

ARISTOPHANES'
"THE BIRDS"

Date of 1st production 414 BC
Awarded the 2nd prize

TRANSLATED BY
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DRAMATIS PERSONAE:

Trusty
(An Athenian)
Dinkum
(His friend)
Bluey
(Slave of Trusty)
Muscles
Another slave of Trusty -silent)
Bushcock
A Bird, ex human (also known as Hoopoe)
Trohilos
(Bushcock's servant)
Iris
(Goddess of the Rainbow, a bird)
Nightingale
Princess
(Silent)
A Priest
A Poet
Verbulus
(Another poet)
An Oracle seller
Meton
(A famous mathematician)
A Law Seller
An Inspector
An Informer
A Recalcitrant Youth
A Herald
Prometheus
(Titan, friend of humans)
Herakles
Poseidon
Triballos
(God of the Barbarians)
Two Attendants to Bushcock
(silent)
A Young Boy, (bird) carrying a ceremonial phallus.

The Population of Birds:

The director is advised that here, Aristophanes gives us ample opportunity to name our own birds as

well as its number. I've chosen to use some of the native Australian names but one is certainly not to take the attire of these birds too dogmatically. The point is to fill the stage with great colour and movement. Actors may, of course, be allocated multiple bird roles. The long red leather phallus is, indubitably, a must!

Corella	Bushtucker Bird	Blue Tit
Drongo	Goose	Male Love Bird
Gum Cock	Duck	Female Love Bird
Flamingo	Halcyon	Red Throat
Persian Cock	Bush Barber	Gang-Gang Cockatoo
Second Bushcock	Cockeyed owl	Laughing Turtle Dove
Garbage Guts	Red Tit	Shrub Lark
Grass Bird	Cockatoo	Riffle Bird
Boobook Owl	Mudnester Cock	Cat Bird
Redneck	Guzzler	
Rufous Whistler	Fig Bird	

ACT I

The stage shows a deserted, isolated country. Far Stage Left is a small hill and above it the black stump of a tree. At the foot of that hill is a short live tree but with thick enough foliage to hide an entrance into the hill. The hill is large enough for "birds" to sit upon and still be clearly visible by the audience. Eventually, a city wall will appear behind this hill.

This hill begins its "life" as the Bushcock's house but eventually it will be taken away and replaced by the gate on the wall of a city.

A small stone (about as big as a fist) is hidden behind the tree. Trusty will look for it later and hit at the hill with it. He should be able to create some sort of audible noise with it. (see line 56)

It is a hot, sunny day.

Before the actors appear we hear the sounds of all sorts of birds. These sounds are attacked by the noise made by the items that the slaves are carrying which, as we will see shortly, are all sorts of pots, pans, blankets, a huge basket, as well as some branches of myrtle. They are the objects which people who wish to found cities take with them.

Pause.

Fade out bird sounds. Only the noise made by the four men and their birds

Pause

Enter DINKUM and TRUSTY, followed by Trusty's slaves, BLUEY and MUSCLES and, attached by a rope to Dinkum, a bird, a Corella and to Trusty, a Drongo.

All men are wearing one sandal each and MUSCLES is heavily dressed with a sheep skin coat and a cape.

Dinkum: *To his Corella*

So, it's straight ahead this time, is it?

Corella *gestures vehemently "yes"*

Towards that tree?

Corella *gestures again, this time more vehemently "yes"*

That bloody big black stump over there?

Further agreement but then the drongo attached to his mate's arm makes contrary gestures. Trusty kicks the drongo. The drongo makes noises of pain and disapproval.

Trusty: *To his drongo*

Will you ever shut up? What now?

Drongo makes more gestures indicating reverse direction.

To Dinkum, frustrated:

Ah! This one is croaking for us to go back, Dinkum! He doesn't like the looks of that black stump.

Dinkum: *To the Corella*

You mongrel of a bird! You've made us go up and down, up and down and 'round and 'round in never-ending and utterly useless bloody circles and for what? We're either lost now or we're about to be imminently and, most probably, fatally lost! Bloody Corellas! Where did you come from?

Trusty: *Smacks his drongo about. Again noises of pain and disapproval from the drongo.*

And me, too! What an idiot I was, listening to a drongo! We must have travelled at least a thousand bloody miles!

Dinkum: *Smacks his Corella about*

Me, too, Trusty! Fancy listening to this moronic bird brain! I must have pounded away all the flesh out of my toes! *Shows his bare foot; so do the slaves.* Look, even my toe nails are gone!

Trusty:*Looks around in despair*

Dinkum, mate? I can't even guess where we are! Do you?

Dinkum:

Nah! Baxterus? Villawoodus? Woomerutous?

Trusty:

Do you think you could find your way back home from here?

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Dinkum:*Looks at his slaves for a possible answer. They shrug their shoulders and shift their loads.*

Nah! Not even our most famous refugee, our awful harp player, Ziggy could do that and he found his way through all the layers of our Athenian bureaucracy to get himself a citizenship, no less and into the best positions of the country, to boot!

Trusty:*Corella bites Trust on the bum.*

Damn you! Stop that!

Dinkum:*To his friend*

You take that road, mate!

Trusty:

We just had to believe that bird seller, Philokrates, didn't we? And we just had to go looking for Tereus, didn't we? Well, miserable old Philokrates says, "take these two birds and they'll lead you there!" One obol for this useless, short-arse, here and three for yours! And what can they do? Bloody nothing! Bloody nothing! Absolutely bloody nothing... All they can do is bite! Damned things! Damned birds!

Of course, we still want to meet Tereus. He's turned himself into a bird, all full of feathers and beaks. A real cock of a bird Mr Tereus is now! Oh, yes! They call him Mister Bushcock, now! Mister, if you please! Big Dick Bushcock!

Corella tries to bite him again.

What? What now?

Birds makes noises and gestures to indicate a direction

What? Do you want to go up that hill? How can we you idiot? There's no path to it!

Dinkum:

That's right. There's no path. By Zeus, it's a dead end, damn you! At least I can't see one from here!

Dinkum:

What about your drongo? Is he saying anything?

Trusty:*Looks at the drongo whose gestures are incomprehensible and threatens to smack him. Then he realises.*

By Zeus! I think this idiot is having a thought! Wait for it! Wait for it... Here it comes... here it comes... Yes! Bastard's changed his mind again! Changed his bloody mind again!

25

Dinkum:

Mind, ey? Didn't know drongos had a mind! What is he saying about our directions?

Trusty:

Directions? Nothing about directions. Only that he's going bite my fingers off!

Dinkum:

What a Zeus-awful bloody thing this is, ey Trusty? Here we are, ready and able to travel to the end of life itself –to perdition, even- and we can't even find the way to it!

We're suffering the exact opposite to what the Skythian refugee, Saka, has suffered. He, a foreigner, tried so hard to get into our city whereas we, born, bred and raised Athenians, men who no one could throw out of there, try as he might, and now we're trying so hard to get out of there... and as fast as our legs can take us, but...

Not that we hate Athens, mind you! It's a big and prosperous city that one. Splendid! Blessed! You can see your bundles of money just... fly away!

On one hand you have the cicadas singing at the branches of trees for a month or two and on the other you have the Athenians singing in the branches of the courts for their whole lives!

And so, that's why we've hit the road.

Looks around him. No road.

There must be a road around here somewhere!

Pats the load on Bluey

And we're fully equipped, too! Basket, myrtle, pots, pans...we threw the babies overboard... just like those pioneers who go and start off cities everywhere.

We've been looking all over the world for a nice, quiet, tranquil slow-paced place to put up our tent, stretch our feet full length and settle down.

We're looking for Tereus, really, Tereus the Bushcock. We want to ask him if with all this flying around he does, if he has ever come across such a city. A nice, comfortable, quiet city.

The drongo is poking at Trusty and gesturing for him to look up high.

Trusty:

Hang on a minute, Dinkum!

Dinkum:

What's up?

Trusty:

I don't know. This drongo-brain of a bird is asking me to look up again.

Dinkum:

My Corella is doing the same as well. She's opening her beak as if she's trying to show me something.

There must be some birds around here. Let's make a noise and see.

The slaves begin to hammer at the pots and pans while everyone else is looking up.

Suddenly a blob of bird-shit hits Dinkum on the face.

Trusty:*Laughs.*

You know, we should hit that rock with our feet. It would make much more noise!

55

Dinkum:

Wiping the bird-shit off his face.

You know, you should hit it with your head. It'll make twice the noise!

Trusty:

Come on, just take a rock and hit the bloody thing!

Dinkum:

As you please, master boss!

Looks around for a rock, finds it behind the tree and begins to hit the hill with it.

Hey, boy! Helooooo, Boy!

Trusty:*Shocked*

Boy? Boy? What's this "boy" business? You don't call a Bushcock, "boy!"

You yell, like this: Coooooeeee-eee, Coooooeeee-ee, Cooooo-eeee! "Boy!"

Dinkum:

All right, I'll do it again then.

Coooo-eeeeee! Coooo-eeeeee! Coooo-eeeeee!

Come on out, Bushcocky! Come on, baby! Coooo-eeeeee! Coooo-eeeeee! Come on darling!

From the foliage appears a huge bird whose beak is grotesquely made up. The bird makes a loud, annoyed and frightening noise as he first ruffles the foliage for a few seconds and then makes his appearance. Most of his feathers are missing and the rest are in bad repair.

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Trohilos:*Annoyed*

Who is it? Who is calling my boss?

All four men fall down with fear. The slaves fart. At this the two birds dismantle their fetters and run off. This, in turn, frightens Trohilos who thinks the men are bird hunters. All humans get up and, trembling with fear, spin around each other on the stage.

Trusty:

Oh my Gorrriiiiiiiii! Zeusy, Zeusy, Zeusy! By Apollo! Woaaa!

To Dinkum

Look at that beak, will you! Woaaa! What a deeeep throat!

Trohilos:*Also frightened*

Ooooooh, Zeusy, Zeusy, Zeusy! Bird hunters! Oh me, oh my! Oh my goody, goody Zeusy! By Apollo!

Bird hunters! Oh, no!

Trusty:*Also trembling. To Trohilos*

What a dreadful thing to say! And so dreadfully said!

Trohilos:*Regains his composure*

Right, you two! You're dead meat!

Trusty:*Still nervous*

Meat? Meat? Ohhh! You think we're men! Ohhhh, nononononono! *Nervously*

Hahahahaha! Ohhhhhhhh, nononononononono!

Trohilos:

Well, what are you then?

65

Trusty:

Me? I...I'm a bird! A... shaker, of course! No, I'm a faker! No, I'm a trembler. Yes, a Trembler. See? I tremble a lot. Yep, I'm a trembler from... errrrr...*Trying to think of some exotic place* from Lydia!

Trohilos:

Nonsense!

Trusty:

What do you mean, nonsense? Why don't you ask about what's all around my legs?

Shakes them to show that he had shat himself from fear.

Trohilos:

Ha! And him? What sort of bird is he then? Go on, speak up!

Dinkum:

Who me? I... I'm a...

Bluey and his friend, Muscles, who happened to be directly behind him wave their hands vigorously and pinch their noses, indicating that Dinkum had also shat himself.

I'm a poo-poo bird! Pheasant variety. Poo-poo bird. That's me!

Tries to make his mating call

Pooooo! Poooooo! Pooooo!

Bluey confirms with nod and other appropriate gestures

Trusty:

What about you, then, you ugly beast? What sort of a bird are you, by the gods?

Trohilos:

Oh, I'm a slave bird.

70

Dinkum: Indicating the slave bird's plumage

Must have been beaten up by some huge cock or other, hey? Is that how you became a slave bird?

Trohilos:

Oh no! No. It's just that when my boss became a Bushcock, well, he prayed to have me become a bird as well, so that he could have a servant to wait on him.

Trusty:

Do the birds need servants as well?

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Trohilos:

No, not really. But my boss was a man once, you see? So, sometimes he gets a craving for say, sardines from down South. Well, off I run with a bucket to get him some. If he wants lentils, I come back with a ladle and a pot.

Trusty:

So, are you a bird or a wheelbarrow? Hahahaha! You know what, Mr Wheelbarrow? Go and wheel your master out here!

Trohilos:

Oh, I couldn't do that! Oh, nonononono! He's only just finished eating his myrtle berries and his gnats. He's gone off for his little siesta now.

Trusty: Angrily

Wheelbarrow, do you lay eggs?

Trohilos:

No, of course not!

Trusty:

Well, then go and get him or I'll destroy most indisputably, your manhood! Go on! Go and wake him up!

Trohilos:

Oh, I know he won't like that at all...

Trusty gives him another angry look which intimidates Trohilos

Oh, all right, then! I'll do just this one favour for you!

He enters the hill through the shrub.

85

Trusty: At Trohilos' back.

Damn you, bird! You've scared the... pants off me!

Smacks the rear of his pants and make gestures of displeasure about its contents

Dinkum:

Damn! *Looks around him* And my damned Corella ran off in fear!

Trusty:

Did you let your Corella go? What a frightened little beastie you are! *Mocks him.* Chook, chook, chook, chook!

Dinkum:

And you? What about you? Tell me! Did you not let go of your drongo when you fell on your frightened little bum?

Trusty:

I did NOT! By Zeus, no! No way!

Dinkum:

So, where is he then?

90

Trusty:

Where? He... flew off!

Dinkum:

So, you didn't let him go, huh? What a brave little cock you are!

Trohilos and a couple of other slaves (body guards) come out through the shrub and wait for their master. The bodyguards (also birds) are armed variously.

Bushcock: From behind the bush. Thunderous, annoyed voice.

Open this bush wiiiiiiiiide! Wiiiiiiiiider! Wiiiiiiiiider! Let me through! Ugh!

The slaves rush about to oblige and to hold the foliage back. The Bushcock comes out, enormous phallus first which is pitifully touching the ground. His feathers are almost all gone and his head is also exaggerated in size. His beak is large and twisted like that of all his slaves. He has a triple crest but also a despondent one. Yawns loudly.

Trusty: Shocked by Bushcock's enormous phallus

By Herakles! Whhhhhhat sort of beast are you?

Initial fear subsides and he begins to laugh. The others join in.

And what sort of... plumage is this? Whoa, look at the triple crest!

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Bushcock: Thunderously still

Who is looking for me? Who are you?

Dinkum:

All of the twelve gods... must have smacked you around quite a bit, hey Bushcock?

Bushcock:

What? Oh! You're mocking me for my feathers, are you? Ah, my friends! If only you knew! If only you knew! Let me tell you: I was a human once! A man! Me!

Trusty: Feeling sorry for the Bushcock

Eh... Oh, no! Really? Eh... Oh no! Oh no, mate! We're not laughing at you!

Bushcock:

What are you laughing at then?

Dinkum:

Errr... Your beak. It's a little on the funny side, don't you think?

100

Bushcock:

You see? You see? That's just how Sophocles portrays me in his tragedies! He makes an absolute mess of my portrayal as Tereus! Oh, the shame! The indignity! The hatred of that man!

Trusty:

So, you're Tereus, then, hey? Bird or Peacock?

Bushcock:

Bird.

Dinkum:

Well, where are your feathers then?

Bushcock:

Gone.

Dinkum:

Gone? Flew away? How? Ill wind? Disease of some sort?

105

Bushcock:

No! All birds lose their feathers during winter. Then, in Summer we grow new ones again... But tell me, who are you?

Trusty:

Us? We're mortals.

Bushcock:

Which country?

Trusty:

The country that has the best warships. The greatest triremes. The best generals. The greatest...

Bushcock:

Oh, no! Not Athens! You're not a pair of those who just love doing jury service, are you?

Dinkum:

Oh no! Quite the contrary. We're a couple of men who hate those who love doing jury service!

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Bushcock:

Do they sow such a seed down there?

Dinkum:

Just a little bit... If you go out into the paddocks a bit.

Bushcock:

So... what brought you here?

Trusty:

We'd like to talk with you.

Bushcock:

With me? About what?

Trusty:

Well, you were a man, once, right? Just like us! And you use to owe money, once right? Just like us!

And, instead of paying it back, you enjoyed spending it, right? Just like us!

