

THE BRAGGART SOLDIER

CHARACTERS

PYRGOPOLYNICES, a soldier

ARTOTROGUS, his parasite

PALÆSTRIO, slave to the soldier (formerly to Pleusicles)

PERIPLECTOMENUS, an old man of Ephesus

SCELEDRUS, slave to the soldier

PLEUSICLES, a young man from Athens

LURCIO, slave to the soldier

PHILOCOMASium, a girl abducted by the soldier

ACROTELEUTIUM, a courtesan

MILPHIDIPPA, her maid

A SLAVE BOY

CARIO, Periplectomenus's cook

SCENE: *The entire action takes place on a street in Ephesus, before the adjoining houses of PYRGOPOLYNICES and PERIPLECTOMENUS.*

(Enter PYRGOPOLYNICES, followed by his parasite ARTOTROGUS and several minions who carry his monstrous shield)

PYRGOPOLYNICES:

(Posing pompously, declaiming in heroic fashion)

Look lively—shine a shimmer on that shield of mine
Surpassing sunbeams—where there are no clouds, of course.
Thus, when it's needed, with the battle joined, its gleam
Shall strike opposing eyeballs in the bloodshed—bloodshot!
Ah me, I must give comfort to this blade of mine

Lest he lament and yield himself to dark despair.
Too long ere now has he been sick of his vacation.
Poor lad! He's dying to make mincemeat of the foe.
(*Dropping the bombastic tone*)
Say, where the devil is Artotrogus?

ARTOTROGUS:

He's here—

By Destiny's dashing, dauntless, debonair darling,
A man so warlike, Mars himself would hardly dare
To claim his powers were the equal of your own.

PYRGOPOLYNICES: (*Preening*) Tell me—who was that chap I saved
at Field-of-Roaches,

Where the chief of staff was Crash-Bang-Razzle-Dazzle,
Son of Boom-Boom-Smash, you know, Neptune's nephew?

ARTOTROGUS: Ah yes, the man with golden armor, I recall.
You puffed away his legions with a single breath
Like wind blows autumn leaves or straw from thatch-roof
huts.

PYRGOPOLYNICES: A snap—a nothing, really.

ARTOTROGUS:
that is,
Compared to other feats I could recount—
(*Aside*)
Nothing, indeed—

as false as this.

(*To the audience, as he hides behind the soldier's shield*)

If any of you knows a man more full of bull
Or empty boastings, you can have me—free of tax.
But I'll say this: I'm crazy for his olive salad!

PYRGOPOLYNICES: Hey, where are you?

ARTOTROCUS: (*Popping up*)
elephant in India—
Here! And then that
The way your fist just broke his arm to smithereens.

PYRGOPOLYNICES: What's that—his *arm*?

ARTOTROGUS;
course.
I mean his leg, of

PYRGOPOLYNICES: I gave him just an easy jab.

ARTOTROGUS: A jab, of course!

If you had really tried, you would have smashed his arm Right through his elephantine skin and guts and bone!

PYRGOPOLYNICES: No more of this.

ARTOTROGUS:
narrate

Your many daring deeds to me—who knows them all.
(*Aside, to the audience*)
It's only for my stomach that I stomach him.
While ears are suffering, at least my teeth are suppering.
And so I yes and yes again to all his lies.

PYRGOPOLYNICES: What was I saying?

ARTOTROGUS:
It's done, by Hercules.

Oh, I know precisely what.

What's done?

Well, something is.

PYRGOPOLYNICES: Have you—

ARTOTROCUS: Your tablets? Yes, of course, a stylus too.

PYROCOPOLYNICES: How expertly you suit your mind to know my own.

ARTOTROGUS: I ought to know your habits well-rehearsedly
And see to it I sniff your wishes in advance.

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PYRGOPOLYNICES: How good's your memory?

ARTOTROGUS:

Cilicia,
It's perfect, sir. In

A hundred fifty. In Saudi I-robaya, hundreds more.
Add thirty Sardians, those Macedonians, and there's
The total men you've slaughtered in a single day.

PYRGOPOLYNICES: "The total men," your final sum is—

ARTOTROGUS:

Seven
thousand.

PYRGOPOLYNICES: I believe you're right. You're good at your
accounts.

ARTOTROGUS: I didn't even write it down; it's all by heart.

PYRGOPOLYNICES: My God, you've got a memory!

ARTOTROGUS:

Food feeds it.

PYRGOPOLYNICES: Well, if you keep behaving as you have, you'll
eat

Eternally. I'll always have a place for you at dinner.

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ARTOTROGUS: (*Inspired by this*)

And then in Cappadocia, you would have slain
Five hundred with one blow—except your blade was dull.

PYRGOPOLYNICES: Just shabby little soldiers, so I let them live.

ARTOTROGUS: Why bother to repeat what every mortal knows—
There's no one more invincible in all the earth
In duties or in beauties than—Pyrgopolynices!
Why, all the women love you—who can blame them, either—
Since you're so . . . so attractive? Why, just yesterday
Some women grabbed me by the tunic—

PYRGOPOLYNICES:

Yes, what said they?

ARTOTROGUS: They badgered me with asking—"Isn't that
Achilles?"

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"No," said I, "it's just his brother." "Ah," said one.
"That's why he looks so beautiful and so genteel!
Just look at him—that handsome head of hair he has!
Oh, blessed are the women that can sleep with him!"

PYRGOPOLYNICES: They really said all that?

ARTOTROGUS:

begged me
And then they

To parade you by today so they could see you.

PYRGOPOLYNICES: How wretched to be such a handsome
man.

ARTOTROGUS: How true.

They are a bother, screeching and beseeching me
For just one little look at you. And sending for me!
That's why I can't give all my time to serving you.

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(*Suddenly, duty calls*)

PYRGOPOLYNICES: Now is the hour. Fall in! On to the forum
To seek the mercenaries I conscripted yesterday.
I must distribute salaries to all enlisted.
King Seleucus has urgently appealed to me
To gather fighting men for him and sign them up.
Today shall be devoted to the king's demands.

ARTOTROGUS: Then off we go!

PYRGOPOLYNICES: Faithful fellows—follow!

(PYRGOPOLYNICES leads his minions off. Enter PALAESTRIO.)

PALAESTRIO: (To the audience) Now, folks, if you'll be kind enough to hear me out,

Then I'll be kind and tell you what our play's about.

Whoever doesn't want to listen, let him beat it

And give a seat to one of those in back who need it.

I'll tell you why we've gathered in this festive spot,

What comedy we will enact, its name and plot.

This play is called the *Alazon* in Greek,

A name translated "braggart" in the tongue we speak.

This town is Ephesus; that soldier is my master

Who's just gone to the forum. What a shameless, crass bombaster!

He's so full of crap and lechery, no lies are vaster.

He brags that all the women seek him out en masse.

The truth is, everywhere he goes they think he's just an ass. 80

The local wenches claim they've tired out their lips,

But not from kissing him—from making nasty quips.

Not very long have I been slaving as his slave.

I want you all to know how I became his knave,

And whom I slaved for prior to this slavish lot.

So listen very closely, folks, here comes the plot!

My master back in Athens was a fine young man.

In good old Athens, he was crazy for a courtesan.

She loved him too. Yes, that's the kind of love that's best.

Then he was sent to Naupactus—a governmental quest

Of great importance. While my master served the state,

The soldier came to Athens—by some trick of Fate.

He made advances to my master's little friend.

He played up to her mother and began to send

Cosmetics, costly catered cookery, and wine—

The soldier and the bawd were getting on just fine.

Right when the soldier saw his chance for something shady

He bamboozled the old bawd—the mother of the lady
(That's the girl my master loved). He took her daughter
In secret on a ship, and made for open water. 110

To Ephesus—against her will—is where he brought her.

Now when I learn he's kidnapped Master's concubine,
As fast as possible, I get a ship of mine.

I head for Naupactus to tell him of the fact,

But just when we get out to sea we are attacked—

And pirates take the ship. Fate's will is done,

And I was finished, though I scarcely had begun.

The pirate made the soldier here a gift of me

And when the soldier took me home—what do I see? 120

The girl from Athens—my old master's concubine—

Who, when she saw me, winked and gave a sign

Not to address her. Later, when the coast was clear,

She wept and told me how unhappy she was here.

She longed to flee to Athens—in a phrase:

She loved my master from the good old days

And hated no one as she did this military guy.

On learning of the woman's inner feelings, I

Compose a letter, sign and seal it secretly

And get a merchant to deliver it for me

To my old master—he who still adored 130

This girl here. And my note to come was not ignored!

He came! He's staying with a neighbor right next door—

A wonderful old man his family knew before,

Who's been a blessing to my amorous young man,

Promoting our affair in every way he can.

Now here within I've started mighty machinations

To make it easy for the lovers' . . . visitations.

The soldier gave the girl a bedroom of her own.

No one but she can enter it, it's hers alone.

So in this bedroom I have tunneled through the wall. 140

Right to the other house in secret she can crawl.

Our neighbor knows of this—in fact, he planned it all!

So good for nothing is this fellow slave of mine—

The one the soldier picked to guard the concubine—

That with our artful artifice and wily ways

We'll coat this fellow's eyeballs with so thick a glaze,
 We'll make him sure he doesn't see what's really there!
 Don't *you* be fooled: one girl today will play a *pair*.
 And so the girl that comes from either house will share
 A single face, the same one claiming to be twins.
 We'll fool that guard of hers until his head just spins!
 But wait—I hear the creaking of our neighbor's door.
 Here comes that nice old fellow I described before.

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(*Old PERIPLECTOMENUS comes out of his house, still shouting back angrily at the slaves within*)

PERIPLECTOMENUS: After this, by Hercules, if you don't beat the
 daylight's out of
 Anyone who's on our roof, I'll make your raw sides into
 rawhides!

(*In exasperation, to the audience*)

Now my neighbors see the show of all that happens in my
 house—

Looking right down through my skylight!

(*Back to his slaves*)

you all:
 Listen, I command

Anyone you see on our roof, coming from the soldier's house—
 That's excepting for Palaestrio—throw 'em down into the street!
 Should they claim to be pursuing monkeys, pigeons, or the
 like,

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You'll be finished if you don't just pound and pummel 'em to
 pulp!

Make it so they won't be able to infringe upon our gambling
 laws.

See to it they won't have even bones enough for rolling dice!

PALAESTRIO: Someone from our house has done a naughty thing,
 from what I hear—

The old man's commanded that my fellow slaves be beaten up.
 Well, he said except for me—who gives a hoot about the rest?
 I'll go see him.

(*PALAESTRIO steps into view*)

PERIPLECTOMENUS: Isn't this Palaestrio now coming toward me?

PALAESTRIO: How are you, Periplectomenus?

PERIPLECTOMENUS: There aren't many
 men I'd

Rather meet right now than you, Palaestrio.

PALAESTRIO: What's going on? 170
 Why are you in such an uproar with our household?

PERIPLECTOMENUS: We're all
 through!

PALAESTRIO: What's the matter?

PERIPLECTOMENUS: It's discovered!

PALAESTRIO: What's discovered?

PERIPLECTOMENUS: On
 my roof—

Someone from your household has been spying on us, through
 the skylight,

Where he saw Philocomasium in my house, with my guest—
 Kissing.

PALAESTRIO: Who saw this?

PERIPLECTOMENUS: A fellow slave of yours.

PALAESTRIO: But which,
 I wonder.

PERIPLECTOMENUS: I don't know, the fellow got away too fast.

PALAESTRIO: Oh, I suspect—that I'm a dead man.

PERIPLECTOMENUS: As he fled, I cried, "Why are you on my roof?" He replied, still on the run, "I had to chase our little monkey."

PALAESTRIO: Pity me—I'll have to die—all for a worthless animal! But the girl—is she still in your house?

PERIPLECTOMENUS:
out here.

She was when I came
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PALAESTRIO: Quick—have her cross back to our house, so the slaves can see her there.

Make her hurry—that's unless she'd rather see her faithful slaves

Just for her affair become fraternal brothers—on the cross!

PERIPLECTOMENUS: She'll be told.
(*Going off*)

If that is all . . .

PALAESTRIO:

Also tell the girl to

See to it she doesn't lose her woman's ingenuity.

Have her practice up her tricks and female shrewdness.

It isn't.

PERIPLECTOMENUS:

this for?

What's

PALAESTRIO: She must force the fellow who found her into full forgetfulness.

Even if he saw her here a hundred times, have her deny it.

She has cheek, a lot of lip, loquacity, audacity,

Also perspicacity, tenacity, mendacity.

If someone accuses her, she'll just outswear the man with oaths.

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She knows every phony phrase, the phony ways, the phony plays.

Wiles she has, guiles she has, very soothing smiles she has.

"Seasoned" women never have to get their spices at the grocer's—

Their own garden grows the pepper for their sharp and saucy schemes.

PERIPLECTOMENUS: I'll convey this all to her, if she's still there.
(*Stops, amazed*)

What's going on?

What are you debating there inside yourself?

PALAESTRIO:

Some silence,
please,

While I call my wits to order to consider what to do

In retaliation: to outfox my foxy fellow slave, who

Saw her kissing in your house. We've got to make the

seen . . . unseen.

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PERIPLECTOMENUS: (*Starts to head for his house*)

Cogitate—while I withdraw and go in here.

(*Turns*)

Well, look at him!

Standing pensive, pondering profundities with wrinkled brow.

Now he knocks upon his head—he wants his brains to answer him.

Look—he turns. Now he supports himself with left hand on his left thigh.

Now he's adding something with the fingers of his right hand.

Now he

Slaps his right thigh—what a slap! What to-do for what to do!

Now he snaps his fingers, struggles, changes posture every second.

Look—he shakes his head. No, no, what he's invented doesn't please him.

He'll cook up a plan that's well done—not half-baked—I'm sure of that.

Look—he's going in for building—with his chin he crowns a column.

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Cut it out! That type of building doesn't please me—not at all. For I hear a foreign poet also has his face so columned—But he has two guards to keep him columned like that all the time.

Bravo! *Molto bello*, standing slavewise and theatrically.

He won't rest at all today until he finds the plan he's seeking.

Now I think he has it. Hey—get busy, man, don't slip to sleep.

That's unless you'd rather be on guard right here and

(*Points to his back*)

right here.
Hey, have you been drinking? Hey, Palaestrio, I'm talking to you.

Rouse yourself! Wake up, I say; it's dawn, I say.

PALAESTRIO: (*Still rapt in thought*) I hear you, sir.

PERIPLECTOMENUS: Don't you see the enemy is threatening that back of yours? *Think!*

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Get us aid and reinforcements. No more napping; let's get scrapping!

Ready an offensive for the foe; prepare defenses too!

Cut the enemy's supply line, then we'll fortify our own.

So our rations and equipment get to you and to our legions

Safely: do it quickly. What we need is instant action!

Tell me that you'll take command yourself and then I'll rest secure,

Knowing we can crush the foe.

PALAESTRIO: (*Magnanimously*) I do accept the office and do Take command!

PERIPLECTOMENUS: I think you'll win the prize you seek.

