Lysistrata

Aristophanes



PIPCUB EDITIONS

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Aristophanes

Translated by Jack Lindsay

THE AUTHOR

Aristophanes

450 – 388 BCE

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Aristophanes

Aristophanes was an Athenian comic playwright writing during and after the Peloponnesian War. His surviving plays use fantasy, disguise, song, and direct political argument to expose the contradictions of civic life.

The Birds, The Clouds, and The Acharnians are among Aristophanes' surviving comedies. Their worlds can be deliberately fantastic, but their quarrels remain recognizable as arguments about civic life. Songs and choruses give those arguments a voice larger than any one character.

Aristophanes gives a public argument the language and physical business of the comic stage. The dispute changes when the people affected by war find a way to make themselves heard. The chorus, entrances, and confrontations are as important to the argument as any single speech.

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Lysistrata

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LYSISTRATA

Translated from the Greek of

ARISTOPHANES

Illustrations by Norman Lindsay



FOREWORD

Lysistrata is the greatest work by Aristophanes. This blank and rash statement is made that it may be rejected. But first let it be understood that I do not mean it is a better written work than the *Birds* or the *Frogs*, or that (to descend to the scale of values that will be naturally imputed to me) it has any more appeal to the collectors of "curious literature" than the *Ecclesiazusae* or the *Thesmophoriazusae*. On the mere grounds of taste I can see an at least equally good case made out for the *Birds*. That brightly plumaged fantasy has an aerial wit and colour all its own. But there are certain works in which a man finds himself at an angle of vision where there is an especially felicitous union of the aesthetic and emotional elements which constitute the basic qualities of his uniqueness. We recognize these works as being welded into a

strange unity, as having a homogeneous texture of ecstasy over them that surpasses any aesthetic surface of harmonic colour, though that harmony also is understood by the deeper welling of imagery from the core of creative exaltation. And I think that this occurs in *Lysistrata*. The intellectual and spiritual tendrils of the poem are more truly interwoven, the operation of their centres more nearly unified; and so the work goes deeper into life. It is his greatest play because of this, because it holds an intimate perfume of femininity and gives the finest sense of the charm of a cluster of girls, the sweet sense of their chatter, and the contact of their bodies, that is to be found before Shakespeare, because that mocking gaiety we call Aristophanies reaches here its most positive acclamation of life, vitalizing sex with a deep delight, a rare happiness of the spirit.

Indeed it is precisely for these reasons that it is *not* considered Aristophanes' greatest play.

To take a case which is sufficiently near to the point in question, to make clear what I mean: the supremacy of *Antony and Cleopatra* in the Shakespearean aesthetic is yet jealously disputed, and it seems silly to the academic to put it up against a work like *Hamlet*. But it is the comparatively more obvious achievement of *Hamlet*, its surface intellectuality, which made it the favourite of actors and critics. It is much more difficult to realize the complex and delicately passionate edge of the former play's rhythm, its tides of hugely wandering emotion, the restless, proud, gay, and agonized reaction from life, of the blood, of the mind, of the heart, which is its unity, than to follow the relatively straightforward definition of Hamlet's nerves. Not that anything derogatory to *Hamlet* or the *Birds* is intended; but the value of such works is not enhanced by forcing them into contrast with other works which cover deeper and wider nexus of aesthetic and spiritual material. It is the very subtlety of the vitality of such works as *Antony and Cleopatra* and *Lysistrata* that makes it so easy to undervalue them, to see only a phallic play and political pamphlet in one, only a chronicle play in a grandiose method in the other. For we have to be in a highly sensitized condition before we can get to that subtle point where life and the

image mix, and so really perceive the work at all; whereas we can command the response to a lesser work which does not call so finely on the full breadth and depth of our spiritual resources.

I amuse myself at times with the fancy that Homer, Sappho, and Aristophanes are the inviolable Trinity of poetry, even to the extent of being reducible to One. For the fiery and lucid directness of Sappho, if her note of personal lyricism is abstracted, is seen to be an element of Homer, as is the profoundly balanced humour of Aristophanes, at once tenderly human and cruelly hard, as of a god to whom all sympathies and tolerances are known, but who is invulnerable somewhere, who sees from a point in space where the pressure of earth's fear and pain, and so its pity, is lifted. It is here that the Shakespearean and Homeric worlds impinge and merge, not to be separated by any academic classifications. They meet in this sensitivity equally involved and aloof, sympathetic and arrogant, suffering and joyous; and in this relation we see Aristophanes as the forerunner of Shakespeare, his only one. We see also that the whole present aesthetic of earth is based in Homer. We live and grow in the world of consciousness bequeathed to us by him; and if we grow beyond it through deeper Shakespearean ardours, it is because those beyond are rooted in the broad basis of the Homeric imagination. To shift that basis is to find the marshes of primitive night and fear alone beneath the feet: Christianity.

And here we return to the question of the immorality of *Lysistrata*. First we may inquire: is it possible for a man whose work has so tremendous a significance in the spiritual development of mankind--and I do not think anyone nowadays doubts that a work of art is the sole stabilizing force that exists for life--is it possible for a man who stands so grandly at head of an immense stream of liberating effort to write an immoral work? Surely the only enduring moral virtue which can be claimed is for that which moves to more power, beauty and delight in the future? The plea that the question of changing customs arises is not valid, for customs ratified by Aristophanes, by Rabelais, by Shakespeare, have no right to change. If they have changed, let us try immediately to return from our disgraceful refinements to the nobler and more rarefied heights of lyric laughter, tragic intensity, and wit, for we cannot have the

first two without the last. And anyhow, how can a social custom claim precedence over the undying material of the senses and the emotions of man, over the very generating forces of life?

How could the humanistic emotions, such as pity, justice, sympathy, exist save as pacifistic quietings of the desire to slay, to hurt, to torment. Where the desire to hurt is gone pity ceases to be a significant, a central emotion. It must of course continue to exist, but it is displaced in the spiritual hierarchy; and all that moves courageously, desirously, and vitally into the action of life takes on a deeper and subtler intention. Lust, then, which on the lower plane was something to be very frightened of, becomes a symbol of the highest spirituality. It is right for Paul to be terrified of sex and so to hate it, because he has so freshly escaped a bestial condition of life that it threatens to plunge him back if he listens to one whisper But it is also right for a Shakespeare to suck every drop of desire from life, for he is building into a higher condition, one self-willed, self-responsible, the discipline of which comes from joy, not fear.

Sex, therefore, is an animal function, one admits, one insists; it may be only that. But also in the bewildering and humorous and tragic duality of all life's energies, it is the bridge to every eternity which is not merely a spectral condition of earth disembowelled of its lusts. For sex holds the substance of the image. But we must remember with Heine that Aristophanes is the God of this ironic earth, and that all argument is apparently vitiated from the start by the simple fact that Wagner and a rooster are given an analogous method of making love. And therefore it seems impeccable logic to say that all that is most unlike the rooster is the most spiritual part of love. All will agree on that, schisms only arise when one tries to decide what does go farthest from the bird's automatic mechanism. Certainly not a Dante-Beatrice affair which is only the negation of the rooster in terms of the swooning bombast of adolescence, the first onslaught of a force which the sufferer cannot control or inhabit with all the potentialities of his body and soul. But the rooster is troubled by no dreams of a divine orgy, no carnival-loves like Beethoven's *Fourth Symphony*, no heroic and shining lust

gathering and swinging into a merry embrace like the third act of *Siegfried*. It is desire in this sense that goes farthest from the animal.

Consciously, no one can achieve the act of love on earth as a completed thing of grace, with whatever delirium of delight, with whatever ingenious preciosity, we go through its process. Only as an image of beauty mated in some strange hermaphroditic ecstasy is that possible. I mean only as a dream projected into a hypothetical, a real heaven. But on earth we cannot complete the cycle in consciousness that would give us the freedom of an image in which two identities mysteriously realize their separate unities by the absorption of a third thing, the constructive rhythm of a work of art. It is thus that Tristan and Isolde become wholly distinct individuals, yet wholly submerged in the unity that is Wagner; and so reconcile life's duality by balancing its opposing laughters in a definite form--thereby sending out into life a profounder duality than existed before. A Platonic equipoise, Nietzsche's Eternal Recurrence--the only real philosophic problem, therefore one of which these two philosophers alone are aware.

But though Wagner with Mathilde Wesendonck in his arms was Tristan in the arms of Isolde, he did not find a melody instead of a kiss on his lips; he did not find a progression of harmonies melting through the contours of a warm beauty with a blur of desperate ecstasies, semitones of desire, he found only the anxious happiness of any other lover. Nevertheless, he was gathering the substance of the second act of *Tristan und Isolde*. And it is this that Plato means when he says that fornication is something immortal in mortality. He does not mean that the act itself is a godlike thing, a claim which any bedroom mirror would quickly deride. He means that it is a symbol, an essential condition, and a part of something that goes deeper into life than any geometry of earth's absurd, passionate, futile, and very necessary antics would suggest.

It is a universal fallacy that because works like the comedies of Aristophanes discuss certain social or ethical problems, they are inspired by them. Aristophanes wrote to express his vision on life, his delight in life itself seen behind the warping screen of contemporary event; and for his purposes anything from Euripides

to Cleon served as ground work. Not that he would think in those terms, naturally: but the rationalizing process that goes on in consciousness during the creation of a work of art, for all its appearance of directing matters, is the merest weathercock in the wind of the subconscious intention. As an example of how utterly it is possible to misunderstand the springs of inspiration in a poem, we may take the following remark of B. B. Rogers: *It is much to be regretted that the phallus element should be so conspicuous in this play.... (This) coarseness, so repulsive to ourselves, was introduced, it is impossible to doubt, for the express purpose of counter-balancing the extreme earnestness and gravity of the play*. It seems so logical, so irrefutable; and so completely misinterprets every creative force of Aristophanes' Psyche that it certainly deserves a little admiration. It is in the best academic tradition, and everyone respects a man for writing so mendaciously. The effort of these castrators is always to show that the parts considered offensive are not the natural expression of the poet, that they are dictated externally. They argue that Shakespeare's coarseness is the result of the age and not personal predilection, completely ignoring the work of men like Sir Philip Sidney and Spenser, indeed practically all the pre-Shakespearean writers, in whom none of this so-called grossness exists. Shakespeare wrote sculduddery because he liked it, and for no other reason; his sensuality is the measure of his vitality. These liars pretend similarly that because Rabelais had a humanistic reason for much of his work--the destructior Mediaevalism, and the Church, which purpose they construe of course as an effort to purify, etc.--therefore he only put the lewdery to make the rest palatable, when it should be obvious even to an academic how he glories in his wild humour.

What the academic cannot understand is that in such works, while attacking certain conditions, the creative power of the vigorous spirits is so great that it overflows and saturates the intellectual conception with their own passionate sense of life. It is for this reason that these works have an eternal significance. If Rabelais were merely a social reformer, then the value of his work

would not have outlived his generation. If *Lysistrata* were but a wise political tract, it would have merely an historical interest, and it would have ceased spiritually at 404 B.C.

But Panurge is as fantastic and fascinating a character now as he was 300 years ago, Lysistrata and her girls as freshly bodied as any girl kissed to-day. Therefore the serious part of the play is that which deals with them, the frivolous part that in which Rogers detects gravity and earnestness.

Aristophanes is the lord of all who take life as a gay adventure, who defy all efforts to turn life into a social, economic, or moral abstraction. Is it therefore just that the critics who, by some dark instinct, unerringly pick out the exact opposite of any creator's real virtues as his chief characteristics, should praise him as an idealistic reformer? An "ideal" state of society was the last thing Aristophanes desired. He wished, certainly, to eliminate inhumanities and baseness; but only that there might be free play for laughter, for individual happiness.