Then, when you changed into a bird, you flew all over the place –sea and land- and got to know the ways and thoughts of both, men and birds, right? That's why we came to you. We'd like to ask you if you could find us some lovely little city where we can lie down, settle down, blanket down as if we were on a lovely woolly rug.

Bushcock:Thinks for a bit

Hmmm. Are you after a bigger city than Athens, the city of the Cranaans?

Trusty:

Oh, no! Just more... comfy for us.

Bushcock:

And I suppose you'd be after an aristocratic set up.

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Trusty:

Me? Oh, no, no, no, no! Even the name Aristocrates, Scelias' son, brings the puke out of me!

Bushcock:

Well, what sort of a city are you after then?

Trusty:

A city where the biggest things to worry about are of this sort: A man comes to my door, say, bright and early one morning and says to me, "By Zeus the Olympian, Trusty! I'm having a wedding feast tonight, marrying my beautiful young daughter off and I'd like to invite you over. Could you do me the honours of having a bath early this evening and coming over with your family? Do so, please or else, don't bother coming to see me when things go downhill in my life!"

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Bushcock:*Chuckles*

I can see you love the hard life. And you?

Dinkum:

Same sort of stuff.

Bushcock:

Meaning?

Dinkum:

Meaning? Ahhhh! Let's see! The father of a beautiful, young, absolute blossom of a boy meets me in the street and that father gets angry at me and says, "what a way to treat my son, you, you... cock polisher? What sort of friend are you? You saw my darling boy as he had just come out of the wrestling ring, all sparkling, all clean and ready for it and yet you went right past him. Not even a word! No kisses, no hugs, no fondling of his balls, nothing! What sort of a family friend are you!"

Bushcock: *Chuckles again*

Poor old bastard! I can see you love the hard life, too! Well, actually, there IS such a happy place:
Near the Red Sea.

Dinkum:

Oh, nonononono! Not by the sea! Oh nonononono! Good ol' Zeusy Zeus no!

The Athenians will send their tax-loving boat, their Majorkia, one fine morning, nab me and tell me
"you haven't paid your taxes, mister! Pay up now!" Oh, nonononono! Errrr, Don't you know of any
Greek cities?

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Bushcock:

Well, what about Leprous, near Elis? Why don't you go and settle there?

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Dinkum:

Nah, Melanthious, that leper of a poet put me off Leprous. I must say, I've never been there but
Melanthius has definitely put me off the place. Definitely! Tragic Poet, that one! Tragic in many
ways! All his verses kept falling off their stanzas!

Bushcock:

Well then... the Opuntians have a lovely city... near Locris. Why don't you go and live with them?

Dinkum:

Nah, Opuntius, the one eyed informer put me off their whole race! No thanks, not even for a talent of
gold! Forget it!

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Trusty:

Errrr... Tell me: How's life here, amongst the birds? You'd know this better than anyone.

Bushcock:

Not bad, really, once you get used to it. No need for a wallet around here, that's for sure!

Dinkum:

Ah ha! And so, you subtract life's most abominable abomination out of life's equation! Delightful!
Life minus wallet equals bliss.

Bushcock:

And then, we've got gardens full of white sesame, myrtle berries, mint, poppy seeds... all the stuff
Athenians use in their festivals, if I remember correctly.

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Dinkum:

Woaaaaa! You lot live the life of newlyweds!

Trusty:

"Woaaa," nothing! It just dawned on me! I can see a real good deal here for all the birds! And it's all
totally achievable –IF you trust me that is! Woaaaa!

Bushcock:

Trust you? Trust you about what?

Trusty:

Trust me about what? Well, let me tell you, Bushcock: Let's see. Firstly, for goodness' sake, don't go
flying all about and round and round gaping and gawking at everything! Damned unattractive stuff
that, yeah? Quite despicable let me tell you! We, humans have a scenario for that: If you'd point out
at one of those flighty characters and ask someone like... say, our greedy and gluttonous Treasurer,
Telly, for example, "Telly, tell me, who is that man over there?" he'd say, "that man's a real bird!
Never at one place, never at one idea, thoroughly unstable!"

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Bushcock:

You're absolutely right, by Dionysus! So, what should we do?

Trusty:

Build a city and live in it, by Dionysus!

Bushcock:

We're birds, not humans! What sort of a city can birds build, by Dionysus?

Trusty:

Idiot! Bird-brain! What a stupid statement to make! Look down, you!

Bushcock: *Does so*

Yeah?

Trusty:

Now look up!

Bushcock: *Obeys*

Yeah?

Trusty:

Now turn your head around! Right around!

Bushcock:

By Zeus! What a joke it would be if I wrung my own neck like this!

Trusty:

So... what did you see?

Bushcock:

The clouds and the sky!

Some bird dropping falls on the Bushcock's head.

Trusty: *Laughs along with everyone else while Bushcock cleans himself.*

Pause

So? Think, man! Is this not the birds' territory?

Bushcock:

Territory? What's a territory?

180

Trusty:

Sort of like a country. But because everything is moving around and everything goes through it, and because nothing is sitting still in it, it's just a space, a territory. But if you put up fences and walls and gates and things all around it, then it will become your city, your country and, just as now you rule over the locusts, you'll then also rule over men... and then you do to the gods what Nicias did to the Melians... starve them all to death, create a real famine! Bang! Complete Theocide!

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Bushcock:

How do we do that?

Trusty:

Look! Between Earth and the gods is air, right? Well, look, if we from Athens have to go, say to the Oracle at Delphi, we have to ask permission from the Boetians, to let us pass through their country. It'll be the same with you. If you've got your city up there, the gods would have to pay you for the aromas of the sacrifices the humans make, to reach them.

Bushcock:

Woaa! Earth, traps, clouds, nets! I've never heard such elegant ideas before! Now if the other birds are in agreement with you, I'd like to join you and live with you in this city!

Trusty:

And who's going to introduce this idea to them?

Bushcock:

You will. They understand the language now. I've been with them now for a long time. I had time to teach them the language and get them out of all their barbarisms.

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Trusty:

Can you call them all here?

Bushcock:

That's easy. I'll just go in that bush there... right now... I'll wake up my little nightingale, Procne and then, we'll call them all together. As soon as they hear our voices, they'll come running.

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Trusty: *Pushes the Bushcock urgently towards the bush.*

My dear, dear feathered friend! I beg you. Go quickly to that bush and wake up that little nightingale of yours!

Bushcock *climbs onto the hill and begins to call*

Bushcock:

Cooooooooo-eee!

Cooooooooo-eee! Coo-Coo-Coo-Coo- Coo-eeeeee!

Wakey, wakey, my sweet little lover, you!

Wakey, wakey and let loose your sacred and enchanting song,

That grieving song for our son forlorn, Itys,

Dead but we mourn him still.

Let the crystal melodies pour out from your honey-coloured throat.

Voice of female bird emanates from behind stage left.

Female Bird:*Lyrical*

Coooooooo-eee! Coo-Coo-Coo-Coo- Coo-eeeeee!

Coooooooo-eee! Coo-Coo-Coo-Coo- Coo-eeeeee!

Bushcock:

Your sound is a sound that rises clear and bright through the

Curly foliage of your delicious bush

All the way to the throne of Zeus.

Golden haired Apollo up there will hear your woes and he will hit the cords of his gold and ivory harp to give the gods their dancing feet.

And then, all together the voices of the blessed immortals will burst forth in abundance.

Voice of another bird:

Coooooooo-eee! Coo-Coo-Coo-Coo- Coo-eeeeee!

Coooooooo-eee! Coo-Coo-Coo-Coo- Coo-eeeeee!

Bushcock:

Coooooooo-eee!

Coooooooo-eee! Coo-Coo-Coo-Coo- Coo-eeeeee!

Approach my darling winged friends!

All you who feed on the seeds of the well-sown paddocks. All you endless races! Barley eaters, seed of all sorts eaters, soft-voiced, fast-winged birds. All those of you who gather round the furrows of the tilled soil and sing with your light joyful cords. Come here!

Coooooooo-eee!

Coooooooo-eee! Coo-Coo-Coo-Coo- Coo-eeeeee!

Voice of yet a bird:

Coooooooo-eee! Coo-Coo-Coo-Coo- Coo-eeeeee!

Coooooooo-eee! Coo-Coo-Coo-Coo- Coo-eeeeee!

Dinkum:

Ahhh! Oh, my Lord, Zeus! What a lovely voice that little bird has! It's filled that whole shrub with honey!

Trusty:*Angry*

Oi!

Dinkum:

What?

Trusty:

Won't you just shut up for a minute?

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Dinkum:

Why? What's up?

Trusty:

The Bushcock is getting ready for another call!

The Bushcock is now calling in all directions, to all birds.

Bushcock:

Coooooooo-eee!

Coooooooo-eee! Coo-Coo-Coo-Coo- Coo-eeeeee!

Birds of all feathers, come! Come out here birds of all voices!

All you birds who fly over the well-sown farms!

All you who love your barley,

All you who know your seeds

All you fast-flyers whose call is light and soft,

All you who love to fly over the soft clumps of soil

Again and again and sing this song with delight:

Coooooooo-eee! Coo-Coo-Coo-Coo- Coo-eeeeee!

Coooooooo-eee! Coo-Coo-Coo-Coo- Coo-eeeeee!

Come, all of you whose feeding grounds are

Gardens of Ivy. Birds whose morsels are the bush olives

And

The strawberry of the hilly shrub

Come, come, come now all of you, all at once!

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And

All of you, too, my friends, who chase the stinging

Mozzies

Of the billabongs and gobble them all up
And all you, my friends, who live in the cool waters
Of the blessed valley of Marathon
And you! Yes you! The bird with the bright and pretty feathers
Such colours!

Come, you, partridge of the lake, Come!

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And all you, my friends, who share the air above the frothy seas with the halcyon;
Birds of the seas! Birds of the long necks!
Come here and learn from me the latest news!
A man is here! He's just arrived!
An old man but a man with a very sharp wit, one who has new ideas, one who does new sorts of things!
Bushcock jumps behind the hill and disappears.

Everyone on the stage is shocked by Bushcock's flight. They look around for him and for all the birds he was calling. Dinkum is staring at the sky with his mouth wide open. As each bird appears on the stage, he goes and sits around the hill and waits. They are all armed variously. Spears, shields, helmets in their hands etc. The dominant feature of their presence is the brightness of their feathers and their bellicosity. It must not be forgotten also that the male birds among them should have the red leather phallus strapped around their waist.

Trusty:

Can you see any birds?

Dinkum:

Nah... Ouch, my neck! All this gawking... right around the whole sky and... nah! Nothing!

Trusty:

Looks like the Bushcock did what the chicken cock does all day long: runs off into his coop and cock-a-doodle-cocks for nothing! For no reason at all!

Bushcock emerges suddenly from behind them. He calls out "Boo!" which frightens the four men.

Bushcock:

Cooooooooo-eee!

Cooooooooo-eee! Coo-Coo-Coo-Coo- Coo-eeeeee!

A bright red, big-breasted Flamingo walks in as would a modern fashion model walk on a cat walk.

Dinkum:

Woohooooo! look at this little chick heading our way!

Trusty:

Oh, yeah! By Zeus, that's a real bird, all right but I wonder what it could be... do you think it's a peacock, maybe?

270

Dinkum:

Bushcock, our host, here will answer that question. *To Bushcock*

What sort of bird is that, Bushcock?

Bushcock: Sighs lustfully.

Ah, that's a very unusual bird, that one. Very rare. Very rare indeed!

It's not one of those birds common to the human eye, that one. That's a bird of the wet beds, I mean wet lands!

Dinkum: Looks at Bushcock, receives his vibes and concurs. Sighs likewise.

Ah, and what a bright red colour her... feathers are! Like fire! Very bright, indeed!

Bushcock:

Of course, that's why she's called a "flaming go!"

The Persian Cock appears, also showing off his plumage and his extra long, extra red phallus. His comb is also tall and stands stiffly erect. He is in full armour but as he enters he sees the Flamingo, throws his armour off and, with a sudden movement, grabs her, drags her to the hill and ravages her.

Dinkum:

Hey... Look at that, Pissy!

Trusty:

What?

Dinkum:

Up there! Another bird! Hahahaha!

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Trusty:

Yep... And what strange... colours he has too! To Bushcock

Hey... who's this strange bird up there, who likes his climbing and acts like a... musical oracle?

Bushcock:

The name of that bird there is Persian Cock.

Dinkum:

Persian Cock, ey? Persian Cock! Good Herakles! How on earth did he manage to get here without a camel?

Another bird, a second Bushcock, appears on top of the hill. His phallus is tiny and obeisant to gravity. He looks much like the main Bushcock. His bellicosity looks ludicrous, considering his diminutive stature and the direction of his phallus. He goes and stands guard next to the mating birds as if to protect them.

Trusty:

Here's another one! Already grabbed a spot for himself on the hill!

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Dinkum:

Good Herakles! What a sad beast! Aren't you the only Bushcock around here? Who is this bird that looks exactly like you?

Bushcock:

Ah, that's my little grandson. Son of my son Philocles. You know how we name our kids: Hipponicus, son of Callias; Callias, son of Hipponicus and so on and on, for many generations.

Trusty:

So, that little bird over there is Callias, hey?

To Dinkum

He sure lost a lot of... his feathers, hasn't he?

Bushcock:

Yeah! Sad case this one. Five generations of wealth all plucked out of him by the sycophants and the pretty girls! Pluck, pluck, pluck! Nothing left now, almost all gone. Five generations of good sturdy stuff!

Garbage Guts appears also in colourful plumage, a big crest and in full armour. His head is down and pecks at the ground, looking for food

Dinkum:

By Poseidon! Look at the colours this bird is painted with! What do you call this one?

Bushcock:

Oh, him! That's Garbage Guts! Eats everything. Constantly!

Trusty:

So there's another garbage guts apart from our own slob Cleonymus?

Garbage Guts pecks all around the stage until he eventually gets to the top of the hill and pecks the Persian Cock's raised bum.

Dinkum:

Ha! If that were our own Cleonymus he'd have thrown his crest away ages ago.

Mimics the fat, notoriously gay, Cleonymus on the battlefield as he's running away from the battlefield and throwing his shield away.

"Oh, please, please don't catch me! Don't take me, take my shield instead!"

Trusty: *Looks all around him and notices the bright and exaggerated crests. To Bushcock:*

Hey, Bushcock? What's with all the huge crests? Are they about to give us a full armour parade?

Bushcock:

No, not at all, my friends. You know how the Carians have invented the crest on their helmet? And that they live on mountaintops and on the crests of hills? That's where these birds got the idea from. Because they, too live on the crests of hills.

Suddenly a whole lot of birds appear noisily from everywhere. From both wings of the stage and, if possible also from the fly and from within the auditorium. The four men are startled by all this commotion. The birds whiz around the humans angrily, wings flapping furiously and glare at them belligerently. The slaves drop their pots and pans and hide behind Dinkum.; while he, in turn, hides behind Trusty who, in turn, hides behind Bushcock.

Trusty: *To Dinkum:*

By Poseidon! Will you look at that! A full catastrophe of birds! Yikes! They're everywhere! Ooooo!

Good Lord Poseidon, help me!

Dinkum:

Good Lord Apollo, help me! Clouds and clouds of them! Oi, oi,oi,oi,oi! Oh my, my, my, my, my, my!

Where are they all coming from? There are so many of them!

The two slaves now run off to hide behind the hill

Trusty:

That's a Bushtucker Bird, that one there.

Dinkum:*A goose goes past them and acts stupidly.*

And that one there must be a Goose, by Zeus!

Trusty:

...and that's a duck... of sorts

Dinkum:

...and a halcyon...

Trusty:

Halcyon ey? And what's behind the halcyon?

Dinkum:

That's a Bush Barber!

Trusty:

You don't mean to say that that bird there can give you a haircut?

Dinkum:

I wonder if he's any better than our own barber, Sporgilus! Ah! And there's a Cockeyed owl!

Trusty:

Now who would have brought an owl to Athens? The place is dense with them!

