

ARISTOPHANES'
"PEACE"

Date of 1st production 421 BC
Awarded the 2nd prize at the City Dionysia

TRANSLATED BY
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"Never shall you be able to make smooth the prickly back of porcupines!"

Dramatis Personae:

Slave 1
(of Trygeas)
Slave 2
(of Trygeas)
Daughter 1
(of Trygeas)
Daughter 2
(of Trygeas – silent)
Trygeas
(a farmer)
Hermes
(a god)
War
(a god)
Fury
(a god)
Peace
(a divinity -silent)
Eyeful
(an attendant to Peace -silent)
Plentiful
(an attendant to Peace -silent)
Aristophanes
(as himself)
Hierocles
(a spinner and seller of oracles)
Sickle Maker
Cask Maker
(mate to Sickle maker -silent)
Arms Dealer
Helmet Maker
(mate to Helmet maker -silent)
Spear Maker
(mate to Helmet maker -silent)
Boy 1
Boy 2
Man 1

Man 2
Man 3
Man 4
Chorus
(of farmers and servants)

ACT 1
Scene 1

Day. In front of Trygeas' house. At Stage Left is a door where the dung beetle is stabled. In front of the house there are three troughs of different types of dung from which Slave 2 gets his ingredients for kneading and pummelling "cakes" for the beetle. Also, in each of the troughs there is a stick which the slave uses to stir the ingredients. It's a smelly -yea, stinking job and the actor makes much of this so that line 10 is all the more effective. In stage centre is another door which leads to Trygeas' house. Somewhere near the stable door is a statue and an altar of Dionysus which stays there throughout the play. Noises are heard from behind the stable door which suggest that there is a large animal eating gluttonously.

Slave 1: *(Rushes out from the stable door)*

Quick, another one! Another shit ball, for the beetle, quick! Hurry! *(noises of anger from the beetle)*

Slave 2: *(Puts the last touches on the "ball" he had prepared and then hands it to Slave 1)*

Here! Take the damned thing! Poh! How it stinks! Take it and let's hope it's the best he's ever tasted, the shit bug! Poh!

Slave 1 takes it and rushes out to the beetle. A few seconds later, however, he rushes in again.

Slave 1: *(Holding his nose)*

Another one. Quick. From donkey shit this time.

Slave 2:

What's he done with the first one? Gobbled it up like the rest, hey? *(Goes to the next trough and repeats the previous routine.)* Here you are, take it!

Slave 1: *(Takes the ball)*

Thanks. The damned shit bug grabbed it right out of my hands, rolled it about with his feet and just gulped it down his cake hole! One gulp and down it goes! *(Just before he leaves more fearsome noises from the beetle.)* Grrrr! Come on! Don't stop. Make some more of them. Keep them coming thick and fast. *(Leaves for the beetle)*

Slave 2: *(Goes to one of the troughs, stirs the stick around for a second or two, makes gestures of intolerance to the stench and then looks up at the audience, frustrated and angry)*

For God's sake you lot! You're all good shit-stirrers, aren't you? Come on down here and help me then. Come on! Come down and help me! Or would you rather watch me die from all this stench? *More noises from the stable. Slave 1 rushes out again.*

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Slave 1:

Another one, another one, quick! From a boy's bum this time. A little whore boy's bum. The shit bug says he likes them well-beaten!

Slave 2: *(Goes to the appropriate trough and undertakes the usual routine)*

Here!

Slave 1 takes it out to the beetle.

Slave 2: *(Works on another ball. More gestures of unbearable smell. Suddenly he stops and chuckles. Then he lifts his head to the audience and, still chuckling)*

But there is one single redeeming feature about this job... No one can accuse me of eating the profits! Hahahaha!

More noise from the beetle before Slave 1 rushes out again as before. This time Slave 2 has one ready in his stretched out hands.

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Slave 1:

Shit, shit, shit, shit! Give me another one... Quick! *(Takes the ball)* Well, don't just stand there, make me some more! Many more! Keep them coming, hard and fast, I said! *(Rushes out to the beetle)*

Slave 2 gets back to the shit-stirring. He's is visibly getting tired. Slave 1 comes out.

Slave 2:

God, I don't think I can cope with this shit stirring for much longer on my own.

Slave 1:

Here, let me take over. Give me the stick.

Slave 2:

By all means! Here! Take the damned thing –and yourself- to the cocks, for all I care! Poh! how it stinks! *(To the audience)* Is there anyone among you, then, who can tell me where I can buy a nose without holes in it? Believe me, there's no worse job than that of cooking for dung beetles. A pig, say, or a dog, well, they're no problem. As soon as the shit falls from your bum they're right into it. No cooking, no problem! This beast, however, is so spoilt, so up itself, no food is good enough unless I first waste a whole day handling it... like a dainty little, well-handled woman, it is! *(Noises from the beetle -as if it got offended by the slave's remarks.)* I think I'll go and see if it's finished eating yet. I'll just open the door slightly so it won't see me. *(Goes and does as he says. Talks quietly at the animal)* Go on, eat the lot, you big shit beast. Go on! Eat! Eat until you burst and blow up! *(To the audience)* Look how he drops his head into the trough to eat, the gluttonous beast! Look at him! He's ripping into his food with his molars and swings his head and arms about, just like a wrestler! Ripping and tearing and pulling... You'd think he's got a hold of one of those huge ropes that hold the barges together. Dreadful thing it is! Disgusting and gluttonous. I wish I knew what God sent us this unbearable insult... I bet it isn't Aphrodite, Goddess of love... or any of the Graces! Grrrr! *(Returns to help his mate)*

Slave 1:

Well, who do you think it is then, if not Aphro or the Graces? Who's delivered this creature to us?

Slave 2:

Who else? He who craps mightily from above. Zeus!

Slave 1:

Zeus? *(Stops his stirring and, referring to the audience)* You know, I have a feeling that already some member of this audience –a young man, no doubt, one of those self-proclaimed philosophers- is asking those around him, "What's all this? What's with the shit and the dung beetle?" And next to him, no doubt another philosophical mind, probably from Ionia, would have answered him, "I believe this is an allusion to our political leader, Cleon, because he's behaving in the same, scatophagous manner towards us all." Feeding us shit, that is! *(Both laugh and go on with the stirring and kneading for a while longer)*

Slave 2:

I'm going back to give the beast a drink.

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Slave 1: *(Stops the stirring and, continuing with the supposition)*

I'll explain the issue to these youngsters... and to the grown ups and to the older grown ups and to those who are grown up even more and I'll speak even to those who are even beyond the ripe-old age and even to those grown up and ready-to-cark-it stage! *(Becoming serious)* My master has been gripped by a new madness. A new sort of madness, quite different from that which you lot are suffering from. A different one altogether. You see, during the day he stares at the sky for hours on end as if astonished at something and every now and then he cries out, "Zeus, what do you think you're doing? Stoooooop! Stop all this cleaning up! Stop! Put your broom down before you clean away the whole of Greece! *(Noises of someone approaching from behind the front door of Trygeas' house)* Shhh! I think I heard someone's voice.

Trygeas: *(From within)*

O Zeus! What do you think you're doing to all our folk? Watch what you're doing, please! You've ripped the heart out of all our cities!

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Slave 1: *(To the audience)*

That's it! That's the madness I was talking about. You've just heard a small sample of it. That's how he'd go on from the moment this madness got a hold of him. You'd hear him muttering to himself, "How could I possibly get myself all the way up to Zeus?" He'd mutter this over and over again. Then he began making these tiny little ladders. He'd make them and then try to climb onto them, to get to the sky. He'd try again and again until, finally, yesterday, he fell down and broke his crown! After that, he went off to God-knows-where and came back with this huge, Athenian dung beetle, in there, and he made me its keeper. Grrrr! God, how he caresses it and talks to it! As if it were a prize filly! "O my hero, my brave flier, my Pegasus," he says to it. "You'll fly me straight to Zeus, won't you?" *(Noises from the stable this time)* I wonder what he's up to now. I'll just bend down and take a little look. *(He does so and after a second, to the audience)* Oh, no! Oh no! Oh Hell! Hey, neighbours, come here quick! Come have a look! My master is flying! He's flying! Look he's flying off, high up, horseback on the beetle!

(Suddenly the door of the stable bursts open and Trygeas, with the aid of a stage crane, appears, sitting on the flying beetle. From his shoulder hangs a bag)

Trygeas:

Woeee, my little darling! Gently does it my eager little beetle. Don't use up all of this fearsome strength of yours straight away. At least not before you sweat a bit and loosen up your limbs and get the momentum of your wings up and regular... and give no ugly pooky smells please, or you're staying home!

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Slave 1:

God, master, how full of bullshit you are!

Trygeas:

Easy, easy!

Slave 1:

So what's with all this 'flying high' stuff, then?

Trygeas:

I'm doing it for the sake of the whole of Greece. This here flight, is a new experiment I'm trying out. Easy, easy, easy, I said!

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Slave 1:

But why fly? You're jeopardising your personal health and safety for no good reason.

Trygeas:

Shut up, slave! This is the time for positive re-enforcement, not your pig -squealing noises! And tell everyone to be quiet for a while and to block all their loos and public sewers with bricks and... to clamp tight their bums!

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Slave 1:

I'm not clamping mine up till you tell me where you think you're going.

Trygeas:

Where else would I be going? I'm off to visit Zeus, up in the heavens!

Slave 1:

But why? What's on your mind?

Trygeas:

What's on my mind? I'm going to ask him what's on his mind – about all the Greeks. I'm going to ask him what's he up to?

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Slave 2:

What if he doesn't tell you?

Trygeas:

I'll... I'll sue him! For being a traitor to the Greeks. I'll sue him for selling us all off to the Medes! *The noise of crying children from behind the front door. They remind the slave of his increased duties if his master leaves him with them.*

Slave 1:

No, master! No! I won't let you. By Dionysus! You won't be going there while I'm alive!

The children, two young girls, come out of the house.

Trygeas:

There's nothing else that can be done.

Slave 2:(*To the children, desperately*)

Dear me, dear, dear, dear me! Children, your father is abandoning you, see? He's secretly flying off, high into the sky. Beg him, please not to do that! Plead with him, please. Beg the idiot not to leave you here to us, all alone.

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Daughter 1:

Daddy, daddy, is it true? Is it true you're going to leave us here while you go flying off with the birds - is it true you're leaving us to these cocks here? (*Indicating the slaves*) Is it true, really and truly? If you love me tell me father, is it true?

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Trygeas:

It's true, daughters, but don't make me angry, now, you two! You always give me this "daddy" talk when you need something, a piece of bread or something even if there's no money in the house -not even a whiff of it anywhere. But look, if -no, when I succeed in this and in due time I return, I'll give you a huge roll... stuffed full with my knuckles.

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Daughter:

But how will you do this, daddy? There are no ships going that way!

Trygeas:

No need for ships. I have saddled up this little winged stallion, here.

Daughter:

But what on Earth possessed you to put a saddle on a dung beetle's back and fly of to the gods, daddy?

Trygeas:

Because, my darlings, Aesop tells us that it's the only winged animal that ever managed to go to the gods.

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Daughter:

But that's a myth, daddy! No one believes that! No one believes that such a terrible animal ever went to the gods!

Trygeas:

It did. The eagle had -once upon a time- pinched the beetle's little babies and so the beetle, to get revenge, flew up there and smashed the eagle's eggs.

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Daughter: Well, then, in that case, wouldn't it be more fitting to saddle up Pegasus? That would look much more tragic in the eyes of the gods.

Trygeas:

No, because then I'd have to carry twice the amount of food with me, silly. Now this little beetle will gobble up everything that I stuffed myself with.

