

LYSISTRATA (410 BCE) by Aristophanes; adapted by Steve Burch**Cast**

Lysistrata	Natalie Hopper
Cleonike	Allison Hetzel
Myrrhine	Molly Page
Lampito	Susie Johnson
Corinthian Woman	Amber Gibson
Boeotian Woman	Dakota Park-Ozee
Magistrate	Mark Hughes Cobb
Spartan Herald	Motell Foster
Kinesias	Joey Gamble
Spartan Ambassador	Russ Frost
Male Chorus leader	Nic Helm
<u>Chorus of Men:</u>	
Man 1	Frank Sharpe
Man 2	Eric Marable
Man 3	Asher Elbein?
Child (offstage voice)	Dori Burns
Female Chorus Leader	Deborah Parker
<u>Chorus of Women</u>	

First Woman

Amber Gibson

Second Woman

Dakota Park-Ozee

Third Woman

Dori Burns

Peace*

Dakota Park-Ozee

***(non-speaking woman, doubled from above)**

SCENE ONE:**LYSISTRATA**

Ah! if only they had been invited to a Bacchic orgy, or a feast of Aphrodite, why the streets would have been impassable for the throngs! Now there's not a single woman here — ah! except my neighbor.... Good day, Cleonike.

CLEONIKE

Hello, Lysistrata; but pray, why this gloom and doom face, my dear?

LYSISTRATA

Oh, Cleonike, I'm in a rage! I blush for our sex. Men will have it we are tricky and sly....

CLEONIKE

And we are! Quite right!

LYSISTRATA

But, when women are summoned to meet for a matter of the greatest importance, they lie in bed instead of coming.

CLEONIKE

Oh! they will come, my dear; but it's not easy, you know, for women to leave the house. One is busy puttering about her husband; another is getting the servant up; a third is putting her child asleep or washing the brat or feeding it.

LYSISTRATA

But I tell you, what I'm calling them here for is far and away more urgent.

CLEONIKE

Yes? And why do you summon us, dear Lysistrata? What is it all about?

LYSISTRATA

About a big thing.

CLEONIKE *[taking this with great interest]*

Oh? And is it thick too?

LYSISTRATA

Yes, very thick.

CLEONIKE

And we are not all here? Now?! Imagine!

LYSISTRATA *[wearily]*

No, no, it doesn't concern that. It's . . . it means just this, Greece saved by us, its women!

CLEONIKE

By its women! Oh, hell, then we're all doomed!

LYSISTRATA

Our country's fortunes depend on us — it is up to us to undo utterly the Peloponnesians.

CLEONIKE

Oh?

LYSISTRATA

To exterminate the Boeotians to a man!

CLEONIKE

All of them?

LYSISTRATA

But, if the Boeotian and Peloponnesian women join us, Greece is saved.

CLEONIKE

Oh! But how can women perform so wise and glorious an achievement, we women who dwell in the retirement of the household, clad in diaphanous garments of yellow silk and long flowing gowns, decked out with flowers and shod with dainty little slippers?

LYSISTRATA

Ah, Cleonike, but those are the very instruments of our salvation — those yellow tunics, those scents and slippers, those cosmetics and transparent robes.

CLEONIKE

How so, pray?

LYSISTRATA

There is not a man will wield a lance against another...

CLEONIKE

Quick, sign me up! I will get me a yellow tunic from the dyer's.

LYSISTRATA

...or want a shield.

CLEONIKE

I'll run and put on a flowing gown.

LYSISTRATA

...or draw a sword.

CLEONIKE

This instant I'll run and buy a pair of slippers.

LYSISTRATA

Now tell me, don't you agree the women would have done better to come here today?

CLEONIKE

Why, they should have flown here! *[sees them approaching]* And they did! They are! Look! Yes! upon my word, 'tis a levy en masse of all the female population!

[MYRRHINE enters, followed by the other women.]

MYRRHINE

Are we late, Lysistrata? What, not a word?

LYSISTRATA

Myrrhine! you have not bestirred yourself overmuch for an affair of such urgency.

MYRRHINE

I could not find my girdle in the dark. But, here we are; so speak.

CLEONIKE

No, let's wait a moment more, till the women of Boeotia arrive and those from the Peloponnese.

LYSISTRATA

Yes, that is best.... Ah! here comes Lampito. *[LAMPITO, a husky Spartan damsel, enters with three others, two from Boeotia and one from Corinth.]* Good day,

Lampito, dear friend from Sparta. How well and handsome you look! what a rosy complexion! and how strong you seem; why, you could strangle a bull surely!

LAMPITO

Yes, indeed, I really think I could. It's because I do gymnastics and practice the bottom-kicking dance.

CLEONIKE *[opening LAMPITO'S robe and baring her bosom]*

And what superb breasts!

LAMPITO

You are looking at me as if I were a beast for sacrifice.

LYSISTRATA

And this young woman, where is she from?

LAMPITO

She is a noble lady from Boeotia.

LYSISTRATA

Ah! my pretty Boeotian friend, you are as blooming as a garden.

CLEONIKE *[making another inspection]*

Yes, on my word! and her "garden" is so thoroughly weeded too!

LYSISTRATA *[pointing to the Corinthian]*

And who is this?

LAMPITO

An honest woman.

CLEONIKE

Oh! honest, no doubt then — she must be from Corinth.

LAMPITO

But who has called together this council of women, pray?

LYSISTRATA

I have.

LAMPITO

Well then, tell us what you want of us.

CLEONIKE

Yes, please tell us! What is this very important business you wish to inform us about?

LYSISTRATA

I will tell you. But first answer me one question.

CLEONIKE

Anything you wish.

LYSISTRATA

Don't you feel sad and sorry because the fathers of your children are far away from you with the army? For I'll wager there is not one of you whose husband is not abroad at this moment.

CORINTHIAN WOMAN

Mine has been the last five months in Thrace.

BOEOTIAN WOMAN

It's seven long months since mine left for Pylos.

LAMPITO

As for mine, if he ever does return from service, he's no sooner home than he takes down his shield again and flies back to the wars.

LYSISTRATA

And not so much as the shadow of a lover!.... Now tell me, if I have discovered a means of ending the war, will you all second me?

BOEOTIAN WOMAN

Yes, you betcha!

CORINTHIAN WOMAN

Absolutely!

CLEONIKE

By all the goddesses, I swear I will, though I have to pawn my gown, and drink the money the same day.

MYRRHINE

And so will I, though I must be split in two like a flat-fish, and have half myself removed.

LAMPITO

And I too; why to secure peace, I would climb to the top of Mount Olympus.

LYSISTRATA

Alright then, my mighty secret! Oh! sister women, if we would compel our husbands to make peace, we must refrain...

CLEONIKE

Refrain from what? tell us, tell us!

LYSISTRATA

But will you do it?

ALL WOMEN

We will, we will, though we should die of it.

LYSISTRATA

We must refrain from men altogether.... No more sex with men! *[Pause. Everyone starts to walk away.]* Why do you turn your backs on me? Where are you going? So, you bite your lips, and shake your heads, eh? Why these pale, sad looks? why these tears? Come, will you do it — yes or no? Yes or no! Don't wait for the translation!

CLEONIKE

I will not do it, let the war go on.

MYRRHINE

Nor will I; let the war go on.

