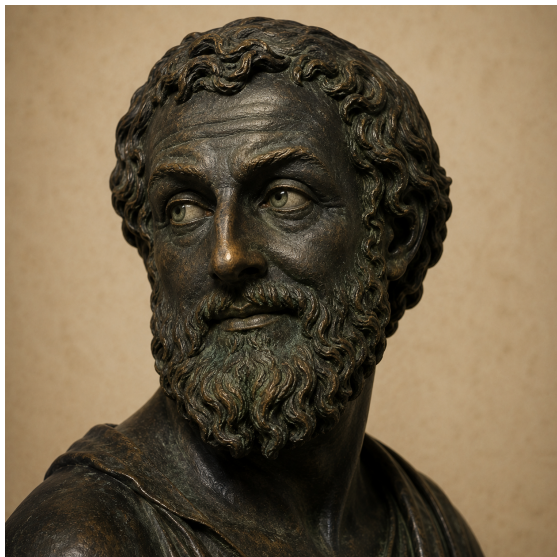




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Aristophanes

The Complete Comedies

THE ELEVEN SURVIVING COMEDIES

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SCOPE AND CONVENTIONS

The eleven complete surviving plays of Attic Old Comedy, from Acharnians (425) to Wealth (388), form its only continuous corpus.

Canonical line numbers are used. Square brackets mark a suspected interpolation, and a dagger an unresolved corruption. Chorou is the transmitted marker of an unrecorded choral interlude. Editorial labels identify dramatic parts. Greek is transliterated and translated. Sexual and scatological language is neither euphemised nor needlessly intensified.

Two plays require immediate qualification. The surviving Clouds is an incomplete, apparently unperformed revision of the play produced in 423. Assemblywomen and Wealth already display features of Middle Comedy: no parabasis and a reduced chorus.

ARISTOPHANES' WORLD

*An ancient tradition says that, when *Knights* was produced in 424, mask-makers feared to model Cleon and Aristophanes played him with wine-lees on his face (*Knights* 230–33). The anecdote is probably embroidered, but it usefully evokes a theatre poised between licensed insult and fear of those it attacked.*

*Aristophanes was probably born about 446, first produced a play in 427, and last produced one about 388; he died in 386 or later. War, peace, displacement from the countryside, and profiteering pervade his comedy, but contemporary events do not turn the plays into topical pamphlets. Their political horizon includes the Periclean empire, the Peloponnesian War of 431–404, the plague (*Thucydides* 2.47–54), Pericles' death in 429, and the ascendancy of demagogues. Cleon, a tanner and popular leader (*Thucydides* 3.36), is its most conspicuous target. Male citizens participated directly in Assembly, courts, offices, and military service; women, slaves, and metics did not.*

*Comedy was a publicly funded civic and religious competition for Dionysus. Unlike tragedy, which commonly works behind a mythic veil, it names living people and institutions. Its extraordinary licence was a festival convention, not unrestricted political immunity. Babylonians (426) apparently mocked allies and magistrates before foreign visitors, and Cleon prosecuted its producer. An alleged subsequent ban on naming people in comedy remains uncertain: Dover, *Aristophanic Comedy*, warns against firm conclusions. The remarkable fact of named satire remains clear.*

The principal chronology is as follows: Sphacteria in 425; the deaths of Cleon and Brasidas in 422; the Peace of Nicias in 421, soon compromised; the Sicilian expedition of 415–413 (Thucydides 7.87); the oligarchic Four Hundred in 411; defeat in 405, surrender in 404, the Thirty, and democratic restoration in 403. The plays of 411 resist firm political alignment. After the war, attention shifts toward poverty, distribution, and gentler personal satire.

Biography is conjectural. The anonymous Life, the Suda, ancient hypotheses, scholia, and the self-presentation of parabases are imperfect evidence. Aristophanes was the son of Philippus of Cydathenaeum. Claims that he came from Aegina or Rhodes are likely routine abuse by rivals; he was probably an Athenian of a comfortable family. His early plays were produced under Callistratus and later under Philonides, now more plausibly understood as producers than mere fronts. Whether this arrangement arose from youth or calculation cannot be determined. Aristophanes openly claimed Knights in 424, and his son Araros later produced the lost Cocalus and Aeolosicon.

The poet's parabases advertise dignified novelty and courage against the powerful (Clouds 518–62; Peace 734–74; Acharnians 500). Such claims are comic advocacy, not transparent autobiography. Dover finds no coherent political system. Broad preferences remain visible, including peace, country life, plain pleasures, suspicion of novelty and oratory, and free speech, but they do not make Aristophanes an editorialist.

The City Dionysia, held in spring under the archon eponymous, had an international character; the winter Lenaea, under the archon basileus, was largely Athenian. The latter especially fostered licence and produced Acharnians, Knights, Wasps, and

Frogs. Choregia required wealthy citizens to meet the costs of a chorus, while didascaliae help establish dates. A comic chorus numbered twenty-four, rather than tragedy's twelve or fifteen. Masks, a padded somation, and usually a large leather phallus were normal. Komoidia links song with the festive komos. In Poetics 4–5 Aristotle relates comedy to phallic song and to the harmlessly ugly or ridiculous, though he wrote a century later and admits uncertainty about its beginnings.

Cratinus and Eupolis were major rivals. Cratinus defeated Aristophanes in 423 with *Wine-Flask*, after being mocked in *Knights*; Eupolis was both rival and alleged borrower. The eleven surviving plays are a chance remnant, not the whole art.

ART AND TRANSMISSION

A common comic design begins with a realistic problem and an impossible project, followed by a hostile parodos, a formal agon, a parabasis, episodes that expel intruders, and an exodos or komos of feasting, marriage, fertility, and recovered life. An unbearable real condition receives an impossible but rigorously pursued answer: private peace, a bird city, a sex strike, or descent to Hades. In Whitman's formulation, Aristophanes and the Comic Hero (1964), the heroic little man compels reality to yield.

In the parabasis the chorus sheds its fictional role to speak for the poet, offering self-praise, rivalry, and civic advice. Its form includes an opening, a breathless anapaestic pnigos, and symmetrical lyric sections and speeches. It is unusually direct authorial and civic theatre, but not unmediated confession. Its disappearance is central to the genre's transformation.

*Comic weapons include named attack, body and obscenity as a controlled rhetoric of fertility (Henderson, *The Maculate Muse*, 1975), tragic parody, and verbal invention ranging from high lyric to compounds and sound effects. Tragic parody depends on recognition and also acts as early literary criticism. The bird songs and cosmogony, discussed by Dunbar in *Birds* (1995), the Clouds parodos, and the Eleusinian hymn of Frogs demonstrate an equally serious lyric range. Political readings need restraint: comedy seeks laughter and victory, and caricature is not testimony. Peace and old Athens recur without becoming a system; Plato's later use of Clouds against Socrates shows the danger.*

Post-war Middle Comedy brings change: the parabasis disappears, the chorus becomes less integrated with the action, and chorou markers often stand in for unrecorded interludes.

Of some forty ancient plays, eleven survive complete through a late Roman and Byzantine school selection. The Byzantine triad comprised Wealth, Clouds, and Frogs. Scholia preserve Alexandrian learning associated with Aristophanes of Byzantium and Aristarchus, together with Suda material. The mid-tenth-century Ravennas (R), the sole complete manuscript, is fundamental. Venetus (V), of the eleventh or twelfth century, preserves seven plays and valuable, partly independent scholia. Later manuscripts include those associated with Triclinius. Papyri both correct texts and preserve fragments of lost comedy.

TEXTUAL AND REFERENCE MATERIAL

The French translation is Eugène Talbot's Œuvres complètes d'Aristophane (Lemerre, 1897; public domain), lively and faithful though at times Victorianly reticent about obscenity. Proper names have been modernised from Talbot's Hellenised forms.

The Greek text is documentary rather than critical: F. W. Hall and W. M. Geldart, Aristophanis Comoediae (OCT, 1906–07), through Perseus TEI. Later divergences are not recorded.

Dates generally refer to production and are relatively secure from competition records. The sequence is: c.446, birth; 425, Acharnians; 424, Knights; 423, Clouds; 421, Peace; 414, Birds; 411, Lysistrata and Thesmophoriazusae; 405, Frogs; c.392, Assemblywomen; 388, Wealth; c.386, death.

SELECTED STUDIES

*Modern starting points include Wilson, *Aristophanis Fabulae* (OCT, 2007; with *Aristophanea*); Coulon and Van Daele's *Budé* (1923–30); Talbot; Sommerstein (1980–2002); Henderson's *Loeb*; Dover, *Aristophanic Comedy*; Dearden, *The Stage of Aristophanes*; de Romilly, *La comédie grecque*; Loraux and the Paris school; and the play-specific commentaries of Dunbar and Olson. Speaker attribution, corrupt passages, and obscure allusions remain recurrent problems: the transmitted text is a contested reconstruction.*

THE ACHARNIANS

Ἀχαρνῆς

Greek title. Ἀχαρνῆς (Acharnês).

Date. 425 BCE

Translation. Athenian Society prose (1912), public domain.

Greek text. Hall & Geldart (Oxford), after the play.

Weary of war, the farmer Dicaeopolis makes his own private peace with Sparta.

