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PLAUTUS

## *Four Comedies*

*The Braggart Soldier*

*The Brothers Menaechmus*

*The Haunted House*

*The Pot of Gold*

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*Translated with an Introduction and Notes by*

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2008

OXFORD  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

## DRAMATIS PERSONAE

TRANIO, slave to Philolaches  
GRUMIO, a slave  
PHILOLACHES, a young man  
PHILEMATIUM, a girl of joy  
SCAPHA, her maid, an old hag  
CALLIDAMATES, a young man  
DELPHIUM, a girl of joy to Callidamates  
THEOPROPIDES, an old man, father to Philolaches  
MISARGYRIDES, a moneylender  
SIMO, an old man, neighbour to Theopropides  
SLAVES  
WHIPPERS in the employ of Theopropides

*The scene is a street in Athens. There are two houses on stage, with an alley between them. One house belongs to THEOPROPIDES, the other to SIMO. The latter has an altar before it.*

## THE HAUNTED HOUSE

*Enter GRUMIO, a puritanical slave from one of THEOPROPIDES' farms. In a huff, he storms up to the door of THEOPROPIDES' house, and shouts inside*

GRUMIO. Come out here from the kitchen, will you, whipping post?

You show such cleverness amidst the pots and pans.

Come out here, come outside, you master's ruination!

I'll get revenge on you some day, out at the farm.

Come out, you kitchen stink-up; don't you hide from me!

*From inside the house saunters TRANIO*

TRANIO [*smiling and calm*]. Why all this shouting here outside the house, you wretch?

You think you're in the country? Go away from here.

Go to the country, go to hell—but go away.

[*Throws a flurry of punches*] Do you want *this*?

GRUMIO [*cringing*]. Oh no! Why beat *me* up? 9-10

TRANIO. Because you live.

GRUMIO. All right. If our old master comes—

[*Melodramatically, to heaven*] Oh, let him come back safe, the man you're eating up!

TRANIO. Your symbols and your similes are terrible,

How can a person eat a person who's not here?

GRUMIO. Terrific city wit! The people love your jokes.

You mock my country ways, but you wait, Tranio.

I'll see you there, and very soon—chained to the mill.

Know what awaits you in a while or two, my boy?

Irons on the fire for you, in the country.

Now, while you still can do it, booze and bankrupt us, 20

And keep corrupting Master's wonderful young son.

Keep drinking day and night, and Greek-it-up like mad!\*

Buy mistresses and free 'em, feed your flatterers,

Buy groceries as if you all were caterers!

Did Master bid you do this when he went abroad?

Did he expect to come back finding things like this?  
 And did you think this is the way good slaves behave—  
 By ruining Master's wealth and Master's son as well?  
 For ruined he is, to judge by his behaviour now.  
 That boy, who out of all the boys in Attica  
 Was once so chaste, so frugal, once so well behaved,  
 Now takes the prizes in completely different sports,  
 Thanks to all your tutoring and all your talent.  
 TRANIO. Why do you give a damn for me? Why do you care?  
 Can't you go find some country cows to care for?  
 It's fun to drink, to love, to have a lot of whores.  
 I'm risking my own back, you know, not risking yours.  
 GRUMIO. How bold he talks! [To TRANIO] Well, 'foo' to you!  
 TRANIO. By Jupiter  
 And all the gods, the hell with you—you reek of garlic!  
 Of home-made country mud, of goats and pigs combined—  
 All scum and scatologic. 40  
 GRUMIO. Well, what do you want?  
 Not all of us can smell of fancy foreign perfumes,  
 Or have the place of honour at a banquet table,  
 Or live as high and mighty off the hog as you do.  
 You keep your doves, the fancy fish and fancy birds,  
 And let me live my life the way I like—with garlic.  
 Right now you're very high, I'm very low. I'll wait.  
 As long as in the end we end up in reverse. 49-50  
 TRANIO. Why, Grumio, it seems to me you're acting jealous!  
 But things are best when best for me and worst for you;  
 For I was made for wooing—you were made for . . . mooing,  
 Thus I live very high and you, of course, live low.  
 GRUMIO. Oh, torture-target—which I know you'll soon  
 become,  
 When whippers prod you manacled right through the streets  
 With goads—[reverently] if ever our old master does return.  
 TRANIO. Can you be sure your turn won't come before my  
 own?  
 GRUMIO. I've not deserved it. You deserve it, always have.  
 TRANIO. Oh, save your efforts, save your words as well, 60  
 Unless you'd like a lot of lashing for yourself.  
 GRUMIO [to business]. Look, are you going to give me feed  
 to feed the cows?

Unless you eat *that*, too. Go on and gallivant  
 The way you've started, drink and Greek-it-up like mad,  
 Eat on and stuff yourselves, destroy the fatted calf.  
 TRANIO. Shut up, back to the sticks! I'm off to the Piraeus\*  
 To buy myself a little fish for this night's dinner,  
 I'll have someone deliver you the feed tomorrow.  
 [Starts to go off, notices GRUMIO glaring at him] What's  
 up? What is it now you want, you gallows bird?  
 GRUMIO. I think *you'll* be the gallows bird—and very soon. 70  
 TRANIO. I have my 'now,' let 'very soon' come when it comes.  
 GRUMIO. Oh, yes? Remember this one thing: 'What comes in  
 life  
 Is not so much what you would like, but what you don't.'  
 TRANIO. Right now you bother me. Go back to farming,  
 move!  
 By Hercules, I want no more delays from you!  
 [TRANIO skips off-stage]  
 GRUMIO. Well, has he gone and treated my words just as  
 straws?  
 [Fervently, to heaven] O ye immortal gods, I call on you  
 and pray,  
 Do let our senior master come back home to us—  
 Although he's gone three years. And let him come before  
 It all is lost, the house and holdings. If not now, 80  
 In little time, there'll only be remains remaining.  
 I'm for the farm. [Notices off-stage] But look—here comes  
 our junior master.  
 Behold—a most corrupted youth—once oh so fine.  
 [GRUMIO walks sadly off-stage in the opposite  
 direction to that in which TRANIO left]  
 Young PHILOLACHES enters. This lad is typical of  
 Plautus' young men, wide-eyed and handsome,  
 but not very bright. In fact, PHILOLACHES is  
 rather an imbecile. When he reaches centre stage,  
 PHILOLACHES sings a doleful lament\*  
 PHILOLACHES. I've been pounding my head a lot, pondering.  
 Deep in me, words have been wandering.  
 Things roll around in my mind—if I do have a mind—  
 And I've thought and I've sought many answers to find.

[*A breath*] What is a man when he's born?  
 I mean, what is he like?  
 After looking around, here's the answer I've found:  
 [*A breath, then a profound conclusion*]

90

Like a house. Like a newly built house.  
 That's a man when he's born, and it's true.  
 Perhaps you don't quite see the likeness,  
 I'll see that you do.  
 And my words will confirm and convince you.  
 I'm sure when you hear what I say,  
 You will see things my way.

So hark to my argument, folks, and you'll be  
 Just as smart in this matter as . . . me.

100

A house when it's steady and ready, all straight with no  
 tilt,

A house when it's perfectly built,  
 Both the building and builder are praised; the approval's  
 immense.

People all want the same sort of house; they won't spare  
 the expense.

But then—suppose some lax and lazy lout moves in  
 And brings a filthy laggard group along. Your cares begin.  
 For even one mistake can make a good house . . . break.  
 You know what also happens often? Storms.

Tiles and gutters shatter,  
 Then suffer from the lazy man's neglect.

110

Rain blows right through and flows right through the walls,  
 The timber goes, A good construction job is wrecked.  
 It grows still worse with wear, as you'd expect.  
 Of course it's not the builder's fault at all.  
 Repairs are costly, people are so cheap.  
 The less they spend, the more they have to keep.

They wait till it must be rebuilt completely, all is in a heap.  
 So far I've talked of houses. Now I shall proceed  
 To state why men are similar to houses—till you've all  
 agreed.

Now, first of all, a parent is a builder of a child.

120

He lays the groundwork, as it were, sees that he's styled.  
 He brings him up, prepares him to grow tall and straight,  
 In hopes that what he builds may some day serve the state—  
 Or stand alone at least. In all events,  
 They spare no pains, and they spare no expense.  
 Then it's lots of schooling: arts and letters, legal lore to  
 build his brain.

Expensive. Parents strain  
 To raise a son who'll show the level others might attain.  
 Then it's off to the army, prepared he is sent  
 To serve as some relative's reinforcement.

130

It's goodbye to the builders, he's out of their hands,  
 And now people see if the building still stands!  
 Speaking now for myself, I used to be one of the top,  
 A genuine model—at least while I stayed in the shop.  
 But when left to my own sweet devices at last,  
 The builder's whole structure began to slip fast.

Laziness came like a storm.

There was raining and hailing.

The next thing I knew all my virtues were failing.

A sudden unroofing caught me unawares,

140

Unroofing I was a bit slow to repair.

