

Menander

The Grouch, *Desperately Seeking
Justice, Closely Cropped Locks,
The Girl from Samos, The Shield*

Edited by

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PENN

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Introduction

Sheila D'Atri

Menander was born around 342 B.C. into a wealthy family and is said to have died at the age of 52. Theophrastus, a close friend, reports that Menander was a teacher of philosophy, and that his first play, the *Orge* ("Anger") was produced around 321 B.C., when Menander was 21 years old. His *Dyskolos* (here *The Grouch*), a copy of which we have today in a nearly complete form, won first prize at the Lenaean festival in 316/315. He is alleged to have had a mistress named Glykera ("Sweetheart"; the conventional name for a hetaira, or courtesan). Glykera is a character in several of Menander's plays, and an ancient mosaic, now in the Art Museum of Princeton University, shows and names Menander, Glykera, and Komodia ("The Spirit of Comedy").

Menander's facility in writing is illustrated by an ancient anecdote in which a friend says, "The Dionysia are coming. Haven't you composed your comedy?" Menander replies, "I have composed it, the plot is worked out. I only have to write the lines." The many papyrus texts found in Egypt from Hellenistic times to the seventh century A.D. attest to his lasting popularity. "O Menander, O Life!" runs the classical epigram, "Which of you has imitated the other?" The early Roman comedies of Plautus and Terence reflect a widespread familiarity with the plays of Menander, along with that of other New Comedy playwrights especially Diphilus and Philémon. Terence is even scolded for combining two plots from Menander in one play for comparison and balance—as Shakespeare did, for example, when he added the story of Gloucester and his two sons into the ancient legends of Lear and his daughters.

The style of New Comedy differs enormously from that of Old Comedy as written by Aristophanes in the fifth century B.C. Aristophanes wrote for a society that allowed political freedom and freedom of speech even in the

midst of the Peloponnesian War (the great civil war of ancient Greece). But by the beginning of the fourth century democratic freedoms had been suppressed, and it would have been dangerous to broach political or religious questions, or to satirize prominent politicians openly. Comedy took a different turn, abandoning the elaborate and expensive choral passages, with their political commentary and fantastic costumes, for a quiet, matter-of-fact style becoming to the comedy of manners, nonpolitical and easily transferable to another time and place. By the late fourth century Middle Comedy favored as a predominant theme some form of mild travesty of mythology. This influence is seen in Plautus' *Amphitryon*, where the birth of Hercules is the result of Jupiter's transformation into Amphitryon and his seduction of Amphitryon's wife. Complicating the plot is Jupiter's helper Mercury, disguised as Amphitryon's slave Sosias, who has a meeting with the real Sosias that so rattles the slave that he goes off wondering if he has any identity at all. (The gods wear feathers in their caps so the audience can tell the difference!)

The theme of mistaken identity, which figures importantly in many of the comedies of Menander, derives not from Old Comedy but from the romantic melodramas of Euripides, which are even referred to and quoted in the Menandrian comedies, most notably in the *Aspis* (here *The Shield*) and the *Epirreiontes* (*Desperately Seeking Justice*). Many of these melodramas or tragicomedies of Euripides exist in fragmentary plays, but the plots of two surviving plays as well can be said to revolve around the problems of mistaken identity. One is *Iphigenia in Tauris*, where the hero Orestes is on the point of being slaughtered by a barbarian tribe when he and his supposedly sacrificed sister Iphigenia (now a priestess of the barbarians) recognize each other and escape together.

A similar theme appears in the *Ion*. The plot is familiar to readers of Menander: many years before the opening of the play, a girl was raped by Apollo and gave birth to a son. Afraid of her parents' reaction, she exposed the baby. Unbeknownst to her, Apollo rescues the child and has him brought up by the priestess at Delphi. At the time the play opens, the girl is grown, married, and unable to have a child. She and her husband go to the temple at Delphi to consult the god. The oracle leads the husband to believe that Ion is his own son; this brings about the mother's attempt to kill the boy and, when she fails, to Ion's attempt to kill his mother. Athena as 'deus

ex machina" resolves the crisis with the help of recognition tokens such as we see in the *Epirreiontes* (here *Desperately Seeking Justice*) and the *Perikeiromene* (*Closely Cropped Locks*).

The *Dyskolos*, found virtually complete less than forty years ago, does not use such a device, yet in the process of the drama the central character, Knemon, can be said to be brought to a recognition of his own character and its limitations. (Similarly, *King Oedipus* can be thought of as a recognition drama in that the progress of the plot follows Oedipus' discovery that he himself is the polluted being he seeks.) As a miserly misanthrope, Knemon thinks he has no need of other human beings, becoming furious at the thought of lending anything to a neighbor and responding with violence to friendliness. In the course of the play, in tribulation and mock-heroic disaster, he discovers how he is connected to humanity. As a consequence, he begins to show respect to the nearby shrine of the god Pan as well as to his fellow humans. By the end of the play, he allows his daughter to be married to a rich young man who has proved his true worth.

In the *Aspis* (*The Shield*) a young soldier is presumed to be dead because, in the heat of battle, another man picked up his shield: when the shield is discovered next to a corpse, a slave believes that his master is dead.

In the *Epirreiontes* a child who was exposed is found by a shepherd, who in turn gives it to a charcoal-burner and his wife. An argument arises when the shepherd wants to keep the items of embroidery and jewelry that were left with the child. The charcoal-burner argues from tragedy that the child's future may depend on his retaining the items that were left with him. The plot differs from a Euripidean situation in that the gods do not magically appear on high and resolve the problems of identity. In Menander's work, the gods may make a brief appearance as prologue, but only affect the action at a distance. The best candidate for divine influence is the goddess Chance.

The *Perikeiromene* has a complicated plot. A man whose wife has just died after giving birth to twins—a boy and a girl—exposes the babies. The foundlings are rescued by an old woman who gives up the boy and raises the girl, Glykera. Before she dies, she tells the girl her history and gives her the items (recognition tokens again!) found with her as an infant. The play opens when Polemon, a soldier and lover of the girl, in a jealous rage lops off her hair with his sword. Proud and angry, she leaves him, finding refuge with the adopted mother of her brother. At the end many reconciliations

take place because the distinctive handwork and ornaments serve to connect the missing father to his two children.

Samia is a character study, and its plot is an intricate exercise in maneuvering two fathers into accepting the romantic intentions and consequences of their children's relationship. One father, Demeas, is wealthy, generous, and kind. His mistress, Chrysis, is the girl from Samos, exiled to Athens after the Macedonian victory in 322 B.C. As a refugee and without Athenian citizenship, she could not marry Demeas although she lives with him. He has expressively forbidden her to have a child. He does have a son, Moschion, who is in love with Plangon, the neighbor's daughter. When Plangon has a baby in the absence of the fathers, the baby is protected by Plangon's mother and then hidden and nursed by Chrysis, who had been pregnant but lost the child before the opening of the play. When Demeas overhears something that makes him think that Moschion is the father of Chrysis' child, he has the poor girl thrown out of his house and rages against the betrayal by his son and his mistress. Eventually the truth is unraveled, and the wedding of Plangon and Moschion is celebrated in the general reconciliation.

The texts of three of these plays are missing large portions. In the *Aspis* the first two acts and the beginning of the third are mostly intact, but only fragments—half-columns and assorted words—exist from the rest of the play. About half of the *Epiripontes* is intact; the rest exists in mutilated condition, some parts clearer than others. The *Perikeiromene* is missing the opening scene (the papyrus begins early in the prologue) and the beginning and end of all the acts in varying degrees. Palmer Bowie and I agreed that what we wanted were readable texts, not translation interspersed with guesswork in italics. Therefore the decision was made to fill in the gaps with logical reconstruction from a general knowledge of Menander's intricate plot-lines and characterizations from these dramas from which a great deal survives, and also from the many plays that exist only in single scenes and short fragments.

The recovery of an almost complete text of the *Dyskolos* from the sands of Egypt in 1958 represents a major chapter in an ongoing modern miracle. However, we still have no clue as to the exact place and circumstances of the discovery of Papyrus Bodmer IV, which was written in the last half of the third century A.D. and contains the text of the play, a verse synopsis attrib-

uted to Aristophanes of Byzantium, and a cast of characters. This text has been matched with approximately forty lines which were previously known from quotations by ancient authors, and since 1958 four more fragments of five to nine lines each from two other papyrus finds have been added.

Other plays of Menander survive in part. Papyri found in 1905 contain half of *The Epiripontes* and significant parts of *Perikeiromene* and *Samia*, and a nearly complete text of the *Samia* was found later. Since the discovery of the *Dyskolos*, Acts I and II and the beginning of Act III of *Aspis* were first published in 1969. Parts of *The Hated Man*, found on the back of papyrus finds containing a deed and a table of fractions, were published in 1965 and 1968. An excellent introduction to the papyri is Eric Turner's *Greek Papyri: An Introduction* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1968).

Another word about the choruses. In the Old Comedy of Aristophanes, the chorus was a masterpiece of lyric as well as elaborate costume. In New Comedy, no choruses were written down—the text just indicates "ΧΟΡΟΥ" ("CHOROU," "of the chorus") to let us know that a group of drunken young men are about to enter the stage and sing a topical or contemporary drinking song. This device serves to divide the acts. I have taken the liberty of composing lyrics for the choruses, based on drinking songs and the poetry of previous generations. The art of comedy has calmed down but, still vibrant with emotion and intrigue, set itself the task of solving problems in recognizable human circumstances.