140

Daughter:

But what if you fall -all the way down into the deep ocean? How would your beetle save you then?

Trygeas: (*Indicating his phallus*)

I'll just use this as a rudder. And as for the beetle, well it's a beetle-boat... you know, one of those they build in the ship yards of Naxos.

Daughter:

And what about a harbour? Which will you use for shelter?

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Trygeas:

We got one right here, at Piraeus silly girl. It's called The Beetle Harbour!

Daughter:

Well, take care not to do anything silly, daddy, and fall down or you'll end up in one of Euripides' tragedies, playing some cripple!

Trygeas:

I'll do that. I'll take care. Right. Now! (*To the audience*) And you Greeks, for whom I suffer all these agonies, listen: Fart not, shit not -clamp your bums tight for the duration of three days, because if he (*pointing at the beetle*) takes as much as a whiff of it while he's flying, he'll come head down and graze upon your droppings! (*to the beetle*) Come on then Pegasus, some enthusiasm please! Off you go then! Make your golden chain sing prettily in your ears... (*After a moment or so of flying*) Hey! What are you doing? Woah, boy? What are you doing? Stop! What are you dropping your nose for? Oh, no! The sewers! Oh, no, the sewers of Piraeus! Come on, boy! Be brave now! Lift yourself up! That's it! Stretch your wings wide and fly straight up -straight to the great halls of Zeus! Draw your nose away from this common shit - from all this common everyday, boring feed! We're off to Zeus, remember? (*To someone in the audience*) Hey, man! What are you doing there? Him! That one down there, emptying his bowels next to that whore house in Piraeus! You'll kill me, man! God! Quick, dig a whole and bury the thing and cover it with lots of soil. Then plant some thyme on it and drench it with perfume! Because if I'm going to fall from here due to your bum, the city will have to pay a fine of five big ones, like they did at Chios.

Scene 2

During Trygeas' next speech, the scene changes thus: Trygeas' house is turned into Zeus' house with the wall and front door in the centre of the stage. On Stage Right is a large pile of boulders which will be moved in due course and from which Peace and her two attendants will emerge. The boulders are arranged in such a way as to allow the chorus to walk around and through them. **160**

Trygeas: (*Still on the beetle and as the scene begins he is shaken terribly by the beetle. Trygeas turns to the machine operator*) Ahh! Ouch! Ohhh! Hey, stop that, operator! Careful! Look, I'm in no mood for jokes. Ach! Wooooooh! Will you stop it, please? You've sent the wind right up my navel!

Stop it! If you're not careful, I'll end up being this beetle's next bite! (*Shaking stops. Some more flying before...*) I think I must be pretty close to the gods now... Ah! I can see Zeus' house. (*He's lowered in front of the gates. He gets off, unloading his sack and, after stretching his back, he knocks at the gates*) Hello? Hello? Helloooooo? Where is the gatekeeper? Hello? Will no one open this gate?

179

Hermes: (*Within*) I hear a mortal! How on earth could a mortal get here? (*Opens the gate and is astonished by the sight of the beetle*) Great Hercules! What is this awful thing?

Trygeas:

Horse Manure – I mean Manure Horse – I mean Dung Horse – Dung Beetle.

Hermes: (*Disgusted he interrupts Trygeas*)

Oh! Oh! You bring this foul creature to this sacred place? You despicable, shameful, shameless, defiler. You... God-cursed and God-hated... Oh! You... Right! (*Angrily takes out a pencil and paper from within the folds of his clothes and records Trygeas' every answer*) Speak! What is your name?

Trygeas:

Shamebum.

Hermes: (*Writes it down*)

Shame-bum. Of which Clan?

Trygeas: (*Hesitates*)

The Clan of Shamebums.

Hermes: (*Writes it down*)

Shame-bums. Surname?

Trygeas:

My surname? Shamebummer.

Hermes: (*Begins to write but suddenly Trygeas' trick becomes clear*)

You! You... tell me your real name or you'll be a dead bum in a minute!

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Trygeas: (*As if reporting for military duty*)

Trygeas of the Clan of Athmoneus, most able vigneron -neither a sycophant nor a sicko-lawyer.

Hermes: (*Continues with his official tone*)

Purpose of visit?

Trygeas: (*Points at his phallus*)

To bring you this bit of meat.

Hermes: (*Changes his tone completely*)

Oh, darling man! Mmmm! Tell me then, sweetie, how was your trip?

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Trygeas:

You slippery crook! So now I'm not despicable, hey? Not shameful? Not shameless? Not a defiler?

Go on, then, call Zeus for me!

Hermes:

Zeus? Hahahaha! You obviously haven't been informed, dear boy! There are no gods here! They've all hit the road yesterday. Left home. Gone! Tsooff!

Trygeas:

Where on Earth...

Hermes:

Nope, not on Earth!

Trygeas:

Where then? Where have they gone?

Hermes:

Oh... they've gone very, very far! To the peak of the sky's dome.

200

Trygeas:

Yeah? And why are you here, then, all alone?

Hermes:

I'm just taking care of the stuff they've left behind. Pots, pans, jugs.

Trygeas:

But what made them leave their homes?

Hermes:

They got angry at you Greeks, so they've brought War to live here now. They've left you all to his

mercy. War can do what he likes with you, now. The gods have moved their palace so high that they won't need to see any more of your stupid squabbles or listen to any more of your whingeing prayers.

210

Trygeas:

But... tell me. What reason did they give for this?

Hermes:

Their reason is that even though they gave you the opportunity to make peace over and over again, you still preferred war. If the Spartans were the ones who happened to have a bit of an advantage, they'd say, "By the Gods, the Athenians will cop it now!" and if the Athenians came up a little better off and the Spartans came to them asking for peace, the Athenians would jump in with, "By Zeus, the Spartans want to cheat us. Don't trust them. Let's hold on to Pylos. They'll soon come around again!"

220

Trygeas:

Ahha... Oh, yeah! Oh yes! How typical, how familiar these words sound!

Hermes:

So I can't think how you'll ever see Peace again.

Trygeas:

Why? Where have they taken her?

Hermes:

War had her dropped in there. *(Points at a mount of rocks behind him)* It's a deeeeeeep cave down there!

Trygeas:

It's a what?

Hermes:

A deep, deep cave. And he stacked up that huge pile of boulders over it so that you'll never be able to get her.

226

Trygeas:

So... tell me. What's War got in mind for us, then?

Hermes:

I only know one thing. Last night he brought home a gigantic mortar.

Trygeas:

A mortar? What for?

Hermes:

He wants to crush all the cities into it. *(A lot of noise behind the wall which worry Hermes)* Oh no! I'm off! I think I can hear him coming. He's sure making a lot of noise in there!

Exit Hermes.

Trygeas:

Oh, God! I think I better hide somewhere. I can hear the language of this war mortar. *(Runs and hides behind one of the boulders.)*

War enters with a bag on his back and holding a huge mortar. He looks mean and, of course, highly belligerent. He drops the bag down and rummages through it.

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War:

Oh,ho,ho! Mortals, mortals, mortals! How your jaws will suffer today!

Trygeas: *(To the audience)*

Great Apollo! That's the god War! Look at the size of that mortar! And how dreadful his eyes look!

That's the god we're all trying to escape. Look at his huge, gruesome legs! Bull size!

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War:*(Takes a bunch of leeks and drops them into the mortar)*

In you go, Leek City, Prasiae. Leeks for you. Thrice stuffed and five times stuffed and ten times stuffed and you're gonna be stuffed again today! Hahahaha!

Trygeas: *(To the audience)*

Ah, that's all right. That's Prasiae. Leek City. Not a big deal for us, Athenians. That's one of the Spartan worries.

War:

And now, you Megara! Hohohoho! Here's your garlic. *(Throws some garlic into the mortar)*

Mmmmm! I shall grind you all and mince you all, Megarians together. Hohohohoho!

Trygeas: *(To the audience)*

Oh no! Huge tears will flow from the eyes of the Megarians today!

250

War: *(Throws some cheese into the mortar)*

You're stuffed, too, Sicily! In goes your cheese! Hohohohoho!

Trygeas: *(To the audience)*

Ah the poor city! Turned into grated cheese!

War:

Now let me add a bit of honey into all this. *(Finds the honey and pours it into the mortar)*

Trygeas: *(Distressed)*

Please! No, not that one. That's the expensive honey. It's Athenian. Four obols a pot, that one. Use another type, stupid!

War:

Hey slave! Fury! *(No answer)* Fury, where are you?

Enter Fury

Fury:

You called, Master?

255

War:

You're in for a flood of tears boy! Lazy shit! Here, cop this! *(Punches him on the face)*

Fury:

Ouch! That hurt, master! Did you wrap your knuckles around a bunch of garlic?

War:

Run off and get me a pestle, Fury! And hurry up!

260

Fury:

But we haven't got one yet, Master! We only moved in here yesterday.

War:

Well, run off to Athens, then. *(Threatens to hit him again)* Quickly!

Fury:

All right, all right! I'm running, I'm running. I don't need the flood of tears, God!

Exit Fury. War is pre-occupied with stirring the ingredients in the mortar, perhaps even taking a rough bite every now and then.

Trygeas: *(To the audience)*

Oh, how we suffer! You see? You see how the poor, little people suffer? Always the poor little people! See the danger we're in now? Huge danger! Because if Fury returns with a pestle, War will sit himself down and quietly grind all of our cities into a pulp! *(To the statue of Dionysus)* Oh, God, Dionysus, please kill him, kill Fury, so he won't come back with the pestle!

Enter Fury breathless from running.

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War: *(Sees he hasn't got the pestle.)*

Yes?

Fury: *(Feigns ignorance)*

Yes what?

War:

Didn't you bring me a pestle?

Fury:

Ummm, no! the Athenians have lost theirs. Their pestle, that is, that leather beater Cleon, who used to pound the whole of Greece into a pulp, carked it! He's... kind of dead! Killed!

271

Trygeas: *(Rubs his hands with glee. To the audience)*

Excellent! Great goddess Athena, that's excellent work, you've done here, sending Cleon packing before he beat us all into a great pile of mush!

War:

Well, go to Sparta, then! Get one from them. Do something!

Fury:

All right, master. I'm off to Sparta!

275

War:

Run! Run, Fury, run!

Trygeas: *(To the audience, with considerable consternation)*

Ah, my darling people. This is crucial stuff now! I wonder what we're in for... If there's anyone among you who happens to be from Samothrace and who happens to be an initiate of the mysteries of

the Cabeiri -the protectors of the seafarers- and who happens to be on our side, and who happens to be... well, now is the time to pray a good and sincere prayer. Pray to get that messenger's feet turn back-to-front and come back without the pestle.

Enter Fury, distressed as before.

280

Fury:

Alas, alas, poor me!

War:

Now what is it? No pestle again?

Fury:

The Spartans lost their pestle too, master!

War:

Grrrrr! And how did they do that, you whirling, flying shit?

Fury:

They've lent it to their mates in Thrace and they've lost it there!

Trygeas: *(To the audience)*

Well done, Castor and Polydeuces, Sparta's patrons! Well done! Perhaps something good will come out of this after all! Courage my fellow mortals!

War: *(To Fury, disgusted)*

Bah! Take all these things inside. I'll go and make one myself! Grrrrr!