Then in place of the rain a swift new storm would start:  
 For then *love* billowed in, and it drenched my whole heart.  
 Then, all at once, my name, my fame, my fortune, all that  
 once was fair

Had fled the camp. Now day by day, it grows still worse  
 with wear.

My roof, it leaks, and it so creaks

My house can't be repaired now, it's a total wreck for  
 good.

The whole foundation's finished. Nothing helps—and  
 nothing could.

What pain to see me now, and know what once I used to  
 be:

There never was a cleaner-living youth than me.

150

No greater athlete in the arts gymnastic,

In throwing, riding, running, fighting—I was just fantastic.



It nourished me with joy  
 To be a model of restraint and ruggedness to every boy.  
 All the noblest people looked to me for discipline,  
 But now, it's all my fault, I'm nothing—see the awful shape  
 I'm in.

*After his song, PHILOLACHES hears the sounds  
 of someone approaching from the back  
 [the women's quarters] of his house. He steps  
 to the side of the stage to observe, as  
 PHILEMATIUM and SCAPHA enter. The first is  
 a dazzling young girl of joy,  
 recently freed by PHILOLACHES, the second a wise  
 and wizened ex-whore, now serving as  
 PHILEMATIUM's personal maid. SCAPHA carries  
 a sort of make-up table and a stool on which  
 her mistress can sit to perform her toilette.\*  
 PHILEMATIUM and SCAPHA converse,  
 as young PHILOLACHES observes from the  
 sidelines, and comments*

PHILEMATIUM. By Castor, it's a while since I have had a  
 fresher bath,

Or a better one, dear Scapha. Why, I feel all scrubbed and  
 polished,

SCAPHA [*the hard pragmatist*]. Well, time will tell. You know,  
 just like the recent harvest stored away.\*

PHILEMATIUM. What does the recent harvest have to do with  
 my own bathing?

SCAPHA. As much as your own bathing has to do with it,  
 PHILOLACHES [*aside, ecstatic*]. O queen of Venus!

[*To the audience, pointing at the girl*] Look, there's my  
 storm, the one that unroofed all my reputation.

I used to have a roof, but Love and Cupid showered on  
 me.

Love soaked right through my heart, and it's beyond repair.  
 My walls are oozing and my house is losing its whole  
 structure.

PHILEMATIUM. Do look me over, Scapha. Is my costume nice  
 enough?

160

I long to please my darling benefactor Philolaches.  
 SCAPHA. No need for lovely ornaments when you yourself  
 can glitter.

The lovers don't love women's clothes; [*with a leer*] they  
 love what's stuffed inside them.

PHILOLACHES [*aside*]. By all the gods, that Scapha's charming;  
 she knows all the tricks!

170

How charmingly she speaks of love affairs and lovers'  
 thoughts!

PHILEMATIUM. And now?

SCAPHA. My dear?

PHILEMATIUM. Please look me over. Am I nice enough?

SCAPHA. You're beautiful inside and so you beautify your  
 clothes.

PHILOLACHES [*aside*]. For that nice thought, dear Scapha,  
 you shall get a gift today.

You won't have complimented my sweet love without  
 reward.

PHILEMATIUM. I don't want simply flattery.

SCAPHA. You're such a silly girl.

I think you'd rather have false criticism than true praise.

By Pollux, I myself would much prefer false flattery.

Who wants true criticism? People laughing at my looks?  
 PHILOLACHES. Not I. I much prefer the truth. I can't abide  
 a liar.

180

SCAPHA. I swear, by Philolaches' love for you, you're simply  
 lovely.

PHILOLACHES [*aside*]. What's that you swear, you bitch? By  
 all my love for her?

But what of hers for me? You left that out. Forget the gift.

You're finished, fully finished, now that gift has flown away.

SCAPHA. And yet I'm quite amazed. I thought that you were  
 shrewd and wise.

You're being foolish foolishly.

PHILEMATIUM. What's this? Have I done wrong?

SCAPHA. By Castor, yes. You're wrong to put your hopes in  
 just one lover,

To be so dutiful to him, rejecting other men.\*

Fidelity's for wives, but not for mistresses.

190

PHILOLACHES [*aside*]. By Jupiter, what sort of evil earthquake shakes my house?

May all the gods and goddesses destroy me with distress  
If I don't kill that hag with hunger, thirst and freezing cold!

PHILEMATIUM. But, Scapha, I don't want to learn such wicked things.

SCAPHA. You're foolish

To think that man will always be your friend and benefactor.

I warn you, someday he'll be jaded—you'll be faded—then he'll leave.

PHILEMATIUM. I *hope* not.

SCAPHA. 'Things unhoped-for come more often than things hoped.'

Well, I suppose I never will convince you with my words,  
But learn from my example, what I am and what I was:

For once I was a charming beauty just as you are now 200

And, loved as you are now, was dutiful to just one man. 200a

He loved me, yes, by Pollux, till with time my hair turned grey,

Then left me in the lurch. [*A sigh*] I know the same will come to you.

PHILOLACHES [*aside, furious*]. I'm barely in control, I'd fly right at the evil bitch's eyes.

PHILEMATIUM. He freed me—spent such sums to be my single swain.

I only think it's right I stay . . . monogamous to him.\*

PHILOLACHES [*aside*]. By the immortal gods, a lovely girl—and ladylike.

By Hercules, it's worth it to be bankrupt all for her.

SCAPHA. By Castor, are you so unshrewd?

PHILEMATIUM.

But why?

SCAPHA.

To care for him,

To hope he really loves you.

PHILEMATIUM.

Why should I *not* care?

SCAPHA.

You're free.

You've got what you desired now. If he won't love you still,

He really would be suffering a loss from his investment. 210

PHILOLACHES [*aside*]. I'm dead, by Hercules, if I don't chop that bitch to bits!

That vicious, ill-advising villainess corrupts my love!

PHILEMATIUM. How can I ever show my gratitude for what he's done?

Don't ever bid me love him less, stop all this trying.

SCAPHA. I will, but do remember this: if you serve one man now

While you're in full bloom, then when you're old, you'll look for men.

PHILOLACHES [*aside*]. I wish I could transform into a rope to choke that poisoner,

By winding round her evil, ill-advising throat—and kill her.

PHILEMATIUM. But since I have my freedom, I should show the same affection, 220

And be as lovey-dovey to him as I was before.

PHILOLACHES [*aside*]. Whatever heaven does, now that I've heard those little words,

I'd free you ten times over—and kill Scapha twice as dead.

SCAPHA. If you feel that your contract spells eternal love,

And he's to be your only lover for your whole life long,

Then honour and obey—put on a wifely hairdo.\*

PHILEMATIUM. Your reputation gets you what you earn in life.

If I preserve my reputation, then the cash will come.

PHILOLACHES [*aside*]. Why, if I had to sell my father, I would rather sell him\*

Than let this lovely girl lack anything while I'm alive. 230

SCAPHA. But what of other men who love you?

PHILEMATIUM.

Well, they'll love me more

To see how I show gratitude in paying back a kindness.

PHILOLACHES [*berserk with joy*]. Oh, someone bring the news right now—the news my father's dead!

I'll disinherit myself, and make *her* heir to all my goods!

SCAPHA. His cash will soon be gone, through dining, drinking day and night.

He never saves a single thing. It's clear-cut gluttonizing.

PHILOLACHES [*aside*]. By Hercules, for you I'll change my style and start to save.

I won't give *you* a thing to eat or drink for ten whole days!

PHILEMATIUM. If you have anything that's nice to say of him, then say it.

But if you keep abusing him . . . I'll beat you up.

PHILOLACHES [*aside*]. If I had used that cash to sacrifice to Jove supreme

Instead of buying her, I couldn't be more blessed than now.

Look how she loves me—deep, in depth. Oh, what a lucky man I am!

I freed a girl protector; she defends me masterfully.

SCAPHA. Although I see you spurn all other men for Philolaches,

I won't be beaten up because of him. I'll say he's nice,

If you're so assured your contract is eternal with him.

PHILEMATIUM. Quickly, Scapha, now my mirror, and my box of jewellery.\*

I must be completely dressed before my darling Philo comes.

SCAPHA. Mirrors are for women who have doubts and need a glass to cling to.\*

*You* don't need a glass; why, you're a really first-rate glass yourself.

PHILOLACHES [*aside*]. Lovely words, dear Scapha—and they won't be unrewarded either.

I'll be sure and give a little bonus thing to—Philematium.\*

PHILEMATIUM. Everything in order? How's my hairdo, coiffed with quality?

SCAPHA. *You* have quality, my dear, and so how could your coif be otherwise?

PHILOLACHES. What on earth could be more awful than that wicked woman there?—

Now she's full of compliments, when she was all complaints before.

PHILEMATIUM. Powder, please.

SCAPHA. But why on earth do you need powder?

PHILEMATIUM. For my cheeks, of course.

SCAPHA. That would be like white-on-white; no need to gild the lily, dear.

