

ARISTOPHANES'
"WEALTH"

Date of 1st production 388(?) BC

TRANSLATED
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DRAMATIS PERSONAE

Wealth
(a blind god)
Chremylus
(an elderly farmer)
Mrs Chremylus
Cario
(Chremylus' slave)
Blepsidemus
(Chremylus' friend)
Poverty
(a grotesque looking goddess)
Just Man
Slave
(to the Just Man -silent)
Old Woman
Young Man
(Old Woman's former lover)
Hermes
(Messenger of the gods)
Priest
(of Zeus The Saviour)
Informer
Witness
(accompanying the Informer -silent)
Chorus
(of farmers)
Child
(of Just Man- silent)

A street in Athens.

Stage Right, Chremylus' House. A bench just outside and to the left of the door.

Wealth, a god, is a very old, blind man. He is wearing old, torn, shabby clothes.

He enters gingerly from Stage Left with the help of a walking stick.

He is followed by Chremylus and Chremylus' slave, Cario.

Chremylus is a middle-aged man, bald. His clothes and the clothes of his slave reveal a man living a modest life. He is holding the tail of the blind man's cape and, behind him, Cario is doing the same with Chremylus' cape.

Chremylus and Cario wear ceremonial wreaths.

Cario is a younger man with long hair and he's carrying a small sack.

They walk across the stage slowly, tiredly. Suddenly Wealth stops and farts. A moment later Chremylus also farts and so does Cario soon afterwards. They flagellate the malodorous air around them to send

it away, before all three sit on the bench to rest and catch their breath.

A short pause before Cario stands, walks to the front of the stage, outside the hearing distance of the other two and, in an agitated voice, addresses the audience.

Cario:

Oh, Zeus and all you other gods in the heavens! What an awful ordeal it is to be the slave of an idiot! Such an awful ordeal! Terrible! If the slave comes up with a sensible advise for his master but his master refuses to act upon it, what happens? The slave cops the horrible consequences of his master's rejection of the slave's suggestion, right along with his master!

That's our Fate, that's the Fate of slaves: our body is not owned by us but by the men who buy it. The masters! They can do whatever they like with it and we, the slaves, have no say in the matter at all.

Believe me, I know what I'm talking about!

And then there's Phoebus Apollo! A "wise god," they say.

You know him, he's the one who utters all his oracles sitting on a golden tripod!

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Apollo! I've got a bone to pick with him –and quite justly, too!

They call this god a healer, a wise prophet! Ha! It was from his temple that my master came out of with a damaged brain! The old boy's thinking is now back to front, upside down! Always does the opposite of what he should do. You saw him just now, instead of leading the blind, he's following them! And he's forcing me to do the same. I asked him, "why, master? Why do we have to follow this blind man around?"

Never get a reply, of course! Not a smidgen of a hint of an inkling of a reply!

Turns to Chremylus

Don't you worry, master! I'll keep asking you the same question over and over again! I'll never shut up! And I'll go on asking you the same question, until I get an answer! You'll get sick of me, you will! Master, why are we following this blind man around?

Chremylus gives Cario threatening looks

No, no, no! You can't beat me, remember? I'm wearing a holy wreath!

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Chremylus: Gets up and angrily approaches Cario

Pester me too much, boy and I'll rip that thing off your head and then beat you up with it. And I can assure you, boy, it's going to hurt you even more then!

Cario:

Bullshit! I'm not shutting up 'till you tell me who this blind man is. Believe me, boss, it's for your own good that I'm asking this question!

Chremylus: Frustrated

All right, all right! I won't hide it from you any longer. You've been the most faithful AND the most thieving slave I've ever had, so I'll tell you.

You see, I'm an honest man, a god-fearing old chap. Been like this all of my life. All my life, I've been an honest man, a good man, a polite man, a gentle man... yet... yet, when it comes to money, I've always been a loser. Not a cracker to my name! Not successful at all! Never made any of it.

Cario:

I know that, boss.

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Chremylus: Indicating the audience

But, then, look at all those crooks out there! Look how they've all made it! Temple thieves, politicians, sycophantic bum lickers, sleazebags –they're all filthy bloody rich!

Look at them all! They've all made it big time!

Cario:

I agree with you there, too, boss! Crooks and sleazebags the lot of them!

Chremylus:

Pisses me off no end! And that's why I went to consult Apollo. Not for my sake – I'm old now, I've shot off all my arrows, but for the sake of my one and only son. That's why I went to talk with the god.

I wanted to ask him if my boy should change his ways at all. I mean, should he, perhaps, become a crook like the rest of them out there, a dishonest sleazebag, a totally rotten man, a stinker, because, to me, it looks like that's the only way one can make it big in the world these days!

Cario:

Well, what did Phoebus utter through all those sacred garlands of his?

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Chremylus:

Well, let me tell you. The god told me, in unambiguous words, mind, to follow the first man I bumped into the moment I walked out of the temple, and then to persuade that man to come home with me.

Cario:

Is that so? And who was the first man you bumped into?

Chremylus: *Pointing the finger at Wealth*

Him! I bumped into him!

Cario:

You're a complete numbskull, boss! Truly, you're a numbskull! You've got the god's words all wrong, boss! Can't you see? What he has told you, in fact, was that you should bring up your son according to our local customs, here!

Chremylus:

Huh? What makes you say that?

Cario:

It's bloody obvious, boss! Even a blind man could see what the god meant. This is the way of our world, these days. If you want to get ahead in life, you must avoid doing anything good. Avoid virtue at all costs! Embrace evil!

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Chremylus:

No, that can't be right! That can't be what the god meant with his oracle. I'm sure his words must have meant something very noble.

Hmmm, now if this chap tells us who he is and what he's on about and why he came all the way here with us, maybe we'll find out what Apollo really meant.

Cario: *Shouts at Wealth*

Oi, you! Time for you now to tell us who you are, now! Tell us now or else I shall be forced to use force!

Wealth gets up with a struggle and slowly and with the help of his walking stick, walks towards them

Go on, hurry up!

Now tell us!

Wealth:

All right, I'll tell you: go and get stuffed!

Cario: *To Chremylus*

What? Who did he say he is?

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Chremylus:

I don't know but I think he was telling you something... something to match your rudeness and your crassness.

To Wealth

Sir, I can see you prefer the polite approach, so, speak with me, if you like, sir. Tell me who you are.

Wealth:

And you can go and get stuffed, too!

Cario:

Charming! There you have it! There's your man and there's your oracle!

Chremylus: *Raising his fist to Wealth*

By Holy Demeter! You won't get to enjoy that insult!

Cario: *Shakes Wealth by the arm*

Listen you! Speak up or I'll knock your ugly bloody block off... in a very ugly bloody manner!

Chremylus and Cario grab a tight hold of Wealth's arms.

Wealth:

Would you two wankers let go of me?

Chremylus:

Never!

Cario: *To Chremylus*

I know what we should do! Get rid of the fool once and for all. Walk him over to some huge cliff and leave him there. Let him fall over the side and kill himself!

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Chremylus: *To Cario*

Good idea. Go ahead, take him over there now!

Wealth:

No! No, don't do that!

Chremylus:

Well, will you tell us who or what you are, then?

Wealth:

I'd like to but I know what will happen afterwards: once you find out who I am, you'll never let me go!

Chremylus:

Oh, no! Not us! I swear by the gods! We'll let you go, if that's what you want.

Wealth:

Well, then, unhand me!

They obey

Chremylus:

There you are. You're free.

Wealth:

Listen then. I had made up my mind not to reveal myself to you but, it looks like I have no choice so, here goes: The man you see before you is a god. The god of Wealth!

Chremylus:

What? You bastard! Why didn't you tell us before? All this time and not a peep out of you! Why-

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Cario: Bursts into a laughter of ridicule

Hahaha! You? The god of Wealth? In these rags? Oh, dear, dear Apollo! Apollo and all the other gods and spirits in the heavens! Dear Zeus! Hahaha! You must be joking, right? You? The god of wealth?

Wealth:

Absolutely! Me, the god of wealth!

Chremylus:

In person?

Wealth:

The person himself! Wealth by name!

Chremylus:

But... but you stink! Where have you been that made you so pongy?

Wealth:

I've been to see that old miser, Patrocles, who's never had a wash in his entire life.

Chremylus:

Ah!

Right! Well, tell me, how the hell did you end up losing your sight?

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Wealth:

Zeus did it to me! He hates mortals, that god! I used to threaten him when I was young that I'd only visit the mortals who were honourable, wise and virtuous, so he went and plucked my eyes out so that I couldn't see who's who.

See? that's the sort of hatred Zeus has for the good folk on earth.

Chremylus:

But they're the only ones who honour him: the good and the virtuous!

Wealth:

But of course!

Chremylus:

And now? If you were to get your sight back, would you still avoid the crooks?

Wealth:

But of course I would. I hate them!

Chremylus:

You'd be visiting the virtuous again, would you?

Wealth:

Certainly. It's been such a long time since I saw a virtuous man!

Chremylus:

I can believe that! Me too. I haven't seen a virtuous man for a long time either and I've got my eyesight!

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Wealth:

Right. Now you know all about me, so... let me go!

Chremylus: *Grabs Wealth by the arm again*

No way! By Zeus! In fact, now we'll get an even tighter grip on you!

Wealth:

I knew it! See? Didn't I say that you two would be giving me the shits?

Chremylus:

No, no. Hang on, Wealth! Let me explain and don't insist in running away. See, I am a virtuous man. You'll never find a more virtuous man than me, anywhere!

Wealth:

Ha! That's what they all say but the moment they grab a hold of me, the moment they become... wealthy, that's when they become unbearably and utterly evil!

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Chremylus:

Sure, sure, but not everyone is evil.

Wealth:

To the very last of them. Evil, the lot of them. Shits. Bastards!

Cario: *Threateningly*

Now listen, mate! You're going to cop it if you go on with this sort of language and attitude!

Chremylus:

Listen, Wealth. Let me tell you the benefits you'll get if you come with us. Listen carefully. I am certain, I'm hoping very much that –with god's help, of course- I'll be able to get rid of that eye problem of yours and get you your sight back.

Wealth:

No, no! Oh, please don't do that! No, I don't want my sight back, thank you!

Chremylus: *Shocked*

What? What did you say?

Cario:

What a total loser, this guy is! A congenital loser!

Wealth:

No, listen. Zeus knows all about these rich fools. Knows all about them well, so it'll be me he'll be taking his anger on again! It'll be me who'll be getting tortured.

120

Chremylus:

But he's torturing you now, making you shuffle and stumble about blindly, this way and that, wandering all over the road.