PALAESTRIO: (*Paternally and gratefully*) May Jupiter

Shower blessings on you.

PERIPLECTOMENUS: Won't you share your plans?

PALAESTRIO:

Be silent, sir,

While I show you through the landscape of my "plot," so you'll be sharing

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Equally in all the plans.

PERIPLECTOMENUS: I'll guard them as I would my own.

PALAESTRIO: Master hasn't normal skin—it's thicker than an elephant's.

He's about as clever as a stone.

PERIPLECTOMENUS: That much I know myself.

PALAESTRIO: Here's the whole idea, here's the notion that I'll set in motion:

I will say Philocomasium has got a real twin sister

Who has just arrived from Athens with a young man she's in love with.

These two "sisters" are as alike as drops of milk. We'll say the lovers

Stay at your house, as your guests.

PERIPLECTOMENUS: Bravo—it's a brilliant plan!

PALAESTRIO: Should this fellow slave of mine make accusations to the soldier,

Claiming that he saw the girl there kissing someone else, why

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I'll accuse my fellow slave of having spied on you and seen the

Sister with her lover, kissing and embracing.

PERIPLECTOMENUS:

If the soldier questions me, I'll back you up.

PALAESTRIO:

Sisters are identically alike. Remember that the
When the soldier asks her, she won't foul it up.

PERIPLECTOMENUS:

(*Suddenly*)

Wait—what happens if the soldier wants to see 'em both
together?
What do we do then?

PALAESTRIO:

It's easy; there are thousands of excuses:
"She's not home, she took a walk, she's sleeping, dressing,
washing,

Dining, drinking, busy, indisposed, it's just impossible."

If we start this on the right foot, we can put him off forever. 250
Soon he'll get to thinking all the lies we tell him are the truth.

PERIPLECTOMENUS: This is just terrific.

PALAESTRIO:

then have her
Hurry home. And train her, make things plainer and explain
her all.

She must fully comprehend our plan, the web we're weaving
with her
New twin sister.

PERIPLECTOMENUS: You shall quickly have a girl who's very quick.
What else?

PALAESTRIO: Be off.

PERIPLECTOMENUS: I'm off.

(*The old man rushes off into his house, leaving PALAESTRIO to ponder his next move*)

PALAESTRIO:

Now I myself must go back home
And by secret subterfugitive investigation find out

Who of all my fellow servants chased that monkey on the roof.
Surely he'll have shared the secret with the other household
slaves,

Whispering of Master's mistress, telling people how he
saw her

Here—within our neighbor's house—embracing some
unknown young man.

"I can't keep it secret; I'm the only one who knows," he'll say.
When I find the man who saw her, my equipment will be
ready.

All is ready; I'm resolved to storm and take the enemy.

If I can't discover him, I'll sniff just like a hunting dog

Till I can pursue the little fox by following his footprints.

Wait—our door is creaking—I had better quiet down for now.
Look—here comes my fellow slave, the one they picked to
guard the girl.

(*Enter SCELEDROS, one of the soldier's household slaves. Normally a nervous nail-biter, he is now completely bewildered.*)

SCELEDROS: If I wasn't walking in my sleep today up on that
roof, I

Know for sure, by Pollux, that I saw Philocomasium, 270

Master's mistress, right here in our neighbor's house—in
search of trouble.

PALAESTRIO: (*Aside*) There's the man who saw her kissing. I can
tell from what he said.

SCELEDROS: Who is that?

PALAESTRIO: Your fellow slave. How goes it, Sceledrus?

SCELEDRUS:

I'm so glad to see you.

PALAESTRIO:

Why? What's up? What's wrong?

Please let me know.

SCELEDRUS: I'm afraid—

PALAESTRIO:

Of what?

SCELEDRUS:

Today I fear we slaves are
really *leaping* into
Trouble and titanic tortures!

PALAESTRIO:

So leap solo, you yourself—
I don't care the slightest bit for any leaping—up or down.

SCELEDRUS:

Maybe you don't know the crime committed in our
house today.

PALAESTRIO: Crime? What sort of crime?

SCELEDRUS:

A dirty one!

PALAESTRIO:

Then keep it
to yourself.
I don't want to know it.

SCELEDRUS:

Well, I won't allow you *not* to
know it!

Listen: as I chased our monkey over our neighbor's roof
today—

PALAESTRIO: Sceledrus, I'd say one worthless animal pursued
another.

SCELEDRUS: Go to hell!

PALAESTRIO: You ought to go—on with your little tale, I mean.

(SCELEDRUS *glares at PALAESTRIO, then goes on with his story*)

SCELEDRUS: On the roof, I chanced by chance to peek down
through our neighbor's skylight—

And what do I see? Philocomasium! She's smooching with some
Utterly unknown young man!

PALAESTRIO: (*Horried*) What scandal, Sceledrus, is this?

SCELEDRUS: There's no doubt of it, I saw her.

PALAESTRIO:

Really?

SCELEDRUS:

two eyes.
With my own

PALAESTRIO: Come on, this is all illusion; you saw nothing.

SCELEDRUS:

at me!

Look

Do my eyes look bad to you?

PALAESTRIO:

Ask a doctor; don't ask me!

(*He now becomes the friendly adviser*)

By the gods, don't propagate this tale of yours so
indiscreetly.

Now you're seeking trouble head-on, soon it may seek you—
head off!

And unless you can suppress this absolutely brainless banter,
Double death awaits you!

SCELEDRUS:

What's this "double" death?

PALAESTRIO:

explain it:

First, if you've accused our master's mistress falsely, you must die.

Next, if what you say is true, you've failed as guard—you die again.

SCELEDROS: I don't know my future, but I know I'm sure of what I saw.

PALAESTRIO: Still persisting, wretch?

SCELEDROS:

Look, I can only tell you what I saw. Why—

She's inside our neighbor's house right now.

PALAESTRIO: (*With mock surprise*)

What's that, she's not at home?

SCELEDROS: You don't have to take my word. Go right inside and look yourself.

PALAESTRIO: Yes, indeed I will!

(*He strides with severity into the soldier's house*)

SCELEDROS:

And I'll wait here and ambush her, the

Minute our young filly trots from pasture to her storehouse stall.

(*He reflects a moment, then groans*)

What am I do to? The soldier chose me as her guardian.

If I let this out—I die. Yet if I'm silent, still I die,

Should this be discovered. Oh, what could be wickeder than women?

While I chased the monkey, she just left her room and went outside!

Bold and brazen badness, by the gods! If Master learns of this, Our whole household will be on the cross, by Hercules. Me too!

(*Resolves himself*)

Come what may, I'll shut my mouth. Better stilled than killed, I say.

(*Exasperated, to the audience*)

I can't guard a girl like this who's always out to sell herself!

(*PALAESTRIO marches out of the soldier's house, a very stern look on his face*)

PALAESTRIO: Sceledrus! Is there a man more insolent in all the earth, or

Born beneath more angry of unfriendly stars—

SCELEDROS: What's wrong? What's wrong?

PALAESTRIO: You should have your eyes dug out for seeing what was never there.

SCELEDROS: Never where?

PALAESTRIO: I wouldn't give a rotten nut for your whole life!

SCELEDROS: Tell me why—

PALAESTRIO: You even dare to ask me?

SCELEDROS: I ask? Well, why can't

PALAESTRIO: You should really have that tattletaling tongue of yours cut off.

SCELEDROS: Should I—why?

PALAESTRIO:

My friend, the girl's *at home*—the
one you said you saw
In our neighbor's house with some young man, hugging and
kissing him.

SCELEDRUS: It's amazing you don't eat your carrots. Why, they're
cheap enough.

PALAESTRIO: Carrots, why?

SCELEDRUS: To aid your eyesight.

PALAESTRIO:

you who needs 'em. Gallows bird! It's
You're the blind man. My sight's perfect—and I'm sure the
girl's at home.

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SCELEDRUS: She's at home?

PALAESTRIO: At home she is.

SCELEDRUS:

fooling with me. Oh, cut it out; you're

PALAESTRIO: Then my hands are very dirty.

SCELEDRUS:

Why?

PALAESTRIO:

with filth. Because I fool

SCELEDRUS: Damn your hide!

PALAESTRIO:

now at stake. No, Sceledrus, it's *your* hide that is

That's unless you make some changes in your visions and
derisions.

Wait—our door is creaking.

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SCELEDRUS: (*At the old man's door*)

I shall stay right here and block *this* door,
For it's sure she can't cross over if she doesn't use the door!

PALAESTRIO: What's caused all this scurvy scoundrelism,
Sceledrus? She's *home*.

(SCELEDRUS *keeps blocking the old man's door, looking straight
ahead and trying to reassure himself*)

SCELEDRUS: I can see . . . I know myself . . . I trust myself
implicitly.

No one bullies me to make me think she isn't in this house.
(*He spreads his arms across the doorway*)
Here—I'll block the door. She won't sneak back and catch me
unawares.

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PALAESTRIO: (*To the audience*) Now I have him where I want him.
One small push and—he goes over.
(*To SCELEDRUS*)

Do you want me to convince you of your stupi-vision?

SCELEDRUS:

Try it!

PALAESTRIO: And to prove that you don't know what eyes or
brains are for?

SCELEDRUS:

Well, prove it!

PALAESTRIO: Now . . . you claim the concubine's in there.

SCELEDRUS:

Why,

I *insist* she is,
And I saw her kissing some young man as well—a perfect
stranger.

PALAESTRIO: There's no passage from this house to our house,
you know that—

SCELEDRUS: (*Impatiently*) I know it.

PALAESTRIO: There's no balcony or garden, just the skylight—

SCELEDRUS: I know *that*, too!

PALAESTRIO: Well . . . if she's in *our* house and I bring her out so you can see her,
Would you say you're worthy of a whipping?

SCELEDRUS: (*Nods*) Worthy.

PALAESTRIO: Guard the door—
See she doesn't sneak out on the sly and slip across to our house.

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SCELEDRUS: That's my plan.

PALAESTRIO: I'll have her standing in the street here right away.

(PALAESTRIO dashes into the soldier's house)

SCELEDRUS: (*Muttering to himself*)
Go ahead and do it! I'll soon know if I saw what I saw.
Or if—as he says he will—he'll prove the girl is still at home.
(*Tries to reassure himself*)
After all, I have my eyes. I never borrow someone else's. . . .
(*Having second thoughts*)
Yet he's always playing up to her—and he's her favorite:
First man called to dinner, always first to fill his face with food.
And he's only been with us about three years—not even that.
Still I tell you, no one's slavery could be savory.

Never mind, I'd better do what must be done, that's guard this door.
Here I'll stand, by Pollux. Never will they make a fool of me!

350

(SCELEDRUS stands with his arms spread across the doorway to the old man's house. PALAESTRIO enters from the soldier's house, leading the girl PHILOCOMASium.)

PALAESTRIO: Remember your instructions.

PHILOCOMASium: I'm astonished I'm admonished so.

PALAESTRIO: I'm worried you're not slippery enough.

PHILOCOMASium: What? I could make
A dozen decent damsels devils with my surplus shrewdness!

PALAESTRIO: Now concentrate on trickery. I'll slip away from you.

(*Strides jauntily up to SCELEDRUS, who is still blocking the old man's door with all possible concentration*)

How are you, Sceledrus?

SCELEDRUS: (*Staring straight ahead*)
I'm on the job. Speak—I have ears.

(PALAESTRIO looks at SCELEDRUS's pose, amused)

PALAESTRIO: You know, I think you'll travel soon in that same pose—beyond the gates
With arms outstretched—to bear your cross.

SCELEDRUS:

Oh yes? What for?

PALAESTRIO: Look to your left. Who is that woman?

SCELEDROS:
the gods—

Oh—by all

That girl—she's the master's concubine!

PALAESTRIO:

You know, I think
so too.

Well, hurry, now's your time—

SCELEDROS:

What should I do?

PALAESTRIO:

dally—*dte!*
Don't

360

PHILOCOMASium: Where is this "loyal" slave who falsely brands an honest woman
With unchastity?

PALAESTRIO: (*Points to SCELEDROS*)

Right here! He told me all the things I
told you.

PHILOCOMASium: You say you saw me—rascal—kissing in our neighbor's house?

PALAESTRIO: And with an unknown man, he said.

SCELEDROS:

I did.
By Hercules,

PHILOCOMASium: You saw me?

SCELEDROS:

With these eyes, by
Hercules.

PHILOCOMASium: You'll lose them soon—
They see more than they see.

THE BRAGGART SOLDIER

SCELEDROS:

By Hercules, I won't be
frightened
Out of seeing what I really saw!

PHILOCOMASium:

I waste my breath
Conversing with a lunatic. I'll have his head, by Pollux!

SCELEDROS: Oh, stop your threats! I know the cross will be my tomb.

My ancestors *all* ended there—exactly like my forefathers—
and five-fathers.

370

And so these threats of yours can't tear my eyes from me!
(*Meckly motioning PALAESTRIO to one side*)

But—could I have a word with you, Palaestrio? . . . Please tell me:
Where *did* she come from?

PALAESTRIO:

Home, where else?

SCELEDROS:

From home?

PALAESTRIO: (*Checking SCELEDROS's eyes*)

You see me?

SCELEDROS:

Sure.

But it's amazing how she crossed from one house to the other!
For certainly we haven't got a balcony, no garden,
Every window's grated.
(*To PHILOCOMASium*)

Yet I'm sure I saw you here inside.

PALAESTRIO: What—criminal—you're still accusing her?

PHILOCOMASium:

Castor, now

By

I think it must have been the truth—that dream I dreamed last night.

PALAESTRIO: What did you dream?

PHILOCOMASium:

I'll tell you both, but please
pay close attention:

Last night it seemed as if my dear *twin sister* had arrived 380
In Ephesus from Athens—with a certain man she loved.
It seemed as if they both were staying here next door as guests.

PALAESTRIO: (*Aside*) Palaestrio dreamed all this up.

(*To PHILOCOMASium*)

Go on—
continue, please.

PHILOCOMASium: It seemed—though I was glad my sister
came—because of her,

There seemed to be a terrible suspicion cast upon me.

Because it seemed that, in my dream, one of our slaves accused
me,

(*To SCELEDUS*)

Just as you're doing now, of having kissed a strange young man,
When really it was my *twin sister* kissing her beloved.
And so I dreamt that I was falsely and unjustly blamed.

PALAESTRIO: What seemed like dreams now happen to you wide
awake!

390

By Hercules—a real live dream!

(*To PHILOCOMASium*)

Go right inside and pray!

(*Casually*)

I think you should relate this to the soldier. . . .

PHILOCOMASium:

I won't be falsely called unchaste—without revenge!
Why, of course!

(*She storms into the soldier's house. PALAESTRIO turns to*
SCELEDUS.)

SCELEDUS: I'm scared. What have I done? I feel my whole back
itching.

PALAESTRIO: You know you're finished, eh?

Well, now at least I'm

SCELEDUS:
sure she's home.

And now I'll guard our door—wherever she may be!

