Oeneus –someone worse off.

Euripides:

Blind Phoenix?

Dicaeopolis:

Thinks a moment No, not Phoenix's either. Someone worse still.

Euripides: *To Kifisophos, angrily*

What rags does the man want? *Back to Dicaeopolis* Do you mean those of poor Philoktetes?

Dicaeopolis:

No, no, even poorer than him!

Euripides:

Ohhh! I know! You're after the filthy rags of Bellerophon? That poor lame creature?

Dicaeopolis:

No... He's trying to think of the name of the character he's got in mind. No... the one I'm thinking of is not only a beggar and lame but also a brilliant orator...

Euripides:

Ah! Now I know who you're thinking of! It's Telephos, the Mysian, right?

Dicaeopolis:

That's it! Telephos! The Mysian!

Euripides: *To Kifisophos*

Boy, give him Telephos' rags.

Kifisophos gets up and looks for them.

They're there, on top of Thyestis' rags, amongst those of Inos.

Kifisophos: *Hands them to Dicaeopolis*

Here you are.

Dicaeopolis:

Takes the costume and examines it. Shows it to the public. It's a true bundle of tatters. He puts his fingers through all the holes and brings the rags close to his face, which the audience can see through the holes. Oh, holy Zeus! Zeus, whose eye sees through all things struggles to put on the clothes. His phallus is in the way and sticks out from under the tunic... and indicating his phallus sees below all things! Oh, Zeus, please dress me up like the most wretched mortal... Sees a cap on the wall

Euripides, since you were kind enough to lend me these rags, could you also lend me something which will really match them? That little cap there, which Telephos wore on his head. I need to be a real pauper today. "To be, but not to look like what I be!" as your Telephos put it. Indicating the audience

That lot should know who I'll be but the chorus out there is like one of yours, too stupid to work it out and they'll be just standing there, gaping at my subtle verbiage and loquacity. Chuckles wickedly

What games, I'll be able to play with them! To the audience You lot know I'm Aristophanes, don't you? The author? Of this play?

445

Euripides:

To Kifisophos Give him the cap. You've got a dense and subtle little engine in that pointy head of yours, haven't you?

Kifisophos nods with a chuckle. He's beginning to enjoy this banter between Dicaeopolis and Euripides. From now on he behaves like an over-energetic puppy waiting for Dicaeopolis to give him the next command.

Dicaeopolis:

Takes the cap Bless you, friend and to hell with Telephos! Oh, I can feel my brain flooding with all these subtle little phrases of yours. Looks about him But I think I also need a walking stick.

Euripides: *Nods to Kifisophos who goes and brings a walking stick to Dicaeopolis*

Take it. Now go! Enough! Get out of my marble abode!

Dicaeopolis:

Feigns hurt soul Ooooh! Addressing his soul Poor soul! See how he's chucking you out even though you're still in need of so many items? No, I need to be a bit gluey here. One of those really oily beggars. Back to Euripides Euripides, please give me that little cane lamp holder as well... please! You don't need it. Look, it's all smoky and burnt.

Euripides:

What on earth do you want to do with that cane lamp holder?

Dicaeopolis:

Do with it? Nothing really. I just need it, that's all!

Euripides:

Getting impatient You know? You're being a real bum-ache now. Come on, get out! Out of my house!

Dicaeopolis:

Oh, all right, all right and may the gods grand you your mother's fate. Impishly confiding to the audience Selling cabbages, hihihihihih!

Euripides: *Furious*

Piss off!

Dicaeopolis:

All right, all right! Goes towards the exit but remembers What about a little cup... one of those with chipped lips?

460

Euripides: *Nods to Kifisophos who finds it and hands it to Dicaeopolis*

Take the damned thing and go! You irritating little man! Now get out! Out!

Dicaeopolis:

Takes the cup and examines it. Then remembers. Oh, no! How this hurts! Euripides, you don't know how this hurts... Darling, dearest Euripides, friend! One more little, tiny thing... a little potty... you know one of those with a hole broken in them and... a sponge in the hole to keep it from dripping...

Euripides:

Man! You're ripping the heart right out of my tragedy!

Kifisophos has the potty ready even before Euripides tells him. He hands it to Dicaeopolis, smiling sympathetically.

Now, take the potty and shove off!

465

Dicaeopolis: *Examines the potty*

Right. Now, I'm going! Hesitates But... Euripides what can I do? I need something else desperately! I'm dead without it! Sweet, sweet, Euripides... one more little thing. Just one more. Just give me some of those cabbage leaves your mother throws out. I need to put them in this cane lamp holder.

Euripides:

Grrr! This is really knocking me about this! Kifisophos has moved enthusiastically again and produced the leaves. There! Take them! There go all my dramatic props!

Dicaeopolis:

Examines the leaves and puts them in the lamp holder Right! Don't worry dear Euripides. Now I'm really going! Moves towards the exit but once again he remembers Oh, no! I forgot again! Darling Euripides... I know I'm a pain, "a pain great enough to rouse the ire of kings," as your Telephos would say, hey? But I forgot the most important thing, Euripides. Sweet, sweet, Euripides. You know how I love you don't you? Sooooo much! Kill me if I ask you for anything else except... except one more thing... some of those dried up parsley leaves your mother throws out-

Euripides: *Interrupts him infuriated*

The man is making fun of me! *To Kifisophos* Throw him out and bolt the doors!

Kifisophos is sadly obedient.

Scene 4

In front of Dicaeopolis' house. The chopping block is still there. The chorus is slowly moving in on him.

480

Dicaeopolis:

To himself Oh, my poor soul! Poor, poor soul! You've got to do the whole thing without the parsley now! Poor soul! Have you any idea what contest you're going to contest? You're about to make a speech in favour of the Spartans! After a few moments, he sighs and lifts his chin up. All right then. Head erect, my soul and forward march! That's it! Moves to make a speech but sees the chopping block and recoils What's up? What's stopping you, Dicaeopolis? You shouldn't have any worries, not while you're full of Euripides. How could you go wrong? Courage, my soul! Go ahead! Put your brave head on the block and say what's in it! Oh, what a brave heart, you've got, Dicaeopolis! Puts his phallus on the block

490

Lacratidis:

So... what are you doing? What are you going to say? You know you've got to be real brave, here don't you? A real iron man. You've put your one and only Dicky on the chopper, and you're about to speak against all of us! Turns to his colleagues with surprise The thing doesn't bother him at all, men! Back to Dicaeopolis All right then, speak, if you want!

During Dicaeopolis' speech the Acharnians move, one by one as they are being persuaded by the argument, into two camps.

496

Dicaeopolis:

Well, here I am, a pauper and a writer –of comedies, no less! And I am about to speak to you, my dear audience of matters that are important to our city. You all think this is a dreadful thing to do, I know. Well, don't! Comedians know justice and I'm a comedian, so I'll speak about justice, no matter how hard it sounds to your ears. The things I will say will be hard but fair. Right. Let's see now. Ah yes! Firstly, I can see that there's isn't a foreigner amongst you, not one, so our leader, Cleon spits at the sound of his name he won't be able to accuse me –as he did last year- that I'm bagging you in front of foreigners. We are here, all on our own, celebrating our own Lenaia festival, no foreigners of any sort, tax payers or allies. No one! What we have here is thoroughly winnowed wheat. That's us. No chaff –that's the foreigners, chaff! Chuckles I call them "the chaff of the city" Resumes his serious posture. Folks, I really hate the Spartans. I really do, and I hope that Poseidon, their own God, sends them a damned huge earthquake and sinks all their houses, because the scum have torn down my own vines, as well. But then, speaking to my friends here, can we really blame the Spartans for this? Because some of our own men, some Athenians –I don't mean the city Athens, listen carefully to this, please. I don't

means Athens the city but Athenians, the men. Some men! Or, rather some vile and hateful morons, losers, dishonourable scum. Human forgeries, strange strangers have begun making accusations about some products from Megara, calling them “enemy goods.” First it was those cute little Megarian cloaks, then the cucumbers, and then the rabbits and then the little piggies and then the garlic, and then the rock salt! No sooner would they see anyone selling anything from Megara and straight away they’d shout, “enemy goods!” and they’d confiscate the damned thing and on that very day, you’d see them in the market selling those “enemy goods” themselves and pocketing the money.