240

250

PHILOLACHES [*aside*]. Very nicely put, the gilding and the lily, Scapha, good!

PHILEMATIUM. All right, pass the rouge to me.

SCAPHA. I won't. You know, you're not too bright.

Do you want to overpaint an absolutely perfect picture?

Blooming girls like you should never ever use false colouring.

Never rouge, or cream from Melos, never any paint at all.

PHILEMATIUM [*pleased, looks at herself, kisses the mirror, hands it to SCAPHA*]. Take the mirror then.

PHILOLACHES.

She kissed it! Oh, my god, she kissed the glass!

Oh, I want a rock; I want to knock a piece of glass right off!

SCAPHA. Here's a towel; better wipe your hands off very well.

PHILEMATIUM.

But why?

SCAPHA [*ironically*]. You've just held the mirror—and your hands might smell of silver now.\*

Philolaches might suspect you've taken silver from a man.

PHILOLACHES. I don't think I've ever seen a shrewder bitch than that old bag!

What a neat and clever thing—to prick her mind about the glass.

PHILEMATIUM. Do you think perfuming with some perfumes might be—?

SCAPHA. Not at all.

PHILEMATIUM. Why?

SCAPHA. The perfect women smell of absolutely nothing, dear.

Only hags try renovation, perfuming themselves with perfume,

Youthless, toothless hags who try to hide their faults with false aromas.

Ah, but when their body sweat at last commingles with the perfume—

What a smell, just like those soups in which the cooks put everything!

What you're smelling there's no telling, you just know they smell like hell!

PHILOLACHES. What a woman, worldly-wise in everything. Who could be wiser?

260

270

And she speaks the truth, as many people in this theatre know.\* 280

[To audience, grinning] Haven't you got smelly wives whose only perfume is their dowry?

PHILEMATIUM. Scapha, please inspect my dress and jewels.

Are they nice enough?

SCAPHA. I can't answer that.

PHILEMATIUM. Who can?

SCAPHA. Philolaches, of course.

After all, would he have bought you jewels he didn't like himself?

And besides, he doesn't need displays of what he doesn't want. 287

Pretty girls are prettier without their clothes—however lush. 289

Any dress is overdressing for a beauty. I can't wait! 292

PHILOLACHES. [Dancing out to meet his beloved]

Hi, what are you doing?

PHILEMATIUM. Dressing up to please you.

PHILOLACHES. Don't dress more.

[To SCAPHA]. You be off and take those trinkets with you.

[To PHILEMATIUM] You, my joy,

Philematium darling, I would love to booze it up with you.

PHILEMATIUM. I would like to do so with you; everything you love, I love.

Darling—

PHILOLACHES. Ah, that single word is cheaply bought at twenty minae.\*

PHILEMATIUM. Give me ten, my darling. For my love I give a lovely discount.

PHILOLACHES. Fine. You're holding ten—and yet the price for you was thirty minae.

[Leaning over to kiss her] Balance my account.

PHILEMATIUM. Oh, why assail me with those thirty minae? 300

PHILOLACHES. I assail my very self about those thirty minae, love.

That's the best investment deal I ever made in my whole life.

PHILEMATIUM. Where could I have found a better place to place my loving in?

PHILOLACHES. Look at our accounts: income and outgo balance perfectly.

You love me and I love you. Our two appraisals are the same.

PHILEMATIUM. Come and lie beside me. [Calls inside] Water! Put a cocktail table here.

Bring the dice! [To PHILOLACHES] Sweet perfume, dear?

PHILOLACHES [puts his arm around her]. No, I've got sweetness right beside me.

[Looks off-stage]. Say—isn't that my pal right there—approaching with his lovely mistress? 310

Yes—Callidamates with his mistress! Goody! [Calling] Darling boy!

Soldiers are assembling, seeking shares in all the beauty booty.\*

Enter young CALLIDAMATES, incredibly drunk.

He is leaning heavily on his mistress, DELPHIUM.

A SLAVE follows behind them

CALLIDAMATES [singing].

Philolaches told me to meet him here,

Told me to meet him on time.

[To SLAVE]. Listen, I've given you orders.

[SLAVE goes

I'm here, I'm on time.

I fled from the party I was at before.

I didn't have fun there,

It was a big bore.

With Philolaches, I'll have a great revel,

He'll welcome me then, and we'll both raise the devil

And spirits will soar. 316

[To DELPHIUM] Do I seem to be—[eyes her bosom] titititit-tipsy to you?\*

DELPHIUM [smiling]. Always . . . always . . . always. 320

And always delays. Here's the place we should go.

CALLIDAMATES. Wanna hug and embrace you all over the place. You wanna hug too?

DELPHIUM. If it will make you glad—

CALLIDAMATES [drunkenly embracing her]. It'll make me and make me!



Now take me to them.

DELPHIUM [*holding him up*]. Oh, don't fall, baby, stand. 325  
CALLIDAMATES. Dadadadadada-darling, my honey, I'm yours—to lead by the hand. 325a

DELPHIUM. Oh, baby, don't fall in the street—

We can lie by and by where the mattress is sweet.

CALLIDAMATES. Let me fall. I like falling and falling and falling. . . .

DELPHIUM. If you fall, I fall with you—

CALLIDAMATES. 'It's falling that binds you—till somebody finds you.'

DELPHIUM [*to the audience*]. He's tipsy. 330

CALLIDAMATES [*gazing at her bosom again*]. I'm tititit-tipsy, you say?

DELPHIUM. Do give me your hand, don't get hurt on the way.

CALLIDAMATES [*operatically*]. Take my hand!

DELPHIUM. Come along.

CALLIDAMATES. Where we going?

DELPHIUM. Where do you think?

CALLIDAMATES. Oh, now I recall—going home for a drink.

DELPHIUM. Well, you're on the right track.

CALLIDAMATES. Yes, it's all coming back! 335

[*They stagger along a bit. PHILOLACHES, who has been watching all this with amusement, now turns to PHILEMATIUM*

PHILOLACHES. Shall I meet them and greet them, my darling?

He's my best pal of all, and our friendship is strong.

[*Stands up to go*

I'll be back in a jiffy.

PHILEMATIUM. A jiffy's too long.

CALLIDAMATES. Hey, anyone home?

PHILOLACHES. Me.

CALLIDAMATES. Philo! [*To DELPHIUM*] It's Philo, it's Philo!

That marvellest, wonderf'lest, friendliest fellow!

PHILOLACHES. Hello! 340

CALLIDAMATES. Hello!

DELPHIUM.

Hello!

PHILEMATIUM.

Where do you come from?

Hello!

CALLIDAMATES.

rose wine is mellow.

Where roses are red—and the

PHILEMATIUM. Sit down, dear Delphium, let's all drink deep.

CALLIDAMATES [*suddenly collapsing*]. I'm going to sleep.

PHILOLACHES [*smiling*]. It's not something new. . . . 345

DELPHIUM. But what should we do?

PHILEMATIUM.

Let him get forty winks,

While meanwhile the rest of the party has—drinks!

[*Music. Laughter. They revel for at least a few seconds*

TRANIO runs on-stage, in a great panic

TRANIO. Jupiter supreme with his supremest might and mighty main

Surely wants to kill me and my master Philolaches, too.

Hope is absolutely gone—we have no refuge we can trust in. 350

Safety couldn't save us if she wanted—safety's unsafe, too! Terrors and titanic tides of troubles have just touched the harbour—

And I saw them. Master's back from foreign fields—and now I'm finished!

Anybody in the audience would like to make a little money?

All you have to do today is take my place—for crucifixion. Come, speak up, you whip-resisters, iron glad-men, raise your hands.

Where are you—you men who'd storm a city wall for next to nothing?\*

And get paid with ten or twenty . . . javelins, right in the gut.

You can have a talent if you win the race to bear my cross.

Nailing down your fee as soon as arms and legs are nailed down twice.

[*Smiles*] After crucifixion, then present yourself—and I'll pay up. 360

[Then reflects] Am I not a tragic fool? I should be sprinting home with speed!

[At this moment, PHILOLACHES notices that TRANIO has appeared]

PHILOLACHES. Ah, he's back from shopping. Look—there's Tranio, back from the harbour.

[TRANIO now runs up to his master]

TRANIO. Philolaches—!

PHILOLACHES. Hi!

TRANIO. Both you and me—

PHILOLACHES. Both you and me?

TRANIO. We're finished!

PHILOLACHES. What?

TRANIO. Your father's here!

PHILOLACHES. What's that you say?

TRANIO. I say we're both destroyed!

Father's here, your father's here!

PHILOLACHES. He's where?

TRANIO. He's here, arrived!

PHILOLACHES. What? Who says so? Who has seen him?

TRANIO. I myself.

PHILOLACHES. Oh, woe is me!

Gad—I'm lost—where am I now?

TRANIO. You're lying down, that's where you are.

PHILOLACHES. Did you really see him?

TRANIO. Yes.

PHILOLACHES. For sure?