(*SCELEDUS plants himself astride the soldier's door in the same*
position he used to block the old man's doorway)

PALAESTRIO: (*Sweetly*)

Sceledrus—

That dream she dreamt was pretty similar to what went on—

Even the part where you suspected that you saw her kissing!

SCELEDUS: I don't know what I should believe myself. I thought
I saw

A thing . . . I think . . . perhaps . . . I didn't see.

PALAESTRIO:

You're

400

waking up—

Too late. When Master hears of this, you'll die a dandy death.

SCELEDUS: I see the truth at last. My eyes were clouded by
some fog.

PALAESTRIO: I knew it all along. She's always been inside the
house.

SCELEDUS: I can't say anything for sure. I saw her, yet I
didn't . . .

PALAESTRIO: By Jupiter, your folly almost finished us for good!
In trying to be true to Master, *you* just missed disaster!
But wait—our neighbor's door is creaking. I'll be quiet now.

(*Enter PHILOCOMASium again, this time from the old man's house*)

PHILOCOMASium: (*In a disguised voice*)

Put fire on the altar; let me joyfully give thanks

To Diana of Ephesus. I'll burn Arabian incense.

She saved me in the turbulent Neptunian territory, 410

When I was buffeted about, beset by savage seas.

SCELEDUS: Palaestrio, Palaestrio!

PALAESTRIO: (*Mimicking him*)

O Sceledrus! What now?

SCELEDUS: That girl that just came out—is that our master's concubine,

Philocomasium? Well—yes or no?

PALAESTRIO:

It seems like her,

Yet it's amazing how she crossed from one house to the other.
If it is she . . .

SCELEDUS: You mean you have your doubts?

PALAESTRIO:

It seems like her.

SCELEDUS: Well, let's accost her. Hey, what's going on,
Philocomasium?

What were you doing in that house? Just what's been going on?
Well, answer when I talk to you!

PALAESTRIO:

You're talking to yourself—

She doesn't answer.

SCELEDUS:

You! I'm speaking to you, wicked woman! 420
So naughty with the neighbors—

PHILOCOMASium: (*Coldly*)

Sir, with whom are you
conversing?

SCELEDUS: Who else but you?

PHILOCOMASium: Who are you, sir? What do you
want with me?

SCELEDUS: Asking me who am I?

PHILOCOMASium: Why not?—I don't know you,
so I ask.

PALAESTRIO: I suppose you also don't know who I am.

PHILOCOMASium: Well, you
and he—
Are both a nuisance.

SCELEDUS: You don't know us?

PHILOCOMASium: Neither one.

SCELEDUS: I'm scared,
I'm scared,

PALAESTRIO: Scared of what?

SCELEDUS: I think we've lost our own identities
somewhere—
Since she says she doesn't know us!

PALAESTRIO: (*Very seriously*) Let's investigate this
further.

Sceledrus—are we ourselves—or are we other people now?
Maybe, unbeknownst to us, one of our neighbors has
transformed us!

(SCELEDUS ponders this for a split second)

SCELEDUS: I'm myself for sure.

PALAESTRIO: Me too. Hey, girl—you're
going after trouble.

430

(PHILOCOMASium ignores him completely)

PALAESTRIO: Hey, Philocomasium!

PHILOCOMASium: (*Coolly*) What madness motivates you, sir, to
Carelessly concoct this incoherent name to call me?

PALAESTRIO: (*Sarcastically*) Well now,
Tell me—what's your real name, then?

PHILOCOMASium: My name is Dicea.

SCELEDUS: No,
you're wrong. The
Name you're forging for yourself is phony, Philocomasium.
You're not *decent*, you're *indecent*—and you're cheating on my
master!

PHILOCOMASium: I?

SCELEDUS: Yes, you.

PHILOCOMASium: But I only arrived from Athens yesterday,
With my faithful lover, an Athenian young man.

SCELEDUS: Then tell me—
What's your business here in Ephesus?

PHILOCOMASium: Looking for my dear
twin sister.
Someone said she might be here.

SCELEDUS: (*Sarcastically*) Oh, you're a clever girl!

PHILOCOMASium: No, I'm foolish, by the gods, to stand here
chattering with you two.
I'll be going. . . .

440

SCELEDUS: No, you won't be—

(*He grabs her*)

PHILOCOMASium: Let me go!

SCELEDUS: You're caught
red-handed!
I won't let you—

PHILOCOMASium: Then beware the noise—when my hand meets
your cheek.
Let me go!

SCELEDUS: (*To PALAESTRIO*) You idiot, don't stand there. Grab
her other arm!

PALAESTRIO: I don't want to get my back involved in this. Who
knows—
Maybe she's our girl . . . or maybe someone else who *looks* like
her.

PHILOCOMASium: Will you let me go or not?

SCELEDUS: You're coming home,
no matter what!
If you don't, I'll drag you home.

PHILOCOMASium: My home and master are
in Athens—
Athens back in Attica. I'm only staying as a guest here.
(*Pointing to the soldier's house*)
I don't know and I don't care about that house—or who you
are!

SCELEDRUS: Go and sue me! I won't ever let you go unless you swear that
 If I do you'll come inside. 450

PHILOCOMASium: Whoever you are, you're forcing me.
 All right, if you let me go, I give my word to go inside.

SCELEDRUS: Go then.

(*He releases her*)

PHILOCOMASium: Go I shall . . . goodbye!

(*She dashes into the old man's house*)

SCELEDRUS: That's typical: a
 woman's word.

PALAESTRIO: Sceledrus, you let the prize slip through your fingers. No mistaking—
 She's our master's mistress. Now—you want to be a man of action?

SCELEDRUS: (*Timidly*) Tell me how.

PALAESTRIO: (*Boldly*) Bring forth a sword for me!

SCELEDRUS: (*Frightened*) What will you do
 with it?

PALAESTRIO: (*Imitating his master's bombastic manner*)
 I'll burst boldly through these portals and the man I see inside
 Kissing Master's mistress, I shall slash to slivers on the spot!

SCELEDRUS: (*Meekly*) So you think it's she?

PALAESTRIO: There's no two ways
 about it.

SCELEDRUS: What an
 actress—
 So convincing . . .

PALAESTRIO: (*Shouts*) Bring me forth my sword!

SCELEDRUS: I'll do it right
 away. 460

(*SCELEDRUS dashes headlong into the soldier's house. PALAESTRIO, convulsed with laughter, addresses the audience.*)

PALAESTRIO: All the king's horses and all the king's men could
 never act with such great daring,
 Never be so calm, so cool, in *anything*, as one small *woman*!
 Deftly she delivered up a different accent for each part!
 How the faithful guard, my foxy fellow slave, was fully
 flimflammed!

What a source of joy for all—this passage passing through the
 wall!

(*PALAESTRIO laughs gleefully as SCELEDRUS peeks out of the soldier's house, then sheepishly approaches*)

SCELEDRUS: Say, Palaestrio . . . forget about the sword.

PALAESTRIO: What's
 that? Why so?

SCELEDRUS: She's at home . . . our master's mistress.

PALAESTRIO: Home?

SCELEDRUS: She's
 lying on her couch. She's

PALAESTRIO: (*Building up in a frightening crescendo*)

Now it seems you've found the trouble you've been looking for, by Pollux!

SCELEDUS: Why?

PALAESTRIO: Because you dared disturb a lady who's our neighbor's guest.

SCELEDUS: Hercules! How horrible!

PALAESTRIO: Why, there's no question, 470
she must be the
Real twin sister of our girl—and *she's* the one that you saw
kissing!

SCELEDUS: Yes, you're right. It's clearly she, just as you say. Did
I come close to
Getting killed! If I'd said a word to Master—

PALAESTRIO: Now, be smart:
Keep this all a secret. Slaves should also know more than they
tell.

I'll be going. I don't want to get mixed up in all your mischief.
I'll be at our neighbor's here. I don't quite care for your
confusions.

If when Master comes he needs me, he can send for me in
here.

(PALAESTRIO *strides into the old man's house*)

SCELEDUS: At last he's gone. He cares no more for Master's
matters

Than if he weren't slaving here in slavery!
Well, *now* our girl's inside the house, I'm sure of that; 480
I personally saw her lying on her couch.
So now's the time to pay attention to my guarding.

(SCELEDUS *paces before the soldier's door, concentrating on his guarding*. PERIPLECTOMENUS *rushes out angrily from his own house*.)

PERIPLECTOMENUS: By Hercules, those men must take me for a
sissy—

My military neighbor's slaves insult me so!
Did they not lay their hands upon my lady guest—
Who yesterday arrived from Athens with my friend?
(*Indignantly to the audience*)
A free and freeborn girl—manhandled and insulted!

SCELEDUS: Oh, Hercules, I'm through. He's heading to behead
me. 490
I'm scared this thing has got me into awful trouble—
At least that's what I gather from the old man's words.

PERIPLECTOMENUS: (*Aside*) Now I'll confront him.
(*To SCELEDUS*)

Scurvy

scoundrel Sceledrus!
Did you insult my guest right by my house just now?

SCELEDUS: (*In a near panic*)
Dear neighbor, listen please—

PERIPLECTOMENUS: I listen? You're the slave!

SCELEDUS: I want to clear myself—

PERIPLECTOMENUS: How can you clear yourself,
When you've just done such monstrous and disgraceful things?
Perhaps because you're used to plundering the foe
You think you're free to act here as you please, scoundrel?

SCELEDUS: Oh, please, sir—

PERIPLECTOMENUS:

May the gods and goddesses not
love me

If I don't arrange a whipping for you—yes,

A good long-lasting lengthy one, from dawn to dusk

For one, because you broke my roof tiles and my gutters,

While you chased another monkey—like yourself.

And then for spying on my guest in my own house,

While he was kissing and embracing his own sweetheart.

And *then* you had the gall to slander that dear girl

Your master keeps—and to accuse me of atrocious things!

And *now* you maul my lady guest—right on my doorstep!

Why, if I don't have knotted lashes put to you,

I'll see to it your master's hit by more disgrace

Than oceans are by waves during a mighty storm!

(SCELEDUS trembles with fright)

SCELEDUS: I'm so upset, Periplectomenus, I just don't know

Whether I'd better argue this thing out with you,

Or else—if one is not the other—she's not *she*—

Well then, I guess I should apologize to you.

I mean—well, now I don't know *what* I saw at all!

Your girl looks so much like the one we have—that is,

If they are not the same—

PERIPLECTOMENUS: (*Sweetly*) Look in my house; you'll see.

SCELEDUS: Oh, could I?

PERIPLECTOMENUS: I insist. Inspect—and take your time.

SCELEDUS: Yes, that's the thing to do.

(He dashes into the old man's house)

PERIPLECTOMENUS: (*Calling at the soldier's house*)

Philoconasium, be quick!

Run over to my house—go at a sprint—it's vital.

As soon as Sceledrus goes out, then double quick—

Run right back to your own house at a sprint!

(*Getting a bit excited himself*)

Oh my goodness! Now I'm scared she'll bungle it.

What if he doesn't see her? Wait—I hear the door.

(SCELEDUS reenters, wide-eyed and confused)

SCELEDUS: O ye immortal gods, there never were two girls more
similar,

More similar—and yet I know they're not the same.

I didn't think the gods could do it!

PERIPLECTOMENUS: Well?

SCELEDUS:

I'm whipped.

PERIPLECTOMENUS: Is she your girl?

SCELEDUS:

It is and yet it isn't her.

PERIPLECTOMENUS: You saw . . . ?

SCELEDUS:

I saw a girl together with

your guest,

Embracing him and kissing.

PERIPLECTOMENUS:

Was it yours?

SCELEDUS:

Who knows?

PERIPLECTOMENUS: You want to know for sure?

SCELEDUS:

Yes!

PERIPLECTOMENUS:

house Hurry to your

And see if your girl's there within. Be quick—

SCELEDUS:

I will.

That's good advice. Wait—I'll be back here right away.

(SCELEDUS *rushes into the soldier's house*)

PERIPLECTOMENUS: By Pollux, never was a man bamboozled better,

More wittily, in wilder or more wondrous ways.

But here he comes. . . .

(SCELEDUS *reenters, on the brink of tears, and throws himself at PERIPLECTOMENUS's feet*)

SCELEDUS:

Periplectomenus, I beg of you,
By all the gods and men—by my stupidity—
And by your knees.

PERIPLECTOMENUS: What do you beg of me?

SCELEDUS:

My foolishness and my stupidity. At last

I know that I've been thoughtless—idiotic—blind!

(*Sheepishly*)

Philocomasium . . . is right inside.

PERIPLECTOMENUS:

You've seen them both?

Well, gallows bird—

SCELEDUS:

I've seen.

PERIPLECTOMENUS:

master? Would you please call your

SCELEDUS: (*Beseeking*) I do confess I'm worthy of a whipping
whipping,

And I do admit that I abused your lady guest.

But I mistook her for my master's concubine—

The soldier has appointed me her guardian.

Two drops of water from a single well could not be drawn
Much more alike than our girl's like your lady guest.

(*Quietly*)

I also peeked down into your house through the skylight,
I do confess.

550

PERIPLECTOMENUS: Why not confess? I saw you do it!

And there you saw my guests—a man and lady—kissing—
Correct?

SCELEDUS: Yes, yes. Should I deny the things I saw?

But, sir, I thought I saw Philocomasium.

PERIPLECTOMENUS: Did you consider me a man so vile and base
To be a party to such things in my own house,
And let my neighbor suffer such outrageous harm?

SCELEDUS: At last I see how idiotically I've acted.

I know the facts now. But it wasn't done on purpose.

I'm blameless—

PERIPLECTOMENUS: But not shameless. Why, a slave should
have

560

His eyes downcast, his hands and tongue in strict control—

His speech as well.

SCELEDUS:

If I so much as mumble, sir,
From this day on—and even mumble what I'm sure of—
Have me tortured. I'll just give myself to you.
But now I beg forgiveness.

PERIPLECTOMENUS: (*Magnanimously*) I'll suppress my wrath
And think you really didn't do it all on purpose.
So—you're forgiven.

SCELEDRUS: May the gods all bless you, sir!

PERIPLECTOMENUS: Now, after this, by Hercules, you guard your
tongue

And even if you know a thing, *don't* know a thing—
And *don't* see even what you see.

SCELEDRUS: That's good advice. 570
I'll do it. Have I begged enough?

PERIPLECTOMENUS: Just go away!

SCELEDRUS: Do you want something else?

PERIPLECTOMENUS: Yes—not to know you!

(PERIPLECTOMENUS *turns away from SCELEDRUS in disgust and walks aside*)

SCELEDRUS: (*Suspiciously*) He's fooling me. How easily he just
excused me.

