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Menander

The Plays and Fragments

Translated with Notes by
Maurice Balme

With an Introduction by
Peter Brown

Oxford University Press
To

The President and Fellows
of
Trinity College Oxford
The Bad-Tempered Man (Dyskolos)

The papyrus codex of the *Dyskolos* was published in 1958, the first complete play of Menander to have been discovered in the sands of Egypt (see Introduction). It is damaged in places; there are several lacunae of four or more lines where the papyrus is torn and many gaps where half-lines, whole words, or a few letters are missing or illegible.

Characters

PAN (Prologue)
CHAIREAS, a toady
SOSTRATOS, a rich young man
PYRRHIAS, Sostratos' slave
KNEMON, an old misanthrope
THE GIRL, his daughter
DAOS, the old slave of Gorgias
CHORUS of worshippers of Pan
GORGIAS, Knemon's son by a previous marriage
SIKON, a cook
GETAS, a slave of Gorgias' father
SOSTRATOS' MOTHER
SIMICHE, Knemon's old servant
KALLIPPIDES, Sostratos' father

Silent characters:

PLANGON, Sostratos' sister
PARTHENIS, a pipe player
MYRRHINE, Gorgias' mother
DONAX and SYROS, slaves
Dyskolos

The scene is set in Phyle, a mountainous district in central Attica. In the middle of the stage is the shrine of Pan and the Nymphs, to the right the house of the old misanthrope Knemon, to the left that of his son Gorgias.

Prologue

The god PAN enters from his shrine and addresses the audience.

PAN. You must imagine we’re in Attica;
Phyle’s the place; the shrine* from which I come
Belongs to Phyle’s people and the men
Who farm these rocky heights as best they can,
A holy place exceedingly well known.
This farm here on the right is Knemon’s home,
An utter misanthrope, cross-grained to all;
He hates the crowd—he hates the crowd, I say?
He’s getting on, yet never in his life
Has spoken willingly to anyone
Or greeted anyone except me, Pan,
His neighbour, as he must when passing by,
And then he’s promptly sorry that he spoke,
I’m sure of that. And yet despite his ways
He wed a widow whose first husband had
Just died, leaving a son, a baby then.
He fought with her not only in the day
But most of every night—a wretched life.
He had a daughter by her. Things got worse.
But when her troubles were beyond repair,
Her life laborious and harsh, the wife
Went off back to the son she’d borne before.
He had a little plot not far from here,
Where now in hardship he supports himself,
His mother, and one loyal family slave.
The boy by now’s become a lad with sense
Beyond his years—experience brings men on.
The old man with his daughter lives alone
And has but one old servant; so he digs

The Bad-Tempered Man

And carries wood; it’s work, work, work for him,
Hating his neighbours most, and wife, and then
The whole world to Cholargos* far below.
The girl, brought up in total innocence,
Remains unchanged. She cultivates the nympha
Who live with me with careful reverence;
So she’s persuaded us to have some care
For her; I’ve made a youth, a city boy,
Whose father’s rich and farms a great estate
Not far from here, go hunting with a friend
And happen to come near her home; I’ve made
Him fall head over heels in love with her.
These are the main points; and the rest you’ll see,
If you are willing; and willing you must be!
But look! I think I see this lover now
Draw near, together with his huntsman friend;
They’re deep in talk about the whole affair.

[Exit into shrine

ACT I

Enter SOSTRATOS and CHAIREAS from the right, deep in conversation.

CHAIREAS. What’s that you say? You saw a freeborn girl
Give garlands to the Nymphs* here and you went
Away in love, at once?

SOSTRATOS. At once.

CHAIREAS. That’s quick!
Had you decided as you left your home
To fall in love with someone?

SOSTRATOS. Chaireas,
You’re laughing at me. I’m in a bad way.
CHAIREAS. I believe you.

SOSTRATOS. That is why I’ve come with you
To help me, since I think you are my friend
And very competent.

CHAIREAS. Well, Sostratos,
In cases of this sort, this is my policy:
One of my friends falls for a courtesan
And calls me in: I seize the girl at once
And bring her; I get drunk, burn down the door,*
Reject all sense! We don’t know who she is
But he must have her now. For slowness feeds
Such love; quick action brings a quick relief.
But someone speaks of marriage, a free girl,
I am another man then; I inquire about
Her family, finances, character;
For now I leave my friend all I arrange
In this affair to be a record for
All time.

SOSTRATOS. Yes, very good. [Aside] But not quite what I want.
CHAIREAS. And now we must hear all the facts.
SOSTRATOS. I sent my fellow-huntsman, Pyrrhias,
From home at dawn today.
CHAIREAS. To whom?
SOSTRATOS. To meet
The father of the girl or master of
The house, whoever he may be.
CHAIREAS. What are you saying?
SOSTRATOS. I was wrong. Perhaps
This sort of thing was not a servant’s job.
But it’s not easy for a man to see
What’s best when he’s in love. But I’m surprised
At his delay. I told him to return
At once when he had learnt the set-up here.

Enter PYRRHIAS from the left, running and breathless.

PYRRHIAS. Let me through! Look out! All of you, out of the way!
A raving loony’s after me.
SOSTRATOS. What, boy?
PYRRHIAS. Run! Run!
SOSTRATOS. What’s up?
PYRRHIAS. He’s pelting me
With clods and stones. I’m done for.

SOSTRATOS. Where are you going, fool?
PYRRHIAS [stopping]. Perhaps he’s not
Still chasing me.
SOSTRATOS. He’s not.
PYRRHIAS [looking round]. I thought he was.
SOSTRATOS. What do you mean?
PYRRHIAS. I beg you, let’s get out.
SOSTRATOS. As far as may be from that door.
PYRRHIAS. Some child of Woe, or else a man possessed
Or melancholy-mad, lives in the house here,
The man you sent me to—who’s agony!
I’ve stubbed and broken nearly all my toes.
SOSTRATOS. Good god! What’s he been up to on his way?
PYRRHIAS. Some drunken trick?
CHAIREAS. He’s clearly off his head.
PYRRHIAS. No, Sostratos, by god, may I be damned
And blasted, if I am. Be on your guard!
But I can’t speak. My breath is choking me.

[He pauses for breath

I knocked at that door there and said that I
Was looking for the master of the house;
A miserable old woman answered me;
From where I’m standing now she pointed out
The fellow on the hill there wandering round
Unhappily and collecting pears, a load
Of trouble for himself.
CHAIREAS [aside]. How cross he is!
What next, my friend?
PYRRHIAS. I set foot on his plot
And walked towards him, and from some way off—
I wished to seem a friendly, tactful sort
Of man—I said, ‘Father, I’ve come to see
You on a matter that’s for your own good.’
Immediately he says, ‘You’re on my land;
You villain, what’s your game?’, takes up a clod
And hurls it at my face.
Dyskolos

CHAIREAS. To hell with him!
PYRRHIAS. I shut my eyes and said, ‘God blast you!’, then
He took a stick this time and beat me up,
Saying, ‘What business have you and I
Together? Don’t you know the public road?’
Shouting with all his might.
CHAIREAS. The farmer is
Quite mad from what you say.
PYRRHIAS. But hear the rest:
I fled; he chased me for about two miles,
First round the hill, then down below into
This thicket, pelting me with clods and stones
And pears when he had nothing else, a wild
And savage beast, a barbarous old sod.
Please, please, get out!
SOSTRATOS. No, that’s the coward’s way.
PYRRHIAS. But you don’t know how dangerous things are.
He’ll eat us all.
CHAIREAS. Perhaps he is a bit
Upset just now. And so I think we should
Put off approaching him; for, Sostratos,
You know, in everything success depends
On finding the right time.
PYRRHIAS. That’s sensible.
CHAIREAS. Poor farmers are sharp-tempered folk; he’s not
The only one, they’re nearly all like this.
At dawn tomorrow I’ll go to him alone—
I know the house; now you go home and wait.
That will be best. [Exit CHAIREAS to the right
PYRRHIAS. Let’s do just as he says.
SOSTRATOS. He’s gladly taken an excuse to go.
It’s clear he didn’t want to come with me
At all, and didn’t like my marriage plans.
[To PYRRHIAS] But you, may all the gods annihilate
You utterly as you deserve, you rogue.
PYRRHIAS. But, Sostratos, please, what have I done wrong?
SOSTRATOS. You did some damage to his land, that’s clear;
You stole something.

The Bad-Tempered Man

PYRRHIAS. I stole?
SOSTRATOS. Did someone beat
You up when you were doing nothing wrong?
Enter KEMON from afar left.
PYRRHIAS. Yes—here he is himself. I’m off, my friend,
And you can talk to him. [Exit PYRRHIAS right
SOSTRATOS. I can’t. In talk
I never can convince a soul. [Looking at KEMON approaching]
What should
One say about this man? He does not seem
To have a very friendly look. God, no!
And what a rush he’s in! I think I’ll get
Back from the door. That’s better. And, what’s more,
He’s shouting though he walks alone! He seems
To me to be unwell. But I’m afraid
Of him. By god, I am. And that’s the truth.

Enter KEMON from the left, talking to himself.

KEMON. Now Perseus,* wasn’t he a lucky man
In two respects? He could take wings on high
And never meet the men who walked on earth.
And then he had this gift with which he turned
All people who annoyed him into stone.
I wish I had that gift! Then there would be
No shortage of stone statues everywhere!
But now life’s not worth living. No, it’s not.
Men trespass on my land and chat to me.
[Ironically] I usually waste my time of course beside
The very road! Why, I don’t even work
That part of my estate. I’ve left that bit
To avoid the passers-by. But now they chase
Me into the hills above. What swarming crowds!
But help! Here’s someone else standing beside
My door!
SOSTRATOS [aside]. Does he intend to beat me up?
KEMON. You can’t find solitude, not anywhere,
Not even if you want to hang yourself.
Dyssolos

Sostratos [coming forward]. Is it me you're angry with? I'm waiting here
For someone, father, as I had arranged.

Knemion. Just what I said! Do you take this for a park
Or public meeting place?* [With heavy irony] Well, if you want
To see someone, arrange to meet him here
Beside my doors; go on, by all means; yes,
Erect a bench, if that is what you want,
Or better still a council-room. [As he enters his house] Oh dear!
Malicious interference is the cause
Of all this trouble so it seems to me.

[Exit into his house. Sostratos is left alone on the stage

Sostratos. This business requires, it seems to me,
No common effort, something more serious.
That's obvious. [He reflects] Getas, my father's slave,
Suppose I go to him? By heaven, I shall.
Yes, he's a ball of fire, experienced
In every kind of thing. He'll drive away
All the old man's bad temper, I'm quite sure.
For I refuse to tolerate delay.
Why, lots of things may happen in one day.
But someone's rattled on his door.

[Sostratos withdraws

The girl comes out of Knemion's door, carrying a water pot.

Girl.

Alas!

More trouble still! Oh, what shall I do now?
My nurse has dropped the bucket in the well.

Sostratos [aside]. O father Zeus, Phoebus, and heavenly Twins,*
What beauty irresistible!

Girl.

And Dad
Told me to get the water hot as he
Went out to work.

Sostratos [to the spectators]. Friends, what am I to do?

Girl. But if he learns of this, he'll beat her up
And kill her for her crime. It's not the time
For idle talk. O dearest Nymphs, I must
Take water now from you. I am ashamed,

The Bad-Tempered Man

If anyone is making offerings inside,
To bother you—

Sostratos [comes forward]. But if you give the pot
To me, I'll fill it from the spring at once
And bring it back to you.

Girl.

O thank you. Please
Be quick.

Sostratos [aside, as he goes into the shrine]. A country girl she is, but how
Unlike a bumpkin. Gods above! what power
Can save me now? [A door rattles

Girl.

But help! Who made that noise?
Is father coming back? Then I shall get
A hiding, if he catches me outside.

[The girl retires to Knemion's door. But it is the
doors of Gorgias' house that opens

Out comes Daoes, the old slave, talking to Gorgias' mother who is
inside; he does not see the girl.

Daoes. I've spent a long time working here for you,
While master digs alone. Now I must go
To him. [As he moves off] O damn you, cursed Poverty,
Why have we found you such a crushing weight?
Why do you settle down so long inside
Our house and make your home with us for good?

Sostratos [coming out of the shrine]. Here, take the pot.

Girl.

Please bring it here.

Daoes. What does
This fellow want?

Sostratos.

Goodbye to you, and take
Good care of father.

[Exit girl into Knemion's house. Sostratos soliloquizes,

While Daoes watches him

Hell! Oh, misery!
Stop moaning, Sostratos! It'll be all right.

Daoes. What does he mean 'all right'?

Sostratos.

Don't be afraid.

Tell Getas clearly, as you planned to do
**Dyskolos**

Just now, about the whole affair and then
Come back with him. [Exit right]

**DAOs.** Whatever’s going on?
I don’t like this at all. A youngster here
Is helping out the girl—that’s really bad!
May all the gods destroy you horribly,
You horror, Knemon! Leave a virtuous girl
Alone, abandoned in a lonely place
And not give her protection, as you should!
Perhaps this fellow knew this and stole here,
Thinking his luck was in. But anyway
I’d best inform her brother with all haste
So we can take the girl into our care.
I think I’d better go and do so now.
For I can see some worshippers of Pan
Approaching here, a bit the worse for drink;
It’s not the time to bother them, I think. [Exit to the left]

**CHORAL INTERLUDE**

_A chorus of worshippers sings and dances outside the shrine._

**ACT 2**

Enter Gorgias and DAOs from the left.

**Gorgias.** You mean to say you treated the affair
So casually and feebly?

**DAOs.** What do you mean?

**Gorgias.** Good god! You should have seen the man at once
Who chatted up the girl, no matter who,
And told him to be sure that no one should
See him behave like this ever again.
But as it is, you backed away as though
You weren’t involved. But, Dao, I suppose
We can’t escape the duty owed our kin.

**The Bad-Tempered Man**

I still care for my sister. Father wants
To be a stranger to us, but don’t let us
Be like him in misanthropy. For if
My sister fell into disgrace, I too must feel
The shame. Outsiders never care who was
To blame but only know the actual facts.
Come on, let’s knock.

**DAOs.** Sir, Gorgias, I’m scared
Of the old man. If he discovers me
Approaching near his door, he’ll string me up
At once.

**Gorgias.** He’s rather difficult, it’s true,
And quarrelsome; there’s no way anyone
Could force him to reform, or change his mind
By good advice such as a friend might give.
He has the law behind him to prevent
Us using force; his character prevents
Persuasion—

**DAOs.** Stop a bit! We’ve not come here
For nothing; as I thought, he’s coming back.

**Gorgias.** You mean the man there in that splendid cloak?

**DAOs.** That’s him.

Enter Sostratos from the right.

**Gorgias.** His looks at once show he’s a rogue.

[DAOs and Gorgias withdraw]

**Sostratos.** I did not find Getas within at home;
Mother, all set to make a sacrifice
To appease some god—I don’t know which—she does
This every day and round and round the whole
District she goes, making her sacrifices—
Had sent him out to hire a cook. I wished
Her offerings luck and back I’ve come to deal
With matters here. I’ll stop this roundabout,
I think, and speak out for myself. I’ll knock,
So that I can no longer hesitate.

**Gorgias [comes forward].** Young man, would you be willing to
attend
To something rather serious I want to say?
sostratos. Yes, very gladly. So say on.
gorgias. I believe
For every man, both rich and poor, there is
A limit to their fortune which brings change.
The wealthy man’s success in life remains
Unbroken only for so long as he
Can bear his luck without committing wrong.
But when he comes to that, led on by his
Prosperity, he suffers then a change for worse.
The poor, as long as they do nothing wrong
In their distress but bear their cruel fate
With honour, still may come in time to win
Some credit* and expect a better lot.
What do I mean? Though you are very rich,
Don’t put your trust in that and don’t
Despise us poor men; prove yourself to all
Who see you worthy of good luck that lasts:
sostratos. But do you think I’m acting wrongly now?
gorgias. You seem to me to have planned a wicked crime,
Intending to seduce a freeborn girl
Or watching for a chance to do a deed
Deserving death twice over.
sostratos. Gods above!
gorgias. It’s certainly not right your idleness
Should upset us who never can be idle.
You surely know, a poor man, when he’s wronged,
Is hardest of all men to tamper with.
First, he rouses pity,* then he treats
All that he’s suffered not as simply wrong
But as an outrage.
sostratos. Friend, as you may hope
To have some luck, please hear a word from me.
daos. Master, well said! May you be blessed for this!
[daos is applauding gorgias' words, disregarding
sostratos' interruption
sostratos. You too, who speak before you know the facts.
I saw a girl here and I fell in love.

The Bad-Tempered Man

If that’s the wrong you mean, perhaps I did
Do wrong. For what else can I say? Except
I don’t come here to her but want to see
Her father. I’m freeborn, well-heeled enough,
And ready to accept her with no dowry,
And guarantee to cherish her for life.
But if I came here with some wrong intent
Or wanting to plot ill behind your backs,
May Pan here and the Nymphs now strike me dumb,
Right here, beside the house. Believe me, I’m most
Upset I seem to you that kind of man.
gorgias. Well, if I spoke more hotly than I should,
Don’t let that go on worrying you. For you’ve
Convinced me now and have me as your friend.
And I’m concerned in this, as I’m the girl’s
Half-brother, let me tell you that, good friend.
sostratos. Good god, then you can help me with the rest.
gorgias. Help? How?
sostratos. I see you have a noble heart—
gorgias. I don’t intend to pack you off with vain
Excuses; I will tell the simple truth.
There’s never been a human in the past
Or in our own time like the father of
This girl.
sostratos. That old curmudgeon? Yes,
I think I know.
gorgias. He’s bad as bad can be.
He has this farm that must be worth a cool
Two talents,* yet he goes on farming it
Alone; he has no man to work with him,
No servant of his own, no labourer hired
From the vicinity, no neighbour even,
But just himself, alone. He’d be best pleased
If he saw no one, but he usually takes
His daughter with him when he goes to work
And only talks to her. Apart from her
He’d hate to speak to anyone. He says
He’ll marry her to someone when he finds
At last a bridegroom something like himself.
sostratos. That must mean never.
gorgias. So don’t bother, friend;
You’ll waste your labour. Leave his family
To bear the burden fortune’s given us.
sostratos. Good god, man, have you never been in love
With anyone?
gorgias. Impossible, my friend.
sostratos. Why’s that?
gorgias. Thinking about
My present troubles never gives me time.
sostratos. I don’t suppose you have; at least you talk
Like one with no experience in love.
You tell me to back off. The god* alone
Can stop me; it’s no longer up to me.
gorgias. Well then, you’re doing us no wrong, but you
Are suffering pointlessly.
sostratos. Not, if I win
The girl.
gorgias. You’ll never win her, as you’ll see,
If you will come with me and stand by him;
He’s working in that valley just near us.
sostratos. Well then?
gorgias. I’ll make some chance remark about
Her marrying; for I myself would love to see
This happen. Straightway he’ll have it in
For everyone, and shout abuse at how
Men lead their lives. And if he sees you there,
Idle and proud, he won’t endure the sight.
sostratos. Is he there now?
gorgias. He’s not, but very soon
He’ll come out by his usual way.
sostratos. My friend,
Do you think he’ll bring the girl with him?
gorgias. He may,
Or maybe not.
sostratos. I’m ready then to go
Dyskolos

Who may be rough but hates all wickedness,
Surely he must be blessed who wins this girl.

[He shoulds the mattock

This mattock weighs a ton. It'll be the death
Of me. But still I must not now go soft,
When I have just begun to sweat it out. [Exit to the left

Enter sikon, the cook, from the right, carrying a sheep; getas
follows, well behind.

Sikon. A fine sheep I've got here, remarkable!
O, go to hell! If I lift him off the ground
And carry him, he gets hold of a fig branch
In his mouth and eats the leaves and pulls like mad.
But if I put him on the ground, he won't
Budge on. Our roles are topsy turvy; I,
The cook, am cut to pieces by the sheep,
As I haul him along the road just like a ship.*
But here with any luck must be the shrine
Where we will sacrifice. So greetings, Pan!
Hey! Getas, are you left so far behind?

Getas emerges, carrying a mass of rugs and other clobber.

Getas. Yes, for those blasted women tied a load
Four asses could not carry on my back.
Sikon. It looks as if a fairish crowd is due.
What stacks of rugs you're carrying!

Getas. What should I

Sikon. Do now?

Getas. Then there you are.

You see, if she should have a dream and see
Pan of Paania,* we'll be off for sure
To him at once, to make a sacrifice.
Sikon. Who saw a dream?

Getas. Don't wear me out, man.
Sikon. Do tell me, Getas, who was it saw the dream?

Getas. My mistress.

The Bad-Tempered Man

Sikon. Tell me what she dreamt she saw.

Getas. You'll do for me. She thought that the god Pan—

Sikon. This Pan?

Getas. Yes, this—

Sikon. Was doing what?

Getas. Took hold of my young master, Sostratos,
Sikon. A nice young man—

Getas. And fastened fetters on

His legs—

Sikon. Good god!

Getas. Then gave him a rough coat
And fork and ordered him to dig the plot
Near by.

Sikon. How weird!

Getas. And that is why we have
To sacrifice, so that this fearful dream
May turn out for the best.

Sikon. I understand.
Lift up this stuff and carry all inside.
Let's make some pretty beds of straw in there
And get all else prepared. Nothing must stop
The sacrifice when they at last arrive,
May all go well! Stop frowning, you poor chap!
I'll fatten you up properly to-day. [Exit sikon into the shrine

Getas. Well, I have always praised you and your skill,
But all the same I don't trust you an inch. [Exit into the shrine

Choral Interlude

ACT 3

Kneemon comes out of his house, speaking to Simiche over his shoulder.

Kneemon. Now lock the door, old woman; open up
To none till I return again, and that
Will be when it's completely dark I think.
Dyskolos

The party of worshippers appears from the right, led by Sostratos’ mother, who is followed by her daughter, Plangon, the piper, and slaves. K nemon watches from his door.

Sostratos’ mother. Plangon, come on, speed up; we should have made
The sacrifice by now.

K nemon. What’s this to-do?
A mob of people! oh, to hell with them.
Mother. Come, Parthenis, and play your pipe for Pan.
They say that one should not approach this god
In silence.

Enter Getas from the shrine.

Getas. Lord! You’re safely here at last.

K nemon [aside]. Good god, how odious!

Getas. We’ve hung around
For ages waiting.

Mother. But is everything
All ready for us?

Getas. Yes, it is. At least
The sheep is ready—almost dead.

Mother. Poor thing!
It will not wait for you to take your time.
Go in and get the basket* ready and
The holy water and the sacred grain.

[To K nemon] What are you gaping at, you half-wit, you?

Enter with the sacrificial procession into the shrine

K nemon. O, go to hell the lot of you! They stop
Me working. For I can’t desert the house
And leave it empty. But the Nymphs next door
Are a perpetual plague; I think I’ll have
To move again—knock down the house and go.
The sacrifices that these devils make!
They bring their picnic hampers and their jars
Of wine not for the gods but for themselves.
A pinch of incense and a holy cake
Are offerings of true piety; they’re burnt
And god receives them all. But they put on

The Bad-Tempered Man

The altar for the gods only the tail
And gall bladder, the parts they cannot eat,
And guzzle down the rest themselves.* Old hag,
Open the door at once. For I suppose
I must get on with jobs inside the house. [Exit into his house

Enter Getas from the shrine, talking to someone inside.

Getas. Forgot the stewing pot, you say? You must
Be sleeping off an orgy. So now what
Are we to do? Pester Pan’s neighbours, I
Suppose.

[He crosses to K nemon’s door and calls
Hey, boy! [He waits] By god, I do not think
There are more useless servants anywhere.
Boys! Sex is the only thing they know about—
Hey, lovely boys—and telling slanderous lies,
If someone sees them at it. Come on, BOY!
What is the matter? BOYS! No one at home?
Hallo! there’s someone running to the door,
I think.

K nemon flings open the door in a rage

K nemon. Why are you pounding on my door,
You miserable man, just tell me that?

Getas. Don’t bite my head off.

K nemon. Yes, I shall, by god,
And swallow you alive.

Getas. God, don’t do that.

K nemon. Have you and I some contract, godless swine?

Getas. No contract. No, I’ve not come here to ask
Repayment of a debt—I’ve brought with me
No witnesses—but just to ask you for
A stewing pot.

K nemon. A stewing pot?

Getas. That’s right.

K nemon. You rogue, do you think I’d sacrifice an ox
And act the way you do?

Getas [aside]. I don’t suppose
You’d sacrifice a snail! [To K nemon] Goodbye, my friend.
The women told me to knock at your door
Dyskolos

And ask you; so I did just that. You have
No pot. Then I’ll go back and tell them so.

[He starts off back towards the shrine
Great gods, a grizzled viper, that he is.

[Exit into the shrine

Knemon. They’re murdering animals. They come straight up
And knock, as though I was a friend of theirs.
If I see one of them come near our door,
If I don’t make him an example for
The neighbourhood, consider me a mere
Nonentity. This man, goodness knows who,
Has got away with it—I can’t think how.

[Exit knemon into his house

Sikon comes out of the shrine shouting back to Getas.

Sikon. Well, damn you! He abused you, did he? Perhaps
You asked him like a shit. [To the audience] Some folk have no
Idea how they should do such jobs. I’ve learnt
Some skill in this. For in the city I do work
For thousands, and I pester those next-door
And borrow pots from all. One has to use
A little flattery when making a request
For something. So, if it’s an older man
Answers the door, at once I call him ‘Dad’
Or ‘Father’; older women I call ‘Ma’;
If middle aged, I greet her ‘Madam dear’;
If a young servant answers, say, ‘Good friend’;
But you deserve to hang! What ignorance!
‘Boy! slaves!’ you say. I’ll show you how it’s done.

[He goes to knemon’s door and knocks
Come out, dad, come, I want to speak to you.

[Knemon bursts out of the door

Knemon. What, you again!

Sikon. My word, what’s this?

Knemon. Me purposely, will you? Did I not tell
You ‘Don’t come near my door’? Give me the whip,
Old woman.

[He seizes hold of sikon

The Bad-Tempered Man

Sikon. No, stop that and let me go!

Knemon. I let you go?

Sikon. I beg you, please, kind sir.

[He wriggles out of knemon’s grasp

Knemon. Come back!

Sikon. God blast you!

Knemon. You still blathering?

Sikon. I came to ask you for a pot-bucket
Knemon. I haven’t got a bucket or an axe,
Or salt or vinegar or anything.
I’ve told my neighbours straight they’re not to come
Near me.

Sikon. You’ve not told me.

Knemon. Well then, I tell
You now.

Sikon. Yes, and worse luck for you. Could you
Not even say where I could go and get one?
Knemon. I warned you. Will you still keep nattering
At me?

Sikon. Good day, sir.

Knemon. I don’t want ‘good day’

From any of you.

Sikon. Then, bad day to you.

Knemon. This is intolerable!

[Sikon bursts out of the door

Sikon. He’s pretty well
Chopped me to pieces. What a thing it is
To make a polite request! It really makes
A difference! Should one try the other door?
But that’s not easy, if they’re all round here
So quick to put on gloves* and beat you up.
Perhaps it’s best for me to bake the meat?
I think it is. I’ve got a roasting dish.
Goodbye to the Phylasians! I’ll use
The things I’ve got to hand.

[Exit into the shrine

Sostratos. Enter sostratos from the left, rubbing his back and limping.

If anyone
Is short of troubles, let him come to hunt
In Phylé! Agony! Oh, what a state I’m in—
My back, my chest, my neck, the whole of me!
For I fell to at once like a young fool;
Swinging my mattock right up high, just like
A navvy, I dug deep and went at it
Much too industriously, but not for long.
Soon I kept turning round a bit to see
When the old man would turn up with the girl.
Then, heavens! I began, first furtively,
To feel my spine; and when an age had passed,
I started straightening out, but I was now
Becoming stiff as wood. And no one came.
The sun was scorching, Gorgias looked round
And saw me bobbing up and bobbing down,
With my whole body, like a pumping beam,*
‘I don’t think he’ll come now, young man’, he said.
At once I answered, ‘What are we to do?
Shall we watch for him tomorrow? but today
Let’s give it up.’ And Daos then appeared
To take my mattock over. So that’s how
My first attempt turned out. I’ve come back here;
By god, I can’t say why, but of its own
Accord the situation draws me here.

Enter getas from the shrine in a cloud of smoke; he shouts at sikon, who is inside the shrine.

getas. What is this? Do you think I’ve sixty hands?
It’s I blow up the charcoal, fly around
And bring the offal, wash and cut it up,
And make the cakes, and carry round the pots,
Although I’m blinded by the smoke. They think
I’m just the donkey at the festival.*

sostratos. Hey, Getas!
getas. Who’s that calling me?
sostratos. It’s me.
getas. And who are you? [rubbing the smoke from his eyes
sostratos. Can you not see?
getas. I see;

My master.
sostratos. Tell me what you’re doing here?
getas. We’ve just this moment made the sacrifice
And now we’re getting ready lunch for you.
sostratos. Is mother here?
getas. She’s been here ages.
sostratos. And father?
getas. We’re still expecting him. So in you go.
sostratos. I will, when I have done a little job.

[he turns to the audience

This sacrifice has proved quite opportune.
I’ll go in as I am,* and I’ll invite
This young man and his servant to the lunch.
For when they’ve shared our offerings, they’ll be
More useful allies in my marriage plan.

getas [grumbling to himself]. What’s that you say? You’re going to invite
Some friends to lunch? As far as I’m concerned
Ask thousands; for I’ve always known I should
Not get a taste. How could I? Bring them all
Along. You’ve made a splendid sacrifice,
Well worth a look. But would the womenfolk,
Delightful ladies, give a share to me?
God, no, not even just a lick of salt.

sostratos. Getas, it’ll be all right today. O Pan,
I’ll make this prophecy myself; but still,
I’ll always make a prayer to you when I
Pass by your shrine and I’ll be generous.*

[Exit to left to find gorgias and daos

Enter simiche from knemon’s house.

simiche. O misery, and misery again!
getas. O hell and blast! Some woman of the old
Man’s now appeared.
simiche. O, what will be my fate?
Wanting to save the bucket from the well
Myself, without the master knowing, if
I could, I tied the mattock to a weak
And rotten piece of rope, and then it broke—
GETAS [aside]. Ah, good!
SIMICHE. And so I've dropped the mattock too
Into the well to join the bucket. Oh!
GETAS [aside]. It's only left for you to throw yourself
In too.
SIMICHE. And master—what bad luck!—decides
To move some dung that's lying in the yard;
He's running round and looking for the fork
And shouting; now he's banging on the door.
GETAS [aside]. You poor old woman, run—he'll murder you—
Get out, or better still defend yourself!
KNEMON [bursting out of his door]. Where is the thief?
SIMICHE. Master, I did not mean
To drop it in.
KNEMON. Go on, inside!
SIMICHE. What do
You mean to do?
KNEMON. Do? Tie you up and let
You down the well.
SIMICHE. No, no, not that! alas!
KNEMON. I shall, and with the selfsame rope, by god.
GETAS [aside]. That's fine, if it is rotten through and through.
SIMICHE. Shall I call Daos from next door?
KNEMON. Call Daos, wicked hag? you've ruined me,
Do you hear me? Quickly, get inside! [Exit SIMICHE into the house
Ah me!

Unhappy in my isolation now,
Of all men most unhappy. I'll go down
Into the well. What else is left to do?
GETAS. Then we'll provide a hook and rope for you.
KNEMON [notices GETAS]. May all the gods blast you to bloody
hell,
You villain, if you say a word to me. [Exit into house
GETAS. That's fair enough. He's burst back in again.
What an unhappy man! What a life he leads!
The Attic farmer in his purest form!

The Bad-Tempered Man

Battling with rocks which bear nothing but sage
And thyme, he reaps a crop of pain and gets
No good from it. But I must say no more—
The master's here, bringing his guests with him.
They're local labourers. How very odd!
Why is he bringing them here now? How did
He get to know them?

Enter SOSTRATOS, GORGIAS and DAOs from the left.

SOSTRATOS. I will not allow
You to say no. 'We're all right thanks.' Good god!
Would anyone on earth refuse to come
To luncheon with a friend who's sacrificed?
For I have been your friend, you know, since long
Before I met you. [SOSTRATOS hands DAOs GORGIAS' tools
DAOS, take these things inside
And then come back.
GORGIAS [to DAOs]. Don't leave mother alone
But see to all her needs. I'll join you soon.
[Exeunt, DAOs into GORGIAS' house, SOSTRATOS and GORGIAS
into the shrine.

CHORAL INTERLUDE

ACT 4

SIMICHE runs out of KNEMON's house, shrieking.

SIMICHE. Won't someone help? O misery! Help! Help!

Sikon comes out of the shrine, grumbling.

Sikon. Good lord! by all the gods and spirits, please
Let us get on with making our libations.*
You wail, abuse us, beat us up! A most
Extraordinary house!

SIMICHE. My master's down
The well!
Dyskolos

sikon. How’s that?
simiche. How? He was climbing down
To get the fork and bucket out, when at
The top he slipped; and so he’s fallen in.
sikon. You mean that difficult old sod? Good lord,
He has done well! My dear old woman, now
It’s up to you.
simiche. What do you mean?
sikon. Why, get
A mortar or a rock or some such thing
And drop it on him from above.
simiche. Dear friend,
Go down the well.
sikon. My god, to suffer what
The man did in the story, fight the dog
In the well!* No Thanks.
simiche [shouts]. Where are you, Gorgias?

Enter GORGIAS from the shrine.

gorgias. I’m here. What is the matter, Simiche?
simiche. You ask me what? I tell you once again,
My master’s in the well.
gorgias. Here, Sostratos,
Come out.

Enter SOSTRATOS from the shrine.

Lead on and quickly go inside.

[Exeunt GORGIAS, SOSTRATOS and SIMICHE into
KNEMON’S house. sikon is left alone on the stage

sikon. The gods exist, by Dionysos! Yes.
You don’t give us a stewing pot when we
Are sacrificing; you’re too mean for that,
You wicked rogue? Then fall into the well
And drink it dry, so you can’t give a drop
To anyone. The Nymphs have punished him
For me, as he deserved. No one can wrong
A cook and get away scot-free. Our art
Is somehow sacred. But waiters you can treat
Just as you like. [Cries off-stage] What? Surely he’s not dead?

The Bad-Tempered Man

Some girl is weeping and bewailing her
Beloved dad.

[Lacuna of four lines; then three deficient; supplements speculative.]

That’s no concern of mine

He must be still alive. Someone perhaps
Has gone right down the well to rescue him;
They’ll tie him to a piece of rope and so
They’ll haul him up, that’s obvious. Oh, what
A sight! What do you think he’ll look like then,
Soaked to the skin and trembling? What a joke!
I’d love to see him, friends, by god, I would.

[He shouts to the women inside the shrine

But, women, pour libations for their sake
And pray the old man’s rescue—may it go wrong
And leave him lamed and crippled. For that way
He’ll be a harmless neighbour to Pan here
And to the folk who come to sacrifice.
That’s my concern too, if I’m hired to cook

[Exit sikon into the shrine

Enter SOSTRATOS from KNEMON’S house and addresses the audience.

sostratos. Friends, by Demeter, by Asklepios,
By all the gods, I never in my life
Have seen a man so nearly drowned, and so
Conveniently! What fun it was to watch!
For Gorgias, the moment we went in,
Leapt down into the well; the girl and I
On top did nothing; what were we to do?
Except she tore her hair and wept and beat
Her breast like mad. And I, the fool I was,
Stood by her, like her nurse, and begged and prayed
Her not to, gazing at that priceless work
Of art. But I cared less than nothing for
The casualty below, except I had to keep
On pulling him—that really was a bore.
And, god, I nearly sent him to his death
Three times at least; as I was gazing at
The girl, I let the rope go. Gorgias
However proved a true Atlas, held firm,
And finally has hauled him up. When he
Emerged, I came out here, because I could
Control myself no longer but almost
Dashed up and kissed the girl; I am in love
So desperately. I'm getting ready now—
They're rattling at the door!

The door opens and K Nem o n is wheeled out on a couch by G org i a s
and the G i r l.

God help me, what

Gorgias.

An extraordinary sight!

Knemon, Say if there's anything you want?

Knemon. What should I say? I'm not too good.

Gorgias. Oh, do cheer up!

Knemon. I have cheered up. For Knemon now will cease
to give you trouble for all time to come.

Gorgias. This is the evil consequence, you know,
of isolation. Do you see? Just now
You were within a hair's breadth of your death.
From now on, then, at your age, you must live
With someone to look after you.

Knemon. I know,
I'm not so well. Call me your mother, Gorgias,
And say it's urgent. Troubles alone, it seems,
Can teach us.

[Exit Gorgias to his house to fetch his mother;
Knemon appeals to his daughter
Daughter dear, please hold me tight
And help me up.

[Sos trat ros, seeing the girl putting her arms round
Knemon, is madly jealous and comes forward
Sost rat ros. O, lucky man!

Knemon. Why are
You standing there beside me, wretched man?
[Sos trat ros retires to the back of the stage

GORGIAS and his MOTHER enter while KNE MON stands to make
his harangue, supported by his DAUGHTER.

[Lacuna of five lines, then three line-endings; supplements speculative.]

Knemon. Listen, all of you; stand round me, while I tell you what I want.*
In the past I worked my heart out and I liked to work alone.
Neighbours seldom came to help me, so I managed by myself.
Gradually I came to realize I was better on my own.
Solitude became habitual; I would rather die than change;
Death is welcome if you cannot live the way you want to do.
Hear then what I have decided. Myrrhine and Gorgias,
You perhaps may not approve of what I've chosen; all the same,
None of you could ever make me change my mind; you must
give way.
One mistake perhaps I did make—thought myself alone of all
Self-sufficient, never needing anything from anyone.
Now I see that death may strike one, swift and unpredictable;
So I've found how wrong I was then. Surely one must always
have
Someone near to help. But, truly—I was quite unbalanced
then,
When I saw, tho' men's lives differed, profit was their only
goal—
I imagined no one ever would show kindness to another.
This it was that caused my blindness. Now one man, and one
alone,
Gorgias, has proved my error, showing true nobility.
I'm the man who never let him near my door, who never gave
him
Help at all, who never greeted, never spoke with courtesy—
All the same it's he has saved me. Any other man, quite fairly,
Might have said, 'You don't let me near. Now I'll not come
near to you.
You yourself have never helped us, now I'll give no help to
you.

[Gorgias shows signs of wanting to intervene
What's the matter, boy? So whether I am now about to
die—
Dyskolos

Which I think is very likely; I seem ill—or I survive,
I adopt you as my son, boy; all I own consider yours;
I entrust my daughter to you; you must find a husband for her.
Even if my health were perfect, I’d not find one; none would
ever
Satisfy me. As for Knemon, if I live, then let me live
As I wish. All else take over; manage things yourself. You are
Sensible, thank god, and care for your own sister, as you
should.
Split in two all my possessions; give one half to her as dowry;
With the rest support your mother and myself. So much for
that.
[To his daughter] Lie me down. I hold that no one should say
more than he needs must.

This, however, you must know, boy; certain things I wish to say
Of myself, my way of living: if all men behaved like me,
Law-courts would exist no longer, men would no more haul
each other
Off to prison; war would cease then; all would live content
with less.
But perhaps you find more pleasure in your present ways—
good luck!—
This bad tempered misanthrope will be no longer in your way.
Gorgias. All of this I gladly welcome. Now we quickly have to find,
If you agree, a husband for her.
Knemon. Hey, I’ve told you what I think.
Don’t, for heaven’s sake, annoy me.
Gorgias. Someone’s here who wants to meet you—
Knemon. No!
Gorgias. He’s asking for your daughter.
Knemon. That’s no longer my concern.
Gorgias. He’s the one who helped to save you.
Knemon. Who?
Gorgias. He’s here.
Knemon. Come forward, you!

[Sostratos comes forward and Knemon has a good look at him

The Bad-Tempered Man

Well, he’s sunburnt; he’s a farmer?
Gorgias. Yes indeed, father, he is.
He’s no dandy, not the type to saunter idly all the day;
Six lines deficient; supplements speculative.
Knemon. I suppose then we must have him, if his family’s all right.
Gorgias, you give her to him and arrange this whole affair.
Wheel me in.
Simiche wheels Knemon into his house followed by Myrrhine
and Knemon’s daughter. Sostratos and Gorgias are left alone on the stage
Sostratos. Nothing’s left for you to do now but betroth your sister to me.
Gorgias. You must ask your father’s blessing
Sostratos. Father won’t oppose the match.
Gorgias. Then I call the gods to witness that I now betroth the girl,
Sostratos, to you and give her gladly, as is only right.
For you came to seek her hand with no disguise but open-hearted;
For this marriage there was nothing you were not prepared to do.
Spoiled you are, yet took the mattock, dug and laboured with a will;
This is how a man’s true nature is revealed, when though he’s rich
He’s prepared himself to lower to the level of the poor.
Such a man will bear with courage all the changes chance may bring.
Proof you’ve given of your nature; may you only stay that way.
Sostratos. Why, I hope I get much better. But self-praise perhaps is vulgar.

Kallippides appears on the far right of the stage.

There, I see my father coming, smack on time.
Gorgias. He’s your father?
Sostratos. Sure, that’s father.
Dyskolos

GORGIAS. He's a millionaire, by god; He certainly deserves his riches; he's a farmer none can beat.

KALLIPPIDES. I suppose I've been abandoned; they have eaten all the sheep, Gone away back to the farm now.

GORGIAS. God, he really does seem famished! Shall we tell him all this moment?

SOSTRATOS. Better wait for him to lunch. He'll be more amenable then.

KALLIPPIDES. Finished?

SOSTRATOS. Yes, but plenty's over. In you go! I'm going now. 780

[Exit into shrine

GORGIAS. If you like, go to your father; you can talk to him alone.

SOSTRATOS. You will stay inside then, won't you?

GORGIAS. Yes, I shall not stir from there.

SOSTRATOS. Well, I shall not be a moment. Then I'll call you out to us.

[Exeunt—SOSTRATOS into the shrine, GORGIAS into KNEMON'S house

CHORAL INTERLUDE

THE BAD-TEMPERED MAN

For I know well the marriage is secure
That's made by a young man inspired by love.

SOSTRATOS. So I'm to have the young man's sister then,
Considering him good enough for us?

KALLIPPIDES. That will not do at all.
I have no wish to take at once a bride
And bridegroom who are paupers. It's enough
To have one in the family.

SOSTRATOS. You talk
Of wealth, a thing on which you can't rely.
For if you know that it will stay with you
For ever, keep it then; don't give a share
To anyone. But where you're not the master
And hold it not by right but by the gift
Of Fortune, father, don't begrudge a share
Of this to anyone. For Fortune may
Take all from you and hand it on perhaps
To someone less deserving than yourself.
And so I say that all the time you have
It, father, you should use it generously,
To help all men and through your means enrich
As many as you can. Such deeds will live,
And if you chance to fall yourself some time,
You will receive a fair return from them.
Far better, father, is a friend you see
Than hidden treasure buried underground.

KALLIPPIDES. You surely know my nature, Sostratos;
I shall not carry with me to the grave
What I have gained. How could I? It is yours.
You want to make a man your friend for good;
You've tested him? Then do so, and good luck!
Why preach at me? Get on with it; you're right.
Give, share! I'm totally convinced by you.

SOSTRATOS. And willingly?

KALLIPPIDES. Yes, willingly; that need.

Not worry you.
Then I'll call Gorgias.

Enter Gorgias from Kneon's house.

Gorgias. As I was coming out, I overheard
Beside the door all that you said from start
To finish. Well then? Sostratos, I think
You are a loyal friend, and I'm remarkably
Attached to you. But I don't wish to take
On what's too much for me, nor, if I wished,
Could I do so, I swear.

Sostratos. What do you mean?
Gorgias. I give my sister to you as your wife;
But as for marrying yours, I'd like to, but—
Sostratos. Why 'like to but'?
Gorgias. No pleasure, in my view,
Can come from living in the luxury
That's won by others' work; a man must make
His way himself.

Sostratos. That's rubbish, Gorgias.
You're worthy of this marriage, don't you think?
Gorgias. I consider myself worthy of her, yes,
But when I have so little, count myself
Unworthy to receive so much.

Kalllippides. Almighty god!
Your sense of honour makes you go too far.
Gorgias. What do you mean?
[The following seven lines are mutilated and their meaning disputed.]

Kalllippides. You have no money yet you want
To seem to other people to be rich.
You see I've been convinced. Give way yourself.

Gorgias. You have convinced me by your words. I would
Be doubly sick, in purse and mind, if I
Refused the only man who offered me
Security.

Sostratos [to his father]. That's splendid. Now what's left
For us to do except to give our word?
Speed up!

sostratos. This way. [To his mother in the shrine] Mother, you must receive
These ladies. [To Gorgias] Knemon not yet here?
gorgias. Not here!

sostratos. What a type! invincible!
gorgias. That’s what he’s like.
sostratos. Goodbye to him then! Let us go inside.
gorgias. But, Sostratos, I’m shy of being in
The company of women—
sostratos. Nonsense, man!
Come, in you go! Now we must think we’re all
One family.

[Exeunt Gorgias and Sostratos into the shrine

Enter Simiche from Knemon’s house, speaking over her shoulder to Knemon.

Simiche. I’m going too. And you
Will lie here on your own. Unhappy man!
What a sad character! When they all wished
To bring you to the god you still refused.
A heap of trouble is in store for you,
By both the goddesses,* much worse than now.

[Enter Getas, speaking to someone in the shrine.

Getas. I will go in and see how Knemon is.

[The pipe plays*

Getas. Why play your pipe at me, wretch? I have no time for
that yet.

They’ve sent me here to see the poor old invalid. So belt up!
Simiche. Yes, one of you must go inside and sit yourself beside
him.

I’m losing my young mistress, so I want to have a chat first,
To talk to her, kiss her goodbye.

Getas. That’s sensible. Go on then.

I will look after him a while.

[Exit Simiche into the shrine

The Bad-Tempered Man

I made my mind up long since
To take this opportunity, but had to work a plan out.
[Two lines mutilated; supplements speculative.]
Now let me see how Knemon is. If he’s awake, I can’t yet
Begin what I have planned to do.

[He peeps in at the door

Ah good, he’s sound asleep. Cook!

Sikon, come out here, come to me and hurry up! Good heavens,
What splendid fun I think we’ll have!

Enter Sikon from the shrine.

Sikon. You calling me?

Getas. You want to get your own back now for what you went
through lately?

Sikon. What I went through? You bugger off, you and your
bloody nonsense.

Getas. That difficult old rogue’s asleep and all alone.

Sikon. How is he?

Getas. Not altogether down and out.

Sikon. Could he stand up and hit us?

Getas. He could not stand at all, I think.

Sikon. What lovely news you give me!

I’ll go inside and ask for something. He will go quite bonkers!

Getas. But look! Suppose we drag him out and then we dump
him down here,

Bang at his door, and ask for things, and get him really heated.

I say, there’ll be some fun in that!

Sikon. It’s Gorgias I’m feared of—

If he should catch us on the job, he’d beat us up and thrash us.

Getas. There’s such a din inside the house; they’re drinking; they
won’t hear us.

In any case we’ve got to tame the fellow. We’re related;
He’s now one of the family; suppose he never changes,
Shall we not have an awful job to tolerate his manners?

Sikon. Then just take care that no one sees you while you hump
him out here.
Dyskolos

GETAS. You lead the way!

SIKON. Please wait a bit. Don’t steal away without me.
   For heaven’s sake don’t make a noise.

GETAS. I’m not, by Earth.
   [They enter the house and carry out the sleeping KNEMON]
   Keep right now.

SIKON. There!

GETAS. Dump him here. Now is the time.

SIKON. I’ll lead. All right. You [to the piper] keep time.
   [SIKON goes to KNEMON’s door and bangs loudly and rhythmically]
   Boy! Boys! Hey, lovely boys! boys! Hey!

KNEMON [waking up and groaning]. Oh dear, oh dear! I’ve had it.

SIKON. Hey, lovely boys! Hey, boys! Hey, boys! Come on!

KNEMON. Oh dear! I’ve had it.

SIKON [pretending to see KNEMON for the first time]. Who’s this? Do you
   come from this house?

KNEMON. Of course. What are you after?

SIKON. I want to borrow pans from you and trays.

KNEMON. Who’ll help me stand up?

SIKON. You’ve got some, surely. And I need seven tripods and
twelve tables.
   But boys, inform the staff inside. I’m pushed for time.

KNEMON. I have none.

SIKON. You’ve not got one?

KNEMON. I’ve told you so a thousand times.

SIKON. I’m off then.

KNEMON. Oh misery! How’ve I got here? Whoever was it dumped me
   Before the house?

GETAS [to SIKON]. You then be off! It’s my turn now.
   [GETAS bangs on the door]

Boy! Boys! men! women! porter!

KNEMON. Man, you’re mad. You’ll break the door down.

GETAS. Lend us nine rugs.

KNEMON. Wherever from?

GETAS. And eastern linen curtains
   One hundred feet in length.

KNEMON. I wish I had a whip from somewhere.

The Bad-Tempered Man

GETAS. Old hag! Where has the woman gone?

GETAS. I’ll try the other door here?
   [GETAS retires

KNEMON. Get out! Hag! Simiche! [SIKON approaches] May all the
gods blast you, you scoundrel.
   What do you want?

SIKON. I want to have a big bronze wine bowl from you.

KNEMON [tries to get up]. Who’ll help me up?

GETAS. You have the drapes, you really have them, grandad.

KNEMON. I’ve not by god!

And no wine bowl?

SIKON. I’ll murder that old woman.

SIKON. Sit down, don’t make a sound. You flee from crowds; you
   hate the ladies;
   And you refuse to let us take you out to join the party
   With people making sacrifice. You must endure these tortures;
   There’s no one here to help you now. So bite your lips and
   listen

[Six lines deficient; supplements speculative.]
   To all we did inside the shrine, preparing for the weddings.
   First, when the ladies from your place had come along to join us,
   Your wife and daughter were embraced and shook our hands
   in greeting.
   They really did enjoy themselves. And I was getting ready,
   Not far away, a party for the men here—you listening?
   Don’t go to sleep.

GETAS. No, don’t.

KNEMON. Oh dear!

SIKON. What’s that? You want to be there?
   Now listen to the rest of it. Libations were all ready.
   A couch of straw was being spread upon the ground. The
   tables
   I myself was laying out—that was, you see, my duty—
   You hear? I am the cook, don’t you forget.

GETAS. He’s coming round* now.
   [as SIKON warms to his description, his language becomes elevated
   and poetic]

SIKON. One man was pouring vintage wine into a hollow vessel,
Dyskulos

And mixing in the Nymphs’ clear stream, he went right round and offered
A toast to all the men; meanwhile another pledged the ladies.
You might as well pour water out into the sand!* You get me?
One of the girls, a trifle drunk, whose fair young face was shaded,
Took up the rhythm of the dance, from shyness hesitating
And trembling, but another girl joined hands with her and danced too.

GETAS. You’ve had a dreadful accident, poor man; now dance, now join in.

[GETAS tries to pull KNEMON to his feet

KNEMON. What do you want, you wretched men?

GETAS. Try harder; up and join in.

KNEMON. Don’t, my god, please, don’t.

GETAS. Then do you want us to lift you in?

KNEMON. What shall I do?

GETAS. Dance, dance!

KNEMON. Perhaps it’s better to endure the party there.

GETAS. That’s good sense.

We’ve won! Hooray! Donax,*

Enter DONAX from the shrine.

and you as well,

Sikon, now lift him up and carry him
Inside. [To KNEMON] But you, look out! For if we find
You stirring things again, you may be sure,
We’ll treat you pretty harshly. Someone give
Us garlands, torches!

[Garlands and torches are distributed to the actors; GETAS throws a garland to KNEMON

Here, this one’s for you!

[To the audience] Well, if you’ve all enjoyed our victory
Over this tiresome old curmudgeon, then

The Bad-Tempered Man

Boys, youths and men, give us a friendly clap.
And may that noble, laughter-loving maid,
Victory, attend us always as our friend.
Explanatory Notes

The Bad-Tempered Man (Dyskolos)

4 the shrine: the shrines of Pan were often caves and there was such a shrine not far from the village of Phyle, in which dedications to Pan and the Nymphs have been found. For the purposes of the play Menander has placed it near Knemon’s house and has made it large enough to hold a considerable gathering.

5 Cholargos: this was a deme of the city of Athens, some twenty miles from Phyle.

6 to the Nymphs: the Nymphs, spirits of water and trees, were often associated with Pan. The girl was putting garlands on their statues.

6 burn down the door: by ancient convention excluded lovers sometimes burnt down the door to gain access to the girl they loved.

9 Perseus: when Perseus was sent to kill the Gorgon Medusa, Athene, to help him, gave him winged sandals. He killed the Gorgon and carried off her head which turned all who looked on it to stone.

10 a park . . . a public meeting place: ‘park’, literally ‘a colonnade’; there were several colonnades in the Agora of Athens where people would meet and talk. ‘Public meeting place’, literally ‘the shrine of Leos’, a hero whose shrine was a common meeting place.

10 heavenly Twins: Castor and Pollux.

14 Some credit: a metaphor from finance.

14rouses pity: juries in the Athenian courts were particularly sympathetic to poor litigants who would appear in rags etc. to rouse their pity.

15 Two talents: this was a considerable sum; Kallippides, a millionaire, gives three talents as the dowry for his daughter.

16 The god: i.e. the god of love, Eros.

18 just like a ship: ships were sometimes hauled on rollers across an isthmus to shorten a journey; this must have been a bumpy passage.

18 Paiania: Paiania was a deme about twenty miles from Phyle where there was a shrine of Pan.

20 the basket: the sacred basket contained items needed for a sacrifice—the sacrificial knife, barley grains for scattering on the victim’s head, etc.

21 the rest themselves: when an animal sacrifice was made, only the inedible parts were burnt on the altar for the gods; the rest, as Knemon says, was divided up and eaten by the worshippers.

23 put on gloves: literally, ‘engage in sparring practice’; in ancient boxing, gloves were worn for sparring, leather thongs for contests.

24 pumping beam: this was a pivoted beam used for drawing water from wells etc.; ‘a rope carrying a bucket was attached to the longer arm, a counterweight to the shorter; hauling on the rope allowed the bucket to descend into the well; the rope was then released and the counterweight caused it to bring the full bucket to the surface’ (Sandbach).

24 the donkey at the festival: an adaptation of the proverbial expression ‘I’m the donkey celebrating the Mysteries’; the donkey carried a load of sacred utensils etc. while the humans enjoyed themselves.

25 as I am: i.e. without bothering to dress up in his fine cloak again.

25 be generous: i.e. he will give generous gifts to Pan.

27 libations: drink offerings made as a preliminary to a sacrifice.

28 the dog | In the well: in Aesop’s fables when a gardener went down a well to rescue his dog, who had fallen in, the dog bit him.

31 God help me, what: the metre changes to trochaics for the remainder of this scene.

38 By both the goddesses: i.e. Demeter and Persephone, a common women’s oath.

38 from this point the dialogue (in iambic tetrameters catalectic) seems to have been accompanied with music.

41 He’s coming round: the Greek means literally: ‘the man’s soft’; on this interpretation Getas means Knemon is softening on his resolve not to join the party.

42 pour water out into the sand: i.e. women’s thirst for wine can never be satisfied, an old canard.

42 Donax: a slave called in just to help carry off Knemon.