Consequently the critics lay the emphasis on the effort to cleanse society, not the method of laughter. Aristophanes wished to destroy Cleon because that demagogue failed to realize the poet's conception of dignified government and tended to upset the stability of Hellas. But it was the stability of life, the vindication of all individual freedoms, in which he was ultimately interested.

JACK LINDSAY.



LYSISTRATA

The Persons of the drama.

LYSISTRATA
CALONICE
MYRRHINE
LAMPITO
Stratyllis, etc.
Chorus of Women.
MAGISTRATE
CINESIAS
SPARTAN HERALD
ENVOYS
ATHENIANS
Porter, Market Idlers, etc.
Chorus of old Men.

LYSISTRATA *stands alone with the Propylaea at her back.*

LYSISTRATA

If they were trysting for a Bacchanal,
A feast of Pan or Colias or Genetyllis,
The tambourines would block the rowdy streets,
But now there's not a woman to be seen
Except--ah, yes--this neighbour of mine yonder.

Enter CALONICE.

Good day Calonice.

CALONICE

Good day Lysistrata.
But what has vexed you so? Tell me, child.
What are these black looks for? It doesn't suit you
To knit your eyebrows up glumly like that.

LYSISTRATA

Calonice, it's more than I can bear,
I am hot all over with blushes for our sex.
Men say we're slippery rogues--

CALONICE

And aren't they right?

LYSISTRATA

Yet summoned on the most tremendous business
For deliberation, still they snuggle in bed.

CALONICE

My dear, they'll come. It's hard for women, you know,
To get away. There's so much to do;
Husbands to be patted and put in good tempers:
Servants to be poked out: children washed
Or soothed with lullays or fed with mouthfuls of pap.

LYSISTRATA

But I tell you, here's a far more weighty object.

CALONICE

What is it all about, dear Lysistrata,
That you've called the women hither in a troop?
What kind of an object is it?

LYSISTRATA

A tremendous thing!

CALONICE

And long?

LYSISTRATA

Indeed, it may be very lengthy.

CALONICE

Then why aren't they here?

LYSISTRATA

No man's connected with it;
If that was the case, they'd soon come fluttering along.
No, no. It concerns an object I've felt over
And turned this way and that for sleepless nights.

CALONICE

It must be fine to stand such long attention.

LYSISTRATA

So fine it comes to this--Greece saved by Woman!

CALONICE

By Woman? Wretched thing, I'm sorry for it.

LYSISTRATA

Our country's fate is henceforth in our hands:
To destroy the Peloponnesians root and branch--

CALONICE

What could be nobler!

LYSISTRATA

Wipe out the Boeotians--

CALONICE

Not utterly. Have mercy on the eels!
[Footnote: The Boeotian eels were highly esteemed delicacies in Athens.]

LYSISTRATA

But with regard to Athens, note I'm careful
Not to say any of these nasty things;
Still, thought is free.... But if the women join us
From Peloponnesus and Boeotia, then
Hand in hand we'll rescue Greece.

CALONICE

How could we do
Such a big wise deed? We women who dwell
Quietly adorning ourselves in a back-room
With gowns of lucid gold and gawdy toilets
Of stately silk and dainty little slippers....

LYSISTRATA

These are the very armaments of the rescue.
These crocus-gowns, this outlay of the best myrrh,
Slippers, cosmetics dusting beauty, and robes
With rippling creases of light.

CALONICE

Yes, but how?

LYSISTRATA

No man will lift a lance against another--

CALONICE

I'll run to have my tunic dyed crocus.

LYSISTRATA

Or take a shield--

CALONICE

I'll get a stately gown.

LYSISTRATA

Or unscabbard a sword--

CALONICE

Let me buy a pair of slipper.

LYSISTRATA

Now, tell me, are the women right to lag?

CALONICE

They should have turned birds, they should have grown wings and flown.

LYSISTRATA

My friend, you'll see that they are true Athenians:
Always too late. Why, there's not a woman
From the shoreward demes arrived, not one from Salamis.

CALONICE

I know for certain they awoke at dawn,
And got their husbands up if not their boat sails.

LYSISTRATA

And I'd have staked my life the Acharnian dames
Would be here first, yet they haven't come either!

CALONICE

Well anyhow there is Theagenes' wife
We can expect--she consulted Hecate.
But look, here are some at last, and more behind them.
See ... where are they from?

CALONICE

From Anagyra they come.

LYSISTRATA

Yes, they generally manage to come first.

Enter MYRRHINE.

MYRRHINE

Are we late, Lysistrata? ... What is that?
Nothing to say?

LYSISTRATA

I've not much to say for you,
Myrrhine, dawdling on so vast an affair.

MYRRHINE

I couldn't find my girdle in the dark.
But if the affair's so wonderful, tell us, what is it?

LYSISTRATA

No, let us stay a little longer till
The Peloponnesian girls and the girls of Bocotia
Are here to listen.

MYRRHINE

That's the best advice.
Ah, there comes Lampito.

Enter LAMPITO.

LYSISTRATA

Welcome Lampito!
Dear Spartan girl with a delightful face,
Washed with the rosy spring, how fresh you look
In the easy stride of your sleek slenderness,
Why you could strangle a bull!

LAMPITO

I think I could.
It's frae exercise and kicking high behint.

[Footnote: The translator has put the speech of the Spartan characters
in Scotch dialect which is related to English about as was the Spartan
dialect to the speech of Athens. The Spartans, in their character,
anticipated the shrewd, canny, uncouth Scotch highlander of modern
times.]

LYSISTRATA

What lovely breasts to own!

LAMPITO

Oo ... your fingers
Assess them, ye tickler, wi' such tender chucks
I feel as if I were an altar-victim.

LYSISTRATA

Who is this youngster?

LAMPITO

A Boeotian lady.

LYSISTRATA

There never was much undergrowth in Boeotia,
Such a smooth place, and this girl takes after it.

CALONICE

Yes, I never saw a skin so primly kept.

LYSISTRATA

This girl?

LAMPITO

A sonsie open-looking jinker!
She's a Corinthian.

LYSISTRATA

Yes, isn't she
Very open, in some ways particularly.

LAMPITO

But who's garred this Council o' Women to meet here?

LYSISTRATA

I have.

LAMPITO

Propound then what you want o' us.

MYRRHINE

What is the amazing news you have to tell?

LYSISTRATA

I'll tell you, but first answer one small question.

MYRRHINE

As you like.

LYSISTRATA

Are you not sad your children's fathers
Go endlessly off soldiering afar
In this plodding war? I am willing to wager
There's not one here whose husband is at home.

CALONICE

Mine's been in Thrace, keeping an eye on Eucrates
For five months past.

MYRRHINE

And mine left me for Pylos
Seven months ago at least.

LAMPITO

And as for mine
No sooner has he slipped out frae the line
He straps his shield and he's snickt off again.

LYSISTRATA

And not the slightest glitter of a lover!
And since the Milesians betrayed us, I've not seen
The image of a single upright man
To be a marble consolation to us.
Now will you help me, if I find a means
To stamp the war out.

MYRRHINE

By the two Goddesses, Yes!
I will though I've to pawn this very dress
And drink the barter-money the same day.

CALONICE

And I too though I'm split up like a turbot
And half is hackt off as the price of peace.

LAMPITO

And I too! Why, to get a peep at the shy thing
I'd clamber up to the tip-top o' Taygetus.

LYSISTRATA

Then I'll expose my mighty mystery.
O women, if we would compel the men
To bow to Peace, we must refrain--

MYRRHINE

From what?
O tell us!

LYSISTRATA

Will you truly do it then?

MYRRHINE

We will, we will, if we must die for it.

LYSISTRATA

We must refrain from every depth of love....
Why do you turn your backs? Where are you going?
Why do you bite your lips and shake your heads?
Why are your faces blanched? Why do you weep?
Will you or won't you, or what do you mean?

MYRRHINE

No, I won't do it. Let the war proceed.

CALONICE

No, I won't do it. Let the war proceed.

LYSISTRATA

You too, dear turbot, you that said just now
You didn't mind being split right up in the least?

CALONICE

Anything else? O bid me walk in fire
But do not rob us of that darling joy.
What else is like it, dearest Lysistrata?

LYSISTRATA

And you?

MYRRHINE

O please give me the fire instead.

LYSISTRATA

Lewd to the least drop in the tiniest vein,
Our sex is fitly food for Tragic Poets,
Our whole life's but a pile of kisses and babies.
But, hardy Spartan, if you join with me
All may be righted yet. O help me, help me.

LAMPITO

It's a sair, sair thing to ask of us, by the Twa,
A lass to sleep her lane and never fill
Love's lack except wi' makeshifts.... But let it be.
Peace maun be thought of first.

LYSISTRATA

My friend, my friend!
The only one amid this herd of weaklings.

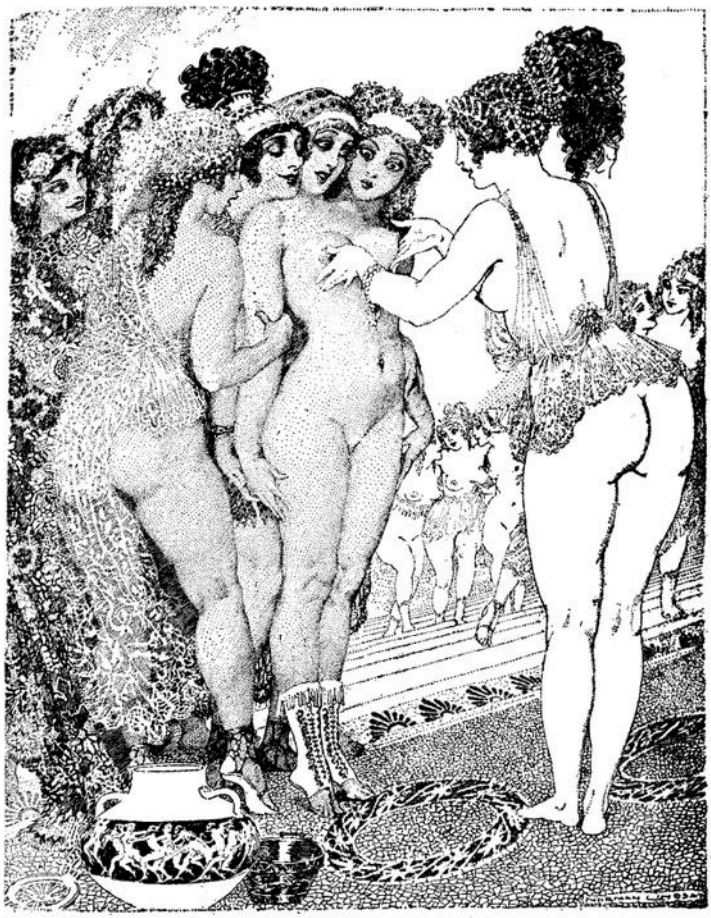
CALONICE

But if--which heaven forbid--we should refrain
As you would have us, how is Peace induced?

LYSISTRATA

By the two Goddesses, now can't you see
All we have to do is idly sit indoors
With smooth roses powdered on our cheeks,

Our bodies burning naked through the folds
Of shining Amorgos' silk, and meet the men
With our dear Venus-plats plucked trim and neat.
Their stirring love will rise up furiously,
They'll beg our arms to open. That's our time!
We'll disregard their knocking, beat them off--
And they will soon be rabid for a Peace.
I'm sure of it.



LAMPITO

Just as Menelaus, they say,
Seeing the bosom of his naked Helen
Flang down the sword.

CALONICE

But we'll be tearful fools
If our husbands take us at our word and leave us.

LYSISTRATA

There's only left then, in Pherecrates' phrase,
To flay a skinned dog--flay more our flayed desires.

CALONICE

Bah, proverbs will never warm a celibate.
But what avail will your scheme be if the men
Drag us for all our kicking on to the couch?

LYSISTRATA

Cling to the doorposts.

CALONICE

But if they should force us?