He wasn't even angry. But I know what's up:
The minute that the soldier comes home from the forum,
They'll grab me in the house. He and Palaestrio,
They want to sell me out. . . . I've sensed it for a while now.
By Hercules, I won't snap at their bait today.
I'll run off somewhere, hide myself a day or two,
Till this commotion quiets and the shouting stops.
I've earned myself much more than one man's share of
troubles. 580

(SCELEDRUS *runs off*)

PERIPLECTOMENUS: Well, he's retreated. Now, by Pollux, I'm
quite sure

A headless pig has far more brains than Sceledrus.
He's been so gulled he doesn't see the things he saw.
His eyes, his ears, his every sense has not deserted him
To join our cause. Well, up to now, so far so good.
That girl of ours came up with quite a fine performance.
Now to our little senate, for Palaestrio
Is there inside my house and Sceledrus is gone.
We now can have a meeting with the whole committee. 590
I'd better go inside before they vote without me!

(*He goes into his own house. The stage is empty for a moment. Then*
PALAESTRIO *tiptoes out of the old man's house.*)

PALAESTRIO: (*Motioning to the others who are still inside*)
Pleusicles, have everybody wait inside a little longer.

Let me reconnoiter first to see if there are spies around to
Stop the meeting we're about to have. We need a place that's
safe,

Someplace where no enemy can plunder any plans we've made.
What you plan out will not pan out, if your enemy can use it.
Useful things for enemies become abusive things for you.
Clearly, if the enemy should somehow learn about your plans,
they'll

Turn the tables on you, shut your mouth and tie your hands.

And so

Whatever you had planned to do to them, they'll do to you
instead! 600

Now I'll peek around, look right and left, to see there's no one
here, no

Hunter using ears for nets so he can "catch" our secret plans.
(*Looks to either side*)

Good—the coast is clear all up and down the street. I'll call
them out.

Hey, Periplectomenus and Pleusicles, produce yourselves!

(*They come out eagerly*)

PERIPLECTOMENUS: Here—at your command.

PALAESTRIO:

easy when your troops are good.
Commanding's

How about it now—that plan we figured out inside—shall we
now

Carry on with it?

PERIPLECTOMENUS: We couldn't do it better.

PALAESTRIO:

Pleusicles?
What do you think,

PLEUSICLES: (*Mindlessly devoted*)

What could be fine with you and not be fine with me?

No one's more my friend than you are.

PALAESTRIO:

Nicely and precisely put.

PERIPLECTOMENUS: That's the way he should be talking.

PLEUSICLES:

Yet it
makes me miserable; it
610
Troubles and torments me too—

PERIPLECTOMENUS:

What troubles you? Speak up,
my boy!

PLEUSICLES: That I burden someone who's as old as you with
childish trifles.

These concerns are so unworthy of your noble qualities—

Asking you for so much help in what is really my concern:

Bringing reinforcements to a lover, doing different duties,

Duties that most men of your age would prefer to dodge—not
do!

I'm ashamed to bring annoyance to you in your twilight years.

PALAESTRIO: You're a novel lover if you blush at doing anything!
You're no lover—just the palest shadow of what lovers should
be.

PLEUSICLES: Troubling a man of his age with a youthful love
620
affair?

PERIPLECTOMENUS: What's that? Do I seem so six-feet-under to
you—is that so?

Do I seem to be so senile, such a coffin candidate?

After all, I'm barely fifty-four years old—not even that.

I've got perfect vision still, my hands are quick, my legs are
nimble.

PALAESTRIO: Maybe he's white-haired on top, but not inside his
head—that's sure.

All the qualities that he was born with haven't aged a bit.

PLEUSICLES: I know that, by Pollux, what you say is true,
Palaestrio.

He's been absolutely youthful in his hospitality.

PERIPLECTOMENUS: Try me in a crisis, boy. The more I'm pressed
the more you'll note how
I'll support your love affair—

PLEUSICLES:
630
No need to note—I know it
well.

PERIPLECTOMENUS: (*Casually boasting*)

Experience, experience . . . the only way of finding out.

Only he who's loved himself can see inside a lover's soul.

Even I still have a little lively loving left in me.

All my taste for joy and pleasure hasn't dried up in me yet.

I'm the perfect party guest—I'm quick with very clever quips.

And I never interrupt another person when he's talking.

I refrain from rudeness, I'm restrained with guests and never
rowdy.

I remember to contribute just my share of conversation.
And I also know to shut my mouth when someone else is talking.

I'm no spitter, I'm no cougher, and I'm not forever sneezing.

640

I was born in Ephesus; I'm not an Animulian.

PALAESTRIO: Mezzo-middle-aged at most, with all the talents he describes!

Certainly a Muse has shown this man how to be so amusing.

PERIPLECTOMENUS: I can show you that I'm even more amusing than you say:

Never at a party do I screw around with someone's girl,
Never do I filch the food or take the gobblet out of turn.

Never do I let the wine bring out an argument in me.

Someone gets too nasty? I go home and cut the conversation.
Give me love and loveliness and lots of laughter at a party.

PALAESTRIO: All your talents seem to tend toward charm and graciousness, by Pollux.

650

Show me three men with such talents and I'll pay their weight in gold!

PLEUSICLES: Never—you won't find another man as old as he who is so

Thoroughly delightful and so good a friend to anyone.

(PERIPLECTOMENUS is enjoying the compliments, but he doesn't like being called an old man)

PERIPLECTOMENUS: I'll make you admit I'm really just a youngster in my way.

Wait until you see the countless splendid services I'll render:

Do you need a lawyer—one that's fierce and angry? Here I am.

Do you need a mild one? I'll be smoother than the silent sea.

I'll be oh so softer than the southern breeze in early spring.

I can also be the most lighthearted of your dinner guests,

Or the perfect parasite, or else supply a super supper.
As for dancing—even fruity fairies haven't got my grace.

660

(Acting very impressed, PALAESTRIO turns to PLEUSICLES)

PALAESTRIO: (To PLEUSICLES) What else could you wish for if you'd even wish for something else?

PLEUSICLES: Just the talent to express my gratitude for everything.

Thanks to you

(To PERIPLECTOMENUS)

and thanks to you for taking such good care of me.
I must be a burdensome expense to you—

PERIPLECTOMENUS:

You silly boy!

What you spend for enemies or for a nasty wife's expense,

What you lay out for a guest, a real true friend of yours, is profit!*

Thank the gods I can afford to entertain you as I'd like to.

Eat! Drink up! Indulge yourself, let laughter overflow the brim!

Mine's the house of freedom—I am free—I live my life for me.

670

Thank the gods, I'm rich enough. I could've married very well,

Could've led a wealthy wife of high position to the altar.

But I wouldn't want to lead a barking dog into my house!

PALAESTRIO: Yet remember—children can be pleasant—and it's fun to breed 'em.

PERIPLECTOMENUS: You can breed 'em. Give me freedom! That, by Hercules, is fun!

PALAESTRIO: You're a good adviser—for yourself as well as other people.

*Line omitted.

PERIPLECTOMENUS: Sure it's sweet to wed a *good* wife—if there's such a thing on earth.

I'd be glad to marry someone who would turn to me and ask me,

"Dearest husband, buy some wool, so I can make some clothing for you,

First a tunic, soft and warm, and then a cloak for winter weather,

680

So you won't be cold." You'd never hear a wife say things like that!

Why, before the cock would crow, she'd shake me from my sleep and say,

"Husband! Give me money for a New Year's gift to give my mother!

It's Minerva's festival, so give to give the fortuneteller, Dream interpreter, diviner, sorceress, and soothsayer!

She tells fortunes from your eyebrows—it's a crime to leave her out!

How about the laundry girl? She couldn't do without a gift.

Look how long it's been since we have tipped the grocer's wife—she's angry with us.

And the midwife has complained—we didn't send her quite enough!

What! Will we send nothing to the one who's nursed our household slaves?"

690

These and other ruinations that a woman brings have kept me Single, so I'm not subjected to this sort of sordid speeches.

PALAESTRIO: All the gods have blessed you, for, by Hercules, if you let go of

Freedom just one second, it's no easy thing to get it back.

PLEUSTICLES: Don't you think it's noble for a man of wealth and high estate to

Bring up children as a sort of monument to his good name?

PERIPLECTOMENUS: I have relatives aplenty, so what need have I of children?

I live happily and well. I suit myself, do what I please.

When I die, my relatives can split the money that I leave 'em.

Now they're up at dawn to come and ask me if I've slept all

700

right.

When they sacrifice, they give me bigger portions than their

own.

And they take me out to banquets, have me home for lunch, for

dinner.

They're so sad if they can send me only something small and

sinuple.

They compete in giving, as I secretly repeat inside:

"Let them chase my money; they're all eagerly supporting me!"

PALAESTRIO: Ah, you really know the way to live; you know what life is for.

If you're having fun, it's just as good as having twins or triplets.

(PERIPLECTOMENUS *seems anxious to talk on any topic, so he now pursues this one*)

PERIPLECTOMENUS: If I really had 'em, I'd be miserable because of them—

Worrying about their health. Why, if my son had fever, I would

Think he's dying. If he drank too much or tumbled off his

710

horse,

I would always be afraid he broke his neck or broke a leg.

PALAESTRIO: Here's a man who rightfully has riches. He should live forever.

He keeps wealthy, ever healthy—and he's out to help his friends.

PLEUSTICLES: What a charming chap! By all the gods and

goddesses above,

Gods should all decide how long we live by a consistent system.

Just as the inspector fixes selling prices in the market,

Merchandise of quality is priced according to its merits,
 Merchandise that's rotten gets a price that makes its owner
 poorer,

That's the way a person's life should be determined by the
 gods.

Men with charm and lots of talent should have long and
 lengthy lives;

720 Rotten men and rogues should be deprived of life without
 delay.

We'd be minus many scoundrels if the gods would use this
 system,

And the dirty deeds committed would be fewer. Furthermore,
 Men would be of quality—and life would be a better bargain.

(PERIPLECTOMENUS is *flattered*, but he *playfully* chides the *young*
man)

PERIPLECTOMENUS: Only silly fools find fault with what the gods
 above decree.

Only fools would scold the gods. Let's stop this stupid stuff for
 now.

(*He starts to go off*)

Now I'll buy the groceries to entertain my guest with
 something

Worthy of us both, a welcome of good wishes *and* good dishes!

PLEUSICLES: Please—I've been a terrible expense to you already.
 Surely

No guest can accept such friendly treatment as you've offered
 me and

730 Not become an inconvenience after three days in a row.
 After *ten* days, he becomes an *Iliad* of inconvenience!

Even if his host is willing, still the servants start to mutter.

PERIPLECTOMENUS: I've instructed servants in this house to stick
 to serving me,

Not to give me orders or to have myself depend on them.
 Why, if

What I want displeases them—too bad! I'm captain of the ship.
 Willy-nilly, they'll do what they're ordered—or be beaten up.
 Now I'd better get on with the groceries. . . .

(*He starts to amble off*)

PLEUSICLES:
 must— Well, if you

Please don't buy extravagantly—anything is fine for me.

(PERIPLECTOMENUS *now stops to discuss this topic*)

PERIPLECTOMENUS: Stop that kind of talk. That stale cliché is
 older than the hills. 740

Really, now you're talking like the *hoi polloi*—you know the
 kind, who

When they're at the table and the dinner's set before 'em say,
 "Did you go to all this trouble just for *me*—you shouldn't have.
 Hercules, it's madness. Why, there's food enough for ten at
 least!"

Much too much for them! But while they're frowning, they are
 downing it!

PALAESTRIO: That's the way it is exactly.
 (To PLEUSICLES)

He speaks soundly and
 profoundly.

PERIPLECTOMENUS: Never will you hear these people, when a
 feast is set before 'em,

Say, "Remove this . . . take this plate away . . . take off the
 ham . . . I simply couldn't.

Take this bit of pork away . . . this eel would be much better
 cold."

"Take" . . . "remove" . . . "be off" are words you'll never hear
 from one of them. 750

No, they leap to reach the food, with half their bodies on the
 table.

PALAESTRIO: Bad behavior well described.

PERIPLECTOMENUS: I haven't told the
hundredth part of
What I could expound upon if only we had time to talk—

(PALAESTRIO *seizes this opportunity to cut PERIPLECTOMENUS's monologue short*)

PALAESTRIO: Right! But we had better turn our thoughts to what
we're doing now.

Listen closely, both of you.
(To PERIPLECTOMENUS)

I'll need your services in this,
Periplectomenus. I've figured out a lovely scheme to help us
Take our curly-headed soldier to the barber's for a trimming.
And we'll give our lover here the chance to get his sweetheart
back, and
Take her off from here for good!

PERIPLECTOMENUS: Now there's a plan I'd like
to hear!

PALAESTRIO: First, I'd like to ask you for that ring of yours.

PERIPLECTOMENUS: (*Suspiciously*) How will you use it? 760

PALAESTRIO: When I have the ring you'll have the reason—and
my whole invention.

PERIPLECTOMENUS: Here's the ring.

PALAESTRIO: And here's your reason in
return, the little scheme that
I've been setting up.

PLEUSICLES: We're listening to you with
well-washed ears.

PALAESTRIO: Master is the wildest wenching wanton man who
ever was—
Or who ever will be for that matter.

PERIPLECTOMENUS: I believe it, too.

PALAESTRIO: He supposes he surpasses Paris in his
handsomeness.

He thinks all the women here just cannot help pursuing him.

PERIPLECTOMENUS: I know several husbands here who wish that
statement were the truth!

But proceed. I know too well he's what you say, Palaestrio.
Get on to the point, be brief, don't beat around the bush,
my boy. 770

PALAESTRIO: Could you find a woman for me—someone beautiful
and charming,
Someone full of cleverness and trickery from tip to toe?

PERIPLECTOMENUS: Freed or freeborn girl?

It doesn't matter, just

PALAESTRIO: be sure and get me
One who's money-loving, and who earns her keep by being
kept.

One who's got a mind—she doesn't need a heart—no woman
has one.

PERIPLECTOMENUS: Do you want a . . . green one . . . or a ripe
one?

PALAESTRIO: Just be sure she's juicy.
Get the freshest, most appealing girl you possibly can find.

PERIPLECTOMENUS: Say—I have a client—luscious, youngish
little courtesan!
But—why do you need her?

PALAESTRIO:

Bring her home to your house,
right away.

Have her in disguise, so she'll look like a married woman— 780
Hair combed high, with ribbons and the rest. She must
pretend that
She's your wedded wife. Now train the girl!

PERIPLECTOMENUS:

I'm lost. What's all
this for?

PALAESTRIO: You'll soon see. Now, does she have a maid?

PERIPLECTOMENUS:

A very
clever one.

PALAESTRIO: We'll have need of her as well. Now tell the woman
and her maid the
Mistress must pretend that she's your wife—who's dying for
the soldier boy.

We'll pretend she gave her little maid this ring—to give to me.
I'll give it to him, pretending I'm the go-between.

PERIPLECTOMENUS:

I hear you—
Don't assume I'm deaf. I know my ears are both in fine
condition.

PALAESTRIO: I'll pretend it's been presented as a present from
your wife so
She could . . . get together with him. I know him—he'll be
in flames!

Nothing gets that lecher more excited than adultery!

790

PERIPLECTOMENUS: If you asked the sun himself to find the girls
you've asked me for,

He could never find a pair more perfect for the job. Relax!

