Lysistrata

ARISTOPHANES

c. 446–386 BC

Lysistrata

Λυσιστράτη

Translated from the Greek with AI (Claude) and edited



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Lysistrata · Aristophanes (c. 446–386 BC)

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INTRODUCTION

Twenty years into the war between Athens and Sparta, an Athenian woman named Lysistrata has a plan: the women of Greece will refuse their husbands sex until the men make peace. She gathers wives from Athens, Sparta, Boeotia and Corinth, swears them to the strike over a bowl of wine, and has the older women seize the Acropolis, where the city keeps the money that pays for the war.

What follows is a battle of the sexes on every front: a chorus of old men with firewood against a chorus of old women with water jars, Lysistrata against a pompous government official, and the wives against their own desire as the strike drags on. In the most famous scene, Myrrhine teases her desperate husband, Cinesias.

First staged in 411 BC, two years after Athens' disastrous defeat in Sicily, Lysistrata is bawdy and fantastic, but its plea for peace among the Greeks is in earnest.

Lysistrata

Athens, before the gates of the Acropolis.

PROLOGUE

Lysistrata gathers women from across Greece and swears them to a sex strike to end the war.

LYSISTRATA [1] Honestly, if someone had invited them to a Bacchic revel, or to Pan's shrine, or to Colias or Genetyllis, you couldn't get through the streets for all the tambourines. But now there isn't a single woman here. Except, look, here's my neighbor coming out. Hello, Calonice.[1]

CALONICE [6] Hello to you too, Lysistrata. What's got you so upset? Don't scowl, honey. Arching your eyebrows like a bow doesn't suit you.

LYSISTRATA [9] Oh, Calonice, my heart's on fire. I'm so annoyed on behalf of us women, because the men all think we're a bunch of wicked schemers—

CALONICE [12] Well, we are, by Zeus!

LYSISTRATA [13] —and yet when they're told to meet here to discuss no small matter, they sleep in and don't show up.

CALONICE [15] Oh, darling, they'll come. It's hard for a woman to get out of the house. One of us is fussing over her husband, another's waking up the slave, another's putting the baby to bed, or bathing it, or feeding it.

1 Bacchus (Dionysus), Pan, and Aphrodite (worshipped at Cape Colias and as Genetyllis, a goddess of childbirth) all had women's festivals known for wild celebration.

LYSISTRATA [20] But they had other things more important than all that.

CALONICE [21] So what is it, Lysistrata dear? What on earth are you calling us women together for? What's the thing? How big is it?

LYSISTRATA [23] Big.

CALONICE Thick, too?

LYSISTRATA [24] Yes, by Zeus, thick too.

CALONICE Then how come we're not all coming?

LYSISTRATA [25] It's not that kind of thing. If it were, we'd have come fast enough. No, it's something I've worked out myself, tossing it back and forth through many sleepless nights.

CALONICE [28] After all that tossing, it must have worn pretty thin.

LYSISTRATA [29] Thin, yes, and fine. So fine that the salvation of all Greece lies with the women.

CALONICE [31] With the women? Then it's hanging by a thread.

LYSISTRATA [32] Because the city's affairs are in our hands: either there'll be no more Peloponnesians—

CALONICE [34] Well, that'd be best, by Zeus, no more of them.

LYSISTRATA [35] —and all the Boeotians wiped out—

CALONICE [36] Not all of them, please! Spare the eels.[2]

LYSISTRATA [37] As for Athens, I won't say anything like that. You can fill that in for yourself. But if the women meet here, the ones from Boeotia, the ones from the Peloponnese, and us, together we'll save Greece.

CALONICE [42] What could women ever do that's sensible or brilliant? We sit around all prettied up, in our saffron gowns and our makeup, our sheer Cimmerian shifts and our fancy slippers.

2 Eels from Lake Copais in Boeotia were a prized delicacy, cut off from Athens by the war.

LYSISTRATA [46] But those are exactly the things I expect to save us: the little saffron gowns, the perfumes, the slippers, the rouge and the see-through dresses.

CALONICE [49] How on earth?

LYSISTRATA So that not one man alive today will raise a spear against another—

CALONICE [51] Then by the Two Goddesses, I'm getting a gown dyed saffron!

LYSISTRATA [52] —or take up a shield—

CALONICE I'll put on my Cimmerian shift!

LYSISTRATA [53] —or even a dagger.

CALONICE I'll buy some slippers!

LYSISTRATA [54] So shouldn't the women be here by now?

CALONICE [55] By Zeus, they should have come flying here ages ago.

LYSISTRATA [56] Well, my friend, you'll see: they're Athenians through and through, doing everything later than they should. There's not a single woman here from the coast, either, or from Salamis.

CALONICE [59] Oh, those ones, I know for a fact, have been riding since dawn, straddling their boats.[3]

LYSISTRATA [61] And the ones I expected and counted on to be here first, the women of Acharnae, haven't come either.

CALONICE [63] Well, Theogenes' wife, at least, consulted her Hecate shrine about coming. But look, here are some women coming toward you. And here come some others. Hey, hey! Where are they from?[4]

LYSISTRATA [67] From Anagyrus.

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3 The Greek word for a fast boat (*kelēs*, "racer") also named a sexual position with the woman astride.

4 Theogenes was an Athenian mocked as a braggart; small shrines of Hecate stood at house doors, and his wife treats hers like an oracle.

CALONICE By Zeus, yes. Somebody's certainly stirred up the stink-bush.[5]

MYRRHINE [69] We're not late, are we, Lysistrata? What's that? Why don't you say something?

LYSISTRATA [70] I'm not pleased with you, Myrrhine, turning up only now on business this important.

MYRRHINE [72] Well, I could hardly find my belt in the dark. But if it's that urgent, tell those of us who are here.

LYSISTRATA [74] No, by Zeus, let's wait just a little while for the women from Boeotia and the Peloponnese to get here.

MYRRHINE [76] That's a much better idea. And look, here comes Lampito now.

LYSISTRATA [78] Lampito, my dearest Spartan, welcome! You look gorgeous, sweetheart! What a complexion, what a firm body! You could strangle a bull.

LAMPITO [81] I could, I reckon, by the Twin Gods. I train. I jump and kick my heels to my rump.[6]

CALONICE [83] What a fine pair of tits you've got!

LAMPITO [84] You are feeling me over like a beast for the altar.

LYSISTRATA [85] And this other young woman, where's she from?

LAMPITO [86] An envoy, by the Twin Gods. Boeotian. She comes to you.

MYRRHINE [87] Boeotian all right, by Zeus, and what lovely lowlands she has.

CALONICE [88] And by Zeus, her pennyroyal's been very stylishly plucked.[7]

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5 Anagyrus was an Attic district named after a foul-smelling shrub; "stirring the anagyros" was a proverb for asking for trouble.

6 The Greek gives the Spartans their own Laconian dialect, marked here only by a blunter cadence. Lampito describes a Spartan exercise in which one jumped and kicked one's buttocks with one's heels.

7 Boeotia is a land of plains; the women are joking about her depilated groin, with pennyroyal, a wild herb, standing for pubic hair.

LYSISTRATA [90] And the other girl?

LAMPITO A fine one, by the Twin Gods. Corinthian, this one.

CALONICE [91] Fine, by Zeus, you can see that. Here, and here.

LAMPITO [93] Who called this muster? This army of women?

LYSISTRATA [94] That's me.

LAMPITO Speak, then. Say what you want of us.

CALONICE [95] Yes, by Zeus, dear woman, tell us what this serious business of yours is.

LYSISTRATA [97] I'll tell you now. But before I do, I want to ask you one small thing.

CALONICE [98] Anything you like.

LYSISTRATA [99] Don't you miss the fathers of your children, away on campaign? I know very well every one of you has a husband away from home.

CALONICE [102] Mine, honey, has been away five months in Thrace, keeping an eye on Eucrates.[8]

MYRRHINE [104] And mine's been seven whole months at Pylos.

LAMPITO [105] And mine, if ever he gets back from his regiment, straps on his shield and he is off. Flown away.

LYSISTRATA [107] And there's not so much as a spark of a lover left. Ever since the Milesians betrayed us, I haven't even seen a six-inch dildo, which would have been some leather relief for us. So would you be willing, if I found a way, to end the war with me?[9]

CALONICE [112] By the Two Goddesses, I would, even if I had to pawn this wrap and drink the money the same day.

MYRRHINE [115] And so would I, even if I had to slice myself in half like a flatfish and give away half of me.

8 Eucrates, an Athenian general, apparently under suspicion.
9 Miletus revolted from Athens in 412 BC; it was known for making leather dildos.

LAMPITO [117] And I would climb to the top of Taygetus, if I could see peace from there.

LYSISTRATA [119] Then I'll tell you. There's no need to keep the plan hidden. Women, if we're going to force the men to make peace, we have to give up—

CALONICE [122] Give up what? Tell us.

LYSISTRATA Will you do it?

CALONICE [123] We will, even if we have to die.

LYSISTRATA [124] Well then, we have to give up cock. Why are you turning away from me? Where are you going? You there, why are you pursing your lips and shaking your heads? Why has your color changed? Why are tears trickling down? Will you do it or won't you? What are you waiting for?

CALONICE [129] I won't do it. Let the war drag on.

MYRRHINE [130] No, by Zeus, I won't either. Let the war drag on.

LYSISTRATA [131] You're saying this, flatfish? Just now you said you'd slice yourself in half.

CALONICE [133] Anything else, anything you like! If I have to, I'm ready to walk through fire. That, sooner than give up cock. There's nothing like it, Lysistrata dear.

LYSISTRATA [136] And you?

ANOTHER WOMAN I'd rather walk through fire too.