Wealth:

Yah, I know but... but, to tell you the truth, I'm shit-scared of him!

Chremylus:

You're joking! What a weak... you must be the weakest of all the gods, up there!

Do you think that all his thunderbolts and all of his huge kingdom would be worth any more than a cracker if you got your sight back, even for a second?

Wealth: *Trembling with fear*

Oh, no, you wretched, sacrilegious man! Don't utter such things!

Chremylus:

Hang on, hang on a minute! Let me prove to you that you're far more powerful than Zeus.

Wealth:

Who, me?

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Chremylus:

Heavens yes! Now, tell me, why is it that Zeus lords it over all the other gods?

Cario:

I know! Because of all the money he's got. He's got more of it than all the other gods.

Chremylus:

Quite right. Now tell me, who supplies it all to him?

Cario: *Indicating Wealth*

This guy does!

Chremylus:

And what does everyone pray for and make sacrifices to Zeus for? Is it not to get some of this guy here?

Cario:

By Zeus, that's for sure! They all want a bit of him. Wealth at all costs! Wealth whatever it takes! Prayer number one: Wealth for me, please Zeus!

Chremylus:

Therefore, Cario, is this blind god here, not responsible for all this injustice? And is it not up to him to put a stop to it all? That is, if he wanted to?

Wealth:

Oi! What do you mean by that?

Chremylus:

What I mean by that, is that, if you wanted to, you would make it impossible for people to go sacrificing bulls and barley cakes, you could make it so that they couldn't sacrifice a thing! If you wanted to.

Wealth:

But how?

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Chremylus:

What a silly question! By not making it affordable for them. If you weren't so quick to give them the money, they wouldn't be so quick to go buying the bulls and the barley cakes, see? If you wanted to, you could wreck Zeus' entire kingdom. He gives you the shits? Fine, destroy his power to give you the shits. You could do it all by yourself.

Wealth:

Is that right? Am I responsible for the fact that people sacrifice to Zeus?

Chremylus:

That's exactly what I am saying. And I'm also saying that it is because of you that they can get everything that's beautiful in the world! All those delightful and charming things they get. They get them because of you, because you give them the money! Money's the cause of it all.

Cario:

That's why I am now a slave, mate. I was a free man once but now, because of a few pennies which I didn't have, I'm a slave!

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Chremylus:

And, they say that the Corinthian whores take absolutely no notice of the poor blokes but the moment a rich bastard approaches, they quickly turn around and offer their bums to them!

Cario:

And I've heard the boys behave in the same manner. They fuck, not because they love their lover but because they love their lover's money!

Chremylus:

Not the nice boys, of course, just the whore boys. Nice boys don't ask for money.

Cario:

No? What do they ask for then?

Chremylus:

Things like a good horse, or some hunting dogs... that sort of thing.

Cario:

That's because they're ashamed of asking for the real stuff, so they hide their love for it by asking for things that cost a lot of money.

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Chremylus: *To Wealth*

It's all because of you, Wealth! Every trade and every bit of thinking done by man is done because of you. One sits at a bench all day long mending shoes...

Cario:

Another bending bronze or shaving wood...

Chremylus:

Or melting all the gold you fork out to him...

Cario:

Or rob people, or do a bit of breaking and entering...

Chremylus:

Stitching patches on clothes...

Cario:

Washing woollies...

Chremylus:

Beat skins...

Cario:

Flog onions...

Chremylus:

Get caught red handed with someone else's missus and get his bum plugged by the husband... all because of you!

Wealth:

Bloody hell! I had no idea all this was going on because of me!

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Cario:

And what about the Great Persian King? Doesn't he get himself all done up because of you? And isn't it because of you that our Assembly gathers?

Chremylus:

And our war ships. Who fits them up and loads them all up with soldiers?

Cario:

And the mercenary force in Corinth? Who pays for their provisions, ey? You, of course! And Pamphylus? Who was the cause of his tears? You, course! He'll now have to spew out all the money he stole from the Treasury!

Chremylus:

Not only Pamphylus but also his mate, the pins and needles seller!

Cario:

Hahaha! And Argyrios? Aren't you the reason he farts so much?

Chremylus:

And Philepsius and all his bullshitting! You caused him to do that!

And you caused our alliance with Egypt and you caused the Corinthian whore, Lais, to fall in love with that dumb fatso, Philonides!

Cario:

Timotheus' tower...

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Chremylus:

should fall on your head, Wealth! The only reason anything happens is because of you! You're the cause of everything that takes place, good and bad! Everything! That's for sure!

Cario:

During war, which side wins? The one you're on, of course! The side with the money always wins!

Wealth:

Wow! Am I capable of perpetrating all this? Me? On my own?

Chremylus:

By Zeus, yes! All that and more! Much more! No one can ever get enough of you!

You can have too much of everything else but of you... never!

You can have too much sex...

Cario:

... or too many bread rolls...

Chremylus:

...too much music...

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Cario:

...too many juicy morsels...

Chremylus:

...just too much honour...

Cario:

...too many cakes...

Chremylus:

...too many heroics...

Cario:

...too many figs...

Chremylus:

...too much ambition...

Cario:

...too many barley rolls...

Chremylus:

...too many army ranks...

Cario:

...too much lentil soup...

Chremylus:

But as for you, Wealth, so far, there's never been anyone who ever had enough of you!
Give someone thirteen talents and he'll want sixteen. Put sixteen in his pocket and he'll yell for forty...
and then he'll start whingeing that he can't survive on that!

Wealth:

It all sounds true, guys but... there's something that bothers me here.

Chremylus:

Like what?

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Wealth:

All this power you two say I have, how on earth can I possibly control it all?

Chremylus:

Ah yes, how? Trying to squirm out of it, are you? No wonder everyone says that wealth creates the most cowards! The more of it you've got the more cowardly you are!

Wealth:

That's bullshit! A burglar gave me that nickname. Entered my house once and found nothing because I had everything locked up, so he called me "Cautious Coward!"

Chremylus:

All right, no worries! If you work with us on this, I'll get you an eyesight that's better than that of Lynceus the sharp-eyed Argonaut.

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Wealth:

Can you do a thing like that? You're not a god.

Chremylus:

No but I've got high hopes because of what Phoebus Apollo uttered to me as he shook his Pythian laurel branches!

Wealth:

You mean you've got him hooked in this as well?

Chremylus:

Too right!

Wealth: *fearfully*

Ohhh, keep a sharp look out then!

Chremylus:

Have no fear, old boy! Now take note: Everything I've promised you shall come to pass. I stake my life upon it!

Cario:

And if needs be, I'll help as well.

Chremylus:

We'll have a whole lot of allies on our side, as well. All those honest folk who are starving.

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Wealth:

Oh, no, no, no! Please! Poor people make bad allies!

Chremylus:

Not at all, after all, these poor people will become rich, right? Cario, you run now. Hurry as much as you can.

Cario:

Sure. Tell me where to and I shall hurry there.

Chremylus:

Go get all the other farmers and bring them here, to share in Wealth's gifts. You'll, probably find them all slaving away in their fields.

Cario:

All right, I'm off. Please get one of the slaves to take that meat inside. *Indicating the sack he came in with.*

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Chremylus:

I'll look after that, you just hurry.

Exit Cario

Now, Wealth, the mightiest of all the gods, you come with me. *Walks him over to the house.* See this house? *Wealth first nods then corrects himself by shaking his head.* Chremylus guides his hand over

the structure. This is the house you're going to fill with riches today. Yes, today, this very day! One way or another! Fair or foul.

Chremylus opens the door which creaks eerily.

Wealth:

God, how frightened I get whenever I enter a stranger's house! It always turns bad on me! No good ever came out of it for me. If it's the house of a miser, then the bastard buries me in his back yard so that if a decent and kind bloke comes around and asks him for a little loan of me, he cries and whines and whinges and says he never saw me in his life! If, on the other hand I end up in some sleazebag's place, he throws me all away on dice and whores and, in no time, I'm back on my arse again, outside his door!

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Chremylus:

That's because you never chanced upon people like me, moderate folk, well mannered. That's how I lived my whole life. I save my money and spend it only when I need to. Come now. Let's go inside. I must introduce you to Mrs Chremylus and to my son whom I love almost as much as I love you.

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Wealth:

I believe you.

Chremylus:

Would anyone lie to you?

Exit Chremylus and Wealth into the house.

A moment later we hear Cario within, (SL) talking to a group of old farmers.

Cario:

Come, my old mates, come quick. You've been brought up on beatings and on hard work, on bread and olives –just like my master. Hurry! This is the moment we must stand strong, this is the hour we must work together. Hurry!

Enter the farmers (Chorus) carrying farm implements and wearing dirty old work clothes. They are old and bent from the life long hard work in the fields.

Chorus:

We're hurrying, we're hurrying! Can't you see? We're running as fast as our old limbs can let us. We're old and feeble...

Chorus:

We're running as fast as we can even though you still haven't told us what we're running for! What does your master want with us?

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Cario:

I've told you a thousand times! My master called you here so that you can share in his wealth. From now on you'll be living in luxury and in joy. No more torture, no more hard work, no more trouble!

Chorus:

What on earth is he promising us really?

Chorus:

How could he deliver such a thing?

Cario:

The old guy brought home another old guy, who's also dirty, who's also a hunchback, who's also shrivelled up, who's also stinking poor, who's also stinking, who's also toothless and, by Zeus, I reckon he's also had the skin at the tip of his cock shortened!

Chorus:

What? What did you say?

Chorus:

You golden messenger you! Repeat that for us. Are you saying this old man came here with a heap of money?

270

Cario: *Kidding*

No, I didn't say money, I said worries! A heap of woes and worries! Old man stuff.

Chorus: *Raising his walking stick threateningly*

Watch it! You think you can fool around with us like that? Forget it, boy! I've got my walking stick here!

Cario:

Do you think I'm a congenital dickhead or something? Don't you think I'm capable of saying anything sensible?

Chorus:

You're a smug shit, I know that! Take care of your legs, boy, they're screaming to be chained at the pillory! I can hear them legs of yours yelling, "ouch, ouchy, ouch!" Chains and stocks, boy! Chains and stocks for you!

Cario:

Ha! Now let me pluck your jury ball out of the urn. Let's see what sort of jury service you're on today. *Pretending to be reading a ball* Aha! Just as I thought! Coffin Court! Charos will hand you your pay ticket. Off you go, old man! Run for it!

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Chorus:

You filthy piece of crap! I hope you're splattered into oblivion. Twisted bastard! Stop playing with us! You've made us all rush over here and still haven't explained to us why. We're busy men, you know.

Chorus:

We've ran so fast, we didn't get a chance to stop even for a minute to gather some thyme on the way.