Well, so far, we might call this a petty crime, the sort that we do ourselves... Frequently! But then these drunken fools, they went to Megara and kidnapped their whore, Simetha. Well, we all know Simetha is Megara’s pride and joy! This was followed by some highly irate Megarians kidnapping our own whores, two of them, belonging to Aspasia, Pericles’ own whore boss. So there you have it! The whole war amongst all the Greeks begins here; because of three whores! Because you see, Pericles – our own, Olympian marvel, our own glorious Pericles- got so angry that he began shooting lightning out of his mouth and making thunder and stirring the whole of Greece with laws which sounded like post-orgy songs:

Sings “We shall fight them on the beaches, we shall fight them on the land, we shall fight them in the market, no Megarian any where!”

That’s why, the Megarians after a while were becoming desperately hungry –starving, in fact. So what could they do? They began begging the Spartans to reverse that whore-begotten law! They had asked us, Athenians, many times but we had refused. And here begins the clamour of the clashing shields.

One may say that there was no need for that but then one might also ask, well then, what was it we needed to do? If for example someone discovered that the Spartans sailed over say to one of our tiny islands, Seriphos, for example and smuggled out of there some little puppy, what would you do, stay at home? Of course you wouldn’t! You’d be out there, launching three hundred ships, immediately, and the city would be drowned under the noise of soldiers choosing their captain and distributing their pay, and you’d be seeing the hustle and bustle as all of the figure heads of Athena were being regilded and the Pireas market would be buzzing with crowds distributing wheat at one stall, men buying wine skins and oar straps and wine brimming jars, at another stall and garlic and oil and sacks of onions at yet another stall and wreaths and anchovies and... there’d be flute girls and... black eyes. And at the docks people would be making oars, banging nails, tying oar straps and oars to the oar holes. And you’d hear flutes, whistles, whistling commands to the oar hands at the oar holes... I know for a fact that that’s what you’d be doing! Indicating his costume And do we not know that Telephus himself would also be acting thus? If we don’t then we don’t have a brain between us. And thus I conclude my speech!

By now the Acharnians are split into two sides.

557

Lacratidis:

Sees the split in the ranks and gets very angry Is that right, you screwed up piece of disgrace? You – you, a mere beggar dare talk to us like this? So what’s the harm if one of us happens to be an informer, hey? What’s with all this agony?

Marilades:

By Zeus! I think that every word Dicaeopolis said was the truth. Not a single lie amongst them!

Lacratidis:

Charging towards Dicaeopolis, intending to beat him up Truth or not, there was no need to mention all this stuff. This boldness of his won’t make him a happier man, I’ll tell you that much!

Marilades:

Trying to stop Lacratidis Hey, hold it! Hold it! What are you getting angry for? Stop! Stop! Hey listen! Lacratidis stops and looks threateningly back at Marilades who suddenly becomes frightened. If you try and hit this man... he’ll... he’ll hurt you more.

Other members of the chorus come and grab Lacratidis noisily from the waist.

565

Lacratidis:

O Lamachus! You, whose eyes are like lightning! Wearer of the terrifying helmet! Friend and relative! Come and help me! To the audience And you, captains and generals and attackers of walls, come quickly! Hurry, they’ve got me by the waist!

Noisy, bombastic, martial fanfare introduces Lamachus, who is fully armed, with sword and shield at the ready. He is wearing a helmet with a ludicrous abundance of plumes and feathers. A huge bright and frightening gorgon is painted on his shield.

572

Lamachus:

Who shouted the war cry? Who needs my help? What clamour must I join? Who stirred the Gorgon on my shield?

Dicaeopolis:

Oh, Sarcastically Here he is! Lamachus! Hero... of the feathered crests and armies!

Lacratidis: *Indicating Dicaeopolis*

This man has been saying nasty things about our city for hours now!

Lamachus: *To Dicaeopolis*

You? A beggar? You dare speak against Athens? A beggar, dares speak against mighty Athens?

Dicaeopolis:

Oh, Lamachus, forgive me! I know I'm a beggar and I know I said a little too much!

Lamachus:

What did you say about Athens? Tell me!

Dicaeopolis:

Feigns nausea I... I don't know. I... I beg you, military doodahs make me nauseous... *Indicating the shield* can you put that beastie gorgon of yours away?

Lamachus:

Moves shield away from him. There!

Dicaeopolis:

No, put it down. Upside down. On its back...

Lamachus: *Does so*

There!

Dicaeopolis:

That's it. Make it look like a wash basin. Now give me that feather from your helmet!

585

Lamachus: *Does so*

Here, take it!

Dicaeopolis: *He tickles his face with it*

Yiiiiik! Now hold on to my head so I can vomit. These plumes make me so sick!

Lamachus: *Tries to snatch the feather away from him*

Oi! What do you think you're doing? Using my feathers to vomit with? It's a feather, not a tickler!

Dicaeopolis:

A feather, not a tickler. Well then tell me what poor bird's bum was the whole plume plucked out of?

A peacock's bum? A lyre bird's bum? A wanker's bum?

590

Lamachus: *Fuming with anger*

Right! You're a dead bird's bum!

Dicaeopolis:

No, no, Lamachus! That's not your forte! Your forte is to decapitate pricks.

He brandishes his phallus

Here! Come on, do mine... if you're so strong! You've got all the tools you need! Sword, spear, shield, feathers...

Lamachus:

You! You... dare talk to a general like this? You? A mere beggar?

Dicaeopolis:

Me? A mere beggar?

Lamachus:

Of course you are. What else?

595

Dicaeopolis:

What else? What else? I'm a useful citizen, that's what else! Not some Chief Dick in the Government... And during war time I'm a simple Private Dick, whereas you! As soon as the war starts you rush off and become a Fully Paid Dick!

Lamachus: *Indignant*

I was hand picked!

Dicaeopolis:

Sure you were. By three cuckoo birds! That's exactly why I've made my own peace treaties! It made me sick watching old men go off to the front line while you, you, young pricklets run away from it.

Some of you go off to Thrace, drawing three drachmas a day! Like Tisa-bloody-fanny-pus and Pano-bloody-prickatus and then there are those near Chari-bloody-tus and others around Chaon. As well as

the other lot:

Geres-bloody-godsgift-prickus and Pede-bloody-rastus and those at Kamarine and Gela and Gela-not!

607

Lamachus:

Proudly Every one of them hand picked!

Dicaeopolis:

So why is it then that you lot, somehow always get paid whereas those Indicating some members of the chorus poor old buggers, get nothing? You, Marilades, old age is closing in on you. Have you ever been made an ambassador? Marilades shakes his head See? He says never! And yet he's a smart man and a hard worker. What about you Drakyllos? You Euforides or you, Prinides? Has any one of you ever been to Ekvatana or Chaon? They all shake their heads See? They all said no. But ask Lamachus and ask Koisiros' son, and you'll find that they've all got to know these places very well. People like these two who, only yesterday, because of their mounting debts and unpaid subscriptions, folks would yell "shit ahoy!" as soon as they saw them in the street... like when people empty their slop out of the window in the evening! They've been there all right!

Lamachus:

Oh Democracy! Do we have to put up with this?

Dicaeopolis:

Not unless you get paid for it, right?

620

Lamachus: *Infuriated*

Right! I'm off! I'm off to fight! To fight all the Peloponnesians. All of them, and always! And I'll stir up the whole place, with the navy and with the infantry! With all my might and strength!

Exits in a anger. Similar martial fanfare.

Dicaeopolis:

And I shall announce that all the Peloponnesians and the Megarians and the Boetians may come and buy and sell from me as they wish and... Shouts at the back of Lamachus to forget about Lamachus!

Exits also in anger. While the chorus is going through the next recitation the stage is set for Act 2. Dicaeopolis, with the help of his slaves, his wife and daughter, silently set up a couple of market stalls whereupon various products are arrayed. They measure a space and draw lines and put markers to establish the boundaries of their "market place." A sign is placed at some point, with the words "Dicky Mart" on it. Xanthias with the daughter and Slave 2 with Dicaeopolis' wife have established to the eyes of the audience but not to those of Dicaeopolis an unequivocal sexual bond. The work is completed just as the chorus has finished the following.