Dicaeopolis, whose name means “Just-City”, is a countryman displaced from his farm by the war. When Athens refuses peace, he concludes a private thirty-year truce with Sparta, sampling alternative truces as wines (131–32; 186–200). The spondee is both treaty and libation: peace is something to swallow.

The play won first prize at the Lenaia of 425, before Cratinus and Eupolis. It was Aristophanes’ third production and is the earliest complete comedy to survive. Though Callistratus receives the credit, the parabolic “I” identifies Aristophanes; the winter audience was largely Athenian.

The prologue (1–203) ridicules the empty Assembly, the Persian embassy and Pseudartabas, and Theorus with Thracian merce-

naries. Charcoal-burners attack as the chorus from 204; Dicaeopolis' basket-of-charcoal hostage (325–40) parodies Telephus. In the Euripidean scene (393–479), an ekkyklema reveals a rag-store. Dicaeopolis borrows Telephus' rags and his tragic manner of persuasion (440–41). His speech at 496–556 makes a deliberately bad-faith joke from prostitutes and the Megarian decree, beginning a sustained, partly affectionate quarrel with Euripides.

The parabasis (626–718) claims courage against Cleon. Later scenes include the Megarian who sells his daughters as piglets (729–835), the Boeotian and sycophant (860–958), the precise parallel between cooking and military preparation (1097–1142), and an ending that contrasts wounded Lamachus with the drunk, feast-winning Dicaeopolis (1190ff.; 1227ff.).

Dicaeopolis is a vir comicus: just, but selfish enough to deny peace to a ruined farmer (1018–36). Lamachus is an effective military foil, perhaps unfairly drawn given the general's later courage at Syracuse. The Acharnians, rural hoplites especially damaged by the war, move from rage to partial persuasion and finally envy of peace. An ancient hypothesis calls the play peace-making; it is not a programme. Sommerstein sees genuine anti-war longing rather than doctrine, while the private truce remains selfish. The play also asserts comic parrhesia after Cleon's prosecution over Babylonians (426; Acharnians 377–82), including the licence of onomasti komodein.

Masks, padded body, leather phallus, and the song to Phales (241–79) belong to its festive world. The Euripidean scene offers early evidence for the ekkyklema. The action shifts freely among Pnyx, countryside, and market, with direct address to the audience at 442. The play is vital, though not uncomplicated, evidence

for wartime Athens, its Assembly, embassies, demes, and market. It provided a pattern for Peace, Lysistrata, Plautus, and Molière, and preserves an invaluable glimpse of Euripides' live reception. Wilson's OCT and Olson (2002) provide the principal modern texts and commentary. Its final irony is that the private happiness it encloses cannot exist while the war continues.

CHARACTERS

DICAEOPOLIS

HERALD

AMPHITHEUS

AMBASSADORS

PSEUDARTABAS

THEORUS

WIFE OF DICAEOPOLIS

DAUGHTER OF DICAEOPOLIS

EURIPIDES

CEPHISOPHON, servant of Euripides

LAMACHUS

ATTENDANT OF LAMACHUS

A MEGARIAN

MAIDENS, daughters of the Megarian

A BOEOTIAN

NICARCHUS

A HUSBANDMAN

A BRIDESMAID

AN INFORMER

MESSENGERS

CHORUS OF ACHARNIAN ELDERS

IN THE COUNTRY

The Athenian Ecclesia on the Pnyx; afterwards Dicaeopolis' house

DICAEOPOLIS (*alone*). What cares have not gnawed at my heart and how few have been the pleasures in my life! Four, to be exact, while my troubles have been as countless as the grains of sand on the shore! Let me see of what value to me have been these few pleasures? Ah! I remember that I was delighted in soul when Cleon had to disgorge those five talents; I was in ecstasy and I love the Knights for this deed; 'it is an honour to Greece.' But the day when I was impatiently awaiting a piece by Aeschylus, what tragic despair it caused me when the herald called, "Theognis, introduce your Chorus!" Just imagine how this blow struck straight at my heart! On the other hand, what joy Dexitheus caused me at the musical competition, when he played a Boeotian melody on the lyre! But this year by contrast! Oh! what deadly torture to hear Chaeris perform the prelude in the Orthian mode!—Never, however, since I began to bathe, has the dust hurt my eyes as it does to-day. Still it is the day of assembly; all should be here at daybreak, and yet the Pnyx is still deserted. They are gossiping in the market-place, slipping hither and thither to avoid the vermilioned rope. The Prytanes even do not come; they will be late, but when they come they will push and fight each other for a seat in the front row. They will never trouble themselves with the question of peace. Oh! Athens! Athens! As for myself, I do not fail to come here before all the rest, and now, finding myself alone, I groan, yawn, stretch, break wind, and know not what to do; I make sketches in the dust, pull out my loose hairs, muse, think of my fields, long for peace, curse town life and regret my dear country

home, which never told me to 'buy fuel, vinegar or oil'; there the word 'buy,' which cuts me in two, was unknown; I harvested everything at will. Therefore I have come to the assembly fully prepared to bawl, interrupt and abuse the speakers, if they talk of aught but peace. But here come the Prytanes, and high time too, for it is midday! As I foretold, hah! is it not so? They are pushing and fighting for the front seats.

HERALD

Move on up, move on, move on, to get within the consecrated area.

AMPHITHEUS

Has anyone spoken yet?

HERALD

Who asks to speak?

AMPHITHEUS

I do.

HERALD

Your name?

AMPHITHEUS

Amphitheus.

HERALD

You are no man.

AMPHITHEUS

No! I am an immortal! Amphitheus was the son of Ceres and Triptolemus; of him was born Celeus. Celeus wedded Phaencreté, my grandmother, whose son was Lucinus, and, being born of him, I am an immortal; it is to me alone that the gods have entrusted the duty of treating with the Lacedaemonians. But, citizens, though I am immortal, I am dying of hunger; the Prytanes give me naught.

A PRYTANIS

Guards!

AMPHITHEUS

Oh, Triptolemus and Ceres, do ye thus forsake your own blood?

DICAEPOLIS

Prytanes, in expelling this citizen, you are offering an outrage to the Assembly. He only desired to secure peace for us and to sheathe the sword.

PRYTANIS

Sit down and keep silence!

DICAEPOLIS

No, by Apollo, will I not, unless you are going to discuss the question of peace.

HERALD

The ambassadors, who are returned from the Court of the King!

DICAEOPOLIS

Of what King? I am sick of all those fine birds, the peacock ambassadors and their swagger.

HERALD

Silence!

DICAEOPOLIS

Oh! oh! by Ecbatana, what assumption!

AN AMBASSADOR

During the archonship of Euthymenes, you sent us to the Great King on a salary of two drachmae per diem.

DICAEOPOLIS

Ah! those poor drachmae!

AMBASSADOR

We suffered horribly on the plains of the Caÿster, sleeping under a tent, stretched deliciously on fine chariots, half dead with weariness.

DICAEOPOLIS

And I was very much at ease, lying on the straw along the battlements!

AMBASSADOR

Everywhere we were well received and forced to drink delicious wine out of golden or crystal flagons....

DICAEPOLIS

Oh, city of Cranaus, thy ambassadors are laughing at thee!

AMBASSADOR

For great feeders and heavy drinkers are alone esteemed as men by the barbarians.

DICAEPOLIS

Just as here in Athens, we only esteem the most drunken debauchees.

AMBASSADOR

At the end of the fourth year we reached the King's Court, but he had left with his whole army to ease himself, and for the space of eight months he was thus easing himself in midst of the golden mountains.

DICAEPOLIS

And how long was he replacing his dress?

AMBASSADOR

The whole period of a full moon; after which he returned to his palace; then he entertained us and had us served with oxen roasted whole in an oven.

DICAEPOLIS

Who ever saw an oxen baked in an oven? What a lie!

AMBASSADOR

On my honour, he also had us served with a bird three times as large as Cleonymus, and called the Boaster.

DICAEOPOLIS

And do we give you two drachmae, that you should treat us to all this humbug?

AMBASSADOR

We are bringing to you, Pseudartabas, the King's Eye.

DICAEOPOLIS

I would a crow might pluck out thine with his beak, thou cursed ambassador!

HERALD

The King's Eye!

DICAEOPOLIS

Eh! Great gods! Friend, with thy great eye, round like the hole through which the oarsman passes his sweep, you have the air of a galley doubling a cape to gain the port.

AMBASSADOR

Come, Pseudartabas, give forth the message for the Athenians with which you were charged by the Great King.

PSEUDARTABAS

Jartaman exarx 'anapissonnai satra.

AMBASSADOR

Do you understand what he says?

DICAEOPOLIS

By Apollo, not I!

AMBASSADOR

He says, that the Great King will send you gold. Come, utter the word 'gold' louder and more distinctly.

DICAEPOLIS

Thou shalt not have gold, thou gaping-arsed Ionian.

DICAEPOLIS

Ah! may the gods forgive me, but that is clear enough.

AMBASSADOR

What does he say?

DICAEPOLIS

That the Ionians are debauchees and idiots, if they expect to receive gold from the barbarians.

AMBASSADOR

Not so, he speaks of medimni of gold.