Dinkum:*Spins around as he notices all the different birds. The birds, where possible, make noises reflecting their names and Dinkum points at them as they make that noise. The various couples, like the Redtit and Bluetit, the Love Birds and the Red throat and Deep throat almost immediately after they find their perch, begin to "make love."*

Laughing turtle dove. Gum Cock. Shrub Lark. Grass Bird. Boobook Owl. Redneck. Redtit, Bluetit. Rufous Whistler. Cockatoo. Mudnester Cock. Red throat. Deep throat. Guzzler. Fig Bird. Love Bird(male). Love Bird (female). Gang-Gang Cockatoo. Riflebird. Green Catbird.

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Trusty:

Oh, me, oh my! Ohhhhhh my, my, my, my, my, my, my, my, my! Look at all them birds! Oh, Zeusy, Zeusy, Zeusy! Look at all the little black birds, screeching and spinning about... I think they're trying to frighten us! Look at how wide they open their beaks... and they're staring at us!

Dinkum:

Yeah, that's what I think, too! They're definitely staring at us!

Gum Cock:*Thunderously but with a stutter*

Who-who-who-who called me? Wwwwwhere is he pppp-perched?

Bushcock:

Here I am, Gum Cock and so happy to be among friends!

Gum Cock:

Ssssss so hhhat words do you have tttttto say to your fffffffriends?

Bushcock:

Words that are good for us all! Words that will benefit us with obtaining security, with obtaining our Birds' Rights and with becoming a happier community!

A couple of men came to visit me, men who have a very subtle mind.

Gang-gang Cockatoo:*Highly concerned jumps in front.*

Where? How? What are you on about?

320

Bushcock:

I'm on about this, Gang-gang Cockatoo: Two old men have arrived here with the seed of a great idea for us!

Gum Cock:

Oh, dddddddear, dddddddear me! You've mmm-made the bbbb-biggest blue I've ever ssss-seen in my whole llll-life!

Bushcock:

Hang on, hang on, Gum Cock! Don't be such a chook!

The sound of an outraged chicken.

Gum Cock:

Wwwwwwhat have you done to us?

Bushcock:

What have I done to you? I've received here two men who happened to love our society passionately.

Gang-gang Cockatoo: *Thoroughly outraged!*

What a thing to do!

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Bushcock:

Sure and happy to have done it, too, Gang-gang Cockatoo!

Redneck: *From some distance away and can't see the group*

And these men are here, among us now?

Bushcock:

Am I among you, Redneck? Of course they're among us!

Gum Cock: *Disgusted*

Oh, no! Oh, no! Oh no!

Treachery! Defilement!

Redneck: *Coming closer and staring at the men.*

Oh yes! Pollution! Our friend who shared our fields trampled upon our ancient laws! Pollution, I say!

Pollution!

Redtit:

And he broke all our fowl oaths, too!

Bluetit:

He lured us all here and threw us into the hands of this unholy race!

Cockeyed Owl:

They've been fed and nurtured to be our sworn enemies, that lot!

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Gum Cock:

Right! We'll sss-settle matters with Bbb-bushcock later but for now, let's get a bit of jjjj-justice out of these two old men... let's tear them up! Llll-limb to llll-limb!

Bushcock withdraws quietly to his cave from whence he'll emerge later in full armour.

Trusty: Sees Bushcock withdrawing

Oh, no! Oh, Zeusy, Zeusy, Zeusy! Dear Zeusy! We're dead meat now, that's for sure!

Dinkum:

Damn you Pissy! What a mess! And it's all your fault! Why the hell did you take me out from back there and bring me over here – to this place?

340

Trusty:

Because I needed company.

Dinkum:

Company? Company? More like you needed to make me drown in my own tears!

Trusty:

Don't worry, mate! Once these little friends of ours gouge out your eyes, you won't be able to cry!

Fig Bird:

Right! This means war! Get ready for a fatal attack!

Rifle Bird:

Surround the bastards! Get your wings together and surround them! Make them scream!

Garbage Guts:

Let me at them! My beak is starving!

Guzzler:

There's no mountain shade, no cloud of the high sky nor wave of the churning sea for these two to hide in. I'll get them one way or another!

Gum Cock:

Right-o! Let's not mess about, then! Where's the general? Tell him to bring forward the right wing!

Birds shuffle about accordingly, spears threatening.

Dinkum:

He's moving about in all directions, dragging with him Trusty.

Oh, Zeusy, Zeusy, Zeusy! Oh me, oh my! Can dead meat hide... before it's dead?

Trusty:

Oi! Can't you stay put?

Dinkum:

Pissy, they're going to tear us to pieces!

Trusty:

In any case, how do you think you can get away from all this?

Dinkum:

Ohhhh, I wish I knew!

Trusty:

Let me tell you! Grab some of those kettles and stand and fight!

Dinkum:

With kettles, Pissy? Are you joking?*The Boobook Owl is moving in for the attack*

Trusty:

I'll keep the Boobook Owl away!

Red Throat, Deep Throat, Red Tit and Blue Tit are also moving in. They have big talons.

Dinkum:

Oh, Zeusy, Zeusy, Zeusy! Look at those sharp talons heading towards us! And there! There! Look!

Red Throat and Deep Throat! Red Tit, Blue Tit! What are we going to do?

Trusty:

Use your skewer, man! Dig it into them!

360

Dinkum:

And our eyes?

Trusty:

Grab a saucer, or a dunny bowl and cover them!

Dinkum:*He does so.*

What a smart boy you are, Pissy! What stunning military invention! What a strategist! You out-strategise even our greatest strategist, Nicias, who gave us the genocide of Melos!

Gum Cock:To the birds

Go, go, go, go! Ddd-dig your beak into them! Rrr-run, ddd-drag them, ttt-tear at them, smash them!

Knock down that kkk-kettle there first! Move, move, move, mmmmm!

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Bushcock:Rushes out of the cave and, in full armour and with his body guards, intervenes angrily. To

Gum Cock

Oi! You mongrel of a bird! You ugly terror of a bird! What the hell are you trying do? Why do you want to mutilate –kill even!- two men who've done nothing to you and who are my wife's relatives and who are from the same tribe as me?

Gum Cock:

You mean we should tttt-treat them more leniently than we ttt-treat www-wolves? What enemies are www-worse than these two are there to take revenge on?

Bushcock:

And what if, in fact, they're enemies only by nature but really friends by heart and mind? And what if, by making friends with them you may learn something which is useful to you?

Bush Tucker Bird:

How could these two ever teach us anything or advise us on anything? They were enemies since the days of our grand dads!

375

Bushcock:

Because, Bush Tucker Bird, wise men learn a great many things from their enemies.

Such as circumspection. You see, circumspection is a marvellous thing! It can save you from all your problems. Circumspection! Now, that's a lesson you can't learn from a friend. Circumspection and respect! You learn that from your enemies. It's the first lesson you learn from them! Friends don't teach you how to build tall walls and splendid warships. Enemies do. And these high walls and splendid warships keep your kids and household and property safe. That's a lesson you learn from enemies, not friends!

The birds gather together to confer. The Laughing Turtle Dove laughs.

Laughing Turtle Dove:*Laughingly to Bushcock*

Well then! I, being the Laughing Turtle Dove and my friends here have decided to hear these two out. See what they've got to say. Yes, a wise man can learn something useful even from his enemies.

Trusty:*To Dinkum*

I think their anger has died down a bit, mate. Retreat a few steps.

Bushcock:*To the Birds*

It's also the just thing to do... Oh, and, by the way, you owe me one!

Love Bird: *Lovingly, coquettishly.*

Wellll, we've never said no to any of your previous plans, Bushy, darling!

Dinkum:

Ah, now they're behaving more... much more... peace like! More... loveable. Tranquillity at last!

Trusty:

By Zeus, they are, too! Lower your kettle then.*Dinkum obeys*

And both bowls

Dinkum does so.

But let's hold on to these spears, I mean skewers so that we'll still be armed and at the ready. Keep looking closely at the edge of that bowl, too. We don't want to lose it, and we can't run away.

Dinkum:*Stoically*

Pissy? Tell me, please! If they slaughter us, where on earth are we going to be buried?

395

Trusty:

Birdsville, at Potter's Acre. They'll accept us there. We'll get a State funeral, too because we'll tell the generals that we died fighting there, at Birdsville.

Gum Cock:*At all the birds who have broken ranks.*

Right oh, you lot! Ggg-get back into line!

The birds obey

Now, ccc-curb your enthusiasm and your kkkk-anger and ddd-behave like real ppp-soldiers! Be real, true ddd-blue diggers, one and all of you!

Now let's sss-see what these men are all about. Who they are and where they've ccc-come from. And what for!

Hey, you! Chu,chu chu chu chu-Bushcock! Over here!

Bushcock.

Yes Gum Cock?

Gum Cock:

Tell us about these two. Wwwwwhere are they from?

The two slaves emerge from their hiding place.

Bushcock:

These two? They're just two men who came over from wise old Greece.

410

Gum Cock:

And by what dddd-Fate they have made the journey over here to our ddd-Fowl City?

Bushcock:

They've been enamoured by your way of life. They want to live with you – be with you for ever!

Gum Cock:

Is that right? And www-what sss-sort of stories has he spun you?

Bushcock:

Oh, incredible stuff. Totally beyond belief!

Redneck:

Oh, yea? And what does he think he's going to get by staying with us? If he thinks we're going to fight his enemy or help his friend...

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Bushcock:

What he says, Redneck, is that you'll end up with an enormous wealth. A wealth you can neither believe nor utter words about! He has convinced me that you can have the whole world: what's here, what's there, what's everywhere!

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Boobook Owl

He's not crazy by any chance, is he?

Bushcock:

Oh no, Boobook owl! Absolutely not! Words can't describe just how sane this man is!

Mudnester Cock:

And so... he's got a brain in his head?

Bushcock:

Brain? He's the shrewdest sneak there is, Mudnester Cock! Subtle and refined! And a most experienced bum!

Gang-gang Cockatoo:*Flutters his wings with excitement*

Well, come on then! Come on then! Let him speak! Let him speak! The more I listen to you the more my wings want to fly!

Bushcock:

Right away, Gang-gang Cockatoo!

To his body guards.

Well then! You two! Take my armour and hang it on the hook in the kitchen... near the fireplace, for good luck!

To Trusty

And you! You go ahead and tell these fine feathered friends of mine the reason why I called them all here!

Trusty:

Oh no! Hang on a minute! Not so easy! First we've got to come to a deal. Same deal as the knife maker and his wife back in Athens.

Everyone looks puzzled

The knife maker was short and his wife was tall –too tall for him to have a comfortable fuck so every time they did have one, the knife maker got into trouble. His wife kept hurting his balls or he was poking her at the wrong end, or something. So they've written up this large, tight, binding agreement to cover all these various unwanted possibilities! That's the sort of binding agreement I want from you lot. Nothing below the belt! No ball tearing, no ripping out my...

Gum Cock:*Shocked*

You ddd-don't mean to say...

Trusty:

No, I don't mean to say that at all! I mean to say, no ripping out my eyeballs!

Gum Cock:

Oh! We ddd-agree!

Trusty:

Swear it!

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Gum Cock:*Indicates the audience*

I'll sss-swear this for you: That this cucucucu-comedy will win the fff-first ffff-prize by the votes of every sssss-judge and every jjjjj-spectator!

Trusty:

Right! So be it!

Gum Cock:

...Bbbbut if I do fffff-break my oath we should still win by one fffff-vote!

Bushcock:*To the rest of the birds*

Right! Now, attention, please! All the brave soldiers among you, take your arms and go home. If there's any need for a further Tour of Duty, it'll be noted on your notice boards.

451

Gang-gang Cockatoo:*To Trusty*

Man was born to be forever treacherous! Treacherous in every way possible! But talk to us! We've got small brains –bird brains. Perhaps you can see something useful in us, something wondrous, even, which we can't see ourselves because of the dullness of our brain. Talk to us, tell us all about this vision of yours! Because if it happens to be good then it would be good for all of us.

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Bush Tucker Bird:

Yes, go on, tell us! Persuade us! Tell us about this great idea of yours. Don't worry, we won't break our oath!

Trusty:

That's great, great, Bush Tucker Bird! I've got the dough of a wonderful speech all ready to go and there's an orgy going on in my heart to say it to you and turn it into real juicy little bread rolls for you!

To Bluey

Boy! Bring me a garland!

To Muscles

And you, bring me some water to wash my hands with.

Both slaves obey.

Hurry!

Dinkum:

What? Are we getting ourselves ready for dinner, Pissy?

The slaves return and Bluey gives the garland to Dinkum who in turn, places it with care and pride on Trusty' head while Muscles bring the water tub and towel and washes and dries his hands.

Trusty:

No, but by Zeus, I've always had this huge speech in my craw. One which would dive right into the souls of these birds.

Pause as he prepares for the speech to the birds.

I feel extreme sorrow for you birds! Extreme sorrow! Birds, you were kings, once!

Gum Cock:

Us? Ppppp-kings? Pppp-kings of what?

Trusty:

Yes, Gum Cock, kings! Kings of everything: me, him *indicating Dinkum* even Zeus himself!

Everything in existence, Gum Cock! You lot were born even before Cronos and the Titans and even Earth herself!

Gum Cock:

Earth, too?

Trusty:

Absolutely, by Apollo! Absolutely!

470

Gum Cock:

By ppppp-Zeus, I nnnn-never bbb-been told that one!

Trusty:

Because, Gum Cock, you were born ignorant and you've learnt nothing afterwards! Have you bothered to study Aesop? No, that's what I thought! He says that it's undeniable that first among you to appear was...

He's looking for the Shrub Lark in the crowd...

You, yes you! Born before Earth!

Shrub Lark acts surprised and proud.

But then, her father died of bird flu and since there was no earth, he couldn't be buried. Poor Shrub Lark didn't know what to do. Finally, on the fifth day, the poor, desperate woman buried him, her father, in her head!

Dinkum:

So that's how we've got the name for the suburb, Lark's Shrub!

Trusty:

So, then, it must follow that if you birds have begun your existence before even the gods did, shouldn't kingship be yours, too?

Gum Cock:

By A-ppppp-polo, yes!

479

Dinkum:

Well then you should make sure that beak of yours stays very sharp because Zeus isn't going to just hand over his sceptre to some little woodpecker that easily. You'll need sharp beaks for that little war!

Trusty:

So, you see, Gum Cock, in the beginning it wasn't the gods who were the kings and ruled over humans but you lot. There's lots of proof for that. Let me give you one example:

He looks around for the Persian Bird and finds him on top of the hill ravaging another female bird.

That Persian Bird, over there! It was he who was the first king and ruler of the Persians, well before all those Dariuses and the Megabuzes, the big mouths ever were!

The Persian Bird disengages for a minute to pay attention to what is said about him.

That's why he's still called the *Persian Bird*. Due that beginning of his.

486

Dinkum:

So that's why he struts about like the Persian King and is the only bird who can keep his head gear erect!

Trusty:

Not only that but due to that mighty power of his, as soon as he... sings his morning erection, everyone else has to get up too and go off to work. The metal worker, the potter, the skin stretcher, skin puller, skin washer, whore, lyre and shield maker—all get up, still in the dark, put on their shoes and off they go!

Dinkum:

Yeah, tell me about it! Because of that beast there, I, poor suck, had my lovely Phrygian cloak stolen from me. I've been invited to a baby's ten-day celebration you see, you know, that's the day we give babies their name and it was held in the city; so I go there, have my few drinks and went off for a little

snooze. Well, no sooner had I done that and even before the others had finished dinner, this stupid bird begins his crowing! “Up and at it! Up and at it, up and bloody at it!”

Well, I thought it was morning so I set out for home, to Halimus. But no sooner I poke my nose outside the walls of the city and, bang! Some bastard of a thief gongs me on the back with a huge club! I flop down and have a go at yelling for help but the damned thief had already run off with my cloak! Lovely, Phrygian cloak!

Trusty:

And the Kite, the kite was the king and ruler of the Greeks.

Laughing Turtle Dove:

Of the Greeks?

500

Trusty:

Absolutely, Laughing Turtle Dove! In fact, being their king, he showed them the custom of “rolling over” on the ground whenever they see a Kite, because the Kite is the herald of Spring.