Fury picks up the bag and the mortar and follows War inside

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Trygeas:

Now we can sing what Datis, the Persian banger, sang as he was having his mid-day wank: "Oh how well I can pleasure myself and enjoy myself and sextice myself!" Right! Now, Greeks! Now is the right time to shake ourselves free from quarrels and from battles and lift out of there the goddess Peace, dear friend to us all! Let's do this before some other pestle appears and stops us. *(To the Chorus which isn't yet visible but waiting on the wings. When they hear him they enter from both sides of the stage carrying between them all sorts of farm tools as well as excavating equipment and army gear: shields, spears, helmets, etc)* Come on then farmers and merchants and builders and all you arty crafty people and all you aliens and foreigners -islanders, too. All of you, come out here quick! Come, bring your rams and ropes! Now is the time to pull this gentle goddess out of there and have her stand beside us!

301

Chorus:

Come men, come with joy! All Greeks can help here as they did before! Let's get rid of this rotten class system and of the war mongers, those shits who wear the crimson cloak! The day has finally shone for us all, the haters of General Lamachus *(To Trygeas)* You, Trygeas! You be our boss and tell us what we need to do here. There's no way I'll be able to stop working till we bring this great goddess -great lover of the grape- out here into the light with our bars and rods. *(Shouts of approbation from the rest of the chorus)*

Trygeas:

Shhh! Not so much noise with your joy, you lot! All this shouting will fire up the god War in there!

311

Chorus:

But this call of yours made us so happy! It wasn't the usual, "Come forth you men with your three days' provisions, we're off to war haha-haha!"

Trygeas:

Now, when you're down there, you be careful with that war monger, Cleon. He's their latest Cerberus and he'll splutter and shout just as he was doing when he was up here. He'll try and hinder our work so that we won't be able to bring our goddess up here.

Chorus:

Not even people like him will be able to snatch her out of our hands once we get her. Is that right, men? *(Shouts of agreement)* Yeah! Yeah!

Trygeas:

Quiet, men! You'll get me shafted with all your shouting! War will rush out here and trample everything under his big feet.

320

Chorus:

Let him do that! Let him rush out here and let him stir and crush and confuse everything. We're not going to put a stop to our joy. *(They begin their wild dancing.)*

Trygeas:

Oh, God! What's the matter now? What wrong with you all? Don't destroy the most wonderful thing ever with all this noisy dancing of yours!

Chorus:

I can't help it. I've got no control over my legs. See? I'm not trying to dance but my legs are so happy, they're dancing all by themselves.

Trygeas:

Well, enough dancing for now. Stop it!

Chorus:

All right... Here! See, I've stopped!

Trygeas:

So you say but you still haven't stopped.

Chorus:

Just one more little whirl, and that's it!

Trygeas:

All right. Just one... and... no more! I said, no more!

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Chorus:

All right, if it'll help you, no more. No more dancing.

Trygeas:

Look, you! You're still going!

Chorus:

Well, by Zeus! We'll just have to toss this right leg over like this and... that's it.

Trygeas:

All right, just that one toss. Have that one on me. *(Chorus does so.)* Now, stop being a pain.

Chorus: *(Suddenly his left leg jerks)*

Ah, look, my left leg wants a toss as well. Oh, I'm so happy! So overjoyed! *(Farts-everyone laughs)*

Oh, I'm farting and I'm laughing so much! *(More farts)* This is even better than if I had rid myself of this aged skin of mine – better even than if I were a soldier shedding his shield!

Trygeas:

No, not yet! Don't overdo the joy yet. We're still not absolutely sure we'll succeed, yet. Wait till we have her in our hands first. Then you can show your joy. You can scream, laugh, carry on as you please. Because only then you can be free to do as your heart desires: To travel for example, or to entertain at home, to fuck or just to go to sleep. Go shopping, play dirty games, be as decadent as you like. Then you can yell, oi, oi, oi, oi!

346

Chorus:

Oh, how I'd love to see that day! The things I had to endure! Sleeping on army mattresses, for one! Grrrr! We've been wearing ourselves thin, marching up and down at the Lyceum training ground, spear and shield at the ready. Up and down, up and down! It sure went on long enough! Oh, yes! Free at last! From now on I won't be such a hard and difficult man at the jury. No, from now on you'll be seeing before you a worry-free, much younger, much softer juryman. So, Trygeas, tell us what's your wish? What will make you happy? Tell us what to do. You are our leader, one made by our good Fortune.

361

Trygeas:

Come, let's see how we can move these stones. *(They pick up their implements and move noisily upon the stones, walking around them and through them and attaching a long rope around one of them and all the while getting progressively more and more dirty and sweaty. Before they make too much progress, however, Hermes enters. He's vicious.)*

Hermes:

Oi! What do you think you're doing, you loathsome little bubbles of snot?

Trygeas:

Aaaaa... as the traitor, Kilikos said when he was sprung, 'nothing at all sneaky, sir!'

Hermes:

You've had it boy! You're dead now!

Trygeas:

A, yes... I suppose if anyone knows when one's time is up, it'd be you, Hermes. You're the one who's in charge of that little lottery.

Hermes:

And I say you're dead. You're out.

Trygeas:

On which day?

367

Hermes: On this very day. Today!

Trygeas:

But the dead need their provision for the journey: barley corn and cheese. I haven't bought either of them yet.

Hermes:

You are already ground to dust, boy! Pulverised dirt. Dead!

Trygeas: (*Pinches himself. Turns to the audience*)

Nope, not dead... yet! (*To Hermes*) Why can I not feel any of the delights which come to you when you're dead, then?

371

Hermes: Don't you know that Zeus has ordered death for anyone who's found raising this baby from the underworld?

Trygeas:

So... it's absolutely necessary then, for me to cark it, then, is it?

Hermes:

Absolutely!

375

Trygeas:

Well, then, lend me three drachmas to buy a piglet... for my initiation ceremony... before I die... so I can have a good time afterwards!

Hermes: (*Raising his hands to the sky with extreme irritation*)

Oh, Zeus! Oh, great thunderfarther!

Trygeas: (*Stops Hermes' mouth with his hand*)

Oh, no, please! Please Lord Hermes, don't do us in. Don't tell Zeus on us!

Hermes:

Ha! I can't keep this sort of thing quiet!

Trygeas:

Do, please, Hermes... (*Raises his cloak to reveal his phallus*) For the sake of this here piece of meat I've brought you, remember?

380

Hermes: (*... but then he remembers*)

Mmm... But no! Zeus will make powder out of me if I don't scream and shout my head off about this! (*He prepares to shout but is stopped by Trygeas who's taken a sudden grip of Hermes' phallus*)

Trygeas:

No, no, no! Please, please, huuuuuge Hermes, don't shout just yet. I implore you! (*To the chorus, angrily*) Don't just stand there like dumb twits, you lot! Talk to him, plead with him, otherwise he'll start the shouting!

385

Chorus:

Hermes, our dear, dear Lord! No, no, no! Don't shout, or scream, Hermes, don't! We implore you.

Think of the pleasure you've got when we've sacrificed other piglets on your altar. Don't reject the offerings we make to you now.

Trygeas:

See how they flatter you now, oh great Lord of Lords?

Chorus:

Come, Lord Hermes, don't be so hard on our pleas and let us resurrect this divine woman, Peace. We know how you hate the crests and helmets and eyebrows of warmongers like Peisandros. Come, grant us this request, oh, most philanthropic, most generous of gods and we will give you holy sacrifices and make great processions for you, for ever and ever, amen!

400

Trygeas:

Come on, Hermes, I beg you! Hear their cry and be merciful. See? They honour you more than ever.

Hermes:

That's because, now that they're greater thieves than ever, they've come appealing to me, the god of thieves!

Trygeas: *(Angry now)*

Right! That's it! Now I'm going to tell you something very serious. HUUUGELY serious! Hugely, hugely serious...

Hermes:

Huh?

Trygeas:

There's a plot against all you gods!

405

Hermes:

Come, on, then, tell me. You might just persuade me not to scream.

Trygeas:

Weeeell, Miss Moon up there, and that crafty Mister Sun have been plotting against all you gods for a long time now. They're trying to betray Greece to the barbarians.

409

Hermes:

Why would they want to do that?

Trygeas:

Because, we humans, always sacrifice to you gods, whereas the barbarians always sacrifice to those two. So, of course, Miss Moon and Mister Sun want all of you destroyed so that they alone will be receiving all of our rituals.

Hermes:

So! That's why they've been stealing bits of our days and years. Cut a bit of the day, here, another bit, there... Total thievery!

Trygeas:

Absolutely! That's why, Hermes -oh, dear Hermes, friend, pal, join us in our efforts to raise Peace out of there and we'll do you the honour of celebrating your name in all of the festivals and processions and mysteries and Diopolies and Adonia! Imagine, Hermes! It'll be your name, throughout the whole of the Panathenia. And, when all the other cities also rid themselves of all their war problems, they'll be sacrificing to you as well – Your name will echo everywhere: Hermes the Trouble Shooter! And you'll be getting all of the accompanying benefits as well... *(Takes out of his a golden bowl and offers it to Hermes)* Here! Here is the first benefit from me. Take this bowl for your libations.

425

Hermes:

Ohhhh, how sweet! Gold always softens my heart... All right then. You may do this job. But get your shovels and move those stones quickly!

Chorus:

We will. And you, wisest of all the gods that you are, be our boss and tell us what we should do.

You'll see just what good hands we are. *(They get into it, as before, generally appearing busy. Finally Trygeas emerges dirty and exhausted. Sighs of exhaustion all round)*

Trygeas: *(To Hermes)*

Right! Hermes, prepare the libation cup so that we can praise the gods and work on the goddess.

Hermes: *(Pours wine into the cup, raises it up and commands)*

Silence! Silence all! A libation! We shall now offer words of virtue only.

Trygeas:

With this libation we pray that this day is the first for all the Greeks to receive gifts in abundance... To the man who puts his might behind his pull –at the ropes- let him never be handed a shield! And -

Chorus:

No, by Zeus, hand him a whore instead, and a poker for her little sparklers.

Trygeas: *(Continues)*

To him who'd rather have a war...

Chorus:

I hope Lord Dionysos sees that he never stops pulling thistle prickles from his prick!

Trygeas: *(Directs the following to the hole where Peace is buried)*

And, Great Lady, he who wants to keep you from rising to the light because of some personal military ambition of his, let him, in his battles –

446

Chorus:

Suffer the coward's fate. Cleonymos is his name!

Trygeas: And he whose occupation is to make or sell spears or shields and for the sake of improving his trade constantly yells in favour of wars –

Chorus:

Let him be taken by thieves and beaten up and... let him live only on barley corn!

450

Trygeas:

And he who wants to be a general instead of helping us, or he who is a slave preparing to escape –

Hermes:

Let him be flogged and stretched on the rack!

All look surprised at the severity of the curse but the ceremony continues

Trygeas:

And upon us let only good things fall, amen! Hip hip and a stroke of the prick!

Chorus:

Will you leave that prick of yours alone for once?

455

Trygeas:

All right. I'll just say "hip-hip," all right? (*Looks at Hermes*) And to Hermes, to the Graces, to the Seasons, to Aphrodite, to Desire (*Asks the Chorus*) and to Ares?

Chorus:

No, nonononono! Not to Ares!

Trygeas:

What about Enyalios? No? Any other war gods?

Chorus:

Definitely not! No war gods!

Hermes pours some wine on the ground and drinks the rest

Trygeas:

Come on you lot. Shoulder to the ropes and let's see if we can bring this little darling up.

The men obey but oddly so and unsynchronised.

Hermes:

Pull-ho!

Chorus:

Pull-ha!

Hermes:

Pull-ho!

Chorus:

Pull-ha!

Hermes:

Pull-ho! Pull-ho! Pull-ho!

Trygeas: (*Angry at the chorus*)

Come on, come on! You're not all pulling at the same time. Put a bit of effort into it! This is Peace we're talking about. Don't act like the wimpy, jerky Boetians!

Hermes:

Now, pull!

