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*Acharnians* was first produced in February 425  
B.C. at the Lenaeon Dionysia and won first prize.

### THEME

The war with Sparta and Boeotia has been dragging on for six years. The countryside of Attica is a shambles and Athens itself is an overcrowded city in which plague has wreaked havoc. The Acharnians, inhabitants of a deme northwest of Athens whose land has been repeatedly ravaged, are thirsting for revenge. Aristophanes' comedy is a plea for peace, whose fruits and comforts are contrasted with the destitution, hardships, and stupidity of war.

### CHARACTERS

DICAEOPOLIS, a worthy citizen of Attica  
CRIER, a herald  
AMPHITHEUS, Dicaeopolis' envoy to Sparta  
SENIOR AMBASSADOR, ex-emissary to the King of Persia  
PSEUDO-ARTABAS, envoy from Persia  
THEORUS, envoy from King Sitalcus of Thrace  
DAUGHTER, of Dicaeopolis  
XANTHIAS, servant of Dicaeopolis  
SERVANT, of Euripides  
EURIPIDES, the tragic poet  
LAMACHUS, Athenian general

MEGARIAN, from Megara on the isthmus of Corinth  
 FIRST GIRL, daughter of the Megarian  
 SECOND GIRL, daughter of the Megarian  
 INFORMER, a Spartan spy  
 BOEOTIAN, salesman of farm produce  
 NICARCHUS, Spartan general  
 HERALD

DERCETES, farmer of Attica  
 BEST MAN, at the wedding of an Athenian soldier  
 FIRST MESSENGER, from Athenian High Command  
 SECOND MESSENGER, from Athenian High Command  
 THIRD MESSENGER, from Athenian High Command  
 CHORUS, old Acharnian charcoal burners

#### SILENT PARTS

DEPUTIES, of the Assembly on the Pnyx  
 ASSEMBLY MEMBERS, of the Athenian Council  
 ARCHER POLICE, Thracian bowmen  
 JUNIOR AMBASSADOR, another ex-emissary to the King of  
 Persia  
 TWO EUNUCHS, citizens of Athens  
 PLATOON, of Odomantian soldiers  
 WIFE, and women of Dicaeopolis' home  
 SERVANTS, of Dicaeopolis  
 SOLDIERS, with Lamachus  
 ISMENIAS, servant of the Boeotian  
 BAGPIPE PLAYERS, from Thebes  
 CHILDREN, of Dicaeopolis  
 PEACE, a transitory vision  
 THREE GRACES, accompanying Peace  
 BRIDESMAID, of Athenian war bride  
 TWO DANCING GIRLS, co-opted by Dicaeopolis

#### THE STORY

Dicaeopolis, an honest citizen of Athens, impatient with the ditherings of the Assembly, decides to go ahead and make peace on his own. But as he is about to celebrate the vintage festival and the return of peace, he is attacked by a group of Acharnian charcoal burners, who are furious at the ruin of their terrain and want the war to continue.

#### OBSERVATIONS

This is the third comedy that Aristophanes wrote and the first that we have. He was barely twenty when he wrote it, and like all poets (Shelley's "unacknowledged legislators of the world"), he goes to the heart of the matter and decries what can be expected of war, knowing very well that the only people to profit by it are the arms dealers.

#### TIME AND SETTING

It is early morning outside the Pnyx, the hill west of the Acropolis where the Assembly meets to decide issues of peace and war. DICAEOPOLIS walks up and down impatiently, waiting for the Assembly to open.

DICAEOPOLIS: *[with rambling thoughts]*

The things that have made me eat my heart out—  
 uncountable as the sands of the dunes . . .  
 and the things that have made my heart leap with joy—  
 not more than four . . . let's see . . .

There's that five talents  
 which the swine Cleon had to cough up, thanks to the  
 Knights.\* . . .

Ah, that was a brilliant stroke,  
 a performance worthy of Hellas! . . .

But another pang cancels my joy:

\*The Knights: an equestrian order. The nature of the incident is obscure.

*Life is  
 Mostly  
 Sadness?*

I was sitting in the theater all agog for an Aeschylus,  
when I heard the announcer call out:

"Theognis, bring on your play."\*

What a shock that gave my heart! Wouldn't it yours? . . .

But I had another happy moment  
when Dexitheus-of-the-calf<sup>†</sup> came on with his Boeotian songs. . . .

Oh, but this year I was stretched to the breaking point  
when that bore Chaeris<sup>‡</sup> sidled in to play his Orthian<sup>§</sup> piece. . . .

[He looks round, disappointed.]

Never since I first washed my face  
have my eyes so stung with soap as now. . . .

A day fixed for the Assembly  
and, come the dawn, not a soul on the Pnyx.

They're all nattering away in the market square  
and dodging the whips.<sup>¶</sup>

Not even the principals are here.

They'll arrive late, of course,  
elbowing one another, charging en masse,  
making a beeline for the front row—you've no idea.

As for being concerned with peace,  
they don't give a damn. . . . O City, my poor City!

Meanwhile, here am I,  
always first at the Assembly,  
in my seat and all forlorn.

I sigh, I fidget, I yawn.

I stretch my legs, I fart, I scribble notes,  
tug at my beard, do accounts,  
gazing fondly all the time towards the countryside,  
longing hopelessly for peace, loathing town and

\*In other words: your work is eligible for competition. Theognis was a tragic poet despised by Aristophanes.

<sup>†</sup>A lyre player who won a musical contest at the Pythian games. The "calf" tag remains a mystery.

<sup>‡</sup>A lyre and flute player often mocked for poor technique: cf. *Peace*, page 315.

<sup>§</sup>To do with the goddess Artemis.

<sup>¶</sup>Those coming late to the Assembly were given a red mark and fined.

References  
to  
poets,  
musicians

All  
Artemis  
doesn't  
care about  
peace!

- Good citizen!

homesick for my village.

where you don't hear cries of "Buy my charcoal,"  
"Buy my vinegar," "Buy my oil."

My village doesn't include the word "buy" in its vocabulary  
but simply produces all that's needed—  
with not a "buy" person in the offing.

Well, here I am, and darn well ready  
to shout and heckle and insult  
anyone who speaks of anything but peace.

[a buzz of noise]

Ah, here they come, the Deputies—at noon!  
What did I tell you—every man jack of them  
jostling for the front row just as I said!

[A throng of DEPUTIES and ASSEMBLY MEMBERS enters running and  
panting and heading for the best seats.]

CRIER: Move forward! Move into th' area reserved a' purpose!

[AMPHITHEUS bustles in.]

AMPHITHEUS: [breathless] Have the speeches begun?

CRIER: 'oo wishes to speak?

AMPHITHEUS: I do.

CRIER: 'oo are you?

AMPHITHEUS: Amphitheus.\*

CRIER: That don't sound like a 'uman being.

AMPHITHEUS:

It's not. I'm immortal.

Amphitheus the first was the son of Demeter and Triptolemus.  
His son Celeus married Phaenere, my grandmother,  
who bore Lycinus, who is my sire.

What's more, to me and me alone  
the gods have assigned the privilege

\**Amphitheus* means "divine from both parents."

They  
had  
all  
they  
needed

son of Gaia's  
primordial  
taught harvest  
by Demeter  
to  
humans  
connected  
w/ Mysteries

The gods sent this mission!  
 of negotiating peace with the Spartans.  
 Unfortunately, good sirs,  
 I haven't a bean for the journey.  
 The Deputies have turned it down.

Athens turns down peace w/ sparta?

CRIER: Police!

[The ARCHER POLICE seize AMPHITHEUS and bustle him away.]

AMPHITHEUS: Triptolemus, Celeus, help! Are you just going to look on?

DICAEOPOLIS: [springing to his feet]

Esteemed Deputies, it is utterly wrong  
 to have that man removed.

He only wanted to arrange a truce  
 and enable us to hang up our shields.

CRIER: Sit down an' shut up!

DICAEOPOLIS: By Apollo, that I will not,  
 unless you agree to discuss the peace.

[Amid a buzz of excitement the magnificently dressed SENIOR and JUNIOR AMBASSADORS arrive from the court of the Great King of Persia. They had been sent there from Athens eleven years previously.]\*

CRIER: It's them ambassadors back from the King.

DICAEOPOLIS: The King, my foot!

I'm fed up with ambassadors and their coxcomby  
 haughty-taughty way.

CRIER: Belt up!

DICAEOPOLIS: Yippee! Ecbatana† all in one!

SENIOR AMBASSADOR: You d-dispatched us to the Gr-Great King  
 on a salary of two d-drachmas a day  
 when Euthymenes was ar-archon.

DICAEOPOLIS: Don't I know it! Drachmas down the drain!

\*Both Athens and Sparta sought money from the Persian King, but old soldiers like DICAEOPOLIS would have despised him as a barbarian and as their onetime enemy. (Loeb)

†The capital of Media and summer home of the Great Kings of Persia, an El Dorado in the view of ordinary Athenians. (Loeb)

SENIOR AMBASSADOR: My d-dear, we were worn to sh-shreds,  
 proceeding over the Cay-Cay-ystrian plains under c-canopies  
 in our luxurious super-duper l-l-litters.

It was too—too frightfully t-trying.

DICAEOPOLIS: Wasn't it just! I was flopped out on the ramparts  
 in a different kind of litter. — pun

SENIOR AMBASSADOR: M-moreover, to p-please us they gave us  
 the very best vintage wine, n-near,  
 in g-goblets of crystal and g-gold. . . .

My dear, we simply h-had to d-drink it.

simply haaaad to . . .

DICAEOPOLIS: My poor Athens, how lightly they treat you,  
 these ambassadors!

SENIOR AMBASSADOR: B-Barbarians, m'dear, only consider real men  
 those that can g-g-gobble and swill. drink

DICAEOPOLIS: With us it's ~~g-g-gobble~~ and ~~swill~~.

SENIOR AMBASSADOR: It was not till the f-fourth year  
 that we got to the Great King's p-palace,

but he, m'dear, had g-gone off with the army to r-relieve himself  
 and stayed for eight months sh-shitting in the Golden Hills.

DICAEOPOLIS: And was it full moon when he finally closed his ~~hole~~ hole?

SENIOR AMBASSADOR: Then he l-left for home  
 and threw a tremendous b-beano:

a whole ox, m'dear, *en pot-au-feu*! \*goulash

DICAEOPOLIS: Don't be silly!

Who's ever seen an ox *en pot-au-feu*?

SENIOR AMBASSADOR: Yes, by Zeus! And once he s-served an  
 enormous b-bird

three times bigger than fat Cleonymus†—called a g-gull. punny

DICAEOPOLIS: Naturally! It g-gulled us out of all those drachmas.

SENIOR AMBASSADOR: W-we introduce to you now Pseudo-Artabas,  
 the G-Great King's Eye.

DICAEOPOLIS: If only a crow would peck out yours, Mr. Ambassador!

CRIER: [with a flourish] The Great King's Eye!

\*Goulash. The SENIOR AMBASSADOR, who is a snob, uses the French.

†A political crony of Cleon's ridiculed by comic poets as a fat glutton, a coward, and a shield thrower; the latter charge (unique in comedy) evidently refers to Cleonymus' behavior in the Athenian retreat at Delium in 424 B.C., when his corpulence made him conspicuous and thus a suitable scapegoat. (Loeb)

Ambassadors "hardly suffered"

Heated well but acts like a drachma!

[PSEUDO-ARTABAS enters. He is grandly dressed but wears an eye patch over one eye. With him are TWO EUNUCHS.]

*(castrated in camp works)*

DICAEOPOLIS: Ye gods and Lord Heracles!

Man, you look like a battleship rounding the quay in search of a berth. . . . What's under that eye?

SENIOR AMBASSADOR: T-tell the Athenians, Pseudo-Artabas, w-what the Great King sent you to s-say.

PSEUDO-ARTABAS: *Parta namè xaxxana satra.*

SENIOR AMBASSADOR: Y-you understood him?

DICAEOPOLIS: No, by Apollo, I did not.

SENIOR AMBASSADOR: He says the K-King is going to send you g-gold.

[to PSEUDO-ARTABAS] Louder and clearer, please, about the gold.

PSEUDO-ARTABAS: [*distinctly*] Getting gold, no! Greeks ~~holes!~~

DICAEOPOLIS: Wow, that's pretty clear!

SENIOR AMBASSADOR: W-what is he saying?

DICAEOPOLIS: That the Greeks are gaping ~~holes~~ if they expect gold from the Barbarians.

SENIOR AMBASSADOR: N-n-no! He means bucketfuls of gold.

DICAEOPOLIS: Bucketfuls, my eye! Off with you, you damn fraud! I'll do the questioning myself.

[*The disconcerted SENIOR and JUNIOR AMBASSADORS leave and DICAEOPOLIS mounts the rostrum.*]

DICAEOPOLIS: [*shaking his stick at PSEUDO-ARTABAS*]

See here, fellow: answer yes or no, or I'll ruddy you with this and you won't need Sardian dye.\* Does the Great King really intend to send us gold?

[PSEUDO-ARTABAS and the TWO EUNUCHS shake their heads.]

So our ambassadors are hoodwinking us?

\*Sardian dye was one of the many items of luxury exported from the city of Sardis, the capital of the kingdom of Lydia in western Asia Minor.

[*They nod vigorously.*]

How very Greek, the way these eunuchs nod! They come from hereabouts most likely.

[*stepping closer*]

Why, this eunuch's none other than Cleisthenes\* *funder of democracy* dainty manner  
son of Siburtius. . . . You, you monkey of a mincing sissy! You horny hotted-up ~~hole~~ shaver!

You come here all togged up as a eunuch?

And this other bugger? . . . Why, it's Strato! *his lover*

CRIER: Sit down an' 'old yer tongue!

The Council's asked this 'ere King's Eye to the Banquet 'all.

[PSEUDO-ARTABAS and the TWO EUNUCHS leave.]

DICAEOPOLIS:

That's a sodding throtter!

Here am I dawdling, left in the lurch, while for those other creatures the doors of the Banquet Hall yawn in everlasting welcome.

All right, then!

I'm going to take a giant step.

Amphitheus, where are you?

AMPHITHEUS: Right here, sir.

DICAEOPOLIS: Do this for me, will you?

Take these eight drachmas and go and hatch a private truce with Sparta: just for me, my siblings, and my wife.

*Dicaeopolis gets his own peace*

[*to the audience*]

The rest of you can go on with your gawping embassies.

*(Screw everyone else!)*

\*Cleisthenes is ridiculed elsewhere as a beardless effeminate, and Strato as his lover.

*Persia won't pay*

[AMPHITHEUS *leaves.*]

CRIER: Attention! 'ere's Theorus, come from King Sitalces.\*

[THEORUS *enters.*]

THEORUS: Here I am!

DICAEOPOLIS: O Lord, another sham!

THEORUS: We wouldn't have lingered so long in Thrace if . . .

DICAEOPOLIS: By Zeus, you wouldn't have if . . .

it weren't for the whacking pay you were getting. *-wasted funds*

THEORUS: . . . if the whole of Thrace hadn't been locked in snow and the rivers frozen solid.

DICAEOPOLIS: Whilst here we were frozen solid by Theognis' play.†

THEORUS:

I at the time was drinking with King Sitalces.

What an admirer of Athens he is, a real Athenophile!

We made his son an honorary citizen, and then the boy could hardly wait to eat the sausages when the celebrations began.

He begged his father to support his adopted country, and his father, amid floods of wine, promised to send such a horde of help it would make the Athenians yelp:

"Holy mackerel! A locust swarm is on us!"

DICAEOPOLIS: I'm jiggered if I believe a word of what you say, except about the locusts.

THEORUS: And now Sitalces sends you *Thrace sends help?* the most pugnacious tribe in Thrace.

DICAEOPOLIS: [*eyeing a ruffian. PLATOON of Odomantian soldiers in kilts*]

I can see that!

CRIER: 'ey, you Thracian lot what Theorus brought, step forward.

\*The King of the Odrysai in Thrace, who had aided the Athenians in an abortive invasion of Macedonia four years earlier. (Loeb)

†A tragic poet whom Aristophanes despised. His compositions were said to be so lifeless and uninspired that he was called Chion ("Snow").

[*The Thracians advance.*]

DICAEOPOLIS: What on frigging earth . . . ?

THEORUS: The Odomantian Guards, sir.\*

DICAEOPOLIS: [*lifting the kilt of one of the Guards*]

Don't tell me these men are Odomantians!

Who's been docking their † *Not brecks!*

THEORUS: Give them pay of two drachmas a day

and they'll flatten the whole of Boeotia.‡ *> scam*

DICAEOPOLIS:

Two drachmas a day for these mutilated pricks?

The sailors who man the ships that keep our city safe would be appalled.

*They steal his lunch*  
[*The Odomantians charge DICAEOPOLIS and snatch his bag.*]

Hey, knock it off! My garlic's in that.

Odomantians, drop my garlic!

THEORUS: Cool it, sir! I wouldn't mess with Odomantians once they've had a spot of garlic.

DICAEOPOLIS:

You Deputies out there, didn't you see what happened—how I'm treated in my own country and by Barbarians at that?

I insist that the Assembly turns down all question of pay for the Thracians.

Indeed, I've just had a sign from heaven—a raindrop.§ *Assembly would dismiss*

\*The Odomantian tribe in Thrace lived on the eastern banks of the river Stryman, which separated Thrace from Macedonia.

†The Greeks were uncircumcised. The Odomantians, being Thracian Greeks, would also be uncircumcised. The fact that these guards are revealed as circumcised makes DICAEOPOLIS suspect that they are not genuine. As to lifting a kilt, this on the Attic stage would not have been necessary. Their long circumcised phalli would have been in full view.

‡Boeotia is pronounced *Bee-o-sha*.

§Meaning that this outdoor Assembly should be immediately adjourned, and the question of pay for the Thracians thereby scrambled.

*Athens wasting time & money in Persia and Thrace*

CRIER: Them Thracians can go but 'ave to come back in two days' time.

The Deputies 'ave declared the Assembly dissolved.

[*Everyone leaves except DICAEPOLIS.*]

DICAEPOLIS: Drat it, my salad's been ruined! - *No lunch*  
But here comes Amphytheus back from Sparta.

[*AMPHITHEUS comes running in.*]

Good day, Amphytheus!

AMPHITHEUS: Not at all good! . . . Sorry, can't stop:  
the Acharnians are after me . . . got to get clear.

DICAEPOLIS: What's up?

AMPHITHEUS:

I was hurrying back here with a load of truces,  
when some Acharnian veterans got to hear of it.

They're tough old blighters:  
hard as oak or maple—they fought at Marathon.\*

They started shouting: "Traitor, you dare bring treaties  
when our vines are being hacked to pieces?"

That's when I bolted,  
and they came after me—yelling.

DICAEPOLIS: Let them yell. . . You've got the pledges?†

AMPHITHEUS: I have indeed. There's a choice of three.

This one matures in five years—have a sip?

DICAEPOLIS: Shit!

AMPHITHEUS: What's wrong?

\*A plain between the mountains and the sea about twenty-two miles northeast of Athens, the scene of the defeat of the invading Persians by Miltiades in 490 B.C. This was the occasion when the Athenian runner Phidippides, sent to get help from Sparta, covered the distance of 150 miles in two days.

†"Pledges" is the nearest I can get to the Greek *spondai*, which means both "treaty" and "the pouring of a libation to celebrate it."

DICAEPOLIS: This one's horrible:

smells of tar and caulking for men-of-war.\*

AMPHITHEUS: Try this one. It's good for ten years.

DICAEPOLIS: This one stinks too—a vinegary smell  
like squeezed allies.† - *reference to Mytilene*

AMPHITHEUS: Well, here we have a pledge to last thirty years  
over land and sea.

DICAEPOLIS:

Sweet Dionysus! This one has a bouquet  
of nectar and ambrosia,  
and of not having to hear: "Your three days' rations, mate."

This one says to my mouth:

"Go wherever you please."

Yes, I'll take this one,  
I'll pour it out and drain it to the dregs,  
and I'll say to the Acharnians:

"To hell with you! Goodbye!"

AMPHITHEUS: Well, the Acharnians are here. . . I'm off.

[*The sounds of the approaching CHORUS of veterans can be heard as AMPHITHEUS hurries away.*]

DICAEPOLIS: As for me, I'm rid of war and destitution;

I'm off to live it up at the Country Dionysia.

[*DICAEPOLIS removes himself as the angry old men of the CHORUS march in.*]

### STROPHE

LEADER:

This way, everyone, go after him and ask  
All-and-sundry where the blighter is. We'll whisk

\*Pitch was used to caulk ships and flavor inferior wines; retsina is still a popular table wine in Greece. (Loeb)

†Athens dominated the confederacy of Greek city-states and severely punished those who tried to break away. For instance, when Mytilene on the island of Lesbos revolted in 428 B.C., during the Peloponnesian War, the ringleaders were put to death and the island put under the control of Athenian officials.

Him away. O what a triumph for our town!  
 If any of you has an inkling where the fellow  
 Is heading with the truces,  
 Tell us.

CHORUS:

He's fled, he's got away, and O  
 Cursed be these legs of mine!  
 Never in my younger days  
 Would he have got away,  
 Nor needed I excuses  
 When I could hoist a sack of coal,  
 Or come in second after Phayllus.<sup>\*</sup>  
 It would have been no use  
 To this slippery bearer of truce:  
 None at all.

## ANTISTROPHE

LEADER:

*vex* But now because of my arthritic limbs and old  
 Lacrateides'† wobbly legs, the man has flown,  
 Got clean away. It's up to us to go after  
 Him. The fellow musn't brag he diddled us  
 Acharnians, however  
 Old we are.

CHORUS:

No matter who he is, O Father  
 Zeus and all you deities,  
 The fellow has contrived a truce  
 With our enemies  
 And I will fight with fervor  
 To defend my lands, and shall not cease  
 Till with a stake slim as a reed

\*This famous athlete from Croton in southern Italy commanded a ship at the battle of Salamis in 480 B.C. (Loeb)

†A leading veteran but the reference is obscure.

I pierce them to the hilt,  
 So they'll learn never again  
 To trample my vines.

LEADER:

We've simply got to search for the man  
 And hunt him from land to land  
 And pelt him when we've found  
 Him, with every stone at hand.

DICAEOPOLIS: [*from within*] Silence! Holy silence, please!

LEADER:

Men, be quiet, all of you.  
 Didn't you hear a call for silence?  
 I think this is the man we're after.  
 Stand ready, everyone.  
 He's coming out to sacrifice.

DICAEOPOLIS: [*emerging*] Silence! Holy silence, please!

[DICAEOPOLIS comes out of the house with his WIFE and DAUGHTER and two SERVANTS carrying a large ceremonial phallus.]

DICAEOPOLIS: Basket carrier, step to the front.

Xanthias, hold that phallus up erect. . . .

Now, daughter, lay the basket down and I'll begin.

DAUGHTER: Mother, hand me the spoon for the sauce  
 and I'll ladle some sauce over the cake.

DICAEOPOLIS: Okeydokey, here goes!

Hail, Dionysus. Lord, may you find  
 this ritual and sacrifice full of grace,  
 and may I and my family celebrate  
 the Country Dionysia full of happiness  
 seeing that at last I'm free  
 from all that nasty campaign stress.

So let the truce of Thirty Years of Peace  
 be a success. . . .

Now, my sweet daughter, carry that basket sweetly

*Aw - it's to  
 be old  
 athlete who commanded  
 a ship at Salamis  
 old  
 men  
 can no  
 longer  
 fight  
 (supporters  
 of  
 war?)*



with your sweetest smile—

Oh what a lucky dog he's going to be who weds you  
and gets on you a litter of small  
~~as~~ as cute and pretty as you  
and smelling as sweet as dawn.

Now, onwards, all of you,  
but in the crowds let me warn *pickpockets in Athens?*  
you against pickpockets who sneak up and steal  
your jewels. . . . Now you and Xanthias  
walk behind the basket bearer, keeping the phallus  
erect, and I'll bring up the rear  
to sing the ode to the phallus; and you, wifey dear,  
can watch me from the roof up there. . . . Proceed.

*Stay home, woman*

[DICAEOPOLIS spreads his hands dramatically and delivers the following  
verses in a kind of chant.]

Phales,\* comrade of Bacchus, pal  
Of his orgies, prowler at night, lover  
Of girls and boys, a shedder  
Of seed, six years have passed and now  
I am returning home  
Joyously since I

Have made a peace all of my own,  
Saving you from turmoil and war,  
Not to mention Lamachus.† *general*

But, Phallus, O Phales,  
It's infinitely nicer  
To grab a young girl in the bud  
As she is collecting wood—

That Thracian wench perhaps, from the back of beyond—  
To squeeze her by the middle,  
Throw her to the ground  
And crack her kernel.

\* A personification of the phallus: the symbol of fertility and the fruitfulness of the earth, associated with Dionysus the god of fertility.

† A formidable Athenian general.

*8 years  
of  
war  
can't side  
emptied*

*Celebrating  
peace*

CHORUS:

It's him, it's him, the man, it's him!  
Stone him, stone him, stone him, stone him!  
Give it to him thick and thin!  
Got a stone there? Got a stone?

DICAEOPOLIS: Great Heracles! What's going on? You'll break my  
pot.

CHORUS: It's you we'll break, you horrid deadhead!

DICAEOPOLIS: You venerable dodderers—for what?

CHORUS:

What a question to ask,  
You filthy rat, you cursed  
Betrayer of your people!  
The only one in our midst  
To settle

A separate peace:

You dare look me in the face?

DICAEOPOLIS: Oughtn't you first to know my reasons? Listen.

CHORUS: Listen to you? You're finished, and we'll flatten  
you under heaps of stone.

DICAEOPOLIS: Not before you've heard me, please!  
Forbear, good people, I appeal.

CHORUS:

Forbear, I'll not,

Nor do we want a spiel. *pro war*

I hate you even more than Cleon,\*

Whom I intend to cut up as leather for shoes

For the noble knights to use.

LEADER: I'm not going to listen to lengthy speeches  
from one who goes in for making truces  
with the Spartans, so what I'll do  
is just punish you.

\* Cleon, of course, being of the war party, would have supported the war party, but for the moment Aristophanes puts his hatred of Cleon, whose trade was leather, into the mouths of the CHORUS, and at the same time advertises his next play: *Knights*.

*traitors  
to have  
peace!  
+ treason!*

DICAEOPOLIS: Good gentlemen, let's forget the Spartans just for now and concentrate on the truce I made.

Was I right to make it, anyhow? — *was he?*

LEADER: How can you possibly ask if it's right to deal with people who don't abide by any altar, faith, or oath?

DICAEOPOLIS: All I know is that the Spartans, whom we so loathe, are not the only reason for our woes. — *they are not totally to blame.*

LEADER: Not the only? You friggling heel, you have the gall to say this to my face and think we're going to spare you?

DICAEOPOLIS: Not the only reason, I repeat: not the only. In fact, with a little dissertation I could show you how in many ways the Spartans are the wronged party. *whoa*

LEADER: What a truly awful thing to say!

A brazen exculpation of our enemy—  
enough to cause a heart attack.

DICAEOPOLIS: Very well, if what I say doesn't seem right and true to all the people I'm ready to speak with my head on the butcher's block.

LEADER: Fellow demesmen, why do we delay?

Why don't we flay the rascal  
till he's as red as a Spartan cloak?\*

DICAEOPOLIS: Ah, sons of Acharneus, that was a spark that flared up in you then, but won't you listen? Please, just listen?

LEADER: Listen, we shall not.

DICAEOPOLIS: Then I'll be hurt.

LEADER: I would rather die.

DICAEOPOLIS: Acharnians, don't say that!

LEADER: You're the one that's going to die—immediately.

DICAEOPOLIS:

In that case I'll sting and murder in return:  
yes, the most loved ones of your loves—and presently.  
They're hostages. Let me go and get them  
and cut their throats. *charcoal*

\*The Spartans on campaign wore scarlet cloaks.

[DICAEOPOLIS goes inside.]

LEADER: Comrade Acharnians, what does he mean by these threats? Is there someone locked up in his home? Otherwise, why is he so sassy? *LOL*

[DICAEOPOLIS comes out with a large knife and a basket of charcoal.]

DICAEOPOLIS: So go ahead and stone me and I'll slaughter these, and I'll soon see which of you is fussy about the way your blessed coal behaves.

LEADER: No, no, it'll be the end of us. That basket of charcoal is from my home. Don't do it. Oh please don't! *— sentimental about something from home!*

DICAEOPOLIS: Yowl away and make a fuss, but kill I will.

LEADER: You'd kill me, too—the lover of charcoal?

DICAEOPOLIS: When I pleaded a moment ago you were dumb.

CHORUS: All right, mean what you meant:

⊙ That the Spartan is your friend.  
This wee basket I'll not desert.

DICAEOPOLIS: First empty those stones onto the ground.

LEADER: See, they're on the ground, so put your weapon down.

DICAEOPOLIS: Sure no stones are tucked away inside your gown?

CHORUS:

Look, it's shaken down to the ground.  
Can't you see it's shaken down?  
No going back on what you said.  
Just put that sword of yours to bed.  
Look, I'm whirling round and round. *physical humor*

DICAEOPOLIS:

How ready you were just now to shake me with your shouts when some Parnesian\* charcoals all but died just because their demesmen went berserk.

My basket in a panic, like a squid,  
squirted me with charcoal dust. How sad that any should succumb to suchlike fits

\*That is, from Mount Parnes, near which the Acharnians collected the wood to make their charcoal.

of bitterness, hurl stones and bark  
and refuse to listen to anything I say for Sparta,  
even though I'm ready to put my head on the chopping block;  
and I'm a man who'd rather keep his life instead.

CHORUS:

Then go ahead, you difficult man, and put the block  
outside your door and give us the speech we're waiting for.  
Whatever is on your mind, I can hardly wait to hear.

LEADER: Yes, bring the block out here—the whole thing's your idea  
and just the way you want it—then begin your speech.

[DICAEPOLIS goes into the house and comes out with a butcher block.]

DICAEPOLIS:

So here is the man and there is the butcher block,  
and this is where he's primed himself to make his pitch.  
Don't be nervous. I'm unarmed, I swear, and speak  
just to put the Spartan case as best I may.

But I am nervous, all the same. I know the way  
country folk respond: how easy it is to con  
them with flattery of themselves or of their city,  
whether true or not and however shitty.

Of which they're completely unaware. I know  
too how the old ones think and want to sting  
by how they vote. And I know how I got stung  
by how they vote. And I know how I got stung  
by how they vote. And I know how I got stung

last year by Cleon because of my comedy,\*

when he had me hauled before the Council and blew  
his top off, slandering, lying, lashing, roaring—exactly  
like the river Cycloborus flooding—as he drenched me  
in abuse until I was all but annihilated  
by a sickly-slimy-sewery slush† of smearable hatred.

\*The comedy was *Babylonians* (lost), which won first prize at the Dionysia in 426 B.C. In it Aristophanes apparently attacked Cleon personally, and Cleon responded by trying to have Aristophanes indicted on the charge that he had slandered the people of Athens in the presence of foreigners and that he was not a born Athenian. The Council dismissed the charges.

†Aristophanes coins the word *molunopragmonoumenos*.

waw! cool word!

Well now, before I launch into my apologia,  
Allow me, please, to dress up in pathetic gear.

CHORUS: What are all these clever delaying tactics?

For all I care, you can go and get yourself a wig  
from Hieronymus,\* a shaggy, unkempt camouflage.

LEADER: Let's get to the bottom of your Sisyphian tricks.†

There's no excuse for any delay—not one bit.

DICAEPOLIS: The time has come to show a stalwart heart at large.  
I'll call on Euripides.

\* [He walks to the door of EURIPIDES' house and knocks.]

Boy! Boy!

SERVANT: Who is it?

DICAEPOLIS: Is Euripides in, please?

SERVANT: He's in, yet not in. . . . If you get my meaning.

DICAEPOLIS: How can he be in, yet not in?

SERVANT: Quite easily, old sir.

His mind's outside collecting verses, so his mind's not in  
but the man himself is inside, though in the air,  
working on tragedies.

DICAEPOLIS: Thrice-fortunate Euripides,  
having a servant who knows exactly where you are!

Call him out.

SERVANT: I can't.

DICAEPOLIS: Don't be silly! [EURIPIDES' SERVANT slams the door.]

Well, I'm not going. I'll keep knocking.

Euripides, dear Euripides, won't you listen?

Listen now if you've ever listened to anyone.

It's Dicaeopolis of Cholleidai‡ calling.

EURIPIDES: [from a window] I'm busy.

DICAEPOLIS: Just get yourself wheeled out.

EURIPIDES: I can't.

\*A long-haired tragic poet.

†Sisyphus was a legendary king of Corinth and reputedly the most cunning man on earth. For his misdeeds, he was condemned to spend eternity rolling uphill a heavy rock, which then rolled down again.

‡A village or deme not far from the Acharnians'.

SKIP P 23-27  
Euripides  
Scene

Expelled from here when I don't have nearly enough  
of the props I need for putting on a needy and pathetic show  
of being down to the dregs.

Euripides, give me a little basket  
with a lamp shining through it.

EURIPIDES: What d'you want a basket for, you bozo?

DICAEOPOLIS: I simply don't know  
but I'd like to have it.

EURIPIDES: You're being a nuisance. Please leave my house.

DICAEOPOLIS: More's the pity. . . . But God bless you and your mother.

EURIPIDES: Go, please!

DICAEOPOLIS: One other

thing: give me a little cup with a chipped rim.

EURIPIDES: Here, take this, and to hell with you.

You're an absolute pest, you bum.

DICAEOPOLIS: Zeus be my witness, you still don't know  
how much you'll miss me.

But, Euripides, sweetie pie,  
just hand me that little bottle plugged with a sponge.

EURIPIDES: Fella, you're filching my entire repertoire.

DICAEOPOLIS:

Hold on, what am I doing?

There's still an item I haven't got,  
which if I haven't got I'm lost.

Listen, Euripides, you gooey darling,  
once I've got it I'll be off and never bother you again:  
some withered leaves for my little basket.

EURIPIDES: Here you are, but you're doing me in: my plays have  
gone.

DICAEOPOLIS: [*pretending to leave*]

Enough! I'm really going. I'm such a nuisance, I know,  
though I never thought the grand protagonists would hate me  
so. . . .\*

Hang on, I'm buggered! I've forgotten one essential thing  
on which depends—everything.

\*The line, in tragic style, is probably taken from *Telephus*, a lost play of Euripides. (Loeb)

O sweetest, dearest Euripideekins,  
may I die the death if I ask anything of you again:  
but just one thing, one teeny-weeny item—  
some chervil from your mother's stall.

EURIPIDES: The man's beyond the pale. . . . Batten down my home.

[EURIPIDES is wheeled away.]

DICAEOPOLIS:

Brave heart, albeit chervilless, march forth  
and concentrate upon the coming challenge  
when you put the case for our Spartan enemies.

Onward, my soul! You know your range.

Why are you hanging back?

You should be full of go and faith  
after that quaff of Euripides.

Coraggio! Be a brick,  
my silly heart, and get me to where  
I have to lose my noodle, but not until  
I've made clear my whole position.

Get moving then, be strong. . . .

O heart, well done!

CHORUS:

What will you do and what will you say?

Do you see

What a man of iron you are?

You have no common sense at all,

Insisting on speaking, opposing us all:

Without a quaver

Offering your neck to the town—very well,

Speak as you will.

DICAEOPOLIS:

Friends, I trust that none of you spectators  
will think ill of me dressed up as a beggar  
and having the nerve to address the Athenian people  
in a comedy, but even comedy writers  
can tell the truth, and the truth that I'll relate  
is shocking but it is the truth. Moreover,

re-start



without herb  
he wants

Be  
brave!



Truth  
in  
satire!

this time Cleon no way can accuse me of blackening the city's name when foreigners are present; there are none here today: we are on our own at the Lenaeon competitions and no news arrives of troops from the city-states, nor of the officials who handle the rates of contributions;\* we are on our own. And if I may call our resident aliens bran we are at present winnowed from the chaff. So let me tell you bluntly, I abhor the Spartans, and I couldn't rejoice enough if Poseidon of Taenarum† sent a quake and shook their houses to the core. For I, like you, have had my vineyards rent. Nonetheless, since only friends are here listening to me, let me ask you: are we to blame the Spartans for everything? Some of our own people here—I'm not saying the city; please remember that—I do not say the city but a gang of spurious obnoxious hooligans who kept denouncing the Megarians for importing jackets without paying the tax. If they saw a cucumber or a rabbit, a piglet, clove of garlic, lump of salt, "Megarian!" they'd shout and confiscate the lot, then sell it off at a knockdown price—typical and trivial of us but the facts. And then a bunch of tipsy cottabus-throwing jobs‡

January? smaller festival

he can't take me to court again!

Before Spring!

I do hate sparta

they've ruined me, too.

Gang who denounces Megarians - Steals lawers' prices

Informer's

\*Tribute payments from Athens' subject allies were presented at the Greater Dionysia in the spring, when allied troops would be mustered for the campaign season. (Loeb)

†Taenarum was a promontory at the most southwesterly tip of Sparta, the most southerly point of Europe, where Poseidon had a temple.

‡The little we know about cottabus makes it sound extremely silly. According to H. G. Liddell and R. Scott's *Greek-English Lexicon*, cottabus was "a Sicilian game, much in vogue at the drinking parties of young men at Athens. The simplest

rollicks off to Megara and grabs Simaetha the courtesan;\* then you Megarians, to even the odds, with garlic in your blood abduct two of Aspasia's† tarts. So all it takes to be the cause of plunging the whole of Hellas into wars are three whores.

3 whores cause war?

Unjust cause of war

Then Pericles, from Olympian heights, rolling out his thunder and his lights, stirred up the whole of Greece with laws that sounded just like drinking songs: "Depart, Megarians, from earth and sea, depart; even from the mart, I say, depart."

- mocks his greatness

The poor ravenous Megarians then betook themselves to Sparta, thinking them somehow able to get the decree of the three slurs repealed. And the Spartans actually asked several times for this, but we refused. That is how the clash of shields began. It shouldn't have, someone'll say. Then tell me, what should the Spartans have done? Let's suppose some Spartan makes a deal: gets hold of a puppy from Seriphus‡ imported in a dinghy over the sea; says it's a miserable cur but sells it, would you just sit at home and keep mum?§

Megaron decree of course sparta had to respond, Athens would, too!

Sparta's demands

metaphor from Trojan war

mode was when each threw the wine left in his cup smartly into a metal basin; if all fell inside the basin and the sound was clear, it was a favourable sign. The game was played in various ways."

\* Reputedly the lover of Alcibiades (the "golden boy").

† Aspasia was the partner of Pericles. Rumor had it that she organized his affairs with other women, even that she trained prostitutes.

‡ An insignificant island in the Cyclades and an insignificant ally of Athens.

§ The point of DICAEOPOLIS' argument seems to be that Telephus, wounded by Achilles and told by an oracle that rust from Achilles' spear would heal him, did not disdain from approaching Achilles, though Achilles was a Greek and he was a Trojan. Similarly, the Athenians shouldn't expect the Spartans, who supported

No, you would make an awful fuss:  
launch three hundred ships of war, I bet.

And the city would be raucous with the shouts  
of soldiers; sailors milling round their skippers;  
pay disbursed; figureheads of Pallas  
gilded; hubbub in the Colonnade;  
rations meted out, wineskins filled,  
oarlocks checked, people buying jars  
of garlic, olives, netted onions, flowers;  
flute girls and . . . black eyes.

The dockyard'd be alive with the sound of oars  
being planed, pegs hammered, row ports drilled,  
bosuns whistling, horns tooting, strains  
of pipes playing . . . you would have had the lot.  
So should we think that Telephus would not?

Then we're quite devoid of brains.

[The CHORUS splits in two, each with its own LEADER.]

FIRST LEADER: So you say, you absolute scum, you villain!

How dare you, a miserable beggar, whine  
at us because we have informers in our midst?

SECOND LEADER: Holy Poseidon! The man is absolutely right.

There's not a single thing he's missed.

FIRST LEADER: Even so, who gave him leave to say it?

He'll regret he delivered that palaver.

[FIRST LEADER leaps up and makes for DICAEPOLIS.]

SECOND LEADER: Hey, what are you doing? Stay where you are.

If you touch that man you're going to be hanged.

the Megarians, not to respond vigorously to what the Athenians did to them in the marketplace. The whole picture, of course, is a metaphor for the cause of the Peloponnesian War.

[The two CHORUSES advance on each other and in struggle the SECOND CHORUS comes off best.] will win

FIRST CHORUS:

O General Lamachus,\* lightning banger,  
Come to our aid in your waving feathers:  
General Lamachus, friend and fella  
Clansman, or any storm trooper near,  
Or military man: come if you can  
And rescue us. It would be nice,  
And on the dot. I'm in a vise.

[LAMACHUS in full battle dress appears with a platoon of SOLDIERS.]

LAMACHUS: What's all this battle din about?

Charge! But in what direction?

Ballyhoo! Ballyhoo! Who woke my Gorgon?<sup>†</sup> my shield

DICAEPOLIS: O General Lamachus, my champion!

What flying plumes! What platoons! - mocking

FIRST LEADER: Lamachus, you ought to know this hothead  
has been ranting against our State.

LAMACHUS: Has he, indeed?

Wretch of a beggar, how dare you!

DICAEPOLIS: {eating humble pie}

Oh, General Lamachus, my hero, don't be irate  
if I said something out of place.

LAMACHUS: About me? What?

Speak up, man.

DICAEPOLIS: I don't think I can.

I come over all dizzy at the sight of armor. you're just too much!

\*Lamachus was the intrepid Athenian general killed in 414 B.C. at the siege of Syracuse.

†The snake-headed Gorgon, Medusa, depicted on the shield.

[pointing at the snake-haired Medusa on LAMACHUS' shield]

Please remove that horrible face.

LAMACHUS: [covering his shield with his scarlet cloak]

That better?

DICAEOPOLIS: Put it upside down.

LAMACHUS: There you are.

DICAEOPOLIS: Now give me a helmet feather or two.

LAMACHUS: Here's a cluster.

DICAEOPOLIS: Now hold my head while I puke.

Helmet crests make me go all queer.

LAMACHUS: Hey, you're not going to vomit on my feathers, are you?

DICAEOPOLIS: What bird are they from? A greater bragtale?

LAMACHUS: Now you're done for!

DICAEOPOLIS: Lamachus, what the heck!

I know you're very strong, but strength isn't the point—though with all your armory you could certainly dock my you-know-what.

LAMACHUS: You creep! A beggar giving lip to a general!

DICAEOPOLIS: Me, a beggar?

LAMACHUS: Aren't you? . . . Well?

DICAEOPOLIS: Aren't I? I'm an honest citizen, I grant, <sup>he profits</sup> not a social climber, and since the war <sup>he profits</sup> a simple soldier, not a profiteer. <sup>he profits</sup> whereas you since the war began have been a well-paid cipher.

LAMACHUS: I was appointed, you know.

DICAEOPOLIS: Yes, by three cuckoos. . . . That's what made me spew and fix up a truce when I saw old graybeards in the ranks drawing no pay, while young men like you were getting three drachmas a day—for being hunks: some on the shores of Thrace, like Horsey-faced Phainippus or Codswallop Hipparchides, and some with Mister-nice Chares.

Others went to Chaeonia (Pie-in-the-Skyia), like Geretheodoros (God's-favorite Dodderer) a phony from Diomeia (Blasphemia),

and still others to Giggleton, Grincity, and Defunctia.\*

LAMACHUS: All by appointment.

DICAEOPOLIS: Yes, and all drawing pay, whereas the rest of you wherever you are never get any.

[turning to CHORUS]

Tell me, Emberson,<sup>†</sup> graybeard though you are, Have you ever served on embassies?

What, never? Never, he says, though he's steady and able-bodied.

And you, Barbecue, Father Bird, and Oakenhearted, has any one of you had a glimpse of Ecbatana or the natives of Chaonia?<sup>‡</sup>

What, never?

But Coisyra's<sup>§</sup> son has, and so has Lamachus, despite the fact that only yesterday, because of their unpaid bills and dues, their friends were advising them to keep out of reach—as if they had to dodge slops from open windows.

LAMACHUS: Democracy! Democracy! This is too much!

DICAEOPOLIS: Not as long as Lamachus gets his pay!

LAMACHUS: That's it then!

I'll damn well go after Spartans with ships and men—might and main.

[LAMACHUS marches off with his SOLDIERS.]

DICAEOPOLIS: And I for my part announce free trade between me and all Spartans, Megarians, and Boeotians—but not Lamachus.

\*Names reflecting the Greek *Gela*, *Catagela*, and *Camarina*.

<sup>†</sup>This and the following names are as near as I can get to Aristophanes' Marilades, Anthracyllus, Euphorides, and Prinides—all punning on the fact that the Acharnians were charcoal burners.

<sup>‡</sup>A mountainous region between Macedonia and Greece.

<sup>§</sup>An extravagant and aristocratic women.

nepotism

reminds Acharnians of pay

who is the war beneficiary

unequal pay

Rewards of Empire not distributed equally

(contrast w/ Pericles speech)

[DICAEPOLIS *retires.*]LEADER: [*speaking in the name of Aristophanes for the Parabasis*]

The man has excelled and changed the people's  
minds on the peace.

Let's roll up our sleeves and tackle the anapests.\*  
 Never till now

Since your Producer first began writing  
 comedies, has he

Come forward and boasted to you the spectators  
 that he was clever,

But now that there're those who have charged him before  
 you the Athenians

(Who jump to conclusions) of wanting to sneer  
 at city and people,

He'd like to petition you the Athenians  
 to unjump conclusions.

Our poet insists that he really deserves  
your accolade

For having prevented your being hoodwinked  
 by foreigners' twaddle

And being seduced by flattery till you  
 are resident inmates

Of insanity city. Before he did that  
 what happened was this:

The allied ambassadors out to deceive you  
 began to salute you

As "violet-crowned," and that crown soon had you  
 sitting all pretty.

If anyone came gushing and saying,  
 "O dazzling Athens!"

That "dazzling" which was perfectly suited  
 for a school of sardines,

Would get him the best of everything.  
 For telling you this,

*Aristophanes  
 wants to  
 educate you -  
 save you!*

\*The Parabasis was composed in anapests. As may be noted above, the anapest ("^-") and the dactyl ("-^") are interchangeable.

Your poet has brought you lavish rewards,  
 and also by giving

A good demonstration of how the allied  
States "democratically" *irony*

Get to be managed. That is the reason  
 the allied emissaries

Continue to come, impatient to meet  
 this brilliant poet

Who had the nerve to steer the Athenians  
towards what's right. *bravery - telling the truth!*

Word of his courage has spread so wide  
 that even the King,\* *-Darius*

During his interview with the delegates  
 from Sparta, asked *alliance w/ Spartans?*

First of all, which of the fleets  
 on either side

Was the more powerful. Immediately next:  
which of the sides

Had the poet most fiercely reviled?  
 For they'd be the ones

To be kept on their toes and succeed in the war,  
 because of him. *Poets speak truth*

And this is the reason the Spartans offer you  
 terms of peace; *Spartan demands*

Demanding, however, the return of Aegina,†  
 not that they really

Care a damn for Aegina but only because  
they want the poet. *- Aristophanes -  
 Spartan wants me!*

So, listen, I beg you. Don't let him go,  
 for he means to continue

Concocting his comedies about what is right.  
 And he promises never

\*Darius, King of Persia. He made an alliance with the Spartans.

†The island of Aegina lay at almost equal distance in the Saronic Gulf from the coasts of Attica and Argolis in the Peloponnese. In 429 B.C. the Athenians expelled the inhabitants and installed their own settlers. Aristophanes seems to have had a house there.





LEADER:

How can it ever be right that a bent old man  
of Thucydides'\* age  
Should be wiped out by that Scythian scum,†  
that creature here,  
That waffling litigant, Cephisodemus' son.‡  
I had to brush away a tear  
and felt such shame  
For a noble veteran being undone  
by a bowman.  
In the days of Thucydides' prime,  
this I swear,  
He would have taken on a champion  
like Artachaees§  
And terrified three thousand bowmen  
with a yell,  
And shot down in their tracks whole families  
of that mouthpiece,¶  
And thrown ten Euathluses. But if you won't  
let us old men  
Sleep in peace, allow us please  
this at least,  
To have our writs made separate from the young.  
Let one  
Old toothless gaffer sue  
a toothless other,  
And the young men use that mincing sissy  
Cleinias' son,

*Athens has  
become a  
police-state?*

\*Not Thucydides the historian. This one was banished in 443 B.C. by Pericles. He was now eighty years old.

†Scythia was a vast unknown territory stretching from Asia through Russia into Siberia. It was famous for its archers, who became employed in Athens as policemen.

‡Euathlus: a keen prosecutor whom Aristophanes is equating with a common archer policeman.

§A huge and stentorian Persian nobleman who had accompanied Xerxes on his invasion of Greece. (Loeb)

¶Euathlus's relations.

Alcibiades;\* and from now on,  
when it comes  
To fines and exiles, only the old  
should ostracize  
The old, and young the young.

*young taking  
advantage of  
the old*

[DICAEOPOLIS comes out of the house with stakes to mark out boundaries, leather straps, and a small table.]

DICAEOPOLIS:

These are for the boundaries of my trading.  
Within them all the people of Peloponnese,  
of Megara and Boeotia are free to trade  
and to sell to me: all except Lamachus.

*Free market?*

These three straps for flogging  
I appoint as market officers.

I want no stool pigeon here  
or any sycophantic fraud.

*NO informers*

Now I'll go and get the column for my truce  
and set it up for all to see in the market square.

[He goes into the house as a MEGARIAN arrives with two small GIRLS aged about eight.]

MEGARIAN:†

Marketplace of Athens, how d'yer do!  
By Zeus god of friendship, we be friends of you.  
I've missed yer like a son his mother.

[turning to the two GIRLS]

And now yer twa miserable lasses of a feeble father,  
if you'd like some'at to eat, *starving*  
go up them steps and see what yer can find there.

\*The golden boy of Athens and a pupil of Socrates. He was beautiful, talented, arrogant, unscrupulous, and dissolute.

†The actor playing MEGARIAN would speak in a thick provincial accent.

[He points to the steps outside DICAEPOLIS' front door.]

But 'earken to me and give me yer complete rummy-rumblin atten-shun.

Would yer rather starve or be put up for sale?

GIRLS: [*unanimously*] Up for sale! Up for sale! — *because they're starving!*

MEGARIAN:

Yeah, yeah—that's the deal.

And I 'ave a brain wave—Oh so Megarian!—

I'll dress ye up as twa wee swine. *Disguises them as pigs*

So now put on them piggy trotters and be the piglets of a real swinish mother.

If yer come 'ome unsold, I swear by 'ermes, ye'll ken what real famine is.

Now put on them little snouts and get into the sack and start squealing an' oinking just like—just like the piggies at the Eleusinian sacrifice.

I'll shout for Dicaeopolis. . . . Dicaeopolis!

DICAEPOLIS: [*coming out of the house*]

Well I'm damned! A Megarian?

MEGARIAN: We're 'ere to sell.

DICAEPOLIS: How are you all doing?

MEGARIAN: Just fine! As I started out

our bigwigs were driving 'emselves silly trying ter figure out the best and quickest way of scuttling the State.

DICAEPOLIS: That'll be a blessing, won't it?

MEGARIAN: Man, yer right!

DICAEPOLIS: Anything else going on in Megara? The price of grain?

MEGARIAN: Where *we* are it's 'igh as 'eaven.

DICAEPOLIS: What's in the sack—salt?

MEGARIAN: Salt? That's what you control.

DICAEPOLIS: Garlic, then?

MEGARIAN: [*shaking his head*] Garlic, na, and it's yor fault. *no salt or garlic*

Ev'ry time ye raid us, yor people

dig it up—more like mice than men!

DICAEPOLIS: Well, what *do* you have?

MEGARIAN: Some Mystery piggies.

DICAEPOLIS: Good, let's see them.

MEGARIAN: [*uncovering the sack*] Beauties, eh? Like what yer see? Real plump an' pretty.

DICAEPOLIS: [*looking into the sack and seeing one of the GIRLS*]

God in heaven, what is this?

MEGARIAN: A piggy, by Zeus.

DICAEPOLIS: A piggy? . . . Don't be dotty!

MEGARIAN: A reel Megarian piggy—no?

DICAEPOLIS: It doesn't look like a piggy to me.

MEGARIAN: [*to the audience*]

Can yer beat it? The disbelieving jerk! 'e says this ain't a little pork. *female genitals*  
Tell yer what:

I bet yer some thyme-scented salt this 'ere's a real piglet . . .

in the Greek sense of the word. — *pig = female*

DICAEPOLIS: Yes, but it takes after a human being.

MEGARIAN: Of course it does—by Diocles!\*

It takes after me. . . . 'oo's d'yer think it is?

Like it to squeal?

DICAEPOLIS: I certainly would.

MEGARIAN: Piggy sweet, let's 'ave it right now—a squeal.

[*not a sound*]

Sod all! You perishing kiddo!

It's 'ome yer'll go. *squeal or you go home!*

FIRST GIRL: Grunt! Grunt!

MEGARIAN: See—isn't that a piggy?

DICAEPOLIS: Seems like a piggy now, but in a while once grown up it'll be a  *whoa*

MEGARIAN: Yer can be sure o' that.

She'll be just like her mother.

DICAEPOLIS: This one's not ripe for sacrifice.

\*A hero celebrated in Megara.

MEGARIAN: What d' yer mean, not ripe for sacrifice?

DICAEOPOLIS: She hasn't got a tail.\*

MEGARIAN: She's young yet, but when grown into full piggy'ood she'll get 'erself a ruddy great thick 'un.

[*displaying the other sack*]

'ere's another nice

piggy for yer to fatten up—if that's what yer want.

DICAEOPOLIS: Hers is the twin of the other—the ~~other~~

MEGARIAN: Sure, she 'as the same mother an' same father.

When she fills out a bit and gets a little ~~big~~,

she'll be a choice piggy for sacrifice to Aphrodite.†

DICAEOPOLIS: Pigs aren't sacrificed to Aphrodite.

MEGARIAN: Pigs not sacrificed to Aphrodite? Tush!

They're *only* sacrificed to 'er,

and 'ow scrumptious they are spitted on a skewer!

DICAEOPOLIS: Can they eat without their mother?

MEGARIAN: Aye, by Poseidon, and without their father.

DICAEOPOLIS: What do they like most?

MEGARIAN: Whatever yer give 'em. Ask 'em.

DICAEOPOLIS: [*addressing FIRST GIRL*] Piglet, oh piglet!

FIRST GIRL: Wee wee!

DICAEOPOLIS: Do you like chickpeas?

FIRST GIRL: Wee wee!

DICAEOPOLIS: And figs from Phibalis?‡

FIRST GIRL: Wee wee!

DICAEOPOLIS: [*to SECOND GIRL*] And you, too?

SECOND GIRL: Wee wee wee!

DICAEOPOLIS:

How the word *fig* makes you squeal—both of you!

Hey, someone in the house bring out some figs for the two wee pigs.

\* Metaphor for penis.

† Goddess of sexual intercourse.

‡ Phibalis was a district of Attica known for its early figs. Both chickpeas and figs were supposed to be aphrodisiacs.

[XANTHIAS *comes on the double with some dry figs and DICAEOPOLIS tosses some into each sack.*]

Do they like figs?

My word, how they guzzle! Holy Heracles, where are they from, these piggies?

Probably from the Goatland town of Gobbleallia.\*

MEGARIAN: They 'aven't eaten every single fig.

'ere's one they've missed and that's for me.

DICAEOPOLIS: My God, what entertaining little rogues they are!

How much are you asking for them, please?

MEGARIAN: A rope of garlic for this one 'ere.

For t'other a peck of salt, if yer like.

DICAEOPOLIS: I'll take them. Wait here.

MEGARIAN: [*as DICAEOPOLIS hurries into the house*]

Done! O 'ermes god of barter,

can I sell me wife as well—

and what about me mother?

[*An INFORMER enters and sidles up to the MEGARIAN.*]

INFORMER: Where yer from, fella?

MEGARIAN: Megara—a pig dealer.

INFORMER: [*looking into the sacks*] That's it then:

I'll denounce them piglets as illegal—

and you as well.

MEGARIAN: 'ere we go again!

This is 'ow the 'ole bloody show began.

INFORMER: Megarian lip! You'll be sorry for it.

'and over that sack.

MEGARIAN: Dicaeopolis! Dicaeopolis! Quick,

we have a rat.

\* This is the best I could do with Aristophanes' *Tragasaia*, which was not only a town in the Epirus (between Greece and Macedonia) but a play upon the word *tragein*, "to eat," and *tragos*, "a goat."

again, staming  
Sells daughters for garlic and salt?!

-The war

DICAEOPOLIS: [*running out of the house and cracking his leather straps threateningly*]

Snooper, denouncer—where?  
You damn market police,  
aren't you ever going to keep these informers out?

[*staring at the INFORMER insultingly*]

Where did you learn to expose yourself without a wick?\*

INFORMER: What? Yer mean expose my enemies?

DICAEOPOLIS: You'd better not.

Go and do your exposing somewhere else.

[*The INFORMER runs off.*]

MEGARIAN: In Athens they're an absolute curse.

DICAEOPOLIS: Cheer up, Megarian!

Take this garlic and salt  
at the price we agreed for the piggies,  
and all good luck to you ahead.

MEGARIAN: Luck's not in our line. *Aw sad*

DICAEOPOLIS: Forgive me for meddling, then.

MEGARIAN: [*ruefully*] Piggies, with no father to 'elp  
try to get some salt at least to nibble with yer bread.

[*MEGARIAN leaves and DICAEOPOLIS takes the GIRLS into the house.*]

CHORUS:

How lucky he is, this man, did you  
See how beautifully his plan  
Is working out?  
In the market see him sit  
Amid the fruits of his design.  
If Ctesias<sup>†</sup> comes sauntering through  
Or any other snooping creep  
He'll kick him in the rump; no sneak

\* Perhaps referring to the INFORMER'S lack of a comic phallus. (Loeb)

<sup>†</sup> "Grabber".

Will come annoying you or jump

The queue;

Nor a man like Prepis\* wipe  
His smelly bottom off on you;  
Nor will you have to bump  
Into Cleonymus; you'll stride  
Through your market brightly clad;  
And never will you come across  
A tiresome Hyperbolus<sup>†</sup>  
Armed with legal summonses;  
Nor in your mart will you collide  
With a Cratinus<sup>‡</sup> strolling through  
With his noodle neatly cut  
On his way to adultery. Note,  
You'll never meet an Artemon<sup>§</sup>  
With his armpits smelling worse  
By far even than his verse:  
Verily his father's son  
From the land of Billygoat.

And in your market you will not  
Be ridiculed by Plaguey Pauson<sup>¶</sup>  
Nor by Lysistratus,<sup>||</sup> the awesome  
Shame of Cholargus,  
Who's sozzled in self-loathing or  
Ravenously shivering for some  
Thirty days or more a moon.

\* An official in the Council, and a pet dislike of Aristophanes'.

<sup>†</sup> A demagogue who replaced Cleon after his death in 422 B.C.

<sup>‡</sup> A rival comic poet to Aristophanes who lived to the age of ninety-seven though he was a drunkard. He won the prize nine times, defeating Aristophanes' *Clouds* in 423 B.C. He was competing in this very festival with his play *Stormtossed*, which won second prize behind *Acharnians*. (Loeb)

<sup>§</sup> A sixth-century B.C. poet who ridiculed Anacreon. But it is more likely that Aristophanes has a contemporary in mind.

<sup>¶</sup> An impoverished painter known for caricatures, jokes, and riddles. (Loeb)

<sup>||</sup> Lysistratus is mentioned in both *Knights* and *Wasps*. He seems to have been something of a wit and practical joker. Aristophanes damned him as a parasite.

*All harassers  
of the  
free market?*

*References  
to  
poets*

[A BOEOTIAN arrives from Thebes with his servant ISMENIAS. They are laden with baskets and sacks bursting with country produce. They are followed by a raucous group of young men playing bagpipes.]

BOEOTIAN: \* 'oly 'eracles! Me shoulders are near raw.  
Ismenias, boy, 'andle them chamomiles with care.  
And ye piper fellas from Thebes,  
blow on them there bones and give us the tune  
of "'ow's my doggie's arse."

DICAEOPOLIS: [charging out of the house]  
Stop that wasp-sting din at once and go to hell!  
Whatever got them to my door,  
this murderous bunch of Chaeridian<sup>†</sup> bumblebees?

BOEOTIAN:  
By Iolaus,<sup>‡</sup> ye'll  
'ave done me a good turn there, pal.  
All the darn way down from Thebes  
these fellas 'ave followed puffin' and blowin'  
fit to blast the petals off me chamomile.  
But lookee, 'ow d'yer like to buy some'at  
the goodies I got . . .  
or some of them four wingers?<sup>§</sup>

DICAEOPOLIS: Fine, dear Boeotian of the muffin eaters!  
So let's see what you've got.

BOEOTIAN:  
I got the tops  
of what my country 'as—just about the lot:  
oregano, chamomile, lamp wicks, doormats,  
daws, ducks, cormorants, coots,  
plovers, snipe, quail. . . .

DICAEOPOLIS: My word!  
You've hit the bird market like a fowl-weather squall. *PUNNY*

\*Like the MEGARIAN, the BOEOTIAN speaks in dialect.

<sup>†</sup>Chaereas was an Athenian who wrote on agriculture and nature. DICAEOPOLIS at first confuses the bagpipers with the BOEOTIAN.

<sup>‡</sup>Iolaus (*i-ō-lā-us*) was the nephew and helper of Heracles.

<sup>§</sup>The locust is probably meant, very succulent when fried.

*FW*

BOEOTIAN: Aye, but I've also got  
geese, hares, foxes, moles,  
hedgehogs, cats, badgers, weasels, Lake Copais eels.\*

DICAEOPOLIS: You gastronomic prince of men,  
if you have eels, will you deign *On my zws- food*  
to introduce them.

BOEOTIAN: [fishing an eel out of a crate]  
O fairest of all Copais' fifty daughters,  
show thyself to this 'ere gent.

DICAEOPOLIS: [in mock grand manner]  
Come, darling, you most yearned for of creatures,  
here at last, you inspiration for the comic chorus to invent,  
come, you paramour of Morychus.<sup>†</sup>  
Servants, on the double, *Super happy for eel*  
bring forth the brazier and the bellows.

[A brazier and bellows are fetched and DICAEOPOLIS' children gather round.]

Behold, children, this splendid eel;  
we've waited six years for her,  
so, children, say how d'you do to the mademoiselle.

Let us honor her with coals,  
and let her recline on her divan.  
Even in death on a bed of beets  
may I be parted from you never.<sup>‡</sup>

BOEOTIAN: 'ey, man, when do I get paid for 'er?

DICAEOPOLIS: Shall we say she's a substitute for the market tariff?  
And you can sell me some of your other stuff, right?

BOEOTIAN: It's all for sale.

DICAEOPOLIS: Good. How much?

Or would you rather swap for something here?

BOEOTIAN: I would that: something Athens 'as  
and us Boeotians 'aven't. *- Informers*

\*Lake Copais—now Limne—in Boeotia was famous for its eels.

<sup>†</sup>A rich glutton.

<sup>‡</sup>Aristophanes has Euripides' *Alcestis* in mind, in which Alcestis offers up her life in place of her husband, Admetus. He turns the lines into parody.

DICAEOPOLIS: What about sardines from Phalerum?\*

Or would you rather pottery?

BOEOTIAN: Mm! Sardines or pottery? It ain't a match:  
we 'ave 'em both back 'ome.

Got to be some'at we don't 'ave any of  
and you 'ave much too much of. . . See?

DICAEOPOLIS: [*thinking hard*] I've got it: informers. *Ha ha ha - they run trade*

We could pack one up for you like china and export him.

BOEOTIAN: Great Zeus-twice-over!

What a fortune I could make exporting 'im  
chock-full of 'is monkey tricks!

DICAEOPOLIS: Watch out! Here comes Nicarchus† to denounce us.

[NICARCHUS *enters*.]

BOEOTIAN: There ain't much to 'im.

DICAEOPOLIS: But every inch of it stinks.

NICARCHUS: Whose stuff is this?

BOEOTIAN: Mine—from Thebes—Zeus my witness!

NICARCHUS: Smuggled, I reckon. I denounce.

BOEOTIAN: Man, what's up with you—  
taking arms against me birdies?

NICARCHUS: Against them, yes, and you, too.

BOEOTIAN: What 'ave I ever done to yer?

NICARCHUS: For the sake of those standing here,  
let me tell you: you're importing lamp wicks  
from countries we're at war with.

DICAEOPOLIS: [*breaking in*]

What! You denounce him for lamp wicks?

NICARCHUS: A lamp wick can burn down the docks. *ridiculous reason*

DICAEOPOLIS: A wick burn down docks?

NICARCHUS: I think so.

DICAEOPOLIS: How could it?

NICARCHUS:

Let's say some fellow from Boeotia

\*A small seaside port not far from Athens.

†Not known, but evidently a snooper.

stuck a wick on the back of a beetle,  
lit it and sent it through a gutter  
till a whiff of north wind came to hustle  
it towards the ships and set them on fire. . . . \*

*Boeotians set an  
ditch enemy wall  
on fire?*

DICAEOPOLIS: [*losing his temper and lashing out with his leather thongs*]

Set yourself on fire, you goddam fraud [*thwack*],  
and from a beetle [*thwack*],  
with a wick on its back [*thwack*].

NICARCHUS: Witnesses! Observe!

DICAEOPOLIS: Lock up his mouth.

Give me some sawdust and I'll pack him like china for dispatch  
so he doesn't get chipped in the move.

LEADER: With care, my hero, pack up the goods *FRAGILE*  
For this guest of ours who comes from abroad.  
It mustn't get smashed on the road. *HA-*

DICAEOPOLIS: Of course I'll take the greatest care.

It's popping and crackling like a fire  
As if deserted by the gods.

LEADER: What's it going to be used for?

DICAEOPOLIS: For every kind of possible thing:

A mug for something . . . that's not nice;  
A pestle to pound writs of error;  
A lamp to illumine official vice;  
A chalice for every kind of malice.

LEADER: But how could anyone not tremor

Using such a jug as this,  
And one that's making such a clamor?

DICAEOPOLIS: It's quite robust, my friend. It won't

Crumble even if you dangle  
It by the feet at any angle.

LEADER: [*to the BOEOTIAN*]

You've got yourself a real boon.

\*Thucydides, some twenty years older than Aristophanes and certainly known to him, describes, in his *History of the Peloponnesian War*, how the Boeotians and their allies wheeled an iron-encased pipe to a wooden part of the enemy walls and blew flame through it from a brazier of sulfur, pitch, and coal and set the wall on fire.

BOEOTIAN: Yes, I'm on the brink of fortune.

LEADER: Reap your reward, good visitor.

Fling him at once into your pack  
And off with him to wherever you want:  
A perfect specimen, I warrant,  
Of the universal skunk.

DICAEOPOLIS: Quite a job of it I had  
Packing up the wretched cad.  
So, Boeotian, load the stack.

BOEOTIAN: [*to ISMENIAS, his servant*]  
Ismenias, hoist 'im up, m'lad.

DICAEOPOLIS: So carry him home with the greatest care,  
Even though your load is far from fair.  
But if you make a profit from this import  
You're on your way to make a pack  
From informer export.

[*The BOEOTIAN and ISMENIAS leave as XANTHIAS runs in shouting.*]

XANTHIAS: Dicaeopolis! Dicaeopolis!

DICAEOPOLIS: Hey, what's all the shouting for?

XANTHIAS: What indeed, sir, just this:

Lamachus submits an order  
for some thrushes for the Feast of Pitcher,\*  
a drachma's worth, and three drachmas for  
an eel from Lake Copais.

DICAEOPOLIS: But which of the Lamachuses is it with the eel  
order?

XANTHIAS: The formidable one, the tough-as-bulls'-hide one,  
the one who flashes his Gorgon shield  
nodding his waving cloud of plumes.

DICAEOPOLIS:

It's no use, by Zeus!  
Even if he presents me with his shield.

\*A midwinter festival honoring Dionysus during which there were drinking contests.

So let him twiddle away his plumes  
for salted mackerel. If he stirs up trouble  
I'll call the market police. Meanwhile,  
I'm going inside to my rooms  
with all this stuff. . . . I'm flying off  
on the wings of blackbird and of thrush.

[*DICAEOPOLIS loads himself up with cages, boxes, and sacks, and staggers into the house. XANTHIAS saunters off the way he came.*]

## STROPHE

CHORUS:

All of you there, I hope you'll note  
This resourceful, brilliant man.  
What a wonderful stock he's got  
Of things for sale because of the truce:  
Some of which can be put to use  
Around the house, some eaten hot.

*So Athenians  
are missing  
at*

LEADER: Every possible benefit can

Come willy-nilly to this man.

I'll never invite the god of war

Into my house or let him recline

Beside me singing the Harmodius song,\*

For when he's drunk he's a boisterous bore.

We were having a wonderful time

With masses of everything until

He crashed in, upsetting all,

Barging his way, fighting and spilling,

And the more I wheedled him with "Please,

Relax with a loving cup—be willing,"

The more he set our poles ablaze

And poured on the ground the juice of vines.

*I never  
asked  
for  
war!*

*Drunk  
guys  
who  
ruin  
parties*

\*A drinking song celebrating Harmodius, who became a hero for assassinating Hipparchus, the brother of the tyrant Hippias.

*Lamachus wants  
black market  
goods?*



## ANTISTROPHE

CHORUS:

But now he's departed for his dinner  
 With something of a change of mind:  
 He's jettisoned outside his door  
 His plumes of war. . . Oh look who's here!  
 Aphrodite's favorite friend,  
 Peace, and the beloved Graces.\*

LEADER: [addressing PEACE]

I never knew how sweet your face is.  
 It makes me itch for Eros here—  
 The Eros in the picture where  
 He's drowned in flowers—to get us together.  
 You probably think I'm a spent old man.  
 All the same, I bet I'd   
 Once I had you in my arms.  
 I'd hit the bull's-eye three times running:  
 First with a strike of vines in a row;  
 Next with a burst of fig tree cuttings;  
 Third, a festoon of grapes I'd grow  
 (Old that I am, I'm so well hung),  
 Round which I'd plant an olive grove—  
 We'd oil ourselves the New Moon long.

*Longing  
 for  
 Peace*

[Enter HERALD.]

HERALD: Attention, people, for the feast!  
 Drain your mugs of wine according to tradition  
 and the one who finishes first  
 gets a wineskin as ample as the belly of Ctesiphon.†

\*PEACE, a dazzling young woman, momentarily appears, with the THREE GRACES in the background.

†Unknown.

[An inner scene is revealed in which DICAEPOLIS and his household are preparing for a banquet.]

DICAEPOLIS: [fussing]

Hey, boys and girls, what are you doing?  
 Weren't you listening?  
 Didn't you hear the herald speaking?  
 Grill those hare fillets nicely,  
 then turn and yank them off the spit, but briskly.  
 Get the garlands and the trestles.  
 Give me some skewers for the throstles.\*

CHORUS:

I so admire your expert plan  
 And even more  
 Your cornucopia.  
 Come, sit beside us, man.

DICAEPOLIS: Wait till you see thrush-on-spit.

CHORUS: I expect that you are right.

DICAEPOLIS: Poke up the fire.

CHORUS: What a master of cuisine!

What a deft grill-side manner!  
 What a superb party planner!

*His peace  
 allows him  
 to eat  
 lazily?*

[The farmer DERCETES enters, near to tears.]

DERCETES: God help me, I am done!

DICAEPOLIS: Heavens, who is this?

DERCETES: A ruined man.

DICAEPOLIS: Then keep it to yourself, please.

DERCETES: Be a good fellow. You are the only one  
 who cornered a truce for yourself; lend me a piece . . .  
 of peace . . . say a five-year morsel.

*lemme get a  
 little...*

DICAEPOLIS: What's the trouble?

DERCETES: Lost my oxen—my couple.

\*Another word for thrush.

DICAEOPOLIS: Where?

DERCETES: At Phyle, snaffled by the Boeotians.

DICAEOPOLIS: Why, thrice-unlucky one, are you dressed in white?

DERCETES: I couldn't before, with all that manure.

DICAEOPOLIS: Well, what do you want me to do?

DERCETES: My eyesight's gone, weeping for my bullocks,  
so if you have any feeling—even slight—  
for Dercetes of Phyle, rub some peace on my eyes now.

DICAEOPOLIS: Bollocks! I'm not a doctor.

DERCETES: Oh please, I beg you.

Then perhaps I'll find my oxen.

DICAEOPOLIS: No. Go to Doctor Pittalus' clinic.\*

DERCETES: Oh please, just a teeny drop of peace:

You can drop it into this hollow stick.

DICAEOPOLIS: No, not the weeniest drop.

Go and find another place to whine in.

DERCETES: Gone! Gone! My darling yoke of oxen.

[DERCETES walks away dejected.]

CHORUS: The man has unearthed a prize  
In his truce

And naturally he wants.

To keep to himself its use.

DICAEOPOLIS: Honey the sausages, grill the squid.

CHORUS: My, what authority!

DICAEOPOLIS: Brown the eels.

CHORUS: Have mercy on our palates, please,

We're near to death with the aroma

And the savory syllables you utter.

DICAEOPOLIS: Get those stewing, get these fried.

[A BEST MAN enters with a BRIDESMAID.]

BEST MAN: Dicaeopolis!

DICAEOPOLIS: Who the blazes, the damn blazes?

\* A general practitioner appointed by the State.

BEST MAN: There's a wedding party going on  
and the bridegroom sends you this viand.

DICAEOPOLIS: Generous of him whoever he is.

BEST MAN: What he asks in return,  
so's not to get called up for campaign  
and can start shagging without a pause,  
is a dollop of peace—here in this little vase.

DICAEOPOLIS: Away with the viand—away with it! Don't tempt me!

Not for a thousand drachmas would I part with a drop. . . .

Who's she?

BEST MAN: The bridesmaid,

and she has a personal message for you from the bride.

DICAEOPOLIS: Really? What sort of message?

[The BRIDESMAID steps up and whispers in his ear.]

Dear gods, that's a laugh! She wants a pledge  
that her husband's ~~be~~ be kept from the draft  
and on the hearth.

Bring the truce here,

I'm going to give her a spoonful—and only to her—  
she's a poor female and oughtn't to suffer because of war.

Hey, my girl, hold the vase up.

D'you know the procedure?

Tell the bride that when there's a call-up  
she's to massage his ~~back~~ at night with this.

[BEST MAN leaves with BRIDESMAID.]

Remove the truce and bring me the wine stoup  
so's I can ladle wine into the flasks.

LEADER: Look, there's a man coming, obviously distraught,  
as if he had something unpleasant to announce.

[FIRST MESSENGER enters and bangs on LAMACHUS' front door, exclaiming  
in a mournful voice.]

FIRST MESSENGER: Oh brother! Battles, Lamachuses, fatigues, and tasks!

Other Athenians suffering and want peace too?

wants a little peace to enjoy honeymoon

Sympathy to sufferings of women!

Athenians starving?

Interruptions!

LAMACHUS: [*coming out snarling*]

Who's banging my brass knockers into naught?

FIRST MESSENGER: Marching orders for the dy, from the 'igh command.

Destinyshun—snow drifts.

Objective—guarding hof the passes.

News 'as just come hin that a gang of Boeotians  
'as it in mind to hattack during the Pot and Pitcher Festival.

[FIRST MESSENGER *salutes briskly and leaves.*]

LAMACHUS: Drat the generals! Too many and too stupid!

So I'm not going to be allowed to enjoy the festival.

DICAEOPOLIS: Three cheers for Lamachus the Intrepid! — *HA HA*

LAMACHUS: So *you* think it's funny as well?

DICAEOPOLIS: [*teasing, as he picks up a fat roasted locust*]

How d' you like to fight with this—a real Geryon.\*

LAMACHUS: Piss off! That message was messy enough.

DICAEOPOLIS: And here's another messenger—all panty-hot-breath.

[*Enter* SECOND MESSENGER.]

SECOND MESSENGER: Dicaeopolis!

DICAEOPOLIS: Yes, what?

SECOND MESSENGER:

You're to go to dinner on the dot.  
Bring your pannier and your flagon,  
the priest of Dionysus asks you, but hurry.  
You're keeping the dinner waiting.

Everything's ready:  
couches, tables, cushions,  
quilts, perfumes, garlands,  
tarts—I mean broads—biscuits, cakes and icing,  
dancing girls—real pearls—like the ones  
in Harmodius' song, sesame honey buns. . . .

So hurry . . . come along!

\*A winged monster with three heads that lived at Gades (Cadiz) in southern Spain, twenty-five miles from the Pillars of Heracles (Gibraltar). The monster was slain by Heracles.

LAMACHUS: [*moaning*] I am beset with things going wrong.

DICAEOPOLIS: Blame yourself: you're your own damper,  
pinning yourself to a Gorgon.\* — *love of war*

[*calling a* SERVANT]

Pack up the pannier, boy, and quick.

LAMACHUS: And, boy, boy, bring me my knapsack.

DICAEOPOLIS: And, boy, boy, bring me my hamper.

LAMACHUS: Fetch the sea salt and the onion.

DICAEOPOLIS: For me just fish. I've had it with onions.

LAMACHUS: And, boy, bring me a smoked herring on a fig leaf.

DICAEOPOLIS: And stuff a fig leaf for me. I'll cook it there.

LAMACHUS: And my twin helmet plumes—bring them here.

DICAEOPOLIS: Bring the thrushes and the pigeons.

LAMACHUS: How beautiful is an ostrich plume—its white fluff!

DICAEOPOLIS: How beautiful is pigeon meat—its brown stuff!

LAMACHUS: Sir, plumes are part of my armor—not a joke.

DICAEOPOLIS: Sir, stop ogling my thrushes—you complete jerk.

LAMACHUS: Sir, kindly stop addressing me—you right berk!

DICAEOPOLIS: I'm not. I'm conferring with my servant here.

[*turns to his* SERVANT]

Shall we toss up or let Lamachus decide which are tastier,  
locusts or thrushes?

LAMACHUS: What a nerve!

DICAEOPOLIS: He's pro-locust a hundred percent.

LAMACHUS: Boy, bring my triple crest out of the chest.

DICAEOPOLIS: And serve me some casserole of hare.

LAMACHUS: I can't believe it: moths have had a go at my crests.

DICAEOPOLIS: I can't believe it: I'm having hare as an hors d'oeuvre.

LAMACHUS: Boy, boy, remove my spear off the wall  
and bring it here.

DICAEOPOLIS: Boy, boy, remove the shish kebab from the grill  
and bring it here.

\*Referring to his Gorgon shield. In other words, what can you expect when you are wedded to war?

Lamachus  
to  
war

Dicaeopolis  
to  
party!

Just a position  
war?  
Peace

Supplies  
for  
war?  
party

LAMACHUS: Now, laddy, I'll draw my lance from its case. Hold tight.  
 DICAEPOLIS: And you, laddy, hold the skewer while I pull.

[DICAEPOLIS removes the kebab from the skewer.]

LAMACHUS: Boy, bring me a prop for my shield.  
 DICAEPOLIS: And bring me a titbit for my prop.  
 LAMACHUS: Bring me the round buckler with the Gorgon boss.  
 DICAEPOLIS: And me a pizza with a cheese base.  
 LAMACHUS: Flat-out impertinence! Who wouldn't be appalled?  
 DICAEPOLIS: A scrumptious pizza this. Who wouldn't say it  
 excelled?  
 LAMACHUS: [preparing to polish his shield] Pour on the oil, boy.  
 I see the reflection of an elderly gent charged with cowardice.\*  
 DICAEPOLIS: Pour on the honey:  
 I see an elderly gent laughing at Lamachus.  
 LAMACHUS: Hand me, boy, my chain mail corselet.  
 DICAEPOLIS: And me, boy, my corselet flagon.  
 LAMACHUS: With it I can face the foe.  
 DICAEPOLIS: With it I can face fellow boozers off the wagon.  
 LAMACHUS: Laddy, lash my bedding to the buckler.  
 DICAEPOLIS: Laddy, lash my dinner to the hamper.  
 LAMACHUS: I'll carry my pack on my own back.  
 DICAEPOLIS: And I'll get dressed in my best and go.  
 LAMACHUS: Up with the shield, boy, and come along. . . .  
 Sods! It's snowing. A dismal wintry show!

DICAEPOLIS: [to another SERVANT]

Up with the dinner—a very festive show.

[LAMACHUS and DICAEPOLIS leave in different directions.]

LEADER:

Success to you both in your enterprise.  
How different are the paths you tread!

\*Another dig, probably, at Cleonymus, who in battle threw away his shield and ran.

He'll be garlanded and drink full measure.  
 You'll be on guard and you will freeze.  
 He'll be in bed  
 With a lovely girl full of surprise  
 And teasing  
 A throbbing under pressure.

Obviously  
 Dicaeopolis  
 will have the  
 better time!

CHORUS:

Antimachus\* son of the Spatterer, the contract writer,  
 And to be absolutely frank  
 The writer of very poor songs:  
 Him may Zeus obliterate.  
 For, of all things,  
 He was the one who sent me away  
 At the Lenaeon Festival without any dinner.  
 I'd very much like  
 To see him ravenous for squid one day.  
 By the shore  
 And have it come grilled and sizzling to his plate  
 And just as he's about to take a bite  
 Have a mongrel snatch it and bolt away.  
 That's one disaster for him. Here's another:  
 Let this curse  
 Happen at night when he's walking homewards shivering  
 After galloping his horse.  
 Let some drunken bugger  
 Mad as Orestes† give him a crack  
 On the head,  
 And when he tries to find a rock  
 He fumbles in the dark  
 And grasps a brand-new turd,  
 And with this sleek weapon in his hand  
 Let him attack

Reference  
 to  
 another  
 poet

\*Unknown, except for the fact that his father sprayed people with saliva when he talked.

†After Orestes and his sister, Electra, murdered their mother, Clytemnestra, Orestes went mad. (See Euripides' *Electra*.)

But miss his adversary and go smack  
Into the face of Cratinus.

[THIRD MESSENGER enters shouting and bangs on LAMACHUS' door.]

THIRD MESSENGER:

Water, water! Servants of Lamachus's home,  
get hot water ready quick,  
and ointment, poultices, bandages, lint:  
he's done his ankle grievous harm.

He hit a stake when jumping a ditch  
and twisted his ankle out of joint,  
cracking his head upon a rock. . . .

He certainly awoke  
the Gorgon on his shield by that!

And when he saw  
his helmet feathers scattered on the stone,  
he let out a most pathetic roar:

"You glorious face of the Sun,  
I look on you for the last stretch—  
my days are done."

He said this as he hit the ditch  
but roused himself and rallied his fleeing men  
and went after the Boeotian brigands with his spear. . .

And they ran.

But here he is. Throw open the door.

[LAMACHUS comes in limping on crutches, supported by SOLDIERS.]

LAMACHUS:

Ouch! Ah! Ouch!  
The horrible ice of my pains is worse than hell.  
The enemy's lance has lanced me to the ground:

But an agony worse than all  
would be to let Dicaeopolis see my wound  
and gloat to see me in this bind.

Lamachus  
is  
injured

But he  
won?

Too  
bad!

[DICAEPOLIS totters in drunk held up by two DANCING GIRLS.]

DICAEPOLIS:

Gee whiz! Yippie! Nice!  
Such —round and plump as quince!  
Give me a kiss, my golden lassies:  
this one smack on the kisser, the other  
lolling her tongue in my mouth, because  
of the drinking bout I won.

LAMACHUS: What I am suffering couldn't be worse.

My wounds, oh my wounds—the curse!

DICAEPOLIS: Hi there! Hullo, my little Lamachins!

LAMACHUS: I'm quite beyond pity.

DICAEPOLIS: [to one of the girls] Ooh! Are you offering your ?

LAMACHUS: My misery's fierce.

DICAEPOLIS: D'you mean at the Pitcher Festival you had to pay for  
tickets?

LAMACHUS: Paeán! Apollo! God of healing, come!

DICAEPOLIS: But it's not his feast day today.

LAMACHUS: Coddle this leg of mine, my friends. I'm lame.

DICAEPOLIS: And you two girls,  
coddle my

LAMACHUS: My head whirls . . . struck with a stone . . .  
swimming in the dark.

DICAEPOLIS: I, too, am ready for bed,  
and   
and dying to  in the dark.

LAMACHUS: Carry me gently, friends, to Pittalus' clinic.

DICAEPOLIS: And me to the judges and the festival head.  
I want the wineskin I won.

LAMACHUS: I'm pierced right through by a spear,  
right to the bone.

[LAMACHUS is carried away.]

DICAEPOLIS: [drinks from a pitcher, then holds it up]

Behold, there's nothing in it!

Salute a winner.

Peace  
wins!

yup!

More  
juxtaposition  
of  
pleasure  
and  
pain

LEADER: Bravo! Bravo! As you order,  
you senior champion!

DICAEOPOLIS: Yes, yes, the wine was neat  
and I swilled it down.

LEADER: Well done, old fellow!  
You've won a wineskin.

DICAEOPOLIS: So I have. Rejoice and follow.  
Sing: Cheers for the hero!

CHORUS: And we in homage follow,  
singing: Long live the champion—he and his skin of wine.

*Whoa - the drunk  
is the HERO!!  
Not the general!*

KNIGHTS