LYSISTRATA

Yield then, but with a sluggish, cold indifference.
There is no joy to them in sullen mating.
Besides we have other ways to madden them;
They cannot stand up long, and they've no delight
Unless we fit their aim with merry succour.

CALONICE

Well if you must have it so, we'll all agree.

LAMPITO

For us I ha' no doubt. We can persuade
Our men to strike a fair an' decent Peace,
But how will ye pitch out the battle-frenzy
O' the Athenian populace?

LYSISTRATA

I promise you
We'll wither up that curse.

LAMPITO

I don't believe it.
Not while they own ane trireme oared an' rigged,
Or a' those stacks an' stacks an' stacks O' siller.

LYSISTRATA

I've thought the whole thing out till there's no flaw.
We shall surprise the Acropolis today:
That is the duty set the older dames.
While we sit here talking, they are to go
And under pretence of sacrificing, seize it.

LAMPITO

Certie, that's fine; all's working for the best.

LYSISTRATA

Now quickly, Lampito, let us tie ourselves
To this high purpose as tightly as the hemp of words
Can knot together.

LAMPITO

Set out the terms in detail
And we'll a' swear to them.

LYSISTRATA

Of course.... Well then
Where is our Scythianess? Why are you staring?
First lay the shield, boss downward, on the floor
And bring the victim's inwards.

CAILONICE

But, Lysistrata,
What is this oath that we're to swear?

LYSISTRATA

What oath!
In Aeschylus they take a slaughtered sheep
And swear upon a buckler. Why not we?

CALONICE

O Lysistrata, Peace sworn on a buckler!

LYSISTRATA

What oath would suit us then?

CALONICE

Something burden bearing
Would be our best insignia.... A white horse!
Let's swear upon its entrails.

LYSISTRATA

A horse indeed!

CALONICE

Then what will symbolise us?

LYSISTRATA

This, as I tell you--
First set a great dark bowl upon the ground
And disembowel a skin of Thasian wine,
Then swear that we'll not add a drop of water.

LAMPITO

Ah, what aith could clink pleasanter than that!

LYSISTRATA

Bring me a bowl then and a skin of wine.

CALONICE

My dears, see what a splendid bowl it is;
I'd not say No if asked to sip it off.

LYSISTRATA

Put down the bowl. Lay hands, all, on the victim.
Skiey Queen who givest the last word in arguments,
And thee, O Bowl, dear comrade, we beseech:
Accept our oblation and be propitious to us.

CALONICE

What healthy blood, la, how it gushes out!

LAMPITO

An' what a leesome fragrance through the air.

LYSISTRATA

Now, dears, if you will let me, I'll speak first.

CALONICE

Only if you draw the lot, by Aphrodite!

LYSISTRATA

SO, grasp the brim, you, Lampito, and all.
You, Calonice, repeat for the rest
Each word I say. Then you must all take oath
And pledge your arms to the same stern conditions--

LYSISTRATA
To husband or lover I'll not open arms
CALONICE
To husband or lover I'll not open arms
LYSISTRATA
Though love and denial may enlarge his charms.
CALONICE
Though love and denial may enlarge his charms.
O, O, my knees are failing me, Lysistrata!
LYSISTRATA
But still at home, ignoring him, I'll stay,
CALONICE
But still at home, ignoring him, I'll stay,
LYSISTRATA
Beautiful, clad in saffron silks all day.
CALONICE
Beautiful, clad in saffron silks all day.
LYSISTRATA
If then he seizes me by dint of force,
CALONICE
If then he seizes me by dint of force,
LYSISTRATA
I'll give him reason for a long remorse.
CALONICE
I'll give him reason for a long remorse.
LYSISTRATA
I'll never lie and stare up at the ceiling,
CALONICE
I'll never lie and stare up at the ceiling,
LYSISTRATA
Nor like a lion on all fours go kneeling.
CALONICE
Nor like a lion on all fours go kneeling.

LYSISTRATA

If I keep faith, then bounteous cups be mine.

CALONICE

If I keep faith, then bounteous cups be mine.

LYSISTRATA

If not, to nauseous water change this wine.

CALONICE

If not, to nauseous water change this wine.

LYSISTRATA

Do you all swear to this?

MYRRHINE

We do, we do.

LYSISTRATA

Then I shall immolate the victim thus.

She drinks.

CALONICE

Here now, share fair, haven't we made a pact?
Let's all quaff down that friendship in our turn.

LAMPITO

Hark, what caterwauling hubbub's that?

LYSISTRATA

As I told you,
The women have appropriated the citadel.
So, Lampito, dash off to your own land
And raise the rebels there. These will serve as hostages,
While we ourselves take our places in the ranks
And drive the bolts right home.



CALONICE

But won't the men
March straight against us?

LYSISTRATA

And what if they do?
No threat shall creak our hinges wide, no torch
Shall light a fear in us; we will come out
To Peace alone.

CALONICE

That's it, by Aphrodite!
As of old let us seem hard and obdurate.

LAMPITO *and some go off; the others go up into the Acropolis.*



Chorus of OLD MEN *enter to attack the captured Acropolis.*

Make room, Draces, move ahead; why your shoulder's chafed, I see,
With lugging uphill these lopped branches of the olive-tree.

How upside-down and wrong-way-round a long life sees things grow.
Ah, Strymodorus, who'd have thought affairs could tangle so?

The women whom at home we fed,
Like witless fools, with fostering bread,
Have impiously come to this--
They've stolen the Acropolis,
With bolts and bars our orders flout
And shut us out.

Come, Philurgus, bustle thither; lay our faggots on the ground,
In neat stacks beleaguering the insurgents all around;
And the vile conspiratresses, plotters of such mischief dire,
Pile and burn them all together in one vast and righteous pyre:
Fling with our own hands Lycon's wife to fry in the thickest fire.
By Demeter, they'll get no brag while I've a vein to beat!
Cleomenes himself was hurtled out in sore defeat.
His stiff-backed Spartan pride was bent.
Out, stripped of all his arms, he went:
A pigmy cloak that would not stretch
To hide his rump (the draggled wretch),
Six sprouting years of beard, the spilth
Of six years' filth.

That was a siege! Our men were ranged in lines of seventeen deep
Before the gates, and never left their posts there, even to sleep.
Shall I not smite the rash presumption then of foes like these,
Detested both of all the gods and of Euripides--
Else, may the Marathon-plain not boast my trophied victories!

Ah, now, there's but a little space
To reach the place!
A deadly climb it is, a tricky road
With all this bumping load:
A pack-ass soon would tire....
How these logs bruise my shoulders! further still
Jog up the hill,
And puff the fire inside,

Or just as we reach the top we'll find it's died.
Ough, phew!
I choke with the smoke.

Lord Heracles, how acrid-hot
Out of the pot
This mad-dog smoke leaps, worrying me
And biting angrily....
'Tis Lemnian fire that smokes,
Or else it would not sting my eyelids thus....
Haste, all of us;
Athene invokes our aid.
Laches, now or never the assault must be made!
Ough, phew!
I choke with the smoke. ..

Thanked be the gods! The fire peeps up and crackles as it should.
Now why not first slide off our backs these weary loads of wood
And dip a vine-branch in the brazier till it glows, then straight
Hurl it at the battering-ram against the stubborn gate?
If they refuse to draw the bolts in immediate compliance,
We'll set fire to the wood, and smoke will strangle their defiance.

Phew, what a spluttering drench of smoke! Come, now from off my back....
Is there no Samos-general to help me to unpack?
Ah there, that's over! For the last time now it's galled my shoulder.
Flare up thine embers, brazier, and dutifully smoulder,
To kindle a brand, that I the first may strike the citadel.
Aid me, Lady Victory, that a triumph-trophy may tell
How we did anciently this insane audacity quell!

Chorus of WOMEN.

What's that rising yonder? That ruddy glare, that smoky skurry?
O is it something in a blaze? Quick, quick, my comrades, hurry!
Nicodice, helter-skelter!
Or poor Calyce's in flames
And Cratylla's stifled in the welter.
O these dreadful old men
And their dark laws of hate!
There, I'm all of a tremble lest I turn out to be too late.

I could scarcely get near to the spring though I rose before dawn,
What with tattling of tongues and rattling of pitchers in one jostling din
With slaves pushing in!....

Still here at last the water's drawn
And with it eagerly I run
To help those of my friends who stand
In danger of being burned alive.
For I am told a dribbling band
Of greybeards hobble to the field,
Great faggots in each palsied hand,
As if a hot bath to prepare,
And threatening that out they'll drive
These wicked women or soon leave them charring into ashes there.
O Goddess, suffer not, I pray, this harsh deed to be done,
But show us Greece and Athens with their warlike acts repealed!
For this alone, in this thy hold,
Thou Goddess with the helm of gold,
We laid hands on thy sanctuary,
Athene.... Then our ally be
And where they cast their fires of slaughter
Direct our water!

STRATYLLIS (*caught*)

Let me go!

WOMEN

You villainous old men, what's this you do?
No honest man, no pious man, could do such things as you.

MEN

Ah ha, here's something most original, I have no doubt:
A swarm of women sentinels to man the walls without.

WOMEN

So then we scare you, do we? Do we seem a fearful host?
You only see the smallest fraction mustered at this post.

MEN

Ho, Phaedrias, shall we put a stop to all these chattering tricks?
Suppose that now upon their backs we splintered these our sticks?

WOMEN

Let us lay down the pitchers, so our bodies will be free,
In case these lumping fellows try to cause some injury.

MEN

O hit them hard and hit again and hit until they run away,
And perhaps they'll learn, like Bupalus, not to have too much to say.

WOMEN

Come on, then--do it! I won't budge, but like a dog I'll bite
At every little scrap of meat that dangles in my sight.

MEN

Be quiet, or I'll bash you out of any years to come.

WOMEN

Now you just touch Stratyllis with the top-joint of your thumb.

MEN

What vengeance can you take if with my fists your face I beat?

WOMEN

I'll rip you with my teeth and strew your entrails at your feet.

MEN

Now I appreciate Euripides' strange subtlety:
Woman is the most shameless beast of all the beasts that be.

WOMEN

Rhodippe, come, and let's pick up our water-jars once more.

MEN

Ah cursed drab, what have you brought this water for?

WOMEN

What is your fire for then, you smelly corpse? Yourself to burn?

MEN

To build a pyre and make your comrades ready for the urn.

WOMEN

And I've the water to put out your fire immediately.

MEN

What, you put out my fire?

WOMEN

Yes, sirrah, as you soon will see.

MEN

I don't know why I hesitate to roast you with this flame.

WOMEN

If you have any soap you'll go off cleaner than you came.

MEN

Cleaner, you dirty slut?

WOMEN

A nuptial-bath in which to lie!

MEN

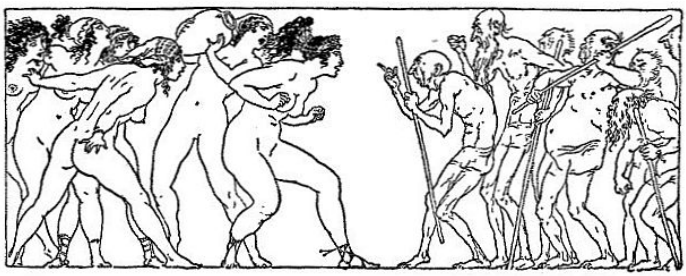
Did you hear that insolence?

WOMEN

I'm a free woman, I.

MEN

I'll make you hold your tongue.



WOMEN

Henceforth you'll serve in no more juries.

MEN

Burn off her hair for her.

WOMEN

Now forward, water, quench their furies!

MEN

O dear, O dear!

WOMEN

So ... was it hot?

MEN

Hot! ... Enough, O hold.