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The Grouch (Dyskolos)

Translated by

Sheila D'Atri

Cast

- PAN, the god, prologue speaker
SOSTRATOS, young man who has fallen in love
CHAIREAS, parasite, friend of Sostratos
PYRRHIAS, slave belonging to the family of Sostratos
KNEMON, the "dyskolos," the dyspeptic grouch
YOUNG GIRL, unmarried daughter of Knemon (no name given in the papyrus)
DAOS, slave belonging to Gorgias
GORGIAS, farmer, half-brother of Knemon's daughter by the same mother
SIKON, cook
GETAS, slave belonging to Sostratos' family
SOSTRATOS' MOTHER
SIMICHE, an old woman, Knemon's slave and nurse to his daughter
KALLIPPIDES, Sostratos' father
CHORUS of revelers
NONSPEAKING
Plangon, Sostratos' sister
Parthenis, a female piper
Donax and Syrus, slaves
Myrrhine, Knemon's wife and mother of Gorgias and the daughter
Another piper

(The action takes place in Phyle, a village about thirteen miles from Athens that was famous for a shrine to Pan and the Nymphs.

The actual shrine was on the side of a steep cliff; in the theater it is represented by the opening to a cave in the center of the stage. On the left is a farmhouse belonging to Knemon, the dyspeptic misanthrope; on the right is another farmhouse belonging to Gorgias and his mother. The spring of the Nymphs, where the sacrifices take place, is inside the shrine. The audience cannot see inside, so these actions will be reported. Next to one of the doors, along the country lane that goes by the houses, is an altar to

Translator's Preface

The Grouch or *Dyskolos* was produced in the winter of 316 B.C., when it won first prize at the Athenian festival of the Lenaea and Menander was in his mid-twenties. Five years earlier, he had won his first victory with the *Orges* (*Anger*), and although he was later admired as the greatest and most popular writer of New Comedy, there were only a few other plays—among over one hundred ascribed to him—that took first prize. He was born in the year 342/1 and grew up at a time when Athens was dominated by Macedon. The year the *Orges* was produced, a revolt inspired by Athens was crushed in both land and sea battles.

In the New Comedy of Menander and his contemporaries, freedom of expression was limited in comparison to the outspoken political and personal attacks with which we are familiar from the comedies of Aristophanes at the end of the fifth century. In a form of drama that has been called a comedy of manners, Menander was particularly adept at revealing character through dialogue and at coining memorable aphorisms within the dramatic context, much as Shakespeare did with Polonius and Claudius. Contemporary political or philosophical questions that arise in the context of the plays are of general topical interest, are not presented didactically, and are always subordinate to the characterization and the demands of the dramatic structure. For example, although at the time the *Dyskolos* was written, there was considerable discussion about the abuse of religious practices, when Knemon raves against hypocrisy and extravagance we must keep in mind that the speaker of these lines is a self-denying misanthropic miser whose own religious observances are grudging. The *Dyskolos* is a play that revolves around its title character, Knemon, the “*dyskolos*” (literally “*dyspeptic*”) or “bad-tempered, intractable” old man. In antiquity, the play had the alternative title “*The Misanthrope*,” a name often given to fourth-century comedies.

We are first introduced to Knemon indirectly, through the eyes of a slave

erty, he gave away everything to his daughter and stepson. It is made clear that Knemon's self-sacrificing personality has been as hard on him as on anyone else. It is as if the demonic hold has been broken in the course of Knemon's fall into the well, especially in his recognition of the existence of altruism and the need for human interaction. Although at the end he is still a loner and does not want to join the sacrificers, yet he must celebrate, finally realizing that human beings cannot stand completely alone and that he was rescued by a stepson who had never received any good from him and expected nothing in return.

Menander allows Knemon to reveal himself directly in action and in a few very defining speeches, such as at his entrance when he describes a hostility of mythological proportions as he wishes for a Medusa's head. He slowly becomes less an ogre. In his next monologue, he complains of irreligious sacrifice in terms that are familiar in the writings of the peripatetic philosophers of the late fourth century, complaining about those who give to the god only the inedible parts of the sacrificial animal (the gall and the tail), claiming that the old-fashioned kind of sacrifice is the only true one—barley cakes, where the meal is totally given up to the gods. Menander has told us earlier that Knemon only greets the god Pan because he is afraid of retribution. He shows no religious interest himself, but clearly he begrudges luxury. The young lover Sostratos was rightly advised to take off his fancy cloak and do some farm work.

Indulgence disgusts Knemon and self-denial characterizes his way of life. Although his holdings are not small, he works his farmlands without help and with only the barest of tools. The rotten piece of rope that broke as the bucket was lowered into the well may have been his only rope, carefully saved. When he is desperate to find his mattock, we can guess that it is his only one. He works constantly, granting himself no pleasures (except perhaps for hot water), and expects the worst of everyone. Moreover (and Menander handles this motif with the greatest subtlety), Knemon sees himself as a victim, of people individually and of the whole world. When strangers come by and ask a question or (even worse) ask to borrow something, he abusively beats them with poles and leather straps and hurls pieces of sod and stones and even the sour wild pears he has been at great pains to gather. He calls the intruders man-eating animals, thinking that he is being tormented and that all he asks is to be left alone.

In a culture that prized hospitality (*xenia*) and where inhospitality was

he has terrified. He is described as a lonely figure on a barren rural hillside, gathering wild pears and reacting with violent fury when approached. The slave's terror at this meeting raises Knemon to an almost demonic force. This aspect of the old man is reinforced by his comments in his opening speech: he envies Perseus, not for his heroic qualities but for his ability to fly away from people and turn them to stone with the Medusa's head. The imagery suggests that his aversion to other people borders on the pathological. At first, he is completely unapproachable and unyielding, but, little by little, cracks appear in the armor. In a weak moment during Act III he complains of the "eremia" or emptiness of his life. His isolation is a prison even though it is self-imposed. The audience also begins to get an impression of a creature whose bark is bigger than his bite when he threatens to force his old female slave Simiche to go down into the well. She is frightened, but in actuality Knemon descends himself.

The demonic force we see in Knemon at the beginning of the play is paralleled by the fierce and farcical behavior of the slave Getas and the cook Sikon at the end. The musical accompaniment lightens the atmosphere and lessens the impression of willful cruelty toward a sick old man. Knemon's discomforts are turned into ritual as Getas and Sikon force him to dance and badger him into joining the others who are sacrificing and celebrating in the shrine of Pan and the Nymphs. This way, the front-center of the stage becomes unified with the doings behind the entrance to the cave at the rear center. As Sikon and Getas pester Knemon with his earlier responses, they force him to achieve at least a partial integration into a normal social world. Adding to the atmosphere produced by the music and ritual is the change of role slowly taking place in the tormentors. Sikon, the crudest character in the play, delivers lyrics in the most elevated mode as he describes the party in the cave.

Although most of the *Dyskolos* is written in iambic trimeters, the meter most approximating normal speech, Menander diverges in two places—during Knemon's "apologia," or defense of his way of life after his rescue, and in the scene at the end, played to the accompaniment of the flute. Getas and Sikon torment him in his misery as the characters disguised as woodland creatures at the end of *The Merry Wives of Windsor* torment Falstaff. Things even out. The request for a little stew-pot comes back to haunt Knemon, as they ask for huge and expensive paraphernalia. He is too weak

to protest effectively and finally yields, just as, when he renounced his prop-

seen as a fundamentally irreligious act against Zeus Xenios, Knemon can be seen as a damned soul in need of rescue from himself. In the literary tradition, hospitality and transgressions against it have ancestral roots in the *Odyssey* and are an important theme in tragedy, comedy, and satyr play. The Cyclops eating his guests and Circe turning them into animals are primordial terrors, and it is images like these that Knemon recalls when he threatens to bite Getas' head off and gobble him down, and he expresses a wish to turn people into stone. When he says he has no salt and cannot lend any, this can be read also as an extreme of inhospitality, in that salt was basic to a household and salt was particularly mentioned to establish the depth of his refusal.

The *Dyskolos* can therefore be read as a kind of rescue drama in which the central character is literally rescued from a well into which he has fallen (to retrieve his broken-down possessions) and figuratively from the inhuman aspect of himself. Pan, in the prologue characterized him as an *aparthropos anthropos*—more than a misanthrope—an inhuman human being, a living contradiction in terms. Instead of being granted the power to turn people into inanimate objects, Knemon, a human figure lacking a vital aspect of the human anima or spirit, gained that within himself through the working of the god.

The young man in love, named Sostratos, is eager and impetuous and doesn't know what hit him. He has been picked by the god Pan as a reward to Knemon's daughter for her goodness and piety. Sostratos' manner of speech stands in contrast to that of the hard-working Gorgias, who is deliberate and full of homilies and "talks like a book."

As for the female characters, Simiche is not to be played seriously. She is a perfect parody of a tragic messenger bearing a tale of woe. Old women are frequently treated harshly in the comedies, but this one is hardly real—her presence jolts the action and changes the mood. The other women in the play reveal themselves as the men reveal their attitudes to them. Sostratos is contemptuous of his mother's habit of sacrificing, but he has no idea that his mother's dream was sent by Pan as is part of the god's plan for his own future. This dream will bring together all the participants and fulfill his fondest wishes. Getas has an impudent manner toward his mistress, but Sostratos' mother knows she is in charge, ignores the raillery, and demands that the job be done. The daughter is innocent and unspoiled and represents

a sort of idealized heroine. She is not given any name in the papyrus; she is only identified by the label "Knemon's daughter." At her first appearance, her concern is for her old nurse and her manner is gracious, poised and noble. It has been noted that in her entrance with the water jug, Menander was creating a deliberate parody of the high-born but ignoble-looking Elektra of Euripides. Even Knemon enjoys her company, talks to her, and really loves her. This capacity for love, which is made clear from the beginning, perhaps contains the germ of Knemon's salvation.