BOEOTIAN WOMAN

Uh-uh! No way! Forget it!

CORINTHIAN WOMAN

Not this chick!

LYSISTRATA *[to MYRRHINE]*

And you say this, my pretty flat-fish, who declared just now they might split you in two?

MYRRHINE

Anything, anything but that! Bid me go through the fire, if you will,— but to rob us of the sweetest thing in all the world, Lysistrata darling!

LYSISTRATA *[to CLEONIKE]*

And you?

CLEONIKE

I can't; I too would sooner go through the fire.

LYSISTRATA

Oh, wanton, vicious sex! the poets have done well to make tragedies about us; we are good for nothing then but love and lewdness! But you, you from hardy Sparta, if you join me, all may yet be well; help me, second me, I beg you.

LAMPITO

It's a hard thing, by the two goddesses it is! for a woman to sleep alone without ever a strong, hard man in her bed. But, oh damn it, peace must come first.

LYSISTRATA

Oh, my darling, my dearest, best friend, you are the only one deserving the name of woman!

CLEONIKE

But if — which the gods forbid — we do refrain altogether from what you say, should we get peace any sooner?

LYSISTRATA

Yes! Yes! Yes! Of course we should! We need only sit indoors with painted cheeks, and meet our mates lightly clad in transparent gowns of Amorgos silk, and perfectly

depilated; they will get their tools up and be wild to lie with us. That will be the time to refuse, and they will be damn quick to make peace, I am convinced of that!

LAMPITO

Yes, just as Menelaus, when he saw Helen's naked bosom, threw away his sword, they say.

CLEONIKE

But, oh dear, suppose our husbands go away and leave us. Or . . .or . . . What if our husbands drag us by force into the bedchamber?

LYSISTRATA

Hold on to the door posts.

CLEONIKE

But if they beat us?

LYSISTRATA

Then yield to their wishes, but don't be nice about it; there is no pleasure in it for them, when they do it by force. Besides, there are a thousand ways of tormenting them. Never fear, they'll soon tire of the game; there's no satisfaction for a man, unless the woman shares it.

BOEOTIAN WOMAN 1

That doesn't sound like any man I know. [*CORINTHIAN WOMAN nods aggressively.*]

CLEONIKE

Never mind. Well, if you must have it so, we agree.

CORINTHIAN WOMAN

For ourselves, no doubt we shall persuade our husbands to conclude a fair and honest peace; but there is the Athenian populace, how are we to cure these folk of their warlike frenzy?

LYSISTRATA

Have no fear; we here undertake to make our own people listen to reason.

LAMPITO

That's impossible, so long as they have their trusty ships and the vast treasures stored in the temple of Athene.

LYSISTRATA

Ah! My Spartan sister, but we have seen to that; this very day the Acropolis will be in our hands. That is the task assigned to the older women; while we are here in council, they are going, under pretence of offering sacrifice, to seize the citadel.

LAMPITO

Well said indeed! Yes! Everything is going for the best.

LYSISTRATA

Come, quick, Lampito, and let us bind ourselves by an inviolable oath.

LAMPITO

Recite the terms; we will swear to them.

LYSISTRATA

With pleasure.

CLEONIKE

Wait a minute, Lysistrata, what oath are we to swear?

LYSISTRATA

What oath? Why, let's set this great bowl here; let's sacrifice a skin of Thracian wine into it, and take oath not to add one single drop of water.

LAMPITO

Ah! that's an oath pleases me more than I can say.

LYSISTRATA

Set the bowl down.Almighty goddess, Persuasion, and thou, bowl, boon comrade of joy and merriment, receive this our sacrifice, and be favorable to us poor women!

CLEONIKE [*as LYSISTRATA pours the wine into the bowl*]

Oh! the fine red blood! how well it flows!

LAMPITO

And what a delicious bouquet!

CLEONIKE

Now, my dears, let me swear first, if you please.

LYSISTRATA

No, by Aphrodite, unless it's decided by lot. Come, then, all of you, put your hands to the bowl; and do you, Cleonike, repeat for all the rest the solemn terms I am going to recite. Then you must all swear, and pledge yourselves by the same promises,— I will have nothing to do with either lover or husband...

CLEONIKE [*faintly*]

I will have nothing to do with either lover or husband...

LYSISTRATA

Even if he come to me with an enormous erection...

CLEONIKE *[her voice quavering]*

Even if he come to me with an . . enormous erection... *[in despair]* Oh! Lysistrata, I cannot bear it!

LYSISTRATA *[ignoring this outburst]*

I will live at home unbullied...

CLEONIKE

I will live at home unbullied...

LYSISTRATA

Beautifully dressed and wearing a saffron-colored gown

CLEONIKE

Beautifully dressed and wearing a saffron-colored gown...

LYSISTRATA

To the end I may inspire my husband with the most ardent longings.

CLEONIKE

To the end I may inspire my husband with the most ardent longings.

LYSISTRATA

Never will I give myself voluntarily...

CLEONIKE

Never will I give myself voluntarily...

LYSISTRATA

And if he takes me by force...

CLEONIKE

And if he takes me by force...

LYSISTRATA

I will be cold as ice, and never stir a limb...

CLEONIKE

I will be cold as ice, and never stir a limb...

LYSISTRATA

I will neither extend my Persian slippers toward the ceiling...

CLEONIKE

I will neither extend my Persian slippers toward the ceiling...

LYSISTRATA

Nor will I crouch like the carven lions on a knife-handle.

CLEONIKE

Nor will I crouch like the carven lions on a knife-handle.

LYSISTRATA

And if I keep my oath, may I be suffered to drink of this wine.

CLEONIKE *[more courageously]*

And if I keep my oath, may I be suffered to drink of this wine.

LYSISTRATA

But if I break it, let my bowl be filled with water.

CLEONIKE

But if I break it, let my bowl be filled with water.

LYSISTRATA

Will you all take this oath?

ALL

We do.

LYSISTRATA

Then I'll now consume this remnant.

[She drinks.]

CLEONIKE*[reaching for the cup]*

Enough, enough, my dear; now let us all drink in turn to cement our friendship.

[They pass the cup around and all drink. A great commotion is heard off stage.]

LAMPITO

What the hell . . . ?

LYSISTRATA

Right on time! We have now just occupied the Acropolis. Lampito, you return to Sparta to organize the plot, while your comrades here remain as hostages. For ourselves, it's time, let us join the rest in the citadel, and push the bolts well home.

CLEONIKE

But don't you think the men will march up against us?

Lysistrata

So? Neither threats nor flames shall force our doors; they shall open only on the conditions I have named.

Cleonike

Yes! Yes! by Aphrodite; otherwise we should be called cowardly and wretched women!

[She follows LYSISTRATA out.]

SCENE TWO:

[The scene shifts to the entrance of the Acropolis. The CHORUS OF 3 MEN slowly enters, carrying kindling and pots of fire.]

Leader of Chorus

Go easy, Draces, go easy; why, your shoulder is all chafed by these damned heavy olive stocks. But forward still, forward, man, as needs must.

Man 1

What unlooked-for things do happen, to be sure, in a long life!

Man 2

Ah! Strymodorus, who would ever have thought it? Here we have the women, who used to eat our bread and live in our houses, now daring to seize the Acropolis and draw bars and bolts to keep any from entering!