WOMEN

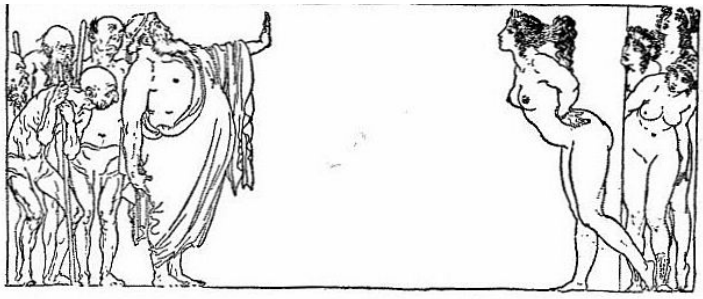
Watered, perhaps you'll bloom again--why not?

MEN

Brrr, I'm wrinkled up from shivering with cold.

WOMEN

Next time you've fire you'll warm yourself and leave us to our lot.



MAGISTRATE *enters with attendant* SCYTHIANS.

MAGISTRATE

Have the luxurious rites of the women glittered
Their libertine show, their drumming tapped out crowds,
The Sabazian Mysteries summoned their mob,
Adonis been wept to death on the terraces,
As I could hear the last day in the Assembly?
For Demostratus--let bad luck befoul him--
Was roaring, "We must sail for Sicily,"
While a woman, throwing herself about in a dance
Lopsided with drink, was shrilling out "Adonis,
Woe for Adonis." Then Demostratus shouted,
"We must levy hoplites at Zacynthus,"
And there the woman, up to the ears in wine,
Was screaming "Weep for Adonis" on the house-top,

The scoundrelly politician, that lunatic ox,
Bellowing bad advice through tipsy shrieks:
Such are the follies wantoning in them.

MEN

O if you knew their full effrontery!
All of the insults they've done, besides sousing us
With water from their pots to our public disgrace
For we stand here wringing our clothes like grown-up infants.

MAGISTRATE

By Poseidon, justly done! For in part with us
The blame must lie for dissolute behaviour
And for the pampered appetites they learn.
Thus grows the seedling lust to blossoming:
We go into a shop and say, "Here, goldsmith,
You remember the necklace that you wrought my wife;
Well, the other night in fervour of a dance
Her clasp broke open. Now I'm off for Salamis;
If you've the leisure, would you go tonight
And stick a bolt-pin into her opened clasp."
Another goes to a cobbler; a soldierly fellow,
Always standing up erect, and says to him,
"Cobbler, a sandal-strap of my wife's pinches her,
Hurts her little toe in a place where she's sensitive.
Come at noon and see if you can stretch out wider
This thing that troubles her, loosen its tightness."
And so you view the result. Observe my case--
I, a magistrate, come here to draw
Money to buy oar-blades, and what happens?
The women slam the door full in my face.
But standing still's no use. Bring me a crowbar,
And I'll chastise this their impertinence.
What do you gape at, wretch, with dazzled eyes?
Peering for a tavern, I suppose.
Come, force the gates with crowbars, prise them apart!
I'll prise away myself too.... (LYSISTRATA *appears*.)

LYSISTRATA

Stop this banging.
I'm coming of my own accord.... Why bars?
It is not bars we need but common sense.

MAGISTRATE

Indeed, you slut! Where is the archer now?
Arrest this woman, tie her hands behind.

LYSISTRATA

If he brushes me with a finger, by Artemis,
The public menial, he'll be sorry for it.

MAGISTRATE

Are you afraid? Grab her about the middle.
Two of you then, lay hands on her and end it.

CALONICE

By Pandrosos I if your hand touches her
I'll spread you out and trample on your guts.

MAGISTRATE

My guts! Where is the other archer gone?
Bind that minx there who talks so prettily.

MYRRHINE

By Phosphor, if your hand moves out her way
You'd better have a surgeon somewhere handy.

MAGISTRATE

You too! Where is that archer? Take that woman.
I'll put a stop to these surprise-parties.

STRATYLLIS

By the Tauric Artemis, one inch nearer
My fingers, and it's a bald man that'll be yelling.

MAGISTRATE

Tut tut, what's here? Deserted by my archers....
But surely women never can defeat us;
Close up your ranks, my Scythians. Forward at them.



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LYSISTRATA

By the Goddesses, you'll find that here await you
Four companies of most pugnacious women
Armed cap-a-pie from the topmost louring curl
To the lowest angry dimple.

MAGISTRATE

On, Scythians, bind them.

LYSISTRATA

On, gallant allies of our high design,
Vendors of grain-eggs-pulse-and-vegetables,
Ye garlic-tavern-keepers of bakeries,

Strike, batter, knock, hit, slap, and scratch our foes,
Be finely imprudent, say what you think of them....
Enough! retire and do not rob the dead.

MAGISTRATE

How basely did my archer-force come off.

LYSISTRATA

Ah, ha, you thought it was a herd of slaves
You had to tackle, and you didn't guess
The thirst for glory ardent in our blood.

MAGISTRATE

By Apollo, I know well the thirst that heats you--
Especially when a wine-skin's close.

MEN

You waste your breath, dear magistrate, I fear, in answering back.
What's the good of argument with such a rampageous pack?
Remember how they washed us down (these very clothes I wore)
With water that looked nasty and that smelt so even more.

WOMEN

What else to do, since you advanced too dangerously nigh.
If you should do the same again, I'll punch you in the eye.
Though I'm a stay-at-home and most a quiet life enjoy,
Polite to all and every (for I'm naturally coy),
Still if you wake a wasps' nest then of wasps you must beware.

MEN

How may this ferocity be tamed? It grows too great to bear.
Let us question them and find if they'll perchance declare
The reason why they strangely dare
To seize on Cranaos' citadel,
This eyrie inaccessible,
This shrine above the precipice,
The Acropolis.
Probe them and find what they mean with this idle talk; listen,
but watch they don't try to deceive.
You'd be neglecting your duty most certainly if now this mystery
unplumbed you leave.

MAGISTRATE

Women there! Tell what I ask you, directly....
Come, without rambling, I wish you to state
What's your rebellious intention in barring up thus on our noses
our own temple-gate.

LYSISTRATA

To take first the treasury out of your management, and so stop the war
through the absence of gold.

MAGISTRATE

Is gold then the cause of the war?

LYSISTRATA

Yes, gold caused it and miseries more, too many to be told.
'Twas for money, and money alone, that Pisander with all of the army of
mob-agitators.
Raised up revolutions. But, as for the future, it won't be worth while to set up to be traitors.
Not an obol they'll get as their loot, not an obol! while we have the treasure-chest in our command.

MAGISTRATE

What then is that you propose?

LYSISTRATA

Just this--merely to take the exchequer henceforth in hand.

MAGISTRATE

The exchequer!

LYSISTRATA

Yes, why not? Of our capabilities you have had various clear evidences.
Firstly remember we have always administered soundly the budget of all
home-expenses.

MAGISTRATE

But this matter's different.

LYSISTRATA

How is it different?

MAGISTRATE

Why, it deals chiefly with war-time supplies.

LYSISTRATA

But we abolish war straight by our policy.

MAGISTRATE

What will you do if emergencies arise?

LYSISTRATA

Face them our own way.

MAGISTRATE

What *you* will?

LYSISTRATA

Yes *we* will!

MAGISTRATE

Then there's no help for it; we're all destroyed.

LYSISTRATA

No, willy-nilly you must be safeguarded.

MAGISTRATE

What madness is this?

LYSISTRATA

Why, it seems you're annoyed.
It must be done, that's all.

MAGISTRATE

Such awful oppression never,
O never in the past yet I bore.

LYSISTRATA

You must be saved, sirrah--that's all there is to it.

MAGISTRATE

If we don't want to be saved?

LYSISTRATA

All the more.

MAGISTRATE

Why do you women come prying and meddling in matters of state touching
war-time and peace?

LYSISTRATA

That I will tell you.

MAGISTRATE

O tell me or quickly I'll--

LYSISTRATA

Hearken awhile and from threatening cease.

MAGISTRATE

I cannot, I cannot; it's growing too insolent.

WOMEN

Come on; you've far more than we have to dread.

MAGISTRATE

Stop from your croaking, old carrion-crow there....
Continue.

LYSISTRATA

Be calm then and I'll go ahead.
All the long years when the hopeless war dragged along we, unassuming,
forgotten in quiet,
Endured without question, endured in our loneliness all your incessant
child's antics and riot.
Our lips we kept tied, though aching with silence, though well all the while in our silence we knew
How wretchedly everything still was progressing by listening dumbly the
day long to you.
For always at home you continued discussing the war and its politics loudly, and we
Sometimes would ask you, our hearts deep with sorrowing though we spoke
lightly, though happy to see,
"What's to be inscribed on the side of the Treaty-stone

What, dear, was said in the Assembly today?"
"Mind your own business," he'd answer me growlingly
"hold your tongue, woman, or else go away."
And so I would hold it.

WOMEN

I'd not be silent for any man living on earth, no, not I!

MAGISTRATE

Not for a staff?

LYSISTRATA

Well, so I did nothing but sit in the house, feeling dreary, and sigh,
While ever arrived some fresh tale of decisions more foolish by far and
presaging disaster.
Then I would say to him, "O my dear husband, why still do they rush on
destruction the faster?"
At which he would look at me sideways, exclaiming, "Keep for your web
and your shuttle your care,
Or for some hours hence your cheeks will be sore and hot; leave this alone, war is Man's sole affair!"

MAGISTRATE

By Zeus, but a man of fine sense, he.

LYSISTRATA

How sensible?
You dotard, because he at no time had lent
His intractable ears to absorb from our counsel one temperate word of
advice, kindly meant?
But when at the last in the streets we heard shouted (everywhere ringing
the ominous cry)
"Is there no one to help us, no saviour in Athens?" and, "No, there is no one," come back in reply.
At once a convention of all wives through Hellas here for a serious

purpose was held,
To determine how husbands might yet back to wisdom despite their reluctance in time be compelled.
Why then delay any longer? It's settled. For the future you'll take up our old occupation.
Now in turn you're to hold tongue, as we did, and listen while we show
the way to recover the nation.

MAGISTRATE

You talk to *us!* Why, you're mad. I'll not stand it.

LYSISTRATA

Cease babbling, you fool; till I end, hold your tongue.

MAGISTRATE

If I should take orders from one who wears veils, may my neck straightaway be deservedly wrung.

LYSISTRATA

O if that keeps pestering you,
I've a veil here for your hair,
I'll fit you out in everything
As is only fair.

CALONICE

Here's a spindle that will do.

MYRRHINE

I'll add a wool-basket too.

LYSISTRATA

Girdled now sit humbly at home,
Munching beans, while you card wool and comb. For war from now on
is the Women's affair.

WOMEN.

Come then, down pitchers, all,
And on, courageous of heart,
In our comradely venture
Each taking her due part.

I could dance, dance, dance, and be fresher after,
I could dance away numberless suns,
To no weariness let my knees bend.
Earth I could brave with laughter,
Having such wonderful girls here to friend.
O the daring, the gracious, the beautiful ones!
Their courage unswerving and witty
Will rescue our city.

O sprung from the seed of most valiant-wombed grand-mothers, scions of savage and dangerous nettles!
Prepare for the battle, all. Gird up your angers. Our way
the wind of sweet victory settles.

LYSISTRATA

O tender Eros and Lady of Cyprus, some flush of beauty I pray you devise
To flash on our bosoms and, O Aphrodite, rosily gleam on our valorous thighs!
Joy will raise up its head through the legions warring and all of the far-serried ranks of mad-love
Bristle the earth to the pillared horizon, pointing in vain to the heavens above.
I think that perhaps then they'll give us our title--
Peace-makers.

MAGISTRATE

What do you mean? Please explain.

LYSISTRATA

First, we'll not see you now flourishing arms about into the Marketing-place clang again.

WOMEN

No, by the Paphian.

LYSISTRATA

Still I can conjure them as past were the herbs stand or crockery's sold
Like Corybants jingling (poor sots) fully armoured, they noisily round
on their promenade strolled.