626

Lacratides:

The man has completely changed the minds of the people about the peace treaties.

Marilades:

But, men, let's take our clothes off and play our part in the play.

Drakylos:

Since the days our poet has first begun putting on plays, he had never used the opportunity to boast about how fantastic he is at it. However seeing that his enemies have managed to persuade the gullible Athenians that he has made fun of them and berated our city, he finds himself today, forced to answer these charges.

Euforides:

He says that he's done a great deal for you. For example, the fact that you are no longer so easily persuaded by foreigners who come here trying to seduce you and cheat you with flattery, is due to his good teaching.

Prinides:

The fact that you are no longer the gorking twits that you once were, is thanks to Aristophanes. In earlier days, all these foreign ambassadors had to do was to call you violet-crowned men and the word "violet" would have raising your bums to the wind. Or, if one of them tickled your vanity with "Athens is a rich and sleek city," well! That word, "sleek" would get him anything he wanted.

Lacratides:

For god's sake he used the adjective one uses to describe anchovies drenched in oil! I mean, "sleek," for goodness sake! He has served you well, our poet, simply by the fact that he warned you against these awful tricks.

Marilades:

He has also shown the governments of our subject States how our sort of Democracy is really governing them!

Drakylos:

Now, the next time these ambassadors come to pay their taxes, they would want to see the best of your poets, the one who put himself in so much danger so as to show the Athenians what justice is.

Euforides:

His fame and audacity has reached so far that the Great King himself, examining the Spartan ambassadors about the fate of our war, asked them first who has the best navy and then he wanted to know about which side the poet says nasty things.

Prinides:

Because, the Great King thinks, those who take Aristophanes' advice will become better human beings and they'll also be the ones who'll win the war. That's why the Spartans are asking for peace and demand to keep our poet's birth place, Aigina. Not because they want the little island for extra territory but because they can then claim our poet to be one of them. And you, you ought never give him up because his comedies will always be a fight for justice.

Lacratides:

He also says that he'll be teaching you a lot more wonderful things, to make your lot a happier one. He won't be licking your bumholes or making you false promises, or giving you nothing sleeky trickery, or hocus-pocus or raining praises upon you. Just good old, pure teaching. The best of it That's what he'll be giving you! The very best teaching available! A real education!

Marilades:

As for Cleon, let him do his worst. His schemes and tricks will bear no fruit. Justice and the Good are his allies; and good old Aristophanes won't be caught hanging around the city like him, a coward and a letch-arse!

Drakylos:

So, come to us, O Muse! Show us now your fiery glow and your Acharnian strength which burns like a spark amidst the coals of oak! Show us the spark which flares with the breeze to fry the frying fish for some and to bake a cake or two for others, while others yet—a slave or two- knead bread or spin with spinning hands the Thasian appetisers. So come to us, neighbours to you, one and all with rustic fervour in your song.

Euforides:

We, oldies accuse the city of not cherishing our old age in a manner worthy of all our naval exploits. Because instead of respect, we suffer terrible indignities and, as aged men the youth is constantly taking us to court, or we'd be laughed at by speech makers as being losers and nobodies as well as deaf and overused flutes holes. Our walking sticks are the only Poseidon, our only saviour and support.

Prinides:

Old age and youth, hey? We get to the courts and we'd be lucky to get but an inkling, a misty shadow of justice! Whereas our prosecutor, a youth himself—and a lusty youth at that- wanting to show just how lusty his youth is -at our expense, of course- bombards us with huge, well-rounded missiles of words.

Lacratides:

Take old Tithonos, for example. A very old man. Well some young and lusty, self-important prosecutor, hauls him up onto the stand and sets upon him with traps and lures and with muddying the waters and leaving the poor man, confounded, mumbling and withdrawing from court with a stinging fine. Outside, poor Tithonos sees his friends, and begins to whimper and cry that the few drachs he had left won't go to pay for his coffin now but for this fine.

Marilades:

How can this be fair, to ruin such an elderly man in a place where the speeches are timed and regulated? Is that a court of justice or what? A man who suffered so much and spilled so much manly, hot sweat fighting at Marathon? A Man, worthy of the name, worthy of our city? One minute we are fighting at Marathon and the next we are pursued by idiots until we are ruined! What would smart arse orator Marpsias say to that?

Drakylos:

Or Thucydides, another poor old warrior! Is it right that such a man, bent with years to be lost in a real brutal, Skythian type of legal desert against Kifisodemos, another savage, crap-spitting prosecutor?

Euforides:

I was so sad, I cried when I saw this hateful archer torture this old man. By Demeter, when Thucydides was a young man, when he was the true Thucydides he wouldn't have taken any insults even from Demeter herself and he would have floored ten hefty wrestlers, no lesser than Euathlos himself. He would have shouted down three thousand archers and his own arrows would have pierced through them -and through their whole family tree!

Lacratides:

Well then, if you won't leave the oldies to their peace, have two types of court. Let the old man have his toothless old lawyer and let the young man have his young Alcibiades, you know that wide-holed chatterbox son of Kleinias. So make such laws as necessary to have old men brought to court by old men and young men by one of their own age.

Acharnians withdraw to the sides.

ACT TWO

Scene 1

Everyone except Dicaeopolis has gone back into the house. He has just thanked everyone, smacked his hands clean and, putting on a smile of self-satisfaction, takes his place behind one of the stalls to wait for customers.

719

Dicaeopolis: *Pointing at the boundaries he drew*

Right then! Here are the boundaries of my market place where everyone, Peloponnesians as well as Megarians and Boetians can come and trade with me and Shouts at Lamachu's door Lamachus can go and get stuffed! He indicates the three leather whips As inspectors of the market place I appoint these three horse whips, which came to me from Whip City. And let it be known also that I'll have no sycophantic traitors or informers around here! I'll go and get the law pillar and place it right here, so that everyone can see it

Goes into the house. Enter a Megarian with his two daughters and an almost empty sack on his back.

729

Megarian:

Oh, darling market! Athenian market, loved by all Megarians, greetings! Oh, how I've missed you! Like a baby misses its mummy! Takes his bag down and offers it to his daughters Come darling, worthless daughters of a miserable father, see if you can find something in here to eat. They examine the sack and find only some old leaves which they throw down. They shake their heads Well then let your empty stomachs listen to me well:

Which do you prefer –to be sold or be starved?

735

Daughters:

To be sold, to be sold!

Megarian:

That's what I say, too! Examines them with dissatisfaction But then, who would be so stupid as to make such an obvious loss? Thinks for a minute and comes up with a solution Yes! That's it! I just remembered an old Megarian trick! I shall turn you both into little pigs! Hehehe! Looks into his sack and finds some trotters Here we are. Put these on your hands and feet! They do so but their posture is careless Come on, girls! Try and look as if you're from good stock. Make pretend that a good sow gave birth to you! Because, by Hermes, if I don't sell you, you'll be feeling the full rage of a real hunger when we get home! Looks into his sack again and comes up with two snouts which he hands to them Now put these snouts on. They obey and he examines them. He is satisfied Now squeeze yourselves into the sack. They obey. Once they're into the sack he taps on the head of one And, don't forget, every now and then squeal and make a koi-koi, make the sort of piggy noises that the sacrificial piggies make, all right? Nods from within the sack I'll call Dicaeopolis now. Yells Hey, Dicaeopolis! Dicky where are you? Dicaeopolis appears at the door carrying the law pillar. Do you want to buy some little piggies?

750

Dicaeopolis:

Very excited at the sight of the Megarian What? A real Megarian?

Megarian:

Yes! I'm here to do business.

Dicaeopolis:

Ah, good, god, very good! puts the law pillar down So, how are things in Megara, then?

Megarian: *Miserably*

Ah, well! Gesturing at his stomach Our stomachs are still singing around the fireplace!