Leader

Let's hurry there; and burn these vile conspiratresses, one and all!

Man 3

Nay, never will I let them laugh at me, whiles I have a breath left in my body.

Leader

Our men were ranged seventeen deep before the gate, and never left their posts, even to sleep. These women, these enemies of Euripides and all the gods, shall we do nothing to hinder their inordinate insolence?

Man 2

But look, let me catch my breath. It's no easy job without beasts of burden, and these logs bruise my shoulder! Still let us carry on, and stoke up our fire and see it does not go out just as we reach our destination. Phew! phew! *[Blowing the fire]* Oh! dear! Look! What a dreadful smoke!

Man 3

It bites my eyes like a mad dog. Come on, let's hurry, it's now or never! Phew! phew! *[Blowing the fire]* Oh dear! what a confounded smoke!

Leader

There's our fire all bright and burning, thank the gods! Now, first put down the logs and light the torches, then we crash the gate! When that doesn't work, we'll ask permission politely. If they don't answer our summons by pulling back the bolts, then we'll burn the damn door down, and the smoke will force them into submission. Dammit, that's smokey! *[Setting down the wood]* Come, men, do your duty, make the embers flare, that I may kindle a brand; I want to be the first to hurl one. Aid me, heavenly Victory; let us punish for their insolent audacity the women who have seized our citadel, and may we raise a trophy of triumph for success!

[They begin to build a fire. The CHORUS OF WOMEN now enters, carrying pots of water.]

FEMALE LEADER of Chorus

Oh! my dears, Let us hurry all we can.

First Woman

News has been brought us that a company of old, doddering grey-beards, loaded with enormous sticks, as if they wanted to heat a furnace, have taken the field, vomiting dreadful threats, crying that they must reduce to ashes these horrible women. Suffer them not, oh! goddess, but, of thy grace, may I see Athens and Greece cured of their warlike folly.

Leader of chorus of women

What is this I see, ye wretched old men? Honest and pious folk ye cannot be who act so vilely.

Leader of chorus of men

Ah, ha! here's something new! a swarm of women stand posted outside to defend the gates!

Leader of chorus of women

Fart at us, would you? we seem a mighty host, yet you do not see the ten-thousandth part of our sex.

Leader of chorus of men

Ho, shall we stop their cackle? Suppose one of us were to break a stick across their backs, eh?

Leader of chorus of women

Let us set down our water-pots on the ground, to be out of the way, if they should dare to offer us violence.

Leader of chorus of men

Let someone knock out two or three teeth for them, they won't talk so loud then.

Leader of chorus of women

Come on then; I'm waiting for you, and no other bitch will ever grab your balls.

Leader of chorus of men

Silence! or my stick will cut short your days.

Leader of chorus of women

Now, just you dare to touch me with your tiny twig!

Leader of chorus of men

And if I use my fists, what will you do?

Leader of chorus of women

I will tear out your lungs and entrails with my teeth.

Leader of chorus of men

[stepping back a bit] Oh! what a clever poet is Euripides! how well he says that woman is the most shameless of animals.

First Woman

Let's pick up our water-jars again.

Leader of chorus of men

You damned women, what do you mean to do here with your water?

Second woman

And you, old death-in-life, with your fire? Is it to cremate yourself?

Leader of chorus of men

I am going to build you a pyre to roast your female friends upon.

Third Woman

And I,— I am going to put out your fire.

Leader of chorus of men

You put out my fire — you?

First Woman

You shall soon see.

Leader of chorus of men

I don't know what prevents me from roasting you with this torch.

Leader of chorus of women

I am getting you a bath ready to clean off the filth.

Leader of chorus of men

A bath for me, you dirty slut?

Leader of chorus of women

Yes, indeed, a nuptial bath! I'm going scrub your nuts!

Leader of chorus of men *[turning to his followers]*

Do you hear that? What insolence!

Leader of chorus of women

We are free women, I tell you.

Leader of chorus of men

I will make you hold your tongue, never fear!

First Woman

Ah ha! you shall never sit any more among your pals.

Leader of chorus of men *[to his torch]*

Burn off her hair for her!

First Woman *[to her pot]*

Do your duty!

[The women pitch the water in their water-pots over the old men.]

Leader of chorus of men

Oh, dear! oh, dear! oh, dear!

Third Woman

Was it hot?

Leader of chorus of men

Enough, enough!

Second Woman

I'm watering you, to make you bloom afresh.

Leader of chorus of men

Alas! I am too dry! Ah, me how! how I am trembling with cold!

[A MAGISTRATE enters.]

Magistrate

These women, have they made din enough, I wonder, with their tambourines?— Do you not blush, you women, for your wild and uproarious doings?

Leader of chorus of men

They abused and insulted us; then soused us with the water in their water-pots, and have set us wringing out our clothes, for all the world as if we had bepossed ourselves.

Magistrate

And well done too, by Posidon! We men must share the blame of their ill conduct; it is we who teach them to love riot and dissoluteness and sow the seeds of wickedness in their hearts. You see a husband go into a shop: "Look you, jeweller," says he, "you remember the necklace you made for my wife. Well, the other evening, when she was dancing, the catch came open. Now, I am bound to start for Salamis; will you make it convenient to go up to-night to make her fastening secure?" Huh? Wink, wink, nudge, nudge! Another will go to the cobbler, a great, strong fellow, with a great, long tool, and tell him: "The strap of one of my wife's sandals presses her little toe, which is extremely sensitive; come in about midday to supple the thing and stretch it." Now see the results. You know what I'm saying? You know! But why do we stand here with arms crossed? Bring me a crowbar; I'll chastise their insolence!— Come on, bring crowbars here, and force open the gates. I will put a hand to the work myself.

Lysistrata *[opening the gate and walking out]*

No need to force the gates; I am coming out — here I am. And why bolts and bars? What we want here is not bolts and bars and locks, but common sense.

Magistrate *[jumping nervously, then striving manfully to regain his dignity]*

Really, my fine lady! Where is my officer? I want him to tie that woman's hands behind her back.

Lysistrata

By the virgin goddess! if he touches me with the tip of his finger, officer of the public peace though he be, let him look out for himself!

[The first Male Chorus defecates in terror.]

Magistrate *[to another officer]*

How now, are you afraid? Seize her, I tell you, round the body. Two of you at her, and have done with it!

Cleonike

If you lay a hand on her, Ill trample you underfoot till the crap comes out of you!

[The second Male Chorus defecates in terror.]

Magistrate

Look at the mess you've made! Where is there another officer? Bind that minx first, the one who speaks so prettily!

Myrrhine

By Phoebe, if you touch her with one finger, you'd better call quick for a surgeon!

[The third Male Chorus defecates in terror.]

Magistrate

What's that? Where's the officer? Lay hold of her. Oh! but I'm going to stop your foolishness for you all

Third Woman

If you go near her, I'll pull out your hair, scream as you like.

Magistrate

Ah! miserable man that I am! My own men desert me. What ho! are we to let ourselves be bested by a mob of women?

Lysistrata

By the holy goddesses! you'll make acquaintance with four companies of women, ready for the fray and well armed to boot.

Magistrate

Forward, men, and bind them!