Dinkum:

Tell me about it, by Dionysus! In fact I did this “rolling over” thing one Spring, when I saw my first Kite and as I did, I gulped down the obol I was carrying under my tongue, you know, so that the thieves won’t find it. Well, I’d swallowed the damned thing and had to drag home an empty wallet that day!

Trusty:

And as for the Cuckoo bird, he ruled over the whole of Egypt and Phoenicia and no-one there would do any reaping of wheat and barley fields until the cuckoo cuckooed!

Dinkum:

Aha! So that’s why when the heat is too much out there and we all go off naked to do the reaping, we say, “cuckoo! All pricks to the fields!” Hahahaha!

Trusty:

And the authority of these birds was so mighty that whoever was the human king in a Greek city, like, say some Agamemnon or a Menelaos, his sceptre would have a bird perched on top of it and that way it would share whatever was presented to that king.

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Dinkum:

Well, look at that! I didn’t know that either. It always bothered me this. When say, Priam came out on the stage of some play, the bird he’s be holding would be looking directly at Lysicrates, the great corrupt judge of plays, to strike a bribery deal with him.

Trusty:

And the most blatant proof of all of this is that, Zeus, the current king of the gods has an eagle stuck on his head, his daughter, Athena, has an owl on hers, and Apollo, being a servant, carries around a hawk.

Gum Cock:

Yes, by Dddd-demetre, that’s rrr-right. But why? Ahhhh-hat’s the ppppp-point?

Trusty:

The ppp-point?

Corrects himself

The point, Gum Cock? The point is that when some human wants to make a sacrifice and, as we customarily say, “put the offal in the god’s hands” these birds themselves can snatch them even before Zeus can! The other thing is, that in the olden days, no human swore an oath by a god. They all swore by some bird or other. Even today, we have Lampon, the prophet, and profiteer by the way, swears by a goose, whenever he wants to trick somebody. That’s how important and sacred everyone thought of you birds in the olden days. These days, though, they treat you like puppets, idiots and imbeciles.

They even chase you around with rocks, like they do to madmen.

Even in the holy temples there are bird catchers, with their nooses and nets and snares and twigs and meshes and lures in traps, all set up and ready to grab you and sell you by the basket full! And when they do, what happens to you? The buyer starts poking you here and there, feeling your breasts and your legs your inner thighs as well as your bum.

Sounds of sexual outrage from various birds

And if they do decide you’re good enough for their barbie, they buy you and instead of just roasting you on it, they pour all over you a whole lot of oil and vinegar and aromatic herbs and spices and then grate a whole lot of cheese and cover you with it.

More sounds of outrage

Then, if that’s not enough, they go and make another sauce, sweet and greasy and pour it hot on you while you’re hot yourselves on the spit! As if you’re carcasses, abandoned on the field to stink.

Gum Cock:

What pppppdreadful, what ppppphorrible words you've dddd brought us, human!

540

Laughing Turtle Dove:

Laughs but chokes her laughter with tears.

It made me cry at my fathers' evilness!

Cockeyed owl:

They've destroyed all those wonderful things their fathers left them! Thank god or goodness that you're here to save us!

Bush Tucker Bird:

I beg you, take over and rule us and our chicks.

Redneck:

That's right! And now that you're here, at least teach us what we've got to do. We must regain our authority as rulers at all costs! Otherwise our life is worth nothing!

550

Trusty:

Fine, Redneck. In that case, lesson number one is this: Let there be a city for birds only. Build a wall which will enclose it and which will enclose the whole space around it and in it. Make that wall out of real hard-baked bricks, like that wall in Babylon.

Gang-gang cockatoo:

By the great birds, Kevrione and Porfyron! What a mighty city that will be!

Trusty:

Get that city built and then demand that Zeus gives you back your authority as rulers, Gang-Gang! If he refuses and if he's unwilling to hand over to you his royal authority at once then declare a holy war against him and tell the gods that they're not to pass through your territory ever again with erect pricks on their way to fuck all those Alcmeneses and Alopeses and Semeleses as they used to do before. And, if they refuse and try to pass through, grab their dicks and put a seal on them so that they can't fuck anyone!

Then, I think you should send a herald to the humans below. Send a bird to them who will tell them that henceforth, you're the rulers and all sacrifices to the gods should be preceded by a sacrifice to a bird, the bird most appropriate to that god.

If, for example, someone wants to make a sacrifice for Afrodite, then first he should sacrifice nuts to Gang-gang Cockatoo here. If he wants to sacrifice a sheep to Poseidon, say, then he should first make an offering of wheat to the Guzzler there. For Herakles, he should make offerings of honey balls to the Flamingo and for Zeus for whom he'd be sacrificing a ram, let him first offer to the king of birds, the Big Nob Gum Cock here, who should first, before Zeus, receive the sacrifice of a slaughtered gnat with all genitals intact.

570

Dinkum:

Lovely! A slaughtered gnat for Big Nob Gum Cock! All genitals intact! Hahahaha! Zeus, old boy, thunder your heart out!

Gum Cock:

Bbbbut how are the hhhhumans going to ddbbelieve we're gods and not Gum Cocks? We fffffly around and ffffflap our wwwwings up and down!

Trusty:

That's bullshit, by Zeus! What about Hermes? He's got wings on him and he's a god and there are many other gods who've got wings. Victory, for example. She flies around with wings of gold and – what about Eros, by Zeus? And what did Homer say about Iris? “She's like a trembling dove!”

Dinkum:

Yeah, but won't Zeus make a whole lot of thunder and hurl at us his winged lighting bolt?

Gum Cock:

But what if out of their ignorance the humans treat us like a pack of nobodies whereas those on Olympus as real gods?

Trusty:

Well, then a whole cloud of you sparrows should get up and charge at their fields, eat all their seed and then let's see how Demetre manages to distribute enough grain to them!

581

Dinkum:

She won't want to do that, by Zeus! She'll behave just like our politicians: she'll use all sorts of excuses to back flip on her promises.

Trusty:

Then, just to show them what you can do, let all the magpies fly down and peck out the eyes of all the sheep and the oxen who are yoked to till the land. This will give Apollo the Healer something to do to earn his fee!

Dinkum:

Hang on! Wait at least until I sell my pair of oxen!

Trusty: Indicating various birds

But, let the humans treat you, say, as their Zeus, or you as their Earth, or you as their Cronus and you as their Poseidon, then they'll be able to share in all sorts of benefits.

Gum Cock:

Wwwwat sort of ggggood ddddbenefits are we ttttalking about?

Trusty:

Well, firstly, Gum Cock, they'll be free of the locusts who eat their vine buds because a whole army of Boobook Owls and Butcher Birds will charge down and gobble them all up in no time. Grind them all to a pulp. Then the mozzies and the blowflies will not be chomping on their fig trees any more because one single flight of Garbage Guts Birds will have them eradicated in no time!

Gang-Gang Cockatoo:

But I know the humans. They'd want money, riches! That's where their passions lie.

What will we do about that?

Trusty:

Easy, Gang-gang Cockatoo! When they do their auguries, the prophets will advise them through the birds, where the most profitable metal mines are and which voyages to take so that no ships and shipowners will be lost at sea.

595

Bush Tucker Bird:

Won't be lost? What do you mean?

Trusty:

What I mean, Bush Tucker Bird is that before anyone leaves his harbour, he'll talk to his seer about it. Well, the birds will be able to whisper in that seer's ears and inform him whether or not to leave now because there's profit in store or to hang on a while because there's heavy, wintry weather ahead!

Dinkum:

Right! That's it then! I'm buying a ship and sailing off for profits. I'm not around with you lot!

Trusty:

As well, all those treasures which your forefathers buried in strange lands, you birds will be able to reveal to the humans because you know those places. In fact you hear it all the time, "Only a bird knows where I've hidden my treasure!"

603

Dinkum:

All right, then! I'm selling the ship and getting myself a shovel. I'm off to dig for treasure pots.

Shrub Lark:

And health? How do we give them health?

Trusty:

What do you mean, Shrub Lark? Isn't being happy also being healthy? You all know the saying: men who work only to be wealthy will never be healthy!

Bushcock:

And what about old age? That's the privilege of the Olympian gods. Or do you expect these humans to reach the ripe old age of toddlers?

Trusty:

These humans, Bushcock will have another three hundred years added to their age!

Gum Cock:

Wwwwwhere ffff from?

Trusty:

From themselves, Gum Cock, from themselves! Haven't you read your Hesiod? He said, "The life of man is five times that of the chattering Galah!"

610

Dinkum:

Damn! These birds would be better kings for us than Zeus, by Zeus!

Trusty:

But of course they would. See, we wouldn't have to build these huge marble temples that we build for the gods; or gild every one of their gates with gold because these lovely birds will build their homes in

the cool shrub and among the grasses and the more religious among them will have the olive tree as their temple. So, we won't have to be going off to Delphi all the time, or to Ammon, in the Siwa oasis in Lydia for prayer or sacrifices. What we'll be doing, instead, is to stand among the wild strawberries and wild olive trees, stretch out our hands full of barley and wheat and pray to the birds to give us a share of their blessings –and we'll get these blessing straight away for the low price of a bit of grain.

Gum Cock:

Oh, my ffff-friend! And I thought you were my ddd-enemy old man!

Shrub Lark:

What a great idea! How could I ever ignore it?

629

Gang-gang Cockatoo:

Your words have given me strength and so, I am making this oath and threat:

If you fight the gods with us, join your heart to ours, bring us your useful words, come to us with one heart true and honest and empty of tricks, I swear, the gods will not enjoy the sceptre they have stolen from us for much longer!

Gum Cock:

Ssss-so! Www-where there is a need fff-for pppppp-muscle, we'll come running to do our duty and www-where there's a need fff-for dddd-brain, you'll ttt-take over!

Trusty:

No time for idle sleep, then, by Zeus! Nor is there any time to speak of victories which may happen tomorrow, like our general Nicias did and brought us the unmitigated Sicilian disaster! No, we need to act and act fast!

641

Bushcock:

Before we do though, you two come into my nest and let's sit down on my little sticks and straw and you can tell us your names.

Trusty:

Ah, nothing to it! Mine is Trusty:

Bushcock:

And his?

Trusty:

That's Dinkum, from the district Krio.

645

Bushcock:

Welcome to both of you.

Trusty:

Welcome accepted.

Bushcock:*Pointing to the shrub*

Entrance is this way.

Trusty:

Let's go in, mate. Bushcock, lead the way!

Bushcock:

Come!

Bushcock goes first but after a few steps, Trusty: stops him.

Trusty:

Woa! Damn! Turn back for a second, Bushy. Slap your oars back this way for a minute. Tell me, my mate and I are without wings whereas all of you lot have them. How can we possibly be your partners if you can fly but we can't?

Bushcock:

No probs!

Trusty:

But haven't you heard Aesop's famous story about how the eagle and the fox make bad mates?

654

Bushcock:

Have no fear, Bushcock's here! There's a little root which, if you just chew a bit of it, you'll end up with wings.

Trusty:

In that case, we're in.*To the slaves*

Come on then, Bluey and Muscles, pick up the pots and pans!

The five men are heading towards the tree.

Gum Cock: To Bush Cock

Pppp-psssss! Hey, Bushy! Tell me!

Bushcock:

Yes, Gummy? What is it?

Gum Cock:

By all means, take these two inside and feed them well but that lovely, mellifluous nightingale of yours, the one that sings so well –just like the muses- bring her down here from wherever she is so that we can play with her for a bit, ey?

Bushcock looks at Trusty for approval

Trusty:

Suuuuure, go ahead! Do as they wish, bring the little chick out here, out of the bull grass!

Dinkum:

Of course, by the gods! Bring her out here we want to take a look at that sweet nightingale, as well!

Bushcock:

Oh, well, if that's what you two want, then I must obey.

He raises his voice and calls towards the wings of Stage Left.

Coooo-eeeeee! Coooo-eeeeee! Coooo-eeeeee!

Coooo-eeeeee! Come outside darling and present yourself to our guests!

Coooo-eeeeee! Coooo-eeeeee! Coooo-eeeeee!

Enter Procne from Stage Right. She's naked, apart from nightingale's mask and wings. Golden ear rings and necklace. Gold also on the mask and wings, waist band etc.

Trusty:

By Zeus! Wwwwwhat a stunning looking chick! So creamy, so fair!

Dinkum:

Carefully examining the bird.

Poh! You know what I'd loooooove to do? I'd just love to... spread those drumsticks of hers apart!

Trusty:

And look at all that gold! Just like a virgin on a festival.

Dinkum: *Moves towards her*

Mmmm! Yummmmm! Mmmm! Yummmmm! I... I think I'd like to give her a kiss!

Trusty: *Pulls Dinkum back*

Look, you ding bat! She's got a beak. And it looks like a couple of huge skewers!

Dinkum:

She does, too, by Zeus! All right, I'll just treat her head like an egg then. Peel that shell off it and kiss her. Yummmmm!

Bushcock:

Come, friends, let's go now!

675

Trusty:

Right-oh! Well, and good luck to us then!

All the men and Bushcock enter the shrub.

INTERMEZZO

During which a wall is being built behind the hill and completed by the time Procne leaves the stage.

The Birds are making a circle around the naked nightingale, admiring her, fondling her, pawing her gently, lustily.

676

Gum Cock:

Oh, my sweet, sweet, sweet blond nightingale! *He notices that he no longer stutters and is amazed*

Oh, sweetest of all birds! *He notices again his ease of speech. Others also notice in equal amazement.*

My dearest of friends, mate of my hymns and songs!

You came, sweet nightingale to bring us the delight of your voice!

Red Tit:

Darling nightingale. Your spring airs sigh through the gentle sounds of the flute!

Begin our song!

While the other birds are "playing" with Procne, each of the following birds turns to address the audience.

685

Bushtucker Bird:

Right then! You... you... humans! Shadowy little creatures, feeble, like the generations of leaves, barely and mostly suffering and mostly dreaming, listen to us as we speak.

We are the immortals,
We are the ethereal,
We are the ever-youthful and our knowledge is eternal.

Boobook Owl:

Listen to us and you'll hear the true facts of all things sacred about the great sky.

Shrub Lark:

And once you've learnt from us all about the birth of all the gods and of all the birds and of rivers like Erebus and Chaos. You can go and tell our famous *Sarcasticall* philosopher Prodicus, who yaps on and on non-stop about such matters, to lie down and cry!

Tell him to shut up!

Blue Tit:

In the beginning there was Chaos and Night and Black Erebus and Wide Tartarus but no Earth or Air or Sky.

And straightaway, deep in the vast folds of Erebus the black-winged Night delivered an egg, full of wind -wind, I said, not seed!

696

Red Tit:

And so the seasons rolled and Eros was born nonetheless.

Eros, whose wings sparkle with gold on his back and he looks like a spinning whirlwind.

Eros, beloved by all and by Chaos of the fair wings with whom he slept at night in the wide folds of Tartarus.

Cockatoo:

And that's how our race was hatched and was brought up to the light of day.

Guzzler:

There was no race of gods then. Not before Eros came out and joined all things. And so, things that were not acquainted before were united and the Sky was born and so did the Sea and the Earth and all these races of eternal and the blessed gods.

Fig Bird:

So, you see? It's us who are older than all the gods and we were born far earlier and it's obvious, too that Eros is our father because we're always flying about and we live together with lovers whose hearts are filled with fluttery!

Eros!

Gum Cock:

And then there are those beautiful men who thought they'd escape love's joy because they've reached the edge of their bloom but through a gift -say a quail, or a rooster or a goose or a Persian Bird, and the power we all have, some lover of theirs managed to give them the fuck they thought had eluded them for ever!

Cockatoo:

It's from us and only us, yes us birds!

You mortals will receive all the blessings.

Spring, Winter, Summer or Autumn are all declared by us!

When the crane croaks and flies off to Lydia it's time for you folk to sow and that's when that crane tells the sailor to hang up his rudder and go to sleep.

And he tells your thief (Orestes by name) to make a cloak of his own so he won't get cold and secretly steal yours.

Gang-gang Cockatoo:

Then the eagle comes out and declares another season and tells you when it's time to shear the Summer wool off your sheep's back.