TRANIO. For sure.

PHILOLACHES. For sure—I'm dead!

Dead—if what you say is true.

TRANIO. But why on earth would I tell lies? 370

PHILOLACHES. Tell me what to do—what should I do?

TRANIO [pointing to the party stuff]. Have this mess cleaned up.

Who's the guy asleep?

PHILOLACHES. Callidamates. [To DELPHIUM] Delphie, wake him up.

DELPHIUM [shaking CALLIDAMATES]. Dear Callidamates, do wake up.

CALLIDAMATES [drunkenly]. I am awake. [Quickly] I want a drink.

DELPHIUM. Do wake up now—Philolaches' father's back!

CALLIDAMATES [toasting drunkenly]. Welcome, Father!

PHILOLACHES. Welcome Father, goodbye me!

CALLIDAMATES [drunkenly, half hearing]. Who'd buy me? Buy me? What for?

PHILOLACHES. Please, by Pollux, do stand up—my father's here!

CALLIDAMATES [drunkenly]. Your father's here?

Tell him to go off again. Why did he have to come back here?

PHILOLACHES [terribly upset]. What can I do now, when Father comes and finds me drunk like this,

Finds his house is overflowing full of girls and party guests?

What a thing—to start to dig a well when you're already thirsty.

That's my problem—what to do. My father's here and I'm in trouble.

TRANIO [indicating CALLIDAMATES]. Look, your friend has fallen off asleep again. Do shake him up.

PHILOLACHES. Hey—wake up, my father's come back home.

CALLIDAMATES. What's that? Your father?

Get my sandals and my weapons, then I'll go and kill your father!\*

PHILOLACHES. You'll destroy us!

DELPHIUM. Do be quiet.

PHILOLACHES [to slaves]. Carry this guy in at once.

CALLIDAMATES [drunkenly, to one of the slaves carrying him inside]. Hey—are you a chamber pot? You will be in another second.

[They carry CALLIDAMATES inside]

PHILOLACHES. Oh, we're dead!

TRANIO. Be brave. I'll medicate your misery . . . with wit.

PHILOLACHES. Oh, I'm finished.

TRANIO. Quiet, will you? I'll dream up some remedy.

Look—will it suffice you if I see your now-arriving father

Doesn't set foot in this house and even rushes far from it? 390

For the moment, go inside and clear the party stuff away.



PHILOLACHES. Where will I be?

TRANIO. Where you like it best: with  
her. And Cal with Del.

DELPHIUM. Wouldn't it be better if we left?

TRANIO. Don't even budge, my dear.  
If you stay inside, you can drink up no less than right out  
here.

PHILOLACHES. Oh, ye gods, what will your sweet words bring?  
*I'm drunk with fear!*

TRANIO. Look—can you keep calm and follow all my orders?

PHILOLACHES. Yes, I think.

TRANIO. First and foremost, girls, I want the two of you to  
go inside.

DELPHIUM. Both of us will be most dutiful to you.\*

*[The girls slink off into the house]*

TRANIO. Jove make it so.

*[Playing commander in chief, to PHILOLACHES]*

All right, pay attention now; I'll tell you what I want from  
you:

First and foremost, have the house completely closed and  
locked up tight.\*

Be on guard inside; don't let a single person mumble—

PHILOLACHES *[nods]*. Yes.

TRANIO. Make it look like no one really lives here.

PHILOLACHES *[repeating]*. 'No one lives here.'

TRANIO. Right.

When the old man knocks, nobody answers. Not a living  
soul.

PHILOLACHES. Yes, what else?

TRANIO. The front-door key, that locks  
you in from here outside,

Get it to me, then I'll lock the house and close it up  
completely.

PHILOLACHES *[getting emotional]*. Tranio, it's in your hands—  
my welfare and my wealth as well.

*[He goes into the house]*

TRANIO *[much bravado]*. If a man has talent, it's no different  
if he's a slave or master.

*[TRANIO goes to the front of the  
stage to address the audience]*

The man who has no bit of boldness in his breast,  
It doesn't matter if he's high or low in life,  
He fails as fast as anyone—if he's a failure.  
And yet you have to seek out someone super-smart  
To take a bungled business that is in hot water  
And see that everything calms down, no damage done,  
While he himself is not ashamed of anything.  
Now *that's* what I intend! I'll take our sea of troubles  
And soothe them down to absolute tranquillity,  
No single bit of pain produced for anyone.

*At this moment, a BOY SLAVE steps out of the  
house, carrying a huge key*

TRANIO. But why have you come out here, Sphaerio? *[Sees  
key]* Ah, good!

You fully followed my instructions.

BOY *[carefully repeating a message]*. Master orders—  
And begs you please—to chase his father off somehow.  
Don't let him come inside.

TRANIO. You tell our master this:  
His dad will feel such terror just to *see* the house  
He'll flee completely panicked, with a shrouded head.  
I'll take the key. Go in and lock the doors up tight.  
I'll also lock them up out here.

*[Boy exits]*

We're ready for him.

The games we hold today, while this old man's alive,  
Will far outmatch whatever games he'll get when dead.\*  
I'll leave the door and set a lookout post up here.

*[He skips to a corner of the stage, peers off]*  
And when the old man comes, I'll fill him full of it.\*

*[A pause—musical interlude?]*

*Finally, enter old THEOPROPIDES,  
dressed in his travelling clothes*

THEOPROPIDES. O Neptune, what a debt of gratitude I owe  
thee!

For thou allowed me, half alive, to reach my home.  
Indeed, if after this you learn I've gone to sea,  
Or set a single foot upon a wave, proceed

To do me in the way you almost did me now.  
 Away with you, away, away forevermore!  
 I've trusted you with everything I'll ever trust.

TRANIO [*aside*]. By Pollux, Neptune, thou hast really blundered badly:

For thou allowed the perfect chance to slip right by.

THEOPROPIDES. I'm coming home from Egypt after three long years.

My people surely are most anxious to receive me.

TRANIO [*aside*]. The man your people are most anxious to receive

Is someone who would bring them news that you were dead!

[THEOPROPIDES *has gone up to his house*

THEOPROPIDES. I say, what's this? The doors are all locked up in daytime?

I'll knock. [*He knocks*] Hello—is someone home? Hey—open up!

TRANIO [*revealing himself to THEOPROPIDES, melodramatically*]. What man is this who now approaches our front door?

THEOPROPIDES. It's Tranio, my slave!

TRANIO.

O Theopropides!

Dear master, greetings! Great to see you safe and sound.

Have you been well?

THEOPROPIDES. As well as now.

TRANIO [*a bit uneasy*]. That's nice to hear.

THEOPROPIDES. And you—are you unwell?

TRANIO.

Unwell?

THEOPROPIDES. Well, look at you— 450

You stroll while not a living soul stays in the house.

No guard, no janitor, no one to open up.

I nearly broke both doors from knocking on and on.

TRANIO [*in mock shock*]. What's that—you touched the house???

THEOPROPIDES. You have to touch to knock,

TRANIO. You touched it?

THEOPROPIDES. Yes, I knocked it too.

TRANIO.

Oh, god!

THEOPROPIDES.

What's wrong?

TRANIO. A dirty deed.

THEOPROPIDES. What's going on?

TRANIO. Impossible

To say how horrible, horrendous—also bad.

THEOPROPIDES. But what?

TRANIO. Just flee! Flee far from this most foul front door!

Flee hither, flee to me. [THEOPROPIDES *approaches* TRANIO] 460

Sir, did you really touch?

THEOPROPIDES. You tell me how to knock and still not touch a door.

TRANIO. By Hercules, you killed—

THEOPROPIDES [*quivering*]. I killed?

TRANIO. Your near and dear ones.

THEOPROPIDES. Oh, what an omen—gods and goddesses forbid!

TRANIO. I tremble . . . Can you purify yourself and kin?

THEOPROPIDES. But why? What is this unexpected shock you bring?

*Two of THEOPROPIDES' PORTERS now come on-stage, to deliver the old man's baggage to his house. TRANIO watches them approach with trepidation*

TRANIO. Oh no, hey, hey! [To THEOPROPIDES] Please tell those two to both retreat.

THEOPROPIDES. You two—retreat!

TRANIO [to PORTERS]. Don't touch the house oh no!

Go quickly—touch the ground!

THEOPROPIDES. But tell me what's so wrong with touching?

[TRANIO *sighs a deep sigh, as if to say, 'This is it'*

TRANIO. It's seven months now since we haven't gone in there. 470

It's seven months since we have all moved out.

THEOPROPIDES. But why? Speak up!

TRANIO. First look around for other people.

Does someone try to catch our conversation?

THEOPROPIDES [*looks high and low. Sees nothing*]. All clear.

TRANIO [*stalling for time—to dream up a story*]. Uh—look around again.

To do me in the way you almost did me now.  
 Away with you, away, away forevermore!  
 I've trusted you with everything I'll ever trust.