Lysistrata

Forward, my gallant companions; march forth, ye vendors of grain and eggs, garlic and vegetables, keepers of taverns and bakeries, wrench and strike and tear; come, a torrent of invective and insult! *[They beat the Male Chorus who retire in haste.]* Enough, enough now retire, never rob the vanquished!

[The women withdraw.]

Magistrate

How unfortunate for my officers!

Lysistrata

Ah, ha! so you thought you had only to do with a set of slave-women! you did not know the ardour that fills the bosom of free-born dames.

Magistrate

Ardour! yes, by Apollo, ardour enough — especially for the wine-cup!

Leader of chorus of men

Sir, sir what good are words? they are of no avail with wild beasts of this sort. Don't you know how they have just washed us down — and with no very fragrant soap!

BOETIAN WOMAN

What would you have? You should never have laid rash hands on us. If you start afresh, I'll knock your eyes out.

CORINTHIAN WOMAN

My delight is to stay at home as coy as a young maid, without hurting anybody or moving any more than a milestone; but 'ware the wasps, if you go stirring up the wasps' nest!

LEADER of chorus of men

Ah! great gods! how get the better of these ferocious creatures? 'tis past all bearing! But come, let us try to find out the reason of the dreadful scourge. With what end in view have they seized the sacred shrine that is raised upon the inaccessible rock of the Acropolis? Question them; be cautious and not too credulous. It would be culpable negligence not to pierce the mystery, if we may.

Magistrate *[addressing the women]*

I would ask you first why you have barred our gates.

Lysistrata

To seize the treasury; no more money, no more war.

Magistrate

Then money is the cause of the war?

Lysistrata

And of all our troubles. It was to find occasion to steal that all the other agitators were forever raising revolutions. Well and good! but they'll never get another drachma here.

Magistrate

What do you propose to do then, pray?

Lysistrata

Why, we propose to administer the treasury ourselves.

Magistrate

You do?

Lysistrata

Surprised? Do we not administer the budget of household expenses?

Magistrate

But that is not the same thing.

Lysistrata

How so — not the same thing?

Magistrate

It is the treasury supplies the expenses of the war.

Lysistrata

That's our first principle — no war!

Magistrate

What! and the safety of the city?

Lysistrata

We will provide for that.

Magistrate

You?

Lysistrata

Yes, women!!

Magistrate

What a sorry business!

Lysistrata

Yes, we're going to save you, whether you like it or not.

Magistrate

Oh! the impudence of the creatures!

Lysistrata

It's a dirty job but someone's got to do it!

Magistrate

But it's the very height of iniquity!

Lysistrata *[testily]*

We're going to save you.

Magistrate

But if I don't want to be saved?

Lysistrata

Why, all the more reason!

Magistrate

But what a notion, to concern yourselves with questions of peace and war!

Lysistrata

We will explain our idea.

Magistrate

Out with it then; quick, or... *[threatening her]*.

Lysistrata *[sternly]*

Listen, and PUT. THAT. HAND. DOWN. NOW!

Magistrate *[in impotent rage]*

Oh! it is too much for me! I cannot keep my temper!

CORINTHIAN WOMAN

Then look out for yourself; you have more to fear than we have.

Magistrate

Stop your croaking, you old crow! *[To LYSISTRATA]* Now you, say what you have to say.

Lysistrata

Willingly. All the long time the war has lasted, we have endured in modest silence all you men did; you never allowed us to open our lips. We were far from satisfied, for we knew how things were going; often in our homes we would hear you men discussing, upside down and inside out, some important turn of affairs. Then with sad hearts, but smiling lips, we would ask you: Well, in today's Assembly did they vote peace?— But, "Mind your own business!" "Hold your tongue, please!" And we would say no more.

Cleonike

I would not have held my tongue though, not me!

Magistrate

You would have been reduced to silence by blows then.

Lysistrata

Well, for my part, I would say no more. But presently I would come to know you had arrived at some fresh decision more fatally foolish than ever. "Ah! my dear man," I

would say, "what madness next!" But he would only look at me askance and say: "War is men's business!"

Magistrate

Bravo! well said indeed!

Lysistrata

Then, then we made up our minds without more delay to make common cause to save Greece. Open your ears to our wise counsels and hold your tongues.

Magistrate

Oh! this is too much! The insolence of the creatures!

Lysistrata

Be still!

Magistrate

May I die a thousand deaths before I obey one who wears a sanitary knapkin!

Lysistrata

If that's all that troubles you, take my sanitary knapkin, wrap it round your head, and hold your tongue.

Cleonike

The war shall now be women's business.

Leader of chorus of women

Oh! my good, gallant Lysistrata, and all my friends, never let your anger slacken; the winds of fortune blow our way.

Lysistrata

May gentle Love shower seductive charms on our breasts and our thighs. If only we may stir so amorous a feeling among the men that they stand as firm as sticks, we shall indeed deserve the name of peace-makers among the Greeks.

Magistrate

How will that be, pray? And how, pray, would you propose to restore peace and order in all the countries of Greece?

Lysistrata

It's the easiest thing in the world!

Magistrate

Come, tell us how; I am curious to know.

Lysistrata

When we are winding thread, and it is tangled, we pass the spool across and through the skein, now this way, now that way; even so, to finish of the war, we shall send embassies hither and thither and everywhere, to disentangle matters.

Magistrate

And is it with your yarn, and your skeins, and your spools, you think to appease so many bitter enmities, you silly women?

Lysistrata

If only you had common sense, you would always do in politics the same as we do with our yarn.

Magistrate

Come, how is that, eh, these women who have neither art nor part in the burdens of the war?

Lysistrata

What! wretched man! why, it's a far heavier burden to us than to you. In the first place, we bear sons who go off to fight far away from Athens.

Magistrate

Enough said! do not recall sad and sorry memories!

Lysistrata

Then secondly, instead of enjoying the pleasures of love and making the best of our youth and beauty, we are left to languish far from our husbands, who are all with the army. But say no more of ourselves; what afflicts me is to see our girls growing old in lonely grief.

Magistrate

Don't the men grow old too?

Lysistrata

That is not the same thing. When the soldier returns from the wars, even though he has white hair, he very soon finds a young wife. But a woman has only one summer; if she does not make hay while the sun shines, no one will afterwards have anything to say to her, and she spends her days consulting oracles that never send her a husband.

Magistrate

But the old man who can still get an erection...

Lysistrata

Oh, why don't you get done with it and die? You are rich; go buy yourself a coffin, and I will knead you a honey-cake for Cerberus. Here, take this garland.

[Drenching him with water.]

Cleonike

And this one too.

[Drenching him with water.]

Myrrhine

And these fillets.

[Drenching him with water.]

Lysistrata

What else do you need? Step aboard the boat; your grave is waiting for you, you're keeping Charon from pushing off and floating you across the River Styx.

Magistrate

To treat me so scurvily! What an insult! Like I'm . . .I'm . . .I'm nothing!

Lysistrata

Are you blaming us for not having exposed you according to custom? Nay, console yourself; we will not fail to offer up the third-day sacrifice for you, first thing in the morning.

[She goes into the Acropolis, with CLEONIKE and MYRRHINE.]

Leader of chorus of men

Awake, friends of freedom; let us hold ourselves ready to act.