Chorus:

There was so much of it, around, too!

Cario:

Poor things! All right, all right! I won't hold it back any longer. Here it is: My master, Mister Chremylus, has brought the god Wealth here, to make you all rich!

Chorus:

Is that true?

Chorus:

Is that possible? Can we all be made rich?

Cario:

As rich as Midas, all of you... if you could get yourselves some donkey ears, you'd look exactly like Midas himself!

Chorus:

Oh! You've made me so happy, I want to start dancing! You are telling the truth, aren't you?

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Cario:

And I, I want to sing the Cyclops song! Tra lala tra lalala!

I'll sing and you dance! Hop! Let me show you: Hop like this, see? Dance properly, you lot. Use both your feet, come on!

Acting the blinded Cyclops, searching for his lambs in his sealed cave.

Come on, my little kiddies! Come, my little lambs! Sing to me your bleating songs loud and clear now!

And you, my little goats, raise up your usual stench and crank up your cocks way up high! Come, kiddies, come get your breakfast now!

Chorus:

Tra lala tra lalala! Right! Our turn now to do the Cyclops. Now you be the Cyclops... We'll find you Cyclops, we'll find you... tra lala tra lalala. We'll cry out and bleat out, tra lala tra lalala and find you starving, carrying a sack full of wild cabbages and there you'd be, pissed as a fart, leading your little lambs along. And if you chance to fall deep into sleep, we'll poke your single eye out with a great big hot stick! Tra lala tra lalala!

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Cario:

Hang on, hang on! Now I'll do Circe, the potion mixer. Stir those potions, stir, stir, stir...

She stirred a potion for Philonedes' mates once, in Corinth. Made them all act like little piggies and then she had them eating shit patties that she had kneaded with her very own hands. Now, I'll be her while you lot be the little piggies! Now grunt away and follow mummy! We'll do everything they did.

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Chorus:

Well then, if you're going to be Circe, the nasty potion-stirring witch that made those men eat shit, we'll do a happy Odysseus and... grab you by the balls, tip you upside down and rub your face in the dung heap, just like a stinky goat! Then you'll do Aristyllus and call out to us, "come on my darling piggies, follow your mummy!"

As the chorus tries to act out its role

Cario:

Enough, enough! Enough of games now!

I've got to go now. You start off another game while I go and pinch some food out of my master's

pantry – just a bit of bread and meat – and then I’ll come out again and join you in your work while I’m chomping into it.

Exit Cario. The chorus continues the playacting for a few minutes before Chremylus comes out of his house. He is now wearing better clothes.

Chremylus:

Oh, fellow citizens!

I’d hate to use the old, worn out phrase “Greetings, friends!” so I won’t. I’ll simply... respectfully welcome you all and thank you all for coming here so willingly, in such an orderly manner and without any undue delay.

Please stay with me now and support me in my efforts to save the god.

Chorus:

No worries, mate! Here we are. Just like war-loving Ares, himself! Ready for you! I mean, we’d be crazy to let the god of Wealth, himself slip away from our fingers when we have to go through all sorts of pushing and shoving just to get our three obols a day at the Council Meetings!

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Chremylus: *Looking into the distance*

Ah, I can see Blepsidemus coming over as well! Look at him! The way he’s huffing and puffing and rushing, he must have heard something about all of this.

Enter Blepsidemus

Blepsidemus:

Right oh, right oh! What’s going on around here? How come Chremylus here is suddenly, so bloody... wealthy... all of a sudden? Look at him! I can’t believe this!

All the barber shops are buzzing with the news, by Heracles! They’re all talking about him suddenly becoming rich! And then, what shocked me most, is the fact that even though he’s become rich, he’s invited all his friends to his home. Now that’s not normal, is it?

343

Chremylus:

All right, all right. I won’t keep it from you. I’ll tell you everything!

Blepsidemus, my friend, let me tell you that today we’re far better off than we were yesterday –wealth wise, that is- and, since you’re one of my friends, you’ll get a share of it!

Blepsidemus:

They say you’re rich now. Is that true?

Chremylus:

Any minute now, god willing. Any minute now. There’s just one tiny, little impediment that’s holding matters back a bit.

Blepsidemus:

Impediment? What sort of impediment?

Chremylus:

A sort of...

Blepsidemus:

Come on, man! Spit it out!

350

Chremylus:

A sort of... an impediment which, if removed, we’ll all be swimming in joy but if not, then we’re all going to be well and truly stuffed!

Blepsidemus:

Something dodgy about all this. I don’t like it one bit. One minute you’re filthy rich and the next minute, there’s an impediment. I reckon you’re up to something, here, something very unsanitary!

Chremylus:

“Unsanitary?” What do you mean, “unsanitary?”

Blepsidemus:

How would I know? Perhaps you’ve stolen some silver or some gold from the temple and now you’re sick with worry.

Chremylus:

Apollo, my saviour! By Zeus, no, I’ve done no such thing, Blepsidemus!

360

Blepsidemus:

You can’t trick me, mate! Cut the bullshit! I know very well what’s going on.

Chremylus:

What a dreadfully suspicious mind you’ve got, Blepsidemus! I’ve done nothing! Ever!

Blepsidemus:

Dear, dear, dear me! Where has all the human honesty gone? Not a hint of it to be seen anywhere! Just greed! Lust for money, that's all that's left! Profit rules the world!

Chremylus:

You're a raving lunatic, Blepsidemus! By Demeter, I think you've lost it!

Blepsidemus: *Pleading to the audience*

God, how he's changed! He used to be such a good man, once!

Chremylus:

Poor bastard, you're nuts!

Blepsidemus:

Good Lord! Look at the look in his eye! Very dodgy! That's one very guilty look, that one. The bastard's done something real bad!

Chremylus:

Ha! I know what you're on about, boy! You reckon I stole something and you want a share of it but...

370

Blepsidemus:

Who, me? A share? A share of what?

Chremylus:

...but the truth is quite different! You've got it all arse-up!

Blepsidemus:

All right, so you didn't steal... you just... nicked 'n snatched things!

Chremylus:

They ought to tie you up, you madman!

Blepsidemus: *Surprised*

You mean, you didn't nick 'n snatch anything? From anybody?

Chremylus:

Never in my whole life!

Blepsidemus: *Pleading*

Oh Heracles! What do I do now? He won't tell us the truth!

Chremylus:

You rush off with accusations before you even check out the facts, you wanker!

Blepsidemus:

Mate, listen! Listen to me! For a tiny sum of money I can get the authorities off your back, lock their lips up with a few pieces of silver... before the whole town knows anything about your doings.

360

Chremylus:

Sure, sure, mate! And you'd do a real honest job of it too! Give the cops three minas and charge me a dozen! Good try!

Blepsidemus:

Oh, I can just see you now, Chremylus! You, your wife, your kids, in court, in the dock, holding the defendant's olive branches! Straight out of Pamphilus' play "Heracles' Children!" What a tragic sight, ey?

Chremylus:

You silly, godforsaken twit! You've got it all arse-up again! I'm going to do the complete opposite. What I'm about to do is to make sure that only the honest people, only the good and the wise folk will get rich!

Blepsidemus:

Good Lord! You mean to tell me you stole that much?

Chremylus:

Bloody hell! I've got my hands full with this one! You're killing me, mate!

390

Blepsidemus:

Methinks you're killing yourself... mate!

Chremylus:

Mate, why would I want to do that? I've got the very god, himself on my side. Wealth! Wealth himself!

Blepsidemus:

You got wealth? What wealth? Where?

Chremylus:

Yes, Wealth. God Wealth! The god himself!

Blepsidemus:
Oh, yeah? Where is he?
Chremylus: *Indicating his house*
In there!
Blepsidemus:
In there where?
Chremylus:
In there, in my house!
Blepsidemus:
In there? In your house?
Chremylus:
Absolutely!
Blepsidemus:
The crows you do! Bullshit! You've got the god in there! Utter...
Chremylus:
I swear by all the gods!
Blepsidemus:
True dinks?
Chremylus:
Very true dinks!
Blepsidemus:
Swear by the goddess Hestia!
Chremylus:
By Poseidon! I swear by the goddess Hestia,!
Blepsidemus:
Poseidon who? The god of the sea?
Chremylus:
Of course the god of the sea and if there's another one around, I swear by him, too!
Blepsidemus:
Wealth, ey? Why don't you sent him to visit us, too, us, your mates?
Chremylus:
We're not quite there yet, exactly.
Blepsidemus:
Not quite where, exactly, the sharing bit?
Chremylus:
That's right, by Zeus! First we need to...
400
Blepsidemus:
Oh, yes? Need to do what... exactly?
Chremylus:
We two need to help him see again.
Blepsidemus:
Help who to see again?
Chremylus:
The god. Wealth. Give him his sight back again. Any way we can.
Blepsidemus:
You mean the god is blind?
Chremylus:
Heavens, yes!
Blepsidemus:
No wonder he could never find my door!
Chremylus:
So let's hope that the gods are willing to let him come to you after this.
Blepsidemus:
Well, then, should we call a doctor?
Chremylus:
A doctor? In this town? They wouldn't earn their keep in this town! Poor people pay poorly. So, no money around, no doctors around.
Blepsidemus: *Indicating the auditorium*
Well, let's search the place!

Chremylus:
I'm telling you, there's no doctor in the house!
Blepsidemus:
Hmm, I think you might be right...

410

Chremylus:
Let's try my idea first. I reckon we should take him down to the temple of Asclepius and put him in a bed there. I think that'd be our best option.

Blepsidemus:
Yes, yes, that's a great idea. All right then, let's not waste any time. Hurry up and do whatever you need to do.

Chremylus:
Right! I'm off!

Blepsidemus:
Good. Go, go, go!

Chremylus:
I'm going, I'm going, I'm going!

Chremylus has turned to leave but is stopped dead by the goddess Poverty, a frightfully ugly old hag.
Poverty:

You! Stop right there! You wormy little mortals! Insolent, sacrilegious, crooked, god-hated little mortals! How dare you do this? Where do you think you're off to?

Blepsidemus: *shocked with fear.*

Abomination! Heracles, help me!

Poverty:

Right! You are carcasses! One way or another you two are going to die! How dare you perform such detestable, insufferable deeds, deeds that neither man nor god has ever before dared to perform?

422

Chremylus:
Oh yeah? And who are you? You look... bloody carcassy yourself, to me. Sick, are you? Jaundice?

Blepsidemus:
Must be one of those Furies, one of those ugly creatures from some tragedy or other. Euripides, most likely. She certainly looks wild! Out of her mind, too... tragic-like!