DICAEPOLIS

What medimni? Thou art but a great braggart; but get your way, I will find out the truth by myself. Come now, answer me clearly, if you do not wish me to dye your skin red. Will the Great King send us gold? (*Pseudartabas makes a negative sign.*) Then our ambassadors are seeking to deceive us? (*Pseudartabas signs affirmatively.*) These fellows make signs like any Greek; I am sure that they are nothing but Athenians. Oh, ho! I recognize one of these eunuchs; it is Clisthenes, the son of Sibyrtius. Behold the effrontery of this shaven rump! How! great baboon, with such a beard do you seek to play the eunuch to us? And this other one? Is it not Straton?

HERALD

Silence! Let all be seated. The Senate invites the King's Eye to the Prytaneum.

DICAEOPOLIS

Is this not sufficient to drive one to hang oneself? Here I stand chilled to the bone, whilst the doors of the Prytaneum fly wide open to lodge such rascals. But I will do something great and bold. Where is Amphytheus? Come and speak with me.

AMPHITHEUS

Here I am.

DICAEOPOLIS

Take these eight drachmae and go and conclude a truce with the Lacedaemonians for me, my wife and my children; I leave you free, my dear citizens, to send out embassies and to stand gaping in the air.

HERALD

Bring in Theorus, who has returned from the Court of Sitalces.

THEORUS

I am here.

DICAEOPOLIS

Another humbug!

THEORUS

We should not have remained long in Thrace....

DICAEPOLIS

Forsooth, no, if you had not been well paid.

THEORUS

... If the country had not been covered with snow; the rivers were ice-bound at the time that Theognis brought out his tragedy here; during the whole of that time I was holding my own with Sitalces, cup in hand; and, in truth, he adored you to such a degree, that he wrote on the walls, "How beautiful are the Athenians!" His son, to whom we gave the freedom of the city, burned with desire to come here and eat chitterlings at the feast of the Apaturia; he prayed his father to come to the aid of his new country and Sitalces swore on his goblet that he would succour us with such a host that the Athenians would exclaim, "What a cloud of grasshoppers!"

DICAEPOLIS

May I die if I believe a word of what you tell us! Excepting the grasshoppers, there is not a grain of truth in it all!

THEORUS

And he has sent you the most warlike soldiers of all Thrace.

DICAEPOLIS

Now we shall begin to see clearly.

HERALD

Come hither, Thracians, whom Theorus brought.

DICAEOPOLIS

What plague have we here?

THEORUS

'Tis the host of the Odomanti.

DICAEOPOLIS

Of the Odomanti? Tell me what it means. Who has mutilated their tools like this?

THEORUS

If they are given a wage of two drachmae, they will put all Boeotia to fire and sword.

DICAEOPOLIS

Two drachmae to those circumcised hounds! Groan aloud, ye people of rowers, bulwark of Athens! Ah! great gods! I am undone; these Odomanti are robbing me of my garlic! Will you give me back my garlic?

THEORUS

Oh! wretched man! do not go near them; they have eaten garlic.

DICAEOPOLIS

Prytanes, will you let me be treated in this manner, in my own country and by barbarians? But I oppose the discussion of paying a wage to the Thracians; I announce an omen; I have just felt a drop of rain.

HERALD

Let the Thracians withdraw and return the day after tomorrow; the Prytanes declare the sitting at an end.

DICAEOPOLIS

Ye gods, what garlic I have lost! But here comes Amphitheus returned from Lacedaemon. Welcome, Amphitheus.

AMPHITHEUS

No, there is no welcome for me and I fly as fast as I can, for I am pursued by the Acharnians.

DICAEOPOLIS

Why, what has happened?

AMPHITHEUS

I was hurrying to bring your treaty of truce, but some old dotards from Acharnae got scent of the thing; they are veterans of Marathon, tough as oak or maple, of which they are made for sure-rough and ruthless. They all set to crying, "Wretch! you are the bearer of a treaty, and the enemy has only just cut our vines!" Meanwhile they were gathering stones in their cloaks, so I fled and they ran after me shouting.

DICAEOPOLIS

Let 'em shout as much as they please! But have you brought me a treaty?

AMPHITHEUS

Most certainly, here are three samples to select from, this one is five years old; take it and taste.

DICAEOPOLIS

Faugh!

AMPHITHEUS

Well?

DICAEOPOLIS

It does not please me; it smells of pitch and of the ships they are fitting out.

AMPHITHEUS

Here is another, ten years old; taste it.

DICAEOPOLIS

It smells strongly of the delegates, who go round the towns to chide the allies for their slowness.

AMPHITHEUS

This last is a truce of thirty years, both on sea and land.

DICAEOPOLIS

Oh! by Bacchus! what a bouquet! It has the aroma of nectar and ambrosia; this does not say to us, "Provision yourselves for three days." But it lisps the gentle numbers, "Go whither you will." I accept it, ratify it, drink it at one draught and consign the Acharnians to limbo. Freed from the war and its ills, I shall keep the Dionysia in the country.

AMPHITHEUS

And I shall run away, for I'm mortally afraid of the Acharnians.

CHORUS

This way all! Let us follow our man; we will demand him of everyone we meet; the public weal makes his seizure imperative. Ho, there! tell me which way the bearer of the truce has gone; he has escaped us, he has disappeared. Curse old age! When I was young, in the days when I followed Phayllus, running with a sack of coals on my back, this wretch would not have eluded my pursuit, let him be as swift as he will; but now my limbs are stiff; old Lacratides feels his legs are weighty and the traitor escapes me. No, no, let us follow him; old Acharnians like ourselves shall not be set at naught by a scoundrel, who has dared, great gods! to conclude a truce, when I wanted the war continued with double fury in order to avenge my ruined lands. No mercy for our foes until I have pierced their hearts like a sharp reed, so that they dare never again ravage my vineyards. Come, let us seek the rascal; let us look everywhere, carrying our stones in our hands; let us hunt him from place to place until we trap him; I could never, never tire of the delight of stoning him.

DICAEOPOLIS

Peace! profane men!

CHORUS

Silence all! Friends, do you hear the sacred formula? Here is he, whom we seek! This way, all! Get out of his way, surely he comes to offer an oblation.

DICAEOPOLIS

Peace, profane men! Let the basket-bearer come forward, and thou, Xanthias, hold the phallus well upright.

WIFE OF DICAEOPOLIS

Daughter, set down the basket and let us begin the sacrifice.

DAUGHTER OF DICAEOPOLIS

Mother, hand me the ladle, that I may spread the sauce on the cake.

DICAEOPOLIS

It is well! Oh, mighty Bacchus, it is with joy that, freed from military duty, I and all mine perform this solemn rite and offer thee this sacrifice; grant, that I may keep the rural Dionysia without hindrance and that this truce of thirty years may be propitious for me.

WIFE OF DICAEOPOLIS

Come, my child, carry the basket gracefully and with a grave, demure face. Happy he, who shall be your possessor and embrace you so firmly at dawn, that you belch wind like a weasel. Go forward, and have a care they don't snatch your jewels in the crowd.

DICAEPOLIS

Xanthias, walk behind the basket-bearer and hold the phallus well erect; I will follow, singing the Phallic hymn; thou, wife, look on from the top of the terrace. Forward! Oh, Phales, companion of the orgies of Bacchus, night reveller, god of adultery, friend of young men, these past six years I have not been able to invoke thee. With what joy I return to my farmstead, thanks to the truce I have concluded, freed from cares, from fighting and from Lamachuses! How much sweeter, Phales, oh, Phales, is it to surprise Thratta, the pretty wood-maid, Strymodorus' slave, stealing wood from Mount Phelleus, to catch her under the arms, to throw her on the ground and possess her! Oh, Phales, Phales! If thou wilt drink and bemuse thyself with me, we will to-morrow consume some good dish in honour of the peace, and I will hang up my buckler over the smoking hearth.

CHORUS

It is he, he himself. Stone him, stone him, stone him, strike the wretch. All, all of you, pelt him, pelt him!

DICAEPOLIS

What is this? By Heracles, you will smash my pot.

CHORUS

It is you that we are stoning, you miserable scoundrel.

DICAEPOLIS

And for what sin, Acharnian Elders, tell me that!

CHORUS

You ask that, you impudent rascal, traitor to your country; you alone amongst us all have concluded a truce, and you dare to look us in the face!

DICAEPOLIS

But you do not know *why* I have treated for peace. Listen!

CHORUS

Listen to you? No, no, you are about to die, we will annihilate you with our stones.

DICAEPOLIS

But first of all, listen. Stop, my friends.

CHORUS

I will hear nothing; do not address me; I hate you more than I do Cleon, whom one day I shall flay to make sandals for the Knights. Listen to your long speeches, after you have treated with the Laconians! No, I will punish you.

DICAEPOLIS

Friends, leave the Laconians out of debate and consider only whether I have not done well to conclude my truce.

CHORUS

Done well! when you have treated with a people who know neither gods, nor truth, nor faith.

DICAEPOLIS

We attribute too much to the Laconians; as for myself, I know that they are not the cause of all our troubles.

CHORUS

Oh, indeed, rascal! You dare to use such language to me and then expect me to spare you!

DICAEOPOLIS

No, no, they are not the cause of all our troubles, and I who address you claim to be able to prove that they have much to complain of in us.

CHORUS

This passes endurance; my heart bounds with fury. Thus you dare to defend our enemies.