Then the swallow appears and tells everyone when exactly to sell that winter cloak and when to buy a lighter one.

Red Tit:

We are your Ammon and Delphi, your Dodona and your Phoebus Apollo because you always come to consult us, yes us, the birds, whenever you want to start off on anything -like a business or a job or a man's marriage.

Whatever is seen by means of prophecy you call it a bird.

Every chance meeting, every rumour, every sneeze, every slave you see, every donkey -for you, they are all ominous signs. "Go for the birds," you say!

Blue Tit:

So, then, who's your Apollo the prophet? Us! And therefore, if you treat us as gods you'll also gain everything the prophets give you: the muses, the breezes, the seasons, the Winter, the Summer -both

soft as well as scorching; and we won't be running off to hide into the clouds, full of arrogance and smugness like Zeus does but we'll always be with you and with your children –even your children's children, each of us will deliver joy, life, wealth, peace, health, youth, laughter, parties and... bird's milk!

So many blessing, so much wealth will probably render you exhausted!

736

Gum Cock:*To Procne*

Muse of the valley

Titititititititoooooooooooooh!

Muse with the splendid call

We are with youuuuuu,

Muse, both on the mountain peaks and in the deep valleys!

Titititititititoooooooooooooh!

Perched in the dense branches of the ash

Titititititititoooooooooooooh!

I sing sweet melodies for Pan through my honey coloured throat

Mudnester Cock:*Also to Procne*

And stern dance rhythms for Cybele the mountain, mother of us all.

Titititititititoooooooooooooh!

There, too, Phrynicus would always harvest, the fruit of the ambrosiac songs, singing his honey-sweet song.

Titititititititoooooooooooooh!

Gang-gang Cockatoo: *To the audience*

If any you folks wants to knit the remainder of life into our pleasant fabric come to us because here, we hold dear the things which your laws hold as shameful.

Do your laws hold shameful to hit your father? Well up here it's a pleasant thing for the son to run up to his father after smacking him on the head and tell him, "you wanna fight, ha? You wanna fight? Go on then, you bastard! Grab your spur and come on! Come on, daddy!"

760

Gum Cock:

And if any of you is branded and is trying to escape his city, well when he gets up here we'll all call him Speckled Lark! Or say you were a Phrygian – barbarian to the core, like our Spitharus! Well, up there in the wide sky you'd be a pigeon citizen for sure, as if from our Philemon's very core. Then again, if you're a Carian slave and you fly up to be with us searching for your parents and your grands just like Exikestides, come with us and amongst the ducks and ganders you'll find all your parents and your grands.

And if Trusty' son wants to show our city's gates to the thieves and crooks outside, let him first become a Galah, a little Galah from a big Galah and there's no shame up here to play the great Galah!

769

Fig Bird:*To Procne*

This is how the swans sing:

Titititititititoooooooooooooh!

When they flap their wings to and fro and they sing a song to Apollo with their voice all as one.

Titititititititoooooooooooooh!

Sitting by the banks of Thracian Evros,

Titititititititoooooooooooooh!

Their voices fly through the sky's clouds sending fear through the many races of beasts below and the clear breeze calmed the waves.

Titititititititoooooooooooooh!

Olympus echoed all over and a fear and awe struck their lords and the Muses and Graces of Olympus sung in reply with a cheery song

Titititititititoooooooooooooh!

Galah:*To the audience*

There's nothing sweeter, nothing better, nothing greater than to make wings and fly.

For example, let me say that you're watching some tragic play –a tragedy that made you hungry and very bored. Well, with wings you'd fly out of here, go home had dinner and when you're full you'd fly back here to see us as we were before you left.

And suppose, like our famous bog dropper, Patrocleides, wanted to drop it there, among you, wanted to shit, that is, well, he wouldn't have shat in his cloaks. He would simply have flown off in a hurry, high up in the sky, let off a fart, regain his breath and flown right back among us again.

Then again, if one of you up there is an unscrupulous fucker and suddenly he sees his woman's husband in the seats reserved for the Councillors... what joy! He'd have used his wings to fly over to her, fuck her and flown right back here again!

So, wings, ey? How good is that! Cheap at any price!

And then there's Diefrefis who made wings out of willow sticks and look where that got him! Well, so far, first they made him a commander of his tribe, then a commander of the cavalry. So you see? He started from nothing and now he's a big shot, a real blond cock of a horse!

END OF INTERMEZZO

ACT TWO

Birds move to either side of the stage. Procne leaves Centre Stage is vacant for a short while and the lighting shows up the great wall behind the hill.

Pause.

Enter Trusty, Dinkum, Bluey and Muscles all wearing wings. They examine each other and Trusty bursts out into chuckles with Dinkum, while Bluey with Muscles. The two slaves also show their single sandals which are also fitted with wings.

801

Trusty:

Here we are folks! Hahahahaha! What... what... what a funny sight you are! The funniest I've ever seen, by Zeus!

Dinkum:

And you're laughing at what, may I ask?

Trusty:

I'm laughing at these long quills you're wearing for wings! Hahahahaha! Do you know what you look like, winged like that?

He walks around him for closer inspection

You look like a chook and a wardrobe-and-make-up victim!

Dinkum:

And you, my friend, you look like a Love Bird who had a close shave!

Trusty:

Reminds me of Aeschylus,'s tragedy "The Myrmidons" where he has an eagle shot down by an arrow with eagle feathers attached to it. So the eagle says, "shot down not by others but by own feathers!"

Gum Cock:

So what's next?

Trusty:

First thing is the name. What will we call this city? It should be something magnificent, something delightful. After that, we should make sacrifices to the gods.

Dinkum:

I agree! With you entirely!

Gum Cock:

Let me see. What name should we give our city?

Trusty:

How would you like that great name which the Spartans call their own city, Sparta?

Dinkum:

Holy Herakles! A city like Sparta? There's a rope that has that name, isn't there? That's right, it's called, "esparto twine." Well, even if I had the right slats to build a bed with, I wouldn't be using that rope because of that name! That's how much I hate that city! Grrrr!

Trusty:

Then what? Think of a name!

Gum Cock:*Indicating his environment*

We need a name which would make people thing of all of this: the clouds and the airy spaced, something grandiose!

Everyone stops to think about this.

Trusty:

Well, what about... "Land of the cloudy Gum Cock?"

Everyone ponders on this with a smile of acceptance.

820

Gum Cock:

Yes! Yes! Oh, yes! Oh yes! Absolutely! What a grand name you've found for it Trusty! Land of the cloudy Gum Cock! Yes! It has a good ring to it! I love it!

Dinkum:

Absolutely! Hahahaha! This must be the very Land of the cloudy Gum Cock where all our crooks, like Theogenes and Aeschines have all their wealth! Hahahaha!

Trusty:

Oh no! It's even better than that! This is where the Gods outdid the earthlings in a game of verbosity. This is the very plain of Phlegra!

Cockatoo:

What a bright, fantastic city that will be! So, now which god will we have as its protector? For whom shall we weave the Ceremonial Robe?

Trusty:

Shall we give that role to Athena Polias?

829

Dinkum:

Zeusy, Zeusy, Zeusy No! By the good god Zeus! How on earth can you keep any order in a city which has a woman god in full lethal armour while one of its citizens, Cleisthenes the beardless girlie, sits there doing his knitting?

Gang-gang Cockatoo:

Then, who'll be in charge of the walls around the Acropolis?

Trusty:

A bird! One of our lot. Of the Persian race. The one everyone calls, Ares' Killer Kid.

835

Dinkum:

Yes! My Lord Killer Kid! What a bird! And one perfectly capable of living on the rocks!

Trusty:

Well then, mate, off you go into the deep blue sky and help the birds build the walls. Bring them the gravel, take off your clothes and work the mud well, carry the troughs, fall down from the ladder, put guards on duty, keep the fire burning, run around with the bell and stay there for the night. Then send a herald up to the gods then from there send him to the humans below and then let him come to me here.

845

Dinkum:*Angry*

Sure! While your majesty stays here and yells at me!

Exit Dinkum

Trusty:

Go, darling, go! Otherwise none of what I've just told you will happen! I'll stay here and prepare the sacrifice to the new gods. Now where is the priest? I need to call him to organise the ceremony!

To the slaves

You! And You! Pick up the basket and the pot with the purifying water.

Slaves obey.

Gang-gang Cockatoo:

I wholeheartedly agree and concur and I shall bring grand and wondrous things for the gods: poems and gifts; and for their sake I shall sacrifice a little sheep.

So, let the Pythian voice be heard,

And let the idiot Heris accompany us with his flute.

From within the distance of Stage Left we hear Heris' flute. Badly played, dissonant, comical.

Exit Gang-gang Cockatoo and after a moment re-enters with a Priest and a goat, all dressed up for the sacrifice (Ribbons around its neck, a garland and blood painted on its forehead). It is a tiny, skinny goat with a long beard and two very long horns.

The priest, too, is overdressed with long wreaths flowing from all over him, golden garlands, and a sceptre with cotton buds at the top. Exaggerated make-up, etc.

Trusty:*Yells towards Heris:*

Oi, there! Enough of your lousy noise.

Turns to the rest of the congregation of birds.

Herakles almighty! What a sight that was – and believe you me, I've seen many of them! A vulture with a pipe shoved up his beak! What next!

Right-o, Priest! Do your work. Sacrifice to the new gods!

Priest:

I shall, I shall! bring the boy with the basket here!

He looks into the basket, finds a knife and raises it into the air.

All ye, all ye, pray to the fowl Hestia, to the Raven who guards its hearth

To all the boy- and girl-gods together and alone -

Trusty:

To you, Hawk of Sunium and Lord of the Stork!

Priest:

As well as Swan of Pytho and of Delos, Athena, mother of the Quail, Artemis, mother of the Crow –
Trusty:*To the audience*

See, we've changed their names now. We no longer have Artemis of the Dodo but Artemis of the Crow.

Priest:

Sabazian Pigeon and Great Ostrich Mother of gods and folks

876

Trusty:

Lady Ostrich Cybele, Cleocritus' mummy! What a horny boy that is, ey? Sex up to his eyebrows!

Priest:

To the denizens of this new city, Land of the Cloudy Gum Cock, grant them security. And as for the Chians –

880

Trusty:

Ah, God, the Chians! Let's never forget the bloody Chians!

Priest:

And let us pray for:

The fowl heroes and the children of those heroes

The Turtle Doves and Pelicans

The Peacock and the Scrub Cock

The Wild Goose and the Red Goose

The Redneck and the Blueneck

The Black Tit and the Crying Chick –

Trusty:*Impatient*

Stone the crows, mate!

Sounds of outraged Crow

Enough with all your invitations! Look at the size of this poor animal! How many do you think can feed from it? All these eagles and vultures you're inviting! Can't you see, you bird brain, that just one hawk can tear up this little goat all on its own?

Go on, get out of here! You and your stupid wreaths. I'll slaughter this little beastie myself!

The priest drops the knife back into the basket and exits angrily

Gang-Gang Cockatoo:

So, for you again, we'll come to your service and raise a second prayer, one which shows respect for the gods and one which is sacred and we'll invite the gods – or rather one of them only since, all I can see on this goat is a beard and a couple of long horns.

Bend over and whispers to the goat

Where's your meat, mate?

Trusty:*Raises the knife*

Now, as we do the sacrifice, let us also pray!

Enter Poet. He is shabbily dressed. Also exaggerated make-up. He carries a papyrus from which he reads and a quill with which he writes. His entrance is flamboyant.

904

Poet:

Oh, thou most blessed land! Land of the Cloudy Gum Cock!

Oh, thou Muse! Sing now its song!

Trusty:*Shocked*

Now, where the hell did this little item come from? Who or what are you?

Poet:

"I am the scribe of the mellifluous tongues
and the tireless slave of the nine Muses!"

...to quote Homer!

Trusty:

So much hair and a slave? No slave is allowed to have such a crop!

Poet:

Oh, no! "We are all untiring servants of the nine Muses."

...to quote Homer!

915

Trusty:

No wonder your jacket is so pitiful! And so what brought you all the way up here, untiring servant of the Muses?

Poet:*Pointing at the papyrus*

I'm here because I have written many songs for your Cloudy Gum Cock land. Lovely dithyrambs for the virgins to sing at your festivals... of the style of greedy Simonides.

920

Trusty:*Examines his papyrus and looks surprised*

When did you manage to write all this stuff? When did you start?

Poet:

Ooooooh... a loooong time ago. I've been singing the praises of this city from way back!

Trusty:

But I've only just given the city its name, a minute ago –just like a baby- on its tenth day!

Poet:*Shuffles through his papyri and reads*

“Ah, but like the fleet-footed legs of horses

Run the words of the Muses

Father and builder of Aetna

Sacred name of the Sacred priests

Pray give me the blessings you can

With a nod make a grant.”

...to quote Pindar.

931

Trusty:

Damn! This mongrel is going to pester us for a long time if we don't give him something to send him on his way!

Looks around and sees Muscles

Hey, you! You've got a coat and a cloak. Give the coat to this genius of a poet!

Muscles, angry takes off the coat and hands it to Trusty:

To the poet:

Now take this, you! You're shivering from the cold.

Poet:*Back into his papyri*

“My dearest Muse accepts this gift

Most gladly

But do let your heart learn some

Words by Pindar...”

940

Trusty:

By Zeus! I don't think we'll ever get rid of this man!

Poet:

“From within the nomadic Skythians

Straton runs hither and thither

Possessing nothing from the weaver and

All through Summer and Winter

Shamed he lives without a cloak!”

... got my meaning?

Trusty:

Sure, I got your meaning. You want that little cloak there as well!

To Bluey

Boy, give our genius here your cloak

Bluey refuses

Come on, take it off! The poet needs it!

Bluey takes the cloak off, hands it to Trusty: who, in turn hands it to the poet.

Here you are! Take it and leave now.

Poet:

I'm leaving and when I get back to my city, I'll write this sort of poem for you:

“Rejoice you who sits on a golden throne,

You city, most horrid, most icy

I've visited her snowy valleys once, snowy and well trodden.”

Hooroo, hooroo, hooroo...

Trusty pushed Poet towards the exit. As Poet exits he is repeating the word, "hooroo" (good bye)
Trusty:*To the poet as he leaves*
Yea, yea, sure but by Zeus, you've certainly escaped the colds of this winter, stealing our cape and cloak!

Back to the birds

By Zeus! Now that was a bit of bother I've never expected to get so soon after building our city!

To Bluey

Boy, grab that holy water and do another circle with it.

Quiet everyone!

Takes a hold of the goat's horns and getting ready for the kill.

Voice of seer from Stage left

Seer:

Don't start on that goat!

Trusty:

Who on earth are you?

Enter the seer holding a papyrus and a quill.

Seer:

Me? I'm a seer!

Trusty:

Then piss off out of here!

Seer:

Cursed man! How dare you commit such sacrilege? Sacred things are not to be taken lightly!

Looks into his papyrus.

Now, I see here an oracle written by our great seer Bacis about our great war with the Spartans, which utters words specifically concerning the Land of the Cloudy Gum Cock.

Trusty:

Is that so? Why didn't you tell us about this oracle before I've built this city?

965

Seer:*Pompously*

Religious prohibitions!

Trusty:*Mimicking the seer's Pomposity.*

Well, I better listen to those utterances then!

Seer:

"...but when the wolves will co-habit with the white crows in that place between Corinth and Sikion..."

Trusty:

Corinth? Corinth? Our enemy? What's that evil city got to do with me?

Seer:

It's Bacis' allusion to the air, the space between the two cities.

Back into the papyrus

"...your first sacrifice should be a ram whose fleece is white as snow to Pandora, the goddess who gives gifts and, to the seer who first utters my words give to him new sandals and a cloak."

Trusty:

By Zeus! Does the oracle mention sandals?

Seer:*Offers him the papyrus but pulls it back just before Trusty: has a chance to take a good look.*

Just here, see?

Reads again

"... and they should give him a bottle and upon his hands they should place the ram's offal..."

Trusty:

You mean there's also the giving of offal in there as well?