TRANIO [*aside*]. By Pollux, Neptune, thou hast really blundered badly;

For thou allowed the perfect chance to slip right by.

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Have you been well?

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TRANIO [*a bit uneasy*]. That's nice to hear.

THEOPROPIDES. And you—are you unwell?

TRANIO.

Unwell?

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THEOPROPIDES. But what?

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460

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THEOPROPIDES.

But tell me what's so wrong

with touching?

[TRANIO *sighs a deep sigh, as if to say, 'This is it'*

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It's seven months since we have all moved out.

THEOPROPIDES. But why? Speak up!

TRANIO. First look around for other people.

Does someone try to catch our conversation?

THEOPROPIDES [*looks high and low. Sees nothing*]. All clear.

TRANIO [*stalling for time—to dream up a story*]. Uh—look around again.

THEOPROPIDES [*looks high and low*]. There's no one. Speak up, will you?

TRANIO. The sin . . . was murder.

THEOPROPIDES. Huh? I don't quite understand.

TRANIO. A sin committed long ago in ancient times.

THEOPROPIDES. In ancient times?

TRANIO. We just found out in modern times.

THEOPROPIDES. What sort of sin? And who committed it? Tell, tell!

TRANIO. A guest was taken unawares by a host—and slaughtered.

I think it was the man who sold the house to you. 480

THEOPROPIDES. S-slaughtered?

TRANIO. Yes. And robbed his own guest's gold, and then—

He buried his own guest right in this house of yours.

THEOPROPIDES [*trembling*]. But how—how did you know of it—did you suspect?

TRANIO. I'll tell you. Listen carefully: he had dined out—

Your son, that is—and after dinner he came home.

We went to bed. We all of us were sleeping tight.

By chance, I had forgotten to put the lantern out.

And suddenly he screamed. An awful scream he screamed!

THEOPROPIDES. Who screamed? My son?

TRANIO. Be quiet, will you? Listen closely.

He told me that the corpse came to him in a dream. 490

THEOPROPIDES. So it was in a dream?

TRANIO. It was, but listen closely.

He told me that the corpse addressed him in this manner—

THEOPROPIDES. Within a dream?

TRANIO. How could he talk to him awake?

The man was murdered over sixty years ago!

At times you can be rather silly, sir. . . . 495

THEOPROPIDES [*chastened*]. I'll shut my mouth.

TRANIO. And then within the dream, he spake:

'My name's Transoceanus from . . . across the sea.\*

I'm housed in this house where I must house myself—

The King of Hades has refused to let me in

Because I died . . . too early. And I was deceived

By someone's word of honour: my host slaughtered me, 500

And buried me in secret—here—unfuneralled.

A sin. A sin for gold. Now, boy, move out of here!

The house is full of sin, the habitation cursed.'

[*To THEOPROPIDES*] I'd need at least a year to tell you all the horrors, sir.

[*Suddenly, noise filters out from the closed house*

TRANIO [*whispering loudly to those within*]. Sh, sh!

THEOPROPIDES. By Hercules, what's happened now?

TRANIO. The door has creaked.

It's *he* who tapped.

THEOPROPIDES [*in terror*]. I haven't got a drop of blood left!

The dead can carry me alive right down to Hades!

TRANIO [*to himself*]. I'm lost! Those folk inside perturb my perfect story! 510

I greatly fear he'll catch me in the act of lying!

THEOPROPIDES. What are you saying to yourself?

TRANIO [*stirring up panic again*]. Retreat, retreat!

And flee, by Hercules!

THEOPROPIDES. Flee where? Why don't you flee?

TRANIO. I have no fear. I've made my peace with all the dead.

[*From inside the house, young PHILOLACHES' voice*

PHILOLACHES. Hey, Tranio!

TRANIO [*whispering through the door*]. Take care—don't call me by my name!

[*Now aloud, a statement to 'the ghost'*] I'm wholly blameless. I've not tapped these sinful walls. 516

THEOPROPIDES. Who are you talking to?

TRANIO [*to THEOPROPIDES, pretending surprise*]. Oh, was that you who called? 519

Dear gods above, I thought it was the dead man speaking,

Perhaps to ask me why you dared to touch the door.

But why do you still stand there? What of my advice?

THEOPROPIDES. What should I do?

TRANIO. Flee! Don't look back—and shroud your head!

THEOPROPIDES. And you don't flee?

TRANIO. I told you, I'm at peace with them.

THEOPROPIDES. But just a while ago you were in fear and trembling. 525

TRANIO. Don't worry, please, I'll look out for myself.

But you go on—go flee and fly with utmost speed.

And call 'Sweet Hercules!'

THEOPROPIDES [*obeys completely, starts running*]. I call 'Sweet Hercules!'

[*He scurries off-stage*]

TRANIO. I'll call on him as well—to give you awful trouble.

Immortal gods above, I bid you all draw near

To see the splendid trouble I've created here!

530

[*TRANIO ecstatically skips off—to the back of the 'haunted' house\**]

*From the exit nearer the forum, enter MISARGYRIDES, the moneylender, a miser-of-misers. As he begins to address the audience, TRANIO re-enters from inside the house*

MISARGYRIDES. It's been a cursed year for lending cash at interest.

I've never seen a season worse than this has been.

I'm in the forum all day long from dawn till dusk

Unable to find customers to lend a bit.

TRANIO [*noticing MISARGYRIDES, aside*]. Oh, now we're fully finished off forevermore!

The broker's here, who lent us cash on interest

To buy the girl and pay for our expensive parties.

We're caught red-handed if I don't do something fast

To keep this from our senior master. I'll go meet him.

540

*And now enter THEOPROPIDES as well!*

TRANIO *sees the old man and is struck by yet another blow*

What's this? What brings that fellow back so soon?

I tremble—has he got a hint of what we've done?

I'd better greet him too! Am I in awful shape!

There's nothing worse than *knowing* that you've done a wrong.

And do I know! But since I've stirred things up already,

I'll go on stirring. That's the order of the day.

[*He goes to THEOPROPIDES*]

What a surprise!

THEOPROPIDES. I met the chap I bought the house from.

TRANIO [*taken aback*]. Uh—did you mention anything—of what I told you?

THEOPROPIDES. By Hercules, I told him everything!

TRANIO [*aside*].

Oh no!

I tremble—all my tricks have permanently perished!

550

THEOPROPIDES [*to TRANIO*]. What are you mumbling?

TRANIO.

Nothing, nothing. Tell me this:

What did you say?

THEOPROPIDES. Why, everything from start to finish.

TRANIO. Did he confess about his guest?

THEOPROPIDES.

No, he denied it.

[*A new topic*] What's your advice for now?

TRANIO.

You're asking my advice?

By Hercules, I'd take the thing to arbitration.

[*Aside*] But get a judge who'd swallow anything I say.

You'd win as easily as foxes eat a pear.\*

MISARGYRIDES. But look—there's Philolaches' slave man Tranini.\*

560

Those fellows never pay me principal or interest.

[*TRANIO starts toward MISARGYRIDES, who is on one side of the stage, while THEOPROPIDES stands at the opposite end*]

THEOPROPIDES [*to TRANIO*]. But where're you going?

TRANIO [*to himself*]. Nowhere. I'm in no condition.

Oh, am I cursed, born under inauspicious stars.

The man will dun me while my master's here. It's tragic.

On either side of me an awful time awaits.

I'll seize the situation,

MISARGYRIDES.

He approaches. All is saved.

There's hope for money yet.

TRANIO [*aside*].

He's happy—but he's wrong.

[*Calling*] Hello, Misargyrides, hope you're feeling well.

MISARGYRIDES. Well, what about my money?

TRANIO.

Do behave yourself.

The minute I arrive, you throw your javelins.

570

MISARGYRIDES. A worthless man!

TRANIO [*ironically*]. Now there's a truthful prophecy.



MISARGYRIDES. Don't start some dodge with me.

TRANIO. Then speak—what's on your mind?

MISARGYRIDES. Where's Philolaches?

TRANIO [*too, too friendly*]. Ah, dear friend, you couldn't have Arrived more opportunely than you've just arrived.

MISARGYRIDES. How come?

TRANIO. Come over here . . . [*beckons MISARGYRIDES to a quiet corner*]

MISARGYRIDES [*loudly*]. When do I get my interest?

TRANIO. I know you've got a healthy voice; please don't shout.

MISARGYRIDES. By Hercules, why not?

TRANIO. Do me a little favour.

MISARGYRIDES. What sort of little favour?

TRANIO. Won't you please . . . go home?

MISARGYRIDES. Go home?

TRANIO. Come back here sometime after midday, please.

MISARGYRIDES. But will I get my interest then?

TRANIO. You will. Now go. 580

MISARGYRIDES [*'adding' things up in his miserly mind*]. But why expend the effort and exhaust myself?

I think I'll wait around right here till midday.

TRANIO. Oh no, go home. By Hercules, it's better home.

MISARGYRIDES. Why don't I get my interest? Why these jokes with me?