Man 1

I suspect a mighty peril; I foresee another tyranny. I am sore afraid our enemies have, by a stratagem of war, stirred up these women, enemies of the gods, to seize upon our treasury and the funds whereby I lived.

Leader of chorus of men

Is it not a sin and a shame for them to interfere in advising the citizens? The whole thing, my friends, is nothing else but an attempt to re-establish tyranny. But I will

never submit; I will be on my guard for the future; I will always carry a blade hidden under myrtle boughs; I will post myself in the public square under arms; and now, to make a start, I might just break a few of that old bitch's teeth yonder.

Leader of chorus of women

Never play the brave man, else when you go back home, your own mother won't know you. Citizens all, hear what I have to say. I have useful counsel to give our city, which deserves it well at my hands for the brilliant distinctions it has lavished on my girlhood. At seven years of age, I carried the sacred vessels; at ten, I pounded barley for the altar of Athene; presently, when I was grown up, a tall, handsome maiden, they put a necklace of dried figs about my neck, and I was one of the girls selected to carry the sacrificial tools. So surely I am bound to give my best advice to Athens. What matters that I was born a woman, if I can cure your misfortunes? I pay my share of tolls and taxes, by giving men – husbands, sons, brothers - to the State as cannon fodder. But you, you miserable greybeards, you contribute nothing to the public charges; on the contrary, you have wasted the treasure of our forefathers, as it was called, the treasure amassed in the days of the Persian Wars. You pay nothing at all in return; and into the bargain you endanger our lives and our liberties by your mistakes. Have you one word to say for yourselves?...

Second Woman

Ah! don't irritate me, you there, or I'll lay my slipper across your jaws; and it's pretty heavy.

Man 1

Outrage upon outrage!

Man 2

Things are going from bad to worse.

Man 3

Let us punish the minxes, every one of us that has balls to boast of.

Man 1

Come, off with our tunics, for a man must savour of manhood; come, my friends, let us strip naked from head to foot.

Man 2

Courage, I say, let us be young again, and shake off our age.

Leader of chorus of men

If we give them the least hold over us, that's the end! their audacity will know no bounds! We shall see them building ships, and fighting sea-fights, and, if they want to mount and ride as cavalry, we had best get rid of the knights, for indeed women excel in riding, and have a fine, firm seat for the gallop.

[MALE CHORUS groans.]

FIRST WOMAN

By the blessed goddesses, if you anger me, I will let loose the beast of my evil passions, and a very hailstorm of blows will set you yelling for help.

SECOND WOMAN

Come, dames, off with your tunics, and quick's the word; women must smell the smell of women in the throes of passion....

THIRD WOMAN

Now just you dare to measure strength with me, old greybeard, and I warrant you you'll never eat garlic or black beans any more. No, not a word! my anger is at boiling point, and I'll do with you what the beetle did with the eagle's eggs.

FIRST Woman

I laugh at your threats.... Pass decree on decree, you can do us no hurt, you wretch, you worm, you chancre, abhorred of all your fellows! *[To LYSISTRATA as she comes out*

from the Acropolis] You, Lysistrata, you who are leader of our glorious enterprise, why do I see you coming towards me with so gloomy an air?

Lysistrata

It's the behaviour of these women, it's the female heart and female weakness that so discourage me.

Leader of chorus of women

Tell us, tell us, what is it?

Lysistrata

I only tell the simple truth.

Leader of chorus of women

What has happened that's made you so upset? Come, tell your friends.

Lysistrata

Oh! the thing is so hard to tell — yet so impossible to conceal.

Leader of chorus of women

Never seek to hide any ill that has befallen our cause.

Lysistrata

To blurt it out in a word — we want laying!

[Leader and of chorus of women begin moaning deliriously after each word or phrase, working themselves up parallel to Lysistrata, groaning "Oh Zeus, oh! Zeus!]

Screwing! Coupling! Boarding! Rogering! The old In-Out! Sofa thumping! Tub thumping! Bed-breaking! Frontal! Rear! Upside down! Hosed till we can't see straight anymore! Oh, baby bring home the bacon!!

Leader of chorus of women

[anti-climactic] Oh, Zeus, oh, Zeus . . .

Lysistrata

What use calling upon Zeus? The thing is even as I say. I cannot stop them any longer from lusting after the men. They are all for deserting. The first I caught was slipping out by the postern gate near the cave of Pan; another was letting herself down by a rope and pulley; a third was busy preparing her escape; while a fourth, perched on a bird's back, was just taking wing, when I seized her by the hair. One and all, they are inventing excuses to be off home. *[Pointing to the gate]* Look! there goes one, trying to get out! Halloo there! whither away so fast?

First woman

I want to go home; I have some Milesian wool in the house, which is getting all eaten up by the worms.

Lysistrata

Bah! you and your worms! go back, I say!

First woman

I will return immediately, I swear I will by the two goddesses! I only have just to spread eagle it on the bed.

Lysistrata

You shall not do anything of the kind! I say, you shall not go.

First woman

Must I leave my wool to spoil then?

Lysistrata

Yes!

Second woman

Unhappy woman that I am! Alas for my flax! I've left it at home unstript!

Lysistrata

So, here's another trying to escape to go home and strip her flax!

Second woman

Oh! I swear by the goddess of light, the instant I have it stripped and laid I will come straight back.

Lysistrata

You shall do nothing of the kind! If once you began, others would want to follow suit.

Third woman

Oh! goddess divine, Ilithyia, patroness of women in labour, stay, stay the birth, till I have reached a spot less hallowed than Athene's mount!

Lysistrata

What mean you by these silly tales?

Third woman

I am going to have a child — now, this minute!

Lysistrata

But you were not pregnant yesterday!

Third woman

Well, I am to-day. Oh! let me go in search of the midwife, Lysistrata, quick, quick!

Lysistrata

What is this fable you are telling me? [*Feeling her stomach*] Ah! what have you got there so hard?

Third woman

A male child.

Lysistrata

No, no, by Aphrodite! nothing of the sort! Why, it feels like something hollow — a pot or a kettle. [*Opening her robe*] Oh! you silly creature, if you have not got the sacred helmet of Pallas — and you said you were with child!

Third woman

And so I am, by Zeus, I am! It's a male inside me. [*aside*] Or will be soon.

Lysistrata

Excuses and pretences every word! The thing's as clear as daylight.

Third Woman

I cannot sleep any more in the Acropolis, now I have seen the snake that guards the temple.

Second woman

Ah! and those awful owls with their dismal hooting! I cannot get a wink of rest, and I'm just dying of fatigue.

Lysistrata

You wicked women, have done with your falsehoods! You want your husbands, that's plain enough. But don't you think they want you just as badly? They are spending dreadful, desperate nights, oh! I know that well enough. But hold out, my dears, hold out! A little more patience, and the victory will be ours. An oracle promises us success, if only we remain united. Shall I repeat the words?

Third woman

Yes, tell us what the oracle declares.

Lysistrata

Silence then! Now — "When the swallows shall have all flocked together in one place, and shall refrain them from all amorous commerce, then will be the end of all the ills of life; yea, and Zeus, who doth thunder in the skies, shall set above what was erst below...."

Third woman

What! shall the men be underneath?

Lysistrata

"But if dissension do arise among the swallows, and they take wing from the holy temple, it will be said there is never a more wanton bird in all the world."