LYSISTRATA [137] Oh, what an utterly degenerate lot we women are! No wonder they write tragedies about us: all we are is Poseidon and a tub. But you, my dear Spartan, if you alone stand with me, we might still save the situation. Vote with me.[10]

LAMPITO [142] It is hard, by the Twin Gods, for a woman to sleep alone without a hard-on. All the same. We need peace. Badly.

LYSISTRATA [145] Oh, you darling, the only real woman of the lot!

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10 An allusion to Sophocles' *Tyro*: Tyro, seduced by Poseidon, bore twins and set them adrift in a tub; sex and its consequences, the stuff of tragedy.

CALONICE [146] But suppose we did keep as far as we could from what you're talking about, perish the thought: would that make peace any more likely?

LYSISTRATA [148] Much more, by the Two Goddesses. If we sat around at home all made up, and walked past them in our little Amorgos slips with nothing underneath, our deltas plucked, and the men got hard and were dying to screw, but we didn't go near them and kept away, they'd make a treaty fast, I'm sure of it.

LAMPITO [155] Menelaus, anyway. He got a look at Helen's naked apples and threw his sword away, I reckon.

CALONICE [157] But what if the men just let us go, my friend?

LYSISTRATA [158] Then it's what Pherecrates says: skin a skinned dog.[11]

CALONICE [159] Imitations are rubbish. And what if they grab us and drag us into the bedroom by force?

LYSISTRATA [161] Hold on to the door.

CALONICE [162] And if they beat us?

LYSISTRATA Then you have to give in, but badly. There's no pleasure in it for them when it's forced. And you have to make them suffer in other ways too. Don't worry, they'll give up soon enough. A man never enjoys himself unless the woman's in it with him.

CALONICE [167] If you two think so, we agree too.

LAMPITO [168] Our own men we will persuade to keep a fair peace, no tricks, in every way. But the Athenian rabble: how could anyone talk them out of their babbling?

LYSISTRATA [172] Don't worry, we'll persuade our side for you.

LAMPITO [173] Not while your triremes have feet and that bottomless money sits with the Goddess.[12]

11 Pherecrates was a comic poet; "skinning a skinned dog" was a proverb for useless effort, and "dog" here also hints at a dildo.
12 Athens' war treasury was kept on the Acropolis, in the temple of Athena.

LYSISTRATA [175] But that's all well arranged too. We're seizing the Acropolis today. The oldest women have orders to do it: while we're arranging all this, they're to pretend they're sacrificing and take the Acropolis.

LAMPITO [180] That would work every way. That is well said too.

LYSISTRATA [181] Then why don't we swear to all this right away, Lampito, so it can't be broken?

LAMPITO [183] Out with the oath, then. We will swear it.

LYSISTRATA [184] Well said. Where's the Scythian girl? What are you staring at? Put the shield down here in front, face up. And somebody give me the victim's parts.

CALONICE [186] Lysistrata, what oath are you going to make us swear?

LYSISTRATA [187] What oath? Over a shield, like they did once in Aeschylus, slaughtering a sheep.[13]

CALONICE [189] No, Lysistrata, don't swear anything about peace over a shield.

LYSISTRATA [191] Then what should the oath be?

CALONICE What if we got hold of a white horse somewhere and cut up its parts?

LYSISTRATA [193] A white horse? Come on!

CALONICE Well, how are we going to swear, then?

LYSISTRATA [194] I'll tell you, by Zeus, if you like. Let's set a big black cup face up, slaughter a jar of Thasian wine into it, and swear not to pour in any water.[14]

LAMPITO [198] Oh, that oath! I cannot tell you how much I like it.

LYSISTRATA [199] Somebody bring a cup and a jar out from inside.

MYRRHINE [200] My dear women, what a monster of a pot!

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13 In Aeschylus' *Seven Against Thebes* the attackers swear their oath over a shield filled with a sacrificed bull's blood.

14 Greeks normally drank wine mixed with water; neat wine was the drink of the intemperate, a stock comic vice of women.

CALONICE [201] Grab hold of that one and you'd be happy right away.

LYSISTRATA [202] Set it down and help me take hold of the boar. Lady Persuasion, and you, Cup of Friendship, accept this sacrifice and be kind to us women.

CALONICE [205] What a lovely color the blood is, and how nicely it spurts!

LAMPITO [206] And it smells sweet, by Castor.

MYRRHINE [207] Women, let me be the first to swear.

CALONICE [208] No, by Aphrodite, not unless you draw the lot.

LYSISTRATA [209] Everyone lay hold of the cup, you too, Lampito. One of you will repeat after me on behalf of all; the rest of you will swear along and confirm it. No man at all, neither lover nor husband—

CALONICE [213] No man at all, neither lover nor husband—

LYSISTRATA [214] —shall come near me with a hard-on. Say it.

CALONICE [215] —shall come near me with a hard-on. Oh, oh! My knees are giving way, Lysistrata!

LYSISTRATA [217] At home I'll pass my days without a bull—

CALONICE [218] At home I'll pass my days without a bull—

LYSISTRATA [219] —in my saffron gown, all made up—

CALONICE [220] —in my saffron gown, all made up—

LYSISTRATA [221] —so my husband will burn for me all the more.

CALONICE [222] —so my husband will burn for me all the more.

LYSISTRATA [223] And I'll never willingly give in to my husband.

CALONICE [224] And I'll never willingly give in to my husband.

LYSISTRATA [225] And if he forces me against my will—

CALONICE [226] And if he forces me against my will—

LYSISTRATA [227] —I'll be bad at it and I won't move with him.

CALONICE [228] —I'll be bad at it and I won't move with him.

LYSISTRATA [229] I won't raise my Persian slippers toward the ceiling.

CALONICE [230] I won't raise my Persian slippers toward the ceiling.

LYSISTRATA [231] I won't crouch like the lioness on a cheese grater.[15]

CALONICE [232] I won't crouch like the lioness on a cheese grater.

LYSISTRATA [233] If I keep these vows, may I drink from this cup;

CALONICE [234] If I keep these vows, may I drink from this cup;

LYSISTRATA [235] but if I break them, may the cup be full of water.

CALONICE [236] but if I break them, may the cup be full of water.

LYSISTRATA [237] Do you all swear to this with her?

MYRRHINE By Zeus, we do.

LYSISTRATA [238] Now then, I'll consecrate this.

CALONICE Just your share, dear, so we can all be friends with each other from the start.

LAMPITO [240] Who is raising that cry?

LYSISTRATA That's what I was telling you about: the women have already taken the Goddess's Acropolis. Now, Lampito, you go and get things in order on your side, and leave these women here with us as hostages. And let's go inside and help the others up in the citadel shoot the bolts.

CALONICE [247] But don't you think the men will all come charging at us right away?

LYSISTRATA [248] I don't much care about them. They won't come with enough threats or fire to open these gates, except on the terms we've set.

CALONICE [252] No, by Aphrodite, never! Otherwise people would call us women unbeatable pests for nothing.

15 Sex positions: legs in the air, and crouching on all fours like the lioness carved on cheese-grater handles.

PARODOS

Old men bring fire to smoke the women off the Acropolis; old women drench them with water.

CHORUS OF OLD MEN 254 Move along, Draces, lead on, step by step, even if your shoulder aches from carrying such a heavy load of green olive wood.

256 Ah, a long life holds plenty of surprises!
Who would ever have expected, Strymodorus, to hear
that the women we've been feeding
at home, an obvious plague,
have taken hold of the holy image,
have seized my Acropolis,
and with bars and bolts
are blocking up the gateway?

266 Let's hurry up to the citadel as fast as we can, Philurgus, and pile these logs in a ring around them, all the women who started this business and went along with it. Then we'll build one pyre and burn them all with our own hands, by a single vote, starting with Lycon's wife.[16]

273 By Demeter, while I live they won't laugh at me!
Not even Cleomenes, who seized it first,
got away unscathed. No,
for all his Spartan bluster
he left, handing over his arms to me,
in a tiny little cloak,
grimy, filthy, unplucked,
six years unwashed.[17]

281 That's how fiercely I besieged that man, sleeping at the gates seventeen shields deep. And these women, hated by Euripides and every god, am I not going to stop them, when I'm right

16 Lycon, an Athenian politician (later one of Socrates' accusers), whose wife was mocked for loose living.
17 Cleomenes, a Spartan king, occupied the Acropolis in 508 BC and was besieged there until he surrendered.

here, from such an outrage? Then let my trophy stand no longer in the Tetrapolis![18]

286 But the only stretch
of road I've got left
is this steep slope up to the citadel, where I'm hurrying.
How are we going to haul
this up there without a donkey?
These two logs have rubbed my shoulder raw.
Still, we've got to march on
and keep blowing on the fire,
so it doesn't go out on me before the end of the road.
Phoo! Phoo!
Ugh, ugh, the smoke!

296 What a terrible thing, Lord Heracles,
comes leaping at me from the pot
and bites my eyes like a rabid dog!
This fire is Lemnian,
every bit of it,
or it would never gnaw my gummy eyes like this.
Hurry on up to the citadel
and help the Goddess.
When will we ever stand by her, Laches, if not now?
Phoo! Phoo!
Ugh, ugh, the smoke![19]

306 This fire's awake, thank the gods, and alive. So how about this: we put the logs down first, stick the vine-wood torch into the pot, light it, and then charge the door like a battering ram? If the women won't undo the bolts when we call, we'll have to set fire to the doors and smoke them out. Let's put down our load. Phew, the smoke, ugh! Which of the generals at Samos will lend a hand with this wood? Well, at least these have stopped crush-

18 The Tetrapolis was the district around Marathon, where Athens defeated the Persians in 490 BC; Euripides was notorious for his wicked heroines.

19 A pun: Lemnos was proverbial for fiery violence, and its name echoes *lēmai*, the gunk that gathers in old men's eyes.

ing my back.[20] 315 Your job, pot, is to wake up the coals, so you can be the very first to bring me a lighted torch. Lady Victory, stand with us, and let us set up a trophy over the women in the citadel and their present insolence.