TRANIO. By Hercules, I wish you would . . . go home for now.

MISARGYRIDES. By Hercules, I'll call my client—

TRANIO [*ironically*]. Loud, I'm sure!

Your greatest joy is loudness.

MISARGYRIDES. I just want what's mine.

For days and days you've held me off with tricks like this.

If I annoy you, pay me, then I'll go away. 590

The single phrase 'I'll pay' will end all complications.

TRANIO [*a sudden thought—to faze MISARGYRIDES*]. Well—take your principal.

MISARGYRIDES. I want my interest first!

TRANIO. What's that? You lowest, basest, vilest man on earth!

You're practising extortion? No, go do your worst.

He owes you zero.

MISARGYRIDES [*flabbergasted*]. Owes me zero?

TRANIO.

Now you won't get

A single spot of dust from us. Are you afraid

He'll leave the city, just to dodge your interest?

He's offering the principal.

MISARGYRIDES. But I don't want it!

I first and foremost want to get some interest paid me. 599-600

TRANIO. Look, don't annoy us. Nothing you can do will help.

You think that you're the only moneylender here?

MISARGYRIDES [*starting to foam at the mouth*]. My interest

now, my interest, interest; pay me interest!

Will you please pay my interest to me right away?

I want my interest!

TRANIO. 'Interest' here and 'interest' there,

The only interest this man has in life is 'interest'.

Do go away. I think in all my years on earth

I've never seen a fouler, viler beast than you.

MISARGYRIDES. By Pollux, you don't scare me with those words of yours!

[*Across the stage, old THEOPROPIDES has been waiting quasi-patiently*

THEOPROPIDES. Hot talk! Why, even over here I feel the heat. 609a

[*A bit louder*] I wonder what that interest is the man is after. 610

TRANIO [*to MISARGYRIDES, indicating THEOPROPIDES*]. Look,

there's his father, just returned from overseas.

He'll give you back your principal and interest too,

So stop your bearing down and shady practices.

That man won't make you wait.

MISARGYRIDES. I'll take what I can get.

THEOPROPIDES [*to TRANIO*]. Hey, Tranio!

TRANIO. Yes, sir?

[*Dashes over to THEOPROPIDES*

THEOPROPIDES. Who's that? What is he claiming?

Why does he seem to mention my son Philolaches?

Why does he make this sort of hue and cry to you?

What's owed the man?

TRANIO. By Hercules, give orders, sir,

To smash this rotten fellow's face with all his cash.

THEOPROPIDES. Give orders?



TRANIO. Yes—to knock his block off with hard currency. 620  
 MISARGYRIDES. I'd gladly suffer any knocks for blocks of cash. 621  
 TRANIO. Did you hear that? The perfect moneylender speaks. 625  
 A moneylender—vilest, foulest breed there is.  
 THEOPROPIDES. Don't tell me what he is; I don't care where he's from.  
 I really want to know and long to be informed. 628  
 What is this sum that Philolaches owes this man? 622  
 TRANIO. A teeny bit.  
 THEOPROPIDES. How teeny?  
 TRANIO. Forty thousand drachmae.  
 That isn't very much.  
 THEOPROPIDES [*ironically*]. Oh no, it's tiny. 624  
 I hear there's interest due as well. So what's the total? 629  
 TRANIO. Our total debt to him is—[*quickly*] forty-four thousand drachmae. 630  
 Just say you'll pay—and send him off.  
 THEOPROPIDES. Just say I'll pay??? 633  
 TRANIO. Just say you'll pay.  
 THEOPROPIDES. Myself?  
 TRANIO. In person. Listen, sir,  
 Go on and say it, I command you.  
 THEOPROPIDES. Tell me this:  
 That money—what'd you do with it?  
 TRANIO. It's solid.  
 THEOPROPIDES. Solid?  
 Then pay him back yourself, if that's the case.  
 TRANIO [*coming up with a big idea, makes a big announcement*]. Your son—  
 Has bought a house.  
 THEOPROPIDES. A house?  
 TRANIO. A house.  
 THEOPROPIDES [*ecstatic*]. Oh, goody, goody!  
 His father's son he is, he is, he's going into business!\*
 A house, you say?  
 TRANIO [*nods*]. A house. And do you know what kind? 640  
 THEOPROPIDES. How could I know?  
 TRANIO. Oh, boy!

THEOPROPIDES. What kind?  
 TRANIO. Don't even ask!  
 THEOPROPIDES. Oh, tell!  
 TRANIO. A splendiddifferiffic, brilliant building!  
 THEOPROPIDES. By Hercules, well done! What did he pay for it?  
 TRANIO. Two silver talents. One plus one—like you and me.  
 He gave as cash deposit forty thousand drachmae. 645  
 [*Indicating the moneylender*] We borrowed cash from him to pay the owner—understand?  
 The moment we discovered that our house was . . . cursed  
 Your son made haste to buy himself another house.  
 THEOPROPIDES. By Hercules, well done! 649-51  
 MISARGYRIDES [*to himself*]. The day is fast collecting noon.  
 TRANIO [*to THEOPROPIDES*]. Let's rid ourselves of him—before he pukes on us.  
 Our total debt to him is forty-four thousand drachmae 652a  
 Both principal and interest— 631  
 MISARGYRIDES. And that's all I seek.  
 TRANIO. I'd like to see you dare demand a penny more! 632  
 THEOPROPIDES [*to MISARGYRIDES*]. Young man, you'll deal with me.  
 MISARGYRIDES [*to THEOPROPIDES*]. So I collect from you?  
 THEOPROPIDES. Collect tomorrow.  
 MISARGYRIDES. Good. Tomorrow. Good, good, good.  
 [*Rubbing his greedy hands in anticipation, MISARGYRIDES shuffles off*]  
 TRANIO [*at MISARGYRIDES, as he goes*]. May all the gods and goddesses give trouble to you! 655  
 You missed destroying all my plans by half-a-hair's breadth.  
 [*To audience*] By Pollux, you won't find a fouler class of men  
 Or men less lawful than the moneylending breed!  
 THEOPROPIDES. What sort of neighbourhood did my boy buy this house in?  
 TRANIO [*aside*]. I'm lost again!  
 THEOPROPIDES. Speak up, I asked you something. 660  
 TRANIO. I can't—I just forgot the former owner's name.  
 THEOPROPIDES. Come on, just use your wits, my lad.

TRANIO [*aside*]. What can I do?  
 Unless I choose our neighbour's house . . .  
 And claim this is the house his son just bought. I've heard  
 That lies taste best when served up piping hot. All right, 665  
 Whatever hodgepodge heaven hints, I'll hand to him. 667  
 THEOPROPIDES. Well, have you thought it out?  
 TRANIO [*to THEOPROPIDES*]. That goddamned owner, sir—  
 [*Aside*] My goddamned master! [*Aloud*] Sir . . . it is your  
 neighbour's house.  
 [*Indicating SIMO's home*] Your son just bought this house.  
 THEOPROPIDES [*wide-eyed with joy*]. I can't believe it's true! 670  
 TRANIO. Well, if you pay whatever cash is due, it's true.  
 If you don't pay the cash, then what I'm saying isn't true.  
 THEOPROPIDES. And not just in a goodly part of town—  
 TRANIO [*feeding his enthusiasm*]. The very best!  
 THEOPROPIDES. By Hercules, I'd love to look inside. Please  
 knock.  
 Yes, Tranio. Go summon someone from inside.  
 TRANIO [*aside*]. I'm lost again—I really don't know what to  
 say!  
 Another time the tide has turned me on the rocks!  
 THEOPROPIDES. What now?  
 TRANIO [*aside*]. By Hercules, I don't know what to do.  
 I'm caught red-handed.  
 THEOPROPIDES. Call somebody out at once.  
 I want a tour.  
 TRANIO [*nervously*]. But, sir . . . there are the women, sir. 680  
 We ought to ask permission—if they are presentable.  
 THEOPROPIDES. The proper thing to do. You go ahead and  
 ask.  
 And while you do, I'll wait outside right here.  
 TRANIO [*aside to the audience*]. May all the gods and god-  
 desses destroy this old man—  
 For giving all my plans attacks from every side!  
 At this very moment, the door of the 'new' house  
 opens, and out comes SIMO, a chubby old man,  
 who is slightly drunk from dinner.  
 TRANIO. What luck! The owner of the house is stepping out.

Old Simo in the flesh. I'll step aside to watch,  
 And call a senate assembly inside my interior soul.  
 I'll broach the man as soon as I think up a plan.  
 [*As TRANIO slinks into the alley to eavesdrop,*  
 SIMO steps down-stage to sing a solo

SIMO [*singing*].  
 That was the best meal of the year. 690  
 Never have I eaten better.  
 What a fine dinner prepared by my wife.  
 But after she wanted to 'sleep' and I wouldn't let her.  
 That old hag made a dinner better than usual,  
 Simply a plot to get me to bed.  
 'Sleep isn't good after dinner,' I said.  
 Secretly, quietly, I have slipped out.  
 Wife will be wild at me, I have no doubt.