First Woman

Dammit! Dammit! Dammit!! The prophecy is clear.

Lysistrata

No, never let us be cast down by calamity! let us be brave to bear, and go back to our posts. It would be shameful indeed not to trust the promises of the oracle.

[They all go back into the Acropolis.]

Chorus of men

Man 1

I want to tell you a fable they used to relate to me when I was a little boy. This is it: Once upon a time there was a young man called Melanion, who hated the thought of marriage so sorely that he fled away to the wilds. So he dwelt in the mountains, wove

himself nets, and caught hares. He never, never came back, he had such a horror of women. As chaste as Melanion, we loathe those women just as much as he did.

Chorus of women

First Woman

I want to tell you a fable too, to match yours about Melanion. Once there was a certain man called Timon, a tough customer, and a whimsical, a true son of the Furies, with a face that seemed to glare out of a thorn-bush. He withdrew from the world because he couldn't abide bad men, after vomiting a thousand curses at them. He had a holy horror of ill-conditioned fellows, but he was mighty tender towards women.

Second Woman

Suppose I up and broke your jaw for you!

Man 2

I am not a bit afraid of you.

Second Woman

Suppose I let fly a good kick at you?

Man 2

I should see your naked thing then.

Second Woman

That will be the very last thing you'll ever see.

Lysistrata [*rushing out of the Acropolis*]

Come quick, come quick!

Leader of the women

What is it? Why these cries?

Lysistrata

A man! a man! I see him approaching all afire with the flames of love. Oh! divine Queen of Cyprus, Paphos and Cythera, I pray you still be propitious to our enterprise.

Third Woman

Where is he, this unknown foe?

Lysistrata

Over there — beside the Temple of Demeter.

First Woman

Yes, indeed, I see him; but who is he?

Lysistrata

Look, look! do any of you recognize him?

Myrrhine *[joyfully]*

I do, I do! it's my husband Kinesias.

Lysistrata

To work then! Be it your task to inflame and torture and torment him. Seductions, caresses, provocations, refusals, try every means! Grant every favour,— always excepting what is forbidden by our oath on the wine-bowl.

Myrrhine

Have no fear, I'll do it.

Lysistrata

Well, I shall stay here to help you tease the man and set his passions aflame. The rest of you withdraw.

[KINESIAS enters, in obvious and extreme sexual excitement.]

Kinesias

Alas! alas! how I am tortured by spasm and rigid convulsion! Oh! The shaft! The shaft!

Lysistrata

Who is this that dares to pass our lines?

Kinesias

It is I. *[cries]* Oh, the humanity!

Lysistrata

What, a man?

Kinesias

Look at me!!

Lysistrata

Get out.

Kinesias

But who are you? Can't you see the state I'm in?

Lysistrata

I'm the sentinel of the day.

Kinesias

For the gods' sake, call Myrrhine.

Lysistrata

Call Myrrhine, you say? And who are you?

Kinesias

I am her husband, Kinesias, son of Paeon [*pronounced as in pain*].

Lysistrata

Ah! good day, my dear friend. Your name is not unknown amongst us. Your wife has it forever on her lips; and she never touches an egg or an apple without saying: "This is for Kinesias."

Kinesias

[*hopefully*] Really and truly?

Lysistrata

Yes, indeed, by Aphrodite! And if we fall to talking of men, quick your wife declares: "Oh! all the rest, they're good for nothing compared with Kinesias."

Kinesias

[*in agony*] Oh! please, please go and call her to me!

Lysistrata

And what will you give me for my trouble?

Kinesias

[*sobbing*] Anything I've got, if you like. [*Pointing to the evidence of his condition*] I will give you what I have here!

Lysistrata

Well, well, I will tell her to come.

[She enters the Acropolis.]

Kinesias

Quick, oh! be quick! Life has no more charms for me since she left my house. I am sad, sad, when I go indoors; it all seems so empty; nothing seems worth it anymore. And all because of this erection that I can't get rid of!

Myrrhine *[to LYSISTRATA, over her shoulder]*

I love him, oh! I love him; but he won't let himself be loved. No! I shall not come.

Kinesias

Myrrhine, my little darling Myrrhine, what are you saying? Come down to me quick.

Myrrhine

No indeed, not I.

Kinesias

I call you, Myrrhine, Myrrhine; won't you please come? Please? Please? PLEEEZE!

Myrrhine

Why should you call me? You do not want me.

Kinesias

Not want you? Why, here I stand-well, something of me stands- stiff with desire!

Myrrhine

Good-bye.

[She turns, as if to go.]

Kinesias

Oh! Myrrhine, Myrrhine, in our child's name, hear me; at any rate hear the child!
Little lad, call your mother.

Child [off-stage]

Mamma, mamma, mamma!

Kinesias

There, listen! Don't you pity the poor child? It's six days now you've never washed and never fed the child.

Myrrhine

Poor darling!

Kinesias

Come down, dearest, come down for the child's sake.

Myrrhine

Ah! what a thing it is to be a mother!

Kinesias [*as MYRRHINE approaches*]

Ah! what a bad thing it is to let yourself be led away by other women! Why give me such pain and suffering, and yourself into the bargain?

Myrrhine [*as he is about to embrace her*]

Hands off, sir!

Kinesias

Everything is going to rack and ruin in the house. [*He starts to cry like a baby.*]

Myrrhine

I don't care.

Kinesias

But, but, but, but ? Oh! won't you please come back home?

Myrrhine

No, least, not till a sound treaty puts an end to the war.

Kinesias

Well, if you wish it so much, why, we'll make it, your treaty.

Myrrhine

Well and good! When that's done, I will come home. Till then, I am bound by an oath.

Kinesias

At any rate, lie with me for a little while.

Myrrhine

No, no, no! *[she hesitates]* But just the same I can't say I don't love you.

Kinesias

You love me? Then why refuse to lie with me, my little girl, my sweet Myrrhine, my Honey-Bunny . . . ? *[He begins to nuzzle her neck and stroke her behind.]*

Myrrhine *[pretending to be shocked]*

You must be joking! What, before the child!

Kinesias *[to the slave]*

Somebody-ANYBODY!- carry the lad home. Is there anyone in the theatre who'll do me this favor? *[looks offstage]* Ah, thank you, Priapus, my best friend! There, you see, the child is gone; there's nothing to hinder us; won't you lie down now?

Myrrhine

But, miserable husband, where, where?

Kinesias

Here! There! Up there! In the cave of Pan; nothing could be better.

Myrrhine

But how shall I purify myself before going back into the citadel?

Kinesias

Nothing easier! you can wash at the Clepsydra.

Myrrhine

But my oath? Do you want me to perjure myself?

Kinesias

Can I watch you? No, no, bad joke, my twinkling fountain of desire. I'll take all responsibility; don't worry.

Myrrhine

Well, I'll be off, then, and find a bed for us.

Kinesias

There's no point in that; surely we can lie on the ground.

Myrrhine

No, no! even though you are bad, I don't like your lying on the bare earth.

[She goes back into the Acropolis.]

Kinesias *[enraptured]*

Ah! how the dear girl loves me!

Myrrhine

I've found one! It was already in the cave. Come on now, get to bed quick; I am going to undress. But, oh no, I'm such a ditz, we must get a mattress.