MAGISTRATE

And rightly; that's discipline, they--

LYSISTRATA

But what's sillier than to go on an errand of buying a fish
Carrying along an immense. Gorgon-buckler instead the usual platter
or dish?
A phylarch I lately saw, mounted on horse-back, dressed for the part with long ringlets and all,
Stow in his helmet the omelet bought steaming from an old woman who
kept a food-stall.
Nearby a soldier, a Thracian, was shaking wildly his spear like Tereus
in the play,
To frighten a fig-girl while unseen the ruffian filched from her
fruit-trays the ripest away.

MAGISTRATE

How, may I ask, will your rule re-establish order and justice in lands
so tormented?

LYSISTRATA

Nothing is easier.

MAGISTRATE

Out with it speedily--what is this plan that you boast you've invented?

LYSISTRATA

If, when yarn we are winding, It chances to tangle, then, as perchance you
may know, through the skein
This way and that still the spool we keep passing till it is finally clear all again:
So to untangle the War and its errors, ambassadors out on all sides we will
send

This way and that, here, there and round about--soon you will find that the
War has an end.

MAGISTRATE

So with these trivial tricks of the household, domestic analogies of threads, skeins and spools,
You think that you'll solve such a bitter complexity, unwind such political
problems, you fools!

LYSISTRATA

Well, first as we wash dirty wool so's to cleanse it, so with a pitiless
zeal we will scrub
Through the whole city for all greasy fellows; burrs too, the parasites,
off we will rub.
That verminous plague of insensate place-seekers soon between thumb and
forefinger we'll crack.
All who inside Athens' walls have their dwelling into one great common
basket we'll pack.
Disenfranchised or citizens, allies or aliens, pell-mell the lot of them in we will squeeze.
Till they discover humanity's meaning.... As for disjointed and far colonies,
Them you must never from this time imagine as scattered about just like
lost hanks of wool.
Each portion we'll take and wind in to this centre, inward to Athens each loyalty pull,
Till from the vast heap where all's piled together at last can be woven
a strong Cloak of State.

MAGISTRATE

How terrible is it to stand here and watch them carding and winding at
will with our fate,
Witless in war as they are.

LYSISTRATA

What of us then, who ever in vain for our children must weep
Borne but to perish afar and in vain?

MAGISTRATE

Not that, O let that one memory sleep!

LYSISTRATA

Then while we should be companioned still merrily, happy as brides may,
the livelong night,
Kissing youth by, we are forced to lie single.... But leave for a moment
our pitiful plight,
It hurts even more to behold the poor maidens helpless wrinkling in staler virginity.

MAGISTRATE

Does not a man age?

LYSISTRATA

Not in the same way. Not as a woman grows withered, grows he.
He, when returned from the war, though grey-headed, yet
if he wishes can choose out a wife.
But she has no solace save peering for omens, wretched and
lonely the rest of her life.

MAGISTRATE

But the old man will often select--

LYSISTRATA

O why not finish and die?
A bier is easy to buy,
A honey-cake I'll knead you with joy,
This garland will see you are decked.

CALONICE

I've a wreath for you too.

MYRRHINE

I also will fillet you.

LYSISTRATA

What more is lacking? Step aboard the boat.
See, Charon shouts ahoy.
You're keeping him, he wants to shove afloat.

MAGISTRATE

Outrageous insults! Thus my place to flout!
Now to my fellow-magistrates I'll go
And what you've perpetrated on me show.

LYSISTRATA

Why are you blaming us for laying you out?
Assure yourself we'll not forget to make
The third day offering early for your sake.

MAGISTRATE *retires*, LYSISTRATA *returns within*.

OLD MEN.

All men who call your loins your own, awake at last, arise
And strip to stand in readiness. For as it seems to me
Some more perilous offensive in their heads they now devise.
I'm sure a Tyranny
Like that of Hippias
In this I detect....
They mean to put us under
Themselves I suspect,
And that Laconians assembling
At Cleisthenes' house have played
A trick-of-war and provoked them
Madly to raid
The Treasury, in which term I include
The Pay for my food.

For is it not preposterous
They should talk this way to us
On a subject such as battle!

And, women as they are, about bronze bucklers dare prattle--
Make alliance with the Spartans--people I for one
Like very hungry wolves would always most sincere shun....

Some dirty game is up their sleeve,
I believe.
A Tyranny, no doubt... but they won't catch me, that know.
Henceforth on my guard I'll go,
A sword with myrtle-branches wreathed for ever in my hand,
And under arms in the Public Place I'll take my watchful stand,
Shoulder to shoulder with Aristogeiton. Now my staff I'll draw
And start at once by knocking
that shocking
Hag upon the jaw.

WOMEN.

Your own mother will not know you when you get back to the town.
But first, my friends and allies, let us lay these garments down,
And all ye fellow-citizens, hark to me while I tell
What will aid Athens well.
Just as is right, for I
Have been a sharer
In all the lavish splendour
Of the proud city.
I bore the holy vessels
At seven, then
I pounded barley
At the age of ten,
And clad in yellow robes,
Soon after this,
I was Little Bear to
Brauronian Artemis;
Then neckletted with figs,
Grown tall and pretty,
I was a Basket-bearer,
And so it's obvious I should
Give you advice that I think good,
The very best I can.
It should not prejudice my voice that I'm not born a man,
If I say something advantageous to the present situation.
For I'm taxed too, and as a toll provide men for the nation

While, miserable greybeards, you,
It is true,
Contribute nothing of any importance whatever to our needs;
But the treasure raised against the Medes
You've squandered, and do nothing in return, save that you make
Our lives and persons hazardous by some imbecile mistakes
What can you answer? Now be careful, don't arouse my spite,
Or with my slipper I'll take you napping,
faces slapping
Left and right.

MEN.

What villainies they contrive!
Come, let vengeance fall,
You that below the waist are still alive,
Off with your tunics at my call--
Naked, all.
For a man must strip to battle like a man.
No quaking, brave steps taking, careless what's ahead, white shoed, in the nude, onward bold,
All ye who garrisoned Leipsidrion of old....
Let each one wag
As youthfully as he can,
And if he has the cause at heart
Rise at least a span.

We must take a stand and keep to it,
For if we yield the smallest bit
To their importunity.
Then nowhere from their inroads will be left to us immunity.
But they'll be building ships and soon their navies will attack us,
As Artemisia did, and seek to fight us and to sack us.
And if they mount, the Knights they'll rob
Of a job,
For everyone knows how talented they all are in the saddle,
Having long practised how to straddle;
No matter how they're jogged there up and down, they're never thrown.
Then think of Myron's painting, and each horse-backed Amazon

In combat hand-to-hand with men.... Come, on these women fall,
And in pierced wood-collars let's stick
quick
The necks of one and all.

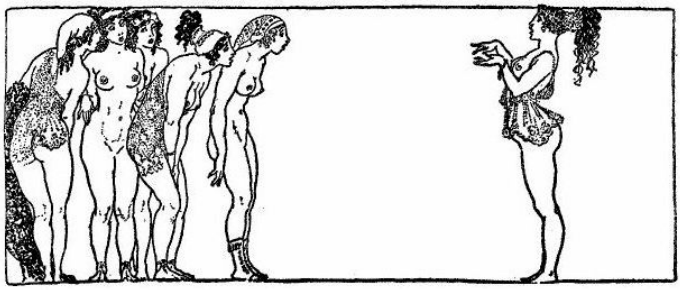
WOMEN.

Don't cross me or I'll loose
The Beast that's kennelled here....
And soon you will be howling for a truce,
Howling out with fear.
But my dear,
Strip also, that women may battle unhindered....
But you, you'll be too sore to eat garlic more, or one black bean,
I really mean, so great's my spleen, to kick you black and blue
With these my dangerous legs.
I'll hatch the lot of you,
If my rage you dash on,
The way the relentless Beetle
Hatched the Eagle's eggs.

Scornfully aside I set
Every silly old-man threat
While Lampito's with me.
Or dear Ismenia, the noble Theban girl. Then let decree
Be hotly piled upon decree; in vain will be your labours,
You futile rogue abominated by your suffering neighbour
To Hecate's feast I yesterday went.
Off I sent
To our neighbours in Boeotia, asking as a gift to me
For them to pack immediately
That darling dainty thing ... a good fat eel [1] I meant of course;

[Footnote 1:*Vide supra*, p. 23.]

But they refused because some idiotic old decree's in force.
O this strange passion for decrees nothing on earth can check,
Till someone puts a foot out tripping you,
and slipping you
Break your neck.



LYSISTRATA *enters in dismay.*

WOMEN

Dear Mistress of our martial enterprise,
Why do you come with sorrow in your eyes?

LYSISTRATA

O 'tis our naughty femininity,
So weak in one spot, that hath saddened me.

WOMEN

What's this? Please speak.

LYSISTRATA

Poor women, O so weak!

WOMEN

What can it be? Surely your friends may know.

LYSISTRATA

Yea, I must speak it though it hurt me so.

WOMEN

Speak; can we help? Don't stand there mute in need.

LYSISTRATA

I'll blurt it out then--our women's army's mutinied.

WOMEN

O Zeus!

LYSISTRATA

What use is Zeus to our anatomy?
Here is the gaping calamity I meant:
I cannot shut their ravenous appetites

A moment more now. They are all deserting.
The first I caught was sidling through the postern
Close by the Cave of Pan: the next hoisting herself
With rope and pulley down: a third on the point
Of slipping past: while a fourth malcontent, seated
For instant flight to visit Orsilochus
On bird-back, I dragged off by the hair in time....
They are all snatching excuses to sneak home.
Look, there goes one.... Hey, what's the hurry?

1ST WOMAN

I must get home. I've some Milesian wool
Packed wasting away, and moths are pushing through it.

LYSISTRATA

Fine moths indeed, I know. Get back within.

1ST WOMAN

By the Goddesses, I'll return instantly.
I only want to stretch it on my bed.

LYSISTRATA

You shall stretch nothing and go nowhere either.

1ST WOMAN

Must I never use my wool then?

LYSISTRATA

If needs be.

2ND WOMAN

How unfortunate I am! O my poor flax!
It's left at home unstript.

LYSISTRATA

So here's another
That wishes to go home and strip her flax.
Inside again!

2ND WOMAN

No, by the Goddess of Light,
I'll be back as soon as I have flayed it properly.

LYSISTRATA

You'll not flay anything. For if you begin
There'll not be one here but has a patch to be flayed.

3RD WOMAN

O holy Eilithyia, stay this birth
Till I have left the precincts of the place!

LYSISTRATA

What nonsense is this?

3RD WOMAN

I'll drop it any minute.

LYSISTRATA

Yesterday you weren't with child.

3RD WOMAN

But I am today.
O let me find a midwife, Lysistrata.
O quickly!

LYSISTRATA

Now what story is this you tell?
What is this hard lump here?

3RD WOMAN

It's a male child.

LYSISTRATA

By Aphrodite, it isn't. Your belly's hollow,
And it has the feel of metal.... Well, I soon can see.
You hussy, it's Athene's sacred helm,
And you said you were with child.

3RD WOMAN

And so I am.

LYSISTRATA

Then why the helm?

3RD WOMAN

So if the throes should take me
Still in these grounds I could use it like a dove
As a laying-nest in which to drop the child.

LYSISTRATA

More pretexts! You can't hide your clear intent,
And anyway why not wait till the tenth day
Meditating a brazen name for your brass brat?

WOMAN

And I can't sleep a wink. My nerve is gone
Since I saw that snake-sentinel of the shrine.

WOMAN

And all those dreadful owls with their weird hooting!
Though I'm wearied out, I can't close an eye.