Chremylus:
Yeah but she's not carrying any torches like they all do in those tragedies.

Blepsidemus: *Moves with his fist clenched*

Then I'll beat the ugly witch up!

Poverty:

Hey! Hang on! Hang on a minute! Now look at me! Look at me carefully!

Don't you know who I am?

Chremylus:

Yeah, judging by all that unsolicited squealing you just did, you must be one of those porridge sellers, or maybe, an inn keeper. No one's even touched you and...

Poverty:

No one's touched me? What do you mean, no one's touched me? Aren't you two "touching" me by trying to throw me out of the whole country?

431

Chremylus:
Not quite. Not the whole Country, at least. We've reserved Killer's Cliff for you. You can go and hop off it, if you want!

Come on, then, out with it. Who in Hades' name are you?

Poverty:

I am she who will get her due justice from you two, for trying to exile me from my own country.

Blepsidemus: *To Chremylus*

You think it might be that barmaid next door who's always cheating me with my drinks?

Poverty:

I am the goddess Poverty! One of the many citizens of this town for a great many number of years!

Blepsidemus:

Blessed Apollo and you other gods, help us! How do we get out of this?

Chremylus:

What? Get out of it? You can't be that much of a coward, are you? You stay right here, my friend!

Blepsidemus:

No way! I'm not hanging around here...

Chremylus:

Of course you are! There's two of us –two men against one woman!

Blepsidemus:

A woman? A woman? That's the goddess Poverty, mate! There's no creature known to man that's more abominable, more devastating than Poverty! She's vile!

Chremylus:

Yeah, all right, all right! Now just hold on a minute!

Blepsidemus:

Nope, no way! I'm outa here!

Chremylus:

It'd be a cowardly and dishonourable act for us two to run off and leave this disgusting creature to have her way with our god, Wealth, without first fighting her... to death, if necessary!

449

Blepsidemus:

You got a sword hidden somewhere? A knife? Some sort of weapon? You still got a breastplate or a shield or something in that house of yours, anything that this freak of a goddess hasn't sent off to the pawnshop yet?

Chremylus:

Courage, mate! Courage! Trust me, our god will beat the nastiness out of this... this nasty creature!

Poverty:

You pair of scumbags! You still have the gall to whinge about my deeds when I've just caught both of you, red handed, scheming about doing even worse deeds to me!

Chremylus:

And you, you horrible creature, what was all that screaming about? We did you no harm!

Poverty:

By all the gods in the heavens! You're trying to give Wealth back his eyesight! You don't think that's harm enough to me?

460

Chremylus:

How is it harm to you when all we're doing is bringing joy to the world?

Poverty:

What joy are you two capable of ever bringing to the world?

Chremylus:

What joy? To begin with, the joy of getting rid of you! Throw you right out of Greece!

Poverty:

Throw me out of Greece? You call that "joy?" This would be the biggest disaster you could cause to the people of Greece!

Chremylus:

An even bigger disaster would be caused if we did not fulfil our aims.

Poverty:

Well then, just about this little matter, let me give you some advice. Let me make you see the light right now! The fact is, I am the very fountain of all joy! Of all life, even! Now, if I can't prove this little fact to you, well then, you may do whatever you like with me.

472

Chremylus:

Ugly looking bitch! How dare you suggest a thing like that?

Poverty:

How? Quite easily. Listen and you'll see just how utterly wrong it would be for you to make only the honest people rich.

Chremylus:

Oh, no! Oh, no! Oh, no, bloody no! Cudgels, pillories, sticks and stones! Where are you all? Come to my aid now!

Poverty:

Why scream and squeal before you hear what I have to say?

Chremylus:

Who wouldn't scream and shout? The crap you talk! It's not possible for me to hold back the outrage! Oh, no! Oh, no! Cudgels, pillories, get up here, all of you!

Poverty:

Oh well! Whatever turns you on, darling!

480

Chremylus:

So... how should I punish you if you fail to persuade me?

Poverty:

How? Anyway you like. Name my punishment!

Chremylus:

Beauty! This'll be good!

Poverty:

But! If you lose, you'll suffer the same punishment, right?

Chremylus: *To Blepsidemus*

What do you reckon? Death twenty times over?

Blepsidemus:

Sure, for her; for us, though, just twice will be more than enough!

Poverty:

Right! Well then, prepare to die, you two! Your death is nigh. There's no way, no fair way you can beat my argument.

Chorus: *To Chremylus and Blepsidemus*

Up to you two guys, now. Use your wits and come up with a good speech to topple her argument.

Make it real tough for her.

489

Chremylus:

It's so bloody obvious! Everyone knows that the good folk, the god-fearing folk, the folk who do an honest day's work, should be the ones who deserve to be rich, not the dishonest, godless crooks! That's what we're after and that's why we've come up with this honest and god-fearing plan, a plan which is good and full of virtue, a plan which will serve the whole of humanity! If the god of Wealth regains his eyesight, he won't be wandering aimlessly and blindly about like he does now and he'll be able to see who's honest and who's not and so he'll go to the good folk and shun all the godless crooks and all the bastards. The result? Everyone will become good and god-fearing... and rich!

So tell me, goddess Poverty, can anyone perform a better deed to humanity than this?

Blepsidemus:

Absolutely none, I swear! Don't bother asking that horrible bitch!

500

Chremylus:

Look at the way things are now! Humans have a deplorable life. They're cursed by the gods and they're mindless and they're dreadful! Surely, everyone agrees on that! Who are the wealthy? The crooks, of course! They're the ones who prosper; and they do it all by dishonesty and by disregarding the laws of the land. And the others? The honest and virtuous folk? They suffer and they spend most of their life in your wretched company! It's all your fault, Poverty!

And that's why I say that if we let Wealth regain his eyesight he'll stop this awful goddess here dead on her tracks. And what would be a better deed than that for the mortals?

Poverty:

You poor old fools! Must be paid up members of the Old Foggies Society for the Dopey and the Garrulous, no doubt. Both of you! You gullible twits! Listen, if your wishes were to be granted you'd be mortally sorry!

510

Listen and listen well! If Wealth were to get his sight back and if he spread himself around to everyone, who'd be doing any of the work then or even any of the thinking? And, once the work and the thinking disappear, who on earth would be doing all the work of the smiths and of the ship builders, of the tailors, the cartwheel makers, the cobblers, the brick makers, the launderers, the tanners? And who'll bother to till the soil with the ploughs and then reap Demeter's harvest afterwards, ey?

Who'll be doing all of that work if all you ever want to do is sit around idly all day, doing nothing and caring about nothing?

Chremylus:

What a lot of crap you're spewing out, witch! All this stuff you've just mentioned will be done by slaves!

Poverty:

Slaves? Slaves? Where are you going to get them from?

Chremylus:

Who, me? I'll have enough money to buy as many slaves as I want, of course!

Poverty:

Yeah? And who'd be selling them to you? And why would he... sell them to you, if he'd have all the money he needed as well?

520

Chremylus:

Who? Some greedy slave trader from Thessaly, of course. The place is clogged with them, that's who!

Poverty:

But, according to your silly logic, you won't be able to find a single slave trader in the whole world! Who, on earth would want to risk soul and limb trying out that sort of stuff, if he's already rich? Why would he want to anymore? He'll have all the money he wants! No, sonny, it'd be you who'll have to do all that work. All that ploughing and all that digging and all that other work –it'd be you and you alone who'd have to do it. Your life will become even more difficult than it is now!

Chremylus:

Crap! May that be your Fate!

Poverty:

And forget about your nice, soft little bed with its warm and cosy coverings. Who'd be bothered making them for you? All that sewing and weaving! Why bother if you're already in the money? And as for your brides! When you men get married –if you ever get married!- and you want to bring your girls home, you'd have to do it without all those perfumes and all those beautiful, expensive gowns, so intricately and delicately made!

530

Nope! No delicate perfumes and no delicately woven and delightfully dyed and wonderfully decorated gowns for your brides, boys!

So, I ask you: what's the good of all that money if you can't get all that? No, boys! If you want all this stuff, then you've got to believe in me because it is I who stands next to these clever craftspeople and does the boss's work. It is I who forces them to do all that work. Yes, me, Poverty, whom they all want to avoid and earn themselves a livelihood, it is I who'll be making them do all that work for you!

Chremylus:

Oh yeah? And what about you, you stingy witch? Poverty, ey? What sort of life do you create? Burned bums at the bath houses, hoards of starving kids and old ladies, clouds and clouds of mozzies, gnats and fleas, all buzzing around our heads, keeping us awake all night, annoying us, whistling in our ears and warning us: "Wake up, boy" they scream all night, "wake up or you'll go hungry!"

540

And my clothes? Not lovely cloaks but old rags! My bed? Some old mat made out of some lice-infested twine! My blankets? Rags made out of hessian! Not a wink of sleep all night. As for pillows, we get the pleasure of resting our heads on huge rocks! And forget about bread and cakes. It's mallow shoots and withered old radish leaves, with you around! Chairs? What chairs? Broken old crock pots! Where do we knead our dough? Not in proper kneading troughs but in broken down old half barrels! And that, you old witch is the sort of life you give to people! That and worse!

Poverty:

You, you sly old shit. That's not the life of the poor people you've just described, that's the life of beggars!

Chremylus:

What's the difference? Don't we say that Poverty and Beggary are sisters?

550

Poverty:

Yeah, right! Just like the other thing you say: Thrasybulus, the great democrat, is the brother of Dionysius, the great tyrant! Democracy, Tyranny, it's all the same to you lot, isn't it?

Nope, no way! What you've just described has nothing to do with my life. Never had anything to do with it and it never will. Beggars have no possessions. They have nothing, whereas the poor people are cautious with their money. They work hard and even though they've got nothing to spare, they've got all they need. That's the difference.

Chremylus:

What a delightful life you've just described for the poor! By Demeter! Absolutely delightful! You tighten your belt more and more every day and you slog your guts out and then, when you finally kick the bucket you can't even afford your own funeral!

Poverty:

You're not being serious now! You're turning this into a farce, a bad comedy! You know very well that

the sort of people that I create are far better than those created by Wealth! Both, the brain and the body of my men are far superior to those of Wealth. What do his men look like?

560

Indicating the audience Look at them: Limping around with gout, a fat bum, grotesque fat guts, swollen legs... you feel like puking just by looking at them! Now look at mine. See there? Lovely, slender body, the waist of a wasp, unbeatable in battle!

Chremylus:

Maybe they get their waspy waist from endless starvation, ey?

Poverty:

And let me tell you another thing about the poor. They are modest and civil, whereas the rich are all arrogant.

Chremylus:

Modest and civil means digging holes in walls and robbing people.