Kinesias

A mattress? Oh! no, never mind about that! I like it rough. A little bit . . .

Myrrhine

No, by Artemis! lie on the bare sacking? never! That would be squalid.

Kinesias

Oh, squalid, oh what a wonderfully dirty word. I love squalid. Kiss me!

Myrrhine

Wait a minute!

[She leaves him again.]

Kinesias

[groans] Good god, hurry up before I . . .b . . .b . . .burst . .

Myrrhine *[coming back with a mattress]*

Here is a mattress. Lie down, I am just going to undress. But you've got no pillow.

Kinesias

I don't want one either!

Myrrhine

But I do. While I'm gone, why don't you puff up the mattress?

[She leaves him again.]

Kinesias

Oh god, oh god, my tool, it hurts, it hurts, oh god, this isn't fair . . . !

Myrrhine *[coming back with a pillow]*

There, lift your head, dear! *[Wondering what else to tantalize him with; to herself]*
Is that all, I wonder?

Kinesias *[misunderstanding]*

Come, my treasure. Now! Please! For the love of god!

Myrrhine

I am just unfastening my girdle. But remember what you promised me about making peace; mind you keep your word.

Kinesias

Yes, yes, upon my life I will. Dear heaven, what difference does it make? What I want is to make love! Here! Now! This second!

Myrrhine

Okay, get yourself up.

Kinesias *[pointing]*

I've got this up!!!! It's up!!! It's already up!!! It's been up for days!!! Just. Do it!!! Do it!!! Do it!!! *[sobbing]*

Myrrhine

Coming, coming; I'm just slipping off my shoes. Dear boy, will you vote for peace?

Kinesias

I'll think about it.

[MYRRHINE stands up. She stares at him, hard, coldly, and then turns away from him and exits.]

I'm a dead man, she is killing me! She has gone, and left me in torment! *[in tragic style]* I must have someone to lay, I must! I must! Somebody! Anybody out there in the audience!! Ah me!

Leader of chorus of men

Poor, miserable wretch, those balls are bluer than blue! We can all see and feel what tortures are yours! Ah! you fill me with pity. Could any man's back and loins stand such a strain. Stands stiff and rigid, and there's never a wench to help him!

Kinesias [sobs and groans]

Leader of chorus of men

Bitch! Whore! It's all her doing!

Kinesias

No, no! Don't call her that! You're wrong! She's the sweetest, dearest darling. *[He departs.]*

Leader of chorus of men

That dearest darling? *[stamps his foot]* No, no, that bitch! She's unnatural! Zeus, god of the skies, can't you give us a hurricane, to sweep them all up into the air, and whirl them round, then drop them down crash! and impale them on the point of every man's tool!

[A SPARTAN HERALD enters; he shows signs of being in the same condition as KINESIAS.]

Herald

Say, where shall I find the Senate? I am bearer of despatches.

[MAGISTRATE enters.]

Magistrate

Is that a gun in your pocket, or are you just glad to see me?

Herald *[with an effort at officiousness]*

Don't be stupid! I am a herald and I come from Sparta about making peace.

Magistrate *[pointing]*

But look, you are hiding a lance under your clothes, surely.

Herald *[embarrassed]*

No, nothing of the sort.

Magistrate

Then why do you turn away like that, and hold your cloak out from your body? Have you got swellings in the groin from your journey?

Herald

My eyes are up here! Look into my eyes!

Magistrate

But you've got an erection! Like everyman!

Herald

I saw a play once with that title, but I don't remember any erection in it.

Magistrate *[pointing]*

Well, what is it you have there then?

Herald

It's a Spartan "thing".

Magistrate

Oh, indeed, a 'Spartan thing,' is it? I know all about these "things". How are "Spartan things" going at Sparta now?

Herald

NOT SO GOOD!!! Are you blind as well, as stupid? Why, everything is turned upside down at Sparta; and everybody's got serious erections. Have you been living in Cloud-Cuckoo-Land or what?

Magistrate

Who's behind all this? Is it the god Pan's doing?

Herald

No, it's all the work of Lampito and the Spartan women who are acting at her instigation; they have kicked the men out from between their thighs.

Magistrate

But what are you doing about it?

Herald

Doing about it? What do you think we're doing about it? We walk bent double, just as if we were carrying lanterns in a wind. Our women have all sworn we shall not so much as touch them till we have all agreed to conclude peace with you guys up here.

Magistrate

Ah! I see now, it's a general conspiracy embracing all Greece. No! Of NOT embracing ALL of Greece! Go back to Sparta and bid them send an Ambassador to treat for

peace. I will urge our Senators myself to name myself; and to persuade them, why, I will show them my own tool.

Herald

[mutters] If you think that will impress them. *[to Magistrate]* I'm off. We'll conclude this peace if it kills us!

[They go out in opposite directions.]

Leader of chorus of men

No wild beast is there, no flame of fire, more fierce and untamable than woman; the leopard is less savage and shameless.

Leader of chorus of women

And yet you dare to make war upon me, wretch, when you might have me for your most faithful friend and ally.

Leader of chorus of men

Never, never can my hatred cease towards women.

Leader of chorus of women

Well, suit yourself. Still I cannot bear to leave you all naked as you are; folks would laugh at you. Come, I am going to put this tunic on you.

Leader of chorus of men

You are right, upon my word! it was only in my confounded fit of rage that I took it off.

Leader of chorus of women

Now at any rate you look like a man, and they won't make fun of you. Ah! if you had not offended me so badly, I would take out that nasty insect you have in your eye for you.

Leader of chorus of men

Ah! so that's what was annoying me so. Look, here's a ring, just remove the insect, and show it to me. By Zeus! it has been hurting my eye for a long time now.

Leader of chorus of women

Well, I agree, though your manners are not over and above pleasant. Oh I what a huge great gnat! just look!

Leader of chorus of men

A thousand thanks! the creature was digging a regular well in my eye; now that it's gone, my tears can flow freely.

Leader of chorus of women

I will wipe them for you — bad, naughty man though you are. Now, just one kiss.

Leader of chorus of men

A kiss? certainly not

Leader of chorus of women

Just one, whether you like it or not.

Leader of chorus of men

Oh! those confounded women! how they do cajole us! How true the saying: "Can't live with them, can't live with 'em!" Come, let us agree for the future not to regard each other any more as enemies; and to clinch the bargain, let us shake hands. Ah! here comes the Spartan envoy. [*Enter the SPARTAN AMBASSADOR afflicted like the herald, and the HERALD, accompanied by LAMPITO.*] Hail to you, first of all; then tell us how you fare.

AMBASSADOR

No need for many words; you can see what a state we are in.

Leader of chorus of men

Alas! the situation grows more and more strained! the intensity of the thing is simply frightful.

AMBASSADOR

It's beyond belief. But to work! summon your Magistrate, and let us patch up the best peace we may.

Leader of chorus of men

Ah! our men too, like wrestlers in the arena, cannot endure a rag over their bellies; it's an athlete's malady, which only exercise can remedy.

[The MAGISTRATE returns; he too now has an evident reason to desire peace.]

Magistrate

Can anybody tell us where Lysistrata is? Surely she will have some compassion on our condition.