Seer:*Offers him the papyrus but pulls it back just before Trusty: has a chance to take a good look.*

Just here, see?

Reads again

"...and if, O, god-inspired youth, you accomplish the things I ask of you

You will become an eagle in the clouds. If, however you do not,

You will not become a turtle dove, or a bush cock or a woodpecker."

Trusty:

All that is in there too, I suppose?

980

Seer: *Offers him the papyrus but pulls it back just before Trusty: has a chance to take a good look.*

Here, take the book!

Dinkum:

Gestures at Bluey who digs into the basket and finds a papyrus which he hands to Dinkum. He opens it and before he begins reading,

Strangely enough, your oracle is totally dissimilar to this one which I wrote myself from Apollo – himself:

Pompously angry

“... and when an uninvited impostor arrives and angers the sacrificers

AND desires a share of the offal of the beast, then that impostor you should be beating hard between his ribs!”

Seer:

No way! It says no such thing!

Trusty:

Here’s the book!

Offers him the papyrus but pulls it back just before the seer has a chance to take a good look.

“...and give nothing even to an eagle of the clouds nor to Lampon or to Diopeithes, our great seers!”

Seer:

All that is in there too?

Trusty: *Smacking him around with the papyrus and kicking him.*

Here’s the book for you and here’s the door! Get out of here!

Guides him with beatings towards Stage Left

Seer:

Help! I’m being slaughtered!

Exit Seer.

Trusty: *After him*

Go on, piss off! Go on! Run, you bastard! Take your oracles shove them elsewhere!

Enter Meton, an astronomer and geometer, carrying appropriate instruments and dressed in rather effeminate clothes. (A comment will be made about his boots).

He is walking backwards into the stage measuring the floor with one of his gigantic instruments. His boots are white and have red ribbons attached to them; ribbons which wave about in a comical way.

Suddenly he stops, raises his head and looks around.

Meton:

I have come to you...

Trusty: *To the audience*

Here’s another pain!

To Meton

You have, have you? And you’ve come to us to do what exactly? What grand idea brought you here?

Walks around him in disbelief at his appearance

Where are your pretty boots heading with that idea of yours?

995

Meton: *A little afraid*

I’m here because I want to geometricise the air for you... divide and subdivide the land among you...

Trusty:

By the gods! And who among the mortals are you?

Meton:

Me? You ask ME who I am? I am Meton!

Trusty shows total lack of interest

Meton! I am known throughout Greece and Colonus! Colonus! In Athens! I’ve built a huge clock there!

Trusty:

So... what’s all this stuff you’ve got here?

Meton:

These? These are rulers to measure the air...

Trusty is lost

Because, you see, air, in its entirety is like an oven. Same shape, so I shall put over its top, this curved ruler and by inserting this compass here...

Trusty is further lost

Have you got that?

Trusty:

I've got nothing!

Meton:

Well, then I'll place a straight ruler next to it and measure it and so I'll make a square out of a circle and place a marketplace in its centre where all the roads will be straight... It'll be like a star which, though round, all its rays go off in all directions in straight lines.

Trusty:

This man is as good as Thales! Meton?

Meton:

Yes?

1010

Trusty:

You know, Meton, I like you a lot, so please, listen to me.

Meton turns an ear towards him

Hit the road!

Meton:

But what's the problem?

Dinkum:

We treat the foreigners here just like they do in Sparta: we beat them up, we hassle them and then we throw them out of the city!

Meton:

Is there a revolution going on?

Trusty:

Oh, no, Zeus no!

Meton:

What then?

Trusty:*He is wheeling his arm around with a closed fist, threatening Meton*

There's a unanimous decision taken here, to beat the hell out of all smart-arsed impostors!

Meton:*Takes the hint*

So... I better get out of here, ey?

Moves towards his exit

Trusty:

Absolutely, by Zeus! Though I don't know if you'll manage to do that quickly enough because this beating is getting closer...

Begins to punch him

Meton:*Running off*

Help! He's slaughtering me!

Exit Meton

Trusty:*At his back*

I've warned you, haven't I? Why don't you measure yourself all the way back? Go on! Piss off somewhere else, you mongrel!

Enter Inspector. A public official carrying two urns for votes (votes made out of pebbles)

1021

Inspector:

Where are the consuls?

Trusty:

Now who can this be? Is this Sardanapallus, that corrupt bastard barbarian?

Inspector:*Pompously*

I am an Inspector, sir and I was called by lot to visit the Land of the Cloudy Gum Cock.

Dinkum:

Inspector, are you? And who sent you here?

Inspector:

Some dreadful bill instigated by Peleas.

1025

Trusty:

Well then, could we make an agreement? We give you your payment and you kick no fuss. What do you say?

Inspector:

Of course, by the gods. I am so busy and in such a hurry to get home. I should be in Parliament right now, represent the Persian Pharnaces.

Trusty:*Raises his fist again*

Well, then. Take your pay and run!

Begins beating him

Inspector:

Hey! What was that?

Trusty:

That was the Parliament working for Pharnaces!

Inspector:

I call on witnesses! Witnesses! An Inspector is being attacked!

Inspector runs off

Trusty:

Go on! piss off out of here, Mr Ballot Urns!

What an amazing thing! I haven't done the initiation ceremony yet and they've already sent the inspectors to our fair city!

Enter Law Vendor with a huge scroll of papyrus, sealed with flowing ribbons.

Law Vendor:*Reading pompously*

"...And if any inhabitant of the Land of Cloudy Gum Cock commits any injustice to any Athenian..."

Trusty:

Now what sort of crap do we have here? What's with this huge book?

Law Vendor:

I am a law vendor and I am here to sell you some laws.

Trusty:

Is that right? Like what sort of laws?

Law Vendor:

For example like this one: "The inhabitants of the Land of the Cloudy Gum Cock must use the same measures, weights and laws as those used by the Olophyxians."

Trusty:*Wheels his arm around again ready to beat the Law Vendor up*

And you, my friend, are about to cop the same as did the Smackarouxians!

Law Vendor:

Hey! What's wrong with you?

1045

Trusty:

Why don't you take your laws and piss off out of here ey? Because I'll be showing you some laws of my own you crooked bastard and they won't be to your liking!

Law Vendor runs off. Inspector rushes back in with his ballot urns.

Inspector:

I hereby summon Trusty: to appear in court in the month of April on a charge of hubris and battery.

Trusty:

Are you kidding? What the hell are you still doing here?

Law Vendor rushes back in.

Law Vendor:

"... and if anyone expels officials and does not comply with the law written on the law pillars..."

Trusty:

Bloody hell! Are you still here, too?

Inspector:

I'll destroy you! I will! I'll write you down for a ten-thousand drachmas fine!

Trusty:

And I'll smash both your ballot urns!

Inspector runs off

Law Vendor:

Do you remember all those evenings when you shat at the bottom of the law pillars?

1055

Trusty:*Pinches his nose with disgust*

Phoooooh! Somebody catch the bastard!

Law Vendor runs off. Trusty calls after him

Hey, hang around for a bit, won't you? Hahahaha!

To the slaves

Right-oh men. Let's get out of here as fast as we can! Let's go inside and sacrifice this ram to the gods!

Exit all but the chorus of birds

Gum Cock:

I, who see all and rule all will henceforth receive the sacrifices with reverential prayers.

I am the supervisor over all the Earth and the protector of the flourishing fruit!

By killing the newborn of all those races of beasts who, with hungry mouths descend upon all the peas and their pods which the soil sprouts forth as well as the trees and crop upon which they graze.

And I shall murder those beasts who destroy aromatic gardens with despicable acts.

Whatever crawls, whatever bits with our wings will be destroyed.

1072

Gang-gang Cockatoo:

Well, today you would have heard the proclamation that he who kills the Milesian philosopher and atheist, Diagoras, will receive one talent. So will anyone who kills a dead tyrant. One talent for him also! One whole talent also for him who kills Philocrates the sparrow man and four whole talents if he can bring him before us alive. This reward is given because Philocrates bunches seven finches together at a time and humiliates them by selling them all for an obol. And the thrushes?

Indicates with gestures that Philocrates screws the thrushes.

He puffs them up and displays them for the public in a most undignifying manner.

As for the boobook owls, he digs holes in their beak with their own feathers.

As well, he catches pigeons, keeps them locked up in a cage, ties them to a net and then forces them to act as bait to catch other birds.

Galah:

And that's our proclamation!

Those of you who are in the habit of keeping birds in their gardens we demand that you release them.

Or else, if you don't release them, the birds will catch you and turn you into bait to catch humans!

1088

Redneck:

Oh, how happy is the mob of the feathered birds,

Birds have no need for a heavy cloak in winter.

Birds do not suffer under the summer's long scorching rays.

No, they live inside the leafy embrace of valleys full of blossoms just when all

The scorched cicadas sing their endless mid-day sacred song.

And birds spend their winter

Playing with mountain nymphs inside the deep caverns.

In spring, birds feed on myrtle, their flesh all virginal and white,

And they also feed on the fruits in the gardens of the Graces.

1102

Gum Cock:

There's a need now to say something to the judges about winning this theatrical contest and it's this:

The gifts which we shall give to these judges if they award us the first prize will be far better than those which Priam's son, Paris-Alexander received.

To begin with, those little coins with the owl on them –which all the judges just love to get their hands on- will never leave your purse and, in fact, they'll live in there and they'll make you more little owls, more little coins. As well, you'll be living the life of priests because we'll be building on top of your houses eagle nests. And if you'd happen to want a Cock, we'll respond quickly by placing something holy in your hand. And if you're off to an evening meal will send you on your way with a B.Y.O. gizzard.

HOWEVER! If you do not vote for us, you better wear a tin hat like the statues do, because if you happen to be wearing some fashionable white cloak or anything white, that's when we'll get our own back. All the birds will be shitting all over that white cape of yours!

Enter Trusty, Dinkum and the slaves

1118

Trusty:

The sacrifice went very well my friendly fow! Most auspicious, in fact.

Looks around anxiously

But why haven't we received a messenger to tell us how things are going at the wall constructions?

Ah! Here's one, running and panting as if he were the Olympian Alpheion himself!

Enter First Messenger all puffed out. His wings and face are soiled from a lot of work.

First Messenger:

Woo woo woo woo where is... woo woo woo where is Trusty: the ruler?

Trusty:

Here!

First Messenger:

Woo woo we've finished the wall!

Trusty:

Great stuff!

1125

First Messenger:

It is a most elegant and grandiose piece of work. So great that even if Proxeneidis and Theogenes the brags charge at each other from opposite directions, full speed ahead, with chariots and horses each horse bigger than the Trojan one, they'd still be able to pass each other side by side!

Trusty:

By the great Herakles!

First Messenger:

And its length, its length I've measured its length myself. It's one hundred miles!

Dinkum:

Woa! What a length, by Poseidon! So who did all this building?

First Messenger:

Just the birds. There were no Egyptian stone carriers or masons or builders. The birds built it all by themselves huge and precise. Birds only, jackaroos the lot of them! What a sight! The Cranes, three thousand of them from Lydia, brought the stones for the foundation. The Storks chiselled those stones and every Marsh Lark and other river and billabong bird worked together to bring the water all the way up into the air.

Trusty:

Who did the clay work for them?

First Messenger:

The Herons came with their pans.

Trusty:

How on earth did they put the clay into those pans?

First Messenger:

Ah! That was a most wondrously wise thing to see, my friend! All the ducks came around and used their feet to make mud out of the clay and then use them like shovels to scoop the clay up and toss it into the pans! Quite a sight to watch! What a sight, by Zeus!

Dinkum:

There's nothing that good feet can't accomplish!

First Messenger:

Absolutely, by Zeus! The ducks wore white aprons in front of them and then the Swallows came along and, just as the birds feed their young, the Swallows used trowels to put the clay into the mouths of the ducks!

Trusty:

No need to pay expensive builders this way, is there?

But then, hang on a minute, who knew anything about wood? Who did the woodwork for this wall?

1154

First Messenger:

The carpenters were also birds. Wise Pelecans who used their beak to cut out the gates. You should have heard the noise they made. Just like a shipyard! Now the gates are all in place, complete with their bolts and well guarded, bell ringers go constantly around and there are guards everywhere. At the towers there are signal fires constantly alight. Well, I'm off now to have a bit of a wash. You take care of the rest now.

Exit First Messenger. Trusty and Dinkum look astonished.

Gang-gang Cockatoo:

What's the matter with you two? Are you shocked that the wall has been built so quickly?

Trusty:

By the Gods! Of course we are! Of course we are! Don't you think we're right to be amazed?

Doesn't it sound just a bit too far fetched to you? It sounds more like a lie than a truth to me.

Dinkum:

Hey, look! There's a guard running towards us. No doubt to report on what's going on over there.

Looks like he's doing a war dance.

Enter Second Messenger, flapping his wings in distress.

1170

Second Messenger:

Oi,oi,oi,oi,oi,! O, Zeusy, Zeusy, Zeusy! Oh my, my, my, my!

Trusty:

What's all this?

Second Messenger:

Dreadful stuff! Dreadful stuff! Simply dreadful stuff!

Catching his breath

One of the gods, one of Zeus' boys, flew right through our gates and into our airspace, right past the drongos, our daytime guards!

Trusty:

Dreadful deed indeed! Simply dreadful! Brave, but dreadful!

Dinkum:

Who was it?

Second Messenger:

We've no idea... only that he had wings!

Trusty:

Well, shouldn't you have sent a patrol after him, immediately?

Second Messenger:

But we did that! We've sent three thousand hawks –cavalry archers- and every bird with hooked talons has gone after him. Rednecks, Eagles, Hawks, three-testicled Gang-gangs, Guzzlers, Garbage guts... they all flew off after him immediately. The air shook with the speed of those birds, flying to catch the god. He couldn't have gone too far though. He should be somewhere around here.

1185

Dinkum:

Go then! Grab slings and arrows and let all reserve units enter the fray! Someone give me a sling!

Exit Second Messenger. Enter the two slaves with weapons

Gum Cock:

It's war! War has broken out between us and the gods!

Unspeakable, unutterable, despicable war!

Place a guard here and there and everywhere around this cloud-gathered air!

Erevus' son. Keep keen watch in case the god slides past your by your error!

Redneck:

Prick your ears everyone and stand aloof. Listen for the flying god's flapping wings. The wind has already carried them nearby!

Iris appears flying.

Trusty:

Hey, you! You there! Where are you flying? Why in such a hurry, my girl? Stop right there! Don't move an inch! Hold iiiiiit! Hold it! Who are you and where are you from? Where have you been? Talk!

Iris:

I've been sent here by the gods of Olympus! I am Zeus' messenger.

Trusty and Dinkum approach and examine her.

Trusty:

So, what's your name, Parolos or Salaminia? You're not one of those tax-collectors, are you?

Iris:

No, my name is Speedy Iris.

Trusty:

Are you a ship or a bitch?

Iris:

What?

Trusty:*To the chorus*

One of you three-testicled birds grab her, will you?

Iris:

Grab me? A bird? Why? What wrong have I done to you?

Trusty:

You'll cop it now, my girl!

Iris:

This is unheard of! Why?

Trusty:

Which gates did you go through, you ugly bitch?

1210

Iris:

I don't know, truly, by Zeus! I don't know what gates you're talking about!

Dinkum:

See how she mocks us? Did you go anywhere near the Bum Commander Birds?

Iris:

What was that?

Trusty:

Were you given the seal by the storks?

Iris:

Don't be disgusting!

Dinkum:

So you didn't get it, ey?

Iris:

You're a very sick bird!

Trusty:

So... there was no Bum Commander to give you an entry to your passage?

Iris:

By Zeus! You lot are disgusting! No, no one has entered my passage, thank you very much!

Dinkum:

And then you go flying quietly about someone else's city, all through its air ways?

Iris:

Where else are the gods supposed to fly?

Trusty:

Where? I don't know where, by Zeus but certainly not through these parts! Now, even right this minute you are breaking the law and you should know that the punishment for that offence would be death which would suit you more than all the other irises in the word! We should be catch you and kill you, young lady!

Iris:

But I'm immortal!