Trygeas: (*He urges the audience to assist with his new "pull-ho"*)

Pull-ho!

Chorus: (*To Hermes and Trygeas*)

Come on, you two! Join in the pull!

470

Trygeas: (*Quickly takes a rope*)

What do you mean? I'm pulling, ain't I? Can't you see I'm pulling and tripping and studying the work with great care?

Chorus:

So why isn't the work being done, then?

Trygeas: (*He is surprised. Thinks about it, looks up and down the lines of men and deep into the audience*)

Ah, ha! Hey, you! Yes, you there! General Lamachus! You're just hanging around with your war shield obstructing things. Piss off! We've no time for your monster-painted shields! Piss off!

475

Hermes:

And look at those Argives! They're not pulling either. They're just standing around laughing at the other poor sods and I bet they'll still go and claim rations from both sides. They've been doing this for years, now.

Trygeas:

But the Spartans, though, they've been doing a good job, hey? Real man's work!

Chorus:

You know? I can see that it's only the good old carpenters who are really willing to do the pulling. Look there! See? The metal workers are all bums!

481

Hermes:

The Megarians, too. With all their pulling and puffing, they've achieved nothing as well! Look at them! They're tearing at those ropes with their teeth, like starving dogs!

Trygeas:

Men, listen! We're getting nowhere like this. We need to work together, pull together. Now. Let's all grab the ropes together. *(Waits till they all get a hold of the ropes)* Pull! Pull-ha!

Hermes:

Pull-ho!

Trygeas:

Pull-ha!

Hermes:

Pull-ho!

Chorus: *(Stops and scratches his head)*

We haven't moved it very much, have we?

Trygeas:

This is disgraceful! One lot of them is doing it and the other is undoing it! *(To the audience)* You!

You lot! The Argives. Yes, you! You're looking for a flick across the ear, you lot! Sharpen up!

Hermes:

Now pull!

495

Trygeas:

Pull-ha!

Chorus:

Nope, no good! There are traitors amongst us!

Trygeas:

Yeah! Well at least those of you who are yearning for peace are working properly. Like real men.

Chorus:

But there are those who are holding us back.

Hermes: *(Goes over to the hole where Peace is buried, has what looks like a little animated chat with her and comes back)*

You, Megarian pricks! Piss off! That goddess down there remembers you with absolute contempt. She won't come out while you're around, because she remembers well how you were the first to spread garlic all over her. This is the wrong thing to do to a goddess. It's a dreadful insult. And to you, too, Athenians! I say to you, stop pulling from that end over there. That's the legal courts, at that end. All you can do from there is clog the courts. If you want to bring Peace up here with us, then stop your invasions. Stay within your borders! Pull back from the sea a little. No more imperialism!

508

Chorus:

Come on farmers, let's do the pulling all on our own. Forget that lot!

They pull with effort.

Hermes: *(Standing above the hole and instructing)*

That's it! You're doing it, now, men! You're moving her! Now that's much better!

Chorus:

Come on farmers. He says we're doing it. Each and every one of you with all his might!

Trygeas:

Well, look at that! The farmers are doing it all on their own.

Chorus:

Go, men, go! Go, everyone!

Hermes:

Nearly there now!

Chorus:

Don't slow down now, men! Pull harder!

Hermes:

Here she comes!

Chorus:

Pull now, pull! Everyone together. Pull! Pull! Pull! Pull! Pull! Pull! All together!

A group of three women are raised. It is a sight which overwhelms Trygeas, as well as everyone else. Sighs all round to show that.

Trygeas: *(Walks around Peace inspecting her many virtues)*

Ohhhhh! Awesome! Oh, great, great woman you! Oh, glorious Peace! Great giver of grapes! Words have abandoned my poor skull! Where, oh where can I possibly find words that may adequately describe your million virtues? I don't even have one back home! *(Sees the other two women)* Oh, and you, too, Divine Plentiful, greetings. And, oh, yes, you, too Divine Eye-ful! *(Walks around them as well and inspects them closely)* Oh, what beautiful faces! *(Sniffs)* Mmmmm! And what delightful scents you are exuding! They melt my heart. Sweeter than myrrh, sweeter than demilitarisation!

527

Hermes:

It certainly smells better than a soldier's knapsack, hey?

Trygeas: *(He spits in disgust)*

Soldier's knapsack! Bah! I spit upon man's most hateful accessory! It stinks of onions and vinegar and stinky breath and burps... *(Walks around the women again with admiration.)* Whereas these here... sweet, sweet women... *(Takes a deep breath in front of Miss Peace)* Ahhhh! This is the intoxicating aroma of a plentiful harvest, of grand festivals, of Dionysiac orgies. Of flutes and of theatre! Of Sophocles' songs, of the sweet morsels of roasted thrush, of those cute little verses by Euripides –

Hermes: *(Interrupts him)*

Stop! What are you saying? No, not Euripides! You're telling all sorts of lies about our lovely Peace here, and if you're not careful, you'll end up shedding tears in a minute! Peace cannot stand a poet of legal verses! You ought to know that!

535

Trygeas: *(Ignores Hermes and continues with his fantasy)*

...and of ivy and grape crushing machine and sweet little singing sheep and of women bouncing their lovely tits all around the field, and of drunk little slave girls, of toppled wine jugs and...*(wakes up from the fantasy)* plenty of other joys!

Hermes: *(Points at the audience)*

Hahaha! Look at that down there, will you? See with what delight all the citizens of Greece are chatting with each other? See how happily they laugh and chuckle together? Even though they're adorned with cupping cups attached to their dreadful, black eyes! Look! Hahahaha! A black eye! Hahaha every single one of them has a black eye and a cupping cup on it!

543

Trygeas:

Hahaha! Let's see if we can work out what these people do for a living, just by examining their faces.

Hermes:

Nah! It can't be done!

Trygeas:

Sure it can. Look there! See that man there? That one down there, that man tearing his hair out?

Well, he's a helmet maker, isn't he?

Hermes:

Yeah! Hahaha! He sure is! And that's a hoe maker there... Ha! He's just farted in the face of that sword maker, hahahaha!

Trygeas:

And see how happy that man is? He's a maker of sickles. Hahaha! He just stuck his finger up at the spear maker!

550

Hermes:

Right! Now tell the farmers they can go home.

Trygeas: *(Making a speech)*

Farmers, listen to me! You can now go home. Forget your spears and swords and javelins and shields

and pick up your farm tools. Go as quickly as you can because (*Pointing at Peace*) this beautifully matured peace is bursting out everywhere. So... stroke a prick and get to work on your field!
Everyone is surprised by the "stroke the prick comment"

556

Chorus:

Glorious, glorious day! All the farmers and all the other fair-minded people everywhere, how they all yearned for this day! Oh glorious days! How pleased I am to see you again! I want to see my vines and my fig trees which I planted when I was a youngster. I want to see them and hug them after such a long time!

561

Trygeas:

Men, before we all run off to our farms, let's first show our respect to this goddess here, who got rid of all the helmets and crests and the gorgons painted on the shields. And on our way to the field, we should buy some good quality salt fish and have a good rustic meal.

The men gather around the three women for the "showing of respect," phalluses obedient to the moment.

Hermes: (*Pleased at the sight the men make*)

O, Poseidon! Well, look at that! What a lovely bunch they make. Stiff and spirited, like beef cakes at a party!

Trygeas:

Oh yes! What sight their mallets are making as they sparkle and stand rigid and ready, and how their pitchforks glitter in the sun! They could certainly do good work parting the growth between the vines. Hmmmm... Looking at them like this, it's giving me the desire to get back to my own farm and do some pitch forking and malleting of my own. It's been such a long time! (*To the chorus*)

Remember, men? Remember the life we had in the olden days? The life which this beautiful goddess gave us then? All that preserved fruit, and all those figs and the myrtle and the sweet wine and the violets by the clear spring and the olives—all this stuff we've been missing for so long! Now, men. For all those things let's give a great, big thanks to this deity!

Chorus: (*Solemnly*)

Oh beloved goddess, Peace, welcome, welcome! Your return has filled us with joy. We had been overcome with a dire longing for you and for our fields, because you were our greatest gift, the most longed for gift for all us farmers whose life revolves around the land, and our land is our only support during all our suffering. Support which you gave sweetly and freely and with love. You, Peace were the farmer's daily bread and saviour. And all the vines and the young fig trees and all the other plants will also greet you with smiles of joy.

601

Chorus: (*To Hermes*)

But where has this stunning goddess been all this time? Tell us Hermes, oh, most benevolent of all the gods.

Hermes:

Listen, all you farmers! All you who longed for her and want to know how she vanished from you. It all began when our wonderful sculptor, Pheidias, was exiled after that business about... "creative accounting" for which he was charged. Well, his friend and your leader, Pericles, afraid he'd suffer the same fate—because he knew only too well your love for the law courts—started a little "fire" in your city. A tiny spark of it. It was called "The Megarian Decree." You know the one: trade sanctions against Megara. Yes, that's the one. Well, what that little episode achieved was to starve the poor Megarians and to anger the Spartans. This little spark, then, raised so much smoke... a whole war full of smoke, that it brought tears to the eyes of all the Greeks—both, here, in Athens and there, in Megara as well as in Sparta. And, as soon as this here goddess, Peace, heard the sound of the first vine crackling in the conflagration, and the first wine pot kicked in belligerence, and saw that there was no one around to stop this holocaust, she disappeared.

615

Trygeas:

Now, that's one story I haven't heard before! No wonder I could never work out what the relationship was between this beautiful woman and Pheidias.

Chorus:

Neither could I, until now. So that's why she's so beautiful! She's related to Pheidias. God, there's so much we don't know, isn't there?

619

Hermes:

And then, all those cities under you –all those so called allies!- saw that you lot were snarling at each other, so they began a whole lot of plots and schemes against you, to avoid paying you their taxes. They all went over to Sparta and tried to win over their leaders with money. The Spartans, being a greedy bunch –as well as xenophobic- rejected this lovely goddess most rudely and took up the call of War. But what they gained was what their own poor, innocent farmers lost. Because in retaliation, you lot sent your war ships over there and, when you got there, you rushed about on all their farms and ate all their figs!

628

Trygeas: (*Correcting Hermes*)

No, no, no, Hermes! What they did was right. Because the Spartans had chopped down this beautiful tree of black figs which I had planted and nurtured with my own hands. Beautiful, big, black figs!

Chorus:

Trygeas is right, and the Spartans were wrong. Because they had also destroyed a huge chest of mine. They smashed it all up, with rocks. A huge chest, a forty-eight gallon container.

Hermes: (*Ignoring him*)

And so, as for this city here, when the working folk came out of their farms, they had no idea that they were being sold off and because they were without raisins and loved their figs, they looked to the chattering politicians for help. These crooks, though, knowing full well that the farmers were poor, weak and in need of bread, sent this goddess away with screams as sharp as pitchforks. The poor woman did return home, often, because she had missed it so much but these crooks kept sending her away again. Then they started attacking our allies –the rich and fat ones, accusing them of being sympathisers of Brasidas. So what do you, fools, do? Just like stupid little angry puppies, you jumped on the poor man and damned near tore him to pieces! So the poor folk, pale from fear, sat about waiting for any little thing anyone would offer their grumbling stomachs. The foreigners saw all this. They saw the wounds as they were being made and, to silence the perpetrators, they stuffed their mouths with gold, thus making them rich whilst the Greeks were left totally abandoned – and you knew nothing about it! The one single guilty party of all this, was your leader, that leather beater, Cleon.