Leader of chorus of men *[pointing]*

Look! now he has the very same complaint. *[To the MAGISTRATE]* Don't you feel a strong nervous tension in the morning?

Magistrate

Yes, and a dreadful, dreadful torture it is! Unless peace is made very soon, we shall find no recourse but to make love to . . . ourselves!

[All the men shudder, shakes their heads furiously and mutter (Man 1) "No" and (Man 2) "Never, I'll go blind" and (HERALD) "It's unnatural" and one faint voice (Man 3): "if my mother found out she'd kill me".]

Leader of chorus of men

Take my advice, and arrange your clothes as best you can.

Magistrate

Right, by Zeus.

[He endeavours, not too successfully, to conceal his condition.]

AMBASSADOR

Quite right. There, I will put on my tunic.

Magistrate

Oh! what a terrible state we are in! Greeting to you, Spartan fellow-sufferer, and all of your other fellow-sufferers.

AMBASSADOR

Ah! my boy, what a terrible thing it would have been if there were any audience around to witness this!

Magistrate

[looks out at the audience, then shakes his head and turns back to the AMBASSADOR.] Speak out, my Spartan brother, what is it brings you here?

AMBASSADOR *[pointing at LAMPITO]*

Ask her! We have come to treat for peace.

Magistrate

Well said; we are of the same mind. Better call Lysistrata, then; she is the only person will bring us to terms.

AMBASSADOR

Yes, yes.

Magistrate

Needless to call her; she has heard your voices, and here she comes.

[Lysistrata comes out of the Acropolis. She and Lampito embrace.]

Leader of chorus of men

Hail, boldest and bravest of womankind!

Man 1

The time is come to show yourself in turn uncompromising and conciliatory, exacting and yielding, haughty and condescending.

Man 2

Call up all your skill and artfulness. Lo! the foremost men in Greece, seduced by your fascinations, are agreed to entrust you with the task of ending their quarrels.

Lysistrata

It will be an easy task — if only they refrain from mutual indulgence in masculine love; if they do, I shall know the fact at once. Now, where is the gentle goddess Peace?

[Peace, in the form of a beautiful nude girl with a map of Greece painted across her body, both front and back, is brought in by the Machine.]

Come hither envoys of Athens and Sparta. But, look you, no roughness or violence; our husbands always behaved so boorishly. Bring them to me with smiles, as women should. Spartan, approach; and you, Athenian. Now hearken all! I am but a woman; but I have good common sense; Nature has endowed me with discriminating judgment, which I have yet further developed, thanks to the wise teachings of my father and the elders of the city. First I must bring a reproach against you that applies equally to both sides. At Olympia, and Thermopylae, and Delphi, and a score of other places too numerous to mention, you celebrate before the same altars ceremonies common to all Greeks; yet you go cutting each other's throats, and sacking Greek cities, when all the while the barbarian yonder is threatening you! That is my first point.

Magistrate *[devouring Peace with his eyes]*

Good god, this erection is killing me!

Lysistrata

Now it is to you I address myself, Spartan. Have you forgotten how Periclidias, your own countryman, sat a suppliant before our altars? He had come to crave an army of Athens. Cimon marched to your aid at the head of four thousand troops, and saved Sparta. And, after such a service as that, you ravage the soil of your benefactors!

Magistrate

They do wrong, very wrong, Lysistrata.

AMBASSADOR

We do wrong, very wrong. *[Looking at Peace.]* Ah! great gods! what a lovely rectilinear rectum Peace must have!

Lysistrata

And now a word to the Athenians. Have you no memory left of how, in the days when you wore the tunic of slaves, the Spartans came, spear in hand, and slew a host of Thessalians and partisans of Hippias the tyrant? They, and they only, fought on your side on that eventful day; they delivered you from despotism, and thanks to them our nation could change the short tunic of the slave for the long cloak of the free man.

AMBASSADOR *[looking at LYSISTRATA]*

I have never seen a woman of more gracious dignity.

Magistrate *[looking at PEACE]*

I have never seen a woman with such a plenitude of pulchritude!

Lampito

Or, pudenda-tude. Bound by such ties of mutual kindness, how can you bear to be at war? Stop the bloodshed, end the hate, be reconciled; what hinders you?

AMBASSADOR

We are quite ready, if they will give us back our rampart.

Lysistrata

What rampart, my dear man?

AMBASSADOR

Pylos, which we have been asking for and craving for ever so long.

Magistrate

In the Sea-god's name, you shall never have it!

Lysistrata

Agree, my friends, agree.

Magistrate

But then what city shall we be able to stir up trouble in?

Lysistrata

Ask for another place in exchange.

Magistrate

Ah! that's the ticket! Well, to begin with, *[pointing out these places on Peace's body-map.]* give us Echinus, the Maliac gulf adjoining, and the two legs of Megara.

AMBASSADOR

No, surely not all that, my dear sir.

Lampito

Come to terms; never make a difficulty of two legs more or less!

Magistrate *[his eye on PEACE]*

Well, I'm ready to strip down and get to work right now.

[He takes off his mantle.]

AMBASSADOR *[following out this idea]*

Me, too!

Lysistrata

That's just what you shall do, once peace is signed. So, if you really want to make it, go consult your allies about the matter.

Magistrate

What allies, I should like to know? Why, we are all erected; there's no one who is not mad to be mating. What we all want is to be in bed with our wives; how should our allies fail to second our project?

AMBASSADOR

And ours too, for certain sure!

Lysistrata

Well said, indeed! Now go and purify yourselves for entering the Acropolis, where the women invite you to supper; we will empty our provision baskets to do you honour. At table, you will exchange oaths and pledges; then each man will go home with his wife.

Magistrate

Come along then, and as quick as may be.

AMBASSADOR

Lead on; I'm your man.

Magistrate

Quick, quick's the word, say I.

[They follow, very slowly and in great pain, LYSISTRATA, LAMPITO AND PEACE into the Acropolis.]

First WOMAN

Embroidered stuffs, and dainty tunics, and flowing gowns, and golden ornaments, everything I have, I offer them to you with all my heart; take them all for your children, for your girls. I invite you every one to enter, come in and choose whatever you will; there is nothing so well fastened, you cannot break the seals, and carry away the contents.

Third WOMAN

Look about you everywhere. . . you won't find a blessed thing, unless you have sharper eyes than mine. And if any of you lacks corn to feed his slaves and his young and numerous family, why, I have a few grains of wheat at home; let him take what I have to give, a big twelve-pound loaf included.

LEADER of WOMEN'S CHORUS

So let my poorer neighbours all come with bags and wallets; my man, Manes, shall give them corn; but I warn them not to come near my door, but — beware the dog!

[LYSISTRATA enters, and addresses the audience.]

LYSISTRATA

Oh! Artemis, huntress queen, whose arrows pierce the denizens of the woods, virgin goddess, be thou favourable to the peace we here conclude; through thee may our hearts be long united! May this treaty draw close for ever the bonds of a happy

friendship! No more wiles and stratagems! Aid us, oh! aid us, maiden huntress! And now, Spartans, take your wives away home with you, and you, Athenians, yours. May husband live happily with wife, and wife with husband. Dance, dance, to celebrate our bliss, and let us be heedful to avoid wars and their suffering peoples for the future.

[All depart. END OF PLAY]