LYSISTRATA

You wicked women, cease from juggling lies.
You want your men. But what of them as well?
They toss as sleepless in the lonely night,
I'm sure of it. Hold out awhile, hold out,
But persevere a teeny-weeny longer.
An oracle has promised Victory
If we don't wrangle. Would you hear the words?

WOMEN

Yes, yes, what is it?

LYSISTRATA

Silence then, you chatterboxes.
Here--
Whenas the swallows flocking in one place from the hoopoes
Deny themselves love's gambols any more,
All woes shall then have ending and great Zeus the Thunderer
Shall put above what was below before.

WOMEN

Will the men then always be kept under us?

LYSISTRATA

But if the swallows squabble among themselves and fly away
Out of the temple, refusing to agree,
Then The Most Wanton Birds in all the World
They shall be named for ever. That's his decree.

WOMAN

It's obvious what it means.

LYSISTRATA

Now by all the gods
We must let no agony deter from duty,
Back to your quarters. For we are base indeed,
My friends, if we betray the oracle.

She goes out.

OLD MEN.

I'd like to remind you of a fable they used to employ,
When I was a little boy:
How once through fear of the marriage-bed a young man,
Melanion by name, to the wilderness ran,
And there on the hills he dwelt.
For hares he wove a net
Which with his dog he set--
Most likely he's there yet.
For he never came back home, so great was the fear he felt.
I loathe the sex as much as he,
And therefore I no less shall be
As chaste as was Melanion.

MAN

Grann'am, do you much mind men?

WOMAN

Onions you won't need, to cry.

MAN

From my foot you shan't escape.

WOMAN

What thick forests I espy.

MEN

So much Myronides' fierce beard
And thundering black back were feared,
That the foe fled when they were shown--
Brave he as Phormion.

WOMEN.

Well, I'll relate a rival fable just to show to you
A different point of view:
There was a rough-hewn fellow, Timon, with a face
That glowered as through a thorn-bush in a wild, bleak place.
He too decided on flight,
This very Furies' son,
All the world's ways to shun
And hide from everyone,
Spitting out curses on all knavish men to left and right.
But though he reared this hate for men,
He loved the women even then,
And never thought them enemies.

WOMAN

O your jaw I'd like to break.

MAN

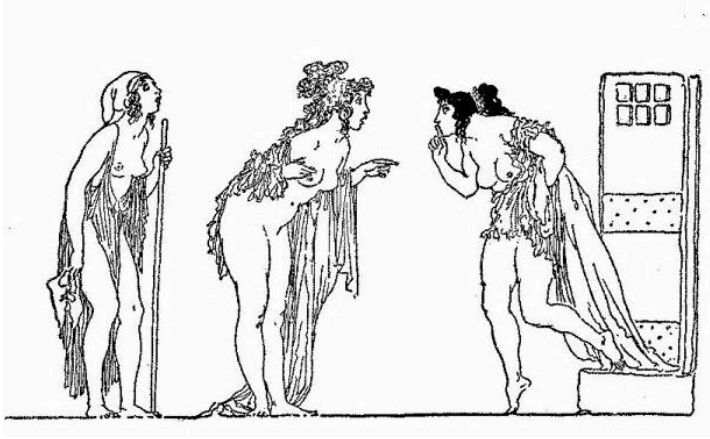
That I fear do you suppose?

WOMAN

Learn what kicks my legs can make.

MAN

Raise them up, and you'll expose--

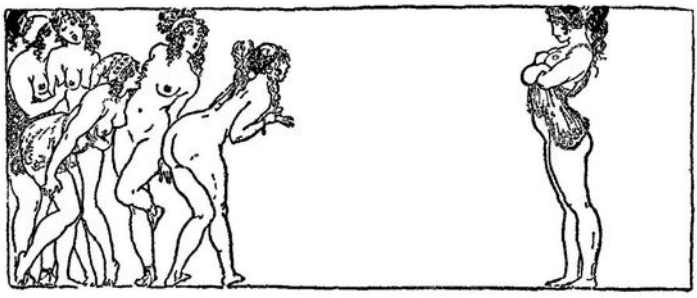


WOMAN

Nay, you'll see there, I engage,
All is well kept despite my age,
And tended smooth enough to slip

From any adversary's grip.

LYSISTRATA *appears*.



LYSISTRATA

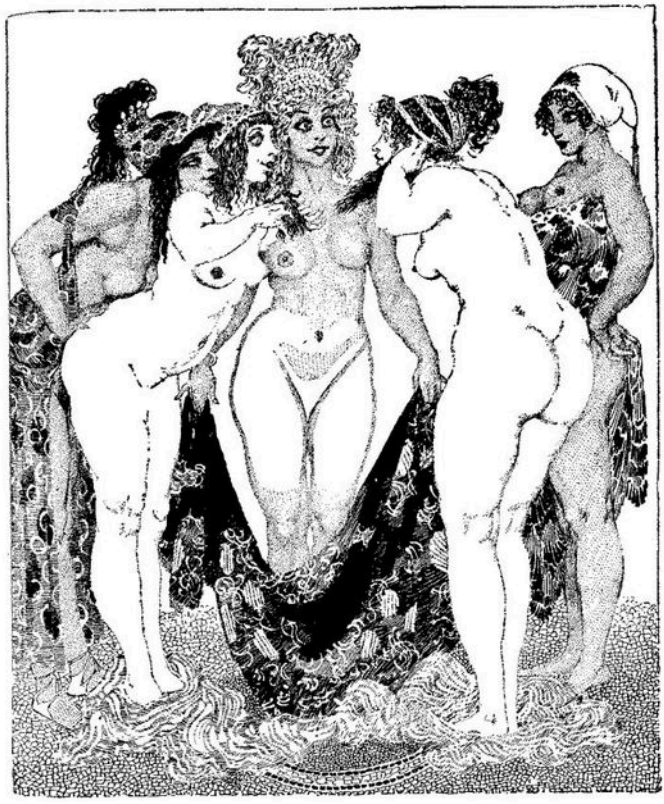
Hollo there, hasten hither to me
Skip fast along.

WOMAN

What is this? Why the noise?

LYSISTRATA

A man, a man! I spy a frenzied man!
He carries Love upon him like a staff.
O Lady of Cyprus, and Cythera, and Paphos,
I beseech you, keep our minds and hands to the oath.



[81]

WOMAN
Where is he, whoever he is?
LYSISTRATA
By the Temple of Chloe.
WOMAN
Yes, now I see him, but who can he be?
LYSISTRATA
Look at him. Does anyone recognise his face?
MYRRHINE
I do. He is my husband, Cinesias.

LYSISTRATA

You know how to work. Play with him, lead him on,
Seduce him to the cozening-point--kiss him, kiss him,
Then slip your mouth aside just as he's sure of it,
Ungirdle every caress his mouth feels at
Save that the oath upon the bowl has locked.

MYRRHINE

You can rely on me.

LYSISTRATA

I'll stay here to help
In working up his ardor to its height
Of vain magnificence.... The rest to their quarters.

Enter CINESIAS.

Who is this that stands within our lines?

CINESIAS

I.

LYSISTRATA

A man?

CINESIAS

Too much a man!

LYSISTRATA

Then be off at once.

CINESIAS

Who are you that thus eject me?

LYSISTRATA

Guard for the day.

CINESIAS

By all the gods, then call Myrrhine hither.

LYSISTRATA

So, call Myrrhine hither! Who are you?

CINESIAS

I am her husband Cinesias, son of Anthros.

LYSISTRATA

Welcome, dear friend! That glorious name of yours
Is quite familiar in our ranks. Your wife
Continually has it in her mouth.
She cannot touch an apple or an egg
But she must say, "This to Cinesias!"

CINESIAS

O is that true?

LYSISTRATA

By Aphrodite, it is.
If the conversation strikes on men, your wife
Cuts in with, "All are boobies by Cinesias."

CINESIAS

Then call her here.

LYSISTRATA

And what am I to get?

CINESIAS

This, if you want it.... See, what I have here.
But not to take away.

LYSISTRATA

Then I'll call her.

CINESIAS

Be quick, be quick. All grace is wiped from life
Since she went away. O sad, sad am I
When there I enter on that loneliness,
And wine is unvintaged of the sun's flavour.
And food is tasteless. But I've put on weight.

MYRRHINE (*above*)

I love him O so much! but he won't have it.
Don't call me down to him.

CINESIAS

Sweet little Myrrhine!
What do you mean? Come here.

MYRRHINE

O no I won't.
Why are you calling me? You don't want me.

CINESIAS

Not want you! with this week-old strength of love.

MYRRHINE

Farewell.

CINESIAS

Don't go, please don't go, Myrrhine.
At least you'll hear our child. Call your mother, lad.

CHILD

Mummy ... mummy ... mummy!

CINESIAS

There now, don't you feel pity for the child?
He's not been fed or washed now for six days.

MYRRHINE

I certainly pity him with so heartless a father.

CINESIAS

Come down, my sweetest, come for the child's sake.

MYRRHINE

A trying life it is to be a mother!
I suppose I'd better go. *She comes down.*

CINESIAS

How much younger she looks,
How fresher and how prettier! Myrrhine,
Lift up your lovely face, your disdainful face;
And your ankle ... let your scorn step out its worst;
It only rubs me to more ardor here.

MYRRHINE (*playing with the child*)

You're as innocent as he's iniquitous.
Let me kiss you, honey-petting, mother's darling.

CINESIAS

How wrong to follow other women's counsel
And let loose all these throbbing voids in yourself
As well as in me. Don't you go throb-throb?

MYRRHINE

Take away your hands.

CINESIAS

Everything in the house
Is being ruined.

MYRRHINE

I don't care at all.

CINESIAS

The roosters are picking all your web to rags.
Do you mind that?

MYRRHINE

Not I.

CINESIAS

What time we've wasted
We might have drenched with Paphian laughter, flung
On Aphrodite's Mysteries. O come here.

MYRRHINE

Not till a treaty finishes the war.

CINESIAS

If you must have it, then we'll get it done.

MYRRHINE

Do it and I'll come home. Till then I am bound.

CINESIAS

Well, can't your oath perhaps be got around?

MYRRHINE

No ... no ... still I'll not say that I don't love you.

CINESIAS

You love me! Then dear girl, let me also love you.

MYRRHINE

You must be joking. The boy's looking on.

CINESIAS

Here, Manes, take the child home!... There, he's gone.
There's nothing in the way now. Come to the point.

MYRRHINE

Here in the open! In plain sight?

CINESIAS

In Pan's cave.
A splendid place.

MYRRHINE

Where shall I dress my hair again
Before returning to the citadel?

CINESIAS

You can easily primp yourself in the Clepsydra.

MYRRHINE

But how can I break my oath?

CINESIAS

Leave that to me,
I'll take all risk.

MYRRHINE

Well, I'll make you comfortable.

CINESIAS

Don't worry. I'd as soon lie on the grass.

MYRRHINE

No, by Apollo, in spite of all your faults
I won't have you lying on the nasty earth.
(*From here MYRRHINE keeps on going off to fetch things.*)

CINESIAS

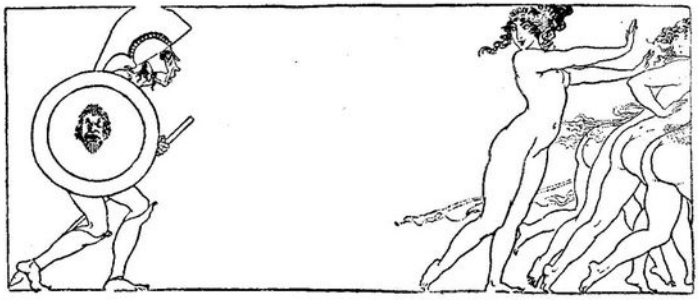
Ah, how she loves me.

MYRRHINE

Rest there on the bench,
While I arrange my clothes. O what a nuisance,
I must find some cushions first.

CINESIAS

Why some cushions?
Please don't get them!