648

Trygeas:

Enough, Lord Hermes, enough! Say no more. Leave that awful man, that tanner, Cleon, where he is – down below. He's not amongst us any more, he's amongst you lot, down there, in the underworld. You can say what you like about him: that he was cunning, that he was a big mouth and a sycophant, and a shit-stirrer and a stirrer of all other things. But now, all these insults apply to one of your lot –the lot that's carked it! (*To Peace*) But tell me, you delicious thing, why are you silent?

Hermes:

Nah, she won't talk in front of this lot of rabble (*indicating the audience*) She's still very angry with all the shit they've put her through.

660

Trygeas:

Well, tell her to whisper in your ear, then.

Hermes: (*Approaches Peace and leans to her ear*)

Tell me, darling, what do you think about all this? What's on your mind? (*Peace shakes her head and refuses to talk*) Come on dearest... (*shakes her head again*) Come, dear woman, hater of army buckles, speak to me! (*She leans and whispers*) Ohhhh! I get it! Yes. So, that's what's bugging you? Right! (*More whispers*) Gotsa! (*To the audience*) Listen you lot. Listen to her complaint! She says that after what had happened at Pylos, she came back to you with a basketful of treaties but your Assembly voted them all down. (*More whispers by Peace*) Three times!

Trygeas:

Yes, our fault, Peace, but, please, forgive us for that. We did it then because our brains were clogged with... leather sandals by Cleon–that was the fashion at the time! Curse that skin beater!

660

Hermes: (*More whispering between him and Peace*)

Ah! And here's another thing she wants to know: She's eager to know who amongst you here was her greatest enemy and who her greatest follower, that is to say who was against war.

Trygeas:

Well, the man who loved her the most by far, was Cleonymos. He certainly loved his peace, that man!

675

Hermes:

And what was that Cleonymos like in the battlefield?

Trygeas: (*Sarcastically*)

Oh, excellent! Tremendous fighting spirit, that man! Except that... well, he wasn't his father's son –if you get what I mean- and so, whenever he went off with the boys to the battlefield, he behaved towards his weapons in the same manner which his father behaved towards him. His weapons would suddenly become changelings! Hahahaha!

Hermes: (*After more whispers*)

Ah, yes. She also wants to know who the Speaker is in the Assembly these days.

Trygeas:

That's Hyperbolus' job, that one. (*Peace is disgusted and turns to leave*) Hey, what are you doing? Where are you off to?

Peace throws a quick whisper at Hermes and continues towards her exit.

Hermes:

She's disgusted with you. Fancy choosing such a scheming, crook to lead you! You'll be back into a war path in no time again.

685

Trygeas:

Oh, no need for her to worry about that stupid man. He's temporary. It's just that right now there's a leadership vacuum. People need the garment of leadership, otherwise they feel naked, so, for the moment they covered themselves with Hyperbolus.

Hermes: (*More whispers*)

She's asking how could this new... wrapper possibly help the city.

Trygeas:

We'll become more enlightened thinkers.

Hermes:

How's that?

690

Trygeas:

Because Hyperbolus happens to be a lamp maker by trade, see? Before him we were groping about in the dark. Now we'll be doing all the thinking by lamp light.

More whispers. This time they become a little protracted.

Hermes: (*Finally*)

Oh, God! The things she wants to know!

Trygeas:

What things?

Hermes:

So many, many, many things! Nostalgia! The old stuff that was around before she left... Sophocles, for example. How is he, these days?

696

Trygeas:

Excellently... and something weird is happening to him.

Hermes:

Like what?

Trygeas:

He... he's turning into a Simonides.

Hermes:

Simonides? How?

Trygeas:

Stingy, miserly bastard, in his old age. So stingy that Euripides says, "to save money, Sophocles would go to sea in a bucket... full of holes!"

700

Hermes: (*Laughs*)

What about old Cratinous, Aristophanes' rival. Is he still with us?

Trygeas:

Carked it. Around about the time the Spartans invaded us.

Hermes:

What did he die of?

Trygeas:

What of? Well, actually, he just dropped dead. I suppose he just couldn't cope with the sight of a full jug of wine being smashed by the enemy, just like that! Rotten Spartans. (*To Peace*) The number of

things that went on after you left! Oh, dear, dear dear Woman! Don't ever leave us again! (*He goes and tightly hugs Peace*) I'll never ever let you go again!

706

Hermes:

Well, then. If that's the case, take Divine Plentiful here, live with her in your farm and husband her and... may she give you a fine bunch of grapeplings!

Trygeas:

Come sweetie, come here and give me your bum. (*Leans towards Hermes and shyly confides*) Hey, Master Hermes. It's been such a long time for me... Do you think there's any harm in my tucking myself into this lovely woman?

Hermes:

Nah! Not if you follow it with a mouthful of her juices. Now, take also Divine Eyeful here and give her to the Council. She knows them well. She's spent a long time with them.

715

Trygeas: (*To the audience*)

Oh, you happy little councilors, you! The juices you'll be licking from this lovely woman during your days off! They'll go well with all those sausages and chops. Oh, yes! (*Hermes is about to leave with Peace*) Goodbye for now, Hermes and be happy always!

Hermes:

You, too, friendly mortal. Infinite joy to you and remember me always.

720

Trygeas: (*Looks up and shouts*)

Beetle? Hey beetle! Come on down now, dung bug. We've got to go home now! *Hermes hears Trygeas and turns back to explain.*

Hermes:

Oh, your beetle isn't here any more.

Trygeas:

Where is he?

Hermes:

As Euripides once said, "he's harnessed to Zeus' cart and carries the lightning bolt for him!"

Trygeas:

But what's the poor thing going to eat up there?

Hermes:

He'll be fed on the ambrosia choofed out by Zeus' little boyfriend, Ganymede

725

Trygeas:

Oh, I see... But how will I get back down there? (*Indicating the audience*)

Hermes:

Don't worry, just go this way... through the gates, past Peace, here.

Trygeas:

This way girls. Quickly, follow me. (*Looking back at the audience anxiously*) There's a great number of pricks waiting for you back home and everyone of them, passionately erect for you! So hurry!

Trygeas with Eyeful and Plentiful go through the central door, past Peace. After a moment, they are followed by Hermes and Peace.

729

Chorus:

Joy be with you all! Right, men. We better hand over our tools to our servants to guard because there are always thieves lurking around theatres and they're always up no good. (*To the servants*) Now men, you take good care of all this stuff while we tell these good people in the audience the path our words are taking, what we've got on our minds. (*While the rest of the men gather their tools, he turns to the audience. Seriously*) So good folks, we're at that part of the play called the *Parabasis*, that is, *Digression*. And, let me tell you! Those comic poets who use this time to sing praises to themselves, with cute little anapests, should be beaten with sticks... However! If, oh, sweet, sweet Muse, darling daughter of Zeus, if it is considered proper to praise the best, the most renown Professor of comedy, in the entire world, then, well then, our poet says he certainly deserves a huge speech of it!

Firstly, then, this poet was the first man ever to stop his rivals from using rags in their jokes and making jokes by waging silly wars on lice! And! This is also the first man –this poet of ours who is imbued with excellence – who has chased off this sacred stage, one *bread-making-but-ever-starving-Hercules* after another! Our brilliant poet has sent the lot off them packing with his witty ridicule. And! Our excellent poet has sent packing also all those slaves who'd always run away after cheating

their masters. All those scenes with unsolicited beatings. You know the sort of stuff I'm talking about. The sort which is there just to raise a laugh. For example:

Man 1 is hopping around in extreme agony, as if he had just been whipped, back and front. Man 2 is watching him and laughing.

Man 2:

Hehehe! What's happened to your skin, hey? Was your master's whip so fierce in its attack that it invaded your bum and tore its forest out? Hahahaha!

Chorus:

Well, our great poet got rid of all that heavy, dirty, uncouth dung and replaced it with *high art* – built great towers with huge words and intellect and jokes that are not merely the currency of the market place. And! He does not, as Cleon suggested after seeing our poet's *Wasps* last year, he does not make jokes, ridiculing the little people –the common man and woman. No! Our poet, with his Herculean might and manner took on the fiercest of all monsters. The poor man had to wade through the stench of raw leather and all the insulting and mad tossing that goes on in there! So, our excellent poet would have the right to say:

Aristophanes:

First of all, I fought a battle with that shark-toothed beast whose eyes fill you with more dread than those of our own darling whore, Cynna! Cynna the Bitch! They flashed rays of raw fear, Cleon's eyes did, and all around his head were the heads of one hundred bum-lickers, spinning about him frantically, licking and moaning and licking and moaning, and his voice was like a mountain-slicing torrent, the very father of devastation, and his smell, his smell was putrid, like that of a seal, and his balls, his balls were... his balls were like... (*points at someone in the audience*) Lamia's balls –only unwashed! And he had the bum hole of a camel! Phewwww, what a stench!

Chorus:

That was our Cleon. And then our poet could go on with:

Aristophanes:

This gruesome spectacle did not weaken my resolve one bit! No, I stood there and fought for you and for all our island folk. So, it's now proper that you should remember all this and pay me some recompense. And remember also my earlier good deeds. Remember that I wasn't one of those who, after he finished his work, he'd hang around all the wrestling pits, hoping to run a boy through my spit. No, I just quickly gathered together my tools of trade and left the scene, leaving behind me a great deal of joy and little only pain and having given a satisfactory service. This is why, you must, all of you, men, boys and all you baldies at the back –yes, particularly you lot- you must all come and be on my side and vote for me to get the first prize in this contest of comedy. Then, every guest of a dinner or party would say, 'here, give this to the baldy, give baldy more sweets and don't hold back to the man whose talent outshines the patch on his head.'

775

Chorus:

Oh, Muse! Come dance with me and forget about the war. Celebrate with me the weddings of the gods, the feasts of mortals and the great galas of the rich, because, these, after all, were the themes of your first songs, weddings and feasts and parties. And should that tragedian, Carcinous, comes to you, begging you to dance with his boys, say no. Refuse to be their workmate. Remember, they are little home birds. Little prickless quails, with long necks and short arses, no more than shit clippings, hunters of little monkey tricks. Remember, their father once said that he had finished –wishfully thinking that is- a play, a whole play, mind you, a whole play, he said but oh... the poor, poor man, what rotten luck, the ferret snatched it away from him!

And so, the Graces, with their adorable, long hair should sing in public this sort of hymns to our poet:

Man 3:

In Spring when the swallow's song is joyful to the ear and our tragedian Morsimos, is rejected a chorus for his plays and when Melanthios... is also rejected a chorus – My God! Melanthios, our choreographer! What bitter words were spat at those tragedians whose choruses were directed by this Melanthios and by his brother! Both of them Gorgons of the High Kitchen, Harpes, with sting ray eyes, show offs to the old women, disgusting stench of goat-and-fish plague in their armpits... Upon those two, oh, Muse, oh Goddess, spit broadly and heavily..

Chorus:

...and then come and play with me!

ACT TWO

Scene 1

As in Act 1: At Trygeas' house. Enter Trygeas with Eyeful and Plentiful on each arm. They are all tired and Trygeas is limping.

819

Trygeas: (*To the audience*)

What a tough job I had, going all the way up to the gods! My legs, oh my poor, poor legs! They're totally stuffed. Gone! (*Pause. Peers at the audience*) God, you look tiny from up there, from the heavens! And from up there, from the heavens, you look like... like a pack of shits! But then again, looking at you from down here, you look even worse!

Enter a slave.

Slave:

You're back, master?

Trygeas:

So I hear. (*Limps about*).

825

Slave:

What's wrong with you?

Trygeas:

My legs! They've had it. The trip was too long for them.

Slave:

So, tell me then –

Trygeas:

Tell you what, then?

Slave:

Did you see any other men flying about in the sky?

Trygeas:

Nah –only the souls of a couple of bad poets.