(*He exits*)

PALAESTRIO: Fine. Hop to it then. We need 'em right away. Now,
Pleusicles—

PLEUSICLES: At your service.

PALAESTRIO: When the soldier gets back home,
remember *not* to
Call your girl Philocomasium.

PLEUSICLES: What should I call her then?

PALAESTRIO: Dicea.

PLEUSICLES: Yes, of course, the name we just agreed upon.

PALAESTRIO: Now go.

(PLEUSICLES *remains stationary for a moment, "memorizing" the
name*)

PLEUSICLES: I'll remember.

(*To PALAESTRIO*)

But I'd like to ask you *why* I should
remember.

PALAESTRIO: When you have to know, I'll tell you. For the
moment, just keep still,

While the old man does his part—and very soon you'll play
your role. 800

PLEUSICLES: Then I guess I'll go inside.

(*He starts to walk off*)

PALAESTRIO: (*Calling after him*) And follow orders carefully!

(PLEUSICLES *walks slowly into the house, rehearsing to himself*)

PALAESTRIO: (*To the audience, with a broad smile*)
 What storms I'm stirring up—what mighty machinations!
 Today I'll snatch that concubine back from the soldier—
 That is, if all my troops remain well disciplined.
 Now I'll call him. Hey, Sceledrus! If you've got time
 Come out in front. Palaestrio is calling you.

(*A pause. Not SCELEDRUS, but another slave, LURCIO by name, appears at the door, extremely drunk.*)

LURCIO: He's busy now.

PALAESTRIO: At what?

LURCIO: He's pouring . . . as he sleeps.

PALAESTRIO: Did you say "pouring"?

LURCIO: "Snoring" 's what I meant
 to say.

But snoring, pouring—isn't it about the same?

(*LURCIO starts to reel offstage. PALAESTRIO stops him.*)

PALAESTRIO: Hey—Sceledrus inside asleep?

LURCIO: Except his nose. 810
 That's making quite a noise.
 (*Confidentially*)

He took some secret snorts
 'Cause he's the steward and was spicing up the wine.

(*LURCIO again turns to go; PALAESTRIO again stops him*)

PALAESTRIO: But wait, you scoundrel, you're the guy's
 steward—wait!

LURCIO: Your point?

PALAESTRIO: (*Indignantly*) How could he let himself just go to
 sleep?

LURCIO: He closed his eyes, I think.

PALAESTRIO: I didn't ask you that!
 Come here! You're dead if I don't know the truth at once!
 Did you serve him the wine?

LURCIO: I didn't.

PALAESTRIO: You deny it?

LURCIO: I do, by Hercules. He told me to deny it.
 I also didn't pour four pints into a pitcher.
 He also didn't drink 'em all warmed up at dinner. 820

PALAESTRIO: You also didn't drink?

LURCIO: Gods blast me if I did.

I wish I'd drunk.

PALAESTRIO: How come?

LURCIO: Because I *guzzled* it instead.
 The wine was overheated and it burned my throat.

PALAESTRIO: Some slaves get drunk, while others get weak
 vinegar!

Our pantry has some loyal steward and subeward!

LURCIO: You'd do the same, by Hercules, if you had charge.
 You're acting jealous now 'cause you can't copy us.

(*He once again turns to go*)

PALAESTRIO: Wait, wait, you scoundrell! Has he drunk like this before?

And just to help your thinking, let me tell you this:
If, Lurcio, you lie, you'll suffer horribly.

830

LURCIO: Oh, really now? Then you can tattle what I've told
To get me kicked out from my storeroom stuffing job,
And pick a new sub steward when *you're* put in charge.

PALAESTRIO: By Pollux, no, I won't. Come on. Be brave and
speak.

LURCIO: He never poured a drop, by Pollux. That's the truth.
He'd order me to do it—and I'd pour for him.

PALAESTRIO: That's why the jars were always standing on their
heads!

LURCIO: By Hercules, that isn't why the jars were jarred.

Inside the storeroom was this very slippery spot.

A two-point pot was leaning on the casks nearby;

It often would get all filled up—ten times or so.

I saw it filled and emptied. Mostly it got filled.

And then the pot danced wildly and the jars were jarred.

840

PALAESTRIO: Get in! You held that storeroom bacchanal
yourselves.

By Hercules, I'll go bring Master from the forum.

(PALAESTRIO takes a few steps toward the forum, then stops to listen
to LURCIO's lament)

LURCIO: I'm dead. Master will crucify me when he comes

And finds out what's been done because I didn't tell him.

I'll run off somewhere so I can postpone the pains.

(To the audience)

Folks, please don't tell Palaestrio, I beg of you.

(He starts to tiptoe off. PALAESTRIO scares him with a shout.)

PALAESTRIO: Hey—where are you going?

LURCIO: (Nervously)

I'll be back. I'm on an
errand.

850

PALAESTRIO: For whom?

LURCIO: Philocomasium.

PALAESTRIO:

Go—rush right back!

LURCIO: Do me a favor, will you? If while I'm away

There's punishment distributed . . . please take my share.

(LURCIO scampers off)

PALAESTRIO: (To the audience) Ah, now I understand our young
girl's strategy.

With Sceledrus asleep, she sends his underling

Off on some business while she sneaks across.

(Looks offstage to his left)

But here's our neighbor with the girl I requisitioned—

And, oh, is she good-looking! All the gods are with us.

She's dressed so finely—most unprostitutishly.

This whole affair now seems most charmingly in hand!

860

(PERIPLECTOMENUS enters with a girl on either arm. One is the
courtesan ACROTELEUTIUM, a reasonably young old pro, and the
other is her maid MILPHIDIPPA.)

PERIPLECTOMENUS: (To the girls) Now I've explained this whole
thing to you both from start to finish,

Acroteleutium and Milphidippa. If you haven't grasped

This artful artifice as yet, I'll drill you once again.

But if you understand it all, then we can change the subject.

ACROTELEUTIUM: Now don't you think I'd be a stupid idiot to undertake

An unfamiliar project or to promise you results,
If I were unacquainted with the whole technique—the art of being wicked?

PERIPLECTOMENUS: Forewarned's forearmed, I say.

ACROTELEUTIUM: Not to a
real professional—
A layman's words are little use. Why, didn't I myself,
The minute that I drank the smallest drop of your proposal, 870
Didn't I tell *you* the way the soldier could be swindled?

PERIPLECTOMENUS: But no one ever knows enough. How many
have I seen
Avoid the region of good sense—before they even found it.

ACROTELEUTIUM: But when it's wickedness or wiles that's wanted
of the woman,
Why, then she's got a monumentally immortal memory.
It's only when it comes to something fine or faithful
That suddenly she's scatterbrained—and can't remember.

PERIPLECTOMENUS: Well, that's what I'm afraid of. Here your job
is double-edged:
For when you do the soldier harm, you're doing *me* a favor.

ACROTELEUTIUM: Relax, you're safe as long as we don't know
we're doing good. 880

PERIPLECTOMENUS: What mangy merchandise a woman is.

ACROTELEUTIUM: Just
like her customers.

PERIPLECTOMENUS: That's typical. Come on.

PALAESTRIO: I ought to go ahead
and meet them.
It's good to see you, sir, so charmingly accompanied.

PERIPLECTOMENUS: Well met, Palaestrio. Look—here they are—the girls
You ordered me to bring—and in their costumes.

PALAESTRIO: (*Pats him on the back*) You're my man!
Palaestrio salutes Acroteleutium.

ACROTELEUTIUM: Who's this
Who speaks to me as if he knew me?

PERIPLECTOMENUS: He's our . . . architect.

ACROTELEUTIUM: My greetings to the architect.

PALAESTRIO: The same to you.
Has he
Indoctrinated you?

PERIPLECTOMENUS: The girls I bring are well rehearsed.

PALAESTRIO: I want to hear how well. The fear of failure
frightens me. 890

PERIPLECTOMENUS: I didn't add a thing to those instructions that
you gave me.

(ACROTELEUTIUM approaches PALAESTRIO and speaks to him in a
very blasé manner)

ACROTELEUTIUM: Now look. You want the soldier to be swindled,
right?

PALAESTRIO: That's right!

ACROTELEUTUM: Neatly, sweetly, and completely—everything's arranged.

PALAESTRIO: I want you to pretend to be his wife—

ACROTELEUTUM: I *am* his wife.

PALAESTRIO: Pretend that you're enamored of the soldier—

ACROTELEUTUM: So I will be.

PALAESTRIO: Pretend that I'm the go-between for this—with Milphidippa.

ACROTELEUTUM: You should have been a prophet—all you say will soon come true.

PALAESTRIO: Pretend this ring was given by your little maid to me
To offer to the soldier with your compliments.

ACROTELEUTUM: That's true!

PERIPLECTOMENUS: Why bother to remind the girls of things they know? 900

ACROTELEUTUM: It's good.

Remember if you're dealing with a first-rate architect,
And if this man designs a ship with well-drawn plans,
You'll build the ship with ease if everything's laid out and set.
Now we've a keel that's accurately laid and nicely set,
Our architect has helpers who are not exactly . . . amateurs,
So if our raw material is not delayed en route,
I know our capabilities—we'll have that ship in no time.

PALAESTRIO: (*To ACROTELEUTUM*) I guess you know my military master—

ACROTELEUTUM: What a question!!

How could I *not* know such a public menace, such a bigmouth,
Fancy-haired, perfumed lecher?!

PALAESTRIO: Hmm—does he know you? 910

ACROTELEUTUM: He never saw me, so how could he?

PALAESTRIO: Ah, that's lovely talk.
I'm sure the action will be lovelier.

ACROTELEUTUM: Now just relax—
Leave him to me. If I don't make a fancy fool of him,
Then put the blame on me completely.

PALAESTRIO: Fine, now go inside
And concentrate completely on this project.

ACROTELEUTUM: (*Going*) Just relax.

PALAESTRIO: Periplectomenus, take them inside. I'm for the forum.

I'll find my man, I'll offer him this ring, and I'll insist
That it was given to me by "your wife," who's dying for him.
(*Pointing to MILPHIDIPPA*)

As soon as we get back from the forum, send her out,
Pretending she was sent to him in secret.

PERIPLECTOMENUS: Fine—relax. 920

PALAESTRIO: Just keep on the alert. I'll bring him here already stuffed.

(PALAESTRIO *rushes out toward the forum*)

PERIPLECTOMENUS: Now walk and talk successfully! Oh, if we work this out,
And if my guest gets back the soldier's concubine today,
I'll send you such a gift—

ACROTELEUTIUM: (*Casually*) Say—is the girl cooperating?

PERIPLECTOMENUS: Absolutissimo, bellissimo.

ACROTELEUTIUM: (*Facetiously*) Swellissimo.
When all our roguery is pooled together, I'm convinced,
We'll never meet defeat by any trickier deceit.

PERIPLECTOMENUS: Let's go inside and then rehearse our parts with care.
We all must follow our instructions nicely and precisely,
So when the soldier comes, there'll be no blunders.

ACROTELEUTIUM: You're 930
the slow one.

(PERIPLECTOMENUS leads the two women into his house. The stage is empty for a brief moment [musical interlude?], then enter PYRGOPOLYNICES, smiling with pleasure at his accomplishments of the morning. PALAESTRIO follows at his heels, trying to get his master's attention.)

PYRGOPOLYNICES: (*Smiling smugly*)
What a pleasure when affairs go well—exactly as you planned them.
I've already sent a parasite of mine to King Seleucus,
Leading mercenaries I conscripted for His Majesty.
While they guard his kingdom, I shall have a little relaxation.

PALAESTRIO: Come now. Think of your affairs, not King Seleucus's. Why, look, a
Promising new venture has been proposed to me as go-between.

PYRGOPOLYNICES: (*Condescendingly*) Well, I'll put the other things aside and give you my attention.
Speak—I now surrender both my ears to you and to this venture.

PALAESTRIO: (*Suspiciously*) Reconnoiter first—is there a snare to catch our conversation? 940
I'm commanded to pursue this business with all secrecy.

(PYRGOPOLYNICES "scouts" the area, then whispers to PALAESTRIO)

PYRGOPOLYNICES: No one.

PALAESTRIO: (*Gives the ring*) Take this—it's the first deposit on a love account.

PYRGOPOLYNICES: What's this? Where'd you get it?

PALAESTRIO: From a
lovely and a lively lady
Who adores you and who longs to have your handsome
handsomeness.
She has had her maid give me this ring to forward on to you.

PYRGOPOLYNICES: But who is she—is she freeborn or some manumitted slave?

PALAESTRIO: Feh! How could I dare negotiate for you with freedwomen—
You're already swamped with offers from the well-born girls who want you!

(PYRGOPOLYNICES smiles and continues his questions)

PYRGOPOLYNICES: Wife or widow?

PALAESTRIO: Wife and widow.

PYRGOPOLYNICES:

how a woman can be
Both a wife and widow?

Tell me

PALAESTRIO:

Easy: she is young, her husband's old!

PYRGOPOLYNICES: Goody!

PALAESTRIO:

She's delectable and dignified.

PYRGOPOLYNICES:

me no lies—

Tell

950

PALAESTRIO: She alone could be compared to *you* in beauty.

PYRGOPOLYNICES:

how gorgeous!
Who is she?

Oh,

PALAESTRIO: The wife of old Periplectomenus, next door.

How she's dying for you, longing to escape—she hates the old
boy.

I've been asked to beg you—to beseech you—let her have a
chance to

Give herself completely.

PYRGOPOLYNICES:

Hercules, why not? If she is willing—

PALAESTRIO: Willing? *Thrilling!*PYRGOPOLYNICES: (*Suddenly remembering*) Say—what shall we do about the girl at home?PALAESTRIO: Let her go—wherever she would like to. *And it just so happens*

Her twin sister and her mother have arrived to fetch the girl.

PYRGOPOLYNICES: What—her mother's come to Ephesus?

THE BRAGGART SOLDIER

137

PALAESTRIO:

who saw so say so.

Those

PYRGOPOLYNICES: Hercules—the perfect chance for me to kick the woman out!

960

PALAESTRIO: Yes, but you should do it in the “perfect” way.

PYRGOPOLYNICES:

right, what's your advice?

All

PALAESTRIO: Don't you want to have her hurry from your house with no hard feelings?

PYRGOPOLYNICES: Yes yes yes.

PALAESTRIO:

Here's what to do: you're rich
enough, so let the girl have

All the gold and all the jewels and all the things you dressed
her up with.

Better not upset her; let her take the stuff where she would
like.

PYRGOPOLYNICES: That sounds good. But watch out when I let her go this other woman Doesn't change her mind!

PALAESTRIO:

Oh, feh! Don't be absurd—the girl
adores you!

PYRGOPOLYNICES: (*Preening*) Venus loves me!

PALAESTRIO:

Quiet now—the
door is open—hide yourself.

(*MILPHIDIPPA enters from the old man's house*)

That one coming out is Madam's clipper ship, the go-between
who

Brought the ring that I just gave to you.

PYRGOPOLYNICES:

bad, not

Bad at all!