MYRRHINE

What? The plain, hard wood?
Never, by Artemis! That would be too vulgar.

CINESIAS

Open your arms!

MYRRHINE

No. Wait a second.

CINESIAS

O....
Then hurry back again.

MYRRHINE

Here the cushions are.
Lie down while I--O dear! But what a shame,
You need more pillows.

CINESIAS

I don't want them, dear.

MYRRHINE

But I do.

CINESIAS

Thwarted affection mine,
They treat you just like Heracles at a feast
With cheats of dainties, O disappointing arms!

MYRRHINE

Raise up your head.

CINESIAS

There, that's everything at last.

MYRRHINE

Yes, all.

CINESIAS

Then run to my arms, you golden girl.

MYRRHINE

I'm loosening my girdle now. But you've not forgotten? You're not deceiving me about the Treaty?

CINESIAS

No, by my life, I'm not.

MYRRHINE

Why, you've no blanket.

CINESIAS

It's not the silly blanket's warmth but yours I want.

MYRRHINE

Never mind. You'll soon have both. I'll come straight back.

CINESIAS

The woman will choke me with her coverlets.

MYRRHINE

Get up a moment.

CINESIAS

I'm up high enough.

MYRRHINE

Would you like me to perfume you?

CINESIAS

By Apollo, no!

MYRRHINE

By Aphrodite, I'll do it anyway.

CINESIAS

Lord Zeus, may she soon use up all the myrrh.

MYRRHINE

Stretch out your hand. Take it and rub it in.

CINESIAS

Hmm, it's not as fragrant as might be; that is,
Not before it's smeared. It doesn't smell of kisses.

MYRRHINE

How silly I am: I've brought you Rhodian scents.

CINESIAS

It's good enough, leave it, love.

MYRRHINE

You must be jesting.

CINESIAS

Plague rack the man who first compounded scent!

MYRRHINE

Here, take this flask.

CINESIAS

I've a far better one.
Don't tease me, come here, and get nothing more.

MYRRHINE

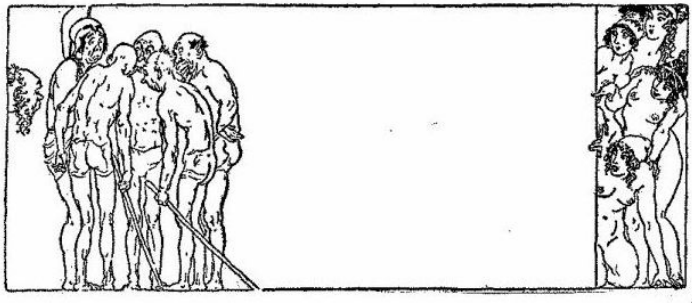
I'm coming.... I'm just drawing off my shoes....
You're sure you will vote for Peace?

CINESIAS

I'll think about it.
She runs off.
I'm dead: the woman's worn me all away.
She's gone and left me with an anguished pulse.

MEN

Baulked in your amorous delight
How melancholy is your plight.
With sympathy your case I view;
For I am sure it's hard on you.
What human being could sustain
This unforeseen domestic strain,
And not a single trace
Of willing women in the place!



CINESIAS

O Zeus, what throbbing suffering!

MEN

She did it all, the harlot, she
With her atrocious harlotry.

WOMEN

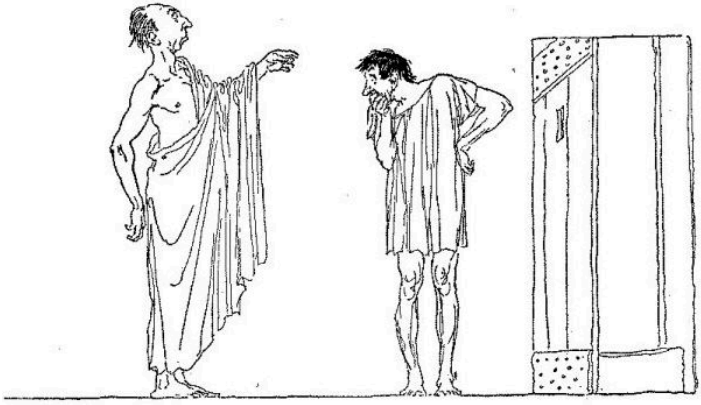
Nay, rather call her darling-sweet.

MEN

What, sweet? She's a rude, wicked thing.

CINESIAS

A wicked thing, as I repeat.
O Zeus, O Zeus,
Canst Thou not suddenly let loose
Some twirling hurricane to tear
Her flapping up along the air
And drop her, when she's whirled around,
Here to the ground
Neatly impaled upon the stake
That's ready upright for her sake.
He goes out.



Enter SPARTAN HERALD.

The MAGISTRATE *comes forward.*

HERALD

What here gabs the Senate an' the Prytanes?
I've fetcht despatches for them.

MAGISTRATE

Are you a man
Or a monstrosity?

HERALD

My scrimp-brained lad,
I'm a herald, as ye see, who hae come frae Sparta
Anent a Peace.

MAGISTRATE

Then why do you hide that lance
That sticks out under your arms?

HERALD.

I've brought no lance.

MAGISTRATE

Then why do you turn aside and hold your cloak
So far out from your body? Is your groin swollen
With stress of travelling?

HERALD

By Castor, I'll swear
The man is wud.

MAGISTRATE

Indeed, your cloak is wide,
My rascal fellow.

HERALD

But I tell ye No!
Enow o' fleering!

MAGISTRATE

Well, what is it then?

HERALD

It's my despatch cane.

MAGISTRATE

Of course--a Spartan cane!
But speak right out. I know all this too well.
Are new privations springing up in Sparta?

HERALD

Och, hard as could be: in lofty lusty columns
Our allies stand united. We maun get Pellene.

MAGISTRATE

Whence has this evil come? Is it from Pan?

HERALD

No. Lampito first ran asklent, then the others
Sprinted after her example, and blocked, the hizzies,
Their wames unskaithed against our every fleech.

MAGISTRATE

What did you do?

HERALD

We are broken, and bent double,
Limp like men carrying lanthorns in great winds
About the city. They winna let us even
Wi' lightest neif skim their primsie pretties
Till we've concluded Peace-terms wi' a' Hellas.

MAGISTRATE

So the conspiracy is universal;
This proves it. Then return to Sparta. Bid them
Send envoys with full powers to treat of Peace;
And I will urge the Senate here to choose
Plenipotentiary ambassadors,
As argument adducing this connection.

HERALD

I'm off. Your wisdom none could contravert.
They retire.

MEN

There is no beast, no rush of fire, like woman so untamed.
She calmly goes her way where even panthers would be shamed.

WOMEN

And yet you are fool enough, it seems, to dare to war with me,
When for your faithful ally you might win me easily.

MEN

Never could the hate I feel for womankind grow less.

WOMEN

Then have your will. But I'll take pity on your nakedness.
For I can see just how ridiculous you look, and so
Will help you with your tunic if close up I now may go.

MEN

Well, that, by Zeus, is no scoundrel-deed, I frankly will admit.
I only took them off myself in a scoundrel raging-fit.

WOMEN

Now you look sensible, and that you're men no one could doubt.
If you were but good friends again, I'd take the insect out
That hurts your eye.

MEN

Is that what's wrong? That nasty bitie thing.
Please squeeze it out, and show me what it is that makes this sting.
It's been paining me a long while now.

WOMEN

Well I'll agree to that,
Although you're most unmannerly. O what a giant gnat.
Here, look! It comes from marshy Tricorysus, I can tell.

MEN

O thank you. It was digging out a veritable well.
Now that it's gone, I can't hold back my tears. See how they fall.

WOMEN

I'll wipe them off, bad as you are, and kiss you after all.

MEN

I won't be kissed.

WOMEN

O yes, you will. Your wishes do not matter.

MEN

O botheration take you all! How you cajole and flatter.
A hell it is to live with you; to live without, a hell:
How truly was that said. But come, these enmities let's quell.
You stop from giving orders and I'll stop from doing wrong.
So let's join ranks and seal our bargain with a choric song.

CHORUS.

Athenians, it's not our intention
To sow political dissension
By giving any scandal mention;
But on the contrary to promote good feeling in the state
By word and deed. We've had enough calamities of late.
So let a man or woman but divulge
They need a trifle, say,
Two minas, three or four,
I've purses here that bulge.
There's only one condition made
(Indulge my whim in this I pray)--
When Peace is signed once more,
On no account am I to be repaid.

And I'm making preparation
For a gay select collation
With some youths of reputation.

I've managed to produce some soup and they're slaughtering for me
A sucking-pig: its flesh should taste as tender as could be.
I shall expect you at my house today.
To the baths make an early visit,
And bring your children along;
Don't dawdle on the way.
Ask no one; enter as if the place
Was all your own--yours henceforth is it.
If nothing chances wrong,
The door will then be shut bang in your face.

The SPARTAN AMBASSADORS *approach*.

CHORUS

Here come the Spartan envoys with long, worried beards.
Hail, Spartans how do you fare?
Did anything new arise?

SPARTANS

No need for a clutter o' words. Do ye see our condition?

CHORUS

The situation swells to greater tension.
Something will explode soon.

SPARTANS

It's awfu' truly.
But come, let us wi' the best speed we may
Scribble a Peace.

CHORUS

I notice that our men
Like wrestlers poised for contest, hold their clothes
Out from their bellies. An athlete's malady!
Since exercise alone can bring relief.

ATHENIANS

Can anyone tell us where Lysistrata is?
There is no need to describe our men's condition,
It shows up plainly enough.

CHORUS

It's the same disease.
Do you feel a jerking throbbing in the morning?

ATHENIANS

By Zeus, yes! In these straits, I'm racked all through.
Unless Peace is soon declared, we shall be driven
In the void of women to try Cleisthenes.

CHORUS

Be wise and cover those things with your tunics.
Who knows what kind of person may perceive you?

ATHENIANS

By Zeus, you're right.

SPARTANS

By the Twa Goddesses,
Indeed ye are. Let's put our tunics on.

ATHENIANS

Hail O my fellow-sufferers, hail Spartans.

SPARTANS

O hinnie darling, what a waefu' thing!
If they had seen us wi' our lunging waddies!

ATHENIANS

Tell us then, Spartans, what has brought you here?

SPARTANS

We come to treat o' Peace.

ATHENIANS

Well spoken there!
And we the same. Let us callout Lysistrata
Since she alone can settle the Peace-terms.

SPARTANS

Callout Lysistratus too if ye don't mind.

CHORUS

No indeed. She hears your voices and she comes.

Enter LYSISTRATA

Hail, Wonder of all women! Now you must be in turn
Hard, shifting, clear, deceitful, noble, crafty, sweet, and stern.
The foremost men of Hellas, smitten by your fascination,
Have brought their tangled quarrels here for your sole arbitration.

LYSISTRATA

An easy task if the love's raging home-sickness
Doesn't start trying out how well each other
Will serve instead of us. But I'll know at once
If they do. O where's that girl, Reconciliation?
Bring first before me the Spartan delegates,
And see you lift no rude or violent hands--
None of the churlish ways our husbands used.
But lead them courteously, as women should.
And if they grudge fingers, guide them by other methods,
And introduce them with ready tact. The Athenians
Draw by whatever offers you a grip.
Now, Spartans, stay here facing me. Here you,
Athenians. Both hearken to my words.
I am a woman, but I'm not a fool.
And what of natural intelligence I own
Has been filled out with the remembered precepts
My father and the city-elders taught me.
First I reproach you both sides equally
That when at Pylae and Olympia,
At Pytho and the many other shrines
That I could name, you sprinkle from one cup
The altars common to all Hellenes, yet
You wrack Hellenic cities, bloody Hellas
With deaths of her own sons, while yonder clangs
The gathering menace of barbarians.

ATHENIANS

We cannot hold it in much longer now.