TRANIO [*aside*]. What a bad evening's preparing for that old  
 duffer. 700  
 In sleep and at supper he'll suffer.

SIMO.  
 The more I reflect, as I think very deep,  
 I see wedding a hag for some gold in a bag  
 Means you won't oversleep.  
 The bedroom is torture, so I'd rather roam.  
 Better work in the forum than bed her at home. 706-7

[*Winks at the audience*] By Pollux, I don't know of your  
 wives—are their ways diverse?  
 I know my case is bad and it's bound to get worse. 709-10

TRANIO [*aside*]. It's your own ways, old man, that have made  
 your life worsen.  
 Blame no god in the sky, blame your own very person. 712-13  
 But it's time now for me to deceive that old man.  
 For I've just had a thought and I've just found a plan,  
 A ruse that will fend off a bruise just as far as I can.  
 I'll approach him and broach him. Hi, Simo—the gods  
 make you glad.  
 SIMO. Ah, Tranio!  
 TRANIO. How have you been?

SIMO.

Not too bad.

*[They shake hands warmly]*

Doing what?

TRANIO. Shaking hands with a wonderful guy.

SIMO *[smiles]*. Thank you, lad.

I would like to requite those nice words you just gave:

*[With a smile]* I am now shaking hands with a wonderful . . . rogue of a slave. 720THEOPROPIDES *[calling from across the stage]*. Hey, you whipping post, come over here.TRANIO *[calling over, nervously]*. One minute, one minute! 721aSIMO *[to TRANIO, confidentially]*. How's the house?

TRANIO. Sir?

SIMO. The house. What is now going on in it?

I approve! Life is short.

We must live every minute!

TRANIO. Uh, sir? Beg your pardon?

I scarcely can grasp what you're saying.

SIMO. I'm saying—keep playing. Live life as a song—

Keep wining and dining, keep rolling in clover—

TRANIO *[confidentially, to SIMO]*. That life is . . . all over. 729-30

SIMO. What?

TRANIO. All of us, one great big fall of us, Simo.

SIMO. It was all going well for you.

TRANIO. I can't deny that's a fact.

We lived it, we loved it, there's nothing we lacked.

But, Simo, a storm came, our good ship is racked.

SIMO. But your ship was so sound, pulled right up on dry ground.

TRANIO. But another ship rammed. Now we're damned—and we're drowned! 740

SIMO. I'm on your side, but what's the problem? Tell me, please.

TRANIO. Master—back from overseas.

*[End of musical moment. A**pause. SIMO gets the picture*SIMO *[to TRANIO, with a wry smile]*. For you a slight ironic twist. You're in a kind of cruci—fix?

TRANIO. I beg you, please don't tell my master.

SIMO.

He won't get a thing from me.

TRANIO. Thank you, you're my patron.

SIMO. I don't need your kind of client, thank you.

TRANIO. But now the reason Master sent me here to you—

SIMO. No, first you answer something I would like to ask:

How much of your affairs does he already know?

TRANIO. Why—not a thing.

SIMO.

He hasn't shouted at his son? 750

TRANIO. His sky is blue and calm and balmy. All is clear.

But now he's asked me to convey a strong request.

He'd like to take a look around inside your house.

SIMO. It's not for sale.

TRANIO.

I know, of course. But the old man

Is anxious to build women's quarters in his own house,

And baths and paths and porticoes, a big construction.

SIMO. Whatever made him dream of doing this?

TRANIO.

I'll tell you, sir.

He's very anxious that his son now take a wife

As soon as possible. And so—the women's quarters.

He said he heard some architect, I don't know who, 760

Discuss your house design. The man was mad with praise.

And so he'd like to copy from it, do you mind?

The special thing he wants to copy from your house is this:

He's heard you have terrific shade, all summer through,

And all day long, and even if it's awfully bright.

SIMO *[surprised]*. But listen here—when shadows fall all over townThere's *never* shade in here. It's sunny all day long.

The sun just stays—as if it were a bill collector.

The only shade I have at all is down my well.

TRANIO *[with a weak laugh]*. Well . . . shady things are shady, sun is . . . nice and bright.\* 770

SIMO. Look, don't annoy me. Things are as I've just explained.

TRANIO. But still, he'd like to look around.

SIMO.

Well, let him look!

If he sees anything he likes and wants to copy,

Why, let him build it.

TRANIO.

Can I call him?

SIMO.

Go and call him.

[TRANIO *struts across the stage and shares his satisfaction with the audience*]

TRANIO. They say Kings Alexander and Agathocles\*  
Were two who did big things. Now would you say I'm  
third—

Who solo does so many memorable things?  
I've saddled up both old men like a pair of mules.  
This latest ploy I've started isn't bad at all!  
For just as muleteers have saddled mules to ride,  
I've got two saddled men to act as mules for me.  
They're loaded up—and what a load they're carrying!

780

[*Music begins*]

[*Singing*] Now I must talk to him, walk up and talk to  
him.

Hey, Theo, hey!

THEOPROPIDES. Who's calling, I say?

TRANIO. Your multi-faithful servant.

THEOPROPIDES. Say, where have you been?

TRANIO. Your mission, sir, is, sir, accomplished. You now  
can begin.

THEOPROPIDES. But what on earth caused such a delay?

TRANIO. The man was engaged in some business, so I had to  
wait.

THEOPROPIDES. I know you—the slow you—you've always  
been late.

TRANIO. The ancient proverb, sir, still bears repeating:  
'No one can whistle the same time he's eating.'

790

I couldn't be with you right here—and also be there too.  
THEOPROPIDES. What now?

TRANIO. You can visit his house just as  
long as you care to.

THEOPROPIDES. Go on, lead the way.

TRANIO. Am I causing delay?

THEOPROPIDES. Lead the way.

TRANIO [*confidentially to THEOPROPIDES*]. Look at the old  
boy just standing there—sad to behold it,

He's very unhappy—regrets having sold it.

THEOPROPIDES. Why so?

TRANIO. He's been constantly begging, pursuing  
And pleading to cancel the sale.

THEOPROPIDES [*the tough businessman*]. Nothing doing!  
'A man sows his crop, and the man must then reap it.'  
If we were complaining, he'd force us to keep it.  
No, 'All sales are final', 'What's been done, don't undo',  
'Pity's a luxury', 'Eat what you chew'.

TRANIO. Your words of wisdom slow me down. Please follow  
me.

THEOPROPIDES.

That's what I'll do.

Faithfully I'll follow you.

[*They cross the stage to SIMO*]

TRANIO [*to THEOPROPIDES*]. Look—there's the old man. [*To  
SIMO*] Here's your man...

SIMO. Greetings, Theopropides, I'm glad you're back both  
safe and sound.

THEOPROPIDES. Greetings.

SIMO. Your man told me that you'd like to look around.  
THEOPROPIDES. If you wouldn't mind.

SIMO. I wouldn't mind. Go in and look around.

THEOPROPIDES. But of course, the women—

SIMO. Women? Don't you care a hoot for them!

Stroll around in any room you'd like; pretend the house is  
yours.

THEOPROPIDES [*whispers to TRANIO*]. What—'pretend'?

TRANIO [*whispers back*]. Oh, let's not put the gentleman  
through further pain,

810

Throwing up the fact you've bought his place. You see  
how sad he looks.

THEOPROPIDES. Yes, I see.

TRANIO. Well, let's not make it worse by making fun of him.  
Let's not mention that you've bought it any more.

THEOPROPIDES. I see your point.

Well advised. I think that's very sensitive of you, my boy.\*  
Now what, Simo?

SIMO. Go inside, just take your time and look around.

THEOPROPIDES. Very nice, considerate. I thank you kindly.

SIMO. You're quite welcome.

[TRANIO *further 'sells' his master  
the qualities of the house*]

TRANIO. Look at what a vestibule it has; observe the wonderful  
front path.

THEOPROPIDES. Splendid, splendid, oh, by Pollux—

TRANIO. Take a good look at those pillars.

[*Ironically gestures to the audience that he means the two old men*]

Solid, strong, and oh so thick. Oh yes, dear Master, oh so thick!

THEOPROPIDES. Never have I seen more pretty pillars.

SIMO. And the price I paid— 820

Pretty penny, even long ago.

TRANIO [*to THEOPROPIDES*]. You hear that 'long ago'?

He can scarcely keep from weeping.

THEOPROPIDES [*to SIMO*]. How much did you pay for them?

SIMO. Paid three hundred drachmae for them both; delivery was extra, too.

THEOPROPIDES [*examining more closely*]. Hercules! I see they're not as good as what I first believed.

TRANIO. Why?

THEOPROPIDES. Because, by Pollux, they've got termite trouble, both of them.

TRANIO [*again, ironically to the audience, suggesting the old men*]. Past their prime is what I'd say's the major trouble with them both.

Still and all, they'd do quite well, if we'd just throw some tar on them.