830

Slave:

Doing what?

Trygeas:

Tumbling about in the clouds, collecting airy fairy verses.

Slave:

So, what they say about us becoming stars after death is wrong, then?

Trygeas:

O, no! That part is right! Of course we do! Of course we become stars!

Slave:

Yeah? So, who's a star, then?

835

Trygeas: Ion of Chios for example –composer of *The Morning Star*. Dead and buried for a while now... As soon as he got up there, everyone began calling him *Morning Star*, so, he's become a star.

Slave:

And what about those stars that shoot across the sky full of fire?

Trygeas:

They're some of the rich stars. Going home after the party, holding their lighted lanterns. (*Indicating Plentiful*) This here is Divine Plentiful. Take her inside, now, quickly. Scrub the bath tub clean, heat some water and get the wedding bed ready for us. When you've finished come back down here. In the meantime, I'll take Eyeful here to the Council.

Slave: (*Awestruck*)

Master! Where did you get these two?

Trygeas:

Where else? From Heaven!

Slave: (*Disgusted now*)

What sort of gods are they that they're into sex harvesting, like us, mortals? That's it! I've lost my faith, now! Religion is not worth a cracker to me any more!

850

Trygeas:

Oh, no, they're not into pimping, really, though, there are those who live off such women!

Slave: (*To Plentiful*)

Come with me, darling. (*To Trygeas*) Should I give her something to eat?

Trygeas:

Nothing. No bread, no cake. She's only used to slurping. Up there, with the gods, she was slurping ambrosia.

Slave:

Well then, we ought to get something for her to slurp, down here as well.

Exit Slave and Plentiful.

Chorus:

It seems that our old guy, Trygeas, is happy.

Trygeas: *(Rubbing his hands with glee)*

Nah, this is nothing. Wait till you see what a brilliant groom I make!

860

Chorus:

Oh yes. I can see that! All it takes is a bit of perfume and presto! An old man becomes the envy of the young!

Trygeas: *(Delirious with joy)*

Tralalalala! Oh, yessssss! I'll be there, in bed, with her, holding her titties, mmmmm!

Chorus:

Your prick will be happier than Carcinous dancing one of his whirly gigs.

865

Trygeas:

Too right! Don't I deserve it though? Was I not the man who rode the dung beetle's bum and the one who saved all the Greeks so that they can have their choice of fuck or sleep, in peace at home, or in the open field?

Enter the Slave

Slave:

Master, the girl has finished her bath and her bum is wiped sparkling clean, her cunt is placated, the sesame rolls are rising now and all is perfect... only the prick is to come.

Trygeas:

Well, then, let's hurry and hand Eyeful here to the Council.

Slave:

What do you mean? This girl here? Is this the one we used to have in Artemis' honour? Bonking and drinking at the festivals of the girls' initiation ceremonies, at Vrauvron? Is this the one?

875

Trygeas:

That's her, precisely. And I tell you, she wasn't an easy catch either!

Slave: *(Checking her out all around)*

O, master! What a stunning bum she's got! Twice the value! No, thrice, no- four times the value of your ordinary bum!

Trygeas: *(To the audience)*

Right. Now! Which one of you is an honest, trustworthy man? No one? Not even one? Shame on you! Who'll look after this girl here for the Council? *(To the slave who was making all sorts of suggestive gestures behind his back about the girl)* Oi! What are you up to?

880

Slave:

Uh... I'm checking out the landscape. This bit here, between her legs, for example, is the Isthmus. That's where the Isthmian games are usually held and I'm reserving a spot here... for my prick.

Trygeas: *(Back to the audience)*

You still haven't found me a bodyguard? *(To Eyeful)* Come with me, darling. I'll take you around myself and sit you down... *(moving towards the centre of the front row)* right there. Smack in the middle of them.

Slave: *(Before Trygeas and Eyeful get there)*

Hang on! Someone is making signs at you.

Trygeas:

Who?

Slave:

Ha! Well, look at that! It's Arifrathis. He's pleading with you to take her to him!

Trygeas:

Certainly not! He'll pounce on her and suck the poor woman dry in no time. *(To Eyeful)* Come, Eyeful, take your clothes off and put them right here on the ground. *(She does so. He addresses the audience who has by now become the Council)* You, Council, Chairmen of the Executive Committee! Look at young Eyeful here... Just think of what wondrous pleasures I've brought for you. Lift her legs up a bit and immediately you've entered a feast! And check out this little kitchen of hers!

Slave:

Oh, yeah! It's beautiful! So, dark, so smoky, so... pre-loved! And no wonder, too. That's where the Council did all its stirring before the war.

Trygeas:

Now! First thing tomorrow morning you may hold a lovely athletic competition with her. A wrestling match, if you want. The real stuff. Stand her on all fours, for example, give her the full bit, side grips, knee grips, head grips, grips by young pricks, burrowing with fists and dicks, oil her all over... Then the following day you can have a... racing competition. One filly shall race side by side with another, and the chariots, all overturned onto a pile at the finishing line, some of them will be still huffing and puffing and others will be just lying there, thoroughly de-pricked, stuffed, collapsed. So, members of the Executive, accept this young Eyeful here. (*One of the members of the Chorus snaps her up and runs off with her, out of the stage*) Wow! The keenness of that man! That's the Members of the Executive for you! Ask them to do something for nothing for you and they go crazy waving their hands about for "time-out!"

Chorus:

How useful for our people you are, Trygeas!

Trygeas:

And when you gather your vine harvest, that's when you'll see just how truly useful I am!

Chorus:

We can see it already. You are the saviour of all humanity.

916

Trygeas: (*Meaning Eyeful*)

And wait till you've drunk the first cup of her new vintage!

Chorus:

And next to the gods we'll always think of you, as the greatest.

Trygeas:

Ah, yes! I am, indeed, very worthy of your praise. After all, I am Trygeas, of Athmonios, liberator of the common folk and farmers, from much terrible pain. And I've put a stop to Hyperbolos' doings!

923

Slave:

So, Trygeas, what's your next act?

Trygeas:

What else, except to install the pots of plants on the goddess' altar?

Slave:

What? Pots of plants! Vegies, like wimpy Hermes?

925

Trygeas:

What do you suggest then? A fatted bull?

Slave:

Bull? Never! No more bullish stuff for me!

Trygeas:

A big, fat pig, then?

Slave:

No, oh absolutely not!

Trygeas:

Why not?

Slave:

We don't want to end up as pigs, like Theogenous.

Trygeas:

Well, what's left then?

Slave:

Blah, blah sheep!

930

Trygeas:

Blah, blah, sheep?

Slave:

That's it! By Zeus, I think you've got it! Blah, blah, sheep!

Trygeas:

But that's Ionian pronunciation.

Slave:

Precisely! I did that on purpose. So that if someone in the Assembly yells out, “we need to go to war,” the others will be able to yell back in fear, “blah, blah –

Trygeas: *(Interrupts him)*

Yeah, right, good idea, slave, blah, blah!

Slave:

...and we'd be gentle with everything. So that we'll adopt the ways of the little sheep when we relate to each other. And we'll be much softer on our allies.

Trygeas:

All right, then, go and get this little blah-blah lamb of yours as quick as you can and I'll get us the altar for the sacrifice.

Exit Slave

Chorus:

Oh yes, indeed! When God wills and Fortune favours we get all our wishes at the appropriate time.

Trygeas:

You're so right about that. *(Points at the stage altar of Dionysos)* Look, there's an altar right in front of the gate.

Chorus:

Hurry then, Trygeas while the gods still have a strong hold of the winds keeping them away from War. It's obvious. The goddess Peace is changing things for the good.

Slave enters with sacrificial implements, Branches, kindling, knives, etc.

Slave:

Got everything here, Master! Let's see. The basket, the barley corn, a wreath, a knife, kindling, me... nope, nothing's missing... Ah! Except the lamb!

Runs off to get it. Trygeas is trying to light the fire but is having some difficulties.

Chorus:

You realise you're competing for time with Chaeris, the flute player, don't you? Because the moment he sees you, he'll be over here, uninvited and huffing and puffing at his flute, till you hand him over a tip.

Slave returns with lamb.

Trygeas: *(To the slave)*

Now then. You take the basket and the water and then make a circle round the altar *(Slave begins but errs)* No, from left to right!

Slave: *(completes the task)*

Done. Now what?

959

Trygeas:

Right. Now, I'll take these branches, dip them in the water and sprinkle it on the little lamb's head to get its permission. Now, come on little chop, please, nod your little head. You know you want us to sacrifice you don't you. And you know we can't do it until you nod your approval, don't you? So come on, little choppy, nod your head... I promise you, you'll go straight to Heaven! *(Lamb refuses to do so)* Stupid sheep! Come on, nod! *(it does so)* Ah, that's a good little lamb. *(To the slave)* Quick, now hand me some barley corn *(Slave obeys and Trygeas sprinkles the barley corn all over the lamb)* Now wash your hands and throw the rest of it to the audience.

Slave: *(Does so)*

Done!

Trygeas:

Already?

Slave:

Sure have! I assure you there isn't a man amongst them who hasn't got a barley corn –or two- under his tunic.

966

Trygeas:

None for the women?

Slave:

Barley corn? No. But their husbands will give them some tonight.

Trygeas:

Good. Now let us pray... *(Solemnly)* All innocent and virtuous men approach the altar... *(Silence.*

Trygeas realises that no one is approaching) What? Are there no virtuous men amongst us?

Slave:

Hang on, I'll get them for you. (*Chases the chorus around and sprinkles some water on them. Stops and waits a second or two*) Here they are. Plenty of innocent and virtuous men here!

970

Trygeas:

You call them innocent and virtuous?

Slave:

But of course! Didn't they go right around and back to the starting point after I sprinkled them with water?

Trygeas:

Let's hurry then and say the prayer.

Slave:

Yes, let's!

Trygeas: (*Regains his solemn posture*)

Oh, most dignified and sovereign goddess, blessed Peace. Mistress of all the choruses and the weddings! Accept today this our sacrifice.

Slave:

Yes, do that, oh, most worthy one and, in Zeus' name don't behave like those slutty silly women who first open their gates a crack until some man notices them and then as soon as he does, slam them shut, only to open them again once the man's gone. Damned cock teasers! Please don't do that to us!

987

Trygeas:

Oh, no, dear Peace! Please no! Don't do that to us! Just show yourself completely and bravely to us! We are your lovers, and we've missed you dearly for the last thirteen years. Please free us from battles and from shit stirring so that we may call you Lysimahe, undoer of wars! Cleanse our heads from all that fancy rhetoric which destroys all our meetings. (*Goes into deep, nostalgic, passionate reverie*).

Start again with us Greeks, please, Peace. Right from the beginning and mix in us the juices of friendship and forgiveness; and mingle in our minds some moderation. Fill our markets with good stuff, including Megarian garlic, first grade figs, apples and pomegranates and cute little cloaks for our slaves. Let the Boetians bring to us their geese, ducks, pigeons and larks and let us also see basketfuls of eels from Lake Copais. And oh, how I'd like to see once again the jostling that takes place around those stalls, all the rushing and arguing that used to go on, down there! And there would also be Morychus, Teleas, Glaucetes and every other garbage guts arguing amongst us! Oh what a sight it would make to see Melanthios get there late, after everything had been sold and squeal in despair, after which squeals he'd sing us a solo from his own *Medea*. I can hear it now:

"Oh me, oh my, I'm lost without those girls, the ones who sleep amid the beetroot furls!"

The people would be so happy with his loss. (*Wakes up*) So, most revered goddess, Peace, we pray to you, to grant us all of this. (*To the slave*) Now take the knife and slaughter the lamb—but do a good job of it. Do it like a real cook.