970

PALAESTRIO: A chimpanzee—a harpy set beside her mistress! Look at her there—hunting with her eyes and using ears as traps.

MILPHIDIPPA (*To the audience*) There's the circus where I must perform my little act right now.

I'll pretend that I don't see them—I won't even know they're there.

PYRGOPOLYNICES: (*Whispering to PALAESTRIO*)

Shh . . . let's listen in to see if there's a mention made of *me*.

MILPHIDIPPA: Are there men about who care for others' business, not their own,

Idlers who don't earn their supper, who might spy on what I'm doing?

I'm afraid of men like these, lest they obstruct me or delay me—

If they come while Mistress crosses over—burning for *his* body. How she loves that man—too beautiful, too too magnificent, the

Soldier Pyrgopolynices.

980

PYRGOPOLYNICES: (*Aside*) This one's mad about me too!

She just praised my looks.

PALAESTRIO:

further rubbing. By Pollux, her speech needs no

PYRGOPOLYNICES: How is that?

PALAESTRIO: Because her words are bright enough—already polished.

And why not? She speaks of you—she has a shining subject, too!

PYRGOPOLYNICES: Say, her mistress surely is a gorgeously attractive woman.

Hercules, I'm getting sort of warm for her already, boy.

PALAESTRIO: Even when you haven't seen her yet?

PYRGOPOLYNICES: (*Ogling MILPHIDIPPA*) I take your word for it.

Meanwhile, "clipper ship" here whets my appetite for love.

PALAESTRIO:

you don't, by Hercules!

Don't you fall in love with her—that girl's engaged to *me*. If you should

Wed the mistress, *she* becomes my bride at once.

No,

PYRGOPOLYNICES: (*Impatiently*)

Then speak to her.

990

PALAESTRIO: All right, follow me.

PYRGOPOLYNICES:

I'll be your follower.

(*They approach MILPHIDIPPA, who still pretends not to see them. She gets even more melodramatic.*)

MILPHIDIPPA:

could find him—

Find the man I've left the house to meet. O heaven, grant me this!

Would I

PALAESTRIO: All you dreamed will appear, you can be of good cheer—there is certainly no cause for fearing,

For the person that's speaking knows just who you're seeking—

MILPHIDIPPA: My goodness—who is this I'm hearing?

PALAESTRIO: Of your council a sharer—and also a bearer of counsel, should you be confiding it.

MILPHIDIPPA: Oh no! Heaven forbid! What I'm hiding's not hid!

PALAESTRIO: Well, you may or may not still be hiding it.

MILPHIDIPPA: Tell me how that can be.

PALAESTRIO: It's not hidden from me—but I'm trusty, a tacit and mum one.

MILPHIDIPPA: Can you give me a sign that you know our design?

PALAESTRIO: Let us say that a woman loves someone.

MILPHIDIPPA: There are hundreds who do—

PALAESTRIO: Ah, but ever so few send a gift given straight from their finger.

MILPHIDIPPA: Ah, now I understand I've the lay of the land now—and no more uncertainties linger.
Are there spies whereabouts?

1000

PALAESTRIO: (*Pointing to the soldier*) We're both with and without.

(*MILPHIDIPPA motions PALAESTRIO to one side*)

MILPHIDIPPA: I must see you alone, so I beckoned.

PALAESTRIO: Well, for many or few words?

MILPHIDIPPA:

I only want two words.

PALAESTRIO: (*To the soldier*) I'll be back with you in a second.

PYRGOPOLYNICES: What of me—hey, explain—must I stand here in vain, looking fiery, fierce . . . fascinating?

PALAESTRIO: Yes, sir, stand there in view—I'm just working for you.

PYRGOPOLYNICES: (*In great heat*) But I'm wasting away with this waiting!

PALAESTRIO: But it's best to go slow, for I'm sure you well know of the kind of low mind that her stock has.

PYRGOPOLYNICES: Yes yes yes—on with your quest—do what you think best.

PALAESTRIO: (*Aside to MILPHIDIPPA*)

This man has no more brains than a rock has!
Now I'm back here with you—ask me.

MILPHIDIPPA:

What shall I do?
What's your method for storming our Troy here?
Can you give me a plan?

PALAESTRIO: Just pretend if you can, that you're dying with love—

MILPHIDIPPA: (*Nodding*) For our boy here!

PALAESTRIO: Don't forget when you speak, praise his face and physique—and his courage in every endeavor. 1010

MILPHIDIPPA: Now you don't have to harp, I've got everything sharp. As I showed you before, I'm quite clever.

PALAESTRIO: In respect to the rest, you resolve what is best—hunt a hint in whatever I'm saying.

PYRGOPOLYNICES: (*Chafing at the bit*)

Well, I wish we would start and you'd tell me my part in all this—come back here—you're delaying!

(PALAESTRIO *scampers back to the soldier's side*)

PALAESTRIO: Here I am. Don't be nervous; I'm back at your service—

PYRGOPOLYNICES: Tell me what she has said—

PALAESTRIO:

Why, the poor dear's been sighing and crying—near dying—in short, she's in terrible distress.

For she's crazy about you and can't live without you, so she sent out her maid on this mission.

PYRGOPOLYNICES: Let her come—

PALAESTRIO:

Why so pliant? Do act more defiant, disdainful of this proposition.

Shout—why did I annoy you, debase, hoi-polloi you?—pretend that this whole affair piques you.

PYRGOPOLYNICES: Say, there is something to that; I'll certainly do that.

PALAESTRIO: (*Aloud*) Shall I call this woman who seeks you?

PYRGOPOLYNICES: Let her come if she wants something.

PALAESTRIO: Come if
you want something, woman. 1020

MILPHIDIPPA: (*Hurling herself at the soldier's feet*)

O beauty so beaming!

PYRGOPOLYNICES: What a clever young dame—she remembers my name.

(*To MILPHIDIPPA*)

May the gods grant whatever you're dreaming—

MILPHIDIPPA: Why, to live out this life as your own wedded wife.

PYRGOPOLYNICES: That's too much!

MILPHIDIPPA:

Oh, it's not *my* desire—
It's for Mistress I woo—she's just dying for you.

PYRGOPOLYNICES:

My dear girl,
there are thousands on fire.
And there just isn't time—

MILPHIDIPPA:

Oh, by Pollux, sir, I'm quite aware
that you've so high a rating.
You're a man so attractive, in action so active—and "fiery,
fierce . . . fascinating."

(*Aloud to PALAESTRIO*)

And there could be no one more godlike than he—

PALAESTRIO:

human—you're right, no debating.

(*Aside*)

Why, it couldn't be plainer—a vulture's humaner than he is.

PYRGOPOLYNICES: (*Not hearing this*)

I'll act more imposing. I must put on a show since she's praising me so—

PALAESTRIO: (*Aside to MILPHIDIPPA*)

What an ass—will you look at him posing!

(*Aloud, to the soldier*)

Will you design a reply to her mistress's cry? You remember, I spoke a while back of it.

PYRGOPOLYNICES: I don't quite understand—from *which one*?
The demand is so great that I cannot keep track of it. 1030

MILPHIDIPPA: Well, she took from her hand something grand,
something handsome, to hand you in elegant fashion.

Look—you're wearing the ring I was bidden to bring—from a
woman who's burning with passion.

PYRGOPOLYNICES: All right, what's her request—speak out,
woman, I'm pressed.

MILPHIDIPPA: How she wants you—oh, please don't reject her!
She lives only for you—who knows what she may do—she's
near death—but *you* could resurrect her!

PYRGOPOLYNICES: What's her wish now?

MILPHIDIPPA:

To touch you, to clasp
you, to clutch you—she cries for complete consummation.
And unless you relieve her, I truly believe her to be very near
desperation.

O Achilles so fair, won't you answer my prayer—save this
pretty one all the world pities.

Oh, produce something kind from your merciful mind—noble
king-killer, sacker of cities!

PYRGOPOLYNICES: Ah, these girls who adore me do nothing
but bore me. 1040

(*To PALAESTRIO*)

You shouldn't be letting me near all this.

Do you think it's your job—giving me to the mob?

PALAESTRIO: (*To MILPHIDIPPA*)

Hey there,

woman, I hope that you hear all this!

Look, I've told you before—must I tell you once more? This
great stud always must be rewarded.

He can't give out his seed to just any old breed—it's too
valuable not to be hoarded!

MILPHIDIPPA: Let him make his demand; we have cash here on
hand.

PALAESTRIO: Well . . . one talent—not silver, but golden.
And he never takes less—

MILPHIDIPPA:

By the gods, I confess that he's
cheap at that price; we're beholden!

PYRGOPOLYNICES: Oh, I'm not one for greed, I've got all that I
need. To be frank, I've got wealth beyond measure:
Golden coins by the score—by the thousands and more—

PALAESTRIO:

Not

to mention a storehouse of treasure!

Silver, too, not in pounds, no, not even in mounds, but in
mountains, like Aetna—or higher.

MILPHIDIPPA: (*Aside*) Oh, ye gods, how he's lying!

PALAESTRIO: (*Aside to her*)

supplying him fuel—
And how I'm 1050

MILPHIDIPPA: And I'm stoking the fire!

But do hurry, I pray, send me back right away.

PALAESTRIO: (*Aloud*)

sir, to give her an answer?

Say you do or you don't, say you will or you won't—

Will you deign,

MILPHIDIPPA:

Save a

suffering wretch while you can, sir!

Why torment her so long? She has done you no wrong.

PYRGOPOLYNICES: (*Magnanimously*) Have her come back to me for a viewing.

You may say that I'm willing; I'll soon be fulfilling her dreams—

MILPHIDIPPA: (*Excitedly*) Just as you should be doing!

Being very astute you will do what is mutual—

PALAESTRIO: (*Waving her off*)

no further cuing. Experts need

MILPHIDIPPA: You're so kind to be heeding my passionate pleading, and letting me speak to your soul myself! (*Aside to PALAESTRIO*)

Well, speak up—how's my act?

PALAESTRIO: (*Aside to MILPHIDIPPA*) As a matter of fact, I have all I can do to control myself!

MILPHIDIPPA: That's why I turned aside. I was trying to hide—

(*She breaks into giggles*)

1060

PYRGOPOLYNICES: (*Completely involved in self-praise*)

Do you know this occasion is stellar?

Do you know the great honor I lavish upon her?

THE BRAGGART SOLDIER

I know, and I'll

MILPHIDIPPA:
certainly tell her.

PALAESTRIO: The demand is so great I could ask for his weight in pure gold—

MILPHIDIPPA: By the gods, you'd receive it!

PALAESTRIO: And the women he lies with he fecundifies with real heroes—and would you believe it—
The children he rears live for eight hundred years—

MILPHIDIPPA: (*Aside*) Oh please
stop it, you joker—I'm crying!

PYRGOPOLYNICES: My dear boy, there are many who live a millennium—from age to age without dying!

PALAESTRIO: Oh, I knew it but hid it—and I underdid it so she wouldn't think I was lying.

MILPHIDIPPA: Oh, I'm simply aghast—why, how long will *he* last—if his sons are of such great duration?

PYRGOPOLYNICES: Jove was born of the Earth just preceding my birth—I was born one day after Creation.

PALAESTRIO: And what is more—had he been born before, *he* would be in the heavens now, reigning!

MILPHIDIPPA: (*Aside to PALAESTRIO*)

Please—one more and I'll crack! By the gods, send me back—
let me go with some breath still remaining. 1070

PALAESTRIO: (*Aloud*) Don't stand lazily by—go—you've got your reply.

MILPHIDIPPA: Yes—I'll go and I'll bring back Madam now.
How her spirits will soar!

(To PYRGOPOLYNICES)

Do you want something more?

PYRGOPOLYNICES:
no handsomer than I am now.
It is so aggravating to be devastatingly handsome. . . .

To be

PALAESTRIO:
girl!

Go on,

MILPHIDIPPA: I'm going.

PALAESTRIO: Now remember. Be smart—use your head and your heart.

Have *her* heart fairly dance, have her glowing!

(*Aside to MILPHIDIPPA*)

And if our girl's in there, have her cross and prepare—say the soldier's returned to his station.

MILPHIDIPPA: She's with Mistress inside; they found someplace to hide where they took in our whole conversation.

PALAESTRIO: That was smart—what they're hearing will help them in steering their own course with good navigation.

MILPHIDIPPA: Come—you're holding me back—

PALAESTRIO:
I'm not holding
you actually, nor am I—
(*Gives a knowing glance*)
no further mention now.

(MILPHIDIPPA exits)

PYRGOPOLYNICES: Have your mistress make haste, I have no time to waste. I shall give this my foremost attention now.

(*Paces back and forth, deep in thought, then turns to PALAESTRIO*)

Palaestrio, you're my adviser, what about
My concubine? For clearly it's impossible
To ask the new one in before the other's out!

PALAESTRIO: Why ask me for advice on what to do? I've told
you

How to do it gently—with the most compassion:
Let her keep the jewels and fancy clothes you gave her.
Tell her to prepare 'em, wear 'em, bear 'em off.
Say the time is ripe for her to go back home—
Her mother's here with her twin sister—say that too.
It's fitting she go home accompanied by them.

PYRGOPOLYNICES: (*Worried*) How do you *know* they're
here?

PALAESTRIO: Why, with these very eyes
I saw our lady's twin.

PYRGOPOLYNICES: And have the sisters met?

PALAESTRIO: Yes.

PYRGOPOLYNICES: (*Lecherously*) How's the twin—good-
looking?

PALAESTRIO: Sir! You want
To grab at everything!

PYRGOPOLYNICES: (*Lecherously*) Where did you say the mother
was?

PALAESTRIO: Aboard the ship, in bed with swollen and infected eyes.

The skipper told me—that's the man who brought 'em here. He happens to be staying as our neighbor's guest.

PYRGOPOLYNICES: How's *he*—is he good-looking?

PALAESTRIO:

Indeed—

Cut it out!

You really have been quite the model stud—
Pursuing both the sexes—male and female!
Enough of this!

PYRGOPOLYNICES: (*A bit cowed, changing the subject*)

Now this advice you've given me—
I would prefer your speaking to her of the matter.
You seem to get on well with her in conversation.

1100

PALAESTRIO: What better than to go yourself; it's your affair.
Just say that it's imperative you take a wife.
Say your relations tell you and your friends compel you.

PYRGOPOLYNICES: You think so?

PALAESTRIO:

Would I tell you what I didn't think?

PYRGOPOLYNICES: I'll go inside. Meanwhile, you stay before the house

And guard. As soon as *she* appears, you call me out.

PALAESTRIO: (*Confidently*) Just do your own part well.

PYRGOPOLYNICES:

as done!

Consider it

If she's unwilling, then I'll kick her out by force!

1110

PALAESTRIO: Oh, do be careful. It's much better that she leave With no hard feelings. So just give her what I told you—
The gold, the jewels, and all the stuff you dressed her up with.

PYRGOPOLYNICES: Ye gods, I hope she'll go!

PALAESTRIO:

succeed.

I think that you'll

But go inside—don't wait.

PYRGOPOLYNICES:

I'll follow your advice.