Dicaeopolis:

Ah, yes, the empty stomach and the empty fireplace! The hungry stomach and the empty fireplace, hey? What a duet they could put compose! All they need is a good flute player, right? And what else is news in Megara?

Megarian:

What else? Well, let me see... The day I was leaving for the market, the politicians were wondering what to do to bring about the quickest possible death to us all!

Dicaeopolis:

That would put a certain end to all of your worries then, wouldn't it?

Megarian:

Correct!

Dicaeopolis:

So... what else, my friend? What's the price of wheat these days?

Megarian:

Wheat? The price of wheat is at an absolute premium! It has shot up so high, soooooo high... only the gods can buy it!

760

Dicaeopolis: *Nods in sympathy, then, indicating the sack*

Is this salt, you're bringing us?

Megarian:

Salt? After your occupation of Minoa, and since you're the masters of the sea, it'd be you who'd be the lords of the salts, wouldn't you?

Dicaeopolis:

Is it garlic, then?

Megarian:

Garlic? What garlic? Whenever you lot attacked us, you'd come charging into our fields like mice and burrow yourselves underground and rip all their heads off!

Dicaeopolis:

So what have you got in here, then?

Megarian:

Proudly I am bringing you piglets. Little beauties. Special. The sort they use for sacrifices.

765

Dicaeopolis:

Oh! Well done! Show me!

Megarian:

Oh ho! You're gonna love this! They are so beautiful! Feel them if you like! They are so plump, so delicious!

Dicaeopolis: *Feels around the outside of the sack... finds the tits*

Hello, what's this?

Megarian:

A piglet, I swear! A little sow!

Dicaeopolis: *Feels around a bit more... finds the bums. Becomes more and more suspicious.*

A piglet, hey? And where do such piggies grow?

Megarian:

Megara, of course, where else? What? Don't you think they're little sows?

Dicaeopolis: *Feels around the sack a bit more.*

I... no! I don't think they're little piggies. Sows or otherwise!

Megarian:

Wanna bet? Ho, ho ho! What a silly doubting Dicky you are! Ha! To the audience He says they're not piglets! Could you believe it? I bet you, salt to oregano, they're little sows. That's what they're called in Athenian, sow. "Sow, sow!" You hear them yelling at them all the time, "Hey, you old sow!" and "Come here you little pig!" and "You little porker, you!" They yell it all the time!

Dicaeopolis: *Looking even more uncertain*

They seem to be... of the human variety!

Megarian:

Not giving an inch But of course they are! Of course they are! By our Grand, Megarian hero, Diocles! They are my very own variety. Whose did you think they were? Sees that Dicaeopolis is not convinced Do you want to hear their voice?

Dicaeopolis:

Now, that I'd love to hear!

Megarian:

Right you are! Right, my little piggies, say hello! Silence from the sack. Leans over and, after smacking one on the head, speaks softly but sternly to them. Listen, you little shits, if you don't say something, you'll be back home before you can say "Hermes!"

Daughter: *Timidly*

Koi, koi!

Megarian:

Now, was that a piggy or not?

Dicaeopolis is about to laugh but controls himself. Instead he mumbles, "either piglet or pussy" and wonders how the Megarian will pull this through. The Megarian, frustrated at the man's disbelief, opens the sack and one of the daughters jumps up!

Dicaeopolis: *Bursts into laughter*

Wow! It... it certainly looks like a little piggy now... but I think when she grows up she'll be a real cunt! Hohohohoho!

Megarian:

In five years she'll look just like her mum!

Dicaeopolis:

But she's not yet ready for the altar.

Megarian:

What? Of course she's ready for the altar.

785

Dicaeopolis:

Walks around the daughter and inspects her closely But this little... piggie is missing a tail!

Megarian:

Oh, that's because she's still young. Wait till she grows up a bit. Then she'll get a real beauty! A real big one. Fat and red. You'll see. Stuff her full of good food and she'll grow up to be a real good sow for you!

Second daughter emerges from the sack. Angry at being left out of the deal.

Dicaeopolis:

Oh, ho! Well, look at that! These cunts look identical!

790

Megarian:

Same mother, same father! Indicating their cunts And when these little beauties grow up a bit and get a bit more hair around them, they'll be perfect for the altar of Aphrodite!

Dicaeopolis:

They don't sacrifice pigs on Afro's altar!

Megarian:

Don't they? But she's the only god who loves them, bless her! And, of course, after the sacrifice, shove a skewer into them and the flesh of these little piglets is scrumptious!

Dicaeopolis:

Can they eat without their mother yet?

Megarian:

Of course! As well as without their father!

Dicaeopolis:

So... what do they like eating mostly?

Megarian:

Whatever you give them. Ask them yourself!

Dicaeopolis:

To the daughters Little pig, little pig...

Daughters:

Koi, koi!

800

Dicaeopolis:

Do you eat... chick peas, piggies?

Daughters:

Koi, koi!

Dicaeopolis:

And figs from Fivalos?

Daughters:

Koi, koi!

Dicaeopolis:

You eat figs, too, do you?

Daughters: *With enthusiasm this time*

Koi, koi, koi, koi, koi!

Dicaeopolis:

How loudly you squeal about the figs! Shouts towards the house Xanthias!

Xanthias appears at the door, obviously having been interrupted from his amorous work.

Dicaeopolis:

Xanthias bring us here the figs I've got inside and let's see if these piggies will eat them.

Xanthias disappears into the house, comes back with the figs and places them on one of the stalls.

He's in a hurry to get back to his work so he does so. As soon as the figs are put onto the table, the "piglets" charge at them.

Dicaeopolis:

Wow! They sure love their figs! Look how greedily they're gobbling them up... Great Hercules!

Where did you say these little piggies are from, Gluttony?

810

Megarian:

Ah, sorry, mate. It wasn't just them. I snatched one myself!

Dicaeopolis:

I love the way they eat! Very... decorously, very... city like! Right, I'll take them. Tell me, how much do you want for the little porkers?

Megarian:

For this one here a string of garlic and for this one... a bag of salt.

Dicaeopolis:

Right. I'm buying them! Wait here a moment.

Megarian:

I'll be right here. To the audience Oh Hermes! God of Trade! If only I could sell off my wife that easily... and my mother!

Dicaeopolis goes to his house, stops at the porch where the garlic is hanging—a reminder of the beginning of scene 2, looks at and ponders over their diminishing quantity for a moment but then, convinced he's doing the right thing, tears a string off. Then he goes inside to get the salt. While all this is going on, an Informer enters, brandishing a fearful truncheon and looking very mean. He approaches the Megarian and his daughters. The daughters see him and, frightened, scramble back into the sack.

Informer:

You! Where are you from?

Megarian:

Me? I'm a pig seller from Megara.

Informer:

Right! I'm confiscating the pigs and expose you as a seller of enemy products!

Megarian:

Here we go again! This is the sort of crap that brought about all our woes in the first place! He grabs at the bag protectively

Informer:

That's Megarian talk, that! You'll cop it now! He tries to drag the sack away Let go of the sack!

Megarian:

Shouts Dicaeopolis! Dicky! A sycophant is here and he says he's going to expose me! Dicky, help!

Dicaeopolis:

From within. Very angry. Who? A sycophant? Who? Who's exposing whom? Comes out of the house, rushes to his stall, pulls down the whip and looks furiously at the informer. Addressing the whip. Right! Come on, Market Inspector, let's get these informers out of our market place, shall we? To the informer Now! What sort of exposure have we here, hey?

Informer:

Frightened a bit but defiant I'm exposing the enemy. Should I not expose the enemy?

827

Dicaeopolis: *Comes around the stall to the Informer and chases him away*

Piss off! Go and do your exposing somewhere else!

Exit the Informer. The piglets come out again.

Megarian:

What a slimy plague this lot must be to you Athenians, hey?

Dicaeopolis:

Don't worry about them, Megarian. Here you are, here's the price you've asked for the piglets. Hands him the goods Here's the string of garlic and the salt, and joy aplenty to you!

Megarian:

We don't say that in Megara any more!

Dicaeopolis:

What, "Joy aplenty?" A bit over the top, is it? Sorry. Well, "Joy aplenty" to me, then! Hohohoho!