DICAEOPOLIS

Were my head on the block I would uphold what I say and rely on the approval of the people.

CHORUS

Comrades, let us hurl our stones and dye this fellow purple.

DICAEOPOLIS

What black fire-brand has inflamed your heart! You will not hear me? You really will not, Acharnians?

CHORUS

No, a thousand times, no.

DICAEOPOLIS

This is a hateful injustice.

CHORUS

May I die, if I listen.

DICAEOPOLIS

Nay, nay! have mercy, have mercy, Acharnians.

CHORUS

You shall die.

DICAEOPOLIS

Well, blood for blood! I will kill your dearest friend. I have here the hostages of Acharnae; I shall disembowel them.

CHORUS

Acharnians, what means this threat? Has he got one of our children in his house? What gives him such audacity?

DICAEOPOLIS

Stone me, if it please you; I shall avenge myself on this. (*Shows a basket.*) Let us see whether you have any love for your coals.

CHORUS

Great gods! this basket is our fellow-citizen. Stop, stop, in heaven's name!

DICAEOPOLIS

I shall dismember it despite your cries; I will listen to nothing.

CHORUS

How! will you kill this coal-basket, my beloved comrade?

DICAEOPOLIS

Just now, you did not listen to me.

CHORUS

Well, speak now, if you will; tell us, tell us you have a weakness for the Lacedaemonians. I consent to anything; never will I forsake this dear little basket.

DICAEOPOLIS

First, throw down your stones.

CHORUS

There! 'tis done. And you, do you put away your sword.

DICAEOPOLIS

Let me see that no stones remain concealed in your cloaks.

CHORUS

They are all on the ground; see how we shake our garments. Come, no haggling, lay down your sword; we threw away everything while crossing from one side of the stage to the other.

DICAEOPOLIS

What cries of anguish you would have uttered had these coals of Parnes been dismembered, and yet it came very near it; had they perished, their death would have been due to the folly of their fellow-citizens. The poor basket was so frightened, look, it has shed a thick black dust over me, the same as a cuttle-fish does. What an irritable temper! You shout and throw stones, you will not hear my arguments—not even when I propose to speak in favour of the Lacedaemonians with my head on the block; and yet I cling to my life.

CHORUS

Well then, bring out a block before your door, scoundrel, and let us hear the good grounds you can give us; I am curious to know them. Now mind, as you proposed yourself, place your head on the block and speak.

DICAEOPOLIS

Here is the block; and, though I am but a very sorry speaker, I wish nevertheless to talk freely of the Lacedaemonians and without the protection of my buckler. Yet I have many reasons for fear. I know our rustics; they are delighted if some braggart comes, and rightly or wrongly loads both them and their city with praise and flattery; they do not see that such toad-eaters are traitors, who sell them for gain. As for the old men, I know their weakness; they only seek to overwhelm the accused with their votes. Nor have I forgotten how Cleon treated me because of my comedy last year; he dragged me before the Senate and there he uttered endless slanders against me; 'twas a tempest of abuse, a deluge of lies. Through what a slough of mud he dragged me! I nigh perished. Permit me, therefore, before I speak, to dress in the manner most likely to draw pity.

CHORUS

What evasions, subterfuges and delays! Hold! here is the sombre helmet of Pluto with its thick bristling plume; Hieronymus lends it to you; then open Sisyphus' bag of wiles; but hurry, hurry, pray, for our discussion does not admit of delay.

DICAEOPOLIS

The time has come for me to manifest my courage, so I will go and seek Euripides. Ho! slave, slave!

SLAVE

Who's there?

DICAEOPOLIS

Is Euripides at home?

SLAVE

He is and he isn't; understand that, if you have wit for't.

DICAEOPOLIS

How? He is and he isn't!

SLAVE

Certainly, old man; busy gathering subtle fancies here and there, his mind is not in the house, but he himself is; perched aloft, he is composing a tragedy.

DICAEOPOLIS

Oh, Euripides, you are indeed happy to have a slave so quick at repartee! Now, fellow, call your master.

SLAVE

Impossible!

DICAEOPOLIS

So much the worse. But I will not go. Come, let us knock at the door. Euripides, my little Euripides, my darling Euripides, listen; never had man greater right to your pity. It is Dicaeopolis of the Chollidan Deme who calls you. Do you hear?

EURIPIDES

I have no time to waste.

DICAEOPOLIS

Very well, have yourself wheeled out here.

EURIPIDES

Impossible.

DICAEOPOLIS

Nevertheless....

EURIPIDES

Well, let them roll me out; as to coming down, I have not the time.

DICAEOPOLIS

Euripides....

EURIPIDES

What words strike my ear?

DICAEOPOLIS

You perch aloft to compose tragedies, when you might just as well do them on the ground. I am not astonished at your introducing cripples on the stage. And why dress in these miserable tragic rags? I do not wonder that your heroes are beggars. But, Euripides, on my knees I beseech you, give me the tatters of some old piece: for I have to treat the Chorus to a long speech, and if I do it ill it is all over with me.

EURIPIDES

What rags do you prefer? Those in which I rigged out Aeneus on the stage, that unhappy, miserable old man?

DICAEOPOLIS

No, I want those of some hero still more unfortunate.

EURIPIDES

Of Phoenix, the blind man?

DICAEOPOLIS

No, not of Phoenix, you have another hero more unfortunate than him.

EURIPIDES

Now, what tatters *does* he want? Do you mean those of the beggar Philoctetes?

DICAEOPOLIS

No, of another far more the mendicant.

EURIPIDES

Is it the filthy dress of the lame fellow, Bellerophon?

DICAEOPOLIS

No, 'tis not Bellerophon; he, whom I mean, was not only lame and a beggar, but boastful and a fine speaker.

EURIPIDES

Ah! I know, it is Telephus, the Mysian.

DICAEOPOLIS

Yes, Telephus. Give me his rags, I beg of you.

EURIPIDES

Slave! give him Telephus' tatters; they are on top of the rags of Thyestes and mixed with those of Ino.

SLAVE

Catch hold! here they are.

DICAEOPOLIS

Oh! Zeus, whose eye pierces everywhere and embraces all, permit me to assume the most wretched dress on earth. Euripides, cap your kindness by giving me the little Mysian hat, that goes so well with these tatters. I must to-day have the look of a beggar; "be what I am, but not appear to be"; the audience will know well who I am, but the Chorus will be fools enough not to, and I shall dupe 'em with my subtle phrases.

EURIPIDES

I will give you the hat; I love the clever tricks of an ingenious brain like yours.

DICAEOPOLIS

Rest happy, and may it befall Telephus as I wish. Ah! I already feel myself filled with quibbles. But I must have a beggar's staff.

EURIPIDES

Here you are, and now get you gone from this porch.

DICAEOPOLIS

Oh, my soul! You see how you are driven from this house, when I still need so many accessories. But let us be pressing, obstinate, importunate. Euripides, give me a little basket with a lamp alight inside.

EURIPIDES

Whatever do you want such a thing as that for?

DICAEOPOLIS

I do not need it, but I want it all the same.

EURIPIDES

You importune me; get you gone!

DICAEOPOLIS

Alas! may the gods grant you a destiny as brilliant as your mother's.

EURIPIDES

Leave me in peace.

DICAEOPOLIS

Oh! just a little broken cup.

EURIPIDES

Take it and go and hang yourself. What a tiresome fellow!

DICAEOPOLIS

Ah! you do not know all the pain you cause me. Dear, good Euripides, nothing beyond a small pipkin stoppered with a sponge.

EURIPIDES

Miserable man! You are robbing me of an entire tragedy. Here, take it and be off.

DICAEOPOLIS

I am going, but, great gods! I need one thing more; unless I have it, I am a dead man. Hearken, my little Euripides, only give me this and I go, never to return. For pity's sake, do give me a few small herbs for my basket.

EURIPIDES

You wish to ruin me then. Here, take what you want; but it is all over with my pieces!

DICAEOPOLIS

I won't ask another thing; I'm going. I am too importunate and forget that I rouse against me the hate of kings.—Ah! wretch that I am! I am lost! I have forgotten one thing, without which all the rest is as nothing. Euripides, my excellent Euripides, my dear little Euripides, may I die if I ask you again for the smallest present; only one, the last, absolutely the last; give me some of the chervil your mother left you in her will.

EURIPIDES

Insolent hound! Slave, lock the door.

DICAEOPOLIS

Oh, my soul! I must go away without the chervil. Art thou sensible of the dangerous battle we are about to engage upon in defending the Lacedaemonians? Courage, my soul, we must plunge into the midst of it. Dost thou hesitate and art thou fully steeped in Euripides? That's right! do not falter, my poor heart, and let us risk our head to say what we hold for truth. Courage and boldly to the front. I wonder I am so brave!

CHORUS

What do you purport doing? what are you going to say? What an impudent fellow! what a brazen heart! To dare to stake his head and uphold an opinion contrary to that of us all! And he does not tremble to face this peril! Come, it is you who desired it, speak!