Dinkum:

Nevertheless, you'd be put to death! Now listen: We'd be in terrible trouble if we're the bosses and you gods do as you please without paying any attention to what your rulers say. It is we who are now your superiors... Tell me now, where were you off to with those speedy wings of yours?

1230

Iris:

Me? I've been sent by the Father of the gods to deliver a message to the humans... the message being, "offer sacrifices to the Olympian gods! Fill the sacrificial altars with slaughtered sheep so that the aromas of the burnt meat may reach their nostrils!

Trusty:

What are you on about? What gods are you talking about?

Iris:

To us, of course! Us the inhabitants of the sky!

Dinkum:

So, you think you're the gods, do you?

Iris:

Of course. Who else do you think might be gods?

Trusty:

It is the birds who are now the gods of the humans, by Zeus! And to the birds the humans must offer sacrifices, not to Zeus... by Zeus!

Iris:

What a moron! What a moron you are! You're shaking the dire mind of the gods and Justice will be swift because with one of his bolts Zeus can destroy your whole mob. One fiery bolt like that Lycimnius sent in Euripides' play and both, your body and your house will burn.

1243

Dinkum:

Woa there! Stop! Stop your nauseating belching. Listen you! Do you think you're talking to some Lydian twit or some timid little Phrygian? You might be able to make them shake in their feathers

with this sort of nonsense but do you know what I could do if Zeusy up there bugs me any more? I'll have his palaces turned to ashes, including Amphion's palace. I'll send flame-throwing eagles and I'll send off against him six hundred Porphyryons hawks in leopard skins even though just one Porphyryon alone has already done him enough harm.

Trusty:

As for you! You, Iris the servant girl, I'll tear your little thighs apart and fuck you and amaze you how an old cock like me can keep it up for three consecutive rogerings!

Iris:

Why, damn you sir and your disgusting language!

Dinkum:

Off you go now! Quickly! Come on, fuck off!

Iris:

My father will put a stop to your foul arrogance!

1260

Trusty:

O, me, o my! I'm sooooo scared! Go on, off you go now! Go and turn on some other younger man!

Exit Iris

Gum Cock:

We've made it clear to the gods that they are prohibited from passing through this city and told the mortals not to send sacrificial smoke to the gods through here.

Trusty:

I'm terribly worried about the herald we've sent to the humans. He's still not back yet!

Pause. Enter the First Herald holding a golden crown

Herald:

O Trusty:! O blessed Trusty:! O most wise Trusty:! O, most beautiful Trusty:! O, most wise Trusty:! O, most, most, most blessed Trusty:! O... please stop me, Trusty:!

Trusty:

What are you blabbering about?

First Herald:

All the folk below want to show their appreciation to you for your great wisdom and offer you this golden crown.

1276

Trusty:

I accept. But why do the folk below honour me like this?

First Herald:

Why? You have built an ethereal city, so glorious, so magnificent that you have no idea how much the humans love it and honour it. Before you built this city they had all suffered from Spartomania! They dragged around long clubs, left their hair long, unwashed and untidy and they all behaved like Socrates: always hungry and always in worn-out and torn clothes. Now, they've all changed completely!

They're in the grips of ornithomania. They have this excessive love for the birds and the only thing they do all day is to joyfully mimic the birds! As soon as they wake up in the morning they rush out of their bed, go off into the fields to graze and then, when they come back to the city, they all bend over books searching for votes.

Not only that but this ornithomania of theirs has developed to such a degree that now they've started calling themselves by bird names. For example, our famous lame and drunk innkeeper, is calling himself Mr Partridge. One-eyed Opuntius is calling himself Hawkeye. Menippos calls himself Swallow, Philocles calls himself Brolga, Theagenes is now Foxhen, Lycourgos became Egyptian stork, Cherephon a bat, Syracusios calls himself a Galah and Meidias, because of that ugly face of his and his head which was smacked about by a Quail, well he was given the name Quail.

And so, because of this ornithophilia of theirs, all they do all day long is sing songs to them. Whenever they see a swallow, or a cockatoo, or a shrub lark or a bush tucker bird, or a wing or even just a bit of a feather out comes their song!

So that's what's happening down there. I'm telling you, this place will be filled by ten thousand men wanting wings and asking to learn the ways of the hooked-taloned birds. I'm telling you, you'll have to find wings for them all!

1308

Trusty:

Right! No time to waste then with all the work we've got to do!

Bluey, you run and fill all the baskets and pans you can find with wings. You, Muscles bring them all to me at the gate where I'll be standing to greet the visitors.

Bluey, Muscles and First Messenger leave

Gum Cock:

It won't be long now when some man will say that this city has a good population.

With a bit of luck everyone will love our city passionately!

Trusty: *Calls in the direction of Muscles*

Come on Muscles! Stop wasting time. Do as I tell you for once!

Gang-gang Cockatoo:

After all, *Indicating the audience* what's down there that's not up here? Every thing a settler could wish or dream for, this city has it: Wisdom, Passion, Divine Graces and a most happy Peace with its sweet face!

Trusty:

What an idiot of a servant you are! Come on, speed it up!

Muscles comes out with a basket overfilled with wings. Slips, slides, drops basket, spills wings.

Redneck:

Tell him to hurry! Bring a basket of wings over here! Hurry!

Trusty:

He'll hurry if I beat him like this!

Wheels his arm around as if to give Muscles a punch but instead kicks him on the bum.

Gum Cock:

He's so slow! Slower than a donkey!

Trusty:

That's my Muscles, all right, a very lazy boy!

1330

Gang-gang Cockatoo: *To Trusty:*

Now you make sure, though, to put all these wings in some order and give the right ones to the right people. Put the wings for the musicians here, those for the prophets there, those who love the sea here and then check each man carefully as you give him his wings.

Enter Recalcitrant Son

Recalcitrant son:

, how I'd love to be an eagle and fly high with wings over the vast waste of the blue waters of oceans.

Trusty:

It seems that our messenger was quite right. Here's someone singing a song... about eagles!

Recalcitrant son:

He, he! O, dear me! There's just nothing sweeter than flying! I'm in the grips of ornithomania for sure! I love all the fowl laws and so I fly to you, I want to live with you!

Dinkum:

Hang on a minute! Which laws do you mean because birds have many of them!

Recalcitrant son:

All of them! I love them all. Particularly I love the laws which say you can grab your father by the neck and bite him deep and hard!

Trusty:

By Zeus, yes! We do think a cheeky chick who beats his father to be quite a brave chick!

Recalcitrant son:

And that's exactly why I want to shift house and come here! So I can beat my father and get all his money!

Dinkum:

But we have an ancient law here, written in the Storks Statutes which says, "If a stork's father brought his little chicks up with all the necessities for a healthy life and they grew up, it is the duty of the storklings to look after their father in his old age."

Recalcitrant son:

What was the good of coming here then, by Zeus, if now I've got feed my old man?

Trusty:

No, no, my good friend! Good will brought you here so I'll be kind to you and treat you like an orphan. I'll give you wings.

He does so

Now let me give you this advice my boy and it's a good one because that's what I was taught myself when I was your age. Don't beat your father.

Goes into a basket and comes out with a cock's spur. He offers it to the recalcitrant son.

Here, take this cock's spur and imagine that you've got a crest on your head. Then join the army. You're a top cock now! Go on campaigns! Stand on Guard! Work for your food. Let your father live his own life and if you really want to fight then go off to the Thracian front and fight there!

1370

Recalcitrant son:

You're right, by Dionysus! That's good advice and I'll take it!

Dinkum:

And that's certainly the smart thing to do, by Zeus!

Exit Recalcitrant son. Verbulus (a stork) enters pompously reciting one of his poems (in reality one of Anacreon's) He's whirling about the stage and flapping his arms about as if he's about to fly. He limps.

Verbulus:

O! How I fly so high with so light

A wing! This path of Olympian songs or that...

Trusty:

This boy here, is going to need a whole truckload of wings!

Verbulus:

...fearless of body and mind

fearless in search of a new way

Dinkum:

We welcome most warmly Verbulus the storky dorky! Hold it! What's with all this whirling about in a circle on your lame leg? What sort of a dance is this?

1380

Verbulus:

O, how I wish to be a bird

A nightingale with clear voice I'd like to be!

Trusty:

Stop all this sing-song and tell me what you want from us.

Verbulus:

From you? From you I want wings, wings to fly high with, to fly high, so I can catch, so I can catch new, new, new stanzas; stanzas whirling in the wind whirling in the wind and in the snow-white snow!

Dinkum:

You mean, it's possible to catch these stanzas from inside the clouds?

Verbulus:

But of course! Our whole art hangs from the clouds! The most brilliant bits in the dithyrambs are full of sweet air and dark and moody blues at the tips of speeding wings. Do you want to hear some of them?

Trusty:

No, no, no, no! Eh, no thanks!

Verbulus:

By Herakles, I say you shall! I'll give you the whole air:

Coughs as he gets his voice ready. Sings... off key.

I see the idols of roosters

Of roosters splicing the sky

Of birds with necks so long, so loooong, soooooo loooong!

Trusty and Dinkum together:

Whoooooa there! Cast anchor, poet!

1395

Verbuls:Not noticed the plea

And so I run and run and run like the running wind

And I whirl about and I wander and I wander fast like the wind's breath...

Trusty:Grabs Verbulus by the throat

By Zeus! I'll grab a hold of this windpipe of yours and choke the breath-wind right out of it!

Verbulus:Escapes and continues

Gulp, gulp, gulp...cough, cough, splatter...

So then I charge towards the South the South, the South. Then I swerve this body northerly, northerly - o, northerly and open a channel through the sky's windy wastes - wastes without a harbour nor without an end...

Dinkum comes around and kicks Verbulus on the bum

Verbulus:*To Dinkum*

Now that's a clever little trick you've done there, old man!

Dinkum:

Aren't you happy to have your bum winged like this?

Verbulus:

What a way to treat the most sought after cyclic chorus master in all of the tribes in the Universe!

Trusty:

Well, would you like to stay with us up here and begin directing your idiot colleague Leotrophides and a chorus of flying fowl from the Dickheads tribe?

Verbulus:

You mock me! I know that for sure but you should also know that I will not stop my singing until you give me my wings so that I can cut highways through the sky!

Exit Verbulus.

Small pause before Blue Tit and Red Tit climb the hill to do some mating.

Enter Informer wearing old and torn clothes. He looks around and notices the two mating birds.

Informer:Speaking to Blue Tit busy on the hill.

O, broad-winged bright Blue Tit, who are these birds with their multicoloured wings who have no coins hidden in their purses?

Blue Tit too busy to respond

Trusty:

Damn, what a headache I've made for myself here! Here's another babbler coming this way!

1415

Informer:

I said, brightly coloured Blue Tiiiiiiiiit !

Dinkum:Looks up on the hill and see the mating. Then to Trusty

I think he's singing this little routine because of his worn out cloak but by the looks of it, he'll need more than a few blue tits to get a new one!

Informer:

Who is it that hands out wings to the new arrivals?

Trusty:

That would be me. What can I do for you, tell me.

1420

Informer:

Wings! I want wings and don't make me repeat myself!

Dinkum:

And... what are you going to do with them, fly off to our enemy, Pellene, I suppose. Get yourself one of those lovely woolly cloaks they give away as prizes at the chariot races?

Informer:

By Zeus no! I serve subpoenas to the islanders... and I'm an informer as well...

Trusty:

What a divine occupation!

Informer:

...and I hunt around for lawsuits. That's why I need wings; to fly around the cities serving the subpoenas.

Trusty:

So, you'll be better at this job with wings, will you?

Informer:

Well, no. It's just so that I won't be molested by the thieves. With wings, I'll be able to fly back home with the cranes, you see and I'll be able to swallow many lawsuits to use as a ballast.

1430

Trusty:

Is that your job? Aren't you ashamed of yourself? A young, healthy man like you and you make your living by informing on our allies?

Informer:

What would you have me do? I don't know how to use a shovel.

Dinkum:

But there are plenty of other, more honourable occupations, by Zeus! Why not take up one of those? A young man of your stature should be employed honestly, honourably, instead of stitching up lawsuits for everyone!

Informer:

Will you stop the lectures and put some wings on me, stupid?

Trusty:

That's what I'm doing right now!

Informer:

How? How can you put wings on a man with just a lot of yakity yak?

Trusty:

Oh, that's simple! Words can make everyone fly off the handle.

Informer:

Not everyone.

Dinkum:

Surely you've been to the barber shops where fathers often say of their sons, "Look how Dieitrephes has sent my son flying off his head with his dreadful talk about horse racing!" Or, someone else would complain about his son's brain flying off with a love for acting and ran off to join a tragic chorus.

Informer:

So, brains fly with mere words?

Trusty:

Absolutely! It's words that send a man flying into the dizzy height of dignity! So that's what I'll do for you, as well. I shall offer you words which will give you wings which will send you off on a lawful, straight path.

1450

Informer:

But I don't want that!

Dinkum:

No? What will you do then?

Informer:

Forget it! You want me to disgrace my family, a family that, since the days of my grandfather, has been drawing its livelihood out of this occupation! No way! Just shove a pair of speedy wings on my back. From a hawk, say or a Galah so that I can do my subpoena act on the foreigners, get them charged and get back home again without wasting any time.

Trusty:

Right! Now I get you! You mean, you want to get to Athens before the foreigner so that he'll lose the case because he won't be there to defend himself.

Informer:

Well done! You've got that right.

Trusty:

Furthermore, while the poor man is sailing to Athens, you fly back to his house and grab all of his possessions.

1460

Informer:

That's exactly right. So, I've got to be whizzing round just like a spinning top.

Dinkum:

A top, ey? I know exactly what you mean. Now let's see... *looks inside a bag and finds a whip. He pulls it out and brandishes it about.* Got it! By Zeus, I've got it! This is from whip-country, Corcyra. It's perfect for you!

Informer:

Bloody hell! That's a whip!

1465

Dinkum:

Don't be silly! This is not a whip! This a pair of wings. You wanted to be a spinning top, well let me use them on you and you shall!

Informer:

No way!

Exit Informer in a hurry.

Trusty:After him

Go on then, fly! Fly off and piss off out of here! Damned nuisance! And a bitter bite of it you'll get one day with your crooked, sleazy way!

To the slaves and Dinkum:

Come on then, let's grab all these wings and go!

Exit the four men.

1470

Gum Cock:

What new, wondrous and frightful things have we not seen as we flew around the world.

There's a tree in Athens, called Cleonymus. Quite out of its soil since it hails from Caria in Thrace and quite cowardly and of no use at all. Yet it's doing admirably well, if you go by its girth. Every spring without fail, this Cleonymus tree, sprouts out new writs and summonses! And every winter, like a true coward, it drops its leaves –its shields and disappears.

Gang-gang Cockatoo:

And then, there's another land, at the edge of darkness. It's a place bereft of any light, or any torch and it's where heroes meet humans for food and chit-chat during the day. But never at night though, never at night! Oh, no! It's never safe at night because the night is bereft of heroes.

Because if any human meets up with Orestes, the world acclaimed thief of the night he'll get a hiding and have all his clothes ripped off his back!

Enter Prometheus terrified and hiding his face under an umbrella. He is looking around everywhere, in search of Trusty:

Prometheus:

Oh me oh my! I hope Zeus doesn't see me... Where is Trusty:?

Enter Trusty carrying a chamber pot. Sees Prometheus.

Trusty:

Now What! What is this, now? What's with the hidden facial?

Prometheus:

Is there a god following me?

Trusty:*Trying to see beneath the umbrella*

No... no! Who are you?

Prometheus:

What time is it then?

Trusty:

What time is it? It's just gone midday. Why? Who are you?

1500

Prometheus:

Evening or later?

Trusty:

Damn it! This is getting up my nostrils!

Prometheus:

What about Zeus? What's he up to? Gathering clouds or spreading sunshine?

Trusty:

By Zeus!

He pulls at the umbrella

Prometheus:

All right, all right, I'll remove the umbrella!

Trusty:*Effusively*

Prometheus! Dear, dear, darling friend!

Hugs him

O, my Prometheus!

Prometheus:

Shhhh! Don't shout like that!

Trusty:

Why? What's the matter?