Megarian:

To his daughters Well, my little piglets, even without your father, now, you should still try and get whatever they give you: bread, salt, prick. Take whatever they give you.

Exit the Megarian and Dicaeopolis takes the "piglets" into his house.

Scene 2

836

Lacratides:

Well, here's a man with joy aplenty!

Marilades:

Did you hear how well his plans came through? He'll be able to feed himself well, simply by sitting down at his own little market.

Drakylos:

And if informers like Ktesias want to come around, they'll be shedding tears.

From now on, Dicaeopolis and his family –including his daughter, the two "piglets," his wife and his two slaves- come and go, bringing various stuff out to the stall and taking other stuff back inside, generally looking busy and jolly. Xanthias is now happier with his master's new, female acquisitions. Everyone is still there when the Boetian enters.

Euforides:

No other man will be able to cheat you, with your shopping, Dicaeopolis –by buying everything before you get to the market – hihhi! You'll already be there, before everyone else! Choose your goods at your own pace! Hahahaha!

Prinides:

And Prepis that loose-arse, won't be dropping his guts on you. Pinches his nose Pohhh!

Lacratides:

And Cleonymus won't be able to screw you, here at your own market. No, your cloak will always be clean and you'll be seen walking the whole length of your market without bumping into characters like Hyperbolous, the summons psycho...

Marilades:

...or into Kratinos, who's always wearing that stupid haircut –you know the one? The skinhead sort. The one which makes him look like a real sleazdick!

Drakylos:

Or that other slimy character, Artemos, who calls himself a musician and whose armpits stink as if he's descended from a heard of goats!

Euforides:

Or that crook, Pauson! He won't be able to chuck insults at you any more, and you'll never again need to meet Lysistratos...

Prinides:

...that piece of shame from Cholareis, who's steeped in evil and who's always shivering and always hungry – for longer than thirty days a month!

Enter a Boetian, with Ismenias, his slave. Both are burdened by a great many wares for the market.

They are followed by some flute players.

860

Boetian:

In agony By Hercules I've really stuffed up my shoulder with all this. Ismenias, put the oregano down – gently! And you, Theban musicians, blow "The Bitche's Bum" on your bony flutes.

The music is intolerable for Dicaeopolis and the rest.

Dicaeopolis:

What the crows... Get these buzzing wasps away from my gates! How did these children of Cheri that dreadful bag pipe player get to my door?

Boetian:

By Hercules' boyfriend, the Theban Iolaus! Good stranger, you'd be doing me a favour if you'd send them away. They've been right behind me blowing those stupid pipes all the way from Thebes.

They've blown off all the tips of my oregano! You want to buy some of my stuff? I've got chooks and four-winged thingies!

873

Dicaeopolis:

A Boetian! Bread-stick lovers one and all! Welcome! Greetings, my friend! Let's see, what have you got there?

Boetian:

All of Boetia's goodies: Oregano, baskets, ducks, wicks, jays, woodcocks, water fowl, wrens, divers –
Dicaeopolis:

Interrupts him You've come here like the rough wind that drops all the birds from the sky!

Boetian:

Ah, but I also bring geese, rabbits, foxes, moles, porcupines, cats, lyres, martins, otters and Copaic eels.

Dicaeopolis:

Ahhhhh! Copaic eels! My friend! You have brought me the most delicious of morsels. Let me say hello to your eels!

Boetian:

To his eels Come! Let the eldest of the fifty Copaic water virgins come out of there and make this stranger happy.

Dicaeopolis:

Oh, beloved eel, you! I've longed for you for so long! The poets sigh hot sighs for you and Morychus adores you! Finally, oh, finally, you've come! To his slaves Get the grill and the bellows out boys and –Oh, look at it, will you! What a sweet looking eel. We've been waiting for it for six long years! Look at it! Darling daughter, say hello to this beauty! I'll get the coal for our delicious, darling stranger! Take her in, folks and even death won't separate me from her, not when she's garnished with a bit of beet root!

Dicaeopolis hands the eel to Xanthias. Dicaeopolis' family goes into the house to prepare the eel.

Appropriate –as well as inappropriate- noises issue from there, suggesting a good time in the kitchen.

895

Boetian:

What about me? Where is my money?

Dicaeopolis:

The eel is the price of your entry into the market. What else do you want to sell me?

Boetian:

The lot, of course!

Dicaeopolis:

Tell me then, how much do you want? Or would you rather barter?

900

Boetian:

I'll barter. I'll get whatever you Athenians have but we Boetians don't.

Dicaeopolis:

Examines his wares Let's see... we have Anchovies from Phaliron and... pottery.

Boetian:

Anchovies and pottery? We've got those. I need to get stuff we don't have back there.

Dicaeopolis:

Ah! I know just the thing you're after. Pointing at a jar Take this informer. He's dressed up as a jar.

Boetian:

An informer! Yes! By the twin gods. I'd be making a lot of money if I took one of them back with me.

Full of dirty monkey business, they are!

Enter Nikarhos, an informer. He's short and overdressed, pompous and Dictatorial. He too, brandishes a fearful truncheon.

Dicaeopolis:

Talking of monkeys, here's our own Nikarhos!

Boetians:

He's a little short for an informer, isn't he?

Dicaeopolis:

Short but full of venom!

910

Nikarhos: Pointing at the Boetian's wares with his truncheon

Whose load is this?

Boetian:

Mine. I brought it all the way from Thebes. Sees that Nikarhos is doubtful Swear by Zeus!

Nikarhos:

Then I expose them as enemy products!

Boetian:

Mocks him and laughs You've got a war going with the little Dicky birds?

Nikarhos:

Yes, I shall expose your Dicky birds as well as you!

Boetian:

Me? What have I done to you?

915

Nikarhos: *Pompously indicating the audience and with his truncheon pointing at the wares*

I'll tell you, for the sake of the audience: You have brought to this country enemy wicks.

Dicaeopolis:

You'll expose the man because of a lamp wick?

Nikarhos:

Indeed! One man could set a whole fleet on fire with a lamp wick!

Dicaeopolis:

A whole fleet, with a wick?

Nikarhos:

I'm certain of it!

Dicaeopolis:

How?

Nikarhos:

A Boetian can tie the wick to the wings of a mosquito, then light it, then shove it into the sewer which leads to the docks, wait there for a strong Northerly which, when it gets there, will make the flames big enough and strong enough to turn our whole navy into ashes, within seconds!

Dicaeopolis:

Into ashes, you... Smacks him on the head with the butt of the whip you escaped fart! A spark and a mossy can turn our navy into ashes?

926

Nikarhos:

Distressed turns to everyone around him See that? You're all witnesses.

Dicaeopolis:

Grab him! Shut his mouth up! They all attack and grab Nikarhos Bring me some of that packing, someone. Boetian hands him some straw I'll pack the idiot up like a vase so he won't break on the way there.

Nikarhos is "packed" and a rope is tied around his neck.

Lacratides:

Tie him well, Dicky. Tie his prick well –firmly, so it won't wobble about and break on the way.

Dicaeopolis:

No worries! I'll take care of that, all right. Taps and pulls at Nikarhos' phallus which, in response makes an odd sound It's a sad sound, this one, isn't it? Sort of cracked... badly baked. The Gods hate that sort of sound!

935

Marilades:

So what's the use of a prick like that, then?

Dicaeopolis:

Oh, lot's of foul and disgusting things! This the sort of prick that's used as a pestle to grind law suits and foul indictments, a wick to spy with, a stick to stir shit with... make all sorts of poisons...

Drakylos:

How can anyone feel safe using such a foul-sounding tool?

Dicaeopolis:

He's finished with the stuffing and, smacking his hands with satisfaction Well, it's made of sturdy stuff, really, if you hang it by the feet.

Euforides:

To the Boetian He's done a good job with the straw.

Boetian:

Laughs Yeah! It looks like harvest time!

Prinides:

He's all yours for the harvest, good stranger. Take this sycophant now and make what good use you can of him. Take him all around and expose him to everyone for the informer that he is.