DICAEOPOLIS

Spectators, be not angered if, although I am a beggar, I dare in a Comedy to speak before the people of Athens of the public weal; Comedy too can sometimes discern what is right. I shall not please, but I shall say what is true. Besides, Cleon shall not be able to accuse me of attacking Athens before strangers; we are by ourselves at the festival of the Lenaea; the period when our allies send us their tribute and their soldiers is not yet. Here is only the pure wheat without chaff; as to the resident strangers settled among us, they and the citizens are one, like the straw and the ear.

I detest the Lacedaemonians with all my heart, and may Posidon, the god of Taenarus, cause an earthquake and overturn their dwellings! My vines also have been cut. But come (there are only friends who hear me), why accuse the Laconians of all our woes? Some men (I do not say the city, note particularly, that I do not say the city), some wretches, lost in vices, bereft of honour, who were not even citizens of good stamp, but strangers, have accused the Megarians of introducing their produce fraudulently, and not a cucumber, a leveret, a sucking-pig, a clove of garlic, a lump of salt was seen without its being said, "Halloa! these come from Megara," and their being instantly confiscated. Thus far the evil was not serious, and we were the only sufferers. But now some young drunkards go to Megara and carry off the courtesan Simaetha; the Megarians, hurt to the quick, run off in turn with two harlots of the house of Aspasia; and so for three gay women Greece is set ablaze. Then Pericles, aflame with ire on his Olympian height, let loose the lightning, caused the thun-

der to roll, upset Greece and passed an edict, which ran like the song, "That the Megarians be banished both from our land and from our markets and from the sea and from the continent." Meanwhile the Megarians, who were beginning to die of hunger, begged the Lacedaemonians to bring about the abolition of the decree, of which those harlots were the cause; several times we refused their demand; and from that time there was a horrible clatter of arms everywhere. You will say that Sparta was wrong, but what should she have done? Answer that. Suppose that a Lacedaemonian had seized a little Seriphian dog on any pretext and had sold it, would you have endured it quietly? Far from it, you would at once have sent three hundred vessels to sea, and what an uproar there would have been through all the city! there 'tis a band of noisy soldiery, here a brawl about the election of a Trierarch; elsewhere pay is being distributed, the Pallas figure-heads are being regilded, crowds are surging under the market porticos, encumbered with wheat that is being measured, wine-skins, oar-leathers, garlic, olives, onions in nets; everywhere are chaplets, sprats, flute-girls, black eyes; in the arsenal bolts are being noisily driven home, sweeps are being made and fitted with leathers; we hear nothing but the sound of whistles, of flutes and fifes to encourage the work-folk. That is what you assuredly would have done, and would not Telephus have done the same? So I come to my general conclusion; we have no common sense.

FIRST SEMI-CHORUS

Oh! wretch! oh! infamous man! You are naught but a beggar and yet you dare to talk to us like this! you insult their worships the informers!

SECOND SEMI-CHORUS

By Posidon! he speaks the truth; he has not lied in a single detail.

FIRST SEMI-CHORUS

But though it be true, need he say it? But you'll have no great cause to be proud of your insolence!

SECOND SEMI-CHORUS

Where are you running to? Don't you move; if you strike this man I shall be at you.

FIRST SEMI-CHORUS

Lamachus, whose glance flashes lightning, whose plume petrifies thy foes, help! Oh! Lamachus, my friend, the hero of my tribe and all of you, both officers and soldiers, defenders of our walls, come to my aid; else is it all over with me!

LAMACHUS

Whence comes this cry of battle? where must I bring my aid? where must I sow dread? who wants me to uncase my dreadful Gorgon's head?

DICAEPOLIS

Oh, Lamachus, great hero! Your plumes and your cohorts terrify me.

CHORUS

This man, Lamachus, incessantly abuses Athens.

LAMACHUS

You are but a mendicant and you dare to use language of this sort?

DICAEOPOLIS

Oh, brave Lamachus, forgive a beggar who speaks at hazard.

LAMACHUS

But what have you said? Let us hear.

DICAEOPOLIS

I know nothing about it; the sight of weapons makes me dizzy. Oh! I adjure you, take that fearful Gorgon somewhat farther away.

LAMACHUS

There.

DICAEOPOLIS

Now place it face downwards on the ground.

LAMACHUS

It is done.

DICAEOPOLIS

Give me a plume out of your helmet.

LAMACHUS

Here is a feather.

DICAEOPOLIS

And hold my head while I vomit; the plumes have turned my stomach.

LAMACHUS

Hah! what are you proposing to do? do you want to make yourself vomit with this feather?

DICAEOPOLIS

Is it a feather? what bird's? a braggart's?

LAMACHUS

Ah! ah! I will rip you open.

DICAEOPOLIS

No, no, Lamachus! Violence is out of place here! But as you are so strong, why did you not circumcise me? You have all you want for the operation there.

LAMACHUS

A beggar dares thus address a general!

DICAEOPOLIS

How? Am I a beggar?

LAMACHUS

What are you then?

DICAEOPOLIS

Who am I? A good citizen, not ambitious; a soldier, who has fought well since the outbreak of the war, whereas you are but a vile mercenary.

LAMACHUS

They elected me....

DICAEOPOLIS

Yes, three cuckoos did! If I have concluded peace, 'twas disgust that drove me; for I see men with hoary heads in the ranks and young fellows of your age shirking service. Some are in Thrace getting an allowance of three drachmae, such fellows as Tisameophoenippus and Panurgipparchides. The others are with Chares or in Chaonia, men like Gere-totheodorus and Diomialazon; there are some of the same kidney, too, at Camarina and at Gela, the laughing-stock of all and sundry.

LAMACHUS

They were elected.

DICAEPOLIS

And why do you always receive your pay, when none of these others ever get any? Speak, Marilades, you have grey hair; well then, have you ever been entrusted with a mission? See! he shakes his head. Yet he is an active as well as a prudent man. And you, Dracyllus, Euphorides or Prinides, have you knowledge of Ecbatana or Chaonia? You say no, do you not? Such offices are good for the son of Caesyra and Lamachus, who, but yesterday ruined with debt, never pay their shot, and whom all their friends avoid as foot passengers dodge the folks who empty their slops out of window.

LAMACHUS

Oh! in freedom's name! are such exaggerations to be borne?

DICAEPOLIS

Lamachus is well content; no doubt he is well paid, you know.

LAMACHUS

But I propose always to war with the Peloponnesians, both at sea, on land and everywhere to make them tremble, and trounce them soundly.

DICAEPOLIS

For my own part, I make proclamation to all Peloponnesians, Megarians and Boeotians, that to them my markets are open; but I debar Lamachus from entering them.

CHORUS

Convinced by this man's speech, the folk have changed their view and approve him for having concluded peace. But let us prepare for the recital of the parabasis.

Never since our poet presented Comedies, has he praised himself upon the stage; but, having been slandered by his enemies amongst the volatile Athenians, accused of scoffing at his country and of insulting the people, to-day he wishes to reply and regain for himself the inconstant Athenians. He maintains that he has done much that is good for you; if you no longer allow yourselves to be too much hoodwinked by strangers or seduced by flattery, if in politics you are no longer the ninnies you once were, it is thanks to him. Formerly, when delegates from other cities wanted to deceive you, they had but to style you, "the people crowned with violets," and, at the word "violets" you at once sat erect on the tips of your bums. Or, if to tickle your vanity, someone spoke of "rich and sleek Athens," in return for that 'sleekness' he would get all, because he spoke of you as he would have of anchovies in oil. In cautioning you against such wiles, the poet has done you great service as well as in forcing you to understand what is really the democratic principle. Thus, the strangers, who came to pay their tributes, wanted to see this great poet, who had dared to speak the truth to Athens. And so far has the fame of his boldness reached that one day the Great King, when questioning the Lacedaemonian delegates, first asked them which of the two rival cities was the superior at sea, and then immediately demanded at which it was that the comic poet directed his biting satire. "Happy that city," he added,

"if it listens to his counsel; it will grow in power, and its victory is assured." This is why the Lacedaemonians offer you peace, if you will cede them Aegina; not that they care for the isle, but they wish to rob you of your poet. As for you, never lose him, who will always fight for the cause of justice in his Comedies; he promises you that his precepts will lead you to happiness, though he uses neither flattery, nor bribery, nor intrigue, nor deceit; instead of loading you with praise, he will point you to the better way. I scoff at Cleon's tricks and plotting; honesty and justice shall fight my cause; never will you find me a political poltroon, a prostitute to the highest bidder.

I invoke thee, Acharnian Muse, fierce and fell as the devouring fire; sudden as the spark that bursts from the crackling oaken coal when roused by the quickening fan to fry little fishes, while others knead the dough or whip the sharp Thasian pickle with rapid hand, so break forth, my Muse, and inspire thy tribesmen with rough, vigorous, stirring strains.

We others, now old men and heavy with years, we reproach the city; so many are the victories we have gained for the Athenian fleets that we well deserve to be cared for in our declining life; yet far from this, we are ill-used, harassed with law-suits, delivered over to the scorn of stripling orators. Our minds and bodies being ravaged with age, Posidon should protect us, yet we have no other support than a staff. When standing before the judge, we can scarcely stammer forth the fewest words, and of justice we see but its barest shadow, whereas the accuser, desirous of conciliating the younger men, overwhelms us with his ready rhetoric; he drags us before the

judge, presses us with questions, lays traps for us; the onslaught troubles, upsets and rends poor old Tithonus, who, crushed with age, stands tongue-tied; sentenced to a fine, he weeps, he sobs and says to his friend, "This fine robs me of the last trifle that was to have bought my coffin."