CHORUS OF OLD WOMEN 319 Women, I think I can see soot and smoke, as if a fire's burning. We'd better hurry faster.

321 Fly, fly, Nicodice,
before Calyce
and Critylla are burned up, fanned on every side
by cruel winds
and by deadly old men!
But I'm afraid of this: am I too slow to help?
Just now at dawn I filled my water jar
and barely got it from the fountain, through the crowd and
din and clatter
of pots,
jostled by slave women
...
and branded slaves. I snatched it up quickly,
and to the women of my district
who are burning
I'm bringing water to help.

20 The Athenian fleet and its generals were then based at Samos, far across the Aegean.

335 For I heard that doddering old
men were on their way, carrying logs
like men off to heat a bathhouse,
up to the citadel, three talents' weight,
making the most terrible threats
that these loathsome women must be burned to charcoal.
Goddess, may I never see them burning,
but see them rescue Greece and its
citizens from war and madness:
that's why, golden-crested
Guardian of the City, they took your seat.
And I call on you as our ally,
Tritogeneia: if any man
sets fire to them,
help us carry water.[21]

350 Hold it! What's this? You men, you rotten, good-for-nothing wretches! No decent, god-fearing men would ever do a thing like this.

CHORUS OF OLD MEN 352 Here's something we didn't expect to see: a swarm of women out here at the gates, coming to help!

CHORUS OF OLD WOMEN 354 What are you farting with fright at us for? Do we look like a lot of us? You aren't seeing even a ten-thousandth of us yet.

CHORUS OF OLD MEN 356 Phaedrias, are we going to let them run their mouths like this? Shouldn't someone beat them and break this wood over their heads?

CHORUS OF OLD WOMEN 358 Let's put our pitchers down on the ground too, so they won't get in my way if anyone lays a hand on me.

21 Tritogeneia is a title of Athena.

CHORUS OF OLD MEN 360 By Zeus, if someone had punched them in the jaw two or three times, like Bupalus, they wouldn't have any voice left.[22]

CHORUS OF OLD WOMEN 362 Go on, then, somebody hit me. I'll stand here and take it. And no other bitch will ever grab you by the balls!

CHORUS OF OLD MEN 364 If you don't shut up, I'll beat the old age right out of your hide.

CHORUS OF OLD WOMEN 365 Just come up and touch Stratyllis with one finger.

CHORUS OF OLD MEN 366 And what if I pound you with my fists? What terrible thing will you do to me?

CHORUS OF OLD WOMEN 367 I'll bite out your lungs and rip out your guts.

CHORUS OF OLD MEN 368 There's no poet wiser than Euripides: no creature on earth is as shameless as women.

CHORUS OF OLD WOMEN 370 Let's pick up our water jars, Rhodippe.

CHORUS OF OLD MEN 371 Why did you come here with water, you god-forsaken woman?

CHORUS OF OLD WOMEN 372 And why have you got fire, you walking tomb? To cremate yourself?

CHORUS OF OLD MEN 373 So I can build a pyre and burn your friends.

CHORUS OF OLD WOMEN 374 And I'm here so I can put out your pyre with this.

CHORUS OF OLD MEN 375 You'll put out my fire?

CHORUS OF OLD WOMEN You'll see soon enough.

CHORUS OF OLD MEN 376 I've half a mind to roast you with this torch, right here.

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22 The poet Hipponax threatened in his verses to punch the sculptor Bupalus in the jaw.

CHORUS OF OLD WOMEN [377] If you happen to have soap, I'll give you a bath.

CHORUS OF OLD MEN [378] A bath? From you, you rotten old bag?

CHORUS OF OLD WOMEN Yes, and a bridal one at that.

CHORUS OF OLD MEN [379] Did you hear the nerve of her?

CHORUS OF OLD WOMEN I'm a free woman.

CHORUS OF OLD MEN [380] I'll put a stop to your shouting.

CHORUS OF OLD WOMEN You're not on jury duty now.[23]

CHORUS OF OLD MEN [381] Set her hair on fire!

CHORUS OF OLD WOMEN Your turn, Achelous![24]

CHORUS OF OLD MEN [382] Ow, poor me!

CHORUS OF OLD WOMEN Too hot?

CHORUS OF OLD MEN [383] Hot? Will you stop it? What are you doing?

CHORUS OF OLD WOMEN [384] Watering you, so you'll grow.

CHORUS OF OLD MEN [385] But I'm withered already, and shivering!

CHORUS OF OLD WOMEN [386] Well, you've got fire, haven't you? Warm yourself up.

FIRST EPISODE

The Magistrate comes for the war money, and the women rout his archers.

MAGISTRATE [387] So the women's wild ways have flared up again, have they? Their drumming, their endless cries to Sabazius, and this Adonis-wailing up on the rooftops that I heard once in the Assembly? Demostratus, damn him, was saying we should sail to Sicily, and his wife, dancing, cried, "Alas for Adonis!"

23 Old Athenian men were notorious for serving on juries, which paid a small fee; the women mock their love of sitting in judgment.
24 Achelous was a river god whose name was used poetically for water itself.

Demostratus was saying we should enlist hoplites from Zacynthus, and the wife, a bit tipsy up on the roof, cried, "Beat your breasts for Adonis!" But he forced it through, that god-forsaken scumbag Bile-Yoker. That's the kind of debauched songs you get from them.[25]

CHORUS OF OLD MEN 399 Then what if you heard how these ones have outraged us? On top of everything else, they've given us a bath out of their pitchers, so now we can wring out our cloaks like we'd pissed ourselves.

MAGISTRATE 403 By salty Poseidon, serves you right. When we men join in the women's wickedness ourselves and teach them to be self-indulgent, these are the plans that sprout from them. We go into the craftsmen's shops and say things like this: "Goldsmith, about that necklace you fixed: last night, while my wife was dancing, the pin slipped out of its hole. Now I've got to sail over to Salamis. But if you have time, do come by this evening and do your very best to fit her pin back in." 414 Another says this to a shoemaker, a young man with a cock that's no boy's: "Shoemaker, the strap is pinching my wife's little toe, it's so tender. So come by at midday and loosen it up, so it's got more room." That's the sort of thing that's led to this business, when I, a Magistrate, have found a supply of oar timber and need the money right now, and I'm locked out of the gates by women. But there's no point standing around. Bring the crowbars, so I can put a stop to their insolence. What are you gaping at, you idiot? 426 And you, where are you looking? Doing nothing but eyeing the tavern? Get those crowbars under the gates and pry from over there. I'll pry along with you from this side.

LYSISTRATA 430 Don't pry anything. I'm coming out of my own accord. What do you need crowbars for? It isn't crowbars that are needed, it's brains and sense.

25 The Magistrate is one of the ten *probouloi*, emergency commissioners appointed after the Sicilian disaster of 413 BC. He recalls the Assembly of 415 BC, where Demostratus ("Bile-Yoker" mangles his family name Bouzyges, "Ox-Yoker") pushed the expedition through while women mourned Adonis on the rooftops.

MAGISTRATE 433 Oh, really, you foul creature? Where's the archer? Grab her and tie her hands behind her back.[26]

LYSISTRATA 435 By Artemis, if he lays so much as a fingertip on me, public slave that he is, he'll be howling.

MAGISTRATE 437 Scared, are you? Grab her around the waist, and you help him, and the two of you tie her up, fast.

FIRST WOMAN 439 By Pandrosos, if you so much as lay a hand on her, you'll get stomped till you shit yourself.[27]

MAGISTRATE 441 Listen to that, "shit yourself"! Where's another archer? Tie that one up first, since she's got a mouth on her too.

SECOND WOMAN 443 By the Light-Bringer, if you lay a fingertip on her, you'll soon be begging for a cup to hold on your black eye.

MAGISTRATE 445 What's this? Where's an archer? Hold on to that one. I'll put a stop to at least one of you coming out.

THIRD WOMAN 447 By Artemis of the Bulls, if you go near her, I'll tear your hair out till you wail and moan.

MAGISTRATE 449 Oh, damn my luck! The archers have run out on me. But we must never be beaten by women. Form up, Scythians, and let's charge them together.

LYSISTRATA 452 By the Two Goddesses, then you'll find out we've got four companies of fighting women inside too, fully armed.

MAGISTRATE 455 Twist their arms back, Scythians!

LYSISTRATA 456 Allied women, come running out! You seed-and-porridge-and-veggie-market-women! You garlic-and-guest-house-and-bread-stall-women! Drag them, hit them, smash them! Curse them, show them no shame! Stop! Fall back! No stripping the bodies!

MAGISTRATE 462 Ugh, what a beating my archers have taken!

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26 Athens' "archers" were publicly owned Scythian slaves who served as a police force.

27 Pandrosos, a daughter of Athens' legendary king Cecrops, had a shrine on the Acropolis.

LYSISTRATA [463] Well, what did you expect? Did you think you were up against some slave girls? Or don't you think women have any spirit in them?

MAGISTRATE [465] By Apollo, plenty, as long as there's a tavern nearby.

AGON

Lysistrata debates the Magistrate and argues that women should run the city the way they work wool.

CHORUS OF OLD MEN [467] Magistrate of this land, you've wasted plenty of words already. Why are you getting into a discussion with these beasts? Don't you know what kind of bath they just gave us, clothes and all, and without any soap at that?

CHORUS OF OLD WOMEN [471] Look, mister, you shouldn't go laying hands on your neighbors just like that. If you do, you're bound to end up with a black eye. Because I'd much rather sit here demurely like a young girl, bothering nobody, not moving so much as a twig, unless somebody goes poking at me like a wasps' nest and riles me up.

CHORUS OF OLD MEN

[476] Zeus, what on earth are we going to do with these
monsters?
This is past all bearing! No, you and I
must get to the bottom of this business:
what on earth they wanted
when they seized Cranaa, and why
they took the great rock, the untrodden Acropolis,
the holy precinct.[28]

[484] Question them, don't be taken in, put them through every test there is. It would be a disgrace to let a business like this slip past untested.