952

Dicaeopolis:

It took a bit out of me, but I managed to do a good job with the fart, don't you think? Hands the rope to the Boetian

Boetian:

Takes the rope from Dicaeopolis but offers it to his slave Here, Isminias, take him and be careful how you handle him.

Dicaeopolis:

You're taking home a bad piece of work but still, making a profit out of informing on informers would be a good thing.

Boetian, Nikarhos and Ismenias exit. Dicaeopolis goes inside his house.

Scene 3

A slave comes out of Lamachus' house and yells in front of Dicaeopolis' house.

Slave:

Dicaeopolis! Dicky! Diiiiickyyyyy!

960

Dicaeopolis:

Yes? Who is it? Comes out Yeah, what do you want?

Slave:

Lamachus has asked me to ask you to sell him some Dicky birds and a bit of eel... he's given me to give you one drachma for the Dicky birds and he's given me to give you three more drachmas for the eel. He's going to the festival of Wine Drunks... I mean, Wine Cups.

Dicaeopolis:

Lamachus? Lamachus? Who is this Lamachus who wants some of my eel?

Slave:

You know Lamachus! My master! That fearful, bull-strong, shaker of the shield upon which a fierce Gorgon is painted and wears three plumes that beshadow his mighty shadow crest.

Dicaeopolis:

Ohhh! Shouts in the direction of Lamachus' home so that Lamachus can hear him That Lamachus! No! I wouldn't give him anything, even if he gave me that shield of his. Let him and his plumes eat beshadowed sardines... and if he starts shouting again like before, Picks up his whip and shakes it at the slave I'll call the market inspectors again!

Slave runs back into Lamachus' house.

I'll start packing everything up, I think. Starts doing so as he intones:

Oh, on the wings of a dove and the beak of a sparrow, I am carried away...

While the chorus speaks, all the members of Dicaeopolis' family come out and, forming a "chain gang," help bring all the merchandise into the house, until they are all inside. The door shuts firmly behind them. Again, noises are heard which suggest a good time in the kitchen and elsewhere in the house.

971

Lacratides:*To the audience*

Did you see Athenians? Did you all see how wise and prudent this man is?

Marilades:

How with his own treaty he managed to buy all the things he needs for his household and all the delicious things that are worthy of his table? So easily!

Drakylos:

Without bother or fuss, all good things come to him.

Euforides:

I shall never invite War into my house, nor will I sing with him the martial songs of Harmodius.

Prinides:

He's a loud drunk, who burst into my party once and, while we were all enjoying ourselves with all sorts of delightful things, in he goes and does all the harm he can, smashing and spilling everything and arguing and fighting with everyone; and no matter how often I told him to sit down and to take this lovely cup and enjoy the drink, he still went on and wildly burned down my vine stakes and even more wildly spilled all our wine!

Dicaeopolis comes out and carefully, proudly, places a bundle of feathers next to his door. They are the feathers of the chickens and all the other birds they've slaughtered for their dinner. He smiles with satisfaction, burps, farts, chuckles and goes back inside.

Lacratides:

Whereas, this man, Dicky, here, has his table covered with delicious morsels and, as you saw, proud of what he's done, puts the customary feathers at his entrance, a sign of the good life that's going on inside.

Dicaeopolis' door opens once again and this time a woman, the personification of Peace comes and stands in front of it.

Marilades:

Oh Peace! Ohhhh! Stunning mate of Aphrodite! Beloved of the Graces. We've forgotten just how beautiful your face is!

Drakylos:

Ohhh! If only, if only Eros would join us –just you and me together- somehow!

Euforides:

Even in a painting, like those which the artists draw with all those wreaths and blossoms! Or do you think I'm too old for you? Hehehe!

Prinides:

I reckon I could still manage three little tasks for you, deary! Old or not...

Lacratides:

...I'd first plant a loooooong vine into you and then...

Marilades:

...snuggled right up close to it, right next to that vine I'd plant a couple of figs, and thirdly...

Drakylos:

Thirdly, all around that vine and those two figs I'd pop in some olive trees.

Euforides:

Then, we'd be able to have our New Moon ritual by anointing our bodies with olive oil.

Peace smiles appreciatively and goes back inside. A moment later enters a Herald.

1000

Herald:

Hear me people! Let everyone, at the sound of the trumpet, drink fast from his jug. He whose jug is the first to be empty, will, as did our forefathers, win a wine skin the size of Ktisiphos' stomach!

Herald leaves.

Dicaeopolis:

From within. Did you hear that wife? Children? Slaves? Piglets? Peace? Did you all hear the proclamation? Move! Boil and roast and turn the meat about! Pull those rabbits out of the fire...Get those wreaths done... pass me the skewers to stick into the Dicky birds!

A moment later Dicaeopolis comes out, flustered but happy with anticipation.

Prinides:

To Dicaeopolis I envy your good sense but even more, I envy your joy!

1010

Dicaeopolis:

Ah, you'll see just how joyful I am when you see my roasted Dicky birds!

Lacratides:

I think you're right about that as well!

Dicaeopolis: *Goes to the window and shouts chef-like commands at the household*

Stir the fire a bit!

Marilades: *To the audience*

Do you hear him? See what a refined cook he is? See how well he knows the art of cooking?

Enter Derketes, a farmer, dressed in bright, wealth- white clothes. He is "Almost" blind and holding a cup. He looks very sad.

Derketes: *Distressed*

Hades! Hades! Hades! Hades!

Dicaeopolis:

Who on Earth is that?

Drakylos:

Some poor, god-forsaken, misery-clogged man.

Dicaeopolis:

Yeah? Well, on your way, misery-man! We don't need any misery today, thanks!

1020

Derketes: *Stretches out his cup to him*

Dear Dicaeopolis, darling Dicky. Since you're the only one who's got any peace around here, please let me have some... just a little bit... even if it's just for five years.

Dicaeopolis:

Why? What happened to you?

Derketes:

Oh, poor me! Poor me! I'm screwed! I've lost my oxen!

Dicaeopolis:

How?

Derketes:

The Boetians invaded my village, Phylae. They ran off with them.

Dicaeopolis:

Shouldn't you be in mourning, then, you sly shit? You're dressed in white.

Derketes:

Well, shit is right! The oxen made me wealthy with their manure!

1026

Dicaeopolis:

So what is it you would possibly need then?

Derketes: *Feigns total blindness*

Oh, well, I've cried so much about my poor oxen, I've lost my sight. Please, Dicky, if you care for poor Derketes from Phylae, just rub a bit of your peace on my eyes, quick!

Dicaeopolis:

Ohhhh, poor Derketes! Sorry, but I'm not in public medicine, like Dr. Pittalos!

Derketes:

Please help me! Perhaps I'll be able to see the oxen!

Dicaeopolis:

Nope! Go and cry at Pittalos' people.

Derketes:

From his cloak he takes out a little reed. Please, Dicky, just drop me a drop or two of your peace in this tiny little reed.

Dicaeopolis:

No, not even a droplet. Go cry elsewhere!

Derketes:

Oh, my ploughing oxen! My poor, poor ploughing oxen!

Exit Derketes.

Euforides:

Our man has discovered that peace is sweet and doesn't want to share it with anyone else.

Dicaeopolis goes back to his window and shouts similar chef-like orders to those within

1040

Dicaeopolis:

Hey, you! Spread a bit of honey over the entrails and turn the Dicky birds over!

Prinides: *To the audience*

Hear him? His orders are as sweet as a song!

Dicaeopolis:

And toss the eels!

Lacratides: *To Dicaeopolis*

God, you're killing me with hunger; and all this smoke and all your shouts will also kill the neighbours.

1046

Dicaeopolis: *Even more pompously*

Get that fish fried till it's nice and brown!

Goes inside to show them what he means. Enter a Best Man and Bridesmaid. He has come from the wedding feast and he's holding a platter with food on it and a small bottle made of alabaster. The Bridesmaid is holding onto the Best Man's phallus and they both have a cheeky grin on their face.

Best Man:

Dicaeopolis! Hey, Dicky! cheekily Hihihihihih!

Dicaeopolis:

From within What? Who? Comes out Where?