(PYRGOPOLYNICES dashes into his house. PALAESTRIO smiles broadly as he watches his master, then turns to the audience.)

PALAESTRIO: Well, folks, did I exaggerate a while ago
In what I said about this conceits captain?

Now I need Acroteleutium, or else

That little maid of hers, or Pleusicles. By Jupiter!

My luck is coming through for me at every turn!

For just the ones I wanted most of all to see,

I see—coming together from the house next door!

1120

(Enter ACROTELEUTIUM from the old man's house, leading MILPHIDIPPA and PLEUSICLES)

ACROTELEUTIUM: (*To the others*) Follow me and look around to see there's no one spying on us.

MILPHIDIPPA: I see no one here—except the man we want to see.

PALAESTRIO: Well met!

MILPHIDIPPA: How're you doing, architect?

PALAESTRIO:

architect.

Feh, I'm no

MILPHIDIPPA: What's that?

PALAESTRIO: Why, compared to you, my talent couldn't bang two boards together.

MILPHIDIPPA: Come now, don't exaggerate—

PALAESTRIO: (*Smiling*)
 Why, you're a filly
 full of felony!
 And you polished off the soldier charmingly.

MILPHIDIPPA:
 We haven't
 finished.

PALAESTRIO: Smile a little; this affair is well in hand—at least for now.

Simply keep on giving helpful help as you have done so far.

Soldier boy is there inside, beseeching her to go away:
 "Please go back to Athens with your mother and your sister!"

PLEUSICLES: Great!

PALAESTRIO: And he gave her all the gold, the jewels, the stuff he dressed her up with

As a gift—to go away. He's following the plan I gave him!

PLEUSICLES: It looks easy: he is all insistence—she gives no resistance.

PALAESTRIO: Don't you know that when you're climbing upward in a well that's deep,

You're in greatest danger of a fall when nearest to the top?
 We have almost drawn this from the well, but if he gets suspicious,

We'll get nothing out of him—so now's the time to be our sharpest.

We have raw materials aplenty for the job, that's clear.
 Three girls,
 (*To PLEUSICLES*)

1140

you're a fourth, and I'm a fifth—the old man is a sixth.

We six have a large reserve of rogueries to draw upon.

Name a city—we could storm and conquer it with all our tricks.

Pay attention now—

ACROTELEUTIUM: That's why we've come—to find out what you want.

PALAESTRIO: Nice of you to say. Now I'll command you in your line of duty.

ACROTELEUTIUM: You'll command commendably. I'll do my best for your request.

PALAESTRIO: Lightly . . . brightly . . . and in spritely fashion—
 fool the soldier boy.
 I command it.

ACROTELEUTIUM: Your command's a pleasure.

PALAESTRIO: You've got the way?

ACROTELEUTIUM: I pretend I'm torn apart for love of . . . him,
 that I've divorced my present husband,
 Since I'm burning so to marry . . . him.

PALAESTRIO: (*Smiling*)
 One more thing—this house is *yours*—since it was in your
 dowry. Say the

1150

Old man has gone off already, since the separation's final.
 We don't want our man afraid to enter someone else's house.

ACROTELEUTIUM: Well advised.

PALAESTRIO:

When he comes out, be
hesitant—don't come too close.

Act as if you're too ashamed to place your beauty near his own.
Be in awe of all his riches; lavish praise upon his looks, his
Splendid face and figure, charm, his personality, et cetera.
Have you been rehearsed enough?

ACROTELEUTIUM:

Of course. Won't it be quite
enough to

Render you a polished piece of work? I know you'll find it
flawless.

PALAESTRIO: Fine.

(To PLEUSICLES)

It's your turn now to be commanded in your
line of duty.

When what we've discussed is done, and she goes in—you
come at once.

Get yourself disguised the way the skipper of a ship would
dress; 1160

Have a wide-brimmed hat—rust-brown—and on your eye a
woolen patch.

Also have a rust-brown cloak—since that's the color sailors
wear.

Fasten it to your left shoulder; tie it round with one arm bare.
One way or another, you must seem the master of a ship.
All these clothes are there inside—the old man owns some
fishing boats.

(PLEUSICLES nods, having taken great pains to memorize all this)

PLEUSICLES: Well, when I am here . . . all dressed up like you
just described . . . what then?

PALAESTRIO: Come here—and pretend you're fetching
Philocomasium for her mother.

Say that if she's going to Athens she must hurry to the harbor.
Also have them carry all the things she wants to take on
board. 1170

(Affecting an old-salt accent)

If she doesn't come, you'll cast off anyway—the wind is fair.

PLEUSICLES: Pretty picture—please proceed.

Then right away

PALAESTRIO:

he'll urge the girl to
Hasten, hurry—don't keep Mother waiting.

PLEUSICLES: (*Admiringly to the others*) He's poly-
perceptive!

PALAESTRIO: I'll have her request my aid in taking luggage to the
harbor.

He'll command me to escort her. When I'm there, be sure of
this—

Straightaway I'll be away, straight . . . back to Athens.

When

PLEUSICLES:

you're there,
You won't be a slave for three days longer. I'll release you.

PALAESTRIO: Quickly now, and dress yourself.

There's

PLEUSICLES:
nothing else?

PALAESTRIO: Just don't forget.

PLEUSICLES: I'll be going . . .

(*He goes*)

PALAESTRIO: (*To the women*) You two hurry in as well, since any minute

He'll be coming out again, I know.

ACROTELEUTUM: (*Taking leave*) Your wish is our command.

1180

PALAESTRIO: Everybody go—retreat!
(*Turns*)

And just in time—our door is open!

(*To the audience*)

Here he comes—so chipper—he's "succeeded"! Fool—he gapes at nothing!

(PYRGOPOLYNICES bursts out, overjoyed with himself)

PYRGOPOLYNICES: I've succeeded! I got what I wanted as I wanted it—

Sweetly and completely she agreed.

PALAESTRIO:

What took so long in there?

PYRGOPOLYNICES: Never was I loved as madly as that little woman loves me.

PALAESTRIO: Oh?

PYRGOPOLYNICES: I needed countless words; she was the toughest nut to crack.

Finally, I triumphed. Did I give her gifts! I gave her Everything that she demanded.
(*Sheepishly*)

I even had to give her . . . you.

PALAESTRIO: (*Mock shock*) Even me! How could I live away from you?

PYRGOPOLYNICES: Stiff upper lip.

I would like to have you back, and yet there was no other way. I

1190

Couldn't get the girl to go without you—I tried everything, she Overwhelmed me.

PALAESTRIO: (*Dramatically*) Well, I trust the gods—and you, of course. I know that

After this, though 'twill be bitter, parted from the best of masters,

This at least will comfort me: that your surpassing beauty will have—

Through my humble efforts—won that lady. I will now arrange it.

PYRGOPOLYNICES: Ah, what need of words. If you succeed, you'll be a free man—
And a rich man.

PALAESTRIO: I'll succeed.

PYRGOPOLYNICES: (*Impatiently*) I'm bursting—hurry!

PALAESTRIO: Self-control!
Take it easy, don't be so . . . hot-blooded. Wait—she's coming out.

(PALAESTRIO pulls the soldier aside, as MILPHIDIPPA leads ACROTELEUTUM from the old man's house)

MILPHIDIPPA: (*Aside to ACROTELEUTUM*)
Oh, Mistress, there's the soldier.

ACROTELEUTUM: Where?

MILPHIDIPPA:

Right to your left.

ACROTELEUTUM:

I see.

MILPHIDIPPA: Take just a hasty glance so he won't know we're looking at him.

1200

ACROTELEUTUM: All right, by Pollux, now's the time for bad girls to be worse girls.

MILPHIDIPPA: You take the lead.

ACROTELEUTUM: (*Melodramatically*) Please tell me—did you see the man in person?

(*Aside*)

Don't speak too softly—let 'im hear.

MILPHIDIPPA: (*Proudly*) I spoke to him myself, Quite calmly, easily—and just as long as I desired.

PYRGOPOLYNICES: You hear?

PALAESTRIO:

I hear. She's overjoyed just to have talked to you.

ACROTELEUTUM: Oh, what a lucky woman!

PYRGOPOLYNICES:

How they love me.

PALAESTRIO:

deserve it.

You

ACROTELEUTUM: What a miracle—you got to him and begged him to submission.

I heard one needed letters, or a page—like for a king.

MILPHIDIPPA: Indeed, it took a bit of effort getting through to him.

PALAESTRIO: You're legendary, sir.

PYRGOPOLYNICES:

I bear it—it's the will of Venus.

ACROTELEUTUM: (*Picking up a cue*)

1210

I give my thanks to Venus and I beg her and beseech That I may be successful with the one I love and long for. May he be kind to me and not deny me my desire.

MILPHIDIPPA: I hope so too. And yet so many women long for him.

He spurns them all, despises them—except for you alone.

ACROTELEUTUM: I'm terribly tormented, since he's so discriminating,

That, seeing me, his eyes will make him change his mind. Why, his own splendidity will spurn with speed my plain appearance.

MILPHIDIPPA: He won't. Be of good cheer.

PYRGOPOLYNICES: (*Taken—and taken in*)

How she disparages herself.

ACROTELEUTUM: I'm frightened you exaggerated my good looks to him.

MILPHIDIPPA: Oh, I was careful—you'll be prettier than I described.

1220

ACROTELEUTUM: If he won't take me for his wife, then I'll embrace his knees And I'll implore him. Otherwise, if I can't win him over, I am resolved to die. I know I cannot live without him.

(PYRGOPOLYNICES starts toward her with open arms)

PYRGOPOLYNICES: I must prevent that woman's death. I'll

go—

PALAESTRIO: (*Restraining him*) Oh, not at all!

You're cheapening yourself to give yourself so liberally.

Do let her come unbidden, sir: to yearn, to burn, to wait her turn.

Now, do you want to lose your reputation? Don't do that!

No man was *ever* loved by woman thus—except for two:

Yourself and Phaon, Sappho's lover on the Isle of Lesbos.

ACROTELEUTIUM: Dear Milphidippa, call him out—or I'll go in myself! 1230

MILPHIDIPPA: Let's wait at least till someone else comes out.

ACROTELEUTIUM:

can't wait—

I'm going in!

But I

MILPHIDIPPA: The doors are locked.

ACROTELEUTIUM:

I'll break 'em.

MILPHIDIPPA: (*Rushing to the soldier's door*) You're insane!

ACROTELEUTIUM: But if he's ever loved, or if his wisdom match his beauty,

Then he'll forgive whatever I may do because of love.

PALAESTRIO: (*To the soldier*) The poor girl's burning up for love of you.

PYRGOPOLYNICES: (*Trembling*) It's mutual!

PALAESTRIO: (*Hushing him*) Don't let her hear!

MILPHIDIPPA:

stupefied—why don't you knock?

You're standing

ACROTELEUTIUM: The man I love is not inside.

MILPHIDIPPA:

you know?

How do

ACROTELEUTIUM: I smell.

My nose would sense it if he were inside.

PALAESTRIO:

A prophetess!

PYRGOPOLYNICES: She loves me; therefore Venus gave her powers of prophecy.

ACROTELEUTIUM: He's near—somewhere—the man I long to see. I smell him! 1240

PYRGOPOLYNICES: She sees more with her nose than with her eyes.

PALAESTRIO: She's blind with love.

(ACROTELEUTIUM begins an elaborate fainting act)

ACROTELEUTIUM: Oh, hold me!

MILPHIDIPPA:

Why?

ACROTELEUTIUM: I'm falling!

MILPHIDIPPA:

Why?

ACROTELEUTIUM:

can't stand up!

Because I

My soul's retreating through my eyes—

MILPHIDIPPA:

seen
The soldier!

ACROTELEUTIUM: Yes!

MILPHIDIPPA: I don't see—where?

ACROTELEUTIUM:

loved him!
You'd see him if you

MILPHIDIPPA: What's that? Why, if you'd let me, I would love him
more than you do!

PALAESTRIO: It's obvious that every woman loves you at first
sight.

PYRGOPOLYNICES: (*Confidentially*) I don't know if I told you, but
my grandmother was . . . Venus.

ACROTELEUTIUM: Dear Milphidippa, please go up to him.

PYRGOPOLYNICES: (*Preening*)

reveres me!
How she

PALAESTRIO: Well, here she comes.

MILPHIDIPPA:

I want you—

PYRGOPOLYNICES: (*Aside*)

I want *you*!

MILPHIDIPPA:

commanded,
I've brought my mistress out.

PYRGOPOLYNICES:

I see.

PYRGOPOLYNICES: How could she?

MILPHIDIPPA: (*Smiling*) This house was in her dowry.

PYRGOPOLYNICES:

Yes?

MILPHIDIPPA:

Yes, sir.

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MILPHIDIPPA:

Well, tell her to

approach.

PYRGOPOLYNICES: Your pleas have forced me not to hate her as I
do the others.

(PYRGOPOLYNICES *starts toward* ACROTELEUTIUM, *but* MILPHIDIP-
PA *suddenly blocks his way*)

MILPHIDIPPA: If she approaches nearer you—she couldn't speak a
word.

For when she simply looks at you, her eyes cut off her tongue.

PYRGOPOLYNICES: I'll cure milady's malady.

MILPHIDIPPA:

and quaked

When she beheld you.

Oh, how she shook

PYRGOPOLYNICES: Mighty men in armor do the same—
I do not wonder that a woman does. What does she want?

MILPHIDIPPA: She wants to live a lifetime with you, so—come to
her house.

PYRGOPOLYNICES: (*Hesitantly*) I—to her house? She's married—
why—her husband—he might catch me!

MILPHIDIPPA: But, sir, for love of you, she's thrown her husband
out.

PYRGOPOLYNICES: Then take her home—
I'll be there in a second. 1260

MILPHIDIPPA: Please don't keep her waiting long—
Don't break her heart.

PYRGOPOLYNICES: I won't—of course. Be off!

MILPHIDIPPA: We're off.

(MILPHIDIPPA helps her "fainting" mistress back into the old man's house)

PYRGOPOLYNICES: (Looking offstage) What do I see?

PALAESTRIO: What do
you see?

PYRGOPOLYNICES: Someone's approaching, dressed
In sailor's clothes.

PALAESTRIO: He's heading for our house—it's clear he
wants you.
Why, that's the skipper—

PYRGOPOLYNICES: Come to fetch the girl,
no doubt.

PALAESTRIO: No doubt.

(Enter PLEUSICLES, looking very uncomfortable in his elaborate sailor's costume. Among other items of apparel, he has a large patch over his left eye.)

PLEUSICLES: If I were not aware how many others have
Done awful things because of love, I'd be afraid
To march around dressed up like this to win my love.
Yet, since I know of many others who committed things
Both shady and dishonest for the sake of love . . . 1270
Why mention how Achilles let his Greeks be killed? . . .
But there's Palaestrio—he's standing with the soldier.
I'd better change my language to a different style.
(Affecting the accent PALAESTRIO demonstrated earlier)
Why, woman's born the daughter of Delay herself.
For any other plain delay of equal length
Seems less of a delay than waiting for a woman.
I really do believe it's in their constitution.
But now to fetch this girl Philocomasium.
I'll knock. Hey—anybody home?