Is this not a scandal? What! the clepsydra is to kill the white-haired veteran, who, in fierce fighting, has so oft covered himself with glorious sweat, whose valour at Marathon saved the country! 'Twas we who pursued on the field of Marathon, whereas now 'tis wretches who pursue us to the death and crush us! What would Marpsias reply to this? What an injustice, that a man, bent with age like Thucydides, should be brow-beaten by this braggart advocate, Cephisodemus, who is as savage as the Scythian desert he was born in! Is it not to convict him from the outset? I wept tears of pity when I saw an Archer maltreat this old man, who, by Ceres, when he was young and the true Thucydides, would not have permitted an insult from Ceres herself! At that date he would have floored ten miserable orators, he would have terrified three thousand Archers with his shouts; he would have pierced the whole line of the enemy with his shafts. Ah! but if you will not leave the aged in peace, decree that the advocates be matched; thus the old man will only be confronted with a toothless greybeard, the young will fight with the braggart, the ignoble with the son of Clinias; make a law that in future, the old man can only be summoned and convicted at the courts by the aged and the young man by the youth.

DICAEOPOLIS

These are the confines of my market-place. All Peloponnesians, Megarians, Boeotians, have the right to come and trade here, provided they sell their wares to me and not to Lamachus. As market-inspectors I appoint these three whips of Leprean leather, chosen by lot. Warned away are all informers and all men of Phasis. They are bringing me the pillar on which the treaty is inscribed and I shall erect it in the centre of the market, well in sight of all.

A MEGARIAN

Hail! market of Athens, beloved of Megarians. Let Zeus, the patron of friendship, witness, I regretted you as a mother mourns her son. Come, poor little daughters of an unfortunate father, try to find something to eat; listen to me with the full heed of an empty belly. Which would you prefer? To be sold or to cry with hunger.

DAUGHTERS

To be sold, to be sold!

MEGARIAN

That is my opinion too. But who would make so sorry a deal as to buy you? Ah! I recall me a Megarian trick; I am going to disguise you as little porkers, that I am offering for sale. Fit your hands with these hoofs and take care to appear the issue of a sow of good breed, for, if I am forced to take you back to the house, by Hermes! you will suffer cruelly of hunger! Then fix on these snouts and cram yourselves into this sack. Forget not to grunt and to say wee-wee like the little pigs that are sacrificed in the Mysteries. I must summon Dicaeopolis. Where is he? Dicaeopolis, will you buy some nice little porkers?

DICAEOPOLIS

Who are you? a Megarian?

MEGARIAN

I have come to your market.

DICAEOPOLIS

Well, how are things at Megara?

MEGARIAN

We are crying with hunger at our firesides.

DICAEOPOLIS

The fireside is jolly enough with a piper. But what else is doing at Megara, eh?

MEGARIAN

What else? When I left for the market, the authorities were taking steps to let us die in the quickest manner.

DICAEOPOLIS

That is the best way to get you out of all your troubles.

MEGARIAN

True.

DICAEOPOLIS

What other news of Megara? What is wheat selling at?

MEGARIAN

With us it is valued as highly as the very gods in heaven!

DICAEOPOLIS

Is it salt that you are bringing?

MEGARIAN

Are you not holding back the salt?

DICAEOPOLIS

'Tis garlic then?

MEGARIAN

What! garlic! do you not at every raid grub up the ground with your pikes to pull out every single head?

DICAEOPOLIS

What *do* you bring then?

MEGARIAN

Little sows, like those they immolate at the Mysteries.

DICAEOPOLIS

Ah! very well, show me them.

MEGARIAN

They are very fine; feel their weight. See! how fat and fine.

DICAEOPOLIS

But what is this?

MEGARIAN

A *sow*, for a certainty.

DICAEOPOLIS

You say a sow! of what country, then?

MEGARIAN

From Megara. What! is that not a sow then?

DICAEOPOLIS

No, I don't believe it is.

MEGARIAN

This is too much! what an incredulous man! He says 'tis not a sow; but we will stake, an you will, a measure of salt ground up with thyme, that in good Greek this is called a sow and nothing else.

DICAEOPOLIS

But a sow of the human kind.

MEGARIAN

Without question, by Diocles! of my own breed! Well! What think you? will you hear them squeal?

DICAEOPOLIS

Well, yes, i' faith, I will.

MEGARIAN

Cry quickly, wee sowlet; squeak up, hussy, or by Hermes! I take you back to the house.

GIRL

Wee-wee, wee-wee!

MEGARIAN

Is that a little sow, or not?

DICAEOPOLIS

Yes, it seems so; but let it grow up, and it will be a fine fat cunt.

MEGARIAN

In five years it will be just like its mother.

DICAEOPOLIS

But it cannot be sacrificed.

MEGARIAN

And why not?

DICAEOPOLIS

It has no tail.

MEGARIAN

Because it is quite young, but in good time it will have a big one, thick and red.

DICAEOPOLIS

The two are as like as two peas.

MEGARIAN

They are born of the same father and mother; let them be fattened, let them grow their bristles, and they will be the finest sows you can offer to Aphrodité.

DICAEOPOLIS

But sows are not immolated to Aphrodité.

MEGARIAN

Not sows to Aphrodité! Why, 'tis the only goddess to whom they are offered! the flesh of my sows will be excellent on the spit.

DICAEOPOLIS

Can they eat alone? They no longer need their mother!

MEGARIAN

Certainly not, nor their father.

DICAEOPOLIS

What do they like most?

MEGARIAN

Whatever is given them; but ask for yourself.

DICAEOPOLIS

Speak! little sow.

DAUGHTER

Wee-wee, wee-wee!

DICAEOPOLIS

Can you eat chick-pease?

DAUGHTER

Wee-wee, wee-wee, wee-wee!

DICAEOPOLIS

And Attic figs?

DAUGHTER

Wee-wee, wee-wee!

DICAEOPOLIS

What sharp squeaks at the name of figs. Come, let some figs be brought for these little pigs. Will they eat them? Goodness! how they munch them, what a grinding of teeth, mighty Heracles! I believe those pigs hail from the land of the Voracians. But surely, 'tis impossible they have bolted all the figs!

MEGARIAN

Yes, certainly, bar this one that I took from them.

DICAEOPOLIS

Ah! what funny creatures! For what sum will you sell them?

MEGARIAN

I will give you one for a bunch of garlic, and the other, if you like, for a quart measure of salt.

DICAEOPOLIS

I buy them of you. Wait for me here.

MEGARIAN

The deal is done. Hermes, god of good traders, grant I may sell both my wife and my mother in the same way!

AN INFORMER

Hi! fellow, what countryman are you?

MEGARIAN

I am a pig-merchant from Megara.

INFORMER

I shall denounce both your pigs and yourself as public enemies.

MEGARIAN

Ah! here our troubles begin afresh!

INFORMER

Let go that sack. I will punish your Megarian lingo.

MEGARIAN

Dicaeopolis, Dicaeopolis, they want to denounce me.

DICAEOPOLIS

Who dares do this thing? Inspectors, drive out the Informers.
Ah! you offer to enlighten us without a lamp!

INFORMER

What! I may not denounce our enemies?

DICAEOPOLIS

Have a care for yourself, if you don't go off pretty quick to
denounce elsewhere.

MEGARIAN

What a plague to Athens!

DICAEOPOLIS

Be reassured, Megarian. Here is the value of your two swine,
the garlic and the salt. Farewell and much happiness!

MEGARIAN

Ah! we never have that amongst us.

DICAEOPOLIS

Well! may the inopportune wish apply to myself.

MEGARIAN

Farewell, dear little sows, and seek, far from your father, to munch your bread with salt, if they give you any.

CHORUS

Here is a man truly happy. See how everything succeeds to his wish. Peacefully seated in his market, he will earn his living; woe to Ctesias, and all other informers, who dare to enter there! You will not be cheated as to the value of wares, you will not again see Prepis wiping his foul rump, nor will Cleonymus jostle you; you will take your walks, clothed in a fine tunic, without meeting Hyperbolus and his unceasing quibblings, without being accosted on the public place by any importunate fellow, neither by Cratinus, shaven in the fashion of the debauchees, nor by this musician, who plagues us with his silly improvisations, Artemo, with his arm-pits stinking as foul as a goat, like his father before him. You will not be the butt of the villainous Pauson's jeers, nor of Lysistratus, the disgrace of the Cholargian deme, who is the incarnation of all the vices, and endures cold and hunger more than thirty days in the month.

A BOEOTIAN

By Heracles! my shoulder is quite black and blue. Ismenias, put the penny-royal down there very gently, and all of you, musicians from Thebes, pipe with your bone flutes into a dog's rump.

DICAEPOLIS

Enough, enough, get you gone. Rascally hornets, away with you! Whence has sprung this accursed swarm of Cheris fellows which comes assailing my door?

BOEOTIAN

Ah! by Iolas! Drive them off, my dear host, you will please me immensely; all the way from Thebes, they were there piping behind me and have completely stripped my penny-royal of its blossom. But will you buy anything of me, some chickens or some locusts?