Blepsidemus:

Why not, if you can steal without getting caught? That's civil, isn't it?

Poverty:

Check out the politicians if you want. In every country. When they're poor, they're doing all sorts of good things for the public but then, when they become rich on public money, they all become real crooks. They scheme and plan and commit all sorts of vile wrongs on the poor folk.

571

Chremylus:

Well, you're not wrong there, even though you are a sly old witch. Still, don't think that your punishment is going to be any softer by trying to convince us that poverty is better than wealth!

Poverty:

But what about you? You haven't managed to prove the opposite, have you? All you're doing is waffling about crap and (*indicating his animated hands*) flapping your hands about as if they're the wings of some giant bird!

Chremylus:

So, tell me this then: Why does everyone run away from you?

Poverty:

Because I try to make better people out of them. They behave just like kids do when they run away from their father who's wise and wants to make them better grownups. Just like the kids, they find it too hard to understand the difference between good and evil.

Chremylus:

So you're saying that Zeus isn't wise, are you? Because that god is filthy rich!

580

Blepsidemus:

Yeah, he's rich all right but what is he doing for us, poor folk? He goes and sends this witch to us! (*Sarcastically*) Thank you, ZEUS!

Poverty:

Sick little brains! Antiquated, blind brains! You're both wrong! Zeus, in fact is very poor and I'll prove it to you. Wealthy he's not, otherwise, at the Olympic games, which are held every four years and where the cream of the Greek athletes gather to compete, if he was rich, he wouldn't be crowning the winners with wreaths made of mere wild olive branches! If he was truly rich, he'd be crowning their heads with wreaths made of pure gold!

Chremylus:

Which just proves that he's rich and, just like all the rich bastards, he's stingy and keeps all the gold to himself. The winners get crap!

590

Poverty:

Oh, I see! You're trying to accuse the father of our gods not only of being rich but also of being something even more shameful than being poor: you're accusing him of being a greedy crook!

Chremylus:

I hope Zeus crowns you with a wreath made out of wild olive branches and then blows you to smithereens, you horrible creature!

Poverty:

You've still got the nerve to deny that it's to me, Poverty that you owe all your good luck?

Chremylus:

Ask Hekate, if you want! The very goddess of witchcraft. She'll tell you who's what! Ask her who's better off, the rich or the poor. She'll tell you about the meals that the rich put out in her honour. The

moment the rich put their scraps up on the table, the poor snatch it all up!
Now piss off and stop your nagging! Not another word from you! There's no way you're going to convince me even if you do convince me!

601

Poverty: *Frustrated*

To quote Euripides: Oh, thou city of Argos, heed though this man's words!

Chremylus:

No, go to Aristophanes and call for one of his paupers, Pauson, your fellow diner.

Poverty:

Oh, the suffering I'm forced to endure!

Chremylus:

No need to endure anything. Just piss off out of here... NOW!

Poverty:

Piss off? Piss off where? Where on earth can I go?

Chremylus:

Go hang yourself! Go, go, go!

Poverty: *As she's exiting*

You'll be sorry for this! You'll be very sorry! You'll be begging me to come back again, very, very soon, you watch!

610

Chremylus:

Yeah right! Don't call us we'll call you! Meantime, I'd rather suffer the consequences of being rich, thank you very much! If you want to go on whining, then get the hell out of here! Piss off as far away as you can!

Exit Poverty

Blepsidemus:

By Zeus! Give me wealth any day! Money, kids, wife, a warm bath, then a promenade around the city, the lot of us sparkling clean and farting in the face of the workers and Poverty! Yeah, give me wealth!

619

Chremylus:

Right! We've got rid of that irritating bitch. Now, mate, let's hurry up and take Wealth over to the shrine of Asclepius, the healer and make a bed there for him.

Blepsidemus:

Yes, we better hurry in case some other bastard comes along and wastes our time again and stuffs up our good work. *Goes to the door and knocks. Cario appears.*

Cario, my boy, go and get Wealth... and bring out the bedding for him and everything else you think he may need for a sleepover. Help him with whatever he needs.

Cario disappears into the house and a few seconds later he reappears guiding Wealth. They are followed by other slaves who are carrying bedding materials and sacks full with various (kitchen) items. All talk among themselves as they exit the stage.

Night comes and then dawn

Enter Cario. He is excited by the news he is about to announce.

Cario: *To the Chorus.*

Rejoice you guys! Mates! Good old folk! Remember how you used to mop up your soup with your tiny, crumby little bread roll during the Theseus Festival? Well, mates, forget that now! And not only you but also every other honest human being in this city! No more crumby little bread rolls! We're all rich!

631

Chorus:

Is that right? Tell us, Cario, what's happened? Must be bloody good news by looks of you.

Cario:

Brilliant news, guys! Oh, how lucky my master is! And Wealth, himself of course, who, to quote Sophocles, "thanks to the kindness of the healer Asclepius, from blindness he has recovered and now he walks with seeing eyes and bright pupils.."

Chorus:

Oh, what joyful words! *Shouts* Words worthy of shouting! Hurrahhhhhh!

Cario:

Joy is inescapable!

Chorus:

Hurrah for Asclepius! Hurrah for his light, the light of all humanity! Blessed are his children!

Enter Chremylus' wife

641

Wife:

What are you all shouting about? Sounds like good news. God, how I long for some good news! Cooped up in there all day, waiting and waiting...

Cario:

Go inside, woman and get the wine jug and we'll let you have some too! I know how you love the stuff, don't you worry! Go and I'll tell you a whole heap of great news! Now go! Hurry!

Wife:

Well? What news?

Cario:

You'll find out. In due course. I'll be making a speech about it all in a minute.

Wife:

Make it now and make it quick! Tell me!

Cario:

Oh, all right then! I'll break open the whole fuss and joy to you. I'll tell you everything, from beginning to end. Head to toe!

Wife:

Stay away from my head!

Cario:

Don't you even want to break open the good news?

651

Wife:

The good news you can break on my head. It's the fuss I don't want!

Cario:

Well, we first took this old man to the shrine of the god. What a miserable looking creature he was at that stage! Afterwards, of course, he became one of the happiest, most blessed men on earth. But first, we took him to the sea, to give him a bit of a wash.

Wife:

And what a blessing that would have been for the old guy: to be washed in the freezing waves of the sea! Pure blessing, that would have been for him that one!

659

Cario:

It was. Then we took him to the shrine's precinct and, after we did all the proper sacrifices of the cakes and stuff, to sweeten Hephaistos' flame, as someone once said, we made a bed for the old man, got him to lie down and then we all made our own mats to sleep on.

Wife:

Did you see any other sick folk there?

Cario:

One in particular and many others in general. The one in particular was Neokleidis. He's blind in the eyes but has better vision than the folk with eyesight when it comes to snatching purses! There were people there with all sorts of diseases.

670

Anyhow, after we got our mats down, one of the shrine's overseers came out and told us all to snuff out all the candles and to go to sleep and not to make a noise, no matter what noises we heard during the night. So we all lay there quietly and orderly. But I just couldn't fall off to sleep. Right next to me was a little old lady and right beside her head was a pot of porridge. How could I possibly sleep with that pot of lovely porridge just sitting there? It drove me insane! I was overwhelmed by the desire to drag myself towards it. So I opened my eyes and looked up and what did I see? There was the shrine's overseer, going round all the altars and the sacred tables, snatching quietly all the sacred sacrifices, all the little sacred cakes and all the sacred figs and all the rest of the sacred stuff, so, I thought that the overseer must have been performing a sacred act and so, I went ahead and dragged myself from the bed to the pot of porridge.

684

Wife:

What? You rotten thief! Weren't you afraid of the god?

Cario:

Afraid? Of course I was afraid of the god! I was afraid that the god would turn up, sacred garland and all, and get to the pot before me! That's what I thought as I was watching his overseer guy!

690

Anyhow, the old woman heard me moving about so she stretched her hand over the pot but I hissed like a snake and bit her hand hard. She nearly shat herself with fear. She quickly pulled her hand back under her blanket and lay there quietly, shaking and farting for all her worth and stinking the place worse than a weasel!

So, I quietly took a huge slurp of the porridge; huge enough to fill my stomach!

Wife:

But what about the god? Didn't he come out to you?

Cario:

Not just that very moment but, when he did come out later, I did another funny thing. As he was coming near me, I let out a loud series of farts. I couldn't help it. My guts were so full they were going to explode!

700

Wife:

At which point the god, no doubt, would have thought you were an absolute stinker!

Cario:

No, not him but his daughters, Iaso and Panacea were affected by it. Iaso turned red in the face and Panacea pinched her nose and turned her head away. Hehe, you see, darling, I don't let out perfume from my rear!

Wife:

What about the god himself? What did he do?

Cario:

It didn't bother him in the slightest!

Wife:

You're saying the god is an idiot?

Cario:

No, by Zeus, he's not an idiot, he's just a typical doctor. They all, you know... examine shit... sniff it and taste it and eat it. Very much used to the smell.

Wife:

Oh, you dreadful beast!

Cario:

Anyhow, after that, I got real scared, so I wrapped myself tightly under my cloak.

The doctor went about examining all the other sick people. Very organised, he was, too. Went from one person to the next, carefully checking out what they were suffering from. Then an assistant of his came out and brought him a stone mortar and a pestle and then a box.

712

Wife:

The box was made of stone?

Cario:

No, not the box, just the mortar.

Wife:

Now how the hell do you know what he did? You said you were all rugged up in your cloak. Bloody liar. How could you see what he did?

Cario:

My cloak is full of holes, woman. You can see right through them.

Anyhow, Neokleides was his first port of call. The god examined him and grounded a potion for him: Dropped three heads of Tenian garlic into the mortar, some fig juice, some dog onion, some Sphettian vinegar, pounded it all together and then, lifted Neokleidis' eyelids up and smeared the stuff right into his eyes, smeared it deep into his eyes and hard, to make the pain even more unbearable for him.

721

Well, Neokleidis jumps up with excruciating pain, screams, yells and shouts and tries to run away but the god grabbed him by the collar and said to him, "You stop right here, Neokleidis. Stay right here with the potion stuck in your eyes. That'll stop you from bringing false affidavits into the courts!"

Wife:

Now that's very patriotic of the god! Very clever, too, I might add.

Cario:

Anyhow... after that, the god went and sat next to our own old man, Wealth. He sat there and first pick up the old man's head, gently ran his hands over it, and with a clean towel wiped both the old guy's eyelids.

730

Then Panacea took a bit of red cloth and wrapped it round Wealth's face. Then the god gave out a hiss and two huge snakes came slithering out. Huge ones!