Prometheus:

Shhh, speak softly and don't utter my name. If Zeus sees me down here I'm a dead liver! All right.

Hold this umbrella over me so that the gods won't see me down here and I'll tell you everything that's going on up there!

1510

Trusty: Takes the umbrella

Right-oh, mate! Good thinking! True Promethean thinking.

Guides him to the tree.

Now come under here quickly and speak freely.

Prometheus:

All right. Listen.

Trusty:

I'm all ears.

Prometheus:

Zeus is gone!

Trusty:

Gone? What do mean? When did he go?

Prometheus:

When? Zeus was gone the moment you lot occupied the air. As you know, gods without the scent of sacrifices are nothing and the humans have stopped sacrificing since the moment you've built this city. Not a nostrilful of burnt thigh bone reaches our nostrils any more. It's as if we're fasting for the funeral ceremonies of the Thesmophoria! As for the gods of the barbarians, they're all starving and screaming like Illyrians that they're going to march against Zeus, unless he opens up the ports for them to trade again and import their beloved offal pieces.

1515

Trusty:

You mean to say that there are even more gods above you lot?

Pometheus:

Of course! Who do you think Excecestides prays to? Of course we've got to have gods for the refugees.

Trusty:

What are they called, these gods of the barbarians?

Prometheus:

What are they called? They're called Triballians! You know, our famous Thracian allies, the savages from up North.

1530

Trusty:

Right! I understand now! That's where we've got the phrase, "well, bugger me dead," from!

Prometheus:

Could well be, could well be! But I'm telling you, mate and you better listen: Zeus and the Triballians will be sending their ambassadors here for talks. I suggest you agree to nothing unless Zeus hands the sceptre back to the birds and gives you the Princess as a wife.

Trusty:

The Princess? What princess?

Prometheus:

Ah, the most beautiful woman in existence, Pissy! She looks after Zeus' bolt... I mean thunderbolt – as well as after everything else, like she has to make the tough decisions, write the just laws, be the wise one, make sure everything and everyone is in order, sets up customs fees, deals with sycophants, awards daily minimum wages...

Trusty:

You mean she does the lot?

Prometheus:

That's what I said. You take her away from her and all that talent will come along with her to you also. That's the reason I'm here, to tell you all this. Because I've always loved the humans.

1546

Trusty:

I know, I know. You're the only god who made it possible for us to have a bit of a Barbie occasionally.

Prometheus:

And as you well know, I too hate all the gods.

Trusty:

And that's why they've always hated you and treated you like a real Timon the Misanthrope.

Prometheus:

I better run off back home now. Give me my umbrella back.

Takes it and puts it over his head.

See? Now even if Zeus sees me from up there, he'll just think that I'm one of the basket bearing virgins in a procession.

Trusty: Hands him the chamber pot.

Here, you might as well take this too. Processional virgins have to carry a stool as well.

Exit Prometheus. Trusty goes inside. The two mating birds have finished their mating and whistling happily come down to join the rest of the birds.

1553

Gum Cock:

There's a land...far, far away where the One-Footers live a very odd way. So wide is their single foot that one minute they hop and the next they lay below it under its shade. They're also called Umbrellapods. There's a lake there, which Socrates, the ever-unwashed visits so as to play with all the spirits. Trusty, our cowardly general, went there one day as well, to see if he could find his own soul which had deserted him on the battlefield. He had gone there with a sheep-camel as an offering and, when he got there he did what Odysseus did, acting on Circe's orders: He just cut its throat off and turned away and left the place. So, from down below, in Hades, Chaerophon sniffed out the stench of the slaughtered flesh and blood from down the underworld and rose up as a bat!

Enter ambassadors, Poseidon, Herakles and Triballos.

Poseidon is dressed in slick, neat, regalia, Herakles in his usual garb of a huge roughly hewn club and a lion skin over his shoulder. Triballos, being the god of the barbarians, is ignorant about how to throw a cloak over his shoulder so he's done this badly. Poseidon will correct it for him later. They stand at a corner as far as possible from the cave's entrance so that when Trusty: and Dinkum enter the stage there could be a moment or two before they notice the ambassadors.

1565

Poseidon:*Talking to the other two*

Now remember: This city here is called "The Land of the Cloudy Gum Cock" and we are here as ambassadors... *Suddenly notices Triballos's clothes*

Hey! What on earth are you doing? You buttoned up your cloak from left to right? Turn it the other way, you idiot! You remind me of Laispodias who had one leg shorter than the other so he used to turn his cloaks back to front to hide his limping! What a dreadful thing Democracy is! Where will it all end when the majority of the gods will vote for him as an ambassador!

He tries to fix the Triballos's cloak. Tosses cloak over then under the shoulder, left, then right...

Stop your incessant fidgeting!

Gives up

Damn you, you great oaf! Of all the barbarian gods I've ever seen in my life you take the first prize! So, Herakles, what now?

1575

Herakles:

You heard me! I said I want to throttle the man who built all these walls to keep the gods out!

Poseidon:

But, Herakles, we've been sent to negotiate!

Herakles:

I think that's twice the reason for throttling the bastard... whoever he is!

Enter Trusty, Dinkum and the slaves carrying a barbeque, a few jars and urns, a table, and all the necessities for a feast. For a few moments they don't notice the ambassadors and they set everything up.

Trusty:

Shouts at the slaves for individual items which are immediately handed to him as if in a modern operating theatre.

Cheese grater!

Herbs!

Poker!

Bluey runs to him with his erect phallus and places it in Trusty's hand.

To poke the fire with, fool!

Bluey runs back and corrects the errors. Others laugh.

Poseidon:

Sir, we three gods bid you good cheer!

Trusty:

Hang on a minute. I'm scrunching up some herbs.

Herakles:*Hungrily, gluttonously, runs to the barbie to take a look*

Ehhh, what sort of meat is this?

Dinkum:

Ehhh, this here meat is the meat of revolutionary birds which the democratic birds convicted.

Herakles:

So why all these herbs?

Trusty:Lifts his head up and notices Herakles

Oh, hello, Herakles! What's up?

Poseidon:

Ahem! We've come here sent by the gods as ambassadors to negotiate a peace settlement.

Dinkum:*Looks into a jar and calls out to the slaves*

There's no oil in this jar!

1590

Herakles:

And birds should be very oily!

Poseidon:

Now, with this war we're engaged in, we gods get nothing. However, if we were to be friends, you'd be able to have plenty of rainwater for your billabongs and halcyon days for every day hereafter. We are fully authorised to sign up an agreement on this issue.

Trusty:

Hang on a minute! We didn't start this war against you! In fact, we're quite ready to sign up a treaty with you even now, if you're prepared to act justly... which simply means that Zeus returns his sceptre to us, the birds. And, if we can agree on this, I shall invite the ambassadors to brunch!

Herakles:

That's a good enough bargain for me! I agree!

Poseidon:

What? You drongo!

Sound of complaint from the drongo among the birds

You moron, you garbage guts!

Sound of complaint from the garbage guts among the birds

Are you going to deprave your father of his authority?

1606

Dinkum:

Really? Wouldn't the authority of you gods increase if the birds rule the humans below?

Right now, the humans can hide beneath the clouds, bend their heads and mumble off false oaths all the time! Whereas, if you were to make yourselves allies with the birds, the moment someone swears a false oath, say, he swears by "the raven and Zeus" a raven will bolt down to the perjurer and rip his eyeball out of its socket!

Poseidon:

That's true, by Poseidon! You're absolutely right!

Herakles:

That's what I reckon, too!

Trusty:*To Triballos*

And you? What do you say?

1615

Triballos:*Coughs, adjusts his cloak.*

Da. Odada hoddadodo!

Herakles:

See? He agrees, too!

Trusty:

And there's yet another benefit we can add for you in this agreement. Let's say some human swears that he'll make an offering to a god but then, through sheer greed he reneges with nonsensical reasoning like, "Oh, the gods are patient!" and doesn't pay, we'll sort him out!

Poseidon:

Now, tell me how you could do that!

Dinkum:

Simple! The moment this man starts counting his coins or is sitting naked in a bathtub, a Brolga will shoot down and pinch enough money to pay for two sheep and deliver it to the god to whom he had made the promise!

Slight pause for thought. Herakles walks around the cooking birds and devours them with his eyes.

Trusty and Dinkum are minding the cooking. Finally, salivatingly...

Herakles:

Again I vote that we give them the sceptre back!

Poseidon:

Well, ask Triballos here, as well!

Herakles:*Threatening him with his huge club.*

Hey Triballos! How would you like a smack on the head?

Triballos:Shakes his head
Saaf naka vaktari kroosa!

Herakles:

He says it's absolutely wonderful!

1630

Poseidon:

Oh, well, if that's what you both say then I'm with you.

Herakles: *To Trusty and Dinkum*

Oi, Pissy! We've voted to agree about the sceptre thing!

Trusty:

Oh! And there's yet another thing I remember asking for: That I'll hand Hera back to Zeus but Zeus will hand me, as a wife, his Princess.

Poseidon:

Oh! Come on! It looks like you're not interested in negotiations at all! Come on, men, we're going home!

Trusty:

Big deal! See if I care. To Dinkum

Chef, make that sauce a bit sweeter!

Herakles:

You're worse than the humans, Poseidon! Where are you off to? Hang on a bit! Are we going off to war for the sake of a mere woman?

Poseidon:

So what should we do?

Herakles:

Agree, of course. What else?

Poseidon:

You poor suck! Can't you see this bastard is trying to trick you? Can't you see that all this works against your own interests? Because if Zeus gives up his rule to the birds, when he carks it, you'll be left without a penny whereas, as matters stand now, you'll inherit everything he leaves behind.

1646

Trusty:

He is still near the barbeque.

Woa! Hahaha! What lovely bullshit he's piling up on you, Herakles!

Look! Come over here. I want to tell you something.

Herakles approaches the barbeque, his eyes and mouth open wide at the food. Trusty waves some of the smoke towards Herakles' face.

Your uncle Poseidon, there, Herakles, is trying to cheat you, my poor boy!

Listen, forget about what your father will leave behind. You're entitled to none of it! You're a bastard, my boy. An illegitimate son, my son. You're the son of a mortal woman, remember?

Alcmene! That's your mummy... and she was the wife of Amphitryon! Totally illegitimate! Pure bastard! No inheritance at all when your daddy dies.

Herakles: *Threateningly*

Ey! Who ya callin' a bastard! What are you on about?

Trusty:

That's right, by Zeus! That's what you are because your mother was a foreigner. Why do you think Athena, a daughter, has been named as the Heiress if she had real, legitimate brothers?

1655

Herakles:

Still, daddy could still leave me a "Bastard's Portion" of his wealth, after he dies, couldn't he?

Trusty:

Nope! The law won't allow him. This uncle of yours, Poseidon there, will be the first to kick up a fuss against your claim. He's agitating you now but he'll be the first to be jumping up and down, arguing that he is the true, legitimate, non-bastard brother... of your father! Hang on, let me tell you one of Solon's laws. Solon our great law giver, said: "No bastard children may be considered as next of kin if there are legitimate children around and if there are no such legitimate children around, then the whole estate goes to the next next of kin."

Herakles:

The next next of kin? You mean, I'll get nothing once Zeusy dies?

Trusty:

No, by Zeus, nothing! Tell me though, has Zeus not signed you up in his tribal register?

Herakles:

No, not me!

Looks up into the sky as if chastising his father

I always wondered about that!

Trusty:

So, why do you gawk at the sky so angrily? Join us and I'll make you a ruler and supply you with all the bird's milk you want.

Herakles:

Well, actually your proposal for the girl seems quite appropriate to me. I always said that and I'll say it again. She's yours!

Trusty:*Yells to Poseidon*

What about you?

Poseidon:

Nope! I say no!

Dinkum:

So the whole thing rests on Triballos. What do you say, Triballos?

Again Herakles threatens him

Triballos:

Oooo, birdy nicey, girlie nicey Booboo megala girlie you!

Herakles:

He's telling us to hand her over.

1680

Poseidon:

No, that's not what he said at all, by Poseidon! He's just chirping away like a galah!

Sounds of protest from a galah

Herakles:

Well then he says to hand her over to the galah.

More sounds of protest from a galah.

Poseidon:

Well, if that's your decision, then you two negotiate the treaty. I'll just shut up.

Herakles:*To Trusty and Dinkum*

So! Now we're agreed to all your proposals! You can come up with us to heaven now and pick up the princess and all the other stuff.

Trusty:

Wonderful! These lovely birds have been all cut up just in time for my wedding.

1690

Herakles:

That's right and if you like, you go on ahead while I'll stay down here and look after them.

Trusty:

Ha! You? You roast my meat? With your sort of gluttony? No, I think you'd better come along with us.

Herakles:*Protesting*

Ohhhh! I reckon I'd be perfect for that job.

Trusty:*To the slaves:*

Someone bring me a wedding cloak!

The slaves rush inside and come out with the wedding cloak which they hand to Dinkum, who wraps it carefully and proudly around the body of Trusty. Trusty, Herakles, Poseidon and Triballos exit.

Dinkum and the slaves tend to the barbeque.

Gum Cock:

Near Fanass, where the water clock's water runs, lives the race of the Felatio lovers, a people who do everything with their tongue: their sowing and their harvesting, their grape picking and their... fig licking! For all these chores they use their tongues. They're a barbarian race, of course who behave just like our tongue-wag philosophers, Gorgias and Philippos; and it's because of these Felatio lovers that everywhere in Attica, when we make a sacrifice, we chop off the tongue of the animal.

1706

Second Herald:*Like a Town Crier*

Hear ye, hear ye, hear ye!

All you whose acts are virtuous, more virtuous than words can explain!

Thrice blessed race of winged fowl! Make welcome the ruler to his opulent chambers. He is approaching with such a brilliance so dazzling that no one has ever seen, not even upon a star whose

rays reach far into the sky's golden orb! He has with him a woman whose beauty defies description by words alone; and in his hand he holds a thunderbolt, Zeus' winged arrow.

An indescribable aroma emanates deep into the very core of the sky –a stunning spectacle!- and breezes play with the curlicues of smoke which emerge from the burnt incense.

Enter Trusty and the Princess as described by the Herald. Behind them follows a young bird (female) holding a standard, a ceremonial phallos.

And here he is! Now the goddess Muse must open her holy mouth to sing an auspicious wedding song.

1720

Nightingale:

Make way, make room, open up now, make a line!

Fly with your wings wide around the man most blessed by luck!

What youth, what beauty!

What joy your wedding brings to our city!

Male Love Bird:

The race of birds are blessed and blessed again by luck

Because of this man.

Welcome him then with wedding songs and songs of the

Nuptial bed. The Man and his Princess!

Female Love Bird:

It was songs like these which brought

Olympian Hera into the arms of Zeus,

The god of the high throne!

Hymen, o Hymen!

And youthful Eros of the golden wings

Stands by the union as witness and

Pulls tight the reins of the chariot's horses

Which carried Zeus and blessed Hera.

Thunder, lightning.

Pause

Trusty:

Your hymns have gratified me enormously.

Your odes have gratified me enormously

Your words leave me speechless!

More thunder and lightning

Pause

1745

Red Tit:

Come then and sing with us of Zeus' earth-shaking

Thunders and of his brightly flaming and terrifying bolts!

Blue Tit:

O great golden light of thunder!

O Zeus' immortal spear of fire!

You echo beneath the earth's soil,

Bringing the rain, the thunder!

With you, Zeus this man now shakes the earth!

To Trusty:

Take now all that Zeus had and rule alone with Zeus'

Princess by the side of your throne.

Hymen, o Hymen!

Trusty:

Now follow us, winged friends of the winged race,

Follow the wedding party

Follow us to Zeus' chambers,

Follow us to our wedding bed.

To the Princess

Let me have your hand, my happy woman.

Hold on to my wings and we'll dance together.

I'll lift you up and swing you about.

The newlyweds begin to dance

1763

Gum Cock:

Tralala! Off you go! Tralala! O Phallos! O Cock!

Praise Victory

Greatest, highest of all the gods!

Exit all

**END OF ARISTOPHANES'
"BIRDS"**