Best Man:

I'm the Best Man at a wedding and the groom has sent this meat for you from his wedding dinner. *Both chuckle*

Dicaeopolis: *Comes down and inspects the meat*

Ah! Yes, he's done it very well, whoever he is!

Best Man:

He asks, in return for this meat –hihihihihih!- for you to put a bit of your peace in this alabaster bottle, so that he can go on –hihihihihih!- screwing instead of going to war.

Dicaeopolis:

Get off! Take it, take it all back! There's no way I'll be giving you any of my peace, not for a million drachs! The Bridesmaid chuckles But who's this?

Best Man:

This here is the Bridesmaid and she's got a personal message for you from the bride. Hihihihhi!

1058

Dicaeopolis:

Well, come on, then, tell me! She moves towards him, still holding onto the Best Man's phallus. This makes the Best Man move closer to Dicaeopolis also. More chuckles from both. Finally, she manages to whisper coyly. Dicaeopolis laughs at her message and they all laugh together Hahaha! Oh gods! What a funny thing! What a funny thing the bride has asked this girl to ask of me! Hahaha! She's asked her to ask me to help her keep the prick – I mean her husband's prick – home! Ohhohohoho! Call out towards the house Xanthias! Bring here my peace bottle. This is the only donation I'll make. Women have no reason to suffer during war. Hohohoho! Keep the prick home! Hohohohoho! Xanthias brings the peace bottle and hands it to Dicaeopolis Come, darling, bring me your little bottle. Dicaeopolis pours some wine into her bottle Now, you know what to do? Tell the bride that when the order comes for the men to enlist, that night, to rub some of this on her husband's Dicky. All right? She nods but from the expression on the couple's faces we can tell that the Peace Wine will be rubbed on the Best Man's prick. Dicaeopolis, also understands this, so he pours a bit extra in the bottle Good! Hands the peace bottle to Xanthias Right! Xanthias, take this back and bring me the for the festival. I must be off.

Xanthias takes the bottle and runs back inside. Bridesmaid and Best Man hop off happily. Enter, unhappily Herald A. He's running.

Marilades:

Now here's someone clearly not happy. Look at his twisted eyebrows. He's running to tell us something awful, I bet.

1071

Herald A:

Oh what tortures and pains! Worthy of Lamachus himself! *He knocks on Lamachus' door*

Lamachus: *Bombastically within*

Who knocks upon the doors of these war-blessed halls, where the shiny bronze of shields and spears outshine the sun?

Herald A:

The generals, sir, have given orders that you should take all your troops and all your helmets and all your plumes and hurry to the snow, to guard our borders. There's been a report that Boetian thieves are coming to the Festival of the Cups to do their usual dirty work.

Lamachus:

By now he has opened the door. His Phallus is sad. Damned Generals! High in number, low in use! How dreadful! How terrible! Can I not at least have time for one festival?

Exit Herald A.

1080

Dicaeopolis: *Laughs at Lamachus' misfortune*

Oh, Lamachus the battle boy! Lamachus the lame... brain! Lamachus' crest has fallen!

Lamachus:

Furious at his misfortune as well as at Dicaeopolis You! You... god-cursed coward! You dare laugh at me?

Dicaeopolis: *Pointing at Lamachus' fallen phallus*

And is this the mighty four-winged Geryon with which you'll fight the enemy?

Lamachus: *Distressed*

Oioioioio! What a terrible message the messenger has brought me!

Enter Herald B. He's is also rushing. Heading for Dicaeopolis.

Dicaeopolis:

Oioioioio! What terrible message this messenger will bring me!

Herald B:

Dicaeopolis! Tries to catch his breath

Dicaeopolis: *Impatient*

Yes? What is it?

Herald B: *Takes a deep breath now and rattles off this long list of goodies in such a way that it hurts Lamachus to hear. To "rub it in" the Herald turns occasionally to Lamachus. Dicaeopolis, of course, is ecstatic. Quick, grab your food platter and your cup and run to the dinner. The priest of Dionysus*

has personally invited you. Hurry! They've been waiting for hours to begin the orgy- I mean the festivities. Everything is ready. Couches, tables, mattresses, cushions, garlands, perfumes, sweets of all sorts, whores galore, cakes, pastry bits and pieces, sesame rolls, little biscuits... and those delightful dancers, those beautiful lovers of Harmodius...Mmmmm! Hurry!

Lamachus: *Even more distressed and green with envy*

Oioioioioioio! Luck has forsaken me!

Exit Herald B

1095

Dicaeopolis: *To Lamachus*

Well, what can I say? You chose the great ugly Gorgon, I chose sweet, beautiful peace! Xanthias!

Shut the door behind you and prepare the platter for the dinner.

They both go into their respective houses but both can be seen through the window. It's a time of busy and furious, loudly made contrasts. An "Agon," as it is usually called, a combat between two ideas.

Lamachus:

Slave, bring my army sack!

Dicaeopolis:

Slave, bring me my food platter!

Lamachus:

Some salt with oregano and onions!

1100

Dicaeopolis:

Fish for me, Xanthias. I hate onions!

Lamachus:

Some of the anchovies. The ones cooked in fig leaves.

Dicaeopolis:

Some nice tripe in my fig leaves, Xanthias. I'll cook it there.

Lamachus:

Bring me my plumes!

Dicaeopolis:

Bring me the pigeons and the Dicky birds!

1105

Lamachus: *Checking it and proudly displaying it to the audience*

This plume is beautiful. Ostrich! So white!

Dicaeopolis: *Similarly displaying it to the audience*

Ohhhh! This Dicky bird is so scrumptious, so brown!

Lamachus: *Angry at Dicaeopolis*

Will you stop mocking my war stuff, man?

Dicaeopolis:

Man, you wanna stop ogling my Dicky bird?

Lamachus:

Back to his slave Bring me the case for the three plumes.

1110

Dicaeopolis:

Bring me the platter with the hare.

Lamachus:

Examining the plumes Damn! The hair-worms have eaten these plumes!

Dicaeopolis:

Shall I eat this hare before dinner?

Lamachus:

Angrier, at Dicaeopolis Man, would you stop talking to me?

Dicaeopolis:

Man, I'm not talking to you! I'm debating with the boy here! *To Xanthias* Would you like to bet on what is nicer, locusts or Dicky birds? We'll let Lamachus here decide.

Lamachus: *To the audience*

Look how the man insults me!

Dicaeopolis: *To the audience*

Yeap, he prefers, the locusts, all right!

Lamachus:

Take down my spear and bring it to me, boy!

Dicaeopolis:

Boy, rips the snags out of the fire and bring them to me!

1120

Lamachus:

Come, slave, hold this spear for me so that I can pull it out of its sheath. Hold it tight... That's right.

Ahhhh!

Dicaeopolis: *Indicating his phallus*

And you, little piglet, hold tight on this!

Lamachus:

Boy, bring the braces for my shield.

Dicaeopolis:

And the... bread loaves for my... stomach!

Lamachus:

My round shield, the one adorned with the Gorgon.

1125

Dicaeopolis:

And my pie.. the one adorned with cheese.

Lamachus: *Indicating the audience*

Now isn't that a coarse joke for our audience?

Dicaeopolis: *Displaying it to the audience*

Now isn't this a beautiful, sweet cheese pie for our audience?

Lamachus:

Boy, put a bit of oil on this shield. I can see a man in it, one about to be prosecuted for cowardice.

1130

Dicaeopolis:

You pour the honey now, boy. I can see... I can see... I can see with my little eye... I can see a man in tears, by the name of Lamachus the Gorgonhead!

Lamachus:

Boy, bring me my battle-proof breast plate!

Dicaeopolis:

Boy, my battle-proof wine cup!

Lamachus:

Puts his breast plate on and smacks at it with pride Ah, yes! Armed with this I'll be right amongst the enemy!

1135

Dicaeopolis: *Brandishing the cup*

Ah, yes! Armed with this, I'll be right amongst my drinking mates!

Lamachus:

Secure the mats on the shield.

Dicaeopolis:

Secure the food into the basket.

Lamachus:

I'll pick up my back pack.

Dicaeopolis:

And I'll pick up my cloak and go.