DICAEPOLIS

Ah! good day, Boeotian, eater of good round loaves. What do you bring?

BOEOTIAN

All that is good in Boeotia, marjoram, penny-royal, rushmats, lamp-wicks, ducks, jays, woodcocks, waterfowl, wrens, divers.

DICAEPOLIS

'Tis a very hail of birds that beats down on my market.

BOEOTIAN

I also bring geese, hares, foxes, moles, hedgehogs, cats, lyres, martins, otters and eels from the Copaic lake.

DICAEPOLIS

Ah! my friend, you, who bring me the most delicious of fish, let me salute your eels.

BOEOTIAN

Come, thou, the eldest of my fifty Copaic virgins, come and complete the joy of our host.

DICAEOPOLIS

Oh! my well-beloved, thou object of my long regrets, thou art here at last then, thou, after whom the comic poets sigh, thou, who art dear to Morychus. Slaves, hither with the stove and the bellows. Look at this charming eel, that returns to us after six long years of absence. Salute it, my children; as for myself, I will supply coal to do honour to the stranger. Take it into my house; death itself could not separate me from her, if cooked with beet leaves.

BOEOTIAN

And what will you give me in return?

DICAEOPOLIS

It will pay for your market dues. And as to the rest, what do you wish to sell me?

BOEOTIAN

Why, everything.

DICAEOPOLIS

On what terms? For ready-money or in wares from these parts?

BOEOTIAN

I would take some Athenian produce, that we have not got in Boeotia.

DICAEOPOLIS

Phaleric anchovies, pottery?

BOEOTIAN

Anchovies, pottery? But these we have. I want produce that is wanting with us and that is plentiful here.

DICAEOPOLIS

Ah! I have the very thing; take away an Informer, packed up carefully as crockery-ware.

BOEOTIAN

By the twin gods! I should earn big money, if I took one; I would exhibit him as an ape full of spite.

DICAEOPOLIS

Hah! here we have Nicarchus, who comes to denounce you.

BOEOTIAN

How small he is!

DICAEOPOLIS

But in his case the whole is one mass of ill-nature.

NICARCHUS

Whose are these goods?

DICAEOPOLIS

Mine; they come from Boeotia, I call Zeus to witness.

NICARCHUS

I denounce them as coming from an enemy's country.

BOEOTIAN

What! you declare war against birds?

NICARCHUS

And I am going to denounce you too.

BOEOTIAN

What harm have I done you?

NICARCHUS

I will say it for the benefit of those that listen; you introduce lamp-wicks from an enemy's country.

DICAEOPOLIS

Then you go as far as denouncing a wick.

NICARCHUS

It needs but one to set an arsenal afire.

DICAEOPOLIS

A wick set an arsenal ablaze! But how, great gods?

NICARCHUS

Should a Boeotian attach it to an insect's wing, and, taking advantage of a violent north wind, throw it by means of a tube into the arsenal and the fire once get hold of the vessels, everything would soon be devoured by the flames.

DICAEOPOLIS

Ah! wretch! an insect and a wick would devour everything.
(*He strikes him.*)

NICARCHUS (*to the Chorus*). You will bear witness, that
he mishandles me.

DICAEOPOLIS

Shut his mouth. Give him some hay; I am going to pack him
up as a vase, that he may not get broken on the road.

CHORUS

Pack up your goods carefully, friend; that the stranger may
not break it when taking it away.

DICAEOPOLIS

I shall take great care with it, for one would say he is cracked
already; he rings with a false note, which the gods abhor.

CHORUS

But what will be done with him?

DICAEOPOLIS

This is a vase good for all purposes; it will be used as a vessel
for holding all foul things, a mortar for pounding together
law-suits, a lamp for spying upon accounts, and as a cup for
the mixing up and poisoning of everything.

CHORUS

None could ever trust a vessel for domestic use that has such
a ring about it.

DICAEOPOLIS

Oh! it is strong, my friend, and will never get broken, if care is taken to hang it head downwards.

CHORUS

There! it is well packed now!

BOEOTIAN

Marry, I will proceed to carry off my bundle.

CHORUS

Farewell, worthiest of strangers, take this Informer, good for anything, and fling him where you like.

DICAEOPOLIS

Bah! this rogue has given me enough trouble to pack! Here! Boeotian, pick up your pottery.

BOEOTIAN

Stoop, Ismenias, that I may put it on your shoulder, and be very careful with it.

DICAEOPOLIS

You carry nothing worth having; however, take it, for you will profit by your bargain; the Informers will bring you luck.

A SERVANT OF LAMACHUS

Dicaeopolis!

DICAEOPOLIS

What do want crying this gait?

SERVANT

Lamachus wants to keep the Feast of Cups, and I come by his order to bid you one drachma for some thrushes and three more for a Copaic eel.

DICAEPOLIS

And who is this Lamachus, who demands an eel?

SERVANT

'Tis the terrible, indefatigable Lamachus, he, who is always brandishing his fearful Gorgon's head and the three plumes which o'ershadow his helmet.

DICAEPOLIS

No, no, he will get nothing, even though he gave me his buckler. Let him eat salt fish, while he shakes his plumes, and, if he comes here making any din, I shall call the inspectors. As for myself, I shall take away all these goods; I go home on thrushes' wings and blackbirds' pinions.

CHORUS

You see, citizens, you see the good fortune which this man owes to his prudence, to his profound wisdom. You see how, since he has concluded peace, he buys what is useful in the household and good to eat hot. All good things flow towards him unsought. Never will I welcome the god of war in my house; never shall he chant the 'Harmodius' at my table; he is a sot, who comes feasting with those who are overflowing with good things and brings all sorts of mischief at his heels. He overthrows, ruins, rips open; 'tis vain to make him a thousand offers, "be seated, pray, drink this cup, proffered in all friendship," he burns our vine-stocks and brutally pours out the wine from our vineyards on the ground. This man, on the other hand, covers his table with a thousand dishes; proud of his good fortunes, he has had these feathers cast before his door to show us how he lives.

DICAEOPOLIS

Oh! Peace! companion of fair Aphrodité and of the sweet Graces, how charming are your features and yet I never knew it! Would that Eros might join me to thee, Eros, crowned with roses as Zeuxis shows him to us! Perhaps I seem somewhat old to you, but I am yet able to make you a threefold offering; despite my age, I could plant a long row of vines for you; then beside these some tender cuttings from the fig; finally a young vine-stock, loaded with fruit and all round the field olive trees, which would furnish us with oil, wherewith to anoint us both at the New Moons.

HERALD

List, ye people! As was the custom of your forebears, empty a full pitcher of wine at the call of the trumpet; he, who first sees the bottom, shall get a wine-skin as round and plump as Ctesiphon's belly.

DICAEPOLIS

Women, children, have you not heard? Faith! do you not heed the herald? Quick! let the hares boil and roast merrily; keep them a-turning; withdraw them from the flame; prepare the chaplets; reach me the skewers that I may spit the thrushes.

CHORUS

I envy you your wisdom and even more your good cheer.

DICAEPOLIS

What then will you say when you see the thrushes roasting?

CHORUS

Ah! true indeed!

DICAEPOLIS

Slave! stir up the fire.

CHORUS

See, how he knows his business, what a perfect cook! How well he understands the way to prepare a good dinner!

A HUSBANDMAN

Ah! woe is me!

DICAEOPOLIS

Heracles! What have we here?

HUSBANDMAN

A most miserable man.

DICAEOPOLIS

Keep your misery for yourself.

HUSBANDMAN

Ah! friend! since you alone are enjoying peace, grant me a part of your truce, were it but five years.

DICAEOPOLIS

What has happened to you?

HUSBANDMAN

I am ruined; I have lost a pair of steers.

DICAEOPOLIS

How?

HUSBANDMAN

The Boeotians seized them at Phylé.

DICAEOPOLIS

Ah! poor wretch! and yet you have not left off white?

HUSBANDMAN

Their dung made my wealth.

DICAEOPOLIS

What can I do in the matter?

HUSBANDMAN

Crying for my beasts has lost me my eyesight. Ah! if you care for poor Dercetes of Phylé, anoint mine eyes quickly with your balm of peace.

DICAEOPOLIS

But, my poor fellow, I do not practise medicine.

HUSBANDMAN

Come, I adjure you; perchance I shall recover my steers.

DICAEOPOLIS

'Tis impossible; away, go and whine to the disciples of Pit-talus.

HUSBANDMAN

Grant me but one drop of peace; pour it into this reedlet.

DICAEOPOLIS

No, not a particle; go a-weeping elsewhere.

HUSBANDMAN

Oh! oh! oh! my poor beasts!

CHORUS

This man has discovered the sweetest enjoyment in peace; he will share it with none.

DICAEOPOLIS

Pour honey over this tripe; set it before the fire to dry.

CHORUS

What lofty tones he uses! Did you hear him?

DICAEOPOLIS

Get the eels on the gridiron!

CHORUS

You are killing me with hunger; your smoke is choking your neighbours, and you split our ears with your bawling.

DICAEOPOLIS

Have this fried and let it be nicely browned.

A BRIDESMAID

Dicaeopolis! Dicaeopolis!

DICAEOPOLIS

Who are you?

BRIDESMAID

A young bridegroom sends you these viands from the marriage feast.