Slave:

But that's not appropriate, master.

Trygeas:

Why not?

Slave:

It's not going to make Peace very happy if we go about spilling blood on her altar!

1021

Trygeas:

Well, then... (*Thinks for a second*) I know! Go inside, sacrifice the sheep, cut off its thighs and bring them here. That way we'll be able to save the rest of the carcass for our chorus sponsor.

The slave goes into the house with the lamb.

Chorus:

You, Trygeas, in the meantime, get the fire wood ready. Arrange it properly and place everything as it should be.

Trygeas: (*Does so on the altar*)

Right. See? Haven't I done this in the proper, prophet's manner?

Chorus:

You sure have. Is there anything that wise men know that you don't Trygeas? You certainly possess every bit of knowledge that a man who's wise and has a cunning daring, possesses.

Trygeas: (*Lights the fire*)

There! We have fire! And the fire is spinning the wits of our prophet, Stilvithis... (*Looks around, then...*) Oh, I'll get the table myself. Who needs a slave?

Exit Trygeas

1033

Chorus:

Now who wouldn't praise such a man, hey! He has endured so much to save our city! That's one man who'll always be admired by everyone here.

Enter Trygeas with a table and the slave with the thighs. The slave is badly stained with the blood of the sheep.

Slave:

All done, master. Now, here, you take the thighs and put them on the fire and I'll go and get the innards and the other stuff.

Slave goes back inside and takes a little too long to get back outside.

Trygeas: (*Calls after him*)

Come, on, where are you? I've got to do this now! Come on, where are they? They should have been here by now. Come on!

Slave comes out again, rushing, holding the offerings. Even more blood on him.

Slave:

I'm hurrying, I'm hurrying! Here I am!

Slave puts offerings on the altar and takes up fork, knife, prongs, ready for a BBQ.

Trygeas:

Now cook them properly because I can see someone coming over. Look he's wearing a laurel crown on his skull!

1045

Slave:

Now I wonder who on earth it is. Looks like a real wanker. Either that or a prophet. What do you think? Do you think he's a prophet?

Trygeas:

Ha, ha! No, that's Hierocles. Not a prophet but an oracle spinner. Athens' official reader of oracles! Phoo! They gave him a piece of land for that, at Oreus.

Slave:

So, what prophesy is he going to spin for us today?

Trygeas:

He's obviously going to make some objections to our Peace discussions with Sparta. There is less need for his sort during Peace. Only war mongers want to know (*Sarcastically*) "what's going to happen? What's going to happen?"

1050

Slave:

Nah, I think he's just been sucked here by this lovely cooking aroma!

Trygeas:

Let's pretend we don't see him.

Slave:

Good idea.

Enter Hierocles, wearing a laurel crown and sheep skins and holding a prophet's staff (with cotton wool wrapped around its tip)

Hierocles:

What sacrifice is this and for which of the gods?

Trygeas: (*To the slave*)

Shut up and cook... and watch the rump, now!

Hierocles:

Won't you tell me to whom are you sacrificing?

Trygeas: (*To the slave*)

The tail is cooking well.

1051

Slave:

It certainly is! Oh, dear, dear, loving Peace!

Hierocles:

Come on, then, start the cutting and give me the first cuts. They belong to the priests.

Trygeas:

We have to cook the thing first!

Hierocles:

But this bit here is done.

Trygeas:

Stop meddling, you – whoever you are! *(To the slave)* Start the carving.

Slave:

Where's the table?

Trygeas:

Bring the wine for the libation.

1060

Hierocles:

You have to cut the tongue separately.

Trygeas:

We know, but do you know what you should do?

Hierocles:

No, tell me.

Trygeas:

Stop your yammering. We're conducting a sacrifice for Peace, here!

Hierocles: *(Takes on the air of a seer and goes on uttering his oracular words in a solemn manner, selectively ignoring the interjections)*

Oh, mortals! How pitiful and moronic –

Trygeas:

To you too!

Hierocles:

-mortals who, in your ignorance of the minds of gods you make treaties with fierce-eyed monkeys –

1066

Trygeas:

Hahahaha!

Hierocles:

What are you laughing about?

Trygeas:

“Fierce-eyed monkeys!” That's a beauty!

Hierocles:

-and like pigeons in tremulous trepidation listen to the words of the cubs of foxes who are treacherous of heart and treacherous of mind!

Trygeas:

Sly tosser! I hope your lungs burn like this meat is burning now!

1070

Hierocles:

-Oh, alas! If only the Nymphs had not fooled poor Vakis and if poor Vakis had not fooled the mortals or if the Nymphs fooled Vakis himself-

Trygeas:

Either you stop this Vakis crap or you're dead meat!

Hierocles:

-Oh but no! Not yet! It has not been written that the ties of Peace be undone before –

Trygeas:

-before we sprinkle salt upon the meat!

1075

Hierocles:

-But no, it is not the wish of the gods that the war shall end till the wolf deflowers the lamb-

Trygeas:

What? And how do you suppose a wolf will deflower a lamb you damned fool?

Hierocles:

So long as the dung beetle farts stinky farts while in full flight and so long as the bitch, in her hurry to give birth gives birth to blind puppies, it is not yet the time for the Greeks to make Peace.

1080

Trygeas:

So what should we do? Don't end the fighting? Draw lots as to which of us – Athens or Sparta- should

suffer the most? Or wouldn't it better if we simply make a peace treaty with each other and rule the whole of Greece together?

Hierocles:

-You can never make a crab walk straight!

Trygeas:

Nor will you ever be fed at the taxpayer's expense at the Prytaneum in the future nor make prophecies... retrospectively!

1086

Hierocles:

-Never shall you be able to make smooth the prickly back of porcupines!

Trygeas:

And what about you? Will you never stop trying to trick the Athenians?

Hierocles: *(Ends his oracular posture)*

By what oracle are you burning these thighs for the gods?

Trygeas:

By which oracle? By that scrumptious one, made by Homer. The one which goes like this: "And so, they shed themselves of the most hateful of clouds and their enemy, War, and accepted Peace and there they established an altar. And after they burnt offerings of thighs and entrails they poured libations from cups and... I was the one who led the ceremony! But to the oracle spinner no one passed to him the glittering goblet," so piss off!

1095

Hierocles:

I'm not part of the Homeric lot. I'm in the Sibyllian group and she hasn't said any of this.

Trygeas:

But the wise Homer also said this bit of brilliant truth, though: "Without a clan, without a law and without a fireplace is he who loves the dreadful war, in his own home town." By Zeus, he was a wise man, that Homer!

Hierocles: *(Back to the seer posture)*

Harken unto me oh mortals, lest some cunning weasel shall trick your wits and snatch –

1101

Trygeas: *(To the slave)*

Did you hear that? He said "snatch." Look out because that last oracle of his is directed at the innards. Pour some libation now and bring me some of the innards.

Hierocles:

If that's what you think, then I, too, will be my own bath attendant and serve myself. *(Tries to snatch some of the meat nearest to him but Trygeas stops him.)*

Trygeas:

A libation! A libation!

Hierocles:

Pour some for me, too and let me have some innards.

1106

Trygeas:

But the blessed gods would not like this before this happens: We make the libation and you piss off! *(Raise the cup)* O, Great Peace! Be with us throughout our whole lives!

Trygeas and the slave drink joyfully from their cup. Hierocles is envious –and hungry!

Hierocles:

Make an offering of the tongue!

Trygeas:

And you, you take your own tongue and both of you, piss off! Right. A libation!

Slave: *(To Hierocles)*

Yeah, and with it cop this! *(Hits him on the head)*

Hierocles:

Ouch! Will no one give me any of the innards?

Trygeas:

Not before the wolf fucks the sheep!

Hierocles: *(Drops to his knees)*

Please, I'm on my knees! I'm begging you!

Trygeas:

You're wasting your time, begging me –at least not until you make smooth the skin of the prickly porcupine! *(To the audience)* Now, you lot, come and share the innards with us.

1117

Hierocles:

What about me?

Trygeas:

You? You go and eat your Sybil.

Hierocles: *(Tries to snatch the meat)*

No, by God! You two aren't eating all this. I'm grabbing it myself. It's for all of us.

Trygeas and the Slave attack him

Trygeas:

Beat this man! Beat this... this Bakis! Beat him!

Hierocles:

Witnesses! Are there any witnesses? I need a witness to witness this terrible assault!

1120

Trygeas:

So do I! I need a witness to witness the fact that you're a garbage guts and a sly shit of a man. Give it to him, folks! The sly braggard!

Slave:

No, you do that. I'll rip these sheepskins off his back. He's pinched them off some other poor bugger by some sneaky means! *(To Hierocles)* Take them off, you oracle spinner!

1125

Trygeas: *(To Hierocles)*

You heard him! *(Hierocles obeys and, naked, runs away)* The old vulture is off to his little Oreus – skinless as the day he was born! Fly off now, boy. Straight to Elymnum!

Slave and Trygeas go into the house. During the speech of the Chorus, tables are brought out, with food and drinks.

Scene 2

Chorus:

I'm so happy, yes so happy to have shed my helmet and army cheese and onions. Because I'm not happy when I'm in battle but I am when I drink with my good friends by the fire place by the blazing logs.

Chorus:

Ah the logs we cut in summer, when the sun burnt them dry! There I'd roast the chick peas and acorns and there, by its sweet fire, I'd screw the maid from Thrace... while the wife was having a bath!

1140

Chorus:

What better joy is there, than when the god spatters his rain on the planted seed and a neighbour says to you:

Man 1:

Tell me, Chief Dick, how shall we pass the time?

Man 2:

I think, since the god's behaving so well towards , we should get us well and drunk.

Man 3:

And, you, wife, dry the chick peas –three cups of them and mix some barley-corn with them and give us some figs in the meantime.

Man 1:

And... tell Syra to call Manes from the field. You can't prune the vines on a day like this, or turn the soil. The ground's just too wet.

Man 2:

And I'd like to have the thrush and the finches and the sour milk and the four hares –unless the cat ran off with them all last night! I heard this noise in the house last night I couldn't work out what it was.

Man 3:

Hey, slave, bring us three hares for now and give one to daddy. Oh, and then go past Aeschines' house and ask him for some myrtle branches, some of those with berries on them... oh, and on your way there...

Man 1:

...call past Charinades' house and ask him to come and drink with us since the god is doing such a good job with our land.

1159

Chorus:

When I hear the chirpers chirp their pretty songs I cry with joy.

Man 1:

When I wander through my Lemnian vines to see if they're ripe yet –for they are the first of Nature's fruits to ripen, those vines from Lemnos...

Man 2:

and when I see the figs swell up and begin to bulge, I am the happiest of men. I eat there and then...

Man 3:

I eat some more and all the while I say, "Oh, Seasons, Seasons, beautiful Seasons, how I love you!"

Man 1:

Then I crush some thyme and make a drink. That's how I get fat, living like this throughout the whole of Summer.

1172

Chorus:

Far better than standing in front of some god-hated general whose head is heavy with a three-plumed helmet and his back with the army cloak –the sharpest possible scarlet, which he calls, "The Sardian shade!" But then, put the idiot into the real battle and his pretty, scarlet cloak ends up being the shade of shit, dye supplied with the compliments of his own bum!

Man 1:

And he'll be the first to run off to the hills, like a cock-horse while I'm left standing there, like a lookout at the rabbit traps.

Man 2:

These generals! Oh, yes! And when they're posted at home their behaviour is absolutely intolerable. Some of us they put on the roster whereas others they strike off it once or twice or three times some times, just as the whim takes them.

Man 3:

We may need to move out the following day and the idiot hadn't brought enough provisions because he didn't know he had to go.