Wife:

Oh, my loving Lord!

Cario:

They slipped under the red cloth and, I guess, they just licked clean Wealth's eyelids. Well, not a minute later –less than the time it takes one to drink ten cups of wine, dear lady- our old man, Wealth jumps right up and, there he was, able to see perfectly!

Then, quick as a flash, god and snakes vanish!

Well you should have seen everyone's reaction! They all gathered round Wealth and kissed him and hugged him and stayed up with him all night long. I made a great speech praising the god Asclepius for giving sight to Wealth's eyes and for taking it completely away from Neokleides!

Wife:

Oh, Lord! Lord of Lords, what great powers you possess! Where's Wealth now?

750

Cario:

On his way here now but he's held back by a huge crowd that gathered around him. You should have seen them all! All those who lived honestly but had no money came to him all full of smiles and joy and they were shaking his hand, whereas all the wealthy crooks, all those who got their money dishonestly, frowned and knitted their eyebrows tight! All the rest followed behind, singing and laughing and wearing garlands and calling out blessings to Wealth. You could hear the lovely beat the old guys made with their shoes as they all marched along!

760

So, come on, now, folks! Dance! Come on, all together now: dance and sing and march and be happy because the day will never come again when you come home and find your flour sack empty! Dance!

Wife:

By the goddess Hekate! What wonderful news! Just for that I'm going to hang a long necklace of bread rolls around your neck!

Cario:

Well, hurry then because they'll be here any minute now!

Wife:

All right, then, I'll run in and bring out some sweets to welcome the newly found sight!

Cario:

Yes, and I'll get myself ready to greet them all.

Wife exits into the house while Cario into the wing (S.R.)

Wealth: From within, (S.L) angry at the crowd following him

Yes, yes, yes! All right, then! All right!

Enter Wealth

Wealth:

Ah! Here we are! First and foremost, I bow to the Sun (*does so*) then, I bow to the glorious soil of our majestic goddess, Palas Athena and then I bow to the whole territory of Cecrops, the very first King of Athens.

I am ashamed at my previous attitude, ashamed at the company I associated with before, completely neglecting those who were, in fact, in grave need of me and deserved my support. That was terrible of me. Wrong in both cases. Neglected the wrong people and supported the wrong people. In short, I was a blind ignoramus.

But, have no fear, my next move will be to reverse these wrongs and to show you all that I had no wish to be used by the crooks, by all that dishonest rabble.

Enter Chremylus and Cario from S.R. Chremylus has a lot of wreaths on his head. Again we hear shouts of an excited crowd within.

782

Chremylus: *To the crowd*

The hell with you all! Go on, piss off the lot of you! Go on, piss off!

Turns back to Cario

What a pain in the bum! How I hate all these so called friend that suddenly appear out of the blue, once the word gets around that you've become rich! Damn them! They crush you about, step on your toes, do all sorts of things to get to you and then ask you for a favour. *Takes off the wreaths and throws them away in disgust.* The whole damned town called out to me and shoved a wreath on my head! Everyone! Every old wanker in the place, damn them!

Enter wife carrying a tray of sweets

Wife: *Greeting all three, Chremylus first.*

Here you are, darling! You, too, Wealth and you, too, Cario. Greeting to all of you. Now, Wealth, let me do the traditional honours! Come here. Let me offer you some of these sweets...

790

Wealth:

Oh, no, dear lady! Oh no, no, no! You mustn't do anything of the sort because since it is the first time that I'm actually *seeing* the house and since it is the first time I'm entering the house with my sight restored, nothing must be taken out of the house; instead, something must be taken into it!

Wife:

So you're going to refuse my sweets?

Wealth:

We must have them inside, by the hearth. That's the real tradition. Otherwise *Indicating the audience* the crowd out there will laugh at us. It's just not the done thing for the playwright of this wonderful comedy to be tossing figs and sweet munchies to the crowd hoping to gain their approval!

Wife:

Quite so, quite right! *Looks into the audience and points at someone* Hahaha! Look there! I can see Dexinikos already jumping up and down hoping to catch some figs!

All exit into the house and after a short pause cheery noises of a pleasant celebration are heard from within the house for a short while, then a quite pause, before Cario comes out. Smoke emanates from the house as he opens the door.

801

Cario: *To the chorus*

Oh, mates! What a lot of fun it is! How sweet it is to be happy without having to spend your own money! The house is packed with wonderful things, things acquired without hurting anyone, no injustice done to anyone, no one suffered. Our pantry is bulging with flour, our coffers are clogged with gold and silver, enough to make you lose your mind!

810

Our oil pots are brimming with olive oil, our perfume jars with the most fragrant perfumes, and the attic, the attic is stuffed full of figs. You should see all our pots and pans and dishes! They're all bronze now! And you should see all those old fish pans we used to have! They're all made of shiny silver now! Even our lantern is now made of ivory. We slaves –you should see us playing dice! Forget the old pennies: These days we play with the big drachmas! Yes and when we go to the dunny, we don't wipe our bums with stones and rubbish, oh, no we use garlic leaves, to make our bums nice and soft! And you should see our master right now! A garland on his head and crackling pig and roast goat and ram on his tray. He's offering it to everyone! The smoke he made roasting those animals on the spit! I couldn't stand it anymore. I had to get out of there. Burning the crap out of my eyes, it was.

Enter the Just Man followed by his slave who is carrying an old torn cloak and worn out shoes.

823

Just Man:

Come, my son, follow me. We're going to the god's house, just there.

Cario:

Hello? Who've got here?

Just Man:

Just a man, my good man. A man who was miserable once but who's very happy now.

Cario:

By the looks of you, you must be a just and honourable man!

Just Man:

Oh, very much so, very much so! Very just, very honourable!

Cario:

Soooo... what are you after now?

Just Man:

Me? I'm just looking for the god Wealth. I'm looking for him because, well, because he gave me so many good things! See, my father has just suddenly died and left me a great deal of money, so, I thought I'd do the just and honourable and useful thing and help out all my needy friends...

832

Cario:

So, let me guess now: You've completely run out of all that money daddy left you.

Just Man:

Yep!

Cario:

And so now, you're well and truly stuffed!

Just Man:

Yep! See, I was under the impression that helping friends in need was a good thing because if you were ever in need, then those you've helped when they were in need, would come and help you... in your hour of need, that is but... but the bastards, the moment they see me down the street, they dash over to the other side and pretend they don't know me!

Cario:

Bastards! And so, when you were in need, they were all laughing at you behind your back, as well, ey?

Just Man:

Yep. In need, alright! Lost the lot! Possession drought! Totally ruined. But, that was then, that's not now. Now, I'm here to show my gratitude and appreciation to the god.

842

Cario:

So, what's with this rag of a cloak the kid is carrying?

Just Man:

It's an offering. To the god, in there.

Cario: *Takes it and examines it. He's appalled by it.*

Good God! This is what you wore at the Great Mysteries... on your initiation day, isn't it?

Just Man:

No, that's not it but it's the one I froze to death in for the last thirteen years!

Cario:

And what about those shoes?

Just Man:

Them too. We fought a whole lot of blizzards together.

Cario:

And they're an offering too, are they?

Just Man:

Too right!

Cario:

Charming stuff! He'll be delighted with your offerings, I'm sure.

Enter Informer followed by a witness

850

Informer:

Penetrated! Stuffed! Screwed through and through! Done over! Impregnated! Poor bastard! I've been screwed over and over again! Three times over. No, four times! No, five times! No, a dozen times! A million times! Poor suck! What a disaster!

Cario:

Apollo save us! Apollo and all you other gods! What in Hades' name is wrong with that man?

Informer:

What a disaster, I tell you! My whole fortune is gone! Everything in my house is gone and it's all that god's fault! All his fault, I tell you and if there's any justice in this world, he'll be made blind again!

860

Just Man:

Hmmm... I think I can see what's happened here. Looks like our visitor's had a rough time of it recently but... he also looks a bit dodgy, I reckon.

Cario:

A bit dodgy all right. Then it serves him right, by Zeus!

Informer:

So where is that nasty creature of a god? The one who made all those promises about making us all rich once he regained his eyesight, ey? Ruin us, more like it! Totally bloody destroyed us, he did!

Cario:

Yeah? Who exactly is it that he's ruined?

Informer:

Who? Who? Me of course! He's ruined me! Myself!

Cario:

In that case you must be one of the crooks, one of those who love breaking and entering!

870

Informer:

Not me, mate! By Zeus, not I! Never! It's you lot who are the crooks! It's obvious: it's your lot that robbed me of all my money and possessions!

Cario:

By my darling goddess Demeter! What we have here is an informer! A blithering blubbing informer! A starving informer, even! How about that?

Informer:

You! They should be stretching you out on the wheel, at the market place! Torture you 'till you confess all your crimes!

Cario:

Yah, I reckon they ought to be doing that to you, mate, not me!

Just Man:

By Zeus the saviour! If only our dear god would somehow –anyhow!- put all these miserable informers out of circulation! The whole of Greece would rejoice!

880

Informer:

You too? Damn it man! You're in there with them? You, mocking me as well? Hang on! Where did you get this lovely cloak from all of a sudden? Yesterday you wearing worn-out rags.

Just Man:

I'm not afraid of you! I'm wearing this protective ring. Protects you from venomous snakes! Bought it for a drach from Eudamus.

Cario:

Hahaha! Ah, but alas, my friend, there's nothing in the world that can protect you from the bite of an informer!

Informer:

How bloody outrageous! Now you're both making fun of me! What on earth are you two doing hanging around here, anyway? I bet you're up to something nasty!

Cario:

Nasty for you, that's for sure!

890

Informer:

And I bet my bottom drachma, you'll be dining and wining with my money!

By Zeus!

Just Man:

And I hope you bust your gut, you bastard!

Cario:

And it'd be an empty gut, I hope!

Informer:

So you won't tell me what you're up to? You rotten slime balls! I bet that house is chokers with beautiful fish and meat. I can smell them cooking from here. *Sniffs the air* Mmmmm! Mmmmm!

Cario:

What's you sniffing about, idiot?

Just Man:

I think he's got the sniffles. Caught a cold, I reckon. Look at that flimsy little jacket he's got on!

Informer:

Oh, Zeus and all you other gods and goddesses! Witness their dreadful arrogance! Towards me! Me, an honest, prim and proper, patriotic individual! Witness the suffering I'm suffering!

901

Just Man:

Hahaha! You? You? An honest and patriotic individual?

Informer:

Absolutely! There's no one more honest and more patriotic than me!

Just Man:

Is that right? Well, mate, I've got a question for you.

Informer:

Go on...

Just Man:

Are you a... farmer?