1140

Lamachus:

Boy, pick up the shield and start walking. Damn! It's snowing. Brrrr! This is wintry work!

Dicaeopolis:

Boy, pick up our food and let's go have a good drinking orgy!

Lamachus and his slave exit and Dicaeopolis and Xanthias as well as the two "piglets," dressed to kill come out of their respective houses. Lamachus is in full armour and his slave, loaded with military equipment is trembling with fear and trepidation. The two "piglets" throw a brilliant cloak over Dicaeopolis' shoulders. Xanthias is carrying a basket of goodies for the festival. In contrast to Lamachus and his slave, Dicaeopolis and his retinue looks very happy. Both sides glance at each other with appropriate expressions of scorn, before they exit from different directions.

Euforides:

Go forth, young men, each on a very different path to the other!

Prinides:

One path ends with drinks and garlands the other with ice and snow and outpost guard duty. The first though, ah, the first!

Lacratides:

He... will have a young beauty, rubbing his Dicky in bed! Hahahaha!

Marilades:

As for Antimachus, that creep, that saliva drip, that so-called author of lyric poets –you know the one!

Drakylos:

The one who wrote up a petition to stop the chorus sponsors from paying the chorus! That's the one. Well, I've got four words you, Master Antimachus!

Euforides:

May Zeus murder you! The stingy bum left me –me! A poor chorus master, to go home -after the stunning show I put on a couple of years ago, he made me go home starving.

Prinides:

The creep left me off his list for the “after-the-show” dinner! Me! You, Antimachus! This is how I'd like to see you suffer:

Lacratides:

Imagine, Antimachus! You're standing there, in front of a delicious cuttle fish, all nicely salted, deliciously cooked, just served –sizzling hot!- and your eyes are devouring it...

Marilades:

Still with me, Antimachus? Your eyes are devouring this beautiful cuttle fish and your mouth –as per usual- dripping spit everywhere. Well, just as your hand moves towards it, what happens?

Drakylos:

A dog snatches it from under your nose and runs off with it! May the gods grant me this sight! That's my first wish, boy! There is another.

Euforides:

One which takes place at night.

Prinides:

You're returning from a day of horse riding, Antimachus, and you're all hot and sweaty and utterly bothered.

Lacratides:

It's night, remember? Well, our friend Orestes the drunk sees you and gongs you one on the head.

Marilades:

So, you're furious and you're mad and it's night...

Drakylos:

...so you can't see too well, and you get off the horse and grab –you want a rock, right?

Euforides:

No, you grab a turd –a freshly made one, of course!-

Prinides:

Swooshy and squashy and mushy...

Lacratides:

...and squishy... and you toss it and it...

Marilades:

...and it misses and it hits... no, not Orestes our drunken friend but...

Drakylos:

... Cratinus, our buggers' friend.

Euforides:

Still with me Antimachus?

Scene 4

Enter Lamachus' slave. He's all hot and bothered. He runs up to Lamachus' house and knocks at the door.

1174

Slave:

Hey, servants of Lamachus! Quick, get some water! Get some hot water, Quick. Heat some water in a pot! A servant comes out of the house Quick! Get some cloth and waxed wool and lint and bandages and stuff, for his ankle. The servant runs off inside and slave now turns to the audience The master hurt himself jumping over a ditch. He hit a stake and dislocated and twisted his ankle, broke his head by some falling stone and the Gorgon shot off right out of his shield! Swoosh! Ah, the poor man! How his beautiful plumes rolled on the ground. He got so angry at that, he let out such a sad, sad lamentation! He said, Takes up a tragic posture “Oh, bright light, this is the last my eyes will see of

you. I die... my eyes will see no more..." Well, you wouldn't believe it but straight after he said this, he sees a band of thieves, so he gets up out of the ditch and chases the thieves and all the other runaways with his spear. Right up their bum his spear was! Ah, here he is now!

Enter Lamachus. He's all bruised and bandaged, helped by a slave on either side. Bodies and phalluses are in concert as to the state of their general disposition.

Lamachus:

Oioioioioiiiiiii! What awful pains! Achhhh! Dreadful aches! Achhh! I'm dyiiiiing!
Muuuuuumy! I'm hit! I've been hit by an enemy spear. Achhhh! You think I'm screaming because of these wounds, because I'm going to die? No! I'm screaming because that rotten man, Dicaeopolis is going to see me like this and laugh at me and at my woes! Oioioioioiiiiiii!

Enter Dicaeopolis "helped" by the two "piglets," one on each side, of course, and each holding Dicaeopolis' phallus with one hand. They are all drunk, very happy and with a garland somewhere around the vicinity of the top of their head. A cup is dangling from Dicaeopolis' phallus. He is fondling the breasts of the "piglets."

1198

Dicaeopolis:

Oioioioiiiiiii! What delightful tits! Firm like quinces! Mmmmmm! To one of them Oh, sweet, sweet, sweetie porky pie, give me a kiss. A deeeeep kiss... with the innermost lips... like lockjaw... as a prize for winning the drinking contest! Hick! I was the first to empty my cup, you know! Hick!

Lamachus:

Envious Oioioioioiiiiiii! What suffering, what bitter pain these fiery wounds give me! Oioioioiiiiiii!

1205

Dicaeopolis:

Ohohoho! Well, hello, Sir Lamachus, Sir Knight of the Gorgon's head!

Lamachus: *More envious*

Oioioioioiiiiiii! Achhhh!

Dicaeopolis:

To one of the girls Will you kiss me? Erotically? She does and as she does, her hand lets go of his phallus.

Lamachus: *Green with envy*

Oioioioioioiiii! Achhhh!

Dicaeopolis: *After the kiss, turns to the other girl*

Will you bite me? Erotically? She does so and also lets her hand off his phallus, which, now unpropped, drops.

1210

Lamachus:

Greener with envy Oioioiiii! How hard I paid for that battle!

Dicaeopolis:

Has everyone paid their dues for the orgy?

Lamachus: *Disgusted*

Oh Apollo, Apollo, Apollo!

Dicaeopolis: *Indicating his phallus*

Can't pull it any more, today, boy! It's exhausted! Try again at the feast of the Healer! Hahahaha!

Lamachus: *Even more disgusted*

Take me, boy, take me by the arms! Friends hold me!

Dicaeopolis: *Again indicating his phallus*

Me, too, girls, grab my prick from the middle and hold it! Pleeeeease! They do. Dignity is restored!

Lamachus: *seeking sympathy*

I'm a bit dizzy. The stone hit me and my sight is fading.

Dicaeopolis:

Me too! I wanna go to bed. Indicating his phallus Look, it's rising! It's gonna blow up!

Lamachus: *Seeking more sympathy*

Quick, men! Take me to Dr. Pittalus' clinic, to his soothing hands.

Dicaeopolis:

And me, take me to the judges! About to walk but stumbles Oooops, someone else do the driving.

Where is the chief? I forgot... I... want my prize!

Lamachus: *Desperately seeking sympathy*

The sharp spear ran itself right through my bones!

Dicaeopolis: *Suddenly discovers his cup*

Ohhhh! Look at my poor empty cup! Hurrah for me! Hurrah for my victory! To the girls, the audience and the chorus Come on, shout with me, hurrah!

They all do so

Lacratides:

Well, hurrah!

Marilades:

Hurrah for your brilliant victory, Dicaeopolis!

All Acharnians together:

Hurrah for our old Dicky!

Dicaeopolis:

Hehehe! Once again, I drained my brimming cup, a cup full of unmixed wine! One glug! One solitary glug! Shows the empty cup around See? My cup is empty!

Drakylos:

You're the hero of the skin!

Euforides:

You're a winner with the drink.

Prinides:

Go and get your prize, Dicky boy!

Dicaeopolis: *To the girls as he heads towards the exit to go and claim his prize*

Come with me girls and let's sing to our victory!

All Acharnians together: *Following him towards the exit*

We're with you, boy! We're with you! Oh, Victory, Victory, Victory! She's yours, Dicaeopolis!

She's yours, Dicky Boy!

Exit all but Lamachus with his slaves who look like they've lost the contest.

End of Aristophanes'