Man 1:

So he stops in front of the statue of Zeus Almighty where the roster is posted and there reads his name. At once he's stunned and runs off in a flood of tears.

Man 2:

That's how they treat the poor farmers.

Chorus:

Not so bad for the city folk, but these war pushers, god-hated one and all, know nothing except how to throw their shield away and run. Ah, they'll pay for it yet! Big lions during peace but sly little foxes during battle!

Enter Trygeas and the slave from the house. Trygeas is adorned with party decorations, one of which is a helmet plume stuck into his hair.

1191

Trygeas:

My God, what a lot of people at my wedding feast! (*Hands his Slave the plume*) Here, take this and dust the tables. It's useless for anything else now. Then bring out the cakes and the thrushes and the rabbits and the bread sticks.

Enter a sickle maker, carrying some sickles and a friend of his, carrying some casks.

Sickle maker:

Who is Trygeas?

Trygeas:

I'm here, cooking thrushes!

Sickle maker:

Oh, great friend Trygeas! What wonderful stuff this Peace you made has brought us! Until now, no one would pay a cracker for my sickles. Now they're giving me fifty drachmas each. And this man here gets three drachs for his farm casks! Here, Trygeas, take some sickles and some of these casks as dowry for your wedding. These are wedding gifts we got you from the profits.

1207

Trygeas:

Thank you very much. Put them down here now and quickly run inside for the dinner because here's a man selling arms and he looks mean and angry.

The sickle maker and the cask maker enter the house. Enters an Arms dealer, wearing a richly plumed helmet, carrying a breast plate and a bugle. He is followed by two companions, one carrying more helmets and the other some spears. They approach Trygeas.

Arms Dealer:

Damn you, Trygeas! You have ruined me!

Trygeas:

What's up, fool? No more plumes?

Arms Dealer:

You've destroyed my trade and my life! Same as him and him!

Trygeas:

Have I? Ohhhh! Well, how much do you want for those two plumes of yours?

1215

Arms Dealer:

What will you give me?

Trygeas:

What will I give you? I'd be ashamed to give you anything, really! (*Examines the helmet from the distance*) Well, I can see the clasp has been put together with some pain and effort... I'll give you three buckets of figs. (*Aside*) So that I can dust the tables with the plumes.

Arms Dealer:

All right, bring them to us. (*Pulls the plumes off the helmet and hands them to Trygeas, then leans to his friend*) Better than nothing, hey?

1221

Trygeas: (*Examines the plumes more closely and he's disgusted by what he sees*)

Bah! Take this crap away! Get them out of my house and send them to the crows. The stupid things are moulting, completely fallen apart. Piss off! Not a fig for them! Not one!

Arms Dealer:

God! Well... what about this beautiful breast plate, then? Look at it, stunning workmanship! It's a ten-mina job! What am I going to do with it? (*Hands it to Trygeas*)

1226

Trygeas: (*Examines the breast plate closely*)

What will you do with it? Sell it to me for cost. That way you won't lose a breast plate and I'll gain a shit bowl. It would do the job...

Arms Dealer:

Stop insulting me and my goods!

1230

Trygeas:

Yes... it would do the job just stunningly! If you put a couple of stones, here, for support. (*He demonstrates by sitting on it*) See? Stunning dunny!

Arms Dealer:

And how could you wipe your bum, idiot?

Trygeas: (*More demonstrating*)

Easy! I can put my hand through this... what is it, a hole for the oars? And, then this hand through here -

Arms Dealer:

You use both hands to wipe your bum?

Trygeas:

Of course, I use both hands. So that I won't be accused of robbing the ship of state through one of its holes

1235

Arms Dealer:

So, you want to use a ten-mina breast plate for a shit bowl?

Trygeas:

Why not, you big stiff? Do you think I'd offer my bum for a mere thousand drachs?

Arms Dealer:

All right, then. Get me the money.

Trygeas: (*Thinks for a second*)

Nah... on second thoughts I don't want it. It rubs against my bum hole a bit... Take it away. No, I won't buy it!

Arms Dealer:

And what about this bugle then? What will I do with it? It cost me sixty drachs.

Trygeas:

Well, you could pour lead into this hole here and then get yourself a long rod, stick it into the

mouthpiece, here and you've made yourself a pitcher to play cottavos with. See? You can have your pissed mates throw their wine swills into it from quite a distance. Great party trick!

1245

Arms Dealer:

You're making fun of me!

Trygeas:

No! Well, here's another thought: You pour the lead in here as I said before but then you attach a pan on this end here and you got yourself a set of scales for weighing out the figs in the field for your slaves.

1250

Arms Dealer: *(To the audience, but praying to God and holding two helmets up)*

Oh, how merciless you are, God! How you have ruined me! I have here two helmets for which I paid a mina each. What am I to do with them now? Who will ever buy them?

Trygeas:

Wander around the markets of Egypt for a while. They'll love them there. They'll use them for measuring out laxatives. They clean their guts right out for three day running, those people. Three days running! Every month! Hahahaha!

1255

Arms Dealer: *(To his mate)*

O, God! Helmet maker, my friend, we're stuffed!

Trygeas:

Nothing's happened to him yet!

Arms Dealer:

What do you mean? Who'll need helmets now that there's peace?

Trygeas: *(Laughs as he points at the helmet maker's ears)*

Hahahaha! All he's got to do is put a pair of handles on them, the size of those ears of his and he's got himself some first class bowls! He'll be getting far more for them than he ever did before.

1260

Arms Dealer: *(Disgusted)*

Spear maker, let's go!

Trygeas:

No, don't go yet! I'll buy those spears from him.

Arms Dealer:

Yeah? How much?

Trygeas:

A hundred for a drachma! I'll cut them in two and use them as vine stakes.

Arms Dealer:

He's insulting us. Let's go friends!

Arms salesman and his friends exit

1265

Trygeas: *(Calling after them)*

What a good idea! *(Two young boys come out from the party, which Trygeas notices)*... because the children are already coming out for their pissing sessions. Though, I think they also want to practice their party songs. Hey, boy, come here! Tell me what you're going to sing later. Sing for me the first line.

1270

Boy 1: *(Takes on the solemn air of a poet)*

"Now we shall begin with the younger bearers of swords -"

Trygeas:

Stop! Stop with your swords, you young idiot! It's peace time. Cursed twit!

Boy 1: *(Thinks of another line)*

"And when the two armies approached and clashed their bulging, oxhide shields..."

1275

Trygeas:

Shields? Will you not stop reminding us of shields?

Boy 1: *(Again thinks of another line)*

"And then came the shouting of victory from some and the groaning of defeat from others..."

Trygeas:

Groans? By Dionysos! You'll be the one groaning in a minute, if you don't stop with your groaning and your oxhide bulging shields!

Boy 1:
But what shall I sing about, then? Tell me what you like.

1280

Trygeas: *(Thinks for a second)*

Well, for instance, something like this: "And so they did feast upon the flesh of oxen" and... "The best of food was presented to them... whatever was scrumptious and delicious..." Stuff like that.

Boy 1: *(Thinks again for a second)*

"And then did they feast upon the flesh of oxen and, having had enough of war, they unharnessed their sweating horses..."

Trygeas:

That's it! That's your song! "having had enough of war, they feasted!" I like that. Sing about that. About "having had enough of war" and about "feasting!"

Boy 1:

"Then, when they've finished the oxen they raised..."

Trygeas:

-A happy cup of wine," I bet!

Boy 1:

"...themselves and issued forth from the towers and with a wild roar..."

Trygeas:

Get off, you little shit. You and your spears and shields. That's all you know : battles and wars. Can you not sing of anything else? Whose son are you, boy?

1290

Boy 1:

Who, me?

Trygeas:

Of course you!

Boy 1:

I'm the son of General Lamachus.

Trygeas:

Bah! General Lamachus! I'm not surprised! I was wondering, in fact, while listening to your singing if you were the son of some general. One of those generals who love war before it starts and start crying when it does! To hell with you and your shitty war songs. *(Boy 1 runs off inside)* Now where's Cleonymos' son? *(He approaches Boy 2)* Come here, boy. Sing me something before you go back inside. *(To the audience)* I know he won't sing about shields and spears. He's got a wise father.

Boy 2:

"Brilliant was the shield which the Saian warrior raised but which, accidentally I threw into the bush..."

1300

Trygeas:

Hahaha! Tell me, boy, is it you father you're singing about?

Boy 2:

"... and thus saved my life!"

Trygeas: *(Laughs heartily)*

Hahahaha! And thus dishonored your family! Yes, yes, we know the rest! Being the son of a warrior like that, that's one song you won't forget in a hurry, will you, son? "Accidentally threw it in the bush!" That's a beauty! Let's go in now, shall we? *(To the chorus)* As for you lot out here, come, eat and drink heartily all the food I've got here. Eat it like men, not like hollow oarsmen. Make good use of your jaws. Teeth make a sad sight if they just sit there idle in your mouths and... simply sit there looking white! Please, chew and bite!

Trygeas enters his house.

Finale

Chorus:

We shall do that. Thank you, Trygeas for reminding us about dental hygiene. *(Trygeas and the boys go inside. Chorus addresses the rest of the men)* You've been hungry for such a long time, men. Now end your hunger and get stuck into these rabbits. It's not every day we bump into cakes, abandoned and wandering aimlessly. Start your eating or else you'll be sorry you've missed out.

Chorus surrounds the table with ecstatic exclamations. Suddenly and with some fanfare, Trygeas comes out dressed spectacularly, as a groom. Sighs and gasps of awe from the chorus.

1316

Trygeas:

Now is the time to speak virtuous words and to escort the bride out here. Bring forth the torches and let the whole world congratulate us and call out in good cheer. (*Shouts of happy cheer from the chorus*) Now, let's move all our equipment back into the field, dancing and drinking as we go and sending Hyperbolus off away from here. And let us pray to all the gods that they grant all the Greeks prosperity and may we, each and all of us, produce lots of barley corn, lots of wine to drink and figs to eat, lots of children –from our wives that is, and may we all recover all that we've lost before the war began and let's all hurtle away once and for all, the shining iron sword! (*Plentiful is escorted by men bearing torches through the gates. She is dressed equally as spectacularly as a groom. More cheers from the chorus.*) Oh, come with me to the field, my love and lie with me in glory
From now on, there's laughter and heart-felt merriment with every utterance.

Chorus:

Oh, Hymen, Hymeneas

Oh, yes, the hymen, the hymen, Hymeneas!

Chorus:

What shall we do with the bride, men?

Chorus:

What shall we do with the bride, oh, yes!

Chorus:

We shall, we shall, we shall gather her berries and –

Chorus:

Yes, we shall gather her berries and – her hymen!

Chorus:

and... Hey, us men of the front row! Let's pick up the groom now and-

Chorus:

and... carry him in triumph!

Chorus:

The hymen, the hymen, oh, Hymeneas, the hymen!

1346

Chorus: (*They pick Trygeas up onto their shoulders*)

We shall take you to your house where you'll be happy for ever and be concerned no more about figs and things.

Chorus:

Oh, his thing is big and thick and her fig is sooooo – sweet!

Chorus:

Oh, the hymen, the hymen, that hymen, Hymeneas!

Chorus:

That's what you'll be saying after one drink –one drink too many!

Chorus:

Oh, yes, the hymen, the hymen, where is the hymen, oh, Hymeneas?

Chorus:

Yes, that's what you'll be asking after one drink, one drink too many!

Riotous laughter all around

Trygeas:

Thank you, gentlemen! Joy and good luck to you all. Now, if you follow me, there are cakes to eat!

All exit.

End of Aristophanes'

"Peace."