Informer:

What? Do you think I'm mad?

Just Man:

Are you a business man, then?

Informer:

Yeah... when I get the chance to do a bit of business.

Just Man:

Well, have learnt a trade of any sort?

Informer:

Zeus, no!

Just Man:

So, you earn a living by doing nothing, ey? How do you manage that?

Informer:

Manage? I manage everything: everything regarding the State as well as the private sector!

Just Man:

Everything? How do you manage all that?

Informer:

I'm a... voluntary consultant!

Just Man:

You mean a meddler. One who meddles in other people's business. You crook! You! An honest and patriotic individual! Ha!

911

Informer:

Of course I'm honest and patriotic, you fool! Do I not help my city as much as I can?

Just Man:

So, you reckon sticking your nose in everybody else's business is helping the city?

Informer:

And isn't making sure that the city's laws are obeyed by everyone and that no one breaks them and gets away with it, isn't that helping the city?

Just Man:

But that's what the city pays jurors for!

Informer:

Of course it does but who does the prosecution work?

Just Man:

Busybodies.

Informer:

So, I, as a busybody... eh, a voluntary consultant, am, therefore, helping the city! See? The city's business is my business! I am her protector!

920

Just Man:

No wonder protection is such a rotten racket in this city! By Zeus!

Anyhow, look: wouldn't you rather mind your own business and have no business worries?

Informer:

I'm not a sheep, mate! I don't roam the paddocks aimlessly.

Just Man:

No point in asking you to mend your ways then, is there?

Informer:

Nope! Absolutely not. Not even if you handed me Wealth himself on a platter and all the fennel in Battus' pantry!

Cario:

Right! Then take off your cloak, right now!

Just Man: *To the informer*

Oi! He's talking to you!

Cario:

And your shoes!

Just Man:

He's still talking to you!

Informer:

Oh yeah? Well come and get them if you dare!

Cario:

I dare!

Cario rushes over to the informer and after a brief tussle, he removes the informer's cloak and shoes.

930

Informer:

Help! Oh, poor me! They're stripping me naked in broad daylight!

Cario:

That'll teach you ripping people off for a living!

Informer: *To his witness*

See this? You see what he's doing? You be my witness here!

Witness runs off in a fright.

Cario:

Hahaha! There goes your witness! Shot off the scene of the crime!

Informer:

Oh, no! Abandoned and all alone!

Cario:

What's you screaming about now?

Informer:

I'm screaming because I'm hurt!

Cario: *To Just Man*

Mate, hand me that old cloak of yours. I want to wrap it around him.

Just Man:

Oh, no, Cario! Please! I'm offering it to Wealth!

Cario:

Wealth doesn't wear such rotten rubbish. Rotten rubbish like this is only fit for rotten crooks like him.

Wealth wears only modest and dignified clothes.

Cario makes the Informer wear Just Man's cloak.

Just Man:

Hang on, what about the shoes? What are we going to do with the shoes?

941

Cario:

The shoes? I'll nail the shoes on his bald head, like the offerings people nail on wild olive trees!

Informer:

All right, all right! You win! I'm leaving. It's obvious I can't take on the both of you but, believe me, if I can get myself a mate -any mate will do- to help me here, I'll have that mighty god of yours brought before the courts before the day's end. I'll have him charged with taking the city's laws into his own hands and trying to overthrow our Democracy, unilaterally and without the consent of the People's Assembly!

951

Just Man:

Hahaha! Go! Run quickly to the bath houses. With my battle gear on, you'll need to go stand guard at the fireplaces there to keep yourself warm. That was my spot for years!

Exit Informer

Cario:

Hahaha! But the owner of the bath house will take one look at him, figure him out for the crook that he is, grab him by his testicles and toss the nasty prick out!

Come on! Let's go inside now so that you can make your offerings to the god.

Exit Cario, Just Man and Just Man's slave into Chremylus' house.

Enter Old Woman with a slave who's carrying a tray of food.

Old Woman: *To the men of the chorus*

Ah! Tell me, please, old gentlemen, am I at the god's house or have I completely lost my way?

Chorus:

Hahaha! A girly question from an old girl! Yes, sweetie, you're right here. That there is the door to his house.

Old Woman:

Well then, let me call one of them out here...

Chremylus comes out of the house

Chremylus:

Don't bother. Here I am. What's up, dearie?

Old Woman:

What's up? Everything's up, dearie! I've suffered dreadful sufferings! Dreadful, unbearable injustices! So much suffering I've suffered after that god, Wealth got his eyesight back! My life's become... totally unliveable!

970

Chremylus:

Is that a fact? Don't tell me you're one of those female informers, are you? One of those that spy and inform on other women?

Old Woman:

Zeus, what are you saying? Certainly not!

Chremylus:

Well then... you're not one of those women who appear at drinking parties without an invitation card, are you?

Old Woman:

Stop making fun of me! Can't you see I'm desperate? I'm badly, badly burnt, sweetie!

Chremylus:

Burnt? Where? What do you mean?

Old Woman:

Well, you see, sweetie, I used to have a lovely young stud of a lover; a poor boy, not a cracker to his name but a damned good lover! Delicious boy, handsome, well mannered, did whatever I asked him to do... did it perfectly well, too. And, of course, I repaid all the favours, special and all.

980

Chremylus:

Special? What sort of special favours?

Old Woman:

Well, nothing much really. He was so modest with his requests. Very much so. For instance, he'd ask for, say, twenty drachmas for a cloak, or eight drachmas for a pair of shoes... and he'd get me to buy little skirts for his sisters or a dress for his mum... once he asked me for a sack of wheat...

Chremylus: *sarcastically*

Oh yeah, I can see he wasn't asking for much. He was certainly very... modest with his requests.

989

Old Woman:

That's right. And not only that but he never asked for anything just because he was greedy but because he loved me so much. Every time he wore the cloak I bought him he'd be thinking of me. That's why he wanted me to buy it for him.

Chremylus:

Now that's one very loving lover!

Old Woman:

But now! Now he's turned on me! Total shit, now! Totally changed. A different boy altogether. See this pie? And these figs and nuts? I've sent them to him on this very platter with a message that I'd be paying him a little visit tonight...

Chremylus:

And? This is getting interesting!

999

Old Woman:

And... and he sent the lot back along with this little cake here and this message—hang on—listen to this: *Opens a folded piece of paper and reads*, “there was a time when the Milesians were unbeatable but now...” Obviously he thinks I've had my day!

Chremylus:

Obviously! Quite good manners from the boy, as I see it, in fact. When he was poor, he'd eat anything but now that he's rich, he's obviously sick of your lentil soup.

Old Woman:

Heavens, yes. Before that he'd be knocking at my door every day! Never missed!

Chremylus:

Obviously waiting for your funeral...

Old Woman:

Zeus no! The boy loved to hear my voice.

Chremylus:

Loved his little gifts, more like it.

1010

Old Woman:

And whenever he noticed that I was a bit sad, he'd call me his “little dove” and his “little hen.”

Chremylus:

And straight after that he'd be asking you for a pair of shoes, ey?

Old Woman:

He loved me so much, the boy was jealous of every other boy. Once, at the Great Mysteries, I was parading in my chariot and he suddenly noticed that some other boy turned his head towards me. Well, that day I got such a thrashing! I was beaten all day long!

Chremylus:

That's because, no doubt, he didn't want to share his lentils with anyone else!

Old Woman:

He said I had such beautiful hands...

Chremylus:

Whenever they were stuffed full of drachmas and stretched out to him, ey?

1020

Old Woman:

And then he'd say, "my! How delightfully your skin smells!"

Chremylus:

As you're topping up his glass with a fine red, Thracian wine, right?

Old Woman:

How he loved my eyes! Told me they were all nice and gooey!

Chremylus:

Hahaha! Gooey, ey? He was a clever young man that one! He knew how to suck up all the goods off a horny old woman! Very clever boy!

Old Woman:

So, my good man, this new god of ours is not good! He says he will make sure that he'll look after the honest people but he does the exact opposite!

Chremylus:

Well, tell him what to do and he'll do it! What is it you want him to do?

Old Woman:

He should forced my lover to do the right thing by me. Repay me for my kindness. Or else to make sure he never gets to have a good life.

1031

Chremylus:

But, surely, he repaid you every single night, hasn't he?

Old Woman:

Yes, but he's promised me he'd never leave me! Never, so long as I lived.

Chremylus:

Yes, so he must obviously think that you're dead now.

Old Woman:

Well no, I'm not dead but I am in the grips of grief, dearie. Believe me, I'm in agony, wasting away!

Chremylus:

No, not in the grips of grief but in the grips of death, old darling. You're not wasting away, you're rotting away, old girl!

Old Woman:

Yes, I'm wasting away so much, you could pull me right through a ring...

Chremylus:

Yes, one of those rings that hold a barrel together, that is!

Old Woman: *Indicating behind the wing*

Oh, look! Here comes the boy now! Oh! There he is! The very one I've been reproaching all this time.

Oh, look! I think he's off to some party!

1041

Chremylus:

Looks like it. He's covered in garlands and he's carrying a torch.

Enter a Young Man wearing a garland but carrying some more in his hand. A small sack of walnuts hangs from his belt.

Young Man:

G'day all!

Old Woman: *to Chremylus*

What was that? What did he say?

Chremylus:

Heavens, old girl! How fast you're aging!

Old Woman:

God help me! The insults I'm insulted with!

Chremylus:

By the looks of it, it must have been a very long time since he last saw you.

Old Woman:

What are you talking about, “long time?” He was at my place only yesterday!

Chremylus:

Then he’s suffering the reverse of a very common ailment: He eyesight becomes sharper with wine.

Old Woman:

No, he was always a naughty boy!

1050

Young Man: *Brings his torch near her face and rudely inspects it.*

O, Poseidon! God of the world’s oceans! And all you, other ancient, ancient gods!

Look at the infinite number of wrinkles on her face! Simply infinite!

Old Woman: *almost in tears with shame*

Oh! Oh! Get that torch off me! Take it away from my face!

Chremylus: *to Young Man*

She’s right, you! Take it away. One little spark from that and she’s up in flames. Up like a dried up harvest wreath!

Young Man: *to Old Woman*

Hey, old darl’, you wanna spent some time with me? Spent a little time... playing up?

Old Woman: *Excited at the prospect*

Yeah, yeah... but where?

Young Man: *Hands her a little sack of nuts*

Right here, girly. Hang on, take these nuts!

Old Woman: *Takes the nuts*

What sort of game are we playing?

Young Man:

A guessing game. We’ll see who can guess how many teeth you’ve got.