DICAEOPOLIS

Whoever he be, I thank him.

BRIDESMAID

And in return, he prays you to pour a glass of peace into this vase, that he may not have to go to the front and may stay at home to do his duty to his young wife.

DICAEPOLIS

Take back, take back your viands; for a thousand drachmae I would not give a drop of peace; but who are you, pray?

BRIDESMAID

I am the bridesmaid; she wants to say something to you from the bride privately.

DICAEPOLIS

Come, what do you wish to say? (*The bridesmaid whispers in his ear.*) Ah! what a ridiculous demand! The bride burns with longing to keep by her her husband's weapon. Come! bring hither my truce; to her alone will I give some of it, for she is a woman, and, as such, should not suffer under the war. Here, friend, reach hither your vial. And as to the manner of applying this balm, tell the bride, when a levy of soldiers is made to rub some in bed on her husband, where most needed. There, slave, take away my truce! Now, quick hither with the wine-flagon, that I may fill up the drinking bowls!

CHORUS

I see a man, striding along apace, with knitted brows; he seems to us the bearer of terrible tidings.

HERALD

Oh! toils and battles! 'tis Lamachus!

LAMACHUS

What noise resounds around my dwelling, where shines the glint of arms.

HERALD

The Generals order you forthwith to take your battalions and your plumes, and, despite the snow, to go and guard our borders. They have learnt that a band of Boeotians intend taking advantage of the feast of Cups to invade our country.

LAMACHUS

Ah! the Generals! they are numerous, but not good for much! It's cruel, not to be able to enjoy the feast!

DICAEOPOLIS

Oh! warlike host of Lamachus!

LAMACHUS

Wretch! do you dare to jeer me?

DICAEOPOLIS

Do you want to fight this four-winged Geryon?

LAMACHUS

Oh! oh! what fearful tidings!

DICAEOPOLIS

Ah! ah! I see another herald running up; what news does he bring me?

HERALD

Dicaeopolis!

DICAEOPOLIS

What is the matter?

HERALD

Come quickly to the feast and bring your basket and your cup; 'tis the priest of Bacchus who invites you. But hasten, the guests have been waiting for you a long while. All is ready—couches, tables, cushions, chaplets, perfumes, dainties and courtesans to boot; biscuits, cakes, sesamé-bread, tarts, and—lovely dancing women, the sweetest charm of the festivity. But come with all haste.

LAMACHUS

Oh! hostile gods!

DICAEPOLIS

This is not astounding; you have chosen this huge, great ugly Gorgon's head for your patron. You, shut the door, and let someone get ready the meal.

LAMACHUS

Slave! slave! my knapsack!

DICAEPOLIS

Slave! slave! a basket!

LAMACHUS

Take salt and thyme, slave, and don't forget the onions.

DICAEPOLIS

Get some fish for me; I cannot bear onions.

LAMACHUS

Slave, wrap me up a little stale salt meat in a fig-leaf.

DICAEOPOLIS

And for me some good greasy tripe in a fig-leaf; I will have it cooked here.

LAMACHUS

Bring me the plumes for my helmet.

DICAEOPOLIS

Bring me wild pigeons and thrushes.

LAMACHUS

How white and beautiful are these ostrich feathers!

DICAEOPOLIS

How fat and well browned is the flesh of this wood-pigeon!

LAMACHUS

Bring me the case for my triple plume.

DICAEOPOLIS

Pass me over that dish of hare.

LAMACHUS

Oh! the moths have eaten the hair of my crest!

DICAEOPOLIS

I shall always eat hare before dinner.

LAMACHUS

Hi! friend! try not to scoff at my armour.

DICAEPOLIS

Hi! friend! will you kindly not stare at my thrushes.

LAMACHUS

Hi! friend! will you kindly not address me.

DICAEPOLIS

I do not address you; I am scolding my slave. Shall we wager and submit the matter to Lamachus, which of the two is the best to eat, a locust or a thrush?

LAMACHUS

Insolent hound!

DICAEPOLIS

He much prefers the locusts.

LAMACHUS

Slave, unhook my spear and bring it to me.

DICAEPOLIS

Slave, slave, take the sausage from the fire and bring it to me.

LAMACHUS

Come, let me draw my spear from its sheath. Hold it, slave, hold it tight.

DICAEPOLIS

And you, slave, grip, grip well hold of the skewer.

LAMACHUS

Slave, the bracings for my shield.

DICAEOPOLIS

Pull the loaves out of the oven and bring me these bracings of my stomach.

LAMACHUS

My round buckler with the Gorgon's head.

DICAEOPOLIS

My round cheese-cake.

LAMACHUS

What clumsy wit!

DICAEOPOLIS

What delicious cheese-cake!

LAMACHUS

Pour oil on the buckler. Hah! hah! I can see an old man who will be accused of cowardice.

DICAEOPOLIS

Pour honey on the cake. Hah! hah! I can see an old man who makes Lamachus of the Gorgon's head weep with rage.

LAMACHUS

Slave, full war armour.

DICAEOPOLIS

Slave, my beaker; that is *my* armour.

LAMACHUS

With this I hold my ground with any foe.

DICAEOPOLIS

And I with this with any tosspot.

LAMACHUS

Fasten the strappings to the buckler; personally I shall carry the knapsack.

DICAEOPOLIS

Pack the dinner well into the basket; personally I shall carry the cloak.

LAMACHUS

Slave, take up the buckler and let's be off. It is snowing! Ah! 'tis a question of facing the winter.

DICAEOPOLIS

Take up the basket, 'tis a question of getting to the feast.

CHORUS

We wish you both joy on your journeys, which differ so much. One goes to mount guard and freeze, while the other will drink, crowned with flowers, and then sleep with a young beauty, who will rub his tool for him.

I say it freely; may Zeus confound Antimachus, the poet-historian, the son of Psacas! When Choregus at the Lenaea, alas! alas! he dismissed me dinnerless. May I see him devouring with his eyes a cuttle-fish, just served, well cooked, hot and properly salted; and the moment that he stretches his hand to help himself, may a dog seize it and run off with it. Such is my first wish. I also hope for him a misfortune at night. That returning all-fevered from horse practice, he may meet an Orestes, mad with drink, who breaks open his head; that wishing to seize a stone, he, in the dark, may pick up a fresh stool, hurl his missile, miss aim and hit Cratinus.

SLAVE OF LAMACHUS

Slaves of Lamachus! Water, water in a little pot! Make it warm, get ready cloths, cerate, greasy wool and bandages for his ankle. In leaping a ditch, the master has hurt himself against a stake; he has dislocated and twisted his ankle, broken his head by falling on a stone, while his Gorgon shot far away from his buckler. His mighty braggadocio plume rolled on the ground; at this sight he uttered these doleful words, "Radiant star, I gaze on thee for the last time; my eyes close to all light, I die." Having said this, he falls into the water, gets out again, meets some runaways and pursues the robbers with his spear at their backsides. But here he comes, himself. Get the door open.

LAMACHUS

Oh! heavens! oh! heavens! What cruel pain! I faint, I tremble! Alas! I die! the foe's lance has struck me! But what would hurt me most would be for Dicaeopolis to see me wounded thus and laugh at my ill-fortune.

DICAEOPOLIS (*enters with two courtesans*). Oh! my gods! what bosoms! Hard as a quince! Come, my treasures, give me voluptuous kisses! Glue your lips to mine. Haha! I was the first to empty my cup.

LAMACHUS

Oh! cruel fate! how I suffer! accursed wounds!

DICAEOPOLIS

Hah! hah! hail! Knight Lamachus! (*Embraces Lamachus.*)

LAMACHUS

By the hostile gods! (*Bites Dicaeopolis.*)

DICAEOPOLIS

Ah! great gods!

LAMACHUS

Why do you embrace me?

DICAEOPOLIS

And why do you bite me?

LAMACHUS

'Twas a cruel score I was paying back!

DICAEOPOLIS

Scores are not evened at the feast of Cups!

LAMACHUS

Oh! Paean, Paean!

DICAEOPOLIS

But to-day is not the feast of Paean.

LAMACHUS

Oh! support my leg, do; ah! hold it tenderly, my friends!

DICAEOPOLIS

And you, my darlings, take hold of my tool both of you!

LAMACHUS

This blow with the stone makes me dizzy; my sight grows dim.

DICAEOPOLIS

For myself, I want to get to bed; I am bursting with lustfulness, I want to be fucking in the dark.

LAMACHUS

Carry me to the surgeon Pittalus.

DICAEOPOLIS

Take me to the judges. Where is the king of the feast? The wine-skin is mine!

LAMACHUS

That spear has pierced my bones; what torture I endure!

DICAEOPOLIS

You see this empty cup! I triumph! I triumph!

CHORUS

Old man, I come at your bidding! You triumph! you triumph!

DICAEOPOLIS

Again I have brimmed my cup with unmixed wine and drained it at a draught!

CHORUS

You triumph then, brave champion; thine is the wine-skin!

DICAEOPOLIS

Follow me, singing "Triumph! Triumph!"

CHORUS

Aye! we will sing of thee, thee and thy sacred wine-skin, and we all, as we follow thee, will repeat in thine honour, "Triumph, Triumph!"

FINIS OF "THE ACHARNIANS"

Footnotes: