

# The Eunuch

*(Eunuchus)*

First performed in Rome at the Megalesian Games, April 161

## INTRODUCTORY NOTE

At its first performance, *The Eunuch* was an unprecedented success on the Roman stage, being brought back for a second performance on the same day and awarded a considerable sum of money as a special reward. It is based on a play of the same name by Menander for which we have very little independent evidence; but Terence tells us in the prologue that he has added the characters of the parasite and soldier (Gnatho and Thraso) from another play by Menander, *The Toady*. A certain amount of this play has survived (in fragments, included as *The Flatterer* in the Oxford World's Classics edition of Menander, pp. 232–40), but we are unable to reconstruct much of its plot in detail, and very little of what has survived overlaps with Terence's play. It is likely that the purely episodic scenes of Gnatho's entrance monologue (232–64) and Thraso's boasting (391–433) derive from *The Toady*, but beyond that it is impossible to determine with confidence the extent to which these new characters have brought with them elements of plot or details of characterization. Particularly at the end of the play, where Gnatho dominates and Thraso is made an object of mockery, we cannot say in what respects Terence has had to adjust the ending of Menander's *Eunuch* to fit these characters in.

The addition of these stock comic characters was no doubt a factor in the play's original success. But it is also in general one of Terence's liveliest plays, from the opening scene onwards; the interaction of the characters is dramatic, the action moves rapidly forwards, and there are also lively descriptions of off-stage action. However, it is one of these descriptions that brings us to a moral problem (for modern audiences) at the heart of the play. Chaerea, an impetuous 18-year-old boy, falls in love with Pamphila on seeing her in the street. He learns that she is being presented by Thraso as a gift to the prostitute Thais, with whom his own elder brother Phaedria is also in love, and that Phaedria is planning to give Thais a eunuch. Disguising himself as the eunuch, Chaerea has himself presented to Thais and is put in charge of Pamphila; before long he finds himself on his own with her and seizes the opportunity to rape her. He then escapes from Thais' house and recounts his exploit to his friend

Antipho (at 549–606); Chaerea is overjoyed and triumphant about the entire adventure, although we subsequently learn that he has torn Pamphila's clothes and hair and left her in a flood of tears. To his further delight, it turns out that Pamphila, whom he had believed to be a slave-girl in the house of a prostitute, is in fact the daughter of a respectable Athenian family who had been kidnapped as a small child and sold into slavery. This means that he can marry her (once her identity has been established), an outcome with which he is more than satisfied.

Chaerea's rape of Pamphila is the central action of the play; the disguise which enables him to carry it out is what gives the play its name, and his description of his exploit is the climax of the first half. At no stage does he express any regret for his brutality, nor is he made to suffer any more than the embarrassment of being seen in public dressed as a eunuch. It is easy to condemn his behaviour, to condemn Terence for making him the hero of his play, and to condemn the Roman audience for greeting it so enthusiastically. On the other hand, Chaerea is no heartless seducer but a young man who acts very much on impulse, knowing nothing of Pamphila's background; it is unlikely that the deflowering of a prostitute's slave-girl would have been felt by society at large (or by the predominantly male citizen audience) to be a serious offence, and it is not surprising that for Chaerea one aspect of the adventure is that it gives him a chance to play a trick on a prostitute (382–7). He gets his girl without having to pay for her, in circumstances that call for speedy action; from his perspective, it is an entertaining escapade, not a serious outrage. From the audience's perspective, it is also relevant that Pamphila is really of Athenian citizen birth; if such a girl had acquiesced willingly in her seduction, that would have reflected very badly on her, and it is partly for the sake of her reputation that the playwright represents her as an unwilling victim. (See the section on 'Ancient attitudes to rape' towards the end of the Introduction for a fuller discussion of this point.)

The rape of Pamphila is also central to the plot-construction. The audience knows that Thais is trying to find Pamphila's family, in the hope that she can make her own position at Athens more secure by helping some citizens. The fact that she has failed to protect the girl's virginity will not be a point in her favour, and she herself

regards it as a disaster at 827 ff. However, in the end it leads to help from an unexpected quarter. Thais can identify the rapist, and he is very keen to marry Pamphila when he discovers she is a citizen. But Pythias' determination to punish Parmeno for suggesting the exploit to Chaerea (910–1024) also leads indirectly to the intervention of Chaerea's father, who would not otherwise have interested himself sufficiently to offer Thais his patronage and protection and allow her to continue her relationship with Phaedria. Thus Chaerea's unpremeditated and irresponsible act leads to a happy outcome for himself, for Phaedria, and for Thais (and perhaps even, by ancient standards, for Pamphila); Thais achieves her aim, but not as a direct result of her own efforts. The rape is a necessary catalyst for this outcome.

Thais, like Bacchis in *The Self-Tormentor*, likes to be given expensive presents. But the play throws more emphasis on her genuine affection for Phaedria, her wish to help Pamphila, and her need to secure her own position. Although her motives are repeatedly suspected by other characters, the audience is invited to take a more sympathetic view of her: suspected by others of plotting deviously for her own selfish ends, she is in fact (or so it seems at first) one of the victims of Chaerea's deception. She is not entirely selfless, and in her position she could not afford to be; but this does not prevent us from sympathizing with her, particularly when we see how unjustifiable are the suspicions of the other characters towards her.

Thraso and Gnatho are more straightforwardly comic characters, Thraso a traditional empty-headed and boastful soldier, Gnatho a parasite with the wit to feather his own nest at Thraso's expense. In the final scene, it is Gnatho who strikes a deal with Phaedria and Chaerea which both further secures his own position and enables Thraso to enjoy continued access to Thais (though quite what this will involve in practice is, perhaps wisely, left rather vague). On the surface, this is an inclusive ending in which all the characters get what they desire; but the emphasis at the very end is on mockery of Thraso. Curiously, this ending has shocked some readers who appear not to have been particularly perturbed by the rape in the middle of the play: they have thought it inappropriate for Thais' future to be decided for her in her absence, and they have felt it implausible that Phaedria (whom we have seen to be passionately possessive in his love for

Thais) should agree to share her with anyone. It was not unusual at Athens for a prostitute to be kept by a number of men at the same time (see the note on *The Girl from Andros* 87), but sharing with Thraso is not quite the ending to which Phaedria and Thais aspire. However, Terence's ending acknowledges certain economic necessities to which Phaedria and Thais cannot afford to be indifferent, and we are not invited to see the 'sharing' as much of a threat to their happiness.

As noted at the beginning of the Introduction, *The Eunuch* is one of the plays (together with Plautus' *The Braggart Soldier*) used by Udall in the seminal sixteenth-century comedy *Ralph Roister Doister*. Matthew Merrygreek's monologue in the opening scene is modelled on Gnatho's at 232–64; Roister Doister and Merrygreek attack the house of Dame Custance at the end of Act IV, in a scene reminiscent of *The Eunuch* 771–816; and the reconciliation at the end of Act V has something in common with the ending of Terence's play. In general, the boastful soldier has been a popular figure in European comedy, but it is usually easier to detect echoes of *The Braggart Soldier* than of *The Eunuch*. The Swiss playwright Carl Zuckmayer caused a scandal in Germany in 1923 by putting on a very free adaptation of *The Eunuch* in Kiel, with contemporary references: it ran for one night only, since the performance resulted in the instant closure of the theatre by the police.

## Characters

- PHAEDRIA, a young Athenian citizen, in love with Thais  
PARMENO, a slave in the household of Phaedria and Chaerea  
THAIS, a prostitute  
GNATHO, a parasite, hanger-on of Thraso  
PAMPHILA, a girl aged about 16, kidnapped in infancy and sold into slavery (non-speaking part)  
CHAEREA, Phaedria's younger brother, aged 18–19, in love with Pamphila  
THRASO, a mercenary soldier  
A BLACK WOMAN, a slave (non-speaking part)  
PYTHIAS, a slave-girl owned by Thais  
CHREMES, a young Athenian citizen, brother of Pamphila  
DORIAS, a slave-girl owned by Thais  
ANTIPHO, a friend of Chaerea, aged 18–19  
DORUS, a eunuch slave  
SANGA, a slave owned by Thraso  
SIMALIO }  
DONAX } slaves owned by Thraso (non-speaking parts)  
SYRISCUS }  
SOPHRONA, a slave, former nursemaid in Chremes' household  
The FATHER of Phaedria and Chaerea  
Various slave-girls (non-speaking parts) at lines 228–83, 499–506, 738–810

## The Eunuch

### Prologue

(spoken by one of the actors)

If there is anyone who is anxious to please as many good men as possible, and to offend as few as possible, this author enrols himself among their number. And if there is someone who has thought that he was attacked rather harshly, he should think of it as a retaliation, not an attack, because he gave offence first—he's the man who by translating plays well and at the same time writing them badly has turned good Greek plays into bad Latin ones.\* Just recently he put on Menander's *Apparition*; and in his *Treasure* he made the defendant 10 speak first, to show why the money was his, before the plaintiff made his speech showing how he came to own that treasure and how it found its way into his father's tomb! Next, in case he's deceiving himself and thinking 'I've finished the matter off now; there's nothing he can say against me', I warn him not to get it wrong, and to stop provoking me; I have much more, which he will be let off now, but which will be brought forward later if he continues to offend me as he has begun to do.

As for the play that we're now about to perform, *The Eunuch* by Menander, after the aediles had bought it,\* he fixed things so that 20 he had a chance to look at it. When the officials were present, a run-through began.\* He cried out that it was a thief, not an author, who had put the play on, but that he hadn't put one over on him all the same. He said that there was a play called *The Toady* by Naevius and Plautus,\* an old play, and that the characters of the parasite and the soldier\* had been lifted from it.

If that wrong has been done, it was done through the author's ignorance, not because he was keen to commit a theft. That this is so, you will now be able to judge. There's a play called *The Toady* by Menander;\* in it there's a parasite (the Toady) and a boastful soldier. 30 The author does not deny that he has transferred those characters to his *Eunuch*, from the *Greek* play; but he does utterly deny that he knew those plays had been written previously in *Latin*. And if he's not

allowed to use the same characters as someone else has used, how is it more allowable to show a running slave, to make his mothers good and his prostitutes bad, [a parasite gluttonous and a soldier boastful,] to write about a supposititious baby, the deception of an  
 40 old man by a slave, love, hate, suspicion?\* In short, there's nothing said today that has not been said before. So it's right that you should acknowledge and allow it, if new writers do what old ones used to do.

Give us your attention, and concentrate in silence, so that you can really learn what *The Eunuch* is about.

*The play is set at Athens. The scene shows the exterior of two houses fronting a street, those of THAIS and of PHAEDRIA's family (on the right and left respectively, as seen from the audience). To the audience's left the street leads past the market to THRASO's house; to the right it leads past the houses of ANTIPHO and CHREMES to the countryside of Attica, where PHAEDRIA's family has a farm.\**

*Enter PHAEDRIA and PARMENO from their house.  
 PHAEDRIA is in the middle of an agitated debate with himself*

PHAEDRIA So what am I to do? Not go, even now when she sends for me herself? Or should I rather steel myself not to put up with the insults of tarts? She shut me out, she calls me back; should I go back? Not if she begged me!

*(More reflectively)* Well, if you could—nothing better or braver. 50  
 However, if you make a start but don't carry it through like a man, and when you can't bear it, when no one asks you, without signing a truce, you go to her of your own accord, showing that you love her and can't stand it, then it's all over; you can go home; you've had it; she'll run rings round you when she realizes you're beaten. So, while there's time, think about it over and over again!

PARMENO *(breaking in on PHAEDRIA's thoughts)* Sir, if a matter has no plan or control to it at all, you can't manage it according to a plan. Love contains all the following faults: wrongs, suspicions, enmities, truces, war, then peace again. These are uncertain things, 60  
 and if you expected to make them certain by thinking about them you wouldn't get any further than if you worked on a method for being mad. And as for what you're thinking to yourself now when you're angry—'Me visit her? When she's let him in? When she's shut me out? When she didn't . . . —Just let me show her! I'd rather die! She'll find out what sort of man I am!'—she'll extinguish those words with one little crocodile tear that she's only just managed to squeeze out with desperate rubbing of her eyes; *she'll* be the one who accuses *you*, and you'll be the one to take the punishment.

PHAEDRIA How intolerable! Now I realize that she's wicked and 70  
 I'm miserable. I'm sick of her, but I'm on fire with love; I'm dying, in full awareness and knowledge, alive and alert, and I don't know what to do!

PARMENO What is there to do but ransom yourself out of your captivity for as little as possible? If not for a small amount, at least for as little as you can—and don't torture yourself.

PHAEDRIA Is that your advice?

PARMENO If you're sensible, you won't add troubles to those that love already contains, and you'll put up properly with those that it does contain. (THAIS comes out of her house)

80 But look! She's coming out herself. She's the blight of our estate: she nips what we ought to reap!

THAIS (to herself, not seeing the others) Oh dear, I'm afraid Phaedria may have taken it rather hard and misinterpreted my behaviour in not letting him in yesterday.

PHAEDRIA (aside to PARMENO) Parmeno, I'm all of a shiver, I tremble all over, now that I've caught sight of her!

PARMENO (aside to PHAEDRIA) Cheer up! Draw nearer to this fire (indicating THAIS)—you'll soon warm up more than enough!

THAIS Who's speaking here? Oh! Are you here, Phaedria darling? Why have you stayed here? Why didn't you go straight inside?

PARMENO (aside) But not a word about the lockout!

THAIS (to PHAEDRIA) Why don't you answer?

PHAEDRIA (with bitter sarcasm) Naturally because this door is always open to me, of course—because you put me first!

90 THAIS (ingratiatingly) Don't go on about that!

PHAEDRIA What do you mean 'Don't'? O Thais, Thais, if only you and I had equal shares of love and felt it equally, so that either you were as upset as I am or I didn't care at all about your behaving like that!

THAIS Please stop torturing yourself, my sweet, darling Phaedria! I certainly didn't do it because I love or desire anyone more than you. But that was how things were: it had to be done.

PARMENO I suppose you were so much in love with him, poor girl, that you locked him out of your house—the way one does!

THAIS Is that what you're up to, Parmeno? OK. (Turning to PHAEDRIA) But listen and I'll tell you why I sent for you.

100 PHAEDRIA All right.

THAIS Tell me this first: is this man (pointing to PARMENO) capable of holding his tongue?

PARMENO What, me? Certainly. But look here, these are the terms on which I give you my word: if I've heard something true, I keep it quiet and keep it in perfectly well; but if it's false, if there's nothing to it, if it's made up, then it's out at once—I'm full of holes; I leak on this side and that. So if you want it kept quiet, tell the truth!

THAIS (starting on her story) My mother came from Samos; she was living at Rhodes.

PARMENO That can be kept secret!\*

THAIS (ignoring PARMENO's interruption) Well, a businessman there gave my mother as a present a small girl who had been kidnapped from here, from Attica.\*

PHAEDRIA A citizen?\*

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THAIS I think so. We don't know for certain. She herself told us the names of her mother and father; she didn't know her country and the other clues—she was too young to be able to. The businessman added that he'd been told by the pirates he bought her from that she had been kidnapped from Sunium.\* When my mother got her, she began to teach her everything properly, and to bring her up as if she were her own daughter.\* Most people thought she was my sister.

I left for here with a visitor who was my only lover at the time; and he left me everything that I've got here.

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PARMENO False on both counts; that'll leak out!

THAIS Why do you say that?

PARMENO Because you weren't satisfied with one lover, and he wasn't the only one to give you things: this man too (pointing to PHAEDRIA) has brought you a good and generous amount.

THAIS All right; but let me get to my point. Next, the soldier who had begun to be my lover set out for Caria.\* In the meantime I got to know you. Since then you know yourself how fond I've been of you, and how I discuss all my projects with you.

PHAEDRIA (coolly) Parmeno won't keep that quiet either.

PARMENO (ironically) Really? Is there any doubt about it?

THAIS Please listen, both of you! My mother died there recently. 130 Her brother's a bit on the greedy side when it comes to money. When he saw that this girl was good-looking and could play the lyre,\* he hoped for a good price; so he put her on the market at once and sold her. Quite by chance this lover of mine was there; he

bought her as a present for me, without knowing anything at all about this whole story. He came back. Since he realized that I was carrying on with you as well, he's been busy thinking up reasons not to give her to me. He says that if he could be sure I was going to rank him above you, and if he wasn't afraid that once I'd got the girl I'd abandon him, then he'd be prepared to give her to me; but he says that's what he's afraid of.—But what I suspect is that he's fallen for the girl.

PHAEDRIA Anything more than that?\*

THAIS No: I've made enquiries. Now, Phaedria darling, there are lots of reasons why I want to take her from him: first, because she was spoken of as my sister; also, so that I can restore and return her to her family. I'm on my own: I've got nobody here, no friend, no relative.\* That's why I want to get some friends by doing someone a favour, Phaedria. Please help me in that—help me over the difficulties: let him be my leading man for these few days. (PHAEDRIA does not respond)

Aren't you going to answer?

PHAEDRIA You bitch! Do you expect me to answer at all when you behave like that?

PARMENO Bravo, our man! Three cheers! At last you've got properly upset: you're a man!

PHAEDRIA Didn't I realize what you were leading up to? (He imitates THAIS' voice) 'A small girl was kidnapped from here; my mother brought her up as if she were her own; she was spoken of as my sister; I want to take her from him, so that I can return her to her family.'—Of course what all these words of yours come down to is this, in the last resort: I'm shut out, he's let in!

160 Why?—unless you love him more than me, and what you're afraid of now is that the girl he's brought with him might snatch that great man from you!

THAIS Me afraid of that?

PHAEDRIA Well then, what else is worrying you, may I ask? Is he the only one who gives you presents? Have you ever known my generosity towards you to be cut off? When you told me you wanted a slave-girl from Ethiopia, didn't I drop everything and look for one? Then you said you wanted a eunuch, because only the grandest ladies enjoy their services.—I found them; yesterday

I paid twenty minas\* for the pair of them. Despised by you though I was, I remembered them. In return for doing that, am I rejected by you? 170

THAIS (*appearing reluctantly to abandon her position*) All right then, Phaedria: although I want to get her, and I think this is the way it can best be done, all the same, rather than have you as an enemy, I'll do what you tell me to.

PHAEDRIA If only you spoke from your heart and honestly when you said 'rather than have you as an enemy'! If I believed that was said sincerely, I could put up with anything!

PARMENO He's tottering; he's overcome by one remark—and how quickly!

THAIS Me not speaking from my heart? That's not fair! What have you ever wanted from me, even in fun, that you didn't get? And can't I get you even to agree for a mere two days to what I want? 180

PHAEDRIA Well, if it's for two days.—But don't let it turn into twenty days!

THAIS Certainly not more than two days or—

PHAEDRIA (*interrupting*) I don't care for that 'or'.

THAIS It won't happen. Please just agree to this.

PHAEDRIA (*reluctantly*) Clearly I must do what you want.

THAIS Thank you so much, darling; you are kind.

PHAEDRIA (*resolutely*) I shall go to the farm. There I'll torture myself for these two days. That's what I'm resolved to do: Thais must be obeyed! You, Parmeno, see that they're brought over here (*referring to the Ethiopian girl and the eunuch*).

PARMENO Certainly. (*Exit into PHAEDRIA's house*)

PHAEDRIA For these two days, Thais, farewell!

THAIS Darling Phaedria, farewell to you. (PHAEDRIA stays rooted to the spot) Nothing else you want, is there? 190

PHAEDRIA Anything I want? That when you're with that soldier of yours you should be absent in his presence; day and night you should love me, long for me, dream of me, want me, think of me, hope for me, delight in me, be with me entirely! In short, you be my soul, since I am yours! (*Exit into his house, leaving THAIS alone on stage*)

THAIS Oh dear, perhaps he doesn't really trust me and is judging me from other women's characters. I know what I'm doing, and

I certainly know this for a fact, that I haven't made up any lies, and that no one is dearer to my heart than this man Phaedria. And whatever I've done in all this I've done because of the girl: I'm almost certain I've found her brother now, and a very well-born young man he is too; and he's agreed to come to my house today. I'll go inside and wait till he comes. (*Returns to her house. After a short pause, PHAEDRIA and PARMENO reappear from their house; PHAEDRIA is now ready to set off to his family's farm in the country*)

PHAEDRIA See that they're brought over, as I said!

PARMENO I shall.

PHAEDRIA But make sure!

PARMENO I shall.

PHAEDRIA But quickly!

PARMENO I shall.

PHAEDRIA Are your instructions clear enough?

PARMENO Oh what a question! As if it were difficult! If only you could get hold of something as easily as this will go to waste, Phaedria!

210 PHAEDRIA I'm wasting away too at the same time, and that's dearer to me! Don't be so upset about the other waste.

PARMENO I certainly won't; I'll do the job. No more instructions, are there?

PHAEDRIA Say as much as you can in praise of my present, and put her off that rival as much as you can.

PARMENO (*impatiently*) Oh—! I'll be sure to, even if you didn't tell me!

PHAEDRIA I shall go to the farm and stay there.

PARMENO Good for you!

PHAEDRIA (*starts to head off right, then stops*) But look here!

PARMENO What do you want?

PHAEDRIA Do you think I can hold out and put up with it, and not come back in the meantime?

PARMENO You? I certainly don't think so! Either you'll come back at once, or else later, in the night, you'll be driven here by insomnia.

220 PHAEDRIA I'll work on the farm, so that I'm utterly exhausted and go to sleep even if I don't want to.

PARMENO You'll still lie awake, and you'll be tired as well; that's all the difference you'll make!

PHAEDRIA Get away with you, you're talking nonsense, Parmeno. I just have to cast out this softness of heart; I'm spoiling myself. In fact couldn't I do without her, if I had to, even for a whole three days?

PARMENO What? An entire three days? Steady on!

PHAEDRIA The decision has been made! (*Exit right*)

PARMENO Ye gods, what sort of disease is this? To think that men can be so changed by love that you can't recognize them to be the same person! No one was ever less silly, more serious, or more self-controlled than he was. (*Sees GNATHO approaching from the left, with PAMPHILA and another slave-girl*)

But who's this heading in this direction? Damn! It's Gnatho, the soldier's parasite. He's bringing the girl with him as a present for Thais. Wow! What a good looker! I'll certainly put up a poor show here today with this decrepit eunuch of mine. She beats Thais 230 herself!

GNATHO (*not seeing PARMENO*) Gods in heaven, how one man surpasses another! What a difference there is between a fool and an intelligent man! Now this occurred to me as a result of the following: on my way here today I bumped into someone from here of my own rank and station, not a bad sort of fellow, who like me had devoured all his inherited wealth. I saw that he was rough, filthy and seedy, overgrown with tatters and time. 'Hey,' I said, 'what are you dressed like that for?' 'Since I had the misfortune to lose everything I had, look what I've been reduced to! All my friends and acquaintances abandon me.' At this I compared him with myself and felt nothing but contempt for him. 'What,' I said, 'you big drip? Have you got yourself into such a state that you haven't any hopes left to pin on yourself? Have you lost your wits 240 together with your wealth? Look at me! I've risen from the same position as yours. Look at my complexion, my smartness, my clothing; look at the condition of my body! I have everything without having anything; although there's nothing in the bank, there's no shortage either.' 'Yes, but unfortunately I'm no good at telling jokes or taking a beating.' 'What? Do you think *that's* how it's done? You're on quite the wrong track! That was *once* the type



that was in business, a long time ago, in the *old days*; I've got a *new* way to catch my bird—in fact I was the first to invent this method. There's a class of men who want to pass as outstanding in everything, but who aren't; they're the ones I hunt down. I don't lay myself on as entertainment for *them*; I'm the one who laughs at  
 250 *their* jokes, and I praise their wit at the same time. Whatever they say, I express my approval; if they then say the opposite, I approve of that too! If a man says no, I say no; if he says yes, I say yes. In short, I've given orders to myself to agree to everything. That's the trade with much the fattest profits nowadays!

PARMENO (*aside*) Smart fellow! He turns men from fools into complete lunatics!

GNATHO While we were talking like this, in the meantime we arrived at the market, and up there rushed, glad to meet me, all the sellers of fancy foods, the tunny-sellers, butchers, cooks, poulterers, and fishmongers, who've profited from me both before and after I'd lost my property, and who often still do. They greeted me, invited me to dinner, welcomed me home. As for him, when  
 260 the poor starving man saw that I was so respected and could earn my living so easily, then the fellow began to beg me to let him learn the trick from me. I told him to join my train, so that if possible, just as the schools of philosophers are named after the men themselves, so parasites will be called Gnathonists!

PARMENO (*aside*) Look what comes from lounging around and eating other men's food!

GNATHO But I'd better get on and deliver this girl to Thais and invite her to come to dinner. (*He catches sight of* PARMENO) But I can see Parmeno in front of her door looking upset. He's the slave of our rival. Everything's all right; clearly the fellows here are having a chilly time. I think I'll have some fun at this twit's expense.

PARMENO (*aside*) These people think Thais is theirs thanks to this gift.

GNATHO (*with exaggerated politeness*) Gnatho bestows the most  
 270 cordial greetings on his own very dear friend Parmeno. How's things?

PARMENO Static.

GNATHO So I see. I trust you don't see anything here that you'd rather not see.

PARMENO You.

GNATHO I can believe that; but there's nothing else, is there?

PARMENO Why on earth?

GNATHO Because you look upset.

PARMENO Not at all.

GNATHO Don't be. But what's your opinion of this piece of property? (*He points to* PAMPHILA)

PARMENO Not bad at all.

GNATHO (*aside*) I'm roasting this guy!

PARMENO (*aside*) How wrong he is!

GNATHO How much do you think Thais appreciates this gift?

PARMENO What you mean by that is that we've been thrown out of here. Look, everything goes up and down!

GNATHO I'll give you peace and quiet for six whole months to come, Parmeno, so you don't have to run to and fro or stay awake till dawn. Am I cheering you up at all?

PARMENO (*sarcastically*) Me? Gosh yes!

GNATHO That's how I generally treat my friends.

PARMENO Jolly good!

GNATHO I'm keeping you. Perhaps you were on your way somewhere else.

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PARMENO Nowhere.

GNATHO In that case would you mind doing a little something for me? See that I'm admitted to her presence.

PARMENO (*losing his patience*) Get on, then: go! This door is open to you now because you're bringing her (*referring to* PAMPHILA).

GNATHO (*on the point of entering* THAIS' house) I don't suppose there's anyone you'd like to have called outside from here? (*Goes into the house with* PAMPHILA *and the slave-girl*)

PARMENO (*to the absent* GNATHO) Just let these two days go by! Now you're in luck you can open this door with just one tiny finger; but I'll make quite sure that in future you don't get anywhere when you leap at it repeatedly with your feet!

GNATHO (*reappearing from* THAIS' house) Are you still standing here, Parmeno? I say (*ironically*), it couldn't be that you've been left here on guard, could it, in case some go-between from the soldier happens to come running to her secretly? (*Exit left, in order to return to* THRASO'S house)

PARMENO (*to GNATHO's back*) How cleverly you put it! Very surprising, of course, from a man who goes down well with a soldier! (*Catches sight of CHAEREA approaching from the left*) But I can see my master's younger son approaching. I wonder why  
 290 he's left the Piraeus; he's on public guard duty there at the moment.\* It must be something serious—and he's coming in a hurry; he's looking around for something.

CHAEREA I've had it! The girl's nowhere, and I'm nowhere, because I let her out of my sight. Where I'm to look, where I'm to search, who to ask, which way to go—I don't know! My one hope is this: wherever she is, she can't be kept hidden for long! What a beauty! From now on I wipe out all other women from my mind; I'm sick of these everyday figures!

PARMENO (*aside*) Now look! It's the other one! He's saying something about love. Oh their poor old father! Once *this* one  
 300 gets going, you'll say the *other* one was just fooling about and child's play in comparison with the results of this one's frenzy.

CHAEREA (*still not seeing PARMENO*) May the gods and goddesses destroy that decrepit man who held me up today! And me too, for stopping! And what's more, for taking any notice of him! (*He notices PARMENO*) But here's Parmeno! Hello!

PARMENO What are you upset about? Why are you all excited? Where have you come from?

CHAEREA Me? I really don't know—I don't know where I've come from or where I'm going to; I've completely lost track of myself!

PARMENO How's that?

CHAEREA I'm in love!

PARMENO What!

CHAEREA Now's your chance to show what sort of man you are, Parmeno. You know you've often promised me, 'Chaerea, just find someone to love—leave it to me; you'll see how useful I can be then'—when I brought all the food in the house to you secretly in  
 310 your room!

PARMENO Come on, silly!

CHAEREA Yes you did! Now please make your promises come true—and this is certainly a case it's worth exerting yourself for. The girl isn't like our local girls, whose mothers take care to give them drooping shoulders, and to make them bind up their breasts

so they look thin. If a girl's a bit better made, they call her a prize fighter and put her on a diet; even when girls are well-endowed by nature, they make them as thin as a rush with their treatment. That's what makes people fall for them! (*The last words are spoken with disgust*)

PARMENO What about this one of yours?

CHAEREA A different sort of look!

PARMENO Wow!

CHAEREA Her complexion's natural, her body firm and juicy.

PARMENO Age?

CHAEREA Age? 16.

PARMENO The very flower!

CHAEREA Now make sure you get hold of this girl for me, whether  
 by force or by stealth or by loan;\* I don't care how it's done, as long  
 as I get her!

PARMENO Look here, who does the girl belong to?

CHAEREA I haven't the faintest idea.

PARMENO Where's she from?

CHAEREA Just as little.

PARMENO Where does she live?

CHAEREA Can't do that one either.

PARMENO Where did you see her?

CHAEREA In the street.

PARMENO How did you come to lose her?

CHAEREA That's just what I was beefing about to myself as I came  
 along just now; and I don't think there's a single other person who  
 finds every piece of good fortune turning out more unfavourably  
 for him. What accounts for my bad luck? I'm done for!

PARMENO What's happened?

CHAEREA Listen: you know my dad's relative and contemporary  
 Archidemides?

PARMENO Of course.

CHAEREA While I was following the girl, he bumped into me.

PARMENO (*drily*) Most inconvenient.

CHAEREA No: quite disastrous! There are other things you can call  
 'inconvenient', Parmeno! I can honestly swear on oath that  
 330 I haven't set eyes on him for the whole of these last six or seven  
 months, except for now when I could least have wished it and it

1694  
+ 27115

was least called for! Well? Isn't that some kind of evil omen?  
What do you say?

PARMENO (*as before*) Certainly.

CHAEREA Up he runs to me at once, and from quite far off too, all bent and shaking, with his lips hanging loose, and grunting away: 'Hey, hey! You there, Chaerea!', he said. I stopped. 'Do you know what I wanted to say to you?' 'Tell me.' 'Tomorrow I've got a case on.' 'Yes?' 'Make sure you tell your father to remember to turn up  
340 to support me in the morning.' While he said this, an hour passed away. I asked if there was anything else he wanted; 'That's fine', he said. I left. When I looked over in this direction for the girl, she had just at that moment turned here into this street of ours.

PARMENO (*aside*) He must mean that girl, the one who was given as a present to *her* just now (*gesturing towards THAIS' house*).

CHAEREA When I got here, she was nowhere to be seen.

PARMENO (*to CHAEREA*) There were some people accompanying the girl, presumably?

CHAEREA Yes, a parasite and a slave-girl.

PARMENO (*triumphant*) It's her! You can go home; say no more; the shouting's over!

CHAEREA You're not concentrating.

PARMENO Yes I am.

CHAEREA Really? Do you know who she is? Have you seen her?

PARMENO I've seen her; I know who she is; I know where she's  
350 been taken off to.

CHAEREA What! My dear Parmeno, you know her? And you know where she is?

PARMENO (*indicating THAIS' house*) She was brought here to the tart Thais; she was given to her as a present.

CHAEREA Who's the wealthy man who can give her a present like that?

PARMENO The soldier Thraso, Phaedria's rival.

CHAEREA That's a hard part for my brother to play, by your account.

PARMENO Well, if you knew what present he's pitting against this present, you'd say so even more.

CHAEREA What ever is that? Tell me.

PARMENO A eunuch.

CHAEREA What? That hideous fellow he bought yesterday—that old man who's really a woman?

PARMENO The very one.

CHAEREA The fellow will certainly be drummed out of doors, present and all! But I didn't know this Thais lived next door to us.

PARMENO She hasn't done for long.

CHAEREA Damn it! To think that I've never seen her yet! I say, tell  
360 me: is she as beautiful as they say?

PARMENO Certainly.

CHAEREA But nothing compared with this girl of mine?

PARMENO There's no comparison.

CHAEREA I beg you, Parmeno, please see that I get her!

PARMENO I'll do my best; I'll give you my assistance; I'll help you. Nothing else, is there? (*Makes to move off*)

CHAEREA Where are you going now?

PARMENO Home, so that I can take those slaves to Thais as your brother told me to.

CHAEREA Oh that lucky eunuch, to be a present for that household!

PARMENO Why do you say that?

CHAEREA How can you ask? His fellow slave, the height of beauty, he'll see all the time indoors; he'll talk to her, he'll be together with her in one and the same house; sometimes he'll take his food with her, and from time to time he'll sleep next to her!

PARMENO What if *you* were now to become the lucky one?

CHAEREA What do you mean, Parmeno? Tell me!

PARMENO You could put his clothes on.

CHAEREA His clothes? What next? 370

PARMENO I could take you over instead of him.

CHAEREA I'm listening.

PARMENO I could say you're him.

CHAEREA I'm with you.

PARMENO You could enjoy those advantages you said just now he would enjoy: you could take your food with her, be together with her, touch her, play with her, sleep next to her.—After all, none of them knows you or has any idea who you are. Besides, you look just right, and you're the right age; you can easily pass yourself off as a eunuch!

CHAEREA Well said! I've never seen better advice given. Come on, let's go inside right now. Dress me up, take me over, take me as quickly as possible!

PARMENO What are you up to? I was only joking!

CHAEREA Rubbish!

PARMENO I've had it! What have I done? Help! (CHAEREA starts to push him towards the house)

Where are you pushing me? You're going to knock me over! Hey, listen! Stop!

CHAEREA Let's go!

PARMENO Won't you stop?

CHAEREA Certainly not!

380 PARMENO Just watch out that this isn't too hot-headed.

CHAEREA It certainly isn't. Let me do it!

PARMENO But look here, you'll get the bean; I'll get the shelling!\*

CHAEREA (*impatiently*) Oh—!

PARMENO We're committing an outrage!

CHAEREA Is it an outrage if I'm going to be taken into a tart's house and get my own back now on those torturers who quite despise us, boys like me, and always utterly torture us—and if I'm going to trick them just as we're tricked by them? Or should it rather be my dad who's tricked and deceived by me? Anyone who got to know about that would criticize it; but everyone would think this was treating the women as they deserve!

PARMENO All right: if you're determined to do it, I'll do it—but don't lay the blame at my door afterwards!

CHAEREA I won't.

PARMENO Is it an order?

CHAEREA An order? I insist; I command you! I won't ever try to pretend I'm not responsible. Follow me! (*He leads into the house*)

390 PARMENO (*following indoors*) I hope it turns out all right!

*After a short pause, THRASO and GNATHO enter from the left*

THRASO Very grateful to me Thais was, of course?

GNATHO Extremely.

THRASO Really? Is she pleased?

GNATHO Yes—but not so much by the present itself as by the fact that you gave it. She's really and truly cock-a-hoop over that!

PARMENO *reappears from his house*

PARMENO (*to the audience, referring to PHAEDRIA's presents for THAIS*) I've come out here to keep watch, so that I can bring them over when the time's right. But here's the soldier! (*He stays by the door, unseen by THRASO and GNATHO*)

THRASO I do have that gift, to be sure: everything I do makes me popular.

GNATHO I've certainly noticed it.

THRASO The king,\* for instance, always thanked me most profusely for everything I'd done. He didn't treat anyone else like that.

GNATHO A man with wit often uses his tongue to transfer to himself the fame that someone else has acquired with much labour. That's what you've got in you. ✓

THRASO That's it!

GNATHO So as far as the king was concerned you were—

THRASO (*interrupting*) Of course.

GNATHO (*unexpectedly varying the usual expression*) —the fruit of his eye!

THRASO Yes. Entrusted his whole army to me, all his planning.

GNATHO Amazing!

THRASO And if ever he'd had enough of people, or if ever he'd got fed up with his work, when he wanted to relax, as if—you know what I mean?

GNATHO Yes: as if he wanted to spit his depression out of his mind—

THRASO You've got it! On such occasions he used to take me off to dine with him alone.

GNATHO Gosh! A choosy king, by your account!

THRASO No, this is what the man's like: keeps very select company.

GNATHO No, none at all, I think, if he lives with you!

THRASO Everyone envious of me. Snapped at me behind my back. 410 I couldn't care less. Terribly envious of me, they were—but one quite excessively, the man he'd put in command of the Indian elephants. As he got more of a nuisance, I said 'I say, Strato, why are you so savage? Is it because you have beasts under your command?'

GNATHO Well spoken indeed! Clever! Wow! You slit the man's throat! What about him?

THRASO Struck dumb on the spot.

GNATHO But of course!

PARMENO (*aside*) Ye gods, what a wreck of a man! How pathetic!  
And what a godless man the other one is!

THRASO What about that other time, Gnatho—the way I scored  
420 off the Rhodian at dinner? (GNATHO *waits, as if eager to hear the  
joke for the first time*)

—Haven't I ever told you?

GNATHO Never. But please do. (*Aside to the audience*) I've heard it  
more than a thousand times!

THRASO This Rhodian I'm talking about, a young lad, was with  
me at dinner. I happened to have a floozy with me. He began to  
make up to her, and to poke fun at me. 'I say', I said to the fellow,  
'You're very impertinent. Are you hunting for meat when you're a  
hare yourself?''\* (GNATHO *roars with laughter*)

What is it?

GNATHO Clever! Smart! Fine! A1! Was that joke really yours? I  
thought it was an old one.

THRASO Had you heard it before?

GNATHO Often; and it's reckoned to be one of the best.

THRASO It's mine.

GNATHO He was just a boy who spoke his mind without thinking;  
430 what a pity he had to come up against your wit!

PARMENO (*aside*) Well, god damn you!

GNATHO Tell me, what about him?

THRASO Crushed. Everyone present dying of laughter. In short,  
they were all afraid of me from then on.

GNATHO Quite right too.

THRASO But look here, Thais suspects me of loving that girl:  
should I clear myself?

GNATHO Certainly not. On the contrary, you should increase her  
suspicion all the more.

THRASO Why?

GNATHO Need you ask? You know how dreadfully it roasts you if  
she ever speaks of Phaedria or if she praises him?

THRASO I do indeed.

GNATHO To stop that happening, this is the only remedy: when  
440 she mentions Phaedria, you must mention Pamphila at once. If

ever she says 'Let's get Phaedria in to drink with us', you must say  
'Let's call Pamphila out to sing for us'. If she praises his looks, you  
must counter by praising hers. In short, give her tit for tat, so as to  
cut her to the quick.

THRASO Well, if she loved me, then your plan would help, Gnatho.

GNATHO Since she longs for and loves the presents you give her,  
she's been in love with you for ages, and it's been easy for ages to do  
something to upset her. She's afraid all the time that you might one  
day lose your temper and distribute somewhere else the harvest  
which at the moment she reaps herself. 450

THRASO You're quite right. That hadn't occurred to me.

GNATHO You're joking! You just hadn't thought about it. Other-  
wise you would have thought of the very same thing so much  
better yourself, Thraso!

THAIS *comes out of her house*

THAIS I thought I heard the soldier's voice just now—and there he  
is. Hello, Thraso darling.

THRASO Thais my darling, my hot-lips, how are you? Do you love  
me for the lyre-player I gave you?

PARMENO (*aside*) How charming! What a way to begin on his  
arrival!

THAIS (*to THRASO*) Very much, as you deserve.

THRASO Let's go to dinner, then. (THAIS *hesitates a moment, as she  
is expecting CHREMES to call on her and does not want to miss him*)  
Get a move on!

PARMENO (*aside*) Look! Once again! Would you call him a  
human being?

THAIS (*to THRASO, recovering from her hesitation*) Whenever you  
like. I won't hold you up. 460

PARMENO (*aside*) I'll go up to them and pretend I'm just coming  
out now. (*Does so*) Are you setting off somewhere, Thais?

THAIS Oh—Parmeno... How kind of you... Today I'm going  
... (*Tries to make it clear to PARMENO by gesture that his presence  
is an embarrassment at this moment. But PARMENO refuses to play  
the game*)

PARMENO Where?

THAIS (*aside to PARMENO*) What, can't you see him?

PARMENO (*not as quietly as THAIS would like*) Yes I can, and I'm sick of the sight. Whenever you like, your presents are ready for you from Phaedria.

THRASO What are we standing around for? Why don't we set off?

PARMENO (*to THRASO, with elaborate politeness*) Please, I beg you to allow me, with your most kind permission, to give this woman the presents I want; let me meet and talk with her.

THRASO Very beautiful presents, I'm sure—as good as mine!

PARMENO Wait and see. (*Shouts into his house*) Hey, tell them to come out—the ones I told—tell them to be quick! (*A black woman appears in the doorway. PARMENO addresses her*) Come along, 470 you, over here. (*She obeys. PARMENO turns to show her off to the assembled company*) This girl's all the way from Ethiopia.

THRASO (*scornfully*) Three minas here.

GNATHO Scarcely that.

PARMENO (*turning back towards the house*) Where are you, Dorus? (*CHAEREA appears in the doorway, in oriental clothing*)

Come over here. (*CHAEREA does so. PARMENO turns to THAIS*)

There! There's your eunuch: what noble looks, and in the prime of life!

THAIS I must say, he is good-looking!

PARMENO (*turning to GNATHO and THRASO in turn*) What do you say, Gnatho? Can you find anything to despise? And what about you, Thraso?—No reply; that's praise enough. (*Turns to THAIS again*) Test him in literature, test him in gymnastics or music; I guarantee that he'll be expert in everything that a 480 well-born young man ought to know.

✓ THRASO I wouldn't mind that eunuch, even when sober if need be!

✓ PARMENO (*still addressing THAIS*) And the man who sent *these* 480 doesn't demand that you should live for him alone and that everyone else should be shut out on his account. He doesn't describe his battles or show off his scars or cramp your style, as a certain person does. But when it's no trouble, when you want it, when you've got the time, he's satisfied if you let him in then.

THRASO Clearly this is the slave of a man who's poor and miserable.

GNATHO Certainly no one who had the money to get someone else could put up with this man, I'm sure enough of that.

PARMENO (*to GNATHO*) Shut up, you! You must be lower than the lowest of the low. If you've brought yourself to suck up to this 490 man, I should think you're capable of trying to snatch the food from a funeral pyre!\*

THRASO (*impatiently*) Are we off yet?

THAIS I'll take these people inside first, and while I'm there I'll give the instructions I want to. Then I'll be right out. (*Goes indoors, taking with her CHAEREA and the black woman*)

THRASO (*to GNATHO*) I'm off; you wait for her here.

PARMENO (*sarcastically*) It wouldn't do for a general to go through the street in the company of his girlfriend. (*Exit right*)

THRASO (*to PARMENO's back, crushingly*) Why should I waste words on you? You're just like your master!

GNATHO Ha ha ha!

THRASO What are you laughing at?

GNATHO At what you just said—and because I'm thinking of that joke about the Rhodian. (*The door of THAIS' house starts to open*) But Thais is coming out.

THRASO (*to GNATHO*) Go ahead, run, make sure things are ready at home!

GNATHO OK (*Exit left. THAIS reappears from her house, together with some slave-girls. PYTHIAS also appears at the door*)

THAIS (*to PYTHIAS*) Be particularly careful, Pythias, if Chremes 500 happens to come here, to ask him first of all to wait; if that doesn't suit him, to come back later; if he can't do that, bring him to me.

PYTHIAS I'll do so.

THAIS Oh and what was the other thing I wanted to say?—Ah yes: look after that girl with particular care. Make sure you stay at home.

THRASO (*impatiently*) Let's go!

THAIS (*to the slave-girls*) Follow me. (*THAIS and the slave-girls go off left with THRASO. PYTHIAS goes back indoors. After a short pause, CHREMES enters from the right, talking to himself*)

CHREMES Yes, the more I think about it, this Thais is clearly going to do me a lot of harm. I could already see the first time she sent for me that she was cunningly trying to weaken my defences. Someone 510 might ask 'What did you have to do with her?'—I didn't even know her. When I arrived, she thought up a reason for me to stay

there. She said she was giving a party following a sacrifice to the gods\* and had some serious business to discuss with me. I suspected already that she was doing all this with malice aforethought. She sat herself next to me, devoted herself to me, tried to start a conversation. When it dried up, she came out with her questions: how long ago had my father and mother died? A long time ago, I said. Did I have a farm at Sunium? How far from the sea? I guess she fancies it and hopes to grab it from me. Finally, had I had a sister who'd disappeared from there as a child? Had there been anyone with her? What had she had on her at the time? Was there anyone who could identify her?—Why should she ask me all these questions?—Unless perhaps she's got the nerve to claim *she's* my sister who disappeared as a child all those years ago. But my sister, if she's alive, is 16, no older than that; Thais is a bit older than I am. Now she's sent for me again, begging me to come urgently. Either she should say what she wants or she should stop being a nuisance. I'm certainly not going to come a third time.

530 (*Knocks on THAIS' door*) Hey! Hey! Anyone in? It's me, Chremes!

PYTHIAS *opens the door*

PYTHIAS Oh you darling man!

CHREMES (*aside*) Didn't I say they were laying traps for me?

PYTHIAS Thais particularly asked for you to come back tomorrow.

CHREMES I'm off to the farm.

PYTHIAS Please do!

CHREMES I can't, I tell you.

PYTHIAS In that case wait here in our house till she comes back herself.

CHREMES Certainly not.

PYTHIAS Why, Chremes dear?

CHREMES Will you go to hell?

PYTHIAS If that's your firm decision, please step over to where she is.

CHREMES All right.

PYTHIAS (*calling into the house*) Go along, Dorias! Take this man quickly to the soldier's. (*DORIAS appears and takes CHREMES off left. PYTHIAS returns indoors. After a pause, ANTIPHO enters from the right*)

540 ANTIPHO (*to the audience*) Yesterday some of us lads down in Piraeus agreed on today for a club dinner. We put Chaerea in

charge of it and handed over our deposits; the place and time were fixed. The time's gone past; there's no sign of preparations at the place we said; the fellow himself's nowhere about, and I don't know what to say, or what to guess. Now the others have given me the job of looking for him, so I'll go to see if he's at home. (*THAIS' door opens. CHAEREA looks out of it, still in oriental clothing*) Who's this coming out of Thais' house? Is it him or isn't it? It is! What has come over the fellow? What's he dressed up like that for? What the hell's going on? I'm flabbergasted; I can't guess. But whatever it is, I'd like to try to find out from over here first. (*Stays on one side. CHAEREA comes out cautiously, looking round*)

CHAEREA No one here, is there? No one. No one following me from inside? No, no one. Can I at last let my joy burst out? O Jupiter! Now, now is the time when I could put up with death, 550 so that life couldn't spoil this joy with any sorrow! But to think that there isn't some busybody to come up to me now and follow me wherever I go, battering me to death with questions—asking me why I'm over the moon, why I'm so happy, where I'm going to, where I've come out from, where I got hold of these clothes, what I'm up to, whether I'm in my senses or off my head!

ANTIPHO (*aside*) I'll go up to him and do him this favour that I see he wants done. (*Does so*) Chaerea, what are you over the moon about? What's the point of this clothing? What are you so happy about? What are you up to? Are you in your right mind?—What are you looking at me for? Why don't you say something?

CHAEREA Oh you wonderful fellow! My dear friend, hello! There's 560 no one on earth I'd rather see just now than you!

ANTIPHO Please tell me what's going on!

CHAEREA No, please *listen*, for god's sake! You know this woman my brother's in love with?

ANTIPHO Yes; I suppose you mean Thais.

CHAEREA The very one.

ANTIPHO I remember hearing about it.

CHAEREA She was given a girl today as a present. Why should I bother to shout about her looks or praise them to you, Antipho? You know perfectly well what standards I set as an inspector of beauty. I've fallen for her!

ANTIPHO Oh really?

CHAEREA You'll say she beats all comers, I know you will, if you see her. To cut the story short, I'm in love with her. As luck would have it, there was a eunuch in our house that my brother had bought for Thais and who hadn't yet been taken over to her. So  
570 Parmeno, our slave, made a suggestion that I seized on.

ANTIPHON What was it?

CHAEREA You'll hear sooner if you keep quiet.—To change clothes with him and give orders to have myself taken there instead of him.

ANTIPHON Instead of a *eunuch*?

CHAEREA Yes.

ANTIPHON What on earth did you hope to gain by doing that?

CHAEREA What a question! To see her, to hear her, to be together with the girl I longed to be with, Antipho! No paltry reason, eh? No faulty reasoning? I was handed over to the woman. As soon as she'd got me, she was overjoyed and took me in to her house. She put me in charge of the girl.

ANTIPHON *Who? You?*

CHAEREA Me.

ANTIPHON Was that really safe?

CHAEREA She announced that no *man* was to go near her, and she ordered *me* not to leave her side but stay with her in the inner rooms, just the two of us together. I nodded, my eyes modestly towards the ground.

ANTIPHON (*ironically*) Poor man!

580 CHAEREA 'I, she said, 'am off to dinner'. She took some slave-girls with her; a few girls stayed to attend on my girl—they were apprentices. Immediately they got things ready for her to have a bath. I urged them to get a move on. While the preparations were going on, the girl sat in her room, looking up at a picture. The picture showed how Jupiter once sent down a shower of gold into Danae's lap, as the story goes.\* I began to look at the picture myself too, and because he had got up to much the same trick once upon a time, my spirit rejoiced within me all the more, to think that a god had turned himself into a man and climbed secretly over another man's roof to seduce a woman through the skylight. And what a god!

'The one whose thunder echoing loud on high  
Doth shake the topmost regions of the sky.'\*

Was I, a mere man, not to do the same?—Indeed, I did it just the same way, and gladly! While I was thinking all this over, in the meantime the girl was summoned for her bath. She went, she washed, she returned. Then the girls settled her on a couch. I stood by, waiting to see if they had any orders to give me. One came along and said 'Hey, Dorus, take this fan and fan her like this, while we have our bath. When we've had our bath, if you want to, you can have one too.' I took the fan, with a show of reluctance.

ANTIPHON How I wish I could have seen that shameless face of yours, and seen you standing there holding a fan, you great donkey!

CHAEREA She'd scarcely said that when they all rushed out of the room together and went off for their bath, making quite a noise—which is what happens when slaves are on their own. Meanwhile 600 the girl was overcome by sleep. I stole a glance at her sideways behind the fan, like this (*imitates the action*), surreptitiously. At the same time I looked round to make sure everything else was safe. I saw that it was. I bolted the door.

ANTIPHON What happened next?

CHAEREA What do you mean 'What happened next?', you joker?

ANTIPHON OK! I give in.

CHAEREA Was I going to lose the chance offered to me, so great an opportunity but so brief, so hoped for but so unexpected? If I had, then I really would have been what I was pretending to be!

ANTIPHON Quite so, quite so. But meanwhile what have you done about our dinner?

CHAEREA It's ready.

ANTIPHON Good for you. Where? At your place?

CHAEREA No, at Discus the freedman's.

ANTIPHON That's miles away—but all the more reason for us to get a move on. Change your clothes.

CHAEREA Where can I change? I've had it! My home is out of bounds now—I'm afraid my brother may be in there—and also 610 that my dad may have come back from the farm by now.

ANTIPHON Let's go to my house; that's the nearest place where you can change.

CHAEREA You're right; let's go. And at the same time I want to pick your brains about how I can get hold of that girl in the future.



ANTIPHO OK. (*Exeunt right. After a short pause, DORIAS enters from the left, holding some jewellery*)

DORIAS I must say, from what I saw of him, I'm terrified that he'll kick up a rumpus, he's so furious, or do some violence to Thais. When that young man Chremes arrived, the girl's brother, she asks the soldier to tell them to let him in. That immediately makes him angry, but he doesn't dare say no. Then Thais insists that he invite him to join them. She did that because she wanted to keep him there—it wasn't the time to tell him what she wanted to about his sister. Reluctantly, he invited him; he stayed. Then she begins chatting to him at once. But the soldier thinks a rival has been brought in before his eyes, and he wants to get his own back on her. 'Hey, boy!', he says, 'Go and fetch Pamphila to entertain us here.' She cries out 'Certainly not! *Her at a dinner-party?*' The soldier insists; it turns into a row. Meanwhile she surreptitiously takes her jewels off and gives them to me to take away. That's a sign: as soon as she can, she'll get away from there, I know. (*Enter PHAEDRIA from the right. He does not see DORIAS, who stays on her side of the stage*)

PHAEDRIA While I was on my way to the farm, I began thinking about one thing after another, the way you do when you've got some trouble on your mind—and everything looked pretty bad. To cut the story short, while I was thinking these things over, I went past the farm without noticing. I'd gone a long way beyond it before I realized. I turned back again, feeling very low. When I'd come right back to the turning, I stopped. I began to think to myself 'What? Have I got to stay here for two days on my own without her?—Well, so what? There's nothing to be done.—What? Nothing? If there's no way for me to touch her, well, won't I even be able to look at her? If that's not allowed, at least this will be. Loving from the edge of the side-lines certainly isn't nothing.' I went past the farm deliberately this time. (*PYTHIAS rushes out of THAIS' house*)

But what's this? Why's Pythias rushing out all in a flap?

PYTHIAS (*not seeing PHAEDRIA or DORIAS*) Damn! Where can I find that wicked, irreligious man? Where can I look for him? To think that he could have dared to commit such an audacious deed as this!

PHAEDRIA (*aside*) Help! I don't like the sound of this!

PYTHIAS What's more, the villain, after he'd tricked her, actually tore all the poor girl's clothes, and tore her hair too!

PHAEDRIA What!

PYTHIAS If I could get hold of him now, I'd be so glad to let fly at his eyes with my nails, the murderer!

PHAEDRIA Clearly while I've been away there's been some sort of rumpus in the house. I'll go up to her. (*Does so*) What's up? What's the hurry? Who are you looking for, Pythias?

PYTHIAS Ah, Phaedria! Me? Who am I looking for? Why don't you buzz off where you deserve to go, you and your nice presents?

PHAEDRIA What's the matter?

PYTHIAS Are you asking me? That eunuch you gave us—what a rumpus he's started up! The girl the soldier had given to my mistress—he's raped her!

PHAEDRIA What are you talking about?

PYTHIAS I've had it!

PHAEDRIA You're drunk!

PYTHIAS This is the sort of drunkenness I'd wish on my enemies.

DORIAS (*breaking in*) What! Really, my dear Pythias, what ever sort of monstrosity was that?

PHAEDRIA (*to PYTHIAS*) You're out of your mind; how could a eunuch do that?

PYTHIAS I don't know who he was, but the facts speak for themselves about what he did. The girl herself is in tears, and when you ask her she can't bring herself to say what's up. As for that good fellow, he's nowhere to be seen. Damn it, I even suspect that he stole something as he left the house!

PHAEDRIA I'm flabbergasted! Where could that feeble creature have got to? He can't have gone far: perhaps he's gone back to our house.

PYTHIAS Please go to see if he has.

PHAEDRIA You'll soon know for sure. (*Goes into his house*)

DORIAS Help! I'm dead! I've never even heard of such an unspeakable deed, my dear!

PYTHIAS Well, I had heard they were particularly keen on women but impotent. But it just didn't occur to me, damn it, or I'd have locked him up somewhere: I wouldn't have put him in charge of

the girl. (PHAEDRIA *reappears, dragging DORUS from his house. DORUS is wearing CHAEREA's clothes*)

PHAEDRIA Come on out, you wicked creature! Still hanging back, are you, you runaway? Come out! To think what I paid for you!

DORUS (*struggling*) Please!

670 PHAEDRIA Just look at how he's screwed up his face, the villain! What do you mean by coming back here? What's this change of clothes? Eh? (*Turns to PYTHIAS*) If I'd been a minute later, Pythias, I wouldn't have found him at home: he was all ready to escape.

PYTHIAS Tell me, have you got the fellow?

PHAEDRIA Of course I have.

PYTHIAS Thank god for that!

DORIAS That is a relief!

PYTHIAS Where is he?

PHAEDRIA What do you mean? Can't you see him?

PYTHIAS See him? Who, for heaven's sake?

PHAEDRIA This man, of course!

PYTHIAS Who's this fellow?

PHAEDRIA The one who was brought over to your place today.

PYTHIAS Not one of us has ever set eyes on *him*, Phaedria.

PHAEDRIA Not set eyes on him?

PYTHIAS Did you honestly think *this* was the man who was brought over to us?

680 PHAEDRIA Well, I didn't have anyone else.

PYTHIAS Really! There's no comparison between the two of them! That one looked handsome and noble.

PHAEDRIA That's what he looked like *then*, because he was dressed up in his colourful clothes. Now he looks ugly to you, because he hasn't got them on.

PYTHIAS Do stop! As if there was just a little difference! The one brought over to our place today was a young man, one you'd be glad to see yourself, Phaedria. This one's an old man, sunken, senile, and soporific, and the colour of a weasel!

PHAEDRIA What? What are you talking about? Are you going to

690 reduce me to not knowing what I bought myself? (*Turns to*

DORUS) Hey, you! Did I buy you?

DORUS Yes.

PYTHIAS Now tell him to reply to *me*!

PHAEDRIA Ask your question.

PYTHIAS (*to DORUS*) Did you come to our house today? (*DORUS shakes his head. PYTHIAS turns to PHAEDRIA*)

He says he didn't. But that other one did, the 16-year-old one who Parmeno brought with him.

PHAEDRIA (*to DORUS*) Come on then, clear this up for me first: where did you get those clothes you're wearing?—Won't you answer? You monstrous creature, aren't you going to tell me?

DORUS Chaerea came.

PHAEDRIA My brother?

DORUS Yes.

PHAEDRIA When?

DORUS Today.

PHAEDRIA How long ago?

DORUS Just now.

PHAEDRIA Who with?

DORUS Parmeno.

PHAEDRIA Had you met him before?

DORUS No.

PHAEDRIA So how did you know he was my brother?

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DORUS Parmeno said he was. He gave me these clothes.

PHAEDRIA (*aside*) I've had it!

DORUS He put mine on himself. Then the pair of them left the house together.

PYTHIAS Does that convince you that I'm sober and wasn't telling you any lies? Does that satisfy you that the girl's been raped?

PHAEDRIA Come on, you ass, do you believe what *he* says?

PYTHIAS Why should I have to believe him? The facts speak for themselves!

PHAEDRIA (*to DORUS, pushing him to one side of the stage*) Move over there a bit, do you hear? A bit further still—that's right. Now tell me again: Chaerea took your clothes off you?

DORUS He did.

PHAEDRIA And put them on himself?

DORUS He did.

PHAEDRIA And was brought over here instead of you?

DORUS Yes.

PHAEDRIA (*pretending not to believe him*) Great god above, what a wicked and audacious fellow!

PYTHIAS Oh no! Do you still not believe we've been most disgracefully tricked?

PHAEDRIA (*to PYTHIAS*) Of course you *would* believe what he says! (*Aside*) I don't know what to do! (*To DORUS, whispering*) Hey, say *no* this time! (*Aloud*) Can I chisel the truth out of you or not? Did you see my brother Chaerea?

DORUS No.

PHAEDRIA He can't admit the truth except under torture, I can see. Follow me in! One moment he says yes, the next he says no. (*To DORUS, whispering*) Beg me for mercy!

DORUS I beg you, Phaedria!

PHAEDRIA (*aloud*) Go inside now! (*Hits him*)

DORUS Ow!

PHAEDRIA (*pushing him into his house, aside to audience*) I can't think how else to get away from here without looking ridiculous. (*Aloud to DORUS*) You've had it if you play any more tricks on me in here, you scoundrel! (*Exeunt PHAEDRIA and DORUS*)

PYTHIAS I'm sure Parmeno was behind this plot—sure as I'm alive!

DORIAS You're right.

PYTHIAS I'll find some way to pay him back in kind, you see if I don't! But what do you think I should do now, Dorias?

720 DORIAS About that girl, do you mean?

PYTHIAS Yes: should I say something about it, or should I keep quiet?

DORIAS If you've got any sense, you don't know what you do know, either about the eunuch or about the rape of the girl. That way you'll escape from all the trouble, and you'll do her a favour as well. Just say Dorus has left.

PYTHIAS That's what I'll do.

DORIAS (*catching sight of CHREMES approaching from the left*) But do I see Chremes? Thais will be here shortly.

PYTHIAS Why do you say that?

DORIAS Because when I left there a row had already started up between them.

PYTHIAS (*referring to the jewellery DORIAS is holding*) You take these jewels inside; I'll find out from him what's up. (*DORIAS goes into THAIS' house*)

CHREMES (*drunk and dishevelled, his cloak trailing on the ground; not seeing PYTHIAS*) Whoops! I've been taken in: the wine I drank has got the better of me. As long as I was sitting down, I thought I was perfectly sober; but since I got up neither my foot nor my brain's doing its job properly!

PYTHIAS Chremes!

CHREMES Who's that? Ah, Pythias! Wow! You look so much more beautiful to me now than you did before!

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PYTHIAS Well, you certainly look a great deal more cheerful!

CHREMES True indeed is the saying: 'No arousal without carousal!'<sup>\*</sup> But has Thais been back for long?

PYTHIAS Has she already left the soldier's?

CHREMES A long time ago, ages ago! There was an enormous row between them.

PYTHIAS Didn't she say anything to you about following her?

CHREMES No—except that as she left she nodded to me.

PYTHIAS Well, wasn't that enough?

CHREMES But I didn't realize that was what she meant—except for the fact that the soldier put me right where I hadn't quite understood: he pushed me out of the house! (*Sees THAIS approaching from the left, accompanied by her slave-girls*) But here she is! I wonder where I overtook her.

THAIS (*to herself*) I think he'll be here any minute to take her away from me: let him come! But if he lays one finger on her I'll tear his eyes out at once! I can put up with his tomfoolery and pompous speeches just as long as they *are* speeches. But if they turn into action he'll pay for it!

CHREMES Thais, I've been here for ages!

THAIS Oh my dear Chremes, you're the very person I was hoping to meet! Do you realize this rumpus was all because of you—in fact this whole affair is to do with you?

CHREMES With me? How? As if an affair of yours could—

THAIS (*interrupting*) Because it's in taking steps to return and restore your sister to you that I've had to put up with this behaviour and lots more like it.

CHREMES Where is she?

THAIS In my house.

CHREMES Oh!

THAIS Don't worry: she's been brought up the right way both for you and for her.

CHREMES Really?

THAIS Yes, that's the truth. I give her to you as a gift; I don't ask for any reward from you in return.

CHREMES I am really grateful, Thais; the favour will be repaid to you as you deserve. (*Noises are heard off left*)

THAIS But look out, or you'll lose her before you get her from me, Chremes! She's the girl the soldier's just coming to kidnap from me. Pythias, go in and bring out the box with her trinkets.

CHREMES (*seeing THRASO and his followers approaching from the left*) Can you see him, Thais—(*PYTHIAS and THAIS continue their discussion while CHREMES is talking*)

PYTHIAS Where's it kept?

THAIS In the chest.—Get a move on, damn you! (*PYTHIAS goes indoors*)

CHREMES:—the soldier, I mean; look how many troops he's bringing with him against you. Help!

THAIS (*to CHREMES*) Surely you're not frightened, are you, my dear fellow?

CHREMES Get away with you! Me frightened? There's no one alive less frightened than me!

THAIS Good! That's the way we want you!

CHREMES I really don't like to think what sort of man you suppose I am!

THAIS Well, just bear this in mind: the man you're dealing with is a foreigner, less influential than you, less well known, and with fewer friends here.

CHREMES I know that. But it's silly to let something happen when you could avoid it. I'd rather take preventive action than get our own back on him after he's harmed us. You go off inside and bolt the door, while I run over to the main square: I want to get some people to come and support us in this rumpus. (*Starts off right, planning to take a back route to the town centre, which lies to the left*)

THAIS Don't go!

CHREMES I'd better!

THAIS (*taking hold of his arm*) Don't!

CHREMES Let go of me! I'll be back at once.

THAIS (*not letting go until it is clear that he will stay*) There's no need for helpers, Chremes. All you need say is that she's your sister and that you lost her when she was a little girl but have now identified her. (*PYTHIAS reappears from the house, holding a box; THAIS turns to her*) Show him the trinkets.

PYTHIAS Here they are.

THAIS (*to CHREMES*) Take them. (*PYTHIAS hands him the box*) If he assaults you, haul the fellow off to court. Have you understood?

CHREMES Perfectly.

THAIS Make sure you keep your nerve while you're speaking.

CHREMES OK.

THAIS Pull up your cloak! (*CHREMES does so. THAIS continues aside*) Oh dear! Here I am getting this man to defend me, when he needs a protector himself!

*By now THRASO, GNATHO, and SANGA have arrived from the left, together with SIMALIO, DONAX, and SYRISCUS; SANGA is carrying a sponge, DONAX a crowbar. THAIS, CHREMES, PYTHIAS, and the other slave-girls remain on the right of the stage, outside THAIS' house*

THRASO Me put up with such an open insult to me as this, Gnatho? I'd rather die! Simalio, Donax, Syricus, follow me! First I'll storm the house.

GNATHO Right!

THRASO I'll take the girl.

GNATHO Perfect!

THRASO I'll beat up the woman.

GNATHO Excellent!

THRASO Here into the centre of the line with the crowbar, Donax! You, Simalio, on the left wing! You, Syricus, on the right! (*They obey*) Let's have the others now: where's captain Sanga and his troop of thieves?\*

SANGA Present, sir!

THRASO What's this, you coward? Brought a sponge with you, have you? Are you planning to fight with it?

SANGA Me? I knew the courage of our general and the might of our men. I knew this couldn't come off without bloodshed, and how else was I going to wipe up the wounds?

THRASO Where are the others?

SANGA What the hell do you mean by 'others'? There's only 780 Sannio, and he's on guard-duty at home.

THRASO (to GNATHO) You draw these men up. I'll be behind the front line: I'll give everyone the signal from there.

GNATHO (to the audience, but heard by THRASO) There's wisdom for you: in drawing up his men, he's chosen a safe position for himself!

THRASO I'm only doing what Pyrrhus used to do.\*

CHREMES Do you see what he's up to, Thais? I was certainly right to advise you to lock up your house.

THAIS He may seem to you to be a man now, but really he's a great twit: don't be frightened.

THRASO (to GNATHO) What do you suggest?

GNATHO If only you could get hold of a sling now! Then you could attack them under cover from over here, and they'd run away.

THRASO But look! I can see Thais herself.

GNATHO How soon do we charge?

THRASO Wait! The wise man should try everything before he resorts to arms. You never know, she may do what I command without any need for violence.

790 GNATHO Ye gods, what it is to be clever! I never meet you without going away a wiser man!

THRASO Thais, first answer me this: when I gave you that girl, did you say you would give yourself to me alone for these days?

THAIS So what if I did?

THRASO What a question! Didn't you bring your boyfriend in right in front of my eyes?

THAIS (to the world at large) What can you do with that man?

THRASO And didn't you steal away secretly from me with him?

THAIS I felt like it.

THRASO Well then, give Pamphila back to me—unless you'd rather I took her by force!

CHREMES Do you expect her to give her back to you? Do you think you're going to touch her, you utterly—

GNATHO (interrupting) Hoy! What are you up to? Belt up!

THRASO What are you on about? Can't I touch my own girl?

CHREMES Your own girl, you crook?

GNATHO Watch out! You don't realize what sort of man it is you're insulting like that.

CHREMES Go to hell! (To THRASO) I'd better put you in the picture: if you kick up any kind of rumpus here today, I'll make 800 sure you never forget this place or this day or me!

GNATHO Poor you! What a great man you're making an enemy of!

CHREMES (to GNATHO) I'll smash your head in if you don't go away!

GNATHO Will you just, you animal? Is that how you behave?

THRASO Who the hell are you? What are you on about? What have you got to do with her?

CHREMES I'll tell you. First of all, I declare that she's free-born.

THRASO What?

CHREMES A citizen of Attica.

THRASO Ho ho!

CHREMES My sister.

THRASO Bare-faced impertinence!