PALAESTRIO: (Rushing up to him) Young man—what's up?
What are you knocking for?

PLEUSICLES: I want Philocomasium. 1280
Her mother sent me. If she's coming, let her come.
The girl's delaying everyone—we're anxious to set sail.

(PYRGOPOLYNICES dashes over nervously)

PYRGOPOLYNICES: Oh, everything's all ready. Go, Palaestrio—
Get helpers to transport her stuff onto the ship—
The gold, the jewels, the clothes, and all the fancy things.
The gifts I gave her are all packed. Now let her take them!

PALAESTRIO: I'm off.

PLEUSICLES: For heaven's sake be quick!

PYRGOPOLYNICES: (Trying to placate him) He won't be long.
But tell me, sir, what happened to that eye of yours?

PLEUSICLES: (*Pointing to his unbandaged eye*)
Why, this one's fine.

PYRGOPOLYNICES: I mean your left one.

PLEUSICLES:
The *ocean* caused me to use this eye less. And yet
Were it not for *dev-otion*, I could use it now.
But they're delaying me too long—

PYRGOPOLYNICES: Ah—here they come!

(PALAESTRIO leads a tearful PHILOCOMASium out of the soldier's house)

PALAESTRIO: Will there ever be an end to all this weeping?

PHILOCOMASium: (*Woefully*)
I help it?
I must leave this beautiful existence. . . .

PALAESTRIO:
for you
From your mother and your sister.

PHILOCOMASium: Yes, I see.

PYRGOPOLYNICES: (*Impatiently*) Palaestrio!

PALAESTRIO: Yes!

PYRGOPOLYNICES: Command that all the stuff I gave the girl be carried off!

PLEUSICLES: Greetings, Philocomasium.

PHILOCOMASium: The same to you.

PLEUSICLES:
and sister
Also bade me tell you . . . greetings.

PHILOCOMASium: Greetings to them both as well.

PLEUSICLES: (*Delivering his carefully memorized speech*)
They beseech you . . . come ahead . . . the wind is fair . . . the sails are full.
If your mother's eyes were better, she'd have come along with me. 1300

PHILOCOMASium: Though I long to stay, one must obey one's mother.

PLEUSICLES: Very wise.

PYRGOPOLYNICES: (*Confidentially to PLEUSICLES*)
If she hadn't lived with me, she'd be a half-wit to this day!

PHILOCOMASium: That's what pains me so—the separation from so great a man.
Why, with your abilities, you could . . . enrich . . . most anyone.

(*At this moment, PALAESTRIO appears from inside the soldier's house, carrying a treasure chest*)

And because I used to be with you, I held my head up high.
Now . . . I have to lose that one distinction.

PYRGOPOLYNICES: Do not cry.

PHILOCOMASium: I must—
When I look at you. . . .

PYRGOPOLYNICES:

Stiff upper lip.

PHILOCOMASIUM:

Oh, if you knew my feelings!

PALAESTRIO: I don't wonder, girl, that you lived happily with him, and that his

Beauty's blaze, his noble gaze, his manly ways have held you rapt, for

Even I—slave that I am—am brought to tears at leaving him. 1310

PHILOCOMASIUM: (*To the soldier*) May I hug you one more time before I go for good?

PYRGOPOLYNICES:

You may.

(PYRGOPOLYNICES *readies himself for her embrace. She starts toward him with open arms, then staggers, wailing.*)

PHILOCOMASIUM: Oh, my darling . . . oh, my soul . . . oh . . .

(*She begins an elaborate faint. PALAESTRIO catches her "just in time" and hands her to PLEUSICLES.*)

PALAESTRIO: Hold this woman please; she may do Damage to herself!

PYRGOPOLYNICES: What's going on?

PALAESTRIO: you, the

Because she has to leave

Poor girl's fainted dead away!

PYRGOPOLYNICES:

Well, run inside and get some water!

PALAESTRIO: Never mind the water—she needs rest. (*The soldier starts toward her*)

No—

don't come any closer!
Please—let her recover.

(PYRGOPOLYNICES *eyes PLEUSICLES and PHILOCOMASIUM with suspicion*)

PYRGOPOLYNICES: Say—their heads are awfully close together!

I don't like the looks of this. Hey, sailor—take your lips from hers!

PLEUSICLES: I just tried to see if she was breathing.

PYRGOPOLYNICES: Use your ear for that!

PLEUSICLES: If you'd like, I'll let her go—

PYRGOPOLYNICES: No no—hold on!

PALAESTRIO: (*Weeping*) Oh, woe is me!

PYRGOPOLYNICES: (*Calling inside his house*)

Men! Come out—bring forth her stuff—bring everything I gave the girl! 1320

(*Various lackeys enter with PHILOCOMASIUM's luggage and assorted gifts, as PALAESTRIO readies himself for an impassioned valedictory*)

PALAESTRIO: Ere I go . . . let me salute you once again . . . ye household gods.

And to you, my male and female fellow slaves . . . hail and farewell.

Please don't speak too badly of me 'mongst yourselves when I am gone.

PYRGOPOLYNICES: Come, Palaestrio, buck up!

PALAESTRIO:

but cry—

I must leave you.

Alas, I cannot help

PYRGOPOLYNICES: Take it like a man.

PALAESTRIO:

Oh, if you knew my feelings!

(PHILOCOMASium suddenly "regains consciousness")

PHILOCOMASium: What? Where am I? What's been going on.
Who are you?

(Aside)

Hello, darling!

PLEUSICLES: Ah, you have revived,
(Aside)

my darling.

PHILOCOMASium: Goodness! Who am I embracing?
Who's this man? I'm lost—I must have fainted.

PLEUSICLES: (Aside)
dearest.

Never fear, my

(She puts her head on PLEUSICLES's chest)

PYRGOPOLYNICES: What's all this?

PALAESTRIO: (Trying to cover up) It's nothing . . . nothing . . .
just another fainting spell.
Oh, I shiver and I quiver.
(To the lovers)

This is getting far too public! 1330

PYRGOPOLYNICES: What'd you say?

Uh—carrying this stuff in

PALAESTRIO:

public—through the city—
It might hurt your reputation.

PYRGOPOLYNICES:

Well, it's mine to give and no one
else's.
I don't care what others think. Now depart—the gods be with
you.

PALAESTRIO: I was looking out for you.

PYRGOPOLYNICES: I know.

Farewell.

PALAESTRIO:

Farewell

PYRGOPOLYNICES:

to you.

PALAESTRIO: (Aside to PLEUSICLES)

Hurry, I'll be with you in a second.

(Aloud)

Just two words with Master.

(He goes to the soldier)

Though you have thought other servants far more faithful than
myself,
Still and all, I'm very grateful to you, sir . . . for everything.
And, if you'd seen fit to, I would rather have been slave to you
Than a freedman, working for another.

Come—stiff upper lip.

PYRGOPOLYNICES:

PALAESTRIO: (Sudden burst of passion)

Fond farewell to following a fiery, ferocious fighter!

Now I'm flunky to a frilly female . . . fortitude forgot.

1340

(He breaks into sobs. PYRGOPOLYNICES pats him on the shoulder,
barely able to restrain his own tears.)

PYRGOPOLYNICES: Good old fellow.

PALAESTRIO:

my will to live!

Oh, I can't go on—I've lost

PYRGOPOLYNICES: Go, go—follow them—no more delay.

PALAESTRIO: Farewell.

PYRGOPOLYNICES: Farewell to you.

(PALAESTRIO *turns to go, then whirls back toward the soldier*)

PALAESTRIO: Don't forget me, sir, for if perchance I should be freed someday,

I will send you word. You won't forsake me?

PYRGOPOLYNICES:

style. Ah, that's not my

PALAESTRIO: Always and forever think how faithful I have been to you.

Then at last you'll know who's been a loyal slave and who has not.

PYRGOPOLYNICES: I'm aware. I've noticed often—never quite so much till now.

PALAESTRIO: Yes, today at last you'll know the kind of slave I really am.

(PALAESTRIO *turns and starts to walk slowly off*)

PYRGOPOLYNICES: I can hardly stop myself from keeping you—

PALAESTRIO: (*Frantically*) Oh, don't do that! 1350

There'd be talk—they'd say you didn't keep your word—untrustworthily.

They would say you had no faithful slaves at all—except for me. If I thought it could be done the proper way—why, I'd insist—But you simply can't—

PYRGOPOLYNICES: Be off then.

PALAESTRIO: I shall bear whatever comes.

PYRGOPOLYNICES: So, farewell.

PALAESTRIO: I'd better hurry off.

PYRGOPOLYNICES: (*Impatiently*) All right—farewell already!

(PALAESTRIO *paces offstage—with a broad smile*)

PYRGOPOLYNICES: (*Reflecting, to the audience*)

Till today I always thought he was the very worst of slaves.

Now I see he was devoted to me. When I think it over,

I was foolish giving him away. But now I'll head inside,

Now's the time for love! Wait—I perceive a sound—made by the door.

(A SLAVE BOY *enters from the old man's house*)

BOY: (*To those inside the house*)

Stop coaching me, please. I remember what to do. 1360

(*Getting melodramatic*)

Wheresoever in the world he be, I'll find him.

Yes, I'll track him down; I won't spare any effort.

PYRGOPOLYNICES: This one seeks me. I'll go up and meet the boy.

BOY: Aha, I'm looking for you. Hail, you gorgeous creature!
O man of every hour, beyond all other men
Beloved of two gods—

PYRGOPOLYNICES: Which two?

BOY: Venus and Mars.

PYRGOPOLYNICES: A clever boy.

BOY: She begs of you to go inside.
She yearns, she burns, expectantly expecting you.
Bring solace to the lovelorn, don't wait—go!

PYRGOPOLYNICES: (*Hunggrily*) I will!

(*He dashes full speed ahead into the old man's house*)

BOY: (*To the audience*) Well, now he's trapped himself, caught
in his own devices.

1370

The ambush is prepared: the old man's standing staunchly
To attack this lecher who's so loud about his loveliness,
Who thinks that every woman loves him at first sight,
When really they detest him, men as well as women.
Now I'll rejoin the uproar—there's a shout inside!

(*He runs back into the house. Sounds of a scuffle from within, then enter PERIPLECTOMENUS, followed by his servants, who are carrying PYRGOPOLYNICES. Among them is CARIO, the cook, who has a long, sharp knife.*)

PERIPLECTOMENUS: Bring 'im out! If he won't come, then pick
him up and throw him out!

Make a little seat for him—right in the midair. Tear him apart!

PYRGOPOLYNICES: Please—I beg—by Hercules!

PERIPLECTOMENUS: By Hercules, you
beg in vain.

Cario, see to it that that knife of yours is sharp enough.

CARIO: Why, it's long been eager to remove this lecher's vital
parts, 1380
And to hang 'em like a baby's string of beads—around his neck.

PYRGOPOLYNICES: Oh, I'm dead!

PERIPLECTOMENUS: Not yet—you speak too soon.

CARIO: (*Brandishing that knife*) Can I go at him now?

PERIPLECTOMENUS: First let him be pummeled by your clubs a
little more.

CARIO: Much more!

(*The slaves pound PYRGOPOLYNICES much more*)

PERIPLECTOMENUS: So! You dared to make advances to another's
wife—you pig!

PYRGOPOLYNICES: By the gods, she asked me first—she came
to me!

PERIPLECTOMENUS: He lies—hit on.

PYRGOPOLYNICES: Wait a second—let me talk.

PERIPLECTOMENUS: (*To the slaves*) Why do you
stop?

PYRGOPOLYNICES: Please—may I speak?

PERIPLECTOMENUS: Speak.

PYRGOPOLYNICES: The woman begged me—

PERIPLECTOMENUS: But you
dared to go—hit him again!

PYRGOPOLYNICES: Stop—stop—stop—I'm pounded plenty.
Please, I beg—

CARIO: When do I cut?

PERIPLECTOMENUS: At your own convenience. Spread 'im out and
stretch 'im all the way.

PYRGOPOLYNICES: Please, by Hercules, I beg you, hear my
words before he cuts! 1390

PERIPLECTOMENUS: Well?

PYRGOPOLYNICES: I didn't want to—Hercules—I thought
she was divorced!
I was told as much—her maid—that little bawd—she lied to
me!

PERIPLECTOMENUS: Swear that you won't harm a single person
for this whole affair, or
For the pounding you've received today—and will receive—if
we now

Let you go intact—sweet little grandson of the goddess Venus.

PYRGOPOLYNICES: Yes! I swear by Jupiter and Mars, I'll never
harm a soul.

And my beating up today—I grant it was my just reward.
As a favor, let me leave with testimony to my manhood!

PERIPLECTOMENUS: If you break your promise after this?

THE BRAGGART SOLDIER

PYRGOPOLYNICES: Then
may I live . . . detested.

CARIO: I suggest we wallop him a final time and let him go. 1400

PYRGOPOLYNICES: Thank you—may the gods all bless you, sir, for
speaking up for me.

CARIO: Also give us gold—a hundred drachmas.

PYRGOPOLYNICES: Why?

CARIO: To let
you go—
Without giving testimony—grandson of the goddess Venus.
Otherwise, you'll never leave.

PYRGOPOLYNICES: You'll get it.

CARIO: Now you're being
smart.
And you can forget about your cloak, your tunic, and your
sword.

(To PERIPLECTOMENUS)
Should I pound or let him loose?

PYRGOPOLYNICES: Your pounding's made me
loose already!
Please—I beg of you—no more.

PERIPLECTOMENUS: Release the man.

PYRGOPOLYNICES: Oh, thank
you, thank you.

PERIPLECTOMENUS: If I catch you after this, you'll never testify
again!

PYRGOPOLYNICES: How can I object?

PERIPLECTOMENUS: Come, Cario, let's go inside.

(The old man takes his slaves inside, just as SCELEDRUS appears, with the soldier's lackeys, returning from the harbor)

PYRGOPOLYNICES: Look now—I

See my slaves. Quick, tell me, has the girl set sail—well, has she, has she? 1410

SCELEDRUS: Long ago—

PYRGOPOLYNICES: Damn!!

SCELEDRUS: If you knew what I know,
that's not all you'd say. That
Fellow with the woolen patch on his left eye . . . was no real
sailor!

PYRGOPOLYNICES: What? Who was he?

SCELEDRUS: Your own
sweetheart's lover.

PYRGOPOLYNICES: How'd you know?

SCELEDRUS: I know.
Why, the minute they were past the city gates, right then and
there, they
Started kissing and embracing—constantly.

PYRGOPOLYNICES: Oh, pity me!

Now I see I've been bamboozled. Oh, that rogue Palaestrio!
He enticed me into this. And yet . . . I find the verdict's just.

(Philosophically)

There would be less lechery if lechers were to learn from this;
Lots would be more leery and less lustful.

(To his slaves)

Let's go in!

(To the audience)

Applaud!

(All exit into the soldier's house)