LYSISTRATA

Now unto you, O Spartans, do I speak.
Do you forget how your own countryman,
Pericleidas, once came hither suppliant
Before our altars, pale in his purple robes,

Praying for an army when in Messenia
Danger growled, and the Sea-god made earth quaver.
Then with four thousand hoplites Cimon marched
And saved all Sparta. Yet base ingrates now,
You are ravaging the soil of your preservers.

ATHENIANS

By Zeus, they do great wrong, Lysistrata.

SPARTANS

Great wrong, indeed. O! What a luscious wench!

LYSISTRATA

And now I turn to the Athenians.
Have you forgotten too how once the Spartans
In days when you wore slavish tunics, came
And with their spears broke a Thessalian host
And all the partisans of Hippias?
They alone stood by your shoulder on that day.
They freed you, so that for the slave's short skirt
You should wear the trailing cloak of liberty.

SPARTANS

I've never seen a nobler woman anywhere.

ATHENIANS

Nor I one with such prettily jointing hips.

LYSISTRATA

Now, brethren twined with mutual benefactions,
Can you still war, can you suffer such disgrace?
Why not be friends? What is there to prevent you?

SPARTANS

We're agreed, gin that we get this tempting Mole.

LYSISTRATA

Which one?

SPARTANS

That ane we've wanted to get into,
O for sae lang.... Pylos, of course.

ATHENIANS

By Poseidon,
Never!

LYSISTRATA

Give it up.

ATHENIANS

Then what will we do?
We need that ticklish place united to us--

LYSISTRATA

Ask for some other lurking-hole in return.

ATHENIANS

Then, ah, we'll choose this snug thing here, Echinus,
Shall we call the nestling spot? And this backside haven,
These desirable twin promontories, the Maliac,
And then of course these Megarean Legs.

SPARTANS

Not that, O surely not that, never that.

LYSISTRATA

Agree! Now what are two legs more or less?

ATHENIANS

I want to strip at once and plough my land.

SPARTANS

And mine I want to fertilize at once.

LYSISTRATA

And so you can, when Peace is once declared.
If you mean it, get your allies' heads together
And come to some decision.

ATHENIANS

What allies?
There's no distinction in our politics:
We've risen as one man to this conclusion;
Every ally is jumping-mad to drive it home.

SPARTANS

And ours the same, for sure.

ATHENIANS

The Carystians first!
I'll bet on that.

LYSISTRATA

I agree with all of you.
Now off, and cleanse yourselves for the Acropolis,
For we invite you all in to a supper
From our commissariat baskets. There at table
You will pledge good behaviour and uprightness;
Then each man's wife is his to hustle home.

ATHENIANS

Come, as quickly as possible.

SPARTANS

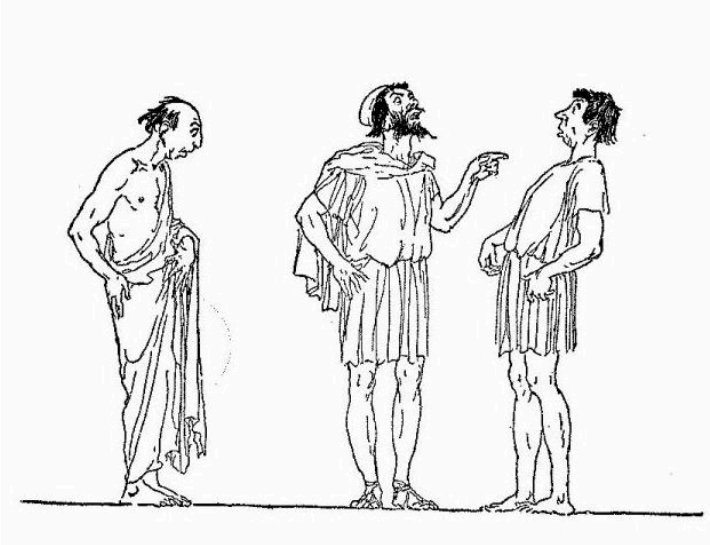
As quick as ye like.
Lead on.

ATHENIANS

O Zeus, quick, quick, lead quickly on.
They hurry off.

CHORUS.

Broidered stuffs on high I'm heaping,
Fashionable cloaks and sweeping
Trains, not even gold gawds keeping.
Take them all, I pray you, take them all (I do not care)
And deck your children--your daughter, if the Basket she's to bear.
Come, everyone of you, come in and take
Of this rich hoard a share.
Nought's tied so skilfully
But you its seal can break
And plunder all you spy inside.
I've laid out all that I can spare,
And therefore you will see
Nothing unless than I you're sharper-eyed.
If lacking corn a man should be
While his slaves clamour hungrily
And his excessive progeny,
Then I've a handfull of grain at home which is always to be had,
And to which in fact a more-than-life-size loaf I'd gladly add.



Then let the poor bring with them bag or sack
And take this store of food.
Manes, my man, I'll tell
To help them all to pack
Their wallets full. But O take care.
I had forgotten; don't intrude,
Or terrified you'll yell.
My dog is hungry too, and bites--beware!



Some LOUNGERS *from the Market with torches approach the Banqueting hall. The* PORTER *bars their entrance.*

1ST MARKET-LOUNGER

Open the door.

PORTER

Here move along.

1ST MARKET-LOUNGER

What's this?
You're sitting down. Shall I singe you with my torch?
That's vulgar! O I couldn't do it ... yet
If it would gratify the audience,
I'll mortify myself.

2ND MARKET-LOUNGER

And I will too.
We'll both be crude and vulgar, yes we will.

PORTER

Be off at once now or you'll be wailing
Dirges for your hair. Get off at once,
And see you don't disturb the Spartan envoys
Just coming out from the splendid feast they've had.

The banqueters begin to come out.

1ST ATHENIAN

I've never known such a pleasant banquet before,
And what delightful fellows the Spartans are.
When we are warm with wine, how wise we grow.

2ND ATHENIAN

That's only fair, since sober we're such fools:
This is the advice I'd give the Athenians--
See our ambassadors are always drunk.
For when we visit Sparta sober, then
We're on the alert for trickery all the while
So that we miss half of the things they say,
And misinterpret things that were never said,
And then report the muddle back to Athens.
But now we're charmed with each other. They might cap
With the Telamon-catch instead of the Cleitagora,
And we'd applaud and praise them just the same;
We're not too scrupulous in weighing words.

PORTER

Why, here the rascals come again to plague me.
Won't you move on, you sorry loafers there!

MARKET-LOUNGER

Yes, by Zeus, they're already coming out.

SPARTANS

Now hinnie dearest, please tak' up your pipe
That I may try a spring an' sing my best
In honour o' the Athenians an' oursels.

ATHENIANS

Aye, take your pipe. By all the gods, there's nothing
Could glad my heart more than to watch you dance.

SPARTANS.

Mnemosyne,
Let thy fire storm these younkers,
O tongue wi' stormy ecstasy
My Muse that knows
Our deeds and theirs, how when at sea
Their navies swooped upon
The Medes at Artemision--
Gods for their courage, did they strike
Wrenching a triumph frae their foes;
While at Thermopylae
Leonidas' army stood: wild-boars they were like
Wild-boars that wi' fierce threat
Their terrible tusks whet;
The sweat ran streaming down each twisted face,
Faen blossoming i' strange petals o' death
Panted frae mortal breath,
The sweat drenched a' their bodies i' that place,
For the hurly-burly o' Persians glittered more
Than the sands on the shore.

Come, Hunting Girl, an' hear my prayer--
You whose arrows whizz in woodlands, come an' bless
This Peace we swear.
Let us be fenced wi' age long amity,
O let this bond stick ever firm through thee
In friendly happiness.

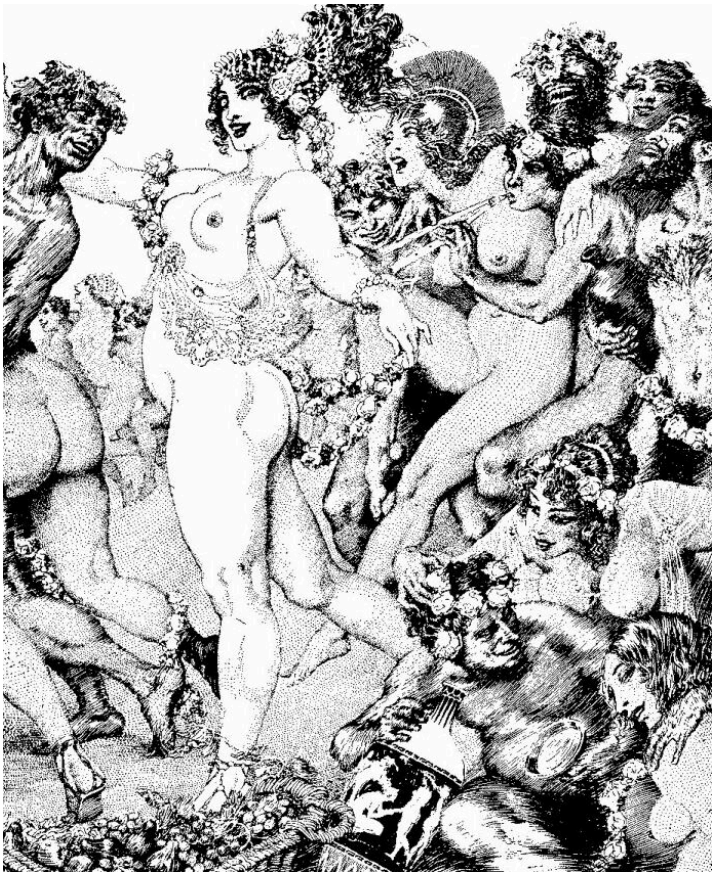
Henceforth no guilefu' perjury be seen!
O hither, hither O
Thou wildwood queen.

LYSISTRATA

Earth is delighted now, peace is the voice of earth.
Spartans, sort out your wives: Athenians, yours.
Let each catch hands with his wife and dance his joy,
Dance out his thanks, be grateful in music,
And promise reformation with his heels.

ATHENIANS.

O Dancers, forward. Lead out the Graces,
Call Artemis out;
Then her brother, the Dancer of Skies,
That gracious Apollo.
Invoke with a shout
Dionysus out of whose eyes
Breaks fire on the maenads that follow;
And Zeus with his flares of quick lightning, and call,
Happy Hera, Queen of all,
And all the Daimons summon hither to be
Witnesses of our revelry
And of the noble Peace we have made,
Aphrodite our aid.



Io Paieon, Io, cry--
For victory, leap!
Attained by me, leap!
Euoi Euoi Euai Euai.

SPARTANS

Piper, gie us the music for a new sang.

SPARTANS.

Leaving again lovely lofty Taygetus
Hither O Spartan Muse, hither to greet us,
And wi' our choric voice to raise
To Amyclean Apollo praise,
And Tyndareus' gallant sons whose days
Alang Eurotas' banks merrily pass,
An' Athene o' the House o' Brass.

Now the dance begin;
Dance, making swirl your fringe o' woolly skin,
While we join voices
To hymn dear Sparta that rejoices
I' a beautifu' sang,
An' loves to see
Dancers tangled beautifully;
For the girls i' tumbled ranks
Alang Eurotas' banks
Like wanton fillies thrang,
Frolicking there



An' like Bacchantes shaking the wild air
To comb a giddy laughter through the hair,
Bacchantes that clench thyrsi as they sweep
To the ecstatic leap.

An' Helen, Child o' Leda, come
Thou holy, nimble, gracefu' Queen,
Lead thou the dance, gather thy joyous tresses up i' bands
An' play like a fawn. To madden them, clap thy hands,
And sing praise to the warrior goddess templed i' our lands,
Her o' the House o' Brass.

Colophon

Lysistrata
Aristophanes

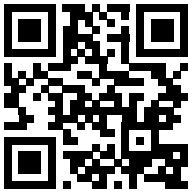
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