CHREMES And now, soldier, I give you due notice that you're not to inflict any violence on her. Thais, I'm off to Sophrona, our nanny, to bring her here and show her these trinkets.

THRASO Are you going to forbid me to touch my own girl?

CHREMES I am, I tell you! (Exit right, with the box which PYTHIAS had given him)

GNATHO (to THRASO) Hear that? That makes him an accomplice. That's enough for you.

THRASO Do you say the same thing, Thais?

THAIS Go and look for someone who'll answer you! (Sweeps into 810 her house with PYTHIAS and the other slave-girls)

THRASO What do we do now?

GNATHO Why don't we go home? She'll soon come along begging you on bended knee.

THRASO Do you think so?

GNATHO 'Think'? It's a certainty! I know what women are like: they don't want it when you do, but when you don't they're the ones that long for it.

THRASO Quite right!  
 GNATHO Shall I dismiss the troops now?  
 THRASO Whenever you like.  
 GNATHO Sanga, as brave soldiers should, turn your mind now to hearth and home.  
 SANGA I've been thinking about my saucepans for ages!  
 GNATHO Good for you.  
 THRASO This way! Follow me! (*Leads off left; the others all follow.*  
*After a pause, THAIS and PYTHIAS reappear from their house*)  
 THAIS Damn you, are you going to carry on talking in riddles? 'I know—I don't know—he's gone—I heard about it, I wasn't there myself': won't you tell me clearly whatever it is you've got to say? The girl's clothes have been torn, she's in tears, and she  
 820 won't say a word; the eunuch has gone.—Why? What's happened? Aren't you going to tell me?  
 PYTHIAS (*starting to cry*) What can I tell you? They say he wasn't a eunuch.  
 THAIS Who was he then?  
 PYTHIAS That Chaerea.  
 THAIS What Chaerea?  
 PYTHIAS That brother of Phaedria's—the one who's doing his military service.  
 THAIS What are you talking about, you murderess?  
 PYTHIAS But I know it for sure!  
 THAIS But why did he come to us? Why was he brought over?  
 PYTHIAS I don't know—but I think he'd fallen for Pamphila.  
 THAIS What? No! I've had it! It's a disaster, if what you say is true.  
 Can that be what the girl's crying about?  
 PYTHIAS I think so.  
 THAIS Tell me, you godless woman, were those the instructions  
 830 I went to such lengths to give you as I left?  
 PYTHIAS What was I supposed to do? I left her on her own with him, just as you told me to.  
 THAIS You put a wolf in charge of a sheep, damn it! I'm really ashamed to have been taken in like that. What kind of fellow can he be? (*CHAEREA comes into view from the right (= stage left), still dressed as a eunuch*)

PYTHIAS (*seeing CHAEREA*) Sh! Quiet, madam, please! We're all right! We've got the fellow himself!  
 THAIS Where is he?  
 PYTHIAS There, on the left. Can you see him?  
 THAIS Yes.  
 PYTHIAS Have him seized as soon as possible!  
 THAIS What'll we do with him, you idiot?  
 PYTHIAS What could you *do* with him? How can you ask? Can't you see at a glance that he looks like a rogue? And if he doesn't, that shows how brazen he is!  
 CHAEREA (*not yet seeing THAIS and PYTHIAS*) At Antipho's place, both his mum and his dad were at home, as if they'd 840 deliberately planned to make it impossible for me to get in without them seeing me. Meanwhile, as I was standing in front of their door, someone I knew came along. When I saw him, I took to my heels as fast as I could down an empty alleyway—and then down another, then another. All the time I was running away I was terrified someone would recognize me.—But is this Thais that I see? Yes, it is. I can't think what to do.—But why should I care? What can she do to me?  
 THAIS Let's go up to him. (*Pretends that she still thinks he is a eunuch*) Dorus, my good fellow, hello! Look here, did you run 850 away?  
 CHAEREA (*pretending to be a eunuch*) Madam, I did.  
 THAIS And are you pleased with yourself for doing that?  
 CHAEREA No.  
 THAIS Do you expect to escape being punished?  
 CHAEREA Let me off this one offence! If I ever commit another, you can kill me!  
 THAIS You weren't afraid I would be a cruel mistress, were you?  
 CHAEREA No.  
 THAIS So what was it, then?  
 CHAEREA I was afraid she would tell you what I'd done (*indicating PYTHIAS*).  
 THAIS What had you done?  
 CHAEREA Nothing much.  
 PYTHIAS (*breaking in*) What! Nothing much? You rogue! Do you think it's nothing much to rape a girl who's a citizen?

CHAEREA I thought she was a slave, like me.

PYTHIAS 'A slave, like me'! The fiend! I can hardly control myself.

I'm going to let fly at his hair! He even comes here specially to  
860 laugh at us!

THAIS (to PYTHIAS) Off you go; you're getting carried away.

PYTHIAS Why should I? (*Sarcastically*) I suppose I'd really have to pay damages to that crook if I did it, would I? Particularly when he admits he's your slave!

THAIS Let's put a stop to this. Chaerea, your behaviour was unworthy of you. It may be entirely proper for me to be insulted like that, but even so it wasn't proper for you to do it. And now I really can't think what to do about that girl. You've messed up all my plans: I can't return her to her family, as would have been right, and  
870 as I wanted to.—I wanted to get myself their lasting favour, Chaerea.

CHAEREA But I'm sure there will now be friendship between us for ever instead, Thais. It often happens that some event like this sparks off a really close relationship in spite of the bad start. Perhaps some god was behind this!

THAIS Well, I'll certainly take it that way; I hope you're right.

CHAEREA Yes, please do. And there's one thing you must know: I *didn't* do this to insult you, but because I'm in love.

THAIS I know, and that's why I'm all the readier to forgive you  
880 now. I'm not so hard-hearted or so inexperienced that I don't know how powerful love can be, Chaerea.

CHAEREA My god, I love you too now, Thais!

PYTHIAS In that case, madam, I can see that you'd better watch out for him!

CHAEREA I wouldn't dare!

PYTHIAS I don't trust you at all!

THAIS (to PYTHIAS) Stop it!

CHAEREA (to THAIS) Now I ask you to be my helper in this matter; I entrust and commit myself to your protection; I adopt you as my patroness, Thais; I beg you—I shall die if I don't get her as my wife!

THAIS Even if your father...? (*Hesitates before completing the sentence*)

CHAEREA What? Oh, he'll be happy, I'm quite sure, as long as she's a citizen.

THAIS If you're happy to wait for a little bit, the girl's own brother 890 will be here shortly. He's gone to fetch the nanny who nursed her when she was little. You can be present yourself when she's identified, Chaerea.

CHAEREA I'll certainly stay.

THAIS Meanwhile, would you like us to wait inside till he comes, rather than here in front of the door?

CHAEREA Yes, I'd love us to!

PYTHIAS (to THAIS) What on earth are you up to?

THAIS What's the matter?

PYTHIAS How can you ask? Are you thinking of letting *him* into the house after what he's done?

THAIS Why not?

PYTHIAS Take my word for it, he'll be up to no good again!

THAIS Really! Please shut up!

PYTHIAS You don't seem to realize! There's no stopping him! 900

CHAEREA I won't do anything, Pythias!

PYTHIAS I won't believe that until I can see it hasn't happened, Chaerea!

CHAEREA But *you* can keep an eye on me, Pythias!

PYTHIAS I wouldn't risk keeping an eye on you, any more than I would giving you something to keep an eye on. Get away with you! (*CHREMES and SOPHRONA start to come into view from the right, moving very slowly because of SOPHRONA's age*)

THAIS Good! Here's her brother himself.

CHAEREA Oh god, I've had it! *Please* let's go inside, Thais! I don't want him to see me in the street dressed like this.

THAIS Why ever not? You're not embarrassed, are you?

CHAEREA That's it.

PYTHIAS 'That's it', is it? And what about the girl?!

THAIS (to CHAEREA) Go ahead; I'll follow. (*CHAEREA goes into her house. THAIS turns to PYTHIAS*)

You stay there so that you can bring Chremes in, Pythias. (*Goes into her house*)

PYTHIAS (to the audience) Well, what can I think of now? How can 910 I get my own back on that godless man who infiltrated him into our house? (*CHREMES and SOPHRONA have at last almost reached THAIS' house*)

CHREMES Get a move on, will you, nanny?

SOPHRONA I am moving.

CHREMES So I see—but not forwards!

PYTHIAS (to CHREMES) Have you shown her nanny the trinkets yet?

CHREMES Yes, all of them.

PYTHIAS Tell me, what does she say? Does she recognize them?

CHREMES Perfectly.

PYTHIAS I'm really glad to hear it; I like that girl. Go inside; my mistress has been waiting for you indoors for ages. (CHREMES and SOPHRONA go into THAIS' house, leaving PYTHIAS on stage on her own. PARMENO comes into view from the right)

920 Look, I can see that good fellow Parmeno coming. Look at him sauntering along: would you believe it? I'm sure I'll be able to torture him the way I'd like to. I'll go inside to find out for certain about the identification. Then I'll come out and terrify this godless man! (Goes into THAIS' house)

PARMENO I've come back to see how Chaerea's getting on here. If he's handled the affair smartly, ye gods, what praise Parmeno will win—what true praise! I'm not talking about the fact that I've achieved for him a love that could have been extremely difficult and extremely expensive, that I've got him the girl he was in love with in the house of a grasping tart—all without trouble, without expense, and without loss. (PYTHIAS reappears from THAIS' house but stays by the door, unnoticed by PARMENO)

930 No, what I think really wins me first prize is this: I've discovered a way for a young lad to get to know what tarts are like and how they behave, so that having got to know them early in his life he can despise them for the rest of it. When they're in public, you'd think nothing was ever more refined, nothing neater or smarter than the way they nibble at their food when they're with a boyfriend. If a lad can see how filthy, squalid, poor, and unattractive they are when they're on their own at home, how desperate they are for food, how they gobble up black bread dipped in yesterday's soup—if he realizes all that, it'll keep him on the straight and narrow!

940 PYTHIAS (aside) My god, I'll punish you for what you've said and done, you villain: you won't get away with playing tricks on us! (Rushes forward, as if coming out of the house) Oh gods in heaven,

how dreadful! Oh, the poor boy! Oh wicked Parmeno, who brought him here!

PARMENO (aside) What's this?

PYTHIAS (as before) I do feel sorry for him. Oh dear! That's why I've run out of doors, so that I don't have to see it. What terrible punishments they say they're going to inflict on him!

PARMENO (still aside) Great god, what's this commotion? Could this be the end of me? I'll go up to her. (Does so) What are you talking about, Pythias? What's up? Who's going to be punished?

PYTHIAS Can't you guess? What a nerve you've got! You've ruined that boy you brought over as a eunuch, you were so keen to play a trick on us!

PARMENO Why do you say that? What's happened? Tell me! 950

PYTHIAS Listen: that girl who was given as a present to Thais today—do you realize she's an Athenian citizen? And that her brother is extremely high-born?

PARMENO I'd no idea.

PYTHIAS Well, that's what she's turned out to be—and the poor boy raped her! When he discovered it had been done, her brother in a fit of violence—

PARMENO (interrupting) What did he do?

PYTHIAS First he tied him up quite brutally.

PARMENO What? Tied him up?

PYTHIAS Yes, though Thais was begging him not to do it.

PARMENO Really?!

PYTHIAS And what's more he now threatens he's going to do to him what's done to adulterers\*—something I've never seen done, and would rather not! ✓

PARMENO The nerve of the man! How can he dare do something so monstrous?

PYTHIAS What do you mean, 'so monstrous'?