28 Cranaa: an old poetic name for Athens and its Acropolis, after the mythical king Cranaus.

MAGISTRATE [486] Well, by Zeus, the first thing I want to find out from them is this: what did you mean by barring our city up with bolts?

LYSISTRATA [488] To keep the money safe, so you won't be fighting a war because of it.

MAGISTRATE [489] So we're fighting a war because of the money?

LYSISTRATA Yes, and that's what stirred up everything else too. Peisander and the men who are after public office were always stirring up some commotion so they'd have the chance to steal. Well, let them do whatever they like for that reason: they'll never get their hands on this money again.[29]

MAGISTRATE [493] But what will you do?

LYSISTRATA You're asking me that? We'll manage it ourselves.

MAGISTRATE [494] You'll manage the money?

LYSISTRATA What's so shocking about that? Don't we manage all the household money for you already?

MAGISTRATE [496] But that's not the same.

LYSISTRATA How is it not the same?

MAGISTRATE This is the money we have to fight the war with.

LYSISTRATA [497] But there's no need to fight a war in the first place.

MAGISTRATE Then how else are we going to be saved?

LYSISTRATA [498] We'll save you.

MAGISTRATE You?

LYSISTRATA Yes, us.

MAGISTRATE Outrageous!

LYSISTRATA [499] You'll be saved whether you like it or not.

MAGISTRATE That's a monstrous thing to say!

29 Peisander: an Athenian politician then helping to engineer the oligarchic coup of 411 BC.

LYSISTRATA You're upset. But it has to be done all the same.

MAGISTRATE [500] By Demeter, it isn't right!

LYSISTRATA [501] You must be saved, my friend.

MAGISTRATE Even if I don't want it?

LYSISTRATA All the more for that very reason.

MAGISTRATE [502] And since when have you cared about war and peace?

LYSISTRATA [503] We'll tell you.

MAGISTRATE Then tell me fast, or you'll be sorry.

LYSISTRATA Listen, then, and try to keep your hands to yourself.

MAGISTRATE [504] But I can't. I'm so angry it's hard to hold them back.

FIRST WOMAN [505] Then you'll be a lot sorrier.

MAGISTRATE [506] Croak that curse on yourself, you old hag! You, talk to me.

LYSISTRATA I'll do that. Through the earlier war, for a long time, we put up with whatever you men did, because we knew how to behave. You wouldn't let us make a peep. Not that you pleased us. But we kept a close eye on you, and often, at home, we'd hear that you'd made a bad decision on some big issue. Then, aching inside, we'd put on a smile and ask you, "What did you decide in the Assembly today about adding a clause to the treaty on the stone?" "What business is that of yours?" my husband would say. "Won't you shut up?" And I'd shut up.[30]

FIRST WOMAN [515] Well, I'd never have shut up.

MAGISTRATE [516] And you'd have been howling if you hadn't.

LYSISTRATA So I kept quiet at home. ... Then we'd hear about some decision of yours that was even worse, and we'd ask, "Hus-

30 The treaty: the Peace of Nicias (421 BC), inscribed on a stone pillar; in 418 BC the Athenians added a note there that the Spartans had broken their oaths.

band, how can you be handling this so stupidly?" And he'd glare at me straight off and tell me that if I didn't spin my thread my head would be howling for a long time: "War shall be the business of men."[31]

MAGISTRATE [521] And he was right to say so, by Zeus.

LYSISTRATA How was he right, you wretch, if we weren't even allowed to give you advice when you were making bad decisions? But when we started hearing you say out loud in the streets, "Isn't there a man left in the country?" and somebody else answering, "No, by Zeus, there isn't," right after that we decided that the women should get together and save Greece together. Why should we have waited any longer? So if you're willing to listen to us in turn when we give good advice, and to keep quiet in turn as we did, we could set you straight.

MAGISTRATE [529] You set us straight? That's a monstrous thing to say, and I won't stand for it.

LYSISTRATA Quiet.

MAGISTRATE [530] Me, keep quiet for you, damn you, and you with a veil on your head? I'd sooner die.

LYSISTRATA [531] Well, if that's what's in your way, take this veil from me, have it, put it around your head, and then keep quiet. And take this little basket too. Then hitch up your clothes and card wool, munching beans. War shall be the business of women.

CHORUS OF OLD WOMEN [539] Up, women, away from your water jars, so that we can do our part in turn and lend our friends a hand.

31 The quotation is Hector's line to his wife Andromache in the *Iliad* (6.492).

541 Me, I'd never tire of dancing,
nor would aching weariness ever grip my knees.
I'm ready to go to any lengths
with these women, for their excellence:
they have spirit, they have charm, they have daring,
they have wisdom, they have a patriot's
sensible excellence.

549 Come on, you daughters of the manliest grannies and of stinging-nettle mothers, charge in fury and don't go soft: the wind's still at your backs.

LYSISTRATA 551 Well, if sweet-souled Eros and Cyprus-born Aphrodite breathe desire down over our breasts and thighs, and then fill the men with a delicious stiffness and hard-ons like clubs, I think someday the Greeks will call us Lysimaches, the Battle-Breakers.[32]

MAGISTRATE 555 By doing what?

LYSISTRATA First of all, by stopping men from shopping in the market in full armor and acting like lunatics.

FIRST WOMAN 556 Yes, by Aphrodite of Paphos!

LYSISTRATA 557 Right now, you see, they're going around the market among the pots and the vegetables alike, in full armor, like Corybants.[33]

MAGISTRATE 559 Yes, by Zeus, that's what real men have to do.

LYSISTRATA And it really is a ridiculous sight, when a man with a shield with a Gorgon on it goes and buys sardines.

FIRST WOMAN 561 By Zeus, I saw it myself: a long-haired cavalry commander on horseback, getting an old woman to pour him pea soup into his bronze helmet. And there was another one, a Thracian, shaking his shield and javelin like Tereus, who scared

32 "Lysimache" means "dissolver of battle"; it was also the name of the priestess of Athena of the City at the time.
33 Corybants: the frenzied attendants of the goddess Cybele, who danced in armor.

the fig-seller woman out of her wits and gobbled up her ripe olives.[34]

MAGISTRATE 565 So how can you women stop all the tangled affairs of the different states and sort them out?

LYSISTRATA 566 Very easily.

MAGISTRATE How? Show me.

LYSISTRATA 567 It's like a skein of wool when it's tangled: we take it like this and draw it out on our spindles, this way and that. That's how we'll untangle this war too, if we're allowed, drawing it out through embassies, this way and that.

MAGISTRATE 571 You think you'll stop terrible affairs with wool and skeins and spindles, you idiots?

LYSISTRATA 572 Yes, and if you had any sense, you'd run all your politics the way we work our wool.

MAGISTRATE 574 How so? Let's see.

LYSISTRATA First, just as with a raw fleece, you'd have to wash out the sheep dung in a bath; then lay the city on a bed and beat the scoundrels out of it with sticks, and pick out the burrs. As for the ones who clump together and mat themselves into knots to get public offices, you'd card them apart and pluck off their heads. Then card the common goodwill into a basket, mixing everyone in: the resident aliens, any foreigner who's a friend of yours, and anyone who owes money to the treasury, mix them in too. And, by Zeus, the cities that are colonies of this land:[35] 583 you should recognize that they're lying around like separate tufts of wool, each one off by itself. Then you take the wool from all of them, bring it here and gather it all into one, and then make a big ball of yarn, and out of that weave a cloak for the people.

34 Tereus: a mythical king of Thrace, hero of a tragedy by Sophocles.
35 Resident aliens (metics) were free foreigners living in Athens without citizenship; debtors to the treasury lost their civic rights until they paid.

MAGISTRATE 587 Isn't it outrageous that these women should be beating and winding all this up, when they've had nothing whatever to do with the war?

LYSISTRATA 588 Oh, but we have, you damned wretch! We bear more than twice our share of it. First of all, we give birth to sons and send them off to serve as soldiers.

MAGISTRATE 590 Quiet, don't bring up old wrongs.

LYSISTRATA 591 Then, when we ought to be having fun and enjoying our youth, we sleep alone because of the campaigns. And never mind us: it's the girls growing old in their bedrooms that I grieve for.

MAGISTRATE 594 But don't men grow old too?

LYSISTRATA By Zeus, what you're talking about isn't the same thing at all. When a man comes home, even if he's gray, he's quickly married a young girl. But a woman's season is short, and if she doesn't seize it, nobody wants to marry her, and she sits there looking for omens.

MAGISTRATE 598 But any man who can still get it up—

LYSISTRATA 599 And you, what's got into you that you don't just die? There's a plot for you. You'll buy a coffin. I'll knead you a honey cake right now. Take these and put on a garland.[36]

FIRST WOMAN 603 And take these from me.

SECOND WOMAN 604 And take this wreath.

LYSISTRATA 605 What do you need? What are you missing? Get on the boat: Charon's calling you, and you're keeping him from casting off.

36 The women are dressing him for his funeral: honey cakes (a sop for Cerberus), ribbons and garlands were given to the dead.

SECOND EPISODE

The Magistrate storms off to show his colleagues how he has been treated.

MAGISTRATE 608 Isn't it outrageous that I should be treated like this? By Zeus, I'm going straight to the other Magistrates to show myself to them just the way I am.

LYSISTRATA 611 You're not complaining that we didn't lay you out properly, are you? Well, on the third day, first thing in the morning, you'll get your third-day offerings from us, all ready.[37]

FIRST CHORAL SONG

The old men and old women trade threats and boast of their service to the city.

CHORUS OF OLD MEN

614 No more dozing on the job for any man who's free!
Let's strip for action, men, and take this business on.
Because it seems to me this thing already reeks
of more and bigger

617 business still,
and above all I catch the smell of Hippias' tyranny.
And I'm very much afraid that some Spartan men
have got together here at Cleisthenes' house
and are craftily egging on these god-hated women
to seize our funds and the jury pay
I've been living on.[38]

626 It's an outrage that these women are already lecturing the citizens, women that they are, and babbling about bronze shields, and trying to reconcile us with the Spartans, men you can trust about as far as a wolf with its jaws open. No, it's men

37 Offerings were brought to the grave on the third day after a funeral.
38 Hippias was the last tyrant of Athens, expelled in 510 BC; Cleisthenes was a contemporary of Aristophanes endlessly mocked for his supposed softness.

who have woven this plot against us, aiming at tyranny. Well, they won't play tyrant over me: I'll be on my guard, and from now on I'll "carry my sword in a myrtle branch," and I'll do my shopping under arms right next to Aristogeiton, standing beside him like this. Because now's my chance to smack this god-hated old hag in the jaw.[39]

CHORUS OF OLD WOMEN

636 Then your own mother won't recognize you when you come home!
Come, my dear old friends, let's put these down on the ground first.
Because, citizens, all of you, we're starting a speech
that will be useful to the city,
and rightly, since it raised me in splendid luxury.
As soon as I was seven, I carried the sacred things;
then at ten I ground grain for the Foundress;
then, in my saffron robe, I was a bear at Brauron;
and once, as a pretty girl, I carried the basket
wearing a string of dried figs.[40]

648 So don't I owe the city some useful advice? Even if I was born a woman, don't hold it against me, if I can contribute something better than what we've got now. I have a stake in the common fund: I contribute men. You miserable old men have no stake in it, because you squandered the fund they call Grandpa's, the one from the Persian Wars, and then never paid anything back in. On top of that, now we're in danger of being ruined by you. Have you got anything to grunt about? If you give

39 Aristogeiton and Harmodius killed the tyrant Hippias' brother in 514 BC; a popular drinking song had them hide their swords in myrtle branches, and their statues stood in the Agora.
40 These were girls' religious offices in Athens: carrying Athena's sacred objects on the Acropolis, grinding meal for her cakes, serving Artemis as a "bear" at Brauron, and carrying the sacred basket in processions.

me any trouble, I'll smack you in the jaw with this rawhide boot.[41]

CHORUS OF OLD MEN

658 Isn't all this a whole lot
of insolence? And I think the thing will only get worse.
Every man with balls has to fight this off.
Come on, let's strip off our tunics: a man should
smell like a man right from the start, not go about wrapped
up like a stuffed vine leaf.
Come on, you White-feet, who marched on Leipsydrion
back when we were still something,
now, now we have to be young again, and sprout wings
all over our bodies, and shake off this old age.[42]

672 Because if any of us gives these women even the slightest handhold, there's no end to the busy handiwork they'll get up to. They'll even build ships, and try to fight sea battles and sail against us, like Artemisia. And if they turn to riding, I can strike our cavalry off the rolls: there's nothing better at riding than a woman, she has a fine seat, and she won't slip off at a gallop. Just look at the Amazons Micon painted on horseback, fighting the men. No, we ought to grab every one of them by the neck, like this, and fit her into the stocks.[43]

41 The fund from the Persian Wars is the treasury of the Delian League, set up against Persia and long since spent by Athens.
42 Leipsydrion: a hill fort where Athenian exiles held out against the tyrant Hippias around 513 BC; "White-feet" was apparently a nickname for its defenders.
43 Artemisia, queen of Halicarnassus, fought for Xerxes at Salamis in 480 BC; Micon painted the battle with the Amazons in the Painted Stoa.

CHORUS OF OLD WOMEN

683 By the Two Goddesses, if you fire me up,
I'll turn my own sow loose, I will, and today
I'll give you such a combing you'll be screaming for the neighbors.
Come on, women, let's strip off quickly too,
so we can smell like women mad enough to bite.
Now let somebody come at me, and he'll never eat garlic again,
or black beans.
If you so much as say a nasty word (I'm boiling over),
I'll be the beetle that midwifes your eagle's egg.[44]

696 I wouldn't give a thought to you, as long as I have Lampito, and my dear friend Ismenia, that fine Theban girl. You'll have no power, not even if you pass your decrees seven times over, you wretch, hated by everyone, neighbors included. Why, just yesterday, when I was throwing a party for the children in honor of Hecate, I invited their playmate from next door, a fine, lovely girl from Boeotia: an eel. But they said they couldn't send her, because of your decrees. And you'll never stop passing these decrees of yours until somebody grabs you by the leg, carries you off and breaks your neck.[45]

THIRD EPISODE

Lysistrata catches wives sneaking home on false excuses and holds them together with an oracle.

CHORUS OF OLD WOMEN 706 Commander of this enterprise and this design, why have you come out of the house with such a gloomy face?

44 In Aesop's fable the dung beetle took revenge on the eagle by smashing its eggs, even when they were laid in Zeus' lap.
45 Eels from Lake Copais in Boeotia were a prized delicacy; wartime decrees had cut off trade with Boeotia, an enemy of Athens.

LYSISTRATA 708 The deeds of wicked women and the female heart make me pace up and down in despair.

CHORUS OF OLD WOMEN 710 What are you saying? What are you saying?

LYSISTRATA 711 The truth, the truth.

CHORUS OF OLD WOMEN 712 What's so terrible? Tell your friends.

LYSISTRATA 713 It's shameful to say, and hard to keep silent.

CHORUS OF OLD WOMEN 714 Then don't hide from me whatever trouble we're in.

LYSISTRATA 715 To put it as briefly as I can: we want to fuck.

CHORUS OF OLD WOMEN 716 Oh, Zeus!

LYSISTRATA 717 Why call on Zeus? Anyway, that's how things stand. I can't keep them away from their husbands any longer: they keep running off. The first one I caught widening the hole by Pan's grotto; another one shinnying down a pulley rope; another one deserting; and another, yesterday, all set to fly down to Orsilochus' place on a sparrow, I dragged back by the hair. They come up with every excuse to go home. Look, here comes one of them now. You there, where are you running?[46]

FIRST WOMAN 728 I want to go home. I've got Milesian wool at home, and the moths are chewing it to pieces.

LYSISTRATA 730 What moths? Get back here!

FIRST WOMAN 731 But I'll come right back, by the Two Goddesses, just as soon as I've spread it out on the bed.

LYSISTRATA 733 Don't spread anything, and don't go off anywhere.

FIRST WOMAN 734 So I should just let my wool be ruined?

LYSISTRATA If that's what it takes.

46 Orsilochus was evidently a notorious seducer or pimp; the sparrow was Aphrodite's bird.

SECOND WOMAN 735 Oh, poor me, poor me, my flax from Amorgos! I've left it at home unstripped.[47]

LYSISTRATA 736 Here's the next one heading out to her unstripped flax. Come back here.

SECOND WOMAN 738 But by the Light-Bringer, I'll just strip it and come straight back up.

LYSISTRATA 740 Don't you strip anything! If you start this, another woman will want to do the same.

THIRD WOMAN 742 Lady Eileithyia, hold off the birth until I can get to a place that isn't holy![48]

LYSISTRATA 744 What's this nonsense?

THIRD WOMAN I'm going to give birth any minute!

LYSISTRATA 745 But you weren't pregnant yesterday.

THIRD WOMAN Well, I am today. Please, Lysistrata, send me home to the midwife, as fast as you can.

LYSISTRATA 747 What are you talking about? What's this hard thing you've got?

THIRD WOMAN 748 A baby boy.

LYSISTRATA 749 By Aphrodite, not you! It looks like you've got some bronze thing in there, hollow. I'll find out. You ridiculous woman, you've got the sacred helmet, and you told me you were carrying?[49]

THIRD WOMAN 752 And I am pregnant, by Zeus!

LYSISTRATA 753 Then what were you doing with this?

THIRD WOMAN So that if labor caught me while I was still on the Acropolis, I could climb into this helmet and have the baby in it, the way pigeons do.

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47 Amorgos: an Aegean island famous for fine flax and the sheer garments made from it.
48 Eileithyia: goddess of childbirth. Giving birth on the sacred Acropolis would pollute it.
49 The Greek puns on *kynē*, "helmet" (here Athena's sacred one), and *kyein*, "to be pregnant."

LYSISTRATA 756 What are you saying? You're making excuses; it's perfectly obvious. Won't you stay right here for the helmet's naming day?[50]

THIRD WOMAN 758 But I can't even sleep on the Acropolis anymore, not since the time I saw the guardian snake.[51]

FIRST WOMAN 760 And I'm dying, poor me, from lack of sleep, with the owls forever hooting.

LYSISTRATA 762 You crazy women, stop these tall tales. Maybe you miss your husbands. Don't you think they miss us? They're having miserable nights, I know it for sure. But hold out, my good friends, and put up with it a little longer. There's an oracle that we'll win, as long as we don't fall out among ourselves. Here's the oracle.

FIRST WOMAN 769 Tell us what it says.

LYSISTRATA Quiet, then. "But when the swallows huddle together in one place, fleeing the hoopoes, and keep away from the cocks, there shall be an end of troubles, and what is above shall be put below by Zeus who thunders on high—"

FIRST WOMAN 773 Are we going to be lying on top?

LYSISTRATA 774 "But if the swallows quarrel and fly away on their wings out of the holy temple, no bird at all shall ever again be thought more degenerate."

FIRST WOMAN 777 By Zeus, that's a clear oracle.

LYSISTRATA By all the gods, let's not give up because we're suffering. Let's go inside. It would be a disgrace, my dearest friends, to betray this oracle.

50 The Amphidromia: the ceremony a few days after a birth when the baby was carried around the hearth and received into the family.
51 A sacred snake was believed to live on the Acropolis as its guardian.

FIRST LYRIC SCENE

The choruses trade tales of Melanion, who hated women, and Timon, who hated men.

CHORUS OF OLD MEN

781 I want to tell you a story
that I heard once,
when I was still a boy.
There was once a young man called Melanion,
who ran away from marriage into the wilderness
and lived in the mountains.
And he hunted hares
with nets he wove himself,
and he had a dog,
and never came back home again, he hated it so much.
That's how much he loathed women,
and we loathe them just as much
as Melanion did, we sensible men.[52]

OLD MAN 797 Old woman, I want to kiss you—

WOMAN 798 Then you won't need an onion to make you cry.

OLD MAN 799 —and lift my leg and kick you.

WOMAN 800 That's a thick bush you've got there.

CHORUS OF OLD MEN

801 Well, Myronides too was
rough down there, and black-assed
to all his enemies,
and so was Phormio.[53]

52 Melanion: a mythical huntsman, usually known as the man who won Atalanta; here he is made into a woman-hater.

53 Myronides and Phormio: famous Athenian generals of earlier days. A hairy, "black" backside was a sign of manly toughness.

CHORUS OF OLD WOMEN

I want to tell you a story too,
to answer your Melanion.
There was a certain Timon, a restless drifter,
his face fenced in with thorns no one could get through,
an offshoot of the Furies.
Well, this Timon
...
went away out of hatred,
heaping curses on wicked men.
That's how he hated you in return,
you wicked men, forever,
but to women he was the dearest of friends.[54]

WOMAN Want me to smack you in the jaw?

OLD MAN No way! I'm terrified.

WOMAN Then shall I give you a kick?

OLD MAN You'll flash your man-sack.

CHORUS OF OLD WOMEN

But all the same you wouldn't see it,
old woman though I am,
all shaggy: no, it's been singed bare
with the lamp.[55]

SECOND LYRIC SCENE

Myrrhine teases her desperate husband Cinesias and leaves him unsatisfied; an aching Spartan herald arrives.

LYSISTRATA Hey! Hey! Women, come over here to me, quick!

WOMAN What is it? Tell me, what's all the shouting about?

LYSISTRATA A man! I see a man coming, out of his mind, in the grip of Aphrodite's rites. Lady who rules Cyprus and Cythera

54 Timon: a famous Athenian misanthrope of the fifth century BC.
55 Women removed their pubic hair by singeing it with a lamp.

and Paphos, keep going straight and upright along the road you're on![56]

WOMAN 835 Where is he, whoever he is?

LYSISTRATA Over by the shrine of Chloe.[57]

WOMAN 836 Oh, by Zeus, there he is! Who on earth is he?

LYSISTRATA 837 Take a look. Does any of you know him?

MYRRHINE By Zeus, I do. It's my husband, Cinesias.[58]

LYSISTRATA 839 Then it's your job now to roast him and turn him on the spit, lead him on, love him and not love him, and give him everything except what the cup knows about.[59]

MYRRHINE 842 Don't worry, I'll do it.

LYSISTRATA And I'll stay right here and help you lead him on, and help you roast him. Now, the rest of you, off you go.

CINESIAS 845 Oh, I'm miserable! These spasms have got hold of me, and this stiffness, like I'm being twisted on the rack.

LYSISTRATA 847 Who's that standing inside the guard line?

CINESIAS Me.

LYSISTRATA 848 A man?

CINESIAS Very much a man.

LYSISTRATA Then get out of the way!

CINESIAS 849 And who are you, to throw me out?

LYSISTRATA The day watch.

CINESIAS 850 For the gods' sake, then, call Myrrhine out here for me.

LYSISTRATA 851 Oh, so I'm to call Myrrhine for you? And who are you?

---

56 Cyprus, Cythera and Paphos were Aphrodite's chief cult centers. "Straight and upright" (*orthos*) is also the Greek for "erect."
57 Demeter Chloe ("the Green") had a shrine on the slope below the Acropolis.
58 Cinesias' name suggests *kinein*, Greek slang for "screw."
59 The women swore their oath to refuse their husbands over a cup of wine.

CINESIAS 852 Her husband, Cinesias, from Paeonidae.[60]

LYSISTRATA 853 Oh, hello, darling! Your name's famous around here, believe me, everybody knows it. Your name's always on your wife's lips. If she picks up an egg or an apple, she says, "This one's for Cinesias."

CINESIAS 857 Oh, by the gods!

LYSISTRATA 858 Yes, by Aphrodite. And if the talk ever turns to men, your wife says right away that the rest are rubbish next to Cinesias.

CINESIAS 861 Go on, then, call her.

LYSISTRATA And what's in it for me? Will you give me something?

CINESIAS 862 I will, by Zeus, if you want it. I've got this here. Whatever I've got, it's yours.

LYSISTRATA 864 All right, I'll go down and call her for you.

CINESIAS Quick, then, really quick! Because I've had no joy in life since she walked out of the house. I hate going home, everything there seems empty, and I get no pleasure out of my food when I eat. I've got a hard-on, you see.

MYRRHINE 870 I love him, I love him! But he doesn't want my love. Don't call me out to him.

CINESIAS 872 Myrrhine, my sweetest little Myrrhinikins, why are you doing this? Come down here.

MYRRHINE 873 No, by Zeus, I'm not coming down there.

CINESIAS 874 I'm calling you, and you won't come down, Myrrhine?

MYRRHINE 875 You're calling me out, but you don't need anything.

CINESIAS 876 Me, not need anything? I'm being ground to pieces!

MYRRHINE 877 I'm leaving.

60 Paeonidae was a real Athenian deme, but the name also suggests *paiein*, "bang."

CINESIAS No, don't! At least listen to the baby. You there, won't you call your mommy?

BABY [879] Mommy, mommy, mommy!

CINESIAS [880] What's wrong with you? Don't you even feel sorry for the baby? Six days now, no bath, no breast.

MYRRHINE [882] Of course I feel sorry for him. But his father doesn't care about him.

CINESIAS [883] Come down, you crazy woman, for the baby's sake.

MYRRHINE [884] Oh, what it is to be a mother! I'll have to go down. What else can I do?

CINESIAS [885] She looks so much younger to me, and her eyes look softer. And the way she's difficult with me and plays proud, that's exactly what's grinding me down with desire.

MYRRHINE [889] You sweetest little baby, with such a bad father, come here, let Mommy kiss you, sweetest.

CINESIAS [891] Why are you doing this, you wicked woman, listening to the other women? You're making me miserable, and you're hurting yourself too.

MYRRHINE [893] Keep your hands off me.

CINESIAS [894] And our things at home, yours and mine, you're letting them go to ruin.

MYRRHINE [895] I don't much care about them.

CINESIAS [896] You don't much care that the chickens are making off with your weaving?

MYRRHINE [897] Not much, by Zeus.

CINESIAS [898] And Aphrodite's rites have gone uncelebrated by you all this time. Won't you come back home?

MYRRHINE [900] No, by Zeus, I won't, not unless you men make peace and stop the war.

CINESIAS [901] Well, then, if that's what's decided, we'll do that too.

MYRRHINE [902] Well, then, if that's what's decided, I'll come back home too. For now I've sworn not to.

CINESIAS [904] Then at least lie down with me. It's been so long.

MYRRHINE [905] No. And yet I won't tell you I don't love you.

CINESIAS [906] You love me? Then why won't you lie down, Myrrhy?

MYRRHINE [907] You ridiculous man, in front of the baby?

CINESIAS [908] No, by Zeus, not that. Manes, take this one home. There you go, the baby's out of the way. And you still won't lie down.

MYRRHINE [910] But where, poor me, could anyone do it?

CINESIAS [911] Where? Pan's grotto. Perfect.

MYRRHINE [912] And how could I go back up to the Acropolis pure?

CINESIAS [913] Easiest thing in the world: wash in the Clepsydra spring.

MYRRHINE [914] And then, poor me, I'd be breaking the oath I swore?

CINESIAS [915] Let that fall on my head. Don't you worry about the oath.

MYRRHINE [916] All right, let me fetch us a little bed.

CINESIAS No need. The ground's good enough for us.

MYRRHINE [917] By Apollo, I'm not laying you down on the ground, not even you, the way you are.

CINESIAS [919] My wife loves me, that's plain as day.

MYRRHINE [920] There, lie down, will you, and I'll get undressed. Oh, what's-it, I have to bring out a mat.

CINESIAS [922] What mat? Not for me!

MYRRHINE Yes, by Artemis. It's disgraceful on the bare straps.

CINESIAS [923] Then give me a kiss.

MYRRHINE [924] There.

CINESIAS Oooh! Hurry back, really fast!

MYRRHINE [925] Here's the mat. Lie down, I'm getting undressed. Oh, what's-it, you haven't got a pillow.

CINESIAS [927] But I don't even want one!

MYRRHINE Well, by Zeus, I do.

CINESIAS [928] This dick of mine is getting the Heracles treatment at dinner.[61]

MYRRHINE [929] Up you get, jump up.

CINESIAS Now I've got everything.

MYRRHINE [930] Absolutely everything.

CINESIAS Come here, then, my treasure.

MYRRHINE [931] I'm undoing my breastband now. Remember: don't you cheat me over the peace.

CINESIAS [933] By Zeus, may I drop dead if I do.

MYRRHINE You haven't got a blanket.

CINESIAS [934] No, by Zeus, and I don't want one. I want to fuck!

MYRRHINE [935] Don't worry, you will. I'll be right back.

CINESIAS [936] This woman's going to kill me with her bedding.

MYRRHINE [937] Lift yourself up.

CINESIAS Oh, this is up already.

MYRRHINE [938] Do you want me to put some perfume on you?

CINESIAS By Apollo, not on me!

MYRRHINE [939] Yes, by Aphrodite, whether you like it or not.

CINESIAS [940] Lord Zeus, let the perfume spill!

MYRRHINE [941] Hold out your hand, then, take some and rub it on.

---

61 Heracles, the glutton of comedy, was a stock figure kept waiting for a meal that never arrives.

CINESIAS 942 By Apollo, this perfume's not nice at all. All it's good for is stalling, and it doesn't smell of the marriage bed.

MYRRHINE 944 Oh dear, I brought the Rhodian perfume!

CINESIAS 945 It's fine! Leave it, you crazy woman.

MYRRHINE Don't talk nonsense.

CINESIAS 946 Damn the man who first cooked up perfume!

MYRRHINE 947 Take this flask.

CINESIAS I've got another one right here. Just lie down, you awful woman, and don't bring me anything more.

MYRRHINE 949 I'll do that, by Artemis. There, I'm taking off my shoes. But, darling, make sure you vote for a peace treaty.

CINESIAS 951 I'll think about it. The woman's ruined me, wrecked me, and on top of everything else she's skinned me raw and gone off!

954 Oh no, what will I do? Who can I fuck,
now the loveliest of them all has cheated me?
How will I raise this little one?
Where's Foxdog?
Hire me a wet nurse![62]

CHORUS OF OLD MEN

959 You're in terrible trouble, you poor wretch,
tormented in your soul, deceived.
I pity you too, alas!
What kidneys could hold out,
what soul, what balls,
what loins, what ass,
stretched to the limit
with no fucking in the mornings?

CINESIAS 967 Zeus, these terrible cramps!

CHORUS OF OLD MEN 968 That's what she's done to you now, / that utterly loathsome, utterly disgusting woman.

62 "Foxdog" was the nickname of Philostratus, a pimp.

CINESIAS [970] No, by Zeus, she's dear and utterly sweet.

CHORUS OF OLD MEN [971] Sweet? She's vile, vile!

CINESIAS

[972] Yes, vile she is, Zeus, Zeus!
If only you'd take her like a heap of grain
in a great whirlwind and hurricane,
twist her round and roll her up,
carry her off, then let her drop,
and down she'd come to earth again,
and suddenly
land right astride my hard-on!

SPARTAN HERALD [980] Where is the Athenians' council of elders? Or the Prytanes? I have news to tell.[63]

CINESIAS [982] And what are you, a human being or a Conisalus?[64]

SPARTAN HERALD [983] I am a herald, young man, by the Twin Gods. I come from Sparta about a peace.

CINESIAS [985] So that's why you've come with a spear tucked under your arm?

SPARTAN HERALD [986] No, by Zeus. Not me.

CINESIAS Why are you turning away? Why are you holding your cloak out in front? Did you get a swollen groin from the journey?

SPARTAN HERALD [988] The man's gone senile, by Castor.

CINESIAS [989] But you've got a hard-on, you scoundrel!

SPARTAN HERALD [990] No, by Zeus. Not me. Stop your babbling.

CINESIAS [991] Then what's this you've got?

SPARTAN HERALD A Spartan message-staff.[65]

---

63 The herald uses the Spartan word for a council of elders; the Prytanes were the standing committee of the Athenian Council.
64 Conisalus was a phallic spirit worshipped at Athens.
65 Spartan dispatches were written on a strip wound around a staff (*skytalē*) and could only be read on a matching staff.

CINESIAS [992] Sure, if this here is a Spartan message-staff too. But tell me the truth, I know what's what. How are things with you people in Sparta?

SPARTAN HERALD [995] All Sparta stands up stiff, and the allies, every one, have hard-ons. We need Pellene.[66]

CINESIAS [997] And where did this curse come down on you from? From Pan?

SPARTAN HERALD [998] No. Lampito started it, I reckon. Then the rest of the women all over Sparta, all together, as if from one starting gate, drove their husbands away from their pussies.

CINESIAS [1002] So how are you holding up?

SPARTAN HERALD Badly. We walk bent double through the city, like men carrying lamps. The women won't let us touch so much as their myrtle till we all, with one voice, make a peace treaty for Greece.

CINESIAS [1007] The women have hatched this conspiracy everywhere, I see that now. Well, as fast as you can, tell them back home to send ambassadors here with full powers to make peace. And I'll tell the Council here to choose ambassadors of our own. I'll show them this cock of mine.

SPARTAN HERALD [1013] I fly. Your words are best in every way.

SECOND CHORAL SONG

The old women make up with the old men, and the two choruses join together.

CHORUS OF OLD MEN [1014] There's no beast harder to fight than a woman, no, not fire either. No leopard is so shameless.

CHORUS OF OLD WOMEN [1016] You understand that, and still you go to war with me, you rogue, when you could have me as a friend you can count on?

66 Pellene was a city in Achaea, but the name also seems to suggest a woman, perhaps a well-known courtesan.

CHORUS OF OLD MEN [1018] Let me tell you, I will never stop hating women.

CHORUS OF OLD WOMEN [1019] Whenever you like, then. But for now I won't let you stand there naked like that. I can see what a laughingstock you are. Here, I'll come over and put your tunic on you.

CHORUS OF OLD MEN [1022] Well, by Zeus, that's no bad thing you've done. It was a bad temper that made me strip it off back then.

CHORUS OF OLD WOMEN [1024] For one thing, now you look like a man, and for another, you're no longer a laughingstock. And if you hadn't been so nasty to me, I'd have taken hold of this little beast that's in your eye right now and pulled it out.

CHORUS OF OLD MEN [1027] So that's what's been grinding me down! Here's my ring. Dig it out, take it out and show it to me. By Zeus, it's been biting my eye for ages.

CHORUS OF OLD WOMEN [1030] All right, I'll do it, even though you were born a crabby old man. Zeus! What a monster of a gnat you've got in there! Do you see it? Isn't this a gnat from Tricorythus?[67]

CHORUS OF OLD MEN [1033] By Zeus, you've done me a favor! It's been digging wells in me for ages. Now it's out, the tears are just pouring down.

CHORUS OF OLD WOMEN [1035] I'll wipe you dry, even though you're a thorough rogue, and give you a kiss.

CHORUS OF OLD MEN [1036] Don't kiss me!

CHORUS OF OLD WOMEN Whether you like it or not.

CHORUS OF OLD MEN [1037] Damn you all! You're born flatterers. That old saying gets it exactly right: "Can't live with the pests, can't live without the pests." But now I'm making a truce with you, and from here on I won't do you any harm and won't take

67 Tricorythus was a marshy district of Attica, famous for its gnats.

any from you either. Come on, let's form up together and start our song.

THIRD CHORAL SONG

The united chorus sings; Lysistrata scolds the aching Spartan and Athenian envoys into making peace.

CHORUS

We're not getting ready, gentlemen,
to say anything bad
about a single citizen, not one thing.
Quite the opposite: we'll say and do only good,
since the troubles we have already are plenty.
So let every man and woman tell us
if anyone needs a little cash,
two minas, say, or three:
we've got plenty at home,
and we've got purses.
And if peace ever comes,
whoever borrows from us now
won't have to pay back
what he got.

1058 We're about to entertain some guests
from Carystus,
fine, upstanding gentlemen.
There's still some soup, and I had a little pig,
and I've sacrificed it, so you'll eat meat that's tender and
good.
So come to my place today, but early,
once you've had your baths,
you and your children; then walk right in,
don't ask anybody,
just march straight ahead
as if you were going home,
bold as you please, because
the door will be locked.[68]

1072 And look, here come the envoys from Sparta, trailing their beards, with what looks like a pig crate strapped around their thighs.[69]

1074 Men of Sparta, first of all, welcome. Then tell us how you're doing, coming here.

SPARTAN 1076 Why waste many words on you? You can see how we are doing.

CHORUS 1078 Whoa! This calamity is stretched terribly tight. It looks like the inflammation is getting worse.

SPARTAN 1080 Past words. What can a man say? Let somebody come, any way he likes, and make peace for us.

CHORUS 1082 And look, I see our own native sons too, holding their cloaks out from their bellies like wrestlers. So this disease looks like some kind of athlete's complaint.

ATHENIAN 1086 Who can tell us where Lysistrata is? Because we men here are... well, like this.

---

68 Carystus, on Euboea, was an ally of Athens; its men had a reputation for lustiness.

69 "Piglet" (*choiros*) was slang for a woman's genitals; the wicker crate hides the envoys' erections.

CHORUS 1088 This one's singing in harmony with that one's disease. Do you get a cramp around dawn?

ATHENIAN 1090 No, by Zeus, it's this, doing this, that's wrecked us. If somebody doesn't reconcile us quick, there's no way around it: we'll be fucking Cleisthenes.

CHORUS 1093 If you've got any sense, you'll put your cloaks back on, so none of the Herm-choppers sees you.[70]

ATHENIAN 1095 By Zeus, that's a good point.

SPARTAN By the Twin Gods, every way. Come, let us put our clothes on.

ATHENIAN 1097 Hello there, Spartans! We've been through something shameful.

SPARTAN 1098 Polycharidas, my friend, it would have gone hard with us again if those men had seen us all exposed.

ATHENIAN 1100 Come on, Spartans, we need to go through it all point by point. What have you come here for?

SPARTAN 1101 As envoys, about peace.

ATHENIAN 1102 Well said. Same with us. Then why don't we call Lysistrata? She's the only one who could reconcile us.

SPARTAN 1105 By the Twin Gods, yes. And Lysistratus too, if you like.[71]

ATHENIAN 1106 But it looks like we don't need to call her. She heard us, and here she is coming out herself.

CHORUS 1108 Hail, manliest of all women! Now you have to be fierce and soft, high and low, stern and gentle, and wise in every way. Because the leading men of Greece, caught by your charm, have given way to you and handed all their grievances over to you together.

---

70 In 415 BC vandals mutilated the Herms, pillars with an erect phallus that stood all over Athens.

71 Lysistratus was an Athenian often mocked in comedy; in his state, the Spartan will take a man or a woman.

LYSISTRATA 1112 Well, it's not a hard job, if you catch them while they're aching for it and not trying each other out. I'll soon know. Where's Reconciliation? Take the Spartans first and bring them over here, and not with a rough hand or a high-handed one, or clumsily, the way our husbands used to do it, but the way women do it, nice and friendly. If he won't give you his hand, lead him by the prick. Now you go and bring these Athenians as well; take hold of whatever they offer you and bring them. Men of Sparta, stand here next to me, and you over here, and listen to what I have to say. 1124 I'm a woman, but I have a mind. I'm not badly off for judgment of my own, and I've heard plenty of talk from my father and older men, so I'm not badly educated. Now that I've got you, I want to give you both the scolding you deserve. You sprinkle altars from one basin of holy water, like kinsmen, at Olympia, at Thermopylae, at Delphi, and how many other places could I name, if I had to go on? And yet, with your foreign enemies right there with their army, it's Greek men and Greek cities you're destroying. That's my first point, thrust all the way home.[72]

ATHENIAN 1136 And me, I'm dying here, with my cock peeled bare.

LYSISTRATA 1137 Next, Spartans, because I'm turning to you now: don't you remember how Pericleidas the Spartan once came here and sat at the altars as a suppliant of the Athenians, white as a sheet in his scarlet cloak, begging for an army? Messene was bearing down on you then, and the god was shaking the earth at the same time. And Cimon came with four thousand hoplites and saved all Sparta. That's how the Athenians treated you, and now you ravage the land of the people who did you good?[73]

ATHENIAN 1147 They're in the wrong, by Zeus, Lysistrata!

72 Thermopylae ("Pylae") was the meeting place of the Amphictyonic League, which ran the shrine at Delphi.

73 After the earthquake of 464 BC Sparta's helots in Messenia revolted, and Athens sent Cimon with troops to help.

SPARTAN 1148 We are in the wrong. But that ass is beautiful past words.

LYSISTRATA 1149 And do you think I'm letting you Athenians off? Don't you remember how the Spartans, in their turn, when you were wearing slaves' sheepskins, came in arms and killed many Thessalian men and many of Hippias' friends and allies? They were the only ones fighting at your side that day, and they set you free, and in place of the sheepskin they dressed your people in the cloak of free men again.[74]

SPARTAN 1157 I never saw a finer woman.

ATHENIAN 1158 And I never saw a lovelier pussy.

LYSISTRATA 1159 Then with so many good turns between you, why are you fighting? Why don't you stop this wickedness? Why haven't you made peace? Come on, what's in the way?

SPARTAN 1162 We are willing, if they are willing to give us back this round thing here.

LYSISTRATA 1163 Which one, my friend?

SPARTAN Pylos. We have wanted it a long time, and been feeling for it.[75]

ATHENIAN 1165 By Poseidon, that you won't get!

LYSISTRATA 1166 Let them have it, my good man.

ATHENIAN Then what will we have left to screw?

LYSISTRATA 1167 Ask for some other spot in exchange.

ATHENIAN 1168 Well then, hand over this, er, thingummy to us: first of all Echinus, and the Malian Gulf around the back, and the Legs of Megara.[76]

SPARTAN 1171 No, by the Twin Gods, not all of it, my dear fellow.

---

74 In 510 BC a Spartan army helped drive the tyrant Hippias and his Thessalian allies out of Athens.

75 Athens had held Pylos since 425 BC; the name suggests *pylē*, "gate," and the Spartan is pointing at Reconciliation's behind.

76 Echinus ("sea urchin") suggests pubic hair, the "gulf" (*kolpos*) the vagina, and the Megarian "Legs" were the long walls running down to Megara's port.

LYSISTRATA [1172] Let it go. Don't quarrel over a pair of legs.

ATHENIAN [1173] Right now I want to strip naked and start plowing.

SPARTAN [1174] And I, by the Twin Gods, want to spread manure first.

LYSISTRATA [1175] Once you've made peace, you'll do just that. But if you've decided to do this, talk it over, and go and share it with your allies.

ATHENIAN [1178] What allies, my friend? We're hard. Won't all our allies decide the same as us two: to fuck?

SPARTAN [1180] Ours will, by the Twin Gods.

ATHENIAN [1181] Yes, and by Zeus, so will the Carystians.

LYSISTRATA [1182] Well said. Now, then, purify yourselves, so that we women can entertain you on the Acropolis with what we had in our hampers. There you'll swear oaths and give your pledges to each other. And then each of you will take his own wife and go home.

ATHENIAN [1187] Let's go, quickly.

SPARTAN [1188] Lead where you will.

ATHENIAN By Zeus, lead on, fast as you can.

CHORUS

1189 Embroidered blankets,
and fine cloaks and gowns,
and gold jewelry, all I have:
I don't begrudge anyone; I offer it all, to take
to your sons, and when your daughter carries the basket.
I tell you all, help yourselves
to my things in there now;
nothing's sealed up so tight
that you can't
pull the seals right off
and carry away whatever's inside.
But you won't see a thing when you look, unless
one of you
has sharper eyes than I do.

1203 And if any of you has no grain,
but feeds slaves and
lots of little children,
you can have some wheat from me; it's only fine-ground,
true,
but a loaf from a quart of it is a strapping lad to look at.
So any of you poor folk who want some, come
to my place with sacks and
bags, and you'll get
wheat: my Manes
will pour it in for you.
But I'm warning you now:
don't come near
my door.
Beware of the dog.

EXODOS

After a feast, Athenians and Spartans celebrate the peace with songs and dances.

FIRST ATHENIAN 1216 Open the door! Won't you get out of the way? What are you sitting there for? Do you want me to burn you up with this torch? That's a cheap old routine. I won't do it. Still, if I really have to, to please you, we'll go through with it.

SECOND ATHENIAN 1221 And we'll go through with it alongside you.

FIRST ATHENIAN 1222 Get out of here! You'll be howling over your hair for a long time. Get out, so the Spartans can come out from inside in peace after their feast.

SECOND ATHENIAN 1225 I've never seen a party like it. The Spartans really were charming. And we were the cleverest company you ever saw, over the wine.

FIRST ATHENIAN 1228 Quite right, because sober we're not in our right minds. If I can talk the Athenians into it, we'll always go on our embassies drunk, wherever we go. As it is, when we go to Sparta sober, right away we're looking for some trouble to stir up. So we don't listen to what they do say, and we read things into what they don't say, and we don't report the same story about the same things. But this time everything went down well. So if somebody sang the Telamon song when he should have sung the Cleitagora, we'd have cheered him and sworn to it falsely as well. Hey, those people are coming back to the same spot again! Go to hell, you whipping-posts![77]

SECOND ATHENIAN 1241 By Zeus, yes, they're already coming out.

77 Songs about Telamon and Cleitagora were well-known drinking songs; at a party each guest had to cap the last.

SPARTAN [1242] Polycharidas, my friend, take up the pipes, so I can do the two-step and sing a fine song for the Athenians and for us together.

ATHENIAN [1245] Yes, by the gods, take up the pipes, because I love watching you people dance.

CHORUS OF SPARTANS

[1247] Rouse, Memory,
for these young men
my Muse, who knows
us and the Athenians:
how at Artemisium they
charged like gods
against the ships and beat the Medes,
and Leonidas led us
like boars, I think,
whetting their tusks;
thick foam bloomed around their jaws,
thick foam ran down their legs as well.
For the men were no fewer
than the sands, those Persians.
Wild huntress, slayer of beasts,
come here, maiden goddess,
to the truce,
to keep us together a long time.[78]

[1266] Now let friendship flow freely forever
from our pact,
and let us stop being wily foxes.
Oh, come here, come here,
huntress maiden!

ATHENIAN [1273] Come now, since everything else has turned out well, Spartans, take these women home, and you, take these. Let husband stand by wife and wife by husband, and then, after

78 In 480 BC the Athenian fleet fought the Persians at Artemisium while Leonidas and his Spartans held the pass at Thermopylae.

dancing to the gods for our good fortune, let's take care never to go wrong again.

CHORUS OF ATHENIANS

Bring on the dance, bring the Graces,
and call on Artemis,
and her twin, leader of the dance,
the Healer,
the kindly one; and the Nysian,
Bacchus, whose eyes blaze among the maenads,
and Zeus, aflame with fire, and
his queenly, blessed wife;
and then the spirits, whom we'll call on
as witnesses who won't forget
the gentle-hearted Peace and Quiet
that the goddess Aphrodite made.
Alalai! Iē paiōn!
Leap high, iai,
as for a victory, iai!
Euoi, euoi, euai, euai![79]

ATHENIAN Now you, bring out a new Muse to follow the new one.

79 The Healer (Iēios) is Apollo, Artemis' twin; the Nysian is Dionysus. The cries at the end are ritual shouts of triumph and Bacchic joy.

CHORUS OF SPARTANS

Leave lovely Taygetus once more,
Spartan Muse, and come, glorify for us,
as is fitting, the god at Amyclae
and Athena of the Bronze House,
and the noble sons of Tyndareus,
who play beside the Eurotas.
Come on, step high,
oh, come, leap lightly,
so we may sing of Sparta,
who loves the gods' dances
and the stamp of feet,
where like fillies the girls
beside the Eurotas
leap, with quick feet
raising the dust,
and their hair tosses like Bacchants'
waving the thyrsus at play.
Leda's daughter leads them,
the pure and lovely leader of the dance.
Come, bind up your hair with your hand, and leap with your feet
like a deer; and clap to help the dance along.[80]

And sing again of the goddess, the mightiest, the Goddess of the Bronze House, who wins every fight!

80 Apollo had a great shrine at Amyclae, and Athena of the Bronze House stood on the Spartan acropolis; Tyndareus' sons are Castor and Pollux, and Leda's daughter is Helen.