

## LYSISTRATA



## CAST OF CHARACTERS (WITH SPEAKING PARTS)

LYSISTRATA: an Athenian woman

KALONIKE: friend of Lysistrata

MYRRHINE: an Athenian woman, wife of Kinesias

LAMPITO: a married Spartan woman

LEADER OF MEN'S CHORUS

CHORUS OF OLD MEN

LEADER OF WOMEN'S CHORUS

CHORUS OF OLD WOMEN

ADMINISTRATOR: an Athenian special magistrate

OLD LADIES #1, #2, and #3: allies of Lysistrata

WOMEN #1, #2, #3, and #4: co-conspirators of Lysistrata

KINESIAS: husband of Myrrhine

BABY: infant child of Kinesias and Myrrhine

SPARTAN MESSENGER

UNITED CHORUS OF OLD MEN AND WOMEN

UNITED CHORUS LEADER

SPARTAN AMBASSADOR

ATHENIAN AMBASSADORS #1 and #2

## SCENE 1

*(Setting: The stage building represents the Acropolis, with its central doors serving as the Propylaea, the gated entrance to the Acropolis. Lysistrata anxiously paces before this setting until she speaks below.<sup>8</sup>)*

8. For a detailed reconstruction of the play's staging, see Ewans, M., *Aristophanes: Lysistrata, The Women's Festival, and Frogs* (Norman, OK, 2010): 227–250.

LYSISTRATA<sup>9</sup> You know, if they'd been invited to a Bacchic rave,<sup>10</sup>  
Or to Pan's<sup>11</sup> place or to Genetyllis' at Kolias,<sup>12</sup>  
You wouldn't be able to get anywhere because of all their  
tambourines.<sup>13</sup>

But as it as, not a single woman's here,  
Except for my neighbor who's coming this way now—  
Hi, Kalonike. KALONIKE<sup>14</sup> Hello, Lysistrata.  
Why the frown? Don't scowl like that, dear!  
Those knitted brows don't flatter you any.

LYSISTRATA Honestly, Kalonike, I'm so angry I could just explode!  
I'm so aggravated about us women.  
To the men's way of thinking, we're virtually  
Sociopaths— KALONIKE Right. We are, aren't we, by  
Zeus?<sup>15</sup>

LYSISTRATA They were told to meet here  
To discuss a very important matter!  
They don't show up, and decided to sleep in instead.  
KALONIKE Now, now sweetie,

9. Her name means "Disbander of Armies" in Greek.

10. For the god Dionysus/Bacchus, see Appendix. Lysistrata here refers to religious festivals in honor of Dionysus for women only. In comedy, these are stereotypically portrayed as opportunities for women, once freed from their households and male supervision, to engage in bibulous and licentious behavior.

In keeping with the aims of this translation (see Introduction 30–31), I have retained these very specific opening references ("Bacchic rave," "Pan's place," "Genetyllis at Kolias"). Ewans' (note 8 above) translation demonstrates how these phrases can easily be generalized for a modern performance by his renderings "an orgy," "a sleep-out," "a celebration of the love goddess," respectively.

11. Pan is a lusty rustic deity, at whose grottoes women gathered for festive occasions (cf. 911ff.).

12. Genetyllis is a goddess of childbirth (with erotic associations). The precise location of Kolias is unknown, but it was the site of a temple and women's festival of Aphrodite (see Appendix), referred to here for their erotic connotations. For the stereotyping of women as sexually insatiable, see Introductory Essay 43.

13. I.e., *tympana*, associated with the worship of Dionysus in particular and ecstatic celebrations in general.

14. Her name means "Beautiful Victory."

15. For the Olympian god Zeus, see Appendix.

They'll show. Getting out of the house isn't that easy for us wives:  
We're always having to bend over backwards for our husbands,  
Or having to wake up the maid, or having to put  
The baby to bed, or bathing and feeding it.

20 **LYSISTRATA** Yes, but there are some things they should consider  
More important than all that. **KALONIKE** So what's up,  
Lysistrata darling?  
Whatever in the world have you called all of us together for?  
What's this business all about? Just how big is it?

**LYSISTRATA** Oh, it's big. **KALONIKE** And hard too?

**LYSISTRATA** Yes it's hard, absolutely! **KALONIKE** Then why  
haven't we all shown up in a flash?

**LYSISTRATA** I didn't mean *that*. They obviously would have  
25 shown up already for that!  
But this's something I've been examining  
And bouncing around for many sleepless nights.

**KALONIKE** Must be teeny-weeny after all that nighttime bouncing.

**LYSISTRATA** Teeny-weeny enough that the salvation  
30 Of all Greece<sup>16</sup> rests in the laps of us women.

**KALONIKE** In the laps of us women? Hardly a safe place for that!

**LYSISTRATA** Rest assured, Athens' future lies with us.  
Whether the Peloponnesians<sup>17</sup> are exterminated—

**KALONIKE** I'm 100% percent behind that, to be sure!

35 **LYSISTRATA** And every last Boeotian<sup>18</sup> is completely wiped out—

**KALONIKE** No, not every last one of them! You've got to spare  
the eels.<sup>19</sup>

16. The idea of a unified nation of Greece was only an abstract idea ("panhellenism") in the classical period, as the political unit was instead the city-state (e.g., Athens, Sparta, Corinth).

17. Sparta and her allies on the Peloponnese are Athens' chief enemies in the current war (cf. Introductory Essay 39–40).

18. Boeotia was a region of central Greece whose chief city was Thebes. The Boeotians joined the Peloponnesians in the war against Athens.

19. Eels from Lake Kopias in Boeotia were a delicacy; the war has interrupted their exportation to Athens (cf. 702ff.).

**LYSISTRATA** I won't—knock on wood—utter one bad word  
About the Athenians. Anyway, you know what I'd say.  
But if the women all meet together here—  
The Boeotians, the Peloponnesians,  
40 And us—together we can save Greece!

**KALONIKE** But what brainy or heroic deeds are we women  
Capable of? We just sit around all prettied up,  
Wearing our saffron dresses,<sup>20</sup> plastered in make-up,  
With our Kimberic<sup>21</sup> lingerie and six-inch heels.

**LYSISTRATA** That's exactly it! These very things will be our  
salvation—  
The saffron dresses, and our perfume, and our pumps,  
And the rouge, and our sheer lingerie!

**KALONIKE** What on earth do you mean? **LYSISTRATA** Not  
one man of those left  
Will raise his spear against anyone else—

**KALONIKE** By the Two Goddesses,<sup>22</sup> I'm dying my dress saffron  
right now!

**LYSISTRATA** Nor take up his shield— **KALONIKE** Mmm—  
I'm slipping into my Kimberic see-through!

**LYSISTRATA** Nor even a knife. **KALONIKE** That's it! I'm  
getting some pumps!

**LYSISTRATA** So shouldn't the women have shown up here already?

**KALONIKE** "Shown up here"? They should have *flown* here ages ago!

**LYSISTRATA** They're true-blue Athenians, dear: you know  
Our national motto, "always late when it counts the most."  
Not one single woman from the Paralia,<sup>23</sup>  
Or even anyone from Salamis!<sup>24</sup> **KALONIKE** The women  
of Salamis?

They've been busy riding their men's masts since daybreak.

20. An expensive, yellow-dyed women's garment usually worn at festivals or other special occasions.

21. Imported from a locale in Asia Minor associated with exotic clothing.

22. Demeter and her daughter Persephone (see Appendix).

23. A district (i.e., deme) of greater Athens, which is collectively known as Attica.

24. An island in the Saronic Gulf off the coast of Athens. Cf. note 81 below.

LYSISTRATA And the ones I expected to show up  
Here first, the ladies of Acharnai<sup>25</sup>—  
They haven't come at all! KALONIKE Well, Theogenes'  
wife<sup>26</sup> at least  
Has come here and hoisted her sail.  
Hey, look! Some of them are actually coming now!

LYSISTRATA Oh, and some others are coming over there!  
KALONIKE Phew!  
Where are they from? LYSISTRATA Stenchville.<sup>27</sup>  
KALONIKE By Zeus!  
So that's why they're raising such a stink.

MYRRHINE<sup>28</sup> We're not late, are we, Lysistrata?  
What do you say? Ouch—silence! LYSISTRATA I don't  
approve of  
Anyone's showing up late for something this important.

MYRRHINE Hey, it was hard to find my girdle in the dark.  
But now that we're here, tell us what's so damn urgent.

LYSISTRATA Let's wait a little while longer  
For the women from Boeotia and the Peloponnese  
To arrive. MYRRHINE Agreed, that makes better sense.  
Hey, there's Lampito coming right now!

LYSISTRATA Hello, Lampito, my darling Spartan friend!

MYRRHINE How gorgeous you are, sweetie!  
What a complexion, and that tight body of yours!

25. A deme of Athens that had suffered severe losses in the war.

26. The identification of Theogenes (a very common name) is uncertain, but the description of his wife's "hoisting her sail" characterizes her as stereotypically bibulous (cf. note 10 above).

27. Anagyrous was a deme in a swampy area named for a malodorous plant growing there.

28. A common Greek name meaning "Myrtle" that also was slang for female genitalia.

You could manhandle a bull!<sup>29</sup> LAMPITO<sup>30</sup> Very much  
yes I think, by Twin Gods.<sup>31</sup>  
I am exerciser and I jump at my butt.<sup>32</sup>

KALONIKE And that is one fine titty-rack you've got!

LAMPITO Why you feel me up like animal for sacrifice?

LYSISTRATA Where's this other young woman from?

LAMPITO By Twin Gods, she ambassador for you from  
Boeotia. MYRRHINE My goodness, she's just like  
Boeotia,

What with all that lovely pubic land down there!<sup>33</sup>

KALONIKE And I swear by Zeus,  
That bush<sup>34</sup> of hers is so neatly trimmed!

LYSISTRATA And who's the other girl? LAMPITO Mighty  
fine lady, by Twin Gods,

She from Corinth.<sup>35</sup> KALONIKE Mighty fine, by Zeus,  
Is right—both in front and in back!

29. Women in the military state of Sparta exercised in the gymnasium and participated in sports, reflecting a Spartan belief in "eugenics" (strong mothers produce strong warriors). Cf. Introduction 23.

30. A common Spartan name that means "Shining," reflecting an ancient stereotype of the beautiful and fit Spartan woman (see further Introduction 23). In the play, Lampito and the other Spartans speak a distorted version of their local dialect of Greek (Laconian), which was distinct from the Athenians' own—to them normative—Attic dialect. For all the Spartans in *Lysistrata*, I have used a form of broken English (as, for example, that in popular comic representations of Russians or a caricature such as Sacha Baron Cohen's Borat) that features linguistic slips commonly made in the course of second language acquisition (e.g., improper use of articles, confusion of words, unidiomatic syntax). In keeping with the aims of this translation (see Introduction 30–31), I have purposely avoided an overly domesticated rendering in, for example, a regional dialect of American English. For Aristophanes' use of non-Attic Greek, see Colvin, S., *Dialect in Aristophanes and the Politics of Language in Ancient Greek Literature* (Oxford, 1999).

31. Castor and Pollux, brothers of Helen and known as the Dioscuri, were important warrior deities in Spartan cult. Cf. note 211 below.

32. The *bibasis* was a competitive form of dance/exercise practiced by Spartan women, in which they vigorously flung their heels up to their buttocks.

33. Boeotia is known for its fertile plains (cf. note 18 above).

34. Literally, the Pennyroyal plant. Depilation of female body hair was commonplace in the ancient Greek world (cf. note 144 below).

35. An influential Greek city-state near the neck of land that joins Athens and mainland Greece to the Peloponnese.

- LAMPITO But who's convener of this troop  
Full of women here? LYSISTRATA That would be me.
- LAMPITO Tell to us what you mean to say. KALONIKE Yes,  
95 dear lady,  
What is this serious business you have for us?
- LYSISTRATA I'll tell you soon, but first I want to ask you all  
This one tiny little question. KALONIKE What's that?
- LYSISTRATA Don't you really miss the fathers of your children  
100 When they're away on active duty? I'm pretty sure  
Each and every one of you has a husband off somewhere.
- KALONIKE Yes, dear. Mine's been away for five months  
In Thrace—he's assigned to guard our general Eukrates  
there.<sup>36</sup>
- MYRRHINE And mine's been in Pylos<sup>37</sup> for seven whole  
months.
- 105 LAMPITO Mine he sometime come home from regiment,  
But then he strap up shield and away he fly again.
- KALONIKE And you can't find so much as a trace of a lover  
these days.  
On top of that, ever since the Milesians<sup>38</sup> betrayed us,  
I haven't set my eyes upon even a six-inch dildo,  
110 Which could've provided me some small comfort in wartime.
- LYSISTRATA If I could come up with a way to end  
The war, would you join up with my cause?  
KALONIKE By the Two Goddesses,  
I sure would, even if you made me sell  
This dress of mine for drinking money today!

36. A common name, and so any identification with a particular Eukrates is uncertain. The joke here turns on the expectation of a specific place name in Thrace, a region of northern Greece considered to be barbaric by the Greeks (cf. notes 98 and 137 below), rather than the naming of one of the Athenians' own commanders.

37. A western coastal city on the Peloponnese occupied by the Athenians during much of the war, and still held by them in 411 BCE. Cf. 1163.

38. Miletus, a great city of Asia Minor, broke from its alliance with the Athenians the year before the debut of *Lysistrata*. Miletus was a major producer of dildos, and so this is another example of a deprivation brought about by the war (cf. note 19 above).

- MYRRHINE I'm in, and I'd hack myself in two like a halibut  
To donate half of me for the cause. 115
- LAMPITO And I climb to top of Mount Taygetus<sup>39</sup>  
To take glimpse of peace from there.
- LYSISTRATA Then it's time to reveal my plan to you all:  
Ladies, the only way we can force 120  
Our men to pursue peace  
Is for us to relinquish— KALONIKE What? Tell us!  
LYSISTRATA You're on board then?
- KALONIKE Yes we are, even if we must sacrifice our lives.
- LYSISTRATA Okay, then: *we must renounce dick!*  
Hey, why are you all turning away and walking off? 125  
What's with all the pursed lips and head-shaking?  
What's happened to that shiny complexion of yours? Why the  
tears?  
Are you with me or not? What's the hold up here?
- KALONIKE I'm out. The war can just keep crawling on.
- MYRRHINE I'm out too, by Zeus. The war will just have to  
drag on. 130
- LYSISTRATA Is that so, my "little halibut"? I believe you just now  
Said you'd cut yourself in two for the cause.
- KALONIKE Anything, anything else—whatever you want!  
I'd even  
Walk across fire. Anything except *giving up dick!*  
Lysistrata, darling, there's just nothing else like it. 135
- LYSISTRATA What about you? WOMAN #1 I'd also go with  
walking across fire.
- LYSISTRATA Oh what an ass-fucked bunch all us women are!  
No wonder we're the subjects of tragedies!  
What are we except Poseidon and a rowboat!<sup>40</sup>

39. The highest mountain of Laconia, the region around Sparta.

40. An allusion to a lost play of the fifth-century BCE Athenian tragedian Sophocles, in which a woman named Tyro is seduced by the god Poseidon (for whom, see Appendix) disguised as her lover. She gives birth to two sons, Pelias and Neleus, who are exposed in a small boat but rescued by shepherds and ultimately reunited with their mother.

- 140 But my lovely Spartan friend: if you alone are  
With me, we can still save the day.  
Do I have your vote? LAMPITO By Twin Gods, is  
very hard  
For ladies to sleep by self without the cock.  
Still, you win. We very, very much need peace.
- LYSISTRATA Oh, you darling! You're the only *real woman* in the  
145 bunch!
- KALONIKE But if we actually did renounce what you were  
talking about—  
And may the gods forbid it!—would there really be a greater  
chance  
Of peace because of it? LYSISTRATA Absolutely! I swear,  
If we sat around the house plastered in make-up,  
150 And walked by them half-naked in our  
See-through slips, with our pubes spelling out a delta,  
And our husbands had hard-ons and wanted to fuck,  
And we didn't go near them but kept out of their reach,  
I'm quite sure they'd be in a big hurry to make peace!
- 155 LAMPITO Yes, just like Menelaos.<sup>41</sup> He get glimpse of Helen's  
Bare-naked cantaloupes and he toss his sword away, yes!
- KALONIKE But what if our husbands reject us, my dear?
- LYSISTRATA "Skin the skinned dog," as Pherekrates<sup>42</sup> said.
- KALONIKE Toys aren't as good as the real thing.  
160 And what if they grab us and yank us into  
The bedroom by force? LYSISTRATA Hold on to the door  
for dear life!

41. An allusion to the myth that the Greek hero Menelaos, having planned to kill his adulterous wife Helen after the Trojan war, was unable to do so after being awed by her beauty; she is similarly described as baring her breasts to him in the fifth-century BCE Athenian tragedian Euripides' *Andromache* (629ff.).

42. Pherekrates was a comic playwright, roughly contemporary with Aristophanes. In the context here, the phrase "Skin the skinned dog" clearly means "use a dildo," but the original sense and context of Pherekrates' saying remain obscure.

- KALONIKE And what if they start beating us?  
LYSISTRATA You'll have to submit, but do it with spite.  
There's no pleasure in it for them when they force you.  
And we'll find other ways to make their lives miserable.  
They'll give up soon enough. No husband will  
165 Ever get his rocks off if he doesn't work with his wife.
- KALONIKE If the two of you are agreed, we're in too.
- LAMPITO We will make our husbands to keep  
Peace the right way, no cheating.  
But what about your Athenian riffraff?  
170 Who gonna keep them from getting stupid?
- LYSISTRATA No worries, we'll take care of things on our side.
- LAMPITO I don't like, so long as your triremes got sails  
And your goddess got no end of money.<sup>43</sup>
- LYSISTRATA Now all that's been nicely taken care of,  
175 Since we're going to occupy the Acropolis today.  
That job is the responsibility of the older ladies.<sup>44</sup>  
While we're ironing things out here, they'll go up there  
Pretending to do a sacrifice, and then they'll take the Acropolis.
- LAMPITO That seem very nice. All you say sound very nice. 180
- LYSISTRATA Then why don't we swear an oath over it all  
This instant, Lampito, to make things binding?
- LAMPITO Show us oath and we swear.
- LYSISTRATA Excellent. Where's that Scythian police-woman?<sup>45</sup>  
Hey you, focus!  
185 Set your shield down in front of us, upside down.

43. Lampito refers to the Athenian treasuries on the Acropolis, thought to be under the guardianship of Athena.

44. Women beyond childbearing years probably enjoyed more freedom of movement in classical Athens than their younger counterparts, as male concerns about the legitimacy of children did not apply to them (cf. Introduction 21–26). Lysistrata's plan exploits this situation, along with the fact that women regularly tended to religious cults on the Acropolis.

45. A comic play on the Athenians' use of male Scythian (i.e., foreigners living northeast of Greece) archers as a kind of police force in the city. At 387, the Administrator enters with an escort of four Scythian policemen.

And somebody give me the severed parts.

KALONIKE What sort

Of oath are we going to swear, *Lysistrata*?

LYSISTRATA What sort?

Exactly the one Aeschylus is said to have had people swear  
When they sacrificed the animal above a shield.<sup>46</sup>

KALONIKE No, *Lysistrata*!

190 Not an oath about peace above a shield!

LYSISTRATA Well then what sort of oath do you want?

KALONIKE We could get a

White stallion somewhere and cut a slice off of him.<sup>47</sup>

LYSISTRATA A white stallion? Really? KALONIKE So how  
are we going to swear

The oath? LYSISTRATA If you'll listen, dammit, I'll  
tell you.

195 We set a big black wine bowl right side up,  
We sacrifice a magnum's worth of Thasian wine,<sup>48</sup>  
And we swear not to add any water to the wine bowl.<sup>49</sup>

LAMPITO Ooh la la, I like oath more than words can talk.

LYSISTRATA Somebody go in and get a wine bowl and  
a magnum.

200 MYRRHINE My dear lady-friends, that's quite a hunk of pottery!

KALONIKE Just taking a hold of it could make a girl happy!

LYSISTRATA Let go of it and take a hold of the boar.

Lady of Persuasion<sup>50</sup> and Wine Bowl of Friends,  
Favorably accept this women's sacrifice.

46. The reference is to a scene in the Athenian tragedian Aeschylus' *Seven Against Thebes* 42–48.

47. Presumably a sexual joke ("white stallion" = penis?) rather than a serious suggestion.

48. The Aegean island of Thasos produced premium wine. The use of wine, rather than the blood of a sacrificed animal, is appropriate in sanctifying peace agreements.

49. It was considered barbaric to drink undiluted wine in antiquity; for the women's reputed bibulousness, see note 10 above.

50. Peitho ("Persuasion") is a goddess who is closely associated with Aphrodite in Athenian cult.

KALONIKE The blood's the proper color and is spurting forth  
correctly. 205

LAMPITO And it got a real nice smell, by Castor!<sup>51</sup>

MYRRHINE Ladies, let me swear the oath first!

KALONIKE Not happening, by Aphrodite,<sup>52</sup> unless you draw the  
first lot.

LYSISTRATA Take hold of the wine bowl now, all of you—you  
too, Lampito!

Now one of you, on behalf of everybody, repeat exactly what  
I say. 210

All of you will then swear to abide by the terms.

No one, either my lover or my husband—

KALONIKE No one, either my lover or my husband—

LYSISTRATA Will get near me with a hard-on. *Louder!*

KALONIKE Will get near me with a hard-on. Oh, no,  
My knees are buckling, *Lysistrata!* 215

LYSISTRATA I shall lead a cockless life at home—

KALONIKE I shall lead a cockless life at home—

LYSISTRATA Wearing a saffron dress and make-up—

KALONIKE Wearing a saffron dress and make-up— 220

LYSISTRATA So my husband will get extremely hot for me—

KALONIKE So my husband will get extremely hot for me—

LYSISTRATA Never will I voluntarily give my husband what  
he wants—

KALONIKE Never will I voluntarily give my husband what  
he wants—

LYSISTRATA But if takes me by force against my will— 225

KALONIKE But if takes me by force against my will—

LYSISTRATA I shall yield spitefully and just lie there like a corpse.

KALONIKE I shall yield spitefully and just lie there like a corpse.

51. For Castor, see note 31 above.

52. For Aphrodite, see Appendix.

LYSISTRATA I shall not lift my pumps up toward the ceiling.  
 230 KALONIKE I shall not lift my pumps up toward the ceiling.  
 LYSISTRATA I shall not do "the lioness on a cheese-grater."<sup>53</sup>  
 KALONIKE I shall not do "the lioness on a cheese-grater."  
 LYSISTRATA Should I keep these vows, may I drink from the  
 wine-bowl.  
 KALONIKE Should I keep these vows, may I drink from the  
 wine-bowl.  
 LYSISTRATA Should I violate them, may the wine-bowl be filled  
 235 with water.  
 KALONIKE Should I violate them, may the wine-bowl be filled  
 with water.  
 LYSISTRATA Does each and every one of you formally agree to  
 these conditions? ALL We do, by Zeus!  
 LYSISTRATA Then I shall consecrate this wine bowl. (*drinks*)  
 KALONIKE Just your portion now, dear!  
 We need to share with each other right from the start here.  
 (*noise erupts from the stage building*)  
 LAMPITO What all the hubbub? LYSISTRATA It's what I  
 240 was talking about before:  
 The women have just taken Athena's Acropolis!  
 So Lampito: go ahead and take off,  
 And manage things as you see fit on your side,  
 But you'll need to leave these women here as our hostages.  
 (*Lampito exits*)  
 245 We should go join up with the other women  
 On the Acropolis and lock the gates there.  
 KALONIKE But what about the men? Won't they  
 immediately march  
 Against us to take it back? LYSISTRATA No need to worry  
 about them.  
 They lack the verbal- and fire-power

53. A sexual position (cf. "doggy-style"). The crouching lioness with her hindquarters raised in readiness for attack was a common motif in Greek art and on everyday objects such as cheese-graters.

To open up these gates:<sup>54</sup> 250  
 Only we can do that, and only on our conditions.  
 KALONIKE That, by Aphrodite is the absolute truth! If it  
 weren't,  
 We women wouldn't be considered invincible monsters!  
 (*The women pass through the Propylaia [i.e., the central door of the  
 stage building] and enter the Acropolis, the setting for the rest of the  
 play. A semi-chorus of 12 Athenian old men enters the orchestra; each  
 member lugs firewood, an unlit torch, and a pitcher of live charcoal.*)  
 LEADER OF MEN'S CHORUS Forward, Draces,<sup>55</sup> aching shoulder  
 or not,  
 Lug that load of green olive logs! 255  
 CHORUS OF OLD MEN Ah, a long life holds many surprises! 256-7  
 Whoever would have imagined, Strymodorus, we'd have to hear 258-9  
 That women, that sheer flock of evil 260  
 We pastured in our homes,  
 Have control of the Sacred Image<sup>56</sup>  
 And have seized *my* Acropolis,  
 And have even dared to fasten the gates  
 With bars and bolts! 265  
 LEADER OF MEN'S CHORUS Push on to the Acropolis, Philurgos,  
 as fast as you can,  
 To encircle them with these logs here, and I mean  
 Every last woman who incited or partook in this conspiracy!  
 It's unanimous: we'll build a single pyre and with our very  
 own hands  
 See they're all charred—starting with Lycon's wife.<sup>57</sup> 270  
 CHORUS OF OLD MEN By Demeter, I won't be these ladies'  
 laughingstock, as long

54. The Propylaia, the entrance to the Acropolis.

55. Here and elsewhere the chorus addresses some of its members (e.g., Philurgos, 267). The particular names are typical of old men.

56. An ancient statue of Athena made of olivewood.

57. Lycon was a prominent citizen who is mocked elsewhere in comedy, as also is his wife Rhodia (for her alleged promiscuity).

As I'm breathing at least! Kleomenes<sup>58</sup> himself, the first  
 usurper of this place,  
 275/6 Got away unscathed. Puffed up with Spartan pluck as he was,  
 He departed minus his weapons (now mine!),  
 And wearing only shrunken and tattered rags,  
 And hungry, grimy, unshaven,  
 280 Unwashed for six years.

LEADER OF MEN'S CHORUS That's how I besieged that fool like a  
 wild beast:

We kept guard at the gates, seventeen rows deep.  
 But these women here, hateful as they are to all the gods  
 and Euripides<sup>59</sup>—  
 Could I possibly stand by and tolerate their chutzpah?  
 If I did, go right ahead and destroy my monument  
 285 at Marathon!<sup>60</sup>

CHORUS OF OLD MEN Now all that's left is that

Tilted trek up to the  
 Acropolis I so eagerly seek.  
 How are we, like asses, to haul this  
 290 Load up without a single mule?  
 These two logs have made a slope of my shoulders,  
 But march on I must,  
 Keeping my fire bright  
 Without snuffing out the light  
 I'll need at the end of this road.  
 294a Gak, gak,  
 295 Aw, aw, aw the smoke!

58. A Spartan king who briefly seized the Acropolis in 508 BCE at the prompting of Athenian oligarchs. A truce was struck, and he retreated to Sparta, thus marking an important step toward the establishment of Athenian democracy. The old men of the chorus performing in 411 BCE could not have witnessed these events, but their political sympathies are revealed here.

59. The tragic playwright Euripides (cf. note 41 above) was mercilessly mocked by Aristophanes as a misogynist, owing to the various powerful and daring heroines of his plays (e.g., Medea, Phaedra, Electra).

60. Commemorating the Athenian-led defeat of the Persians at the Battle of Marathon in 490 BCE (again, the men of the chorus could not have actually fought in the battle: cf. note 58 above).

Holy Herakles,<sup>61</sup> how horribly  
 The smoke leapt up from my bucket  
 To bite out my eyes like a rabid bitch!  
 By all means, this fire's  
 The pure Lemnian<sup>62</sup> variety: 300  
 Only *that* would have so viciously nipped at my poor eyes!  
 Press on to the Acropolis  
 To save our goddess!  
 Her time of need, Laches,  
 Could never be so dire as *now*!  
 Gak, gak, 305  
 Aw, aw, aw the smoke! 305a

LEADER OF MEN'S CHORUS Thanks to the gods, the fire's alive  
 and well.

First we'll put our pair of logs here,  
 And place our torches in our buckets.  
 With those ablaze, we'll rush the gates like rams:  
 If the women don't unbar the gates at our command, 310  
 The gates will burn and they'll be smoked out.  
 So let's set our load down. Gak, the smoke! Whooh,  
 Any of the generals at Samos<sup>63</sup> care to lend us a hand with this  
 wood?  
 At least these logs have stopped pinching my back.  
 Your task, bucket, is to stir up your coals, 315  
 So I'll be the first to bear a blazing torch.  
 Goddess Nike,<sup>64</sup> join our side, so together we can build  
 A monument to female insolence interrupted on our citadel.

(A semi-chorus of 12 Athenian old women enters the orchestra; each member is carrying a pitcher of water on her head.)

61. For Herakles, see Appendix.

62. Owing to its volcanic activity, the north Aegean island of Lemnos was proverbial for brilliant fire. In myth, the foul-smelling women of Lemnos murdered their fleeing husbands.

63. Since the year before the first production of *Lysistrata*, the large Aegean island of Samos just off the coast of Asia Minor served as the Athenian navy's headquarters.

64. Nike ("Victory") is identified with Athena on the Acropolis, where her temple (largely intact today) was part of Pericles' recent building program and so was closely associated with democracy.



LEADER OF WOMAN'S CHORUS Women, I think I spot a flash in all  
the smoke—

320 It could be fire, so let's move it out!

CHORUS OF OLD WOMEN Faster, faster, Nikodike,<sup>65</sup>

Before Kalyke and Kritylla

Become torches, fanned on all sides

By vexing winds

325 And by old men bent on murder!

Oh no, oh no, has aid come too late?

I somehow just now filled my pitcher in the dawn's  
early light

At the well amid a clanging

And clattering of pots,<sup>66</sup>

330-1 As I jostled with maids

And slave-girls with tattoos,<sup>67</sup>

And struggled to lift it on to my head.

I'm here to help my fellow citizens,

335 Besieged with fire and bearing water.

I hear crazy old men

Are prowling about with mountains

Of firewood on the citadel like bath-stokers,

Belching out the most abusive words

340 About how those female monsters must be roasted into charcoal.

Goddess, preserve these women from the flames,

So they can save both Greece and their fellow citizens

From the madness of war!

For this very cause, Golden-crowned

345 Athena Polias,<sup>68</sup> they seized your sanctuary.

I call upon you to be our ally,

65. As the men in the preceding semi-chorus (cf. note 55 above), the women address some of their members by name.

66. Like wool-working (cf. 493ff.), fetching water was a traditional female occupation, even for free women (cf. Introduction 21-26).

67. Runaway slaves were branded as such with tattoos.

68. The women invoke the city goddess of Athens (= the "Goddess" in 341 and "Tritogeneia" in 347) by an ancient title bearing venerable associations that long predate democratic Athens.

Tritogeneia, bearing aid and water,

If any of them dares

To set fire to that shrine of yours.

## SCENE 2

LEADER OF WOMAN'S CHORUS Whoa, whoa! What's this now?

Disgusting men!

350

These are acts no decent or god-fearing men would ever dare!

(*The two half-choruses face each other.*)

LEADER OF MEN'S CHORUS This is a problem we never imagined  
we'd see:

Look at this new swarm of women at the gates coming to help!

LEADER OF WOMAN'S CHORUS You're scared of us, are you? You  
think there's a lot of us now?

Why, you've only seen the teeniest fraction of us women so far.

355

LEADER OF MEN'S CHORUS We're not going to tolerate their  
blather, are we, Phaedrias?

Shouldn't someone crack a log over their heads?

LEADER OF WOMAN'S CHORUS Let's set our pitchers down on the  
ground too,

So they'll be out of our way if one of them comes at us.

LEADER OF MEN'S CHORUS By Zeus, if someone had smacked me  
in the jaw a few times

360

(Just like happened to Bupolos<sup>69</sup>), we wouldn't have to listen  
to them now!

LEADER OF WOMAN'S CHORUS Here you go: take your best shot.  
I'll just stand here and take it.

But please note that this will be the last time any bitch yanks  
your balls off!

LEADER OF MEN'S CHORUS Shut up or I'll tan your ugly-ass  
old hide!

69. Bupolos was a sculptor who was verbally attacked and driven to suicide by the sixth-century BCE poet Hipponax.

- 365 LEADER OF WOMAN'S CHORUS If you so much as come near  
Statyllis and lay a finger on her—
- LEADER OF MEN'S CHORUS And what if I give you a knuckle-  
sandwich? Got a smart answer for that?
- LEADER OF WOMAN'S CHORUS I'll rip out your lungs and entrails  
and then viciously chew them up.
- LEADER OF MEN'S CHORUS What poet has ever said it better than  
Euripides:<sup>70</sup>  
"Could there exist a creature more shameless than a woman?"
- 370 LEADER OF WOMAN'S CHORUS Let's pick up our water pitchers,  
Rhodippe.
- LEADER OF MEN'S CHORUS What are you here for with that water,  
you god-forsaken bitch!
- LEADER OF WOMEN'S CHORUS And what are you here for with  
that fire, worm-food? Gonna torch yourself?
- LEADER OF MEN'S CHORUS Clearly, I'm here to build a pyre and  
roast your friends.
- LEADER OF WOMEN'S CHORUS Clearly, I'm here to drench that  
pyre of yours with *this*.
- 375 LEADER OF MEN'S CHORUS Drench my pyre? LEADER OF WOM-  
EN'S CHORUS As you'll soon see in person.
- LEADER OF MEN'S CHORUS I'm thinking I should broil you with  
this here torch of mine.
- LEADER OF WOMEN'S CHORUS Any chance you've got some soap?  
I'd love to give you a nice bath.
- LEADER OF MEN'S CHORUS *You bathe me, you old hag?*  
LEADER OF WOMEN'S CHORUS A pre-nuptial bath, my dear.
- LEADER OF MEN'S CHORUS Such arrogance!  
LEADER OF WOMEN'S CHORUS Well, I'm not a slave.

70. See notes 41 and 59 above (369 may be a quote from a lost play of Euripides).

- LEADER OF MEN'S CHORUS I'll shut that yapper of yours up soon  
enough. LEADER OF WOMEN'S CHORUS Still think  
380 you're judge and jury?<sup>71</sup>
- LEADER OF MEN'S CHORUS Set her hair on fire! LEADER OF  
WOMEN'S CHORUS Just the job for Acheloos<sup>72</sup> here! (*douses  
them*)
- LEADER OF MEN'S CHORUS No! Shit! LEADER OF WOMEN'S  
CHORUS Not too warm was it?
- LEADER OF MEN'S CHORUS Yeah right, too warm—now, stop it!  
Hey, what are you doing?
- LEADER OF WOMEN'S CHORUS I'm watering you, so you'll grow  
up to be big and strong.
- LEADER OF MEN'S CHORUS My growth spurt's long over, and now  
I'm just trembling. 385
- LEADER OF WOMEN'S CHORUS Since you've got all that fire, why  
not heat yourself up some?

### SCENE 3

(*The Administrator enters with two slaves wielding crowbars and four  
Scythian policemen.*)

- ADMINISTRATOR<sup>73</sup> Yet another flare-up of female decadence,  
Complete with tambourines, nonstop "Sabizioses,"<sup>74</sup>  
And this Adonis cult<sup>75</sup> on the rooftops!<sup>76</sup>  
It came down just like this in the Assembly once: 390

71. Jurors in democratic Athens received a small fee for jury service; impecunious old men seem to have relied on jury service for income. Cf. 620ff.

72. The longest river in Greece, quasi-proverbial for water in general.

73. The Administrator is one the 10 Probouloi invested with extraordinary powers to govern Athens in its current state of emergency (cf. Introductory Essay 39).

74. An eastern god whose ecstatic cult had recently been introduced into Greece.

75. Another eastern god (cf. note 74 above), in myth the short-lived consort of Aphrodite. In Athens, his cult was celebrated by women (privately and outside traditional civic religion), who ritually mourned his death on rooftops.

76. The usual setting for celebrations of Adonis (cf. *Samia*, note 18).

Demostratos<sup>77</sup> (may he be forever screwed!) was advising us  
 To send the expedition to Sicily as his wife's dancing  
 And yelling "Poor Adonis." He proceeded to move  
 That we enlist recruits from Zakynthos,<sup>78</sup>  
 395 As his wife, now quite drunk on the rooftop,  
 Says, "Mourn for Adonis!"<sup>79</sup> But he just kept pushing his  
 motions,  
 Filthy, godforsaken member of the Wing-nut family that he is.  
 This is just the sort of unbridled behavior you can expect from  
 women!

LEADER OF MEN'S CHORUS You don't know the half of it! Care to  
 hear how depraved they are?

On top of every other imaginable outrage, they dumped their  
 400 pitchers

On us! Now we've got to squeeze-dry  
 Our clothes just like we do when we pee in them.

ADMINISTRATOR I swear by Salty Poseidon,<sup>80</sup> we men do reap  
 what we sow!

Seeing as we're facilitators of our wives'  
 405 Wickedness and teach them how to be decadent,  
 Is it any wonder such plots as these are popping up among  
 them?

Are we not guilty of going to the craftsmen's district and  
 saying,

"Goldsmith, regarding that necklace you made my wife:  
 She was, as they say, *getting down* the other night  
 410 And the connecting-rod slid right out of the hole.

77. An advocate of the disastrous Athenian naval expedition launched against Syracuse in Sicily in 415 BCE: see further Introductory Essay 39–40.

78. An island west of mainland Greece, an ally of Athens throughout the Peloponnesian War.

79. For the thesis that the women in *Lysistrata* are metaphorically conducting an Adonis celebration on the Acropolis, see Reitzammer, L., "Aristophanes' *Adōniazousai*," *Classical Antiquity* 27 (2008): 282–333.

80. For the god Poseidon, see Appendix.

I'm just about to sail over to Salamis,<sup>81</sup>  
 So if you've got some time this evening, please do  
 Go see her and jam that rod right back into the hole."  
 Or one of us goes to the sandal-maker, who happens to be  
 A young stripling with a full-grown tree trunk between  
 his legs,

415 And says, "I've got a job for you: a tight thong's  
 Been pinching the rim of my wife's foot.  
 It's a tender area, but could you stop by our place  
 Around noon and stretch things out for me down there?"  
 These antics have gotten us to where we are.

420 And here I am, an Administrator who has procured  
 Timber for boat-oars and have come now to get funds for that—  
 Here I am, locked outside the gates by these women!  
 No point in just standing around: get me some crowbars,  
 (to one of his slaves)

425 So I can put an end to their insolence once and for all.  
 What's with the mouth-breathing, loser? Why are you  
 gawking?

Did I tell you to go looking for a *bar* or for *crowbars*?  
 Now let's slide the crowbars under the gates:  
 You pry from there, and I'll pry at the same time from here.  
 (Lysistrata enters from the stage building.)

430 LYSISTRATA Stop that right now,  
 I'm coming out on my own. Why the crowbars?  
 We don't need muscle, we need smarts and common sense.

ADMINISTRATOR Really, you filthy thing? Where's a policeman?  
 Grab her and tie her hands behind her back!

435 LYSISTRATA I swear by Artemis,<sup>82</sup> if this "public servant"  
 Lays a single finger on me, you'll have to listen to him cry!

ADMINISTRATOR Scared, are you? (to second policeman) Help  
 him grab her  
 By the waist and tie her up this instant!

81. Cf. 59–60. Mention of Salaminian-style oarsmanship may also suggest a sexual position, that of "women on top."

82. For the goddess, see Appendix.

- 440 **OLD LADY #1** I swear by Pandrosos,<sup>83</sup> if you so much as  
Touch her, I will beat the living shit out of you!
- ADMINISTRATOR** Beat the living shit out of me, will you? I need  
another policeman.  
(*to third policeman*) Tie up our trash-talking friend here first!
- OLD LADY #2** I swear by the Bringer of Light,<sup>84</sup> if you lay  
A single finger on her, you'll be wearing an eye-patch in no time!
- 445 **ADMINISTRATOR** What's all this now? I need a cop. Grab her  
(*to fourth policeman*).  
This'll be the end of at least one of your forays.
- OLD LADY #3** I swear by Tauropolos,<sup>85</sup> if you come close to her,  
I'll tear out your hair and make *it* scream!
- ADMINISTRATOR** Damn! Now I'm screwed: that's the last  
of my cops!  
450 But women must never have the upper hand  
Over us men! Scythians, take up your positions and  
Engage them! **LYSISTRATA** By the Two Goddesses, you'll  
soon see  
We have four companies of our own inside,  
Each made up of combat-ready warrior-women!
- 455 **ADMINISTRATOR** Scythians, twist their arms behind their backs!
- LYSISTRATA** Allied guard of women, come forward, and on the  
double!  
All ye soup-and-vegetable-selling offspring of the market,  
Dive-owning sellers of garlic and bread,  
Tear at them! Pommel them! Smite away!  
Assault them with the raunchiest words in your arsenal!  
460 (*The Scythians exit at the advance of the women-warriors.*)  
Whoa! Disengage! No plundering now!

83. Daughter of the legendary Athenian King Cecrops; she was worshipped on the Acropolis as a hero.

84. Phosphorus, epithet of both Artemis and Hekate. Hekate is an old and complex deity, associated with (among other things) magic, the moon, and crossroads. Athenian worshippers offered her cakes with small (lit) torches on top.

85. Epithet of Artemis.

- ADMINISTRATOR** Pitiful! My police-bodyguard's been crushed!
- LYSISTRATA** What were you expecting? That you'd be fighting  
Against some slave girls? Or were you assuming women  
don't have  
Enough spunk for war? **ADMINISTRATOR** By Apollo,  
I know you're  
465 Full of spunk—when you're drinking in bars!
- LEADER OF MEN'S CHORUS** Why squander all these words, Ad-  
ministrator of this land?  
Why even bother wrangling with these creatures?  
You're aware of the bath they just gave us,  
Fully clothed as we were and without any soap!  
470
- LEADER OF WOMEN'S CHORUS** You, sir, must not engage in  
random acts of violence against  
Your neighbors. Do it again and you're looking at a pair of  
black eyes.  
I'd prefer to be sitting around at home like a proper young lady,  
Causing no trouble whatsoever, not bothering so much as a flea,  
But if someone provokes me by raiding my nest, I'm all wasp.  
475
- CHORUS OF OLD MEN** O Zeus, tell us what we are to do with  
these beasts!  
476-7 We simply cannot take any more of this,  
So let's investigate what's happened here together:  
What possible motive drove them  
480 To seize Kranaos<sup>86</sup> citadel,  
And *our* Acropolis, a lofty and hallowed area  
Not open to all.
- LEADER OF MEN'S CHORUS** Question her with extreme prejudice  
and scrutinize her every word!  
485 It's our disgrace if acts of this nature go unprosecuted!
- ADMINISTRATOR** Very well, then. Now the first thing I want to  
hear from them, damn it all,  
Is just what their motive was in locking down *our* Acropolis.

86. Legendary Athenian king.

LYSISTRATA It was to keep the treasury safe from *you and your war*.

ADMINISTRATOR You think we're at war because of the money in there? LYSISTRATA Yes, and that's led

490 To the whole mess here. And the desire to steal it caused Pisander<sup>87</sup>

And the other career politicians to always be stirring up trouble. They can

Stir up as much trouble as they want, but now they can't get the money.

ADMINISTRATOR What are you going to do?

LYSISTRATA You have to ask? We're going to manage the treasury.

ADMINISTRATOR *You?* Manage the treasury?

LYSISTRATA What's so weird about that?

495 Don't you put us all in charge of household finances?

ADMINISTRATOR That's not the same thing!

LYSISTRATA Why not? ADMINISTRATOR Because these are military finances!

LYSISTRATA But why's there a war in the first place?

ADMINISTRATOR National security—so we can protect ourselves!

LYSISTRATA We'll protect you. ADMINISTRATOR *You?*

LYSISTRATA Yup. We sure will. ADMINISTRATOR That's absurd!

LYSISTRATA We'll be your saviors, whether you like it or not.

ADMINISTRATOR Disgusting! LYSISTRATA Infuriated now, are you?

Well, that won't stop us. ADMINISTRATOR By Demeter, this simply isn't right!

500

LYSISTRATA We're saving you nonetheless, friend.

ADMINISTRATOR But I don't wanna be saved.

LYSISTRATA All the more reason to do it.

87. A contemporary political figure depicted as corrupt by Aristophanes, he was instrumental in establishing "The Four Hundred," an oligarchical council that temporarily seized power in Athens later in 411 BCE.

ADMINISTRATOR Since when do you care about war and peace?

LYSISTRATA Allow me to explain. ADMINISTRATOR Chop-chop, or you're in for a lot of pain. LYSISTRATA Listen up,

And how about keeping those fists of yours down?

ADMINISTRATOR I really can't—

Managing my anger is quite a challenge.

OLD LADY #1 Then you're in for some serious pain!

505

ADMINISTRATOR Keep cawing away at yourself, you old hag.

I want to hear from this one. LYSISTRATA Certainly.

Up until now, we—as respectable women should do—

Quietly put up with whatever you men did.

And just because you didn't let us make a peep doesn't mean we liked it.

We knew full well what you were up to, and though we were cooped up in the house,

510

We'd often hear about some important political business you'd messed up.

Though we were hurting inside, we'd put on a smile and ask,

"Any decision about an amendment to the peace treaty At the assembly today?"<sup>88</sup> "How's that your business?" my husband<sup>89</sup> would say.

"How about shutting up?" And I shut up.

OLD LADY #1 I never would have!

515

ADMINISTRATOR And you'd be worse for wear if you hadn't.

LYSISTRATA Precisely why I shut up.

Later, we'd hear about some even greater blunder of yours and we'd ask,

"Why are you managing affairs of state like such a moron, my husband?"

88. In 418 BCE, the Athenian Assembly had altered the text of a peace treaty (= the Peace of Nicias, 421 BCE) to indicate that the Spartans had broken the treaty.

89. Apart from the mention of her husband here, the Athena-like Lysistrata elsewhere—in contrast to the other women—does not appear to be married (is she to be thought of as a war widow?).

Instantly I'd get that icy stare, and he'd tell me I'd better get  
back to my knitting,  
If I didn't want a serious head-cracking. "War is men's work,"<sup>90</sup>  
he'd say.

ADMINISTRATOR He got that right, damn it!

LYSISTRATA How's that, my unfortunate friend?

So our advice wasn't needed when you'd messed everything up?  
But then we heard you publicly saying right in the streets,  
"There isn't a man left in this land." And someone else answer-  
ing, "No, not a single one, by Zeus!"

After hearing that, we immediately decided to gather together  
as women

Committed to saving Greece. We saw no reason to wait any longer.  
We have useful advice to share with you, if you'll take your  
turn at listening.

So if you shut up as we did, we can set you straight on things.

ADMINISTRATOR *You set us straight?* This is absurd and intolerable!

LYSISTRATA Shut up!

ADMINISTRATOR *Me shut up for you,* you detestable beast  
with a veil

On your head! I'll kill myself before that happens!

LYSISTRATA If it's just the veil

That's holding you back, take mine here and keep it.

Now put it on your head—

And shut up!

OLD LADY #1 And take this sewing basket here too.

LYSISTRATA Now pull up your skirt, chew some beans,  
And start sowing:

"War is women's work."<sup>91</sup>

90. A quotation of Homer, *Iliad* 6.492, where the Trojan warrior Hector dismisses his wife Andromache's concerns for him as he departs for battle, and instructs her to return to her wool-making. Cf. Introductory Essay 42–43.

91. Cf. note 90 above.

LEADER OF WOMEN'S CHORUS Jump up and away from your  
pitchers, women, so we too

Can take our turn in bringing help to our friends. 540

CHORUS OF OLD WOMEN Never will I tire of dancing,  
Never will my knees give in to weariness and fatigue!

541–2

For virtue's sake, I'll take on any task

With women such as these: 545

They've got gifts, charm, pluck,

Smarts, patriotic spirit,

And common sense!

LEADER OF WOMEN'S CHORUS Most manly of grannies and thorny  
mommies,

Stay the course, and let anger guide you forth: the wind's  
behind you. 550

LYSISTRATA So long as sweet Eros<sup>92</sup> and Cyprian<sup>93</sup> Aphrodite  
Inspire desire in our thighs and breasts,

And engender prolonged passion and raised clubs in our  
husbands,

We'll one day be called Lysimaches<sup>94</sup> among the Greeks.

ADMINISTRATOR For doing what? LYSISTRATA First of all,  
we'll put a stop to the crazies 555

Shopping in the market in full armor. OLD LADY #1 By  
Paphian<sup>95</sup> Aphrodite!

LYSISTRATA These days, you'll find them strutting around the  
market in arms—

In the pottery and vegetable stalls alike, as if they're Korybants!<sup>96</sup>

92. Eros is a personified god of desire/love.

93. I.e., "of Cyprus" (the large eastern Mediterranean island), a traditional epithet of Aphrodite, suggesting her possible eastern origins.

94. For the idea that Lysistrata in name and bearing recalls Lysimache, the (historical) priestess of Athena Polias whose name similarly means "Disbander of Battle," see Introductory Essay 43–44.

95. Paphos is a city-state on the island of Cyprus (see note 93 above), the site of a major sanctuary and cult of Aphrodite.

96. Mythic figures associated with ecstatic dancing in armor and madness.

ADMINISTRATOR By Zeus, men must be men!

LYSISTRATA But what's more ridiculous

560 Than some dude with a Gorgon-emblazoned<sup>97</sup> shield buying sardines?

OLD LADY #1 Damn straight! I actually saw a cavalry captain with longhair ride into the market on horseback and have an old lady slop gruel into his helmet!

Another guy, a Thracian who was rattling his shield and spear like he was Tereus,<sup>98</sup>

Terrified the fig-seller and then inhaled all her figs!

565 ADMINISTRATOR The cities are all tied up in a big ball of confusion: how can you possibly

Unravel this mess? LYSISTRATA It's very simple.

ADMINISTRATOR Oh, really? Do show me how.

LYSISTRATA Think of a ball of wool that's all tangled. You take a hold of it like this, And using your spindles you gently draw out the strands, one this way, one that.

That's exactly how we'll untangle this war, if we're given a chance:

570 We'll send ambassadors—one this way, one that—to unravel it all.

ADMINISTRATOR How moronic! You really think you can put a stop to this horrible predicament We're in with yarn and spindles? LYSISTRATA Absolutely. And if you weren't such a moron, You'd manage all our city's affairs on the model of our wool-working.

97. The frightening Gorgon monster was a common motif on shields, ridiculously incongruous here in the case of the shopping warrior, who neatly satirizes bellicose Athenian patriots.

98. A savage mythical king of Thrace: see notes 36 above and 137 below.

ADMINISTRATOR I'd love to see how. LYSISTRATA Suppose the city's a great big shorn fleece.

First you dunk it in a bath to get rid of all the sheep pooh.

Lay it out on a bed

And pound out the rabble-rousers and extract the burrs.

As for the sticky ones who are always glomming onto public office:

Card them out thoroughly and give their heads a good plucking.

Then card the remaining wool into a basket of solidarity, with everyone

Harmoniously mixed in together. Include resident aliens, friendly foreigners,

580 And even those in hock to the public treasury—toss them all in too!

And absolutely do not forget about all the colonies we founded:

Consider them to be flocks of wool laid out separately From one another. And then take each and every flock of them,

585 Bring them here, roll them all together into a mass And create a giant ball of wool. Finally, take it and weave a new cloak for the people.

ADMINISTRATOR Horrible the way these women blather on about pounding, balls of wool, etc.,

When they take no part in the war. LYSISTRATA I beg to differ, dirtbag!

We do more than our share here! First of all, we gave birth to sons And then sent them off to war—

ADMINISTRATOR Shush! Don't dredge up past sorrows.<sup>99</sup> 590

99. Perhaps with reference to the recently failed Sicilian Expedition (see Introductory Essay 39 and notes 159 and 174 below), but the war had been dragging on for many years and most audience members probably had lost loved ones in any of various conflicts.

LYSISTRATA Secondly, when we deserve to be having some fun  
in our prime,  
All these campaigns mean we're sleeping alone. And putting  
aside our situation,  
What about the young girls growing old in their rooms? It's sad.

ADMINISTRATOR And men don't get old too?

LYSISTRATA Now that's not the same thing at all.

595 A grizzled and gray man can find a young bride the instant he's  
back from war.

A woman's prime is short-lived: if she doesn't make use of it,  
No one wants to marry her and she sits at home hoping for  
good omens.<sup>100</sup>

ADMINISTRATOR But any man who's boner-capable—

LYSISTRATA Oh, why don't you just go off and die?

600 Here's a plot of land. You buy the coffin.  
And I'll make you a nice honey-cake,<sup>101</sup>  
And here, take this for a wreath.

OLD LADY #1 And here, take these ribbons.

OLD LADY #2 And this crown is all yours.

605 LYSISTRATA That should do it. Anything else? Off to the boat.  
Charon's<sup>102</sup> calling for you,  
And here you are making him late.

ADMINISTRATOR It's absolutely outrageous for me to be  
subjected to this!

So help me Zeus, I'm marching straight over to my fellow  
Administrators

610 To show them in person what you've done to me. (*exits*)

LYSISTRATA You're not going to complain to them about our  
little funeral, are you?

100. I.e., omens portending marriage.

101. The cake is to placate Cerberus, the three-headed guardian of the traditional underworld. The women here comically prepare the elderly Administrator for burial, as was the duty of Athenian women in real life (cf. Introduction 23–24).

102. The ferryman who takes the souls of the dead across the River Styx.

But enough of that: two days from now, at the crack of dawn  
You'll get your third day rites from us.

(*The women, including Lysistrata, exit through the central door of the stage-building, which represents the Propylaia, the gated entrance to the Acropolis.*)

LEADER OF MEN'S CHORUS It's time for every free man to be  
awake now!

We must strip down, men, and face the current crisis. (*they  
remove their cloaks*)

615

CHORUS OF OLD MEN I seem to have caught the scent  
Of something much bigger than meets the eye here.  
The most prominent smell is that of Hippias'<sup>103</sup> tyranny. 618–9  
I'm also quite afraid that certain Spartan men 620  
Have sneakily banded together at Cleisthenes'<sup>104</sup> house  
To incite our godforsaken women to seize our money  
And my sustenance—my jury pay!<sup>105</sup> 625

LEADER OF MEN'S CHORUS Outrageous, isn't it? That they should  
admonish us citizens now

And, despite their being women, blather on about the  
weapons of war!

And the idea that they'd try to reconcile us with the men of  
Sparta,

Who are about as trustworthy as a starved wolf!

Men, all they've woven here is a plot against us, and one that  
aspires to tyranny. 630

They won't make me their subject. I'll be on guard,  
And "I'll bear my sword in a branch of myrtle."<sup>106</sup>

103. The last of the Athenian tyrants (Peisistratidai), expelled in 510 BCE.  
Cf. note 107 below.

104. Frequently mocked as effeminate in Aristophanes. For the stereotypical view of a Spartan preference for anal sex, cf. notes 175 and 185 below.

105. See note 71 above.

106. A quotation from a popular song praising the tyrant-slayers (see note 107 below).



I'll do my shopping in the market in full arms, right next to  
Aristogeiton.<sup>107</sup>

I'll stand next to him like this (*strikes a pose*). Which  
reminds me:

635 I should belt this godforsaken old bag right in the jaw.

LEADER OF WOMEN'S CHORUS Go ahead: even your mom won't  
recognize you when you get home.

All right ladies: let's put our sweaters down on the ground  
and start.

CHORUS OF OLD WOMEN Citizens of Athens, we'll start with  
Some useful ideas for the city.

640-1 I do this out of gratitude for being nurtured by Athens'  
glorious prosperity.

At exactly seven years old, I was an Arrhephoros.<sup>108</sup>

And then, when I was ten, I served as a Grinder for the  
Foundress,<sup>109</sup>

644-5 And at Brauron I took off my saffron-dress and became  
a Bear.<sup>110</sup>

And once, as a lovely young girl, I was a Kanephoros<sup>111</sup>

And wore a dried-fig necklace.<sup>112</sup>

107. In 514 BCE, Aristogeiton and his friend Harmodius killed the Athenian tyrant Hipparchus, brother of Hippias (see note 103 above), but failed to kill the latter and were executed.

108. Each year, two girls (Arrhephoroi) from elite families lived on the Acropolis in the service of Athena Polias (see note 94 above), where they wove Athena's robe (*peplos*) for the great Panathenaic Festival in Athens. For the evidence of a girl's progression through such religious roles in real life, see Connelly, J.B., *Portrait of a Priestess: Women and Ritual in Ancient Greece* (Princeton, 2007): 27–55.

109. An important service involving the grinding of corn for sacred cakes in honor of Athena.

110. At Brauron in eastern Attica, girls from aristocratic Athenian families participated in rites and running races in honor of Artemis, in which they somehow became "bears," perhaps as part of their ritual transition to marriageability, which was figured as the "taming" of young girls (cf. Introduction 23). For the cult at Brauron, see further Sourvinou-Inwood, C., *Studies in Girls' Transitions: Aspects of the Arkteia and Age Representation in Attic Iconography* (Athens, 1988).

111. I.e., "a basket-carrier." Young girls carried baskets as part of various festivals; perhaps the Panathenaic Festival (cf. note 108 above) is meant here.

112. Figs are symbols of fertility.

LEADER OF WOMEN'S CHORUS That's why offering useful advice is  
my way of paying back my debt to the city.

I shouldn't be denied a say for being born a woman,  
Especially when my proposals are better than what we've  
currently got.

650

I've made my contribution: I supply the city with men.  
The same can't be said of *you*, you decrepit old geezers,  
Since you've wasted our paternal inheritance from the  
Persian Wars<sup>113</sup>

And don't produce enough revenues to make up for the loss.  
No, it's because of you we're in imminent danger of  
bankruptcy.

655

Any grunts in your defense? If you annoy me the slightest bit,  
I'm going to smack you in the jaw with my rawhide boot!

LEADER OF MEN'S CHORUS Is this not the very height of insolence?

659-60

And to me it looks as if things will only get worse.

Every man equipped with balls must make a stand!

Off with our shirts: a man shouldn't be wrapped up like a pastry.

A man should smell like a man from the get go!<sup>114</sup>

CHORUS OF OLD MEN Come on, Whitefeet,<sup>115</sup>

665-6

All of us who went to war against Leipsydriion<sup>116</sup>

When we still had it.

Now, yes now's the time to be young again, to sprout

New wings all over, and to shuffle off this geriatric coil!

670

113. The spoils of the wars against the Persians (concluded in 479 BCE) had greatly enriched the Athenian coffers.

114. The men have already (615) removed their outer garments, as also the women (637). They now apparently strip down naked, and remain so until the women help dress them again (1021). It is unclear if the actors playing the women similarly disrobe at 687–90 or merely threaten to do so; for the thesis that the women bare all, see Sommerstein (2009): 237–253.

115. The meaning of this is unclear (it may simply be a way of referring to foot-soldiers).

116. Location (on Mt. Panes in northern Attica) of a battle against the tyrant Hippias (cf. note 107 above) following his brother's assassination in 514 BCE, the memory of which was preserved in patriotic song.

LEADER OF MEN'S CHORUS If any of us lets these women have the slightest grip,  
 There'll be no end to their hands' hard work.  
 They'll even go so far as to build ships,  
 675 So they can engage in naval battle against us, as Artemisia<sup>117</sup> did.  
 And if they take up horsemanship, all bets are off for our cavalry.  
 A woman is a creature fond of mounting and riding:  
 The faster you go, the tighter she clings. Consider the  
 Amazons  
 On horseback warring with men, as painted by Mikon.<sup>118</sup>  
 680 The necks of them all need to be grabbed,  
 Locked and slung in the stocks!

CHORUS OF OLD WOMEN If, by the Two Goddesses, you provoke  
 me enough,  
 683-4 I'll release my inner sow, and before you  
 685-6 Can call your goons for help you'll be skinned alive!

LEADER OF WOMEN'S CHORUS Ladies! Let's take off our skirts, and  
 687-8 fast (two can play at this game!),  
 689-90 So they can get a good whiff of how we women are bitin' mad!<sup>119</sup>

WOMEN'S CHORUS Just one of you have a go at me now:  
 You'll never enjoy a taste of garlic  
 Or black beans again!<sup>120</sup>  
 One nasty word from you and you'll have more rage than you  
 can handle.  
 I'll be the midwife the beetle was to the eagle<sup>121</sup> (that's *you* in  
 695 this story!).

117. A queen from Halicarnassus (a Greek city in Asia Minor) who served as a naval commander on the Persian side at the Battle of Salamis in 480 BCE.

118. Fifth-century BCE Athenian painter and sculptor whose mural depicted the mythical Amazons invading Athens and its king Theseus. This story took on ideological significance after the Persian Wars as a mythic prefiguration of war between (reputed) civilization and barbarism, but here reflects male hysteria about gynocracy.

119. Do the women match the men in stripping here? See note 114 above.

120. While the eating of raw garlic was pervasive in ancient Greece, jurors (see note 71 above) were characterized as bean-chewers (cf. modern chewing gum).

121. In one of Aesop's *Fables*, the beetle takes vengeance against the eagle by destroying its eggs (there probably is a joke here on eggs as testicles).

LEADER OF WOMEN'S CHORUS As long as I've got my friends  
 Lampito and Ismene, who's  
 Theban upper-crust, you won't intimidate me.  
 You're powerless, even if you do take a vote seven times.  
 Why? Because all your neighbors hate you, loser.  
 Yesterday I held a block-party in honor of Hekate<sup>122</sup>  
 700 For all the girls, and invited my friend from next door,  
 A helpful girl I'm especially fond of—a Boeotian eel.<sup>123</sup>  
 But they refused to let her come because of your decrees.  
 The only way you'll ever stop passing those is to have  
 Someone grab your leg, lug you away, and break your neck! 705

#### SCENE 4

(*Lysistrata enters from the Acropolis.*)

O Lady of our allied enterprise,  
 Why do you trek from your castle so grimly countenanced?<sup>124</sup>

LYSISTRATA It's the deeds of wicked women and the female psyche  
 That make me lose heart and pace back and forth like this.

LEADER OF WOMEN'S CHORUS Tell us what, tell us what! 710

LYSISTRATA It's truth, the truth it is.

LEADER OF WOMEN'S CHORUS What spells such doom? Enlighten  
 your friends!

LYSISTRATA It is grievous to say, and still more grievous not to say.

LEADER OF WOMEN'S CHORUS Keep me not clueless about the  
 woe that has struck us.

LYSISTRATA That tale is briefest to tell: *we really need a fuck!*<sup>125</sup> 715

LEADER OF WOMEN'S CHORUS Ah, Zeus!

122. A polymorphous goddess associated with witchcraft, the moon, crossroads, and the underworld. She was popular among women and her altars and statues often stood in front of private homes. Cf. note 84 above.

123. See note 19 above.

124. 706ff. here mimic the high diction of tragedy and brilliantly culminate in *Lysistrata's* bathetic announcement at 715.

125. While the sex-strike has hit the "strikers" hard, *Lysistrata* remains—sexually and Athena-like (cf. Introductory Essay 43–44)—dedicated to the cause.

LYSISTRATA Why invoke Zeus?<sup>126</sup> It is what it is.  
 And realistically, I can no longer keep them off  
 Their husbands: they're all leaving their posts.  
 720 The first one I caught was beating around the bushes  
 Right over by Pan's Grotto.<sup>127</sup>  
 A second deserter was sliding down a cable  
 She was clutching. And just yesterday I had to drag  
 Another one down by her hair from a sparrow.<sup>128</sup>  
 725 She was planning to fly over to Orsilochos'<sup>129</sup> house!  
 They're pulling out every possible excuse  
 To go back home. Here's one of them now.  
 Hey you, what's the rush?

LEADER OF WOMEN'S CHORUS I need to go home.  
 It's about my Milesian<sup>130</sup> wool:  
 The moths are devouring it right down back there.

730 LYSISTRATA Moths, right!  
 Get back in here! WOMAN #1 Oh, I'll be right back, I  
 swear!  
 I just need to spread it out on the bed.

LYSISTRATA Whoa, whoa! You're staying put here and you won't  
 be doing any bed-spreading!

WOMAN #1 So I'm just supposed to let my wool get wrecked?  
 LYSISTRATA Yes, if need be.

735 WOMAN #2 Oh no, oh no, not my lovely flax!  
 I left it at home with the stalk unbeaten.

LYSISTRATA Here's another one  
 Going off to beat her stalk of flax.  
 Now get right back here! WOMAN #2 Please, I promise  
 I'll pound that stalk and then be back super-fast.

126. More paratragic language (cf. note 124 above).

127. See note 11 above.

128. Sparrows have long and various associations with sexuality (e.g., they draw Aphrodite's chariot in a famous poem of the seventh/sixth century BCE lyric poet Sappho).

129. The identification of Orsilochos is uncertain (a well-known adulterer or pimp?).

130. Another fine export of Miletus (see note 38 above) that would be hard to acquire during the war.

LYSISTRATA No, no, no! NO pounding! If you set a precedent,  
 All the women will want to go to pound-town. 740

WOMAN #3 Holy Eileithyia,<sup>131</sup> delay this birth  
 Until I'm free of this holy turf!

LYSISTRATA What are you babbling about now?

WOMAN #3 I'm on the verge of having a baby!

LYSISTRATA But you weren't even pregnant yesterday!

WOMAN #3 Well I am now today. 745

Please, Lysistrata, let me go home right this minute,  
 So I can be with my midwife. LYSISTRATA That's quite a  
 story.

What's this hard thing here? (*touches her stomach*)

WOMAN #3 A little baby boy!

LYSISTRATA By Aphrodite, you clearly have some hollowed-out  
 Metal object there. Let me see. 750

You silly thing! There's no baby in there! That's the  
 Holy Helmet<sup>132</sup> you're carrying. OLD LADY #3 I swear, I  
 really am pregnant!

LYSISTRATA And so what was this for? WOMAN #3 In case  
 the delivery started

While I was still on the Acropolis: I'd get into the helmet  
 And make it my nest the way pigeons do. 755

LYSISTRATA Nonsense! That's just an excuse. It's clear what  
 you're up to.

You *must* stay for your helmet's Amphidromia.<sup>133</sup>

WOMAN #3 But I haven't been able to sleep a wink here on the  
 Acropolis  
 From the instant I saw the Guardian Snake.<sup>134</sup>

131. A very old goddess of childbirth.

132. Presumably the helmet from Athena's cult statue in the Parthenon, her main temple on the Acropolis.

133. A ceremony in which an infant is formally welcomed into the household at five days of age.

134. A snake was thought to guard the Acropolis and was pacified by being fed honeycakes.

- 760 **WOMAN #4** Ah, I'm suffering from sleep-deprivation too:  
It's the owls<sup>135</sup>—their hoo-hooing's killing me!
- LYSISTRATA** Enough with the fantasies, you crazy ladies!  
It's reasonable for you to miss your husbands, but surely you  
realize  
They miss you. There's no doubt the nights  
Are very tough for them. Practice patience, my friends.  
765 You won't have to keep this up for very much longer.  
There's an oracle<sup>136</sup> that says victory is ours  
As long as we don't factionalize. Here, check it out.
- WOMAN #3** You tell us what it says. **LYSISTRATA** Hush up  
and I will.
- 770 "When the swallows<sup>137</sup> band close together  
In flight from the hoopoes and renounce the penis,  
Evils will cease, and High-Thundering Zeus will turn  
The world upside down." **WOMAN #3** So we'll be lying on  
top?
- LYSISTRATA** "But if the swallows form factions and fly off from  
775 The holy temple, there no longer can be any doubt  
This bird's the most disgusting creature with wings."
- WOMAN #3** That oracle left little to the imagination, by Zeus!  
Gods help us!
- LYSISTRATA** Times are tough, but let's not give up.  
Betraying the oracle would be  
An utter disgrace, my dears. Let's go inside. (*Lysistrata and the  
780 four women exit into the stage building.*)
- CHORUS OF OLD MEN** I'll tell you a tale I heard  
When I was just a boy.

135. The owl was closely associated with Athena and appeared on Athenian coins.

136. Oracles (prophecies) and oracular shrines, while ubiquitous in the ancient world, often were regarded with skepticism by educated individuals. Lysistrata is cynically exploiting the women's belief in them here.

137. This recalls a gruesome myth in which King Tereus of Thrace (cf. note 98 above), once married to the Athenian princess Procne, lusts for her sister (Philomela) and secretly rapes and mutilates her. The sisters exact their revenge by feeding Tereus his son Itys and then morph into the swallow and the nightingale, to be forever pursued by Tereus, now a hoopoe.

- Once upon a time, there was young man called Melanion.<sup>138</sup> 784-5  
Wanting nothing to do with marriage, he took to the hills 786-7  
And lived like a hermit. 788  
He had a fine dog, 791  
And wove his own nets 789  
So he could hunt rabbits. 790  
Such was his hatred, he never returned home again. 792  
As much as Melanion detested women, 793-4  
We, sensible men that we are, 795  
Hate them no less.
- LEADER OF MEN'S CHORUS** How's about I give you a kiss, hag—
- LEADER OF WOMEN'S CHORUS** You'd have to give up onions first!
- CHORUS OF OLD MEN** And then raise my leg and kick you!
- LEADER OF WOMEN'S CHORUS** That's some bush you've got  
there.<sup>139</sup> 800
- LEADER OF MEN'S CHORUS** For sure. Myronides<sup>140</sup>  
Kept a rough patch down there  
And turned a hairy cheek to all his enemies.  
Likewise for Phormion.
- WOMEN'S CHORUS** Now I'll tell you a tale  
À la your friend Melanion. 807  
There was a notorious vagabond by name of Timon,<sup>141</sup> 808-9  
Whose face could be glimpsed skulking in thorny shrubs 810-11  
(He belonged to the Furies<sup>142</sup> brood).

138. Melanion is better known in myth for his pursuit of Atalanta (with the aid of the golden apple). His dedication to virginity and hunting here, as also his misogyny, recall the figure of Hippolytus, the namesake of an extant play (428 BCE) by Euripides. Cf. note 141 below.

139. For the men's nudity, see note 114 above.

140. Myronides, like Phormion in 804, was a popular fifth-century BCE general.

141. Timon, whether a historical or mythic figure, came to be the archetypal hater of mankind and of human society in general. The women's assertion that he only hated men (819-820) is an *ad hoc* comic distortion to match the men's claim (see note 138 above) that Melanion was a misogynist. See further Hawkins, T., "Seducing a Misanthrope: Timon the Philogynist in Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*." *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 42 (2001): 143-162.

142. The grim and relentless spirits of vengeance.

Such was his hatred that he withdrew  
 To a deserted spot,  
 815 Where he fervently cursed the wickedness of men.  
 In this way he joined up with our crusade  
 To despise wicked men of your ilk until the end of time.  
 819–20 But to women he was most warm-hearted.

LEADER OF WOMEN'S CHORUS Would you like me to give you a  
 knuckle sandwich?

LEADER OF MEN'S CHORUS No, please—you're scarin' me!

LEADER OF WOMEN'S CHORUS How about a good kick instead?

LEADER OF MEN'S CHORUS We'd get a full view of your snatch.<sup>143</sup>

LEADER OF WOMEN'S CHORUS At least you won't catch a glimpse  
 825 of any crotch-locks:  
 I may be elderly,  
 But I practice controlled  
 Burning in that area.<sup>144</sup>

### SCENE 5

LYSISTRATA Hey, hey, ladies! Come on over here  
 Quickly!

830 WOMAN Tell me what's up! What's with all the shouting?

LYSISTRATA It's a man! I see a crazy-looking man coming  
 Who's being violently pulled along by Aphrodite's power!  
 O Guardian Goddess of Cyprus, Cythera<sup>145</sup> and Paphos,  
 Stay the hard course thou doth travel!<sup>146</sup>

WOMAN Where is the man, whoever he is?

835 LYSISTRATA He's by Chloe's<sup>147</sup> shrine.

WOMAN Holy Zeus, there is he! Who in the world is it?

143. Cf. note 114 above.

144. I.e., she sings her pubic hair with a lamp (cf. modern "waxing"). Cf. note 34 above.

145. Cythera is an island off Cape Malea on the Peloponnese, a cult center of Aphrodite (and said to be her birthplace). For Cyprus and Paphos, see notes 93 and 95 above.

146. A parody of religious language, especially in the obvious double-entendre "hard."

147. Referring to a shrine to Demeter Chloe (= "Of Grass/Greenery") near the Propylaea.

LYSISTRATA Take a look. Does any of you recognize  
 him? MYRRHINE (on the roof of the stage building)  
 I most

Certainly do! It's my husband Kinesias!

LYSISTRATA So now your task is to burn and torment him,  
 To tease his dick, and to make a show of affection (or not!),  
 840 To follow his every wish—except for what our wine-bowl  
 knows we must not do!<sup>148</sup>

MYRRHINE No need to worry. I've got this under control.

LYSISTRATA And I'll stay,

To join you in befuddling him here,  
 And slowly roasting him. The rest of you, shoo!

(Myrrhine and the rest of the women exit. Kinesias enters with his  
 slave Manes, who holds Myrrhine's and Kinesias' baby.)

KINESIAS<sup>149</sup> Ah, ah, damn it all! Such convulsions,  
 845 Such tension—it's as if I'm being stretched to capacity  
 on the rack!

LYSISTRATA Who's that there inside our lines?

KINESIAS Me. LYSISTRATA Are you a man?

KINESIAS Yes, *obviously* I am! LYSISTRATA Then you need  
 to disappear instantly.

KINESIAS And who do you suppose you are to be throwing  
 me out? LYSISTRATA The daytime guard.

KINESIAS By the gods, go get Myrrhine for me!

LYSISTRATA How about that! I'm supposed to go get Myrrhine?  
 And who are you?

KINESIAS I'm her husband—Kinesias of Paionidai!<sup>150</sup>

LYSISTRATA Hello, my darling! Your name is not unknown to us,  
 And we've often heard it mentioned

148. Cf. 209ff.

149. His names means "Fucker" (reflecting an obscene sense of the verb *kinein*, "to move").

150. The name of Kinesias' deme suggests the obscene sense of the Greek verb *paiein* (i.e., "pound," "bang"). To (over-)emphasize the obscenity here, one could call him "Fuckhead of Pound-town." Cf. note 149 above.

- 855 Because "Kinesias" is always passing over your wife's lips.  
Every time she handles an apple or egg, she says  
"Ooh, I'm swallowing this one for Kinesias!"  
KINESIAS By the gods!
- LYSISTRATA By Aphrodite, indeed! And whenever we fall to  
talking  
About men, your wife instantly pipes up with  
860 "Compared with my man Kinesias, all the others are just boys."  
KINESIAS C'mon now, go get her! LYSISTRATA Well?  
What's in it for me?  
KINESIAS By Zeus, there's this (*makes an obscene gesture*), if  
you want it.  
How about this? (*offers his money-purse*) Whatever I've got on  
me is yours.
- LYSISTRATA I'll go down and get her for you. (*exits into the stage  
building*) KINESIAS Make it snappy!
- 865 There hasn't been an ounce of joy in my life  
Since the moment she left the house.  
It's agony me for me to go in there,  
And everything seems so empty. I try to eat,  
But food gives me no pleasure. All I have left is . . . THIS  
BONER!
- (*Myrrhine appears on the roof of the stage building.*)
- 870 MYRRHINE (*calling back inside*) I love him, I really do love him,  
but he  
Doesn't want my love! Don't make me go out to him.
- KINESIAS Myrrhine sweetie-pookins, why are you doing this to  
me?  
Come down here. MYRRHINE I absolutely am not  
coming down!
- KINESIAS You still won't come down when I ask  
nicely, Myrrhine?
- MYRRHINE You might be asking for me, but you don't really  
875 need me.
- KINESIAS I don't need you? All this pressure is killing me.

- MYRRHINE I'm out of here. KINESIAS No, please at least  
listen to your baby here.  
You there, call for mommy.
- BABY Mama, mama, mama.
- KINESIAS So what is wrong with you? Don't you feel sorry for  
your baby?  
880 He hasn't been washed or fed in six days!<sup>151</sup>
- MYRRHINE Of course I pity him. It's his father who's neglectful.
- KINESIAS Come down here, you vixen—for the baby.
- MYRRHINE What's more important than being a mother? I've  
got to go down there. KINESIAS (*to the audience*) I  
can't help it.  
885 She somehow looks quite a bit younger to me,  
And there's something more enticing in her eyes.  
And when she lashes out or looks down her nose at me,  
It turns me on and I'm ready to explode with passion!  
(*Myrrhine enters from the stage building.*)
- MYRRHINE Aw, my darling sweet little baby with such an awful  
father!  
890 Now let mommy give you a kiss, you sweet thing!
- KINESIAS Why are you behaving so badly? Acting up with  
Those other women, giving me such grief,  
And hurting yourself too? MYRRHINE Get your hands  
off me!
- KINESIAS And you've made a complete mess of all our stuff at home,  
Both yours and mine! MYRRHINE I really don't care  
895 much about that.
- KINESIAS And you don't care much if the hens are dragging away  
Your finest wool? MYRRHINE Absolutely not at all.
- KINESIAS And what about Aphrodite's sacred rituals?<sup>152</sup> You  
haven't  
Celebrated them for the longest time. Please come home!

151. The passage of time can be loose in Old Comedy: cf. Introduction 7–10.

152. I.e., sex.

MYRRHINE Nope, that's just not happening unless you all reach  
900 an agreement

To put a stop to the war. KINESIAS Okay then: if that's  
what people decide,

That's exactly what we'll do. MYRRHINE Okay then: if  
that's what people decide,

I'll come back home. But for now I'm sworn to stay.

KINESIAS Then at least lie down here with me—it's been such a  
long time.

905 MYRRHINE Absolutely not! But that doesn't mean I don't love you.

KINESIAS You do love me? Then why not lie down with me,  
Myrtie-poo?

MYRRHINE That's ridiculous! Right in front of the baby?

KINESIAS Well, certainly not! Manes, take the kid home!  
(Manes exits with the baby)

There, the baby is out of our way.

Now lie down, please. MYRRHINE Now just where, my  
910 dear, could one possibly

Do that around here? KINESIAS Where? The Grotto of  
Pan<sup>153</sup> will work.

MYRRHINE But how would I go back to the Acropolis in a  
purified state?<sup>154</sup>

KINESIAS No problem at all. You can clean up in the  
Klepsydra.<sup>155</sup>

MYRRHINE Then you want me to break my oath, dear?

915 KINESIAS Oath, smooth—I'll take the heat for that.

MYRRHINE Okay, I'll go get us a portable bed.

KINESIAS No need for that.

The ground will do just fine. MYRRHINE By Apollo,<sup>156</sup> no!

153. See note 11 above.

154. It was necessary to bathe after sex to restore one's ritual purity (i.e., so as to be able to enter sacred space such as that on the Acropolis).

155. A spring on the Acropolis.

156. For Apollo, see Appendix.

I'm not going to let a man in your condition lie directly on the  
ground. (exits)

KINESIAS Isn't it obvious how deeply my wife loves me?

MYRRHINE Here we are. Now lie down there while I slip out of  
these clothes. 920

Hold on, we need a thingamabob . . . oh yeah, I mean a mat-  
tress. I'll get one.

KINESIAS A mattress? Please no, not on my account.

MYRRHINE By Artemis,

We're not doing it on the cords! That's disgusting!

KINESIAS But how about a kiss first?

MYRRHINE There you go. KINESIAS Ooh-la-la, now get  
back here with it in a flash! (Myrrhine exits)

MYRRHINE Ta-dah, a mattress! Lie down and I'll get undressed. 925

Hold on, we need one of those thingees . . . oh yeah, a pillow.  
You've got to have a pillow.

KINESIAS But I don't need one! MYRRHINE But I sure do.  
(exits)

KINESIAS So what's this make my cock here? A hungry Herakles<sup>157</sup>  
at the dinner table?

MYRRHINE Up, up, up with you! Now, is that everything?

KINESIAS Yes, it has to be! Now come here, my little jewel. 930

MYRRHINE I've just about got my bra unhooked. Now don't  
forget:

Don't you dare deceive me about the peace agreement!

KINESIAS As Zeus is my witness, may I die if that happens!

MYRRHINE Hey! You don't have a blanket.

KINESIAS Really, it's not a blanket I need! What I *really* want is a  
FUCK.

MYRRHINE No worries, you'll get that, just as soon as I'm back.  
(exits) 935

KINESIAS This person and her bedspreads are wearing me down!

157. For Herakles, see Appendix. The joke here turns on Herakles' superhuman appetite.

MYRRHINE Up, up, you. KINESIAS Is *this* up enough for you?

MYRRHINE How about some cologne?<sup>158</sup> KINESIAS By Apollo, no, not for me!

MYRRHINE Regardless, *by Aphrodite*, I'm putting some on.

940 KINESIAS O Lord Zeus, please make the stuff spill out!

MYRRHINE Put out your hand: take some and rub it on yourself.

KINESIAS Phew! By Apollo, that does not smell good!  
And it reeks of more delay and less sex.

MYRRHINE Look what I did! I brought the Rhodian<sup>159</sup> fragrance!

KINESIAS That's okay. Leave it be, you strange creature!

945 MYRRHINE Oh, nonsense! (*exits*)

KINESIAS May the inventor of perfume burn eternally in hell!

MYRRHINE Here, take this bottle. KINESIAS But I already have a bottle.<sup>160</sup>  
Just lie down, you beast, and do not bring me  
Another single thing! MYRRHINE Sure, will do, by  
Artemis!

950 I'm taking my sandals off now. But don't forget, darling:  
You *will* be voting for a peace treaty. (*exits and returns to Acropolis*)

KINESIAS It'll get due consideration.  
My wife's worn me down to the bone and wrecked me!  
On top of that, she got me all pumped up and then let the air  
out of my balloon!

955 The horror! I've been deprived of the loveliest lady!  
I've been screwed and now have nobody to screw!  
Who'll take care of this poor orphan?

158. Perfume is a standard accompaniment of sex in the ancient world.

159. I.e., from the large Aegean island of Rhodes. Rhodes defected from Athens after the Sicilian Expedition (see note 99 above), and Athenian bitterness over that may be behind the unpleasant characterization of the cologne here.

160. The vessel for perfume (*alabastron*) is phallic in shape.

Where's that hustler, Fox-Dog?<sup>161</sup> (*surveys the audience*)  
I need to hire one of his private nurses.

CHORUS OF MEN Ah, poor beguiled wretch, your soul  
Is aggrieved in tragic suffering. 960  
And I do pity you—alas!  
What human organ could endure it?  
What scrotum, what soul,  
What testicles, what dong  
Could survive the torture 965  
Of being deprived of a morning fuck?

KINESIAS O Zeus! The horrible pressure!

CHORUS OF MEN Just look at what she's done to you!  
What an abominable monster!

KINESIAS No, no, she's sweet as candy! 970

CHORUS OF MEN Sweet? She's poison, utter poison!

KINESIAS Okay, she's poison then! O Zeus, Zeus,  
Please roll her up and fling her round  
Like a tumbleweed caught up  
In one of your blasting whirlwinds! 975  
Take her aloft and then let her go,  
So she'll plummet back to earth,  
And stick a quick and perfect landing  
On this pommel horse of mine!

#### SCENE 6

(*A messenger from Sparta enters, trying to conceal his erection under his cloak.*)

161. The nickname of Philostratus, an Athenian pimp. The call for the pimp here perhaps underscores one of the more unrealistic premises of the play—that is, the men could simply seek sexual release with prostitutes or with either their slaves or boys (given the prevalence of pederasty in ancient Athens). As the play's focus is on (re)asserting the importance of women citizens in Athens (cf. Introductory Essay 44–49), we apparently are expected to suspend our disbelief on this point.



- 980 SPARTAN MESSENGER Where is Oldmannery<sup>162</sup> of Athen-City  
Or big Government Cheeses<sup>163</sup>? I got news for them.
- KINESIAS What are you supposed to be? A human or a  
human dick?
- SPARTAN MESSENGER By Twin Gods,<sup>164</sup> I am messenger, young  
buck.  
I come from Sparta about peace talk.
- 985 KINESIAS And so that's why you've got a spear hidden on you there?
- SPARTAN MESSENGER No, by Zeus, no spear!
- KINESIAS What are you hiding from me?  
What are your covering up with your cloak there?  
Case of crotch-swell from the trip here?
- SPARTAN MESSENGER You crazy man,  
By Castor! KINESIAS C'mon, that's a boner, you wily  
dodger!
- SPARTAN MESSENGER I swear by Zeus, it certainly no boner. Stop  
blubber-talk!
- 990 KINESIAS So just what is that? SPARTAN MESSENGER A rod,  
Spartan stiffy-staff for walking.
- KINESIAS Yeah, sure, and *this* is a Spartan walking rod too.  
Hey, I think I know what's going on, so you can level with me:  
How are things going for you all in Sparta?
- 995 SPARTAN MESSENGER All Sparta rise up in confusion and allies  
Have boners too. Is need for pussy.
- KINESIAS Who's responsible for this disaster?  
Is it Pan?<sup>165</sup>
- SPARTAN MESSENGER Not Pan. I think Lampito start it  
And then other women in all Sparta

162. The Spartan mistakenly assumes Athens has a Council of Elders (*Gerousia*), as that in Sparta. For the Spartans' dialect, see note 30 above.

163. The ambassador correctly refers to the Athenian *prytaneis* (i.e., representative boards who oversaw Athenian political assemblies).

164. See note 31 above.

165. For the perennially erect god Pan, see note 11 above.

- Line up together like in race  
And say "ready, set go—*no pussy for you!*" 1000
- KINESIAS How are you doing then? SPARTAN  
MESSENGER It hard. We bent way over  
Like men keeping lamp lit in wind over the Sparta town.  
Women not let us touch their  
Sweet cherries 'til we as group together 1005  
Make peace treaty to rest of Greeks.
- KINESIAS Now I get it: this whole affair  
Is a joint conspiracy involving all the women of Greece.  
Advise your fellow citizens to send ambassadors here  
With full diplomatic powers to strike an agreement with us. 1010  
I'll advise our Council to select our own  
Ambassadors by formally presenting this cock of mine to them.
- SPARTAN MESSENGER I fly away now. You say very, very good  
advice.  
(*The Spartan Messenger and Kinesias exit.*)
- LEADER OF MEN'S CHORUS No beast is tougher to tangle with  
than a woman.  
No fire, no leopard is as dogged as she is. 1015
- LEADER OF WOMEN'S CHORUS You've learned that hard lesson,  
but you still do battle with me.  
Naughty boy! Why can't we be best friends forever?
- LEADER OF MEN'S CHORUS Because I have no plan to stop hating  
women.
- LEADER OF WOMEN'S CHORUS Stop doing that on your own time,  
but in the meantime I can't  
Stand seeing you so exposed. Just look for yourself how  
ridiculous you are! 1020  
I'm coming over there to put your shirt back on you.
- LEADER OF MEN'S CHORUS By Zeus, that's a pretty nice thing  
you've done.  
You know, it wasn't very nice of me to take it off so angrily in  
the first place.

LEADER OF WOMEN'S CHORUS There, you look much less  
ridiculous—and like a real man now.<sup>166</sup>

1025 And if you weren't such a prick to me, I'd have already snatched  
That beast that's still in your eye and removed it.

LEADER OF MEN'S CHORUS That's what was hurting me. Take this  
ring of mine  
And pick it out. Then show it to me once it's out—  
By Zeus, it's been gnawing at my eye for quite a while now.

LEADER OF WOMEN'S CHORUS I'll do it even though you've been  
1030 such a grump of a man.  
O Zeus! That is some monster gnat living in there!  
Look for yourself: it appears to be Tricorysian!<sup>167</sup>

LEADER OF MEN'S CHORUS Damn, what a relief! That bug's been  
digging wells in my eye forever,  
And now that it's gone, I've got a bunch of tears streaming out.

LEADER OF WOMEN'S CHORUS Even though you've been such a  
1035 naughty boy, I'll wipe them away  
And give you a kiss. LEADER OF MEN'S CHORUS No kisses!  
LEADER OF WOMEN'S CHORUS That's really not your choice.

LEADER OF MEN'S CHORUS Oh, screw you! You're born  
manipulators!  
That old saying has it exactly right about you all:  
"Can't live with or without you marauders."<sup>168</sup>

1040 But now it's time to make peace, and from now on  
I'll do you no ill and expect the same from you.

LEADER OF WOMEN'S CHORUS Let's all take our places together  
and commence our song.

166. The Greek idealization of the naked male form as seen (esp.) in athletes and artistic representations of gods did not extend to old men's bodies. Cf. note 114 above and see further Bonfante, L., "Nudity as a Costume in Classical Art." *American Journal of Archaeology* 93 (1989): 543–570.

167. Tricorythus was a swampy area near Marathon where insects no doubt were bountiful.

168. An old misogynistic paradox: cf. Hesiod, *Theogony* 600–612 and *Works & Days* 57–58, and Introduction 21–22.

(The two semi-choruses unite and address the audience together.)

UNITED CHORUS OF OLD MEN AND WOMEN We're not here, gentlemen,  
To utter so much as a single slander  
Against a fellow citizen.<sup>169</sup> 1045

It's just the opposite:  
We've only good things to say  
And do, as we've already got  
More than our share of evils.  
Instead, let's have every man and woman 1050  
Speak up if they're  
In need of a little cash—  
Oh, let's say around two or three minae.<sup>170</sup>  
We've got it inside, along with sacks for lugging it.  
If peace ever comes about, 1055  
All loans will promptly be forgiven—  
That is, if any loans were actually ever given!

LEADER OF MEN'S CHORUS We're wining and dining  
Some Karystians<sup>171</sup> guests tonight,  
Their crème de la crème! 1060  
I've planned a soup,  
And an ex-piglet of mine  
Has been nicely grilled  
Into succulent slices.  
So come on over today! Be sure to rise early 1065  
And take a nice bath,  
Both you and the kids! Walk right in,  
Don't bother to ring.  
Proceed inside,  
Make yourself at home (as if you really were)— 1070  
Seeing that the door will be locked!

169. Choral songs in Old Comedy in fact often did this.

170. A significant sum, perhaps the equivalent of as many as 150 days' wages of a skilled laborer in the classical period.

171. Karystos was a loyal ally of Athens in the war. Cf. 1181ff.

## SCENE 7

(*The Spartan delegation enters, along with their slaves, its members trying to conceal their erections under their cloaks.*)

UNITED CHORUS LEADER Hey, here come the Spartan ambassadors, dragging their beards,  
And what looks like a pigpen over their thighs.  
Gentlemen of Sparta! Greetings first,  
1075 And then please tell us how you're doing.

SPARTAN AMBASSADOR I don't need give lecture 'bout that:  
You take good look how we doing.

CHORUS LEADER Arrgh! Matters are much more pressing,  
And the inflammation has gotten even worse!

1080 SPARTAN AMBASSADOR Not speakable—who could say the  
words? But peacemaker  
Should come, make peace for us how he want.

(*The Athenian delegation enters, along with their slaves, its members trying to conceal their erections under their cloaks.*)

CHORUS LEADER Ah, look: here are some of our homegrown  
heroes  
Making belly-tents out of their cloaks the way  
Wrestlers do.<sup>172</sup> Could be a bad case of abdominal swelling  
1085 Or an old injury has popped up again.

SPARTAN AMBASSADOR Can anyone say where is Lysistrata?  
We men are here—see man parts?

CHORUS LEADER The symptomology of both groups is consistent:  
I take it the pressure overcomes you in the morning?

1090 ATHENIAN AMBASSADOR #1 In the name of Zeus, our bones are  
wearing thin from this!  
If we don't have a settlement soon,  
Our only remaining option is fucking Cleisthenes!<sup>173</sup>

172. Greek wrestlers competed in the nude, and so the point of comparison here is the forward incline of their upper bodies as they seek to gain a hold on their opponent, the objective being to throw him to the ground.

173. See note 104 above.

CHORUS LEADER If you've got any brains, you'll tuck those  
things under your cloaks.

Otherwise, some Wang-whacker<sup>174</sup> may catch sight of you.

ATHENIAN AMBASSADOR #1 You've certainly got that right!

SPARTAN AMBASSADOR By Twin Gods,  
1095 Is so! We got to put cloaks on again.

ATHENIAN AMBASSADOR #1 Hello, Spartans! We sure have fallen  
on hard times.

SPARTAN AMBASSADOR O friend, our times is very hard too:  
The men here (*pointing to audience*) maybe saw us playing on  
ourselves.

ATHENIAN AMBASSADOR #1 Let's focus now, Spartans, and get  
right down to business: 1100

What is the reason for your visit here? SPARTAN  
AMBASSADOR We are ambassadors,  
Here to make settlement.

ATHENIAN AMBASSADOR #1 Excellent, so are we.  
So we should invite Lysistrata—  
She's the only person capable of reconciling us.

SPARTAN AMBASSADOR Yes, by the Twin Gods, invite  
Mr. Lysistrata<sup>175</sup> too if want. 1105

ATHENIAN AMBASSADOR #1 Oh, it seems she needs no invitation  
from us:  
She probably heard us. Here she comes right now.

(*Lysistrata enters from the stage building.*)

LEADER OF UNITED CHORUS Greetings, manliest of all women!  
Now we need you to be  
Harsh or gentle, upper crust or low class, snooty or sweet,

174. An allusion to the mutilation of the herms—guardian statues of the god Hermes (see Appendix) with prominent phalluses found throughout Athens—in 415 BCE just before the launch of the Sicilian Expedition (see notes 99 and 159 above). The Chorus Leader suggests that some of the perpetrators of this sacrilegious act, superstitiously blamed (in part) for the expedition's failure, are still in the city.

175. Either a joke about the Spartans' alleged penchant for anal sex (cf. note 104 above) or a jab at a contemporary (effeminate) Lysistratos.

1100 All this in one woman. You've cast all Greece's leaders under  
your spell;  
All their disputes have been handed over to you to fix.

LYSISTRATA It's easy work if you catch them when they're eager  
For peace and not sniffing each other out.  
We'll soon find out. Hey, Reconciliation, where are you?  
(*The personification of Reconciliation enters; the actor*<sup>176</sup> *playing her wears a "naked suit."*)  
(*to Reconciliation*) Take hold of the Spartans' hands first and  
1115 bring them here,  
And don't be rough or pushy about it—you know,  
That brutish way our husbands used to treat us.  
Handle him the way wives do their husbands at home:  
If he refuses to give you his hand, drag him along by his dong.  
1120 Go get the Athenians too.  
Drag them here by any bodily part they offer you.  
You Spartan gentlemen stand close to me here.  
Athenians, over there. All of you listen up now:  
I am a woman and I have a brain:  
1125 I'm quite bright to begin with,  
And since I've listened to a lot of my father's  
And my elders' discussions, I'm not poorly educated.<sup>177</sup>  
Now that I have your attention, I'm going to ream out  
The both of you, just as you deserve. The two  
of you sprinkle  
Holy altars from a single vessel, as if you were  
1130 blood relatives.  
You do this at Olympia, Thermopylai, Delphi, and

176. For the proposal that Reconciliation was played by a woman, see Zweig, B., "The Mute Nude Female Characters in Aristophanes' Plays," pp. 73–89 in A. Richlin (ed.), *Pornography and Representation in Greece and Rome* (New York, 1992). If the actor, like all members of the cast with speaking parts, was male, what might have been the effects of having *him* sexually groped in the manner Reconciliation is here?

177. On education for women in the classical period, see Introduction 20–21.

I could name a lot of other places if I needed to.<sup>178</sup>  
And when we've got armies of barbarian enemies,<sup>179</sup>  
You're bent on destroying Greek cities and citizens.  
So much for my first point.

ATHENIAN AMBASSADOR #1 My turtle's gonna die if it can't put its  
head back in its shell soon!

LYSISTRATA Turning to you now, Spartans:  
Do you remember when Perikleidas the Spartan  
Came here once and sat down at our altars,  
And as a pale suppliant of Athens wearing a crimson cloak  
1140 Begged for reinforcements?<sup>180</sup> At that time, you were being  
Rattled by the Messenians and shaken by Poseidon.<sup>181</sup>  
And Cimon arrived with four thousand soldiers  
And saved all of Sparta.  
This is what they did for you: and you in turn  
1145 Want to overrun the land that came to your rescue?

ATHENIAN AMBASSADOR #1 By Zeus, Lysistrata, they're the  
wrongdoers here!

SPARTAN AMBASSADOR We do wrong yes, but words cannot say  
beauty of her ass!

LYSISTRATA You think I'm going to let you Athenians off the  
hook?  
Do *you* remember when the Spartans in turn  
1150

178. Lysistrata names three panhellenic (see note 16 above) festivals where Greeks of various city-states gathered to celebrate shared religious and cultural practices. She refers to the famous games in Zeus' honor at Olympia (near Pisa on the Peloponnese), the major festival of Apollo at Delphi, his chief oracular site, and the lesser-known Pylaia of Demeter at Thermopylai (cf. note 193 below).

179. Especially the Persians.

180. Taking advantage of the chaos following a major earthquake in 464 BCE, Sparta's helots (i.e., its enslaved population) and the neighboring Messenians revolted.

181. The god (aka "The Earth-Shaker") was believed to be responsible for earthquakes. The Athenian general Cimon was sent to Sparta with a large force, but the Spartans ultimately rejected the Athenians' help, and relations between the two city-states deteriorated as a result. Lysistrata here distorts events in the Athenians' favor. Cf. note 183 below.

- Came armed and annihilated a whole bunch of Thessalians,<sup>182</sup>  
 Along with Hippias' associates and allies?<sup>183</sup>  
 You were dressed like slaves,  
 And they were the only ones there to help.  
 1155 They were your liberators that day:  
*They restored Athens' cloak of freedom.*
- SPARTAN AMBASSADOR I never seen a woman finer.  
 ATHENIAN AMBASSADOR #1 And I've never seen a nicer cunt!  
 LYSISTRATA Why then, after so many fine mutual favors,  
 1160 Are you still at war and doing nothing to stop the depravity?  
 Why not reconcile instead? What's stopping you?  
*(Both parties proceed to map out their desires on Reconciliation's  
 body; see further Introductory Essay 42–49.)*  
 SPARTAN AMBASSADOR We willing for it, if you give us back this  
 Round bottomland. LYSISTRATA Which one, friend?  
 SPARTAN AMBASSADOR Pylos,<sup>184</sup> the gate here.  
 We want for long time and been trying to squeeze way in.<sup>185</sup>  
 ATHENIAN AMBASSADOR #1 By Poseidon, you are not going to do  
 1165 that!
- LYSISTRATA Let them have it, sir. ATHENIAN  
 AMBASSADOR #1 Then how can we still stick it to them?  
 LYSISTRATA Ask them for some other region in return.  
 ATHENIAN AMBASSADOR #1 Let me take a closer look here—  
 okay, first give us the

182. Thessaly, a northern region of Greece, provided cavalry for the tyrant Hippias (see notes 103 and 107 above).

183. As in her account of Cimon and the "liberation" of the Spartans (see note 181 above), Lysistrata exaggerates in portraying the Athenians as being enslaved to Hippias.

184. A strategic city on the western coast of the Peloponnese controlled by the Athenians (cf. note 37 above); *pylos* = "gate" in Greek.

185. The Spartans' alleged inclination toward anal sex is again hinted at.

- Pubic Triangle,<sup>186</sup> and the Gulf of Poontang<sup>187</sup>  
 Just behind it—and how about The Legs<sup>188</sup> here? 1170
- SPARTAN AMBASSADOR By Twin Gods, you can't have it all,  
 Mister!
- LYSISTRATA Let go of it: stop arguing about a pair of legs!  
 ATHENIAN AMBASSADOR #1 I'm going to strip down naked to do  
 some plowing.  
 SPARTAN AMBASSADOR By the Twin Gods, I gonna get up early  
 to plow poop-furrow.  
 LYSISTRATA There'll be time for that after you're reconciled. 1175  
 And if you've officially decided on peace,  
 Go back and confer with your allies.  
 ATHENIAN AMBASSADOR #1 Confer with our allies, ma'am? Have  
 you noticed these boners of ours?  
 Won't each and every one of them reach the same resolution  
 we have:  
*We all need to FUCK!*
- SPARTAN AMBASSADOR All our allies very much want this, 1180  
 By Twin Gods! ATHENIAN AMBASSADOR #1 And, by Zeus,  
 the Karystians<sup>189</sup> certainly will too!
- LYSISTRATA Very well then. For now, be sure to preserve your  
 precious bodily fluids  
 So we women can entertain you on the Acropolis  
 With all the goodies we have in our boxes.  
 There you must give each other your pledges of trust. 1185

186. The Greek puns on the place name Echinus and the word for "sea-urchin" (suggesting pubic hair).

187. The Malian Gulf here = Reconciliation's vagina.

188. "The Legs" here refer to the long walls of Megara, a city-state located between Corinth and Athens, and a former Athenian ally currently on the Spartans' side in the war.

189. See note 171 above.

And then each of you can take his wife

And go home.      ATHENIAN AMBASSADOR #1    Let's go right now!

SPARTAN AMBASSADOR    Lead way fast!      ATHENIAN

    AMBASSADOR #1    Yes, absolutely, as fast as you possibly can!

(*Lysistrata*, *Reconciliation*, and the delegations exit; the slaves sit down around the central door of the stage building.)

CHORUS    Elaborate throws,

1190    And fancy mantles and saffron robes  
           And gold jewelry, everything I have,  
           I'll gladly bestow on all  
           Your sons, and whoever's daughter serves  
           As Kanephoros.<sup>190</sup>

1195-6    I invite all of you to take  
           What you want from my things at home.  
           Nothing's been sealed so tight  
           As to keep you from breaking in  
 1200    And carrying off its contents.  
           Take a good look, but there's nothing to see  
           Unless your eyes are much better than mine.  
           Out of bread and got slaves and a brood  
           Of small kids to feed?

1205-6    Feel free to take some fine little  
           Grains of wheat from my house:  
           A generous measure of these  
           Will grow into a handsome young loaf.

1210    The poor may also come  
           To my house with sacks and bags:  
           My slave will load them down  
           With handfuls of wheat.

1215    That said, I must warn you not to approach my door:  
           Unless you'd like to meet my watchdog!

### SCENE 8

(*Athenian Ambassador #1* appears from within, pounding on the Propylaia and threatening the slaves spread out before it. He wields a lit torch.)

ATHENIAN AMBASSADOR #1    Open up the door, you! You shouldn't have been there in the first place!<sup>191</sup>

Why are all of you sitting there? How's about I light you  
 On fire with this torch? (*to audience*) How played is that?

I'm simply not going to do it. But if we really have to,  
 We'll somehow get ourselves through it to please you.      1220

ATHENIAN AMBASSADOR #2 (*enters from the gates*)    We'd be happy  
 to help you go through all that trouble: (*to slaves*)  
 Get lost or you'll be sadly missing your hair soon!

ATHENIAN AMBASSADOR #1    Yeah, get lost, so when the Spartans  
 come out after their dinner,  
 They can easily make their way through here.

ATHENIAN AMBASSADOR #2    That's the best party I've ever been to!      1225  
 The Spartans were such a delight, and it turns out  
 We Athenians are quite the witty conversationalists when  
 we're drunk.

ATHENIAN AMBASSADOR #1    Fair enough, seeing that we lose our  
 wits when we're sober.

If I can convince my fellow Athenians of this,  
 We'll henceforth and forever more do our diplomacy drunk.      1230

As things are now, every time we go to Sparta sober,  
 We instantly find a way to mess things up.

What usually happens is that we don't listen to what they're  
 saying,

And we each assume all sorts of things they don't actually say,  
 And so we come back here with different accounts of the same  
 events.      1235

But just now everything went smoothly. If somebody

190. See note 111 above.

191. The gratuitous threats to the mute slaves onstage here are a reminder of the harsh realities of slavery in a society where it was naturalized.

- Sang *Telamon* when he was supposed to sing *Kleitagora*,<sup>192</sup>  
 We said "bravo!" and swore it was awesome.  
 But look: those slaves are back again.  
 Get lost, you human whipping posts! (*the slaves flee and*  
 1240 *perhaps exit*)
- ATHENIAN AMBASSADOR #2 Hey, now they're coming out of there!  
 (*The Spartan delegation enters from the Acropolis, accompanied*  
*by a piper.*)
- SPARTAN AMBASSADOR Take pipes, my friend,  
 So I can dance and sing  
 Beautiful song to Athenians and us.
- 1245 ATHENIAN AMBASSADOR #1 By the gods, grab hold of those pipes!  
 I really love watching you Spartans dance!
- SPARTAN AMBASSADOR Memory, inspire for this young man  
 Your own Muse,  
 Who knows about us and the Athenians,  
 1250 How they at Artemisium<sup>193</sup>  
 Sailed, godlike,  
 Against the Persian fleet  
 And prevailed,  
 While Leonidas led us  
 1255 Like crazy boars, I think,  
 Sharpening the tusk, and lot  
 Of foam flowed around our jaws,  
 1258-9 And lot flow down legs too.  
 1260 The Persian men as many as  
 The grains of sand.  
 Maiden goddess,  
 Wild Killer of Beasts,<sup>194</sup> come here

192. The *Telamon* and *Kleitagora* were two very distinct popular songs (the blundering choice is overlooked here in the festivities).

193. Site of a critical naval battle (480 BCE) in the Persian Wars, which took place simultaneously with the Spartan general Leonidas' attempt to hold off the Persians with a force of just 300 at the pass of Thermopylai (cf. note 178 above) in northern Greece.

194. Artemis, prominently worshipped at both Athens and Sparta.

- For peace treaty.  
 Keep us friends for long time. 1265  
 And now let friendship always be smooth 1266-7  
 Because of pact, and let us not be wily 1268-9  
 Foxes to each other anymore. 1270  
 Come to here, come  
 O Maiden Huntress!  
 (*Lysistrata*<sup>195</sup> and both the Athenian and Spartan women enter.)
- ATHENIAN AMBASSADOR #1 Since everything else has turned out  
 so well,  
 You Spartans should now take your wives<sup>196</sup> back home;  
 You Athenians do the same. Let each man stand beside his  
 wife, 1275  
 And each wife beside her husband, in celebration of  
 This happy ending, by taking up a dance for the gods.  
 And may we together aim to never go astray like this again.  
 Bring on the dance, bring on the Graces,<sup>197</sup>  
 1280 And call forth Artemis  
 Along with her twin, the Kindly Healer;<sup>198</sup>  
 The Nysian<sup>199</sup> too,  
 Who among his maenads<sup>200</sup> flashes his eyes ecstatic. 1283-4  
 And call upon Zeus ablaze with lightning, together with 1285  
 His blessed wife and queen.<sup>201</sup>  
 And include the divine spirits,<sup>202</sup> to serve  
 As vigilant witnesses

195. Lysistrata's appearance (as a mute character) here is conjectural, as elsewhere in the play her entrances are explicitly announced. If she does appear, she perhaps does not dance as the others, but stands majestically apart in an Athena-esque pose. Cf. Introductory Essay 42.

196. I.e., the hostages taken at 244.

197. The Charites, who personify grace and charm and enjoy continuous music and dancing.

198. Apollo.

199. Dionysus.

200. In myth, the ecstatic female followers of Dionysus: cf. note 10 above.

201. Hera: see Appendix.

202. The *daimones*, non-anthropomorphic supernatural powers in the Greek pantheon.

Of this generous Peace<sup>203</sup>

1290 That the goddess Cypris<sup>204</sup> forged.

CHORUS Alalai, hail Paian,

Rise up, iai!

Dance for victory, iai!

Evoi, evoi, evoi, evoi!

ATHENIAN AMBASSADOR #1 Produce a song, my Spartan friend,  
1295 a novel one to match our own.

SPARTAN AMBASSADOR Abandon anew lovely Mt. Taygetos,<sup>205</sup>

O Spartan Muse! Come, to graciously

Hymn for us the god of Amyklai,<sup>206</sup>

Athena of the Bronze House<sup>207</sup>

1300 And the noble sons of Tyndareos,<sup>208</sup>

Who sport along the Eurotas.<sup>209</sup>

Step it up now,

Yes, jump ever so slightly!

Let's launch a hymn for Sparta,

1305 Where dances for gods

And the pounding of feet are cherished,

And where along the Eurotas

Young girls sway like fillies

Raising dust

1310 In a flurry of feet.

Their hair's flung 'round

1312-3 Like maenads playfully wielding their thyrsos.<sup>210</sup>

203. Hesychia, a personification of peace.

204. Aphrodite: cf. notes 93 and 95 above.

205. See note 39 above.

206. An important site of the worship of Apollo near Sparta.

207. Spartan cult of Athena, where she served as the citadel's protective goddess, much like Athena Polias (cf. notes 94 and 108 above) at Athens.

208. Castor and Pollux: see note 31 above.

209. A river passing through Sparta; Apollo's sanctuary at Amyklai was located on its banks.

210. A wand wreathed with ivy and topped with a pine cone, carried by reveling maenads (see note 200 above).

Leda's daughter<sup>211</sup> leads the way,

The pure and pleasing leader of the dance. 1315

Now come bind your hair back with your hands, 1316-7

Prance on your feet like a deer, and speed the dance with your  
shouts. 1318-9

Sing now of the all-victorious Goddess of the Bronze  
House!<sup>212</sup> (*all exit*) 1320-1

211. Helen, in myth the daughter of Leda (the wife of Tyndareos) and Zeus (appearing to Leda disguised as a swan), worshipped as a kind of tree goddess in Sparta. She also is the sister of the Dioscuri (see notes 31 and 208 above).

212. See note 208 above.