Chremylus:

Let me, let me! Let me guess how many she’s got... I’d say three... or four maybe...

Young Man:

You lose! Pay up! She’s only got one! One solitary, single, lonely, old molar!

1060

Old Woman:

You deranged little shit! You’re the absolute pits! You’ve gone and flooded me with insults in front of all these men!

Young Man:

It’ll do you the world of good, old girl. The flood will wash some of that dirt off you.

Chremylus: *puts his arm around her. His hand is wandering...*

Wouldn’t do her any good at all! It’d also wash all that make up off her. See how well she’s prepared herself for a trick? The wash would reveal all the old ruins of her face.

Old Woman: *To Chremylus*

Looks like old age has scrambled your brain, old man.

Young Man:

I think he’s after you, darling. I think he’s trying to grab your tits when he thinks I’m not looking!

Old Woman: *Disgusted at Chremylus*

By Aphrodite! You’re not grabbing my tits, you stinker!

1070

Chremylus: *removes his hand*

Hahaha! By Hekate! No, I’m not that far gone!

Turning to Young Man

But, you! Listen, boy, I won’t let you treat this little girl with such hatred!

Young Man:

Hatred? Who me? No! I absolutely adore this... little girl!

Chremylus:

So why does she make all these complains about you, then?

Young Man:

Complains? What sort of complains has she made about me?

Chremylus:

She says that you’re full of insults and that you told her that “there was a time when the Milesians were unbeatable but now...”

Young Man:

All right, you win! She's all yours. You can have her! I'll let you take her from me without a fight!

Chremylus:

What are you on about, boy?

Young Man:

I mean, I won't fight you for her because I respect your age. It's an offer I wouldn't make to anyone else, old man, so, go ahead: take the young lady and go!

1080

Chremylus:

Oh, I know what you're thinking! You're thinking you're too good for her.

Old Woman: *To Young Man*

Oi! Who gave you permission to give me away like that?

Young Man:

Darling, I simply don't want to fuck someone who's been fucked by... thirteen thousand years!

Chremylus:

Well, now, young man, no! Not how it works. You drank all the wine so, now you must also drink all the dregs.

Young Man:

Dregs? These dregs are ancient, mate! They're old, foul!

Chremylus:

No probs, just push it through the strainer sack.

Young Man:

Listen, I'd like to go inside now and dedicate these garlands to the god.

Old Woman:

Me, too! I want to tell him a couple of things, myself.

1090

Young Man:

In that case, I'm not going in.

Chremylus:

Courage, boy! Don't worry, she's not going to rape you!

Young Man:

Just as well! I've been smearing her bum long enough now!

Old Woman:

Move, sonny! I'm right behind you!

Exit Young Man and Old Woman into Chremylus' house.

Chremylus:

Such tenacity! By Zeus, that old woman sticks to that young man like a clam on a rock!

Exit Chremylus into his house.

Enter Hermes from SL. He walks to the door and knocks on it and then hides behind the bench.

Cario: *From within*

Who is it? Who's knocking at my door? *Opens the door, comes out and looks all around him.* What's going on around here? I can't see anyone around here. Stupid door! Doing its own banging now!

Turns to go back inside

Hermes: *Reveals himself*

Oi, Cario! Hang on a tick!

1100

Cario:

You! Were you banging so loudly on my door just then?

Hermes:

Who me? No way! But I was going to. You just beat me to it. Now run in, quickly and bring your boss out here... and his wife... and his kids... and his slaves, his dog, his pig and then bring yourself out, too! Go on! Run!

Cario:

Tell me what for, first!

Hermes:

It's Zeus, stupid! You've got him so angry he's going to toss you all into a big mortar and pestle you all up and then throw you to the dogs!

1110

Cario:

News like that will have my tongue sliced and tossed on the sacrificial altar! What's got Zeus so bloody angry?

Hermes:

He's angry, stupid, because from the moment you gave Wealth his sight back, we gods received nothing from you mortals! Not a single sacrifice, not a whiff of incense, not a single leaf of bay, not a single barley cake, not one victim, nothing! Absolutely nothing!

Cario:

Quite right, too. Why should we? And we won't be giving you anything in the future either. You gods have treated us so miserably in the past!

Hermes:

Listen, I don't particularly care too much about all the other gods but me? I'm absolutely ruined by all this!

Cario:

Smart thinking.

1120

Hermes:

I used to get all sorts of delicious delights from the barmaids before. First thing in the morning. Out would come the wine cakes and the honey and the figs, offerings of all sorts for me. Hermes loves his delights, you know. Well, now I get bugger all. There I am, feet up in the air, stomach rumbling...

Cario:

It's a case of just deserts, isn't it? Didn't you often punish those very folks who made you those offerings?

Hermes:

Oh, dear! Oh dearie, dearie, me! There goes my Fourth of the Month cake! Oh dear!

Cario:

To quote the scribes, "You long for and lament for one that's long gone!" You get it, Hermes? No more cakes! Cakes are all gone!

Hermes:

Oh, how I long for and lament the loss of all those thigh bones I used to debone!

Cario:

You've done all the deboning of thighs you'll ever do. That's it!

1130

Hermes:

And for all those tender gizzards...

Cario:

Looks like your own gizzards are in pain right now.

Hermes:

That delicious mixture of half wine, half water!

Cario: *Turns his bum to Hermes and farts.*

Here, mate, have a sip of this one. You gotta run fast to catch it though. Go on, off you go!

Hermes:

Oh, go on, do your old friend a favour!

Cario:

Sure, if I can.

Hermes:

Go on, get me a well baked loaf of bread and a big, juicy steak to eat, from the stuff you're sacrificing in there.

Cario:

It's not a takeaway, mate.

Hermes:

But what about all the times I've helped you get away with pinching stuff from your master's house?

1139

Cario:

Yeah, you helped me, all right. Helped me so that you could get your share of it, you crook! You'd always end up with some deliciously made little cake or other!

Hermes:

But in whose mouth did they end up?

Cario:

But you never took your share of the wounds inflicted upon my body whenever I got caught doing something.... naughty!

Hermes:

All right, all right! Thyle has been captured and the Spartans have high-tailed it from here. The victory is yours. Now, can we have Peace, please? In heaven's name, invite me into the house, let me live with you lot!

Cario:

What? So you want to leave all the gods behind and come and live down here?

Hermes:

Yes. Looks like you mortals down here, have it much better than we do up there.

1150

Cario:

What? You're not going to desert your country, are you? Not a very polite thing to do.

Hermes:

One's country is where one's life is good.

Cario:

Is that a fact? And what do we get if we let you live with us?

Hermes:

You could use me as a Door Hinge Protector God. Have me standing in front of your door, protecting your door hinges, making sure no one smashes them and robs you blind.

Cario:

Na! No need for a Door Hinge Protector God any more.

Hermes:

Well, you can use me as a Middleman God, for all your wheeling and dealing.

Cario:

But we're all wealthy now. We don't need to be paying some Hermes the Middleman!

Hermes:

How about making me Protector of Crooks?

Cario:

Protector of Crooks? Mate, we don't need any crooks or their protectors. We are now all honest.

Hermes:

As a Guiding God?

1160

Cario:

No need for one of them either. Our god can see now, see? He can do all the guiding we need.

Hermes:

All right then, I'll be your Protector of Sport God, then. Surely you can't say anything against that! All those contests on music and athletics, all done in the nude... Wealth would be pleased with that.

Cario: *To the audience*

What a lovely thing it is to have so many titles, ey? Can't miss out making a living when you can be the god of so many things! Our jurors must have learnt their tricks from this guy. That's why, one way or another, they get their names plastered on a whole lot of judicial lists.

Hermes:

Well? Am I in or am I out?

Cario:

Oh, all right, then! You can go in but when you do, go straight to the wash basin and wash some of the entrails –to show them you can do the job of an apprentice.

Both enter the house.

Enter Priest from SL

1171

Priest: *To the Chorus*

Can someone tell me, clearly please, where Chremylus lives?

Enter Chremylus from the house

Chremylus:

What's up, mate?

Priest:

What's up? What's up? Nothing but trouble, mate! Shocking stuff! Starvation! Acute starvation! Ever since that god, Wealth, got his eyesight back, I've been left to starve, famished! I, the priest of Zeus, have nothing to eat!

Chremylus:

By the gods! How did that happen?

Priest:

It happened because nobody worries about sacrifices anymore.

Chremylus:

Is that right? Why ever not?

1178

Priest:

Why? Because everyone is wealthy now, that's why! Before, when they were all poor, there was always the sacrifice made by a thankful merchant who returned home safely, or some man who was acquitted in the courts... and then all those folk whose sacrifices brought good omens would invite me to their home. Whereas now! No one, not a one, single man sacrifices anything nor visits the shrine anymore... the only visitors we get are those who want to use out toilet! Millions of them!

Chremylus:

No sharing the shit, then, ey?

Priest:

And that's why I'm saying good bye to Zeus and hello to Wealth. I want to live here, with you!

Chremylus:

Fear not, my good man because, if the god wills it, everything will be all right. Zeus himself –yes, the very god, Zeus the Saviour himself- is in there with us. He just walked in, totally of his own accord.

Priest:

What delightful news! I'm going right in!

1190

Chremylus:

Patience, my good man, patience. We're about to install our god, Wealth, back in his old spot, in Acropolis, in Athena's temple, as a permanent guardian of her Treasure Chamber.

Now, somebody please bring us some lighted torches and you, priest, you can lead Wealth's procession.

Torches are brought and one is handed to the Priest.

Priest:

Many thanks!

Chremylus:

Someone call Wealth out here, please!

Old Woman and a slave come out of the house. The old woman is dressed in colourful, new clothes.

The slave is carrying some chamber pots.

Old Woman:

And me? What can I do?

Chremylus:

Well, since you're all dressed up so colourfully, you can carry all the chamber pots on your head, in a dignified manner, of course, all the way to Athena's temple.

Old Woman:

But what about my problem? The one that brought me here in the first place?

1200

Chremylus:

It's all going to be worked out. Your young lover will pay you a visit tonight.

Old Woman:

Well, if you can guarantee that for me, then I'll certainly carry the chamber pots.

Slave hands chamber pots to Old Woman who places them on her head.

Chremylus:

Well, look at that! The usual thing is for the chamber pots to carry the scum. Here we have the scum carrying the pots!

From the house come Wealth, followed by his family and slaves, Hermes, Zeus etc, who form a procession line, lead by the Priest

Chorus:

Let's not slow things down at all, ey guys?!

Chorus:

Yes, let us fall in behind the procession.

Chorus:

Singing a holy song!

Exit all

**END OF ARISTOPHANES'
"WEALTH"**