Generally, I have followed the Oxford text edited by F. H. Sandbach (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), although I have occasionally used E. W. Handley's edition (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1965) for the apportionment of lines as well as for his very valuable commentary.

POSTSCRIPT ON THE PAPYRI

The *Dyskolos* is the only example of Greek New Comedy that is virtually complete. The two most significant lacunae consist of a few missing lines easily bridged by stage directions. In the first instance, when Sikon is alone on stage as Knemon is being rescued from the well, four lines are missing and two are damaged at lines 650–56. In all probability, he is reporting and interpreting noises heard off stage. The second instance occurs at the beginning of Knemon's defense of his way of life at lines 703–10. By line 711 the meter has changed to the trochaic tetrameters that are used until the end of Act IV. One fragment quoted by an ancient author fits very well here, "I was in the habit of inflicting drudgery on myself."

Invenias etiam disiecti membra poetae.

(Still you may find the limbs of the dismembered poet.)

—Horace

Apollo Agyieus, Apollo as the god of streets and roads. The audience cannot see the well and dung-heap situated behind Knemon's house or the lands farmed by Knemon and Gorgias, but will imagine them as they are pointed out. The ridge where Knemon is first seen picking wild pears is just off stage to the left. Farther away, on the right, is the large farm owned by Kallipides, Sostratos' father. The place has an air of desolation; it is hilly, rocky, very difficult to farm, and mostly good for hunting.)

ACT I

(In the early morning, the god Pan comes out of his shrine to deliver the explanatory prologue to the audience.)

PAN

Let your imaginative forces work to make this place appear as Phyle— an Attic village where the celebrated shrine from which I come belongs to those who have the strength to farm the rocks. The field here on my right belongs to Knemon, a human lacking in humanity, bilious toward everyone, detesting crowds. "Crowds" do I say? He's lived a lengthy time and hardly ever said a gracious word to anyone. He's never first to say "hello," with one exception, and that's me, his neighbor, Pan. He doesn't like it, but he must. (I'm dangerous when crossed.) This Knemon once was married to a widow whose husband had just died and left her with a tiny son. Yoked in one harness, they lived by fighting through the days and taking up the greater part of night

10

existing wretchedly. And then a daughter came, and things got worse. When misery was all there was, and life was harsh and full of toil, she left and joined her son. Here, in this neighborhood, he owned a little place, where now he is his mother's sole support (with barely enough). One loyal slave, long in the family, is all the help they have. This boy's quite grown by now.

His mind's advanced beyond his years.

Experience in living brought him up.

The old man and his daughter live alone with an old female servant. Carrying wood, digging, he works all the time.

Beginning with his wife and the neighbors all the way to Chologos, down there,

he hates every one of them. The girl is innocent in all her ways— not one thing ugly about her.

With pious care she tends the Nymphs who share my shrine, and as she honors us so are we moved to care for her.

There's a boy whose father farms a wealthy place, worth many talents, right in this vicinity.

The city's where he lives, but now he's here to hunt, and just by chance he's in this place with his companion in the chase.

I've inspired him, made him mad for the girl: That's the essence. If you want the rest,

watch if you wish—and you ought to wish it! That youth I told you of is coming near, intent on telling to his friend

these matters that we all might hear.

(Pan goes back to his shrine. Sostratos and a hunting companion, named Chaitreas and called a parasite in the list of personae in the papyrus, come on stage from the farm belonging to Sostratos' father.)

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CHAIREAS

What are you saying? You saw a free-born girl putting garlands on the local Nymphs—and right away you're in love?

SOSTRATOS

Right away.

CHAIREAS

That's fast. When you started out today did you plan to fall in love?

SOSTRATOS

You're mocking me, but I am really wretched, Chaireas.

CHAIREAS

It's not that I don't believe you.

SOSTRATOS

That's why I'm taking you into my heart. I also think of you as practical.

CHAIREAS

That's the way I am, Sostratos. Suppose a hetaira has captured a friend. Right away I grab her, get drunk, burn down the house! Don't listen to reason! Before you discover who she is, you've got to try your luck.

Slow-going makes you burn for a girl, and a quick start means a quick finish.

But if you mean marriage with a free-born female, then I'm a different sort of friend. I make inquiries about her family, finances and style. It's permanent

60

arrangements that we're talking here. I leave a future record for my friend.

SOSTRATOS

That's well and good, but not very pleasing.

CHAIREAS

But even in your case we should give the facts a thorough hearing.

SOSTRATOS

At dawn I sent out Pyrrhias from home, but not to hunt—

CHAIREAS

To whom?

SOSTRATOS

To her father. To meet with the person in charge, whoever he is.

CHAIREAS

Heracles! What are you saying?

SOSTRATOS

I made a mistake. Missions like these Aren't for slaves. It isn't easy to know what succeeds, when someone's in love. It's been quite some time since he's been gone, and I've been wondering—I said to him—
 "Get right back home, and tell me here, where I am waiting, what I want to know."

(They are suddenly interrupted by a terrified Pyrrhias dashing onto the stage from the left. He is out of breath and dazed as if he has just encountered a malevolent spirit of superhuman force.)

70

PYRRHIAS

Make room! Watch out! Get off the road!
A crazy man is chasing me—he's mad!

SOSTRATOS

What's this all about, my lad?

PYRRHIAS

Save yourselves!

SOSTRATOS

What's this?

PYRRHIAS

I'm pelted with clods, with sod, with stones.
I'm dead.

SOSTRATOS

Pelted? Where to now, you miserable wretch?

PYRRHIAS (*trying to escape across to the right*)

Is he still coming after me?

SOSTRATOS (*holding him back*)

By Zeus, he's not!

PYRRHIAS

He was, I thought.

SOSTRATOS

What are you saying?

PYRRHIAS

Let's clear out of here, I'm begging!

SOSTRATOS

Where?

PYRRHIAS

Away from his door, as far as we're able.
Some son of Distress, a man possessed
by blackness of bile and dreadful demons
lives there. You sent me to a man
who is big trouble. I've broken my toes
falling over all those rocks.

SOSTRATOS

Has he been drinking, coming here like this?

CHAIREAS

His wits are wandering, that's clear.

PYRRHIAS

By Zeus, I swear it, Sostratos,
I'd rather die! Watch out somehow.
I can't go on; I'm out of breath.
I knocked on the door and asked for the master,
A beaten-down old woman came—
she stood right here, where I am now
and showed me where he was
up on the hill collecting sour pears.

(*Pyrrhias is frantic. His encounter with the old man has made him
sound like an incompetent fool. Chaireas and
Sostratos find the story hard to believe since they
have not yet seen Knemon.*)

CHAIREAS (*sarcastically*)

What excitement!

PYRRHIAS

What's that, you lucky dog? But as for me,
I took some steps upon his bit of land,
and while a good way off, in friendly fashion,
Put out my hand in greeting as I spoke.
"I've come on business, sir," I said.

"On your behalf, I've hurried here."
Right away, he says, "Damn you, are you
spying on my place?" Then he
picked up some sod and threw it in my face.

CHAIREAS (*incredulously*)

Go to hell!

PYRRHIAS

While this was going on, I shut my eyes,
and said, "I hope Poscidon gets you,"
when next he grabbed a pointed pole
and really cleaned me up with it.
He said, "What business could there be,
of some concern to you and me?"
"Can't you find a public road?" he screamed.

CHAIREAS

Without a doubt, you're describing
a farmer who's out of his mind.

PYRRHIAS

Here's how it ends: I ran away
and he chased me, first around the hill,
at least two miles, and then below
into these bushes, throwing clods and stones
and then the pears when nothing else was there.
A rotten business, an absolutely
damned old man. I beg you, find another place.

SOSTRATOS

That's the way that cowards talk.

PYRRHIAS

You've no idea what path you walk.
He'll gobble us up.

CHAIREAS

Perhaps at this moment he's suffering.
It seems to me now, Sostratos, that we
can wait awhile. For you should know,
in business, it's more practical
to wait until the moment's opportune.

PYRRHIAS

Very sensible.

160

CHAIREAS

Poor farmers are prickly, He's not alone;
It's all of them. At dawn, tomorrow,
since I know the house, I'll go alone.
And now it's best you wait at home.
That's the way to play it.

(*Having decided to his own satisfaction what would be best, Chaireas
departs without waiting for an answer. Sostratos
then turns his attention to his slave after deciding
that Chaireas is of no use to him.*)

PYRRHIAS (*happy to have Chaireas take care of things*)

That's what we should do.

SOSTRATOS (*thinking Chaireas has failed him*)

That's an excuse he's gladly seized upon.
It was immediately clear
he didn't want to come with me,
and didn't approve of my marriage plans.
(*turning furiously to Pyrrhias*)

And as for you, you lowest of the low,
I hope the gods destroy you.

170

PYRRHIAS (*innocently*)

How have I injured you, Sostratos?

SOSTRATOS

It's clear you've caused some damage to his place,
or stole—

PYRRHIAS

I stole?

SOSTRATOS

Why would someone beat you if you did nothing wrong?

PYRRHIAS

He's here, that man himself! O best of masters,
now I'll take me off, and you can talk to him.

(Pyrrhias makes his escape. Sostratos on stage alone starts his monologue. As he is speaking, he notices Knemon appear at the left, coming from the ridge. By the time his speech is finished, Sostratos has moved as far away as he can from Knemon's house, while Knemon is standing in the middle of the stage, ready to begin his comments to the spectators.)

SOSTRATOS *(to himself and answering the absent Pyrrhias)*

I can't! I never can persuade a soul
no matter what I talk about.

And how can I address a man like him?

That's no philanthropist I'm looking at.

By Zeus, he's serious! I'll slip aside

a little from the door. That's better.

How he shouts, while walking all alone!

He must be mad, it seems to me—

I'm frightened, by Apollo and the gods.

(Shouldn't a person tell the truth?)

KNEMON

Well, didn't Perseus have double-luck?

First, the wings—he never had to meet

180

with people walking on the ground.
And then he had some sort of property
which turned the mob of nuisances to stone.

That's what I want! They'd be plentiful

everywhere—human statues made of stone.

By Asclepius, my life is now

unlivable. They're talking,

trespassing, crossing my land.

I suppose, by Zeus, I waste my time

standing by the side of the road!

I don't work that bit of field:

those people coming by have chased me off,

and now they follow me up to the hill-tops.

A multi-multitudinous mob!

Good grief! Another one of them

is standing right beside our door!

SOSTRATOS *(aside)*

Will he really strike at me?

KNEMON *(aside)*

A quiet place is nowhere to be found.

You can't even plan to hang yourself in peace.

210

SOSTRATOS *(aside)*

Can it be me enraging him?

(to Knemon)

I'm waiting here for someone, sir, it was agreed—

KNEMON *(ignoring him)*

What did I say? Is this the stoa

or the local shrine for rendezvous?

Whenever there's a man you wish to see,

arrange to meet them all beside my door.

Certainly, construct an assembly-room,

if that's what you have in mind!

190

O dearest Nymphs, you've got to take it on.
But I'm ashamed to go inside
if there are people making sacrifice—

SOSTRATOS

Just give it to me and right away
I'll dip the jug and bring it up.

GIRL

Yes, by the gods, and quickly too!

SOSTRATOS (*to himself as he goes into the shrine*)

She's a natural aristocrat
although her look is countrified.

O gods deserving deepest reverence,
what can save me now?

GIRL

Dear me, who's banging at the door?
Can that be father coming out?
I'll catch some blows if he catches me out.

DAOS (*speaking to Gorgias' mother inside as he comes on stage from the other house*)

I'm slaving and serving forever here
while he's out there digging alone.
I've got to go and help him out.
O cursed Poverty! How have we happened
on such an intimate relationship?
Why has your constant presence
settled in our house?

SOSTRATOS (*returning*)

Take the jar.

GIRL (*from the door of her house*)

Bring it here.

Why not a council-chamber? I'm accursed!
The evil is abusive insolence,
as it appears to me.

(*Knemon exits, going angrily into his house.*)

SOSTRATOS

I can't be casual about this job.
Real effort is required here.
That's clear, but shall I go for Getas,
who's my father's slave? By the gods, I will!
He's hot stuff, with lots of experience
in all sorts of things. He'll beat off his bile.
I don't approve of long delays:
why, even in a single day,
lots could happen. Oh, there's noise at the door!

(*Young girl, Knemon's daughter, enters.*)

GIRL

Alas, for all my sufferings,
and what shall I do now? My nurse,
while lifting up the jar,
dropped the well-ropes in the well.

SOSTRATOS (*aside, thinking only of the appeal of his beloved*)

O Father Zeus, Apollo the healer,
beloved Dioscuri—unbeatable beauty!

GIRL

Father gave me orders coming in
to make the water hot.

SOSTRATOS (*overwhelmed by her*)

Amazing!

GIRL

If he discovers this, he'll treat her
like a criminal. I have no time to talk.

220

230

240

250

260

DAOS

Whatever is this man after?

SOSTRATOS

Be well! Take care of your father.

(to himself)

Oh, my! O Sostratos, stop complaining.
It will be all right.

DAOS (*aside*)

What will be all right?

SOSTRATOS (*still to himself*)

Don't worry, do as you planned—get Getas—
tell him everything and bring him back.
(*He goes offstage.*)

DAOS (*alone*)

Is something ugly going on?
I'm not the least bit pleased.
When a boy is waiting on a girl,
corruption's close. But, Knemon, as for you—
I hope the gods destroy you totally.
You've left that innocent and harmless girl
alone in this deserted place,
with no protection anywhere.
That's why he came by! Finding out,
he slipped away and thought he'd try his luck.
Fast as I can, I'll let her brother know.
We'll watch out on her behalf.

I believe I will start on it now—
for here's a group of followers of Pan.
I see they're looking somewhat drunk,
so I think I'm better off away.

(*Chorus of revelers comes on stage, singing a lighthearted paean to Pan
and providing the choral performance sung
between the acts.*)

270

280

ACT II

(*Daos and Gorgias are alone on stage. Gorgias, hearing about
Sostratos' arrival at the farm, criticizes Daos for not dealing
more forcefully with the situation.*)

GORGIAS

Was this an insignificant affair
that you could handle carelessly?

DAOS

How is that?

GORGIAS

You should have told him, whoever he was,
as soon as you saw him come forward,
by Zeus, that you'd better never,
ever see him again acting like that.
But you kept off, as if this business
was somebody else's concern.
It isn't possible to run away
from family responsibility.

My sister's our concern, although her father
wishes it were otherwise. Don't imitate
dyspeptic dispositions.
If she falls victim to some shame,
disgrace would also come to me.
From the outside, no one ever knows
who is to blame. They only see results.

(*They walk toward Knemon's house.*)

DAOS

Gorgias, my friend, I'm afraid
of that old man. If he catches me
near his door, he'll hang me on the spot.

GORGIAS

He's certainly intractable,
always adversarial. How could someone

300

force him to improve or use persuasion?
The law prevents our use of force,
And persuasion's ruled out by his nature.

310

DAOS

Hold on a bit—we haven't come in vain—
Just as I said, he's turning back again.

GORGIAS

The one in the fancy cloak?
Have you been speaking of HIM?

DAOS

He's the one.

GORGIAS

I can see from his looks, he's a villain.

SOSTRATOS (*entering, unaware of Daos and Gorgias; aside*)

I couldn't find Getas, he wasn't in.

My mother's off to sacrifice
to some divinity—I don't know who
every day she's doing some such thing.
She circles round the entire district
making sacrifice, and Getas was sent
to contract for a cook. I said good-bye
to sacrifice, and here I am again.
I think I'll get rid of this going around
and do my talking for myself.
I'll knock at the door, although it may be, I'll never take counsel
again.

320

GORGIAS

My lad, would you please wait a while? I've something serious
to say.

330

SOSTRATOS

My pleasure, certainly.

GORGIAS

For humankind, I do believe,
for those with luck and those unfortunate,
change and limitation is the rule.
The one with luck remains as such,
flourishing throughout his life,
as long as fortune can be borne
without injustice. But when THAT's there
and leading him by all the goods he owns,
it's then, I think, all changes for the worse.
Yet, as for those who do not have enough,
in difficulty, doing nothing wrong,
bearing up with all nobility,
perhaps, in time, they'll find some credit
and share in better expectations.
What am I trying to say?

340

Although you're rich, don't trust in it,
and don't despise us just because we're poor.
Let anyone who's watching see
you're worth enduring fortune.

350

SOSTRATOS

I appear to do something out of place?

GORGIAS

I believe you're eager for a cheap trick—
planning to persuade a free-born girl
to fall, or else you're waiting
for an opportune time
for an action worth multiple deaths.

SOSTRATOS

By Apollo!

GORGIAS

Certainly, it isn't just that at your ease you work your wickedness on us who have no leisure for such things. Know, then, that a poor man harmed is the most ferocious of all. At first he's piteous, then it's outrage he's suffered, not merely injustice.

SOSTRATOS

May all go well for you, dear boy,
But hear me out a bit.

DAOS (*to Gorgias*)

Great going sir! Lots of luck to you!

SOSTRATOS (*to Daos*)

As for you, babbler, stifle yourself—in this place, I saw a certain girl. I love her. If you call that injury—then perhaps I'm in the wrong. Can anyone say more? Except it's not for her I've come—I want to see her father. I'm free-born and sufficiently rich to marry her without a dowry. I pledge to love her perpetually. If I have come with malice on my mind, or wished to plot intrigues in secrecy, (*pointing to the statue of Pan on stage*) may this Pan, together with the Nymphs, strike me dead beside the house. I'm really disturbed, I hope you know, if that's the way I seem to you.

GORGIAS

Maybe I've spoken more than I should—
don't get yourself upset—you've changed my mind.

360

Now I'm your friend. I'm no stranger, but her brother (we have the same mother). Best of men, that's why I've spoken this way.

SOSTRATOS

And now, by Zeus, you'll be useful!

GORGIAS

What do you mean useful?

SOSTRATOS

I see you have a noble character.

390

GORGIAS

I don't want to send you off empty. No pretexts—but the plain truth. The father of this girl—he's just—like no one else. There never was a man like him, and no one living's like him now.

SOSTRATOS

That vicious man? I've seen him here.

GORGIAS

An absolute excess of abuse!
His holdings (not so small—two talents worth) he farms alone, without a laborer to share the work: no household slave or paid employee from the neighborhood, no neighbor either, just himself alone. Happiness to him is seeing no one near. Mostly he works with his daughter around. To her alone he cares to speak, but not to any other easily. He says he'll never let her marry until he finds a bridegroom just like him.

400

380

SOSTRATOS

What you mean is never.

GORGIAS

And that's why, my good friend,
if you take pains to work at this,
you'll work in vain. Leave it to us
who have no choice, to bear with him.

SOSTRATOS

By the gods, have you never loved someone?

GORGIAS

It's not for me, my friend.

SOSTRATOS

How's that? Who's preventing you?

GORGIAS

Calculating the troubles I have
gives me no time to rest.

SOSTRATOS

You've never been, I think.

Your speech shows no experience in things like this.

You exhort me to withdraw.

The decision is no longer mine—
it is the god's.

GORGIAS

Although you're doing us no harm,
you're only needlessly distressed.

SOSTRATOS

Not if I can win the girl!

410

GORGIAS

But you won't. Follow me. Attempt to ask.
He's farming near us in a wooded glen.

SOSTRATOS

How will it go?

GORGIAS

I'll throw in a word about a marriage
to the girl. (That's a thing I'd gladly see!)
Right away he'll start complaining
about everyone, criticizing
the way they live. When he gets sight of you
looking luxurious, he won't even look!

430

SOSTRATOS

Now—is he there?

GORGIAS

No, but in a little while,
It's out he'll come on his accustomed path.

SOSTRATOS

Are you saying he'll bring the girl along?

GORGIAS

It may work out that way.

440

SOSTRATOS

Go ahead, I'm ready.

GORGIAS

The way you talk!

SOSTRATOS

I'm begging you, be on my side!

- SOSTRATOS
Bring out the two-pronged hoe!
- DAOS
Go on, take mine. Meanwhile I'll rebuild the wall.
That also must be done.
- SOSTRATOS
Hand it over—you've saved me!
- DAOS
I'm setting out, my man, you follow there.
- SOSTRATOS
So that's the way it is. I must die trying,
or win her and live!
- GORGAS
If you are speaking as you're thinking,
I wish you luck.
- SOSTRATOS
Great honored gods! If you believe
those things you said would turn me off,
you're wrong—I'm doubly keen.
If this girl hasn't been reared
among women, and knows nothing
of the evils of this life,
and hasn't been terrified
by the imaginings of some aunt or nurse,
but with freedom of spirit, somehow,
by a harsh father detesting wicked ways—
Isn't she a specially lucky find?
But—this hoe must weigh two hundred pounds!
It's killing me! Can't soften now—
that I've set myself to work at it.

- GORGAS
But in what way?
- SOSTRATOS
What way? Let's go ahead to where you said.
- DAOS
What now? While we are working,
do you plan to hang around
wearing that fancy cloak?
- SOSTRATOS
Why shouldn't I?
- DAOS
He'll pelt you with pieces of sod
and call you a lazy pest. You must
dig along with us. Maybe then he might
perhaps hold off and hear a word,
thinking you lead a poor farmer's life.
- SOSTRATOS
I'm ready to do as I'm told. Go on!
(*He takes off the cloak, and can now work unencumbered in only a short
tunic.*)
- GORGAS
Why do you force yourself
to suffer such distress?
- DAOS (*aside*)
What I wish is that today
we get as much as possible
accomplished. Maybe at the same time,
he'll break his back and stop annoying us.

SIKON (*coming on stage with the sheep*)

A sheep like this one doesn't come along every day. Damn it to hell!

If I carry it up in the air,

it grabs a branch in its mouth

and gobbles the fig-leaves from the tree.

I've got to drag it off by force.

If you set it on the ground, it won't move.

The opposite takes place. I am the cook—

and I'm the one in shreds,

dragging along the road.

Happily, here's the temple to the Nymphs,

where we will sacrifice. Greetings Pan!

Hey boy! You—Getas—why are you hanging behind?

GETAS (*entering, loaded down with cushions and cookery*)

Those damnable women loaded me up

with enough for four donkeys.

SIKON

It looks like a mob is arriving.

That's a lot of bedding you're bearing!

GETAS

What now?

SIKON

Lean those things over there.

GETAS

Ok. If she should see

Paianian Pan in her sleep,

that's where we'd go, I know,

right for the sacrifice!

SIKON

Who saw something asleep?

GETAS

Hey man, don't beat on me.

SIKON

Tell me anyway, Getas, who?

510

GETAS

My mistress.

SIKON

But what, by the gods?

GETAS

You'll destroy me! It seemed that Pan—

SIKON (*pointing to the statue on stage*)

This one over here?

GETAS

This one.

SIKON

What was he doing?

GETAS

The master, Sostratos—

SIKON

A really refined young man!

GETAS

Was putting shackles all about him.

SIKON

By Apollo!

520

GETAS

Then giving him a leather vest
and a two-pronged hoe, he ordered him to dig
in some neighbor's land.

SIKON

Unbelievable!

GETAS

Because of this we sacrifice,
to turn the nightmare into something good.

SIKON

Now I've got it! Pick up that stuff again,
and carry it inside. We've got to have
the cushions set up right
and everything else in order.
Nothing should get in the way
when they're ready to sacrifice.
Here's to luck! And lift those eyebrows up,
you triple-miserable wretch.
Today I'll gorge you to your taste!

530

GETAS

I've always been quick to praise your craft.
But YOU, I don't trust.
(*They go off into the shrine. Chorus enters with another song.*)

ACT III

(*Knemon comes out of his house, calling back to Simiche inside. He is getting ready to start some farm-work, but his plans are interrupted by the arrival of Sostratos' mother, Plangon, and Parthenis, who have come to sacrifice at the shrine of Pan.*)

KNEMON

Old woman, once you bar the door,
don't open it for anyone

540

until I come again. By then
I think it should be quite dark.

MOTHER OF SOSTRATOS

Plangon—go faster—our sacrifice
ought to be finished by now!

KNEMON (*unseen and unheard by the others*)

What rotten business is this?
A crowd! Why don't you go where the crows
can pick your bones?

MOTHER (*to the flute-girl*)

Parthenis! Pipe Pan's melody!
They say that no one should approach
this god in silence.

GETAS (*long familiar with his mistress' sacrifices*)

550

By Zeus—you got here safe enough!
Heracles! How wearing! We've been sitting
forever and hanging around.

MOTHER

Has all been set in order for us?

GETAS

Yes, by Zeus—at least the sheep—
it almost died waiting.

MOTHER

You wretch—it won't wait around
till you've the time. Now all of you go in—
make ready the basket, the lustral water,
the sacrificial cakes. Why are you gaping?
Have you been struck by thunder?

560

(*Sostratos' mother exits into the house. Getas meanwhile sees Knemon coming out of his house looking furious.*)

KNEMON

Damn you pests to deepest hell!
 They're forcing laziness on me—
 I just can't leave an unprotected house!
 These Nymphs are a curse across my door—
 I think I'll build another house,
 tearing this one down.
 Look how those burglars sacrifice!
 They're bringing bedding and bottles of wine—
 not goods for the gods—but good for them!
 What's holy is incense and barley-cake.
 This, when set upon the fire,
 the god takes totally. The other things—
 the inedible gall and the tail—
 that's what they offer to the gods
 while they gulp down the rest.
 Old woman—quickly—open the doors!
 I think we should work on the inside chores.
 (*Knemon goes back into his house.*)

570

GETAS (*talking to servants in the shrine*)

The little stew-pot you say you forgot?
 You're sleeping it off! What can be done?
 I think we've got to trouble the neighbors
 of the god.

580

(*knocks on Knemon's door*)

Slave! By the gods!
 Nowhere is there a more miserable
 mob of serving-girls. Hey, slaves!
 It's only screwing that they understand!
 My fine fellows! And if someone sees,
 why, then they slander someone else. Slave!
 What the hell is this? Servants!
 No one is in. Oh! Someone's racing up!
 (*Knemon appears at the door.*)

KNEMON

Why are you attached to my door? Tell me, you miserable boor. 590

GETAS

Don't bite off my head!

KNEMON

I'll do just that, by Zeus,
 and then I'll devour you alive.

GETAS

You won't—by the gods!

KNEMON

Is there some sort of legal covenant
 binding me to you, you godforsaken pest?

GETAS

No bond. I haven't come with witnesses to ask that a debt be
 repaid.

I'm only requesting a small stew-pot.

KNEMON

Stew-pot?

GETAS

Stew-pot.

600

KNEMON

You whipping-post, do you suppose
 I make it a habit to sacrifice cows?

GETAS

I don't think you'd offer a snail.
 I hope you prosper, my good man.
 The women suggested I knock and ask
 so that's what I did. There isn't any.
 When I return, that's the statement I'll make.
 O honored gods, this man's a gray-haired snake.
 (*Getas returns to the shrine.*)

KNEMON (*alone*)

Man-killing beasts! As if I were a friend—
no one hesitates to knock. If I should catch
a man advancing to this door of ours,
if I don't make a warning out of him
to everyone around, then think of me
as just one of the crowd! I don't know
who he was, but this time he lucked out.

(*Knemon returns inside his house and Sikon emerges from the shrine. He begins by speaking to Getas, who is inside.*)

SIKON

Damn you to hell! So he was abusive?
Probably you were foul-mouthed first.
Some people don't understand how to ask—
but I invented the art!
I supply for tens of thousands in this town.
You've got to be a bit of a flatterer—
if an older man opens the door,
I call him "Father" or "Pop";
an older woman I call "Mother";
if it's a woman of middle-age,
it's "Sister" or "Milady";
if one of the younger slaves, "My good man."
But you can go hang yourself stupidly, you say "Boy" or Slave,"
where I say "Papa, a word with you, please."
(*He knocks and Knemon appears.*)

KNEMON

Are YOU back?

SIKON

How's that?

KNEMON

You're provoking me purposely.
Didn't I say "Keep away from my door?"
Woman, hand me the whip!

610

SIKON

Never! Let me go.

KNEMON

Let go?

SIKON

My good man, truly, by the gods!

KNEMON

Get back here.

SIKON

May Poseidon grant you—

KNEMON

Still chattering?

SIKON

I came to request an earthen casserole.

KNEMON

I have no earthen casserole,
nor do I possess an axe, nor salt,
nor vinegar—only nothing!
I've stated it simply to everyone near
Don't approach!

SIKON

You never said it to me.

KNEMON

Now I'm saying it.

SIKON

Yes, with brute force! Couldn't you tell me
where one might go to ask for one?

640

630

650

KNEMON

Didn't I say? Will you still jabber at me?

SIKON

A grand fare-well.

KNEMON

I don't want any "fare-well" from you.

SIKON

Fare badly then.

KNEMON

Oh, what incurable ills!

(*Knemon exits into his house, leaving Sikon on stage.*)

SIKON

He's furrowed me into strips of sod!

So that's what you get for polite requests!

Some difference, by Zeus!

Should one approach another door?

If they're all so ready with fighting-gloves here,

It would be difficult. Maybe it's best

to roast all the meat. That's how it appears.

Anyway, I've got a pan.

Good-bye to Phyle—I'll use what's at hand.

(*He returns to the shrine. Shortly afterward an exhausted Sostratos enters.*)

SOSTRATOS

Whoever is lacking in troubles,

Let him go hunting in Phyle.

Oh, multiple miseries,

since I have a back and neck and hips—

to put it briefly—my whole body hurts.

I fell into this job like a strong young man;

670

lifting the hoe like a laborer,
I struck it deep. I laid it on
with diligence, but not for long—
then I'd turn and look, in case it was the time
for the old man to come with the girl,
and then, by Zeus, I took hold of my hip,
secretly at first, and after quite a while,
my spine was bent. I was quietly
turning to timber. The sun was burning,
and Gorgias, looking over, saw me
bending slightly up like a swing-beam
and then going heavily down
with all my body striking it.

"Young fellow," he said, "That man,
it seems, will not come now." I answered,
"So what should we do? Keep watch tomorrow
and let today go by?" Then Daos came
as my successor to the spade.

The first assault is done. I've come
here, though I can't say why, by the gods.
Of its own accord, this business
drags me to this place.

680

(*Getas appears at the door of the shrine, trying to get the smoke out of his eyes. He shouts back inside at Sikon.*)

GETAS

What's the trouble now? Do you think,
my man, I've sixty hands? I kindle the coal,
cut up the guts, wash, and carry to and fro
and at the same time I'm kneading the dough.
I hand this implement around and then—
I'm blinded by the smoke. At times like these,
I think I'm the donkey at the feast.

SOSTRATOS

Slave! Getas!

700

GETAS

Someone's calling me?

SOSTRATOS

I am.

GETAS (*still blinded*)

And who are you?

SOSTRATOS

You don't see me?

GETAS

I see you now—Master!

SOSTRATOS

Tell me what YOU are doing here.

GETAS

What? We've just made the sacrifice
and now we're preparing the morning meal.

SOSTRATOS

Is Mother here?

GETAS

For quite some time.

SOSTRATOS

And Father?

GETAS

We expect him. You can go inside.

SOSTRATOS

After I've run a little errand.
Somehow, the timing's fine for sacrifice.

I'll invite this young man, going just as I am,
and also his slave. If they share
in the offerings, then in the future,
they'll be more useful allies of ours
regarding the marriage.

GETAS

What are you saying? You're planning to go
and invite some people to share the meal?

For my sake, let there be three thousand!

I've known it for a long time—

I won't get a taste of anything. Hardly!

Bring everyone. You've sacrificed

a lovely victim—really worth seeing.

As for these women—they're sophisticates—
but would they give me something? No.

By Demeter, not even bit of coarse salt!

SOSTRATOS

Getas, today it will go well—

I'll prophesy myself, O Pan—

and always pray while passing you.

I'll be a friend to all mankind.

(*Sostratos exits, looking for Gorgias and Daos.*)

SIMICHE (*dashing tragically out of the house*)

Oh, woe is me! Oh, woe is me! Oh, woe is me!

GETAS

Go to Hell! That's the old man's woman coming up.

SIMICHE

What will become of me?

Wanting to get the pail from the well,
without the master finding out,
(if only I could have managed it,
to lift it out myself),

I attached the two-pronged hoe
to a weak and rotten piece of rope.
It broke on me immediately.

GETAS

That's really good!

SIMICHE

Unhappy me—I've heaved the hoe
into the well with the pail.

GETAS

Now all that's left for you to do
is just to throw yourself in too.

SIMICHE

It just so happens he's getting ready
to move some dung that's lying around.
For quite a while he's been searching and shouting,
dashing about and—banging the door!
(*Simiche hides by the door as Knemon rushes out.*)

GETAS (to Simiche)

Get moving—you miserable old woman—
move! He'll kill you. No, protect yourself.

KNEMON

Where's the thief?

SIMICHE (emerging from her hiding place)

Master, it fell against my will.

KNEMON

Just start walking inside.

SIMICHE

Tell me, what will you do?

KNEMON

I'll tie you to the rope and let you down.

SIMICHE

Please, no. Oh, misery.

760

GETAS

That's the best use for this same rope—
by the gods!—if it's totally rotten.

SIMICHE

I'll call on Daos from the neighbor's house.

KNEMON (stopping her)

You'll call Daos? Damn you,
you've destroyed me. Go faster—inside!
(*Simiche goes into the house.*)

750

I'm miserable with this emptiness—
like no other. I'll descend into the well.
What else is there for me to do?

GETAS (to Knemon)

We'll get a hook and a rope.

KNEMON

May the gods destroy you utterly
and horribly, if you speak to me.

770

GETAS

It would only be right! He's jumped in again.
What a confounded wretch he is!

The sort of life he leads! A tried and true
example of an Attic farmer
in battle with the rocks that yield
only thyme and sage. He brings in pain
but reaps no good from it.
But here's my master coming

and bringing his guests along.
They're just local workers! How odd!
Why now is he leading them here?
How have they become familiar?

SOSTRATOS (*enters, talking to Gorgias and Daos*)
I can't allow you to do otherwise.

GORGIAS
We have all we need.

SOSTRATOS
Heracles! Who could refuse completely
to share a meal with a celebrating friend,
for I am your friend, you should know that's true—
Long before I ever saw you, I was.
Daos, take these things, and then come in.

GORGIAS
I can't leave my Mother alone at home.
(*to Daos*)
Take care of what she needs; I'll be there soon.

ACT IV

(*For the second time, Simiche rushes desperately out of Knemon's house in parody of a tragic messenger.*)

SIMICHE
Who can rescue us? O wretched me! Who can rescue us?

SIKON (*emerging from the shrine*)
Lord Heracles!
(*to Simiche*)

Let us get on with our libations
in the name of the gods and divinities.
You are abusive, you beat on us.
Go on with your howling. What a crazy house!

780

SIMICHE

My master's in the well.

SIKON

How's that?

SIMICHE

I'll tell you how—he descended
to retrieve the hoe and pail,
when suddenly he slipped on the rim,
and that's how he fell in.

SIKON

Not that horrible old man?

SIMICHE

That's the one.

SIKON

By heavens, he's done well for himself!

My dear old woman—now you've got a job to do.

SIMICHE

But how?

SIKON

A mortar or stone or something like that—
hurl it at him from above.

SIMICHE (*pleading*)

Dear man, go down . . .

SIKON

By Poseidon, I would pay
if I fight with a dog in the well,
as the story goes. Never!

800

810

SIMICHE (*moving away from him toward Gorgias' house*)

Gorgias, where on earth are you?

GORGIAS (*hearing her and coming out of the shrine*)

Where am I? What is it, Simiche?

SIMICHE

What? I'll say it again.

The master's in the well.

GORGIAS (*calling into the shrine*)

Sostratos, come out.

(*to Simiche, as Sostratos comes out of the shrine*)

You lead the way inside. Go quickly now.

(*After the three of them go into Knemon's house, Sikon speaks.*)

SIKON

There really are gods, by Dionysus!

You wouldn't offer a small stew-pot

to the worshippers, you sacrilege.

You grudge everything. Go fall in the well

and drink it down. Then you won't even

have water to offer anyone.

(*aside*)

Now the Nymphs have taken revenge

on him, as he deserves.

No one escapes unharmed, if he harms a cook.

Somehow our art is sacrosanct.

You can do what you want to the waiters.

(*He hears noises from behind the house.*)

What's that? He didn't die?

A girl is wailing "Dearest Papa."

I don't care . . . but it's clear they're hauling him up.

(*He imagines the scene.*)

Just look at him, can you believe it

by the gods! Soaked and shivering—elegant!

(*pointing to the emblem of Apollo Agyieus by the door*)

By this Apollo here, I'd like to see it!

(*calling to the women in the shrine*)

You women, pour your libations

for these rescuers. Pray that they

save the old man—scarcely.

Let him be maimed and lame—

no longer will this neighbor be the greatest pain

to the ever-present worshippers.

I care how it goes—whenever someone cares to pay.

(*Sikon joins his customers in the shrine as Sostratos emerges.*)

SOSTRATOS (*to the audience*)

By Demeter, by Asclepius,

by the gods, never in my life

have I witnessed a more opportune

near-drowning. What a lovely time!

As fast as we got in, Gorgias jumped down

into the well, while I and the girl

did nothing from above.

What could we possibly do?

Except that she was broken up

and tore her hair and beat her breast.

I was precious—just like a nurse,

by the gods! I stood there and told her

not to act that way. I begged her,

looking at her as an image

of perfect design. The stricken man

was no concern of mine, except

for all that heaving on the rope.

What a pain! By Zeus, I nearly destroyed him—

Looking at my girl, I dropped the rope

three times. Gorgias was a true Atlas.

He kept it up and brought him up,

and when the old man got out, I came here.

I could hardly keep myself in check.

I was just THIS close to kissing her.

850

860

820

830

870

I love her dreadfully. I'm preparing—
oh, they're making noise at the door.
(*The door of Knemon's house opens and Knemon emerges, lying on
a wheeled bed like a wounded tragic hero. His
daughter and Gorgias are in attendance. Myrrhine
comes out from the shrine and stands to the side
with her attendants.*)

SOSTRATOS (*continuing*)

O Savior Zeus, how odd!

GORGIAS (*to Knemon*)

Knemon, tell me what you want.

KNEMON

What's the use of talking? I feel awful.

GORGIAS

Bear up!

KNEMON

I've borne enough. No longer
will Knemon ever bother you.

GORGIAS

That's the evil of isolation,
don't you see? You come within a hair
of dying recently. Someone should
look after you at your time of life.

KNEMON

Although I know I'm done for,
call your mother, Gorgias.

GORGIAS

Right away.

(*aside*)Troubles alone can teach us,
as it seems to me.KNEMON (*without responding to him*)Daughter, would you give me your hand
and help me to stand?SOSTRATOS (*rushing over, in envy of their close contact; aside*)
Lucky man!KNEMON (*to Sostratos*)Why are you standing over there,
you miserable specimen?(*to Myrrhine and Gorgias, when Sostratos doesn't answer*)

I wanted hard work, Myrrhine.

Gorgias, I chose this way of life

No one could have changed my mind, believe me.
(*to all assembled, as an explanation of his life*)Perhaps I was mistaken, but I thought
that I alone of everyone
could be sufficient to myself,
needing no one else.But now I see how fierce and unexpected
the end of life can be. I've discovered
what I never realized before:we must have someone close at hand—
an ally always ready with assistance.But—by Hephaestus—I was so far gone
from looking at the lives men lead
and the way they make their calculations
to profit themselves. I didn't believe
that anyone could be an altruist.

That's what got in my way.

But one man—Gorgias—has proved the reverse,
having done what only the noblest would do.I never allowed him to come to my door
or gave him help of any sort,
never addressed him, spoke kindly
but he saved me anyway.

890

900

910

Someone else would have said, and rightly so,
 "You never let me come, so I'm not coming now.
 You never were of any use,
 and that's how I'll reciprocate."

(*to Gorgias, personally, noticing his discomfort*)

What is it, my boy? If I should die . . . 920

(and I think I will—I'm feeling terrible)
 or whether I escape with my life,
 in either case, I make you my son.
 All that I happen to have, consider your own.
 I hand my daughter over to you—
 provide her with a husband. If I were well,
 I'd never find one on my own—
 there isn't anyone who'd please me.

But as for me, if I should live,
 allow me to live as I wish, . . . 930

while you take care of all the other things.
 You're sensible—with the help of the gods,
 you're her proper guardian.
 Divide my property and offer half
 as dowry for her. Manage the rest
 for me and your mother.

(*getting tired, to his daughter*)
 Daughter, help me lie down. I don't believe
 a man should speak beyond necessity,
 except, my child, I want you to know
 a few things about me and my habits.
 If all the others were like me,
 there wouldn't be any law-courts,
 and no one would send anyone to jail.
 There'd be no war—each man would hold
 a moderate share and be content.
 If instead, you'd rather follow present paths,
 then that's what you should do.

This harsh, dyspeptic aged man won't bother you.

GORGIAS

All these things I take with thanks,
 but, with your help, as soon as possible,
 a husband must be found, if you agree. 950

KNEMON

I told you what I thought.
 Now, by the gods, don't bother me.

GORGIAS (*pointing to Sostratos*)

It just so happens that he wants . . .

KNEMON

Never, by the gods!

GORGIAS (*continuing*)

He's someone asking for the girl.

KNEMON

I don't care about any such things.

GORGIAS

He helped save you.

KNEMON

Who's that?

GORGIAS (*bringing Sostratos forward*)

This man here. 960

KNEMON (*to Sostratos*)

You, come here.

(*looks at Sostratos and speaks to Gorgias*)

He's sunburned. Is he a farmer?

GORGIAS

He is, father—not one of those
who puts on airs and ambles lazily around.
(*Knemon nods in agreement, and then has had enough.*)

KNEMON

Wheel me back inside.

GORGIAS (to *Simiche at the door*)

Take care of him.
(*Knemon goes into his house. Myrrhine and the girl follow.*)

SOSTRATOS (to *Gorgias*)

For the rest, you've got to pledge your sister to me.

GORGIAS

These things should be referred to your father.

SOSTRATOS

Father won't say otherwise.

GORGIAS

Therefore, I certainly give her to you
in view of all the gods. It's fitting, Sostratos
you've approached this business without disguise
and honestly. You thought it worth your while
to work at anything to make this marriage work.
You're delicate and yet you took up the hoe;
you dug and wore yourself out.
In such a manner, a man reveals himself
when he is prosperous but makes himself
the equal of a man who's poor.
With inner strength, your sort will bear
a change of fortune. You've given sufficient proof
of character. Only remain as you are.

SOSTRATOS (*eagerly*)

I'll do better yet.
(*hesitating*)

And yet to praise

myself perhaps reveals vulgarity.

(*noticing Kallippides coming on stage at the right*)

My father's coming just in time, I see.

GORGIAS (*surprised*)

Your father is Kallippides?

SOSTRATOS

Very much indeed!

GORGIAS

By Zeus, he's rich!

SOSTRATOS

And rightly so—he's an unbeatable farmer.

990

KALLIPIDES (*approaching*)

Looks like I've been left behind. Probably
they ate up the sheep and returned to the farm.

GORGIAS (to *Sostratos*)

By Poseidon, he has hunger pains!

Should we wait or tell him now?

SOSTRATOS

First let him eat. Later he'll be milder.

KALLIPIDES (to *Sostratos*)

What's this Sostratos? Have you eaten?

SOSTRATOS

Yes, but yours is set aside—go on.

970

980

KALLIPPIDES

I'm on my way in.
(*He goes into the shrine.*)

GORGIAS

Go in and talk to him now if you wish—
just you and your father alone.

1000

SOSTRATOS

You'll wait in the house, won't you?

GORGIAS

I'm not coming out.

SOSTRATOS

I'll leave in a little and call you over.

(*Sostratos goes into the shrine and Gorgias joins the rest of his family in
Kremon's house. When the stage is empty, the
Chorus of revelers returns with its paean before the
final act.*)

ACT V

(*When the stage is empty, Kallippides and Sostratos come out of the
shrine. They are in the middle of a disagreement.*)

SOSTRATOS

It's not everything I wanted, father.
I didn't expect this from you.

KALLIPPIDES

What? Didn't I give way?
I said that you could have the girl you love.
I wish it and I say it's got to be.

SOSTRATOS

That's not how it seems to me.

KALLIPPIDES

I realize that when you're young,
marriage turns out to be strong
when a man is moved by love.

1010

SOSTRATOS

So I can have this young man's sister
and consider him worthy of us?
How can you say he can't have mine?

KALLIPPIDES

What you say is disgraceful.
I don't want a beggarly bridegroom and bride.
One or the other is enough for us.

SOSTRATOS

You're talking money—an uncertain matter.
If you knew that it would remain with you
until the end of time—protect it
and don't hand it over to a soul.
But where you lack control, and all you have depends on luck
and not on you—

1020

why should you grudge—O Father!—anyone?

For Lady Luck could take it all away
and give your holdings over
by some mischance to an undeserving man.
That's why I say, as long as you master it
you must use it with nobility.

1030

Be of help to all, and through your actions,
make as many well-provided as you can.
Good deeds don't die. Then, if Fortune trips you up,
these same resources will return to you,
a visible friend preferable by far
to secret wealth you've buried in the ground.

KALLIPPIDES

You know how it is, Sostratos—
what I've amassed, I haven't hidden for myself—
How could that be? It's yours.

You've passed your judgment on a man
and want to secure him as a friend?

Why are you giving me maxims?

Go ahead, Sostratos—offer and share.

I'm completely persuaded by you.

1040

SOSTRATOS

You're willing?

KALLIPPIDES

I'm willing, believe me.

Don't bother yourself about it.

SOSTRATOS

Now I'll call Gorgias.

(*He calls over toward Knaemon's house and Gorgias comes out.*)

GORGIAS

I heard you both since I was by the door—
all the things you said from the start.

What then? I consider you my friend,

Sostratos, and I'm extremely fond of you,

but I don't want more than I can manage.

By Zeus, I couldn't do it if I wished.

1050

SOSTRATOS

I don't know what you're saying.

GORGIAS

I give you my sister as your wife,

but to take yours—that would be very fine for me!

SOSTRATOS

What do you mean by "fine"?

GORGIAS

It wouldn't be pleasant for me
to luxuriate in someone else's labors,
but just in what I've accomplished myself.

1060

SOSTRATOS

You're talking nonsense, Gorgias.

How can you judge yourself
unworthy of this marriage?

GORGIAS

I've judged myself worthy of her.

But it isn't right to take a lot
if you only have a little.

KALLIPPIDES

By Zeus, how you act the aristocrat!

GORGIAS

How?

KALLIPPIDES

By not wishing to appear indulged.

You've seen me persuaded; it's your turn to yield.

Your manner convinced me double-fold;

now don't you be brainless as well as poor.

Marriage will bring you real security.

(*After a pause, Gorgias agrees.*)

1070

GORGIAS

You've won. What remains is for us to get engaged.

KALLIPPIDES

I pledge my daughter now to you
young man, to produce lawful offspring.
Three talents as dowry, I offer with her.

GORGIAS

And I've one talent for my sister.

KALLIPPIDES

Have you? You shouldn't give too much.

GORGIAS

But I have it.

1080

KALLIPPIDES

Keep possession of your total holdings,
Gorgias. Now bring your mother
and your sister here to join our women.

GORGIAS

That's what I should do.

SOSTRATOS

Let's all stay here and celebrate tonight.
Tomorrow is the time for marrying.
Gorgias, bring the old man here.
His needs will be better cared for by us.

GORGIAS

He won't want to come, Sostratos.

SOSTRATOS

Change his mind.

1090

GORGIAS

If I could.

SOSTRATOS (*to Kallippides*)

Father, it's time for a fine round of drinks
and an all-night feast for the women.

KALLIPPIDES

The reverse, I think—the women will drink
while we'll be the ones awake at night.
I'll go and get things ready for you.
(*Kallippides goes into the shrine.*)

SOSTRATOS (*to the audience*)

Do it, please.

No problem should cause a thinking man
To ever fall victim to despair—

Application and care can conquer all!
I'm the perfect example!
In just one day I prevailed,
arranging a marriage for myself
which no one thought anyone could.

1100

(*Gorgias comes out of Knemon's house with his sister and mother.*)

GORGIAS (*to the women*)

Come forward quickly, will you please.

SOSTRATOS (*to Myrrhine and the girl*)

Come this way.
(*to his mother at the entrance to the shrine*)
Mother, receive these women.

(*to Gorgias*)

Knemon hasn't come yet?

GORGIAS

He begged me to take the old lady—
so he'd be left alone at last.

1110

SOSTRATOS

You can't win against him!

GORGIAS

That's the way he is.

SOSTRATOS

But you should enjoy yourself—let's go in.

GORGIAS

Sostratos, I'm embarrassed
to be together with women . . .

SOSTRATOS

Isn't that foolish? Won't you go in?

Now you must take all of us as family.

(*Gorgias hesitantly agrees and they go into the shrine together.*)

*Immediately afterward, Simiche comes out of
Knemon's house, talking to Knemon in a mixture
of sympathy and disapproval.*

SIMICHE

I'm going off, by Artemis.

You can just lie there alone.

You make yourself miserable.

They wanted to take you to visit the god,
and you said no. Something bad will happen—
by Demeter and the maiden,
even worse than now. (May all go well!)

(*Simiche walks over to the entrance of the shrine, just as Getas is coming
out, telling someone he will check up on Knemon.
At this point, a piper starts to play, and the
following scene is performed with the music in the
background. The atmosphere becomes less realistic
as Knemon is tormented into celebrating with the
others. The music helps create an atmosphere of
fantasy, so that Knemon's miseries at the hands of
Getas and Sikon seem less like cruelty and more
like ritual. Pan will not be denied.*)

1120

GETAS (*speaking back into the shrine*)

I'll go there and see how he is.

(*The music begins.*)

Why are you piping for me, you wretch?

I have no leisure yet.

I've been sent to the sick man over there

Hold off a bit!

SIMICHE (*to Getas at the entrance*)

Let someone else sit with him, inside.

I want to chat with my lady,

before she leaves as a bride,

to talk to her before we're separated.

1130

GETAS

That's smart of you—now carry on

I'll see to him while you are gone.

(*As Simiche goes into the shrine, Getas calls to Sikon.*)

Hey, Sikon, cook, come over here

and hear what I have to say—

I think we'll have some fun today.

(*Sikon comes out of the shrine.*)

We'll burn him up—it will be such a pleasure.

SIKON

What frightens me is Gorgias.

If he finds out, he'll clean the floor with us.

1140

GETAS

There's such a lot of noise inside the shrine.

No one will notice—there's too much wine.

We'll civilize him into this family

If he continues as he is,

We'd all suffer unbearably.

SIKON

There's nothing more that you could say!

GETAS

Only watch out so nobody sees
as you bring him up to the front. Lead the way!

SIKON

I beg you, for a little, wait around—
you can't just disappear from sight—
and, by the gods! don't make a sound.

1150

GETAS

I'm not making noise, by Gaia! Go right!
(*They arrive at Knemon's house and look inside. Then Sikon goes in and
carries Knemon out to the center of the stage.*)

SIKON (to Getas)

Look at him!

GETAS

The time is now. That's where to put him.
I'll go first—you watch the rhythm.
(*to nonexistent domestic slaves*)

Slave, little slave, fine slaves, little slaves!

KNEMON (*waking up*)

Oh my, I'm dying.

GETAS (*calling louder*)

Fine slaves, O slave, little slave, slave, slaves!

KNEMON (*in greater agony this time*)

Oh my, I'm dying.

1160

GETAS

Hello! Who's this fellow? Is this where you live?

KNEMON

No doubt about it. What do you want?

GETAS

Giant bowls and casseroles.

KNEMON

Who can help me to stand?

GETAS

You have them, you truly have all at hand—
seven stools and twelve tables belong to you—
slaves, pass the word to the inside crew.
I'm in a hurry too.

KNEMON

There isn't any.

GETAS (*incredulously*)

There isn't?

1170

KNEMON (*angry*)

Haven't you heard me ten thousand times?

GETAS

I'll make my escape.

(*He runs to the side and motions to Sikon to take over.*)

KNEMON (*aside*)

Oh, misery! How did I get to be
brought to this spot? Who put me
down in front of my house?

SIKON (*to Getas*)

You go off, I'm on.

Slave, little slave, O women, men, doorman!

KNEMON

My man, are you mad? You'll bring down the door.

SIKON

Could you supply nine coverlets?

KNEMON

How could I?

SIKON

... and a woven Oriental hanging,
in length, one hundred feet.

KNEMON

A strap! If only I could beat . . .
Old woman! Where's the old woman?
at the sacrifice. You've got to bear
these indignities—no one's here to help.
Bite your lip and listen
to one thing after another:
when your women came to the cave,
hugs and handshakes greeted your wife
and daughter. Their manner of life
was not unappealing. I was near
preparing the entertainment for the men.
Don't you hear me? Don't go to sleep.

GETAS

No indeed!

KNEMON

Oh me!

SIKON

What then? You don't want to be there?
We were hurrying—here's what follows—

I readied the table and spread the pillows—
do you hear? The cushions and tables were set—
I just happen to be a cook, don't forget.

GETAS (*aside*)

He's such a dainty fellow!

SIKON (*continuing*)

Somebody tilted the old Bacchic wine
into a deep bellied cup.
With Naiad springs he mixed it up
And toasted the men in a round.
Another saluted the women in line:
They drank it up like sandy ground . . .
You understand?

A serving girl was turning tipsy,
and shaded the flush on her blushing young face.
She started to pace in a rhythmic trance,
but hesitating, modestly.
Another maiden took her hand
and joined her in the dance.

1210

GETAS (*jumping up to dance and grabbing Knemon*)

Oh, you've suffered frightfully,
so dance now, join the chorus.

KNEMON

What do you wretches want with me?

GETAS

You country boor, come and dance with us.

KNEMON

Stop, by the gods!

GETAS

Then let us bring you in.

1220

KNEMON

What can I do?

GETAS (*starting to force him to dance again*)

Then it's dancing for you!

KNEMON

Take me in—better there than here.

GETAS

Now you're talking sensibly.

We win! O lovely victory!

Slave, O Donax, Sikon, Syrus!

Bring him in along with us.

(*Donax and Syrus, two slaves without speaking parts, pick Knemon up from the ground and start to carry him into the shrine. Before they go in, Getas speaks.*)

GETAS (*to Knemon*)

Just watch yourself, 'cause if we catch

you giving trouble again, we won't react so moderately—

We'll really deal with you then!

(*to the servants*)

Someone bring us garlands and a torch.

1230

SIKON (*to Getas, handing him a garland from the altar of Apollo*)

Take this one here.

(*Sikon, Syrus, and Donax bring Knemon into the shrine as Getas speaks the epilogue to the audience.*)

GETAS

Proceed. Now you've seen us triumphant
over this troublesome old man.

Your warm applause now, if you please,
dear lads and boys and men. May laughter-loving Victory,
noble-born and maidenly, favor us forever.

Desperately Seeking Justice (*Epitrepontes*)

Translated by

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