PARMENO Can you think of anything more monstrous? Who ever saw anyone beng taken as an adulterer in a tart's house? 960

PYTHIAS I've no idea.

PARMENO But here's something you'd all better have an idea about, Pythias: I announce and declare to you that he's the son of my master!

PYTHIAS (feigning astonishment) What? Really? Is he?



PARMENO Thais should not allow any violence to be inflicted on him! But in fact why don't I go inside myself? (*Starts towards THAIS' house*)

PYTHIAS (*stopping him*) Steady on, Parmeno! You may not be able to help him, and you may ruin yourself; they think you were behind everything that's happened.

PARMENO What can I do, then, damn it? Where can I start? (*The boys' FATHER comes into view from the right*) And now look! I can see the old man coming back from the farm. Am I to tell him or not? I'll tell him, damn it—though I know there's a whole lot of trouble lined up for me. But I've got to do it, to help Chaerea.

PYTHIAS You're quite right. I'll go inside; you tell him the whole story from the beginning. (*Goes into THAIS' house*)

FATHER (*to the audience*) Having a farm close to town gives me this advantage: I never get fed up either with the country or with the town; when I start to feel I've had enough of the one place, I move to the other. But is that our man Parmeno? Yes, it certainly is him. Who are you waiting for out here in front of the door, Parmeno?

PARMENO (*pretending not to have noticed him before*) Who's that? Oh! Welcome back, sir!

FATHER Who are you waiting for?

PARMENO (*aside*) I've had it! My tongue's glued up with fear.

FATHER What? What's up? What are you trembling for? Everything all right? Tell me!

PARMENO Sir, first of all I'd like you to realize what the facts are: whatever's happened here, it wasn't my fault!

FATHER What wasn't?

PARMENO You're quite right to ask: I should have told you what had happened first. Phaedria bought a eunuch as a present for this woman.

FATHER What woman?

PARMENO Thais.

FATHER He *bought* one? I've had it! How much for?

PARMENO Twenty minas.

FATHER Calamity!

PARMENO Next, Chaerea's in love with a lyre-player\* here.

FATHER What? In love? Does he already know what a tart is? Has he come up to town? One disaster after another!

PARMENO Sir, don't look at me! It wasn't *my* idea!

FATHER Stop talking about yourself! You crook, as sure as I'm alive, I'll—! But first explain what on earth you're talking about. 990

PARMENO He was taken over to Thais here instead of the eunuch.

FATHER Instead of a *eunuch*?

PARMENO Yes. Then they seized him as an adulterer in the house and tied him up.

FATHER That's the end of me!

PARMENO Look at the nerve of the tarts!

FATHER There isn't anything else, is there? Any disaster? Any expense? Anything left over that you haven't told me?

PARMENO No, that's all.

FATHER I'd better get a move on: I'll break in on them here! (*Rushes into THAIS' house*)

PARMENO There's no doubt there's a lot of trouble in store for me as a result of this. But, given that I had to do it, I'm glad that thanks to me some trouble's going to fall on these women too! The old man's been looking for an excuse for some time now to make an 1000 example of them; now he's found one. (*PYTHIAS comes out of THAIS' house, reeling with laughter*)

PYTHIAS (*to the audience*) It's the best thing that's happened to me in ages! I couldn't have hoped for anything better—I mean the old man coming into our house just now, when he'd got it all wrong. I was the only one who saw the joke, because I knew what he was afraid of!

PARMENO (*aside*) What's this now?

PYTHIAS Now I've come out to find Parmeno.—But where on earth is he? (*She looks round but does not at first see him*)

PARMENO (*aside*) It's me she's looking for.

PYTHIAS But there he is: I see him. I'll go up to him. (*Does so, still laughing*)

PARMENO What's going on, you silly woman? What are you up to? What are you laughing about? Stop it!

PYTHIAS I'm dead! Oh dear, I've exhausted myself laughing at you!

PARMENO What for?

PYTHIAS Don't you know? I've never seen a more stupid man, and never shall! Oh, I can't tell you what fun you've given us 1010 indoors! And I used to think you were such a smart and clever

fellow! What? Did you have to go right ahead and believe what I told you? Wasn't it enough for you that you'd egged the lad on to commit the crime? Did you actually have to report the poor boy to his father as well? What do you suppose his feelings were when his father saw him dressed up like that?—What's the matter? Do you realize now that you've had it?

PARMENO What! What's that you say, you bitch? Did you make it up?—Are you still laughing? Damn you! Do you think it was such a good joke to laugh at us?

PYTHIAS Yes, brilliant!

PARMENO Well, if you get away with that—!

PYTHIAS Really?

PARMENO I'll pay you back! I will!

1020 PYTHIAS I believe you. But perhaps your threats are for later, Parmeno. For now, you're the one who's going to be strung up, for inciting the silly boy to notorious criminal behaviour and then reporting him: they'll both punish you.

PARMENO I'm a dead man!

PYTHIAS That's your reward for the present you gave us. I'm off!  
(Goes back into THAIS' house)

PARMENO Damn it! I've given myself away and caused my own death, just like a shrew!\*

*Enter THRASO and GNATHO from the left. They do not notice PARMENO*

GNATHO What now? What are you hoping for? What's our plan in coming here? What are you up to, Thraso?

THRASO Me? I've come to surrender to Thais and do what she commands.

GNATHO What!

THRASO Why not? Hercules was Omphale's slave, wasn't he?\*

GNATHO A good precedent! I'd just like to see your head being softened up by her slipper! But there's a noise from her door.\* (The noise is made by CHAEREA, who bursts out of THAIS' house still dressed as a eunuch)

THRASO I've had it! What the hell's this? I've never seen him

1030 before now. Why has he jumped out here in such a hurry?

CHAEREA (addressing the audience, without seeing anyone on stage) Citizens, is there anyone luckier than me alive today? No, not a single

person. In my case the gods have clearly displayed all their power: so many good things have so suddenly come together for me!

PARMENO (aside) What's he happy about?

CHAEREA (catching sight of PARMENO) O my dear Parmeno, you who devised all my pleasures, you who set them in motion and brought them to fulfilment, do you know how happy I am? Do you know that my Pamphila has been found to be a citizen?

PARMENO (ruefully) I have heard it.

CHAEREA Do you know she's engaged to me?

PARMENO Wonderful! Congratulations!

THRASO (to GNATHO) Do you hear what he's saying?

CHAEREA And then I'm happy because my brother Phaedria's love affair is completely clear of the storms. We've become one household; Thais has asked my dad for his protection, she's entrusted herself to our patronage and safekeeping.

PARMENO So Thais belongs totally to your brother?

CHAEREA Certainly.

1040

PARMENO (still unaware of THRASO's presence) Now here's another cause for rejoicing: the soldier will be driven out!

CHAEREA Tell my brother about this as soon as possible, wherever he is!

PARMENO I'll see if he's at home. (Goes into their house)

THRASO (still unseen by CHAEREA) Do you doubt in the slightest that I've had it for ever now, Gnatho?

GNATHO That's what I think, without a doubt.

CHAEREA (to the world at large) What should I mention first or praise most? Should I praise the man who advised me to do it, or me for having the courage to embark on it, or Fortune who guided it, who has packed so many things of such importance so conveniently into one day, or my father who's so delightful and obliging? O Jupiter, I beg you, preserve these blessings for us!

PHAEDRIA (enters from his house, exclaiming) Ye gods, what an incredible story Parmeno's just told me! But where's my brother?

CHAEREA He's right here!

1050

PHAEDRIA I'm so happy!

CHAEREA I can believe it. No one deserves to be loved more than this Thais of yours, brother: she's been so much help to our whole household.

PHAEDRIA What! Are you praising her to me? (THRASO and

GNATHO *continue to converse separately, unseen by the others*)

THRASO I've had it! The less hope there is, the more I love her.

I beg you, Gnatho—I pin my hopes on you!

GNATHO What do you want me to do?

THRASO Make sure that I keep in with Thais somehow or other:  
beg them, bribe them!

GNATHO That's difficult.

THRASO If you want to do something, I know you can. If you do  
this, you can ask for any present you like as a reward from me:  
you'll get whatever you ask for.

GNATHO Really?

THRASO Certainly.

GNATHO If I achieve this, my request is that your house should be  
open to me whether you're there or not, and that there should  
always be a place for me without needing an invitation.

THRASO I promise.

GNATHO I'll prepare for action! (*As GNATHO is about to move  
towards him, PHAEDRIA realizes that there is someone else on  
stage*)

1060 PHAEDRIA Who's that I hear over there? Oh—Thraso! (PHAEDRIA  
and CHAEREA *move towards THRASO and GNATHO*)

THRASO Hello.

PHAEDRIA (*ignoring his greeting*) Perhaps you don't realize what's  
been going on here.

THRASO Yes I do.

PHAEDRIA So why do I see you in this part of town?

THRASO I'm putting my trust in you.

PHAEDRIA I'll tell you how much you can trust us! Soldier, I give  
you due notice: if I ever come across you in this street after this,  
never mind about telling me 'I was looking for someone else, I was  
passing by here'—you've had it!

GNATHO Hey, you can't say that!

PHAEDRIA I just did.

THRASO I don't recognize this arrogant manner of yours.

PHAEDRIA Well, that's how it is.

GNATHO (*to PHAEDRIA and CHAEREA*) First listen a bit; when  
I've had my say, if you like it, act on it.

CHAEREA Let's listen.

GNATHO You move away a bit over there, Thraso. (THRASO  
*obeys; GNATHO turns back to the other two*)

First of all, I'd very much like you both to believe this: whatever  
I do here, I'm doing it above all for my own sake; but if it's to your  
1070 advantage too, it's silly of you not to do it.

PHAEDRIA What is it?

GNATHO I propose that you let the soldier in to share her.

PHAEDRIA What! Let him in?

GNATHO Just think about it: you like living with her, Phaedria—in  
fact you're very keen on living with her—but you haven't got  
much to give her, and Thais must be given a lot. If you want  
someone to finance your love-life and meet all her demands  
without costing you a penny, there's no one more convenient or  
more useful to you. For a start, he's got the money to give, and no  
one gives more generously than he does. He's stupid, boring, and  
slow, and he snores night and day. And you needn't be afraid the  
woman will fall in love with him; you can easily drive him out  
whenever you like!

1080

CHAEREA What shall we do?

GNATHO What's more, there's this point, which I think the most  
important of all: there isn't a host anywhere who entertains better  
or more lavishly!

CHAEREA It rather looks as if we'll have to put up with that man,  
whether we like it or not!

PHAEDRIA I agree.

GNATHO You're quite right. I've just got this one further request:  
please let me join your gang: I've been pushing this rock up the  
hill\* for long enough now.

PHAEDRIA We'll let you join.

CHAEREA And gladly!

GNATHO And I in return, Phaedria—and you too, Chaerea—  
present him to you: eat up his larder and have a good laugh at him!

CHAEREA Well said!

PHAEDRIA Just what he deserves!

GNATHO Thraso, come and join us whenever you like.

THRASO (*doing so*) Please, tell me how we're getting on.

✓  
1090 GNATHO Need you ask? These people didn't know you; after I'd shown them what you're like, and praised you in line with your deeds and your merits, I got what we wanted.

THRASO You've done well; thank you very much indeed. I've never yet been anywhere where they didn't all adore me!

GNATHO (to PHAEDRIA and CHAEREA) Didn't I tell you what he was like? Real *chic*!

PHAEDRIA He is just as you promised. Come this way. (PHAEDRIA leads the others off into THAIS' house, turning to address the audience as he does so) Goodbye, and please give us your applause!\*

## Phormio

First performed in Rome at the Roman Games, September 161