They're well built. No pasta-eating *foreign* workmen did the job.\*

Also, sir, observe the door joint.

THEOPROPIDES. Yes, I see.

TRANIO. Terrific dolts!

THEOPROPIDES. Dolts, what dolts?

TRANIO. Excuse me, sir, I meant 'terrific bolts', of course. 830  
Seen enough?

THEOPROPIDES.

The more I see, the more I really like the house!

TRANIO. [*to mock them still further, points above the doorway*]. See the picture painted there—the crow who's mocking two old vultures?

THEOPROPIDES. I don't see a thing.

TRANIO. But I do. I can see the crow is standing

Right between the vultures and by turns he twits at each of them.

Look at me, just look at me, and tell me if you see the crow.

[THEOPROPIDES *turns*]

See the crow?

THEOPROPIDES [*confused*]. Why, no, I see no crow of any kind at all.

TRANIO. Look in your direction, then, although the crow's not in your sight.

Maybe if you glance about, you'll catch a glimpse of those two vultures.

THEOPROPIDES [*frustrated*]. Stop this, will you, I can't see a painted bird of any sort!

TRANIO. Well, forget it, I forgive you. At your age, it's tough to spot. 840

THEOPROPIDES. What I can see I adore, I'll tell you that. I just adore it!

SIMO. Look some more; you'll find it worth the effort.

THEOPROPIDES. Pollux, good advice!

SIMO [*calling to a slave inside his house*]. Boy, come here and take this fellow round the house and all the bedrooms.

[*To THEOPROPIDES*] Can't take you around myself. I've got some business in the forum.

THEOPROPIDES [*feeling very smart*]. Never mind a run-around from anyone; I need no leading.

When it comes to being taken in, I'm taken in by no one. 846-7

SIMO. Even into houses?

THEOPROPIDES [*smiles*]. No one ever takes me in.

SIMO.

Then go!

THEOPROPIDES. In I go.

TRANIO. But wait—beware the dog!

THEOPROPIDES [*unbrave*]. Y-you beware for me!

TRANIO [*now an impromptu dog act*]. Dog! Hey, dog! Go 'way! Go kill yourself! Go right to hell! 850

Dog, go, dog! [*to THEOPROPIDES*] The dog won't go. [*to 'dog'*] Go, dog!

SIMO. That little thing can't hurt you.\*

She's as harmless as all other pregnant pooches. Go, be brave!



Forum for myself for now. Farewell.

[*He walks off*]

THEOPROPIDES [*calling after SIMO*]. Farewell—and many thanks.

TRANIO, be good enough to get someone to take that dog off.

Even though she isn't . . . fearsome.

TRANIO [*peeking at the 'dog' again*]. Look at her—so sweetly sleeping.

You don't want to have the people think you're frightened.

THEOPROPIDES [*half-heartedly*]. No—you're right.

Follow me inside now.

TRANIO [*grandiloquent*]. Sir, there's nothing can deter me from you.

[*They both enter SIMO's house*]

*After a pause [musical interlude?],*

*enter PHANISCUS, slave to young CALLIDAMATES.*

*He sings of the joys of good slave behaviour*

PHANISCUS. It's the slaves who are fault-free and still fear the whips

Who serve masters best.

The slaves who fear nothing, they earn themselves something. 860

They'll pay for their folly—they'll soon be distressed.

All they're doing is training for sprinting. They run. When they're caught,

They see it's a nest egg of torture they've bought.\*

For the sake of my skin is how I always act. 868

So I keep it intact.

If my hand is commanded, my roof will stay strong. 870

Let it rain in on others, let others do wrong.

For however the slaves treat their master, that treatment they see:

He's good if they're good; if they're bad, bad he'll be.

Our own slaves at home are the worst on this earth;

Their 'goods' are expended, bad treatment is all that they're worth.

Just now we were commanded to meet Master here,

But not one volunteer!

They all mocked me for going, the duties I'm showing,

I've gone out and my goodness will pay:

I'm the one single slave to fetch Master today, 880

So that breakfast for them will be cowhide to eat.

[*Smiles*] I am one slave who's too good to be beat.

I don't really care about *their* backs, I just care for mine.

They'll be drawn and quartered, I'll do what I'm ordered . . . and be fine.

*Another slave, PINACIUM, rushes in after PHANISCUS*

PINACIUM. Wait, Phaniscus!

Stop a mite!

PHANISCUS [*haughtily*]. Don't annoy me!

PINACIUM. What a monkey!

Won't you wait—you parasite?

PHANISCUS. I, a parasite?

PINACIUM [*sarcastically*]. Wherever you see food—you bite.

PHANISCUS. Well, I enjoy it. You drop dead.

PINACIUM. Talk tough—you share the master's bed!\* 890

PHANISCUS. You're blurring my eyes. Whenever you talk, there are fumes that arise!

PINACIUM. You're a maker of counterfeit coins and counterfeit groins.\*

PHANISCUS. Nothing you do, boy, will make me lose tether.

Our master knows me.

PINACIUM. But, of course! You've been sleeping together!

PHANISCUS. Sober up, and don't curse me.

PINACIUM. I know you can't bear me,

I feel quite the same about you.

PHANISCUS. Kindly spare me.

Your lecture's a bore.

PINACIUM. Well, I'll knock on the door.

[*Knocks at the 'haunted' house, calls grandiloquently*]

Is there a mortal to halt my great fistic assault on this 899-900 portal?

[*To audience*] Not a soul at the door.

Suitable for disreputable people—they simply ignore.

But I'd better take care



Not to get myself singed in their flaming affair.

[PINACIUM and PHANISCUS stand at the door, periodically knocking [in pantomime] while the next dialogue takes place]

TRANIO and THEOPROPIDES come out of SIMO'S house. The slave is really baiting his master

TRANIO. Tell me how the deal seems to you now.

THEOPROPIDES. I'm overjoyed with it!

TRANIO. Too expensive, do you think?

THEOPROPIDES. Expensive? Oh, by Pollux, never

Ever have I seen a house just tossed away!

TRANIO. So then you're pleased.

THEOPROPIDES. 'Pleased' you ask me? Hercules, I'm more than that, I'm super-pleased!

TRANIO. How about the women's quarters? What a portico—

THEOPROPIDES. Fantastic!

I don't think you'd find a public portico that's any bigger.

TRANIO. Actually, your son and I, we personally toured the city,

910

Measuring the public porticoes.

THEOPROPIDES. You did?

TRANIO. And ours is biggest.

THEOPROPIDES. What a luscious, lovely deal. By Hercules, if someone offered

Half a dozen silver talents, cash in hand, to buy this house here,

I'd refuse it.

TRANIO. Even if you tried to take it, I'd prevent you.

THEOPROPIDES. I would say our capital is well invested in this deal.

TRANIO. I don't blush to say how much I prompted and promoted this,

Forcing him to borrow cash on interest from the money-lender,

Giving it to Simo as deposit. . . .

THEOPROPIDES. Lad, you saved the ship!

And we owe the moneylender eighty minae?

TRANIO. Nothing more.

THEOPROPIDES. He'll be paid today.

TRANIO. You're smart. That way, there'll be no complications.

920

Or—you could give me the cash, and I'll go pay the man myself.

THEOPROPIDES [warily]. Give the cash to you? Some little trick is lurking in that thought.

TRANIO [irony-clad protestation]. Would I ever dare to fool you for a fact—or even just for fun?

THEOPROPIDES. Would I ever dare to *not* distrust you, or be off my guard?

TRANIO. Since I've been your slave, have I bamboozled you in any way?

THEOPROPIDES. That's because I've been on guard. So thank me and my wits for that.

Being on my guard with you is proof I'm smart.

TRANIO [aside]. I quite agree.

THEOPROPIDES [an order to TRANIO]. To the country now, and tell my son I'm back.\*

TRANIO. At your command.

THEOPROPIDES. Have him sprint with you back to the city — at full speed.

TRANIO. Yessir.

930

[TRANIO starts off, then stops to address the audience]

Now I'll join my fellow fighters by arriving through the rear guard

To report the situation's calmed—and he's been beaten back.

[TRANIO now skips down the alley between the two houses to get into the 'haunted' one through the back door]

Our attention now returns to the two slaves, who have kept knocking at the 'haunted' front door in pantomime all during the TRANIO-THEOPROPIDES conversation

PHANISCUS. Not a sound of merrymaking, as there used to be.

I can't hear the singing of a musical girl—or anyone.  
 THEOPROPIDES [*finally noticing the two servants*]. Now what is this? Whatever do those people seek at my old house? Wonder what they want, what they are peeking at.

PINACIUM. I'll knock again.

Open up! Hey, Tranio, come loose the locks!  
 THEOPROPIDES. What farce is this?

PHANISCUS. Open up—we've come to fetch our master, we were ordered to.

THEOPROPIDES [*calls over*]. Hey, you boys, what are you doing, what's this beating on the house?

PINACIUM. Hey, old man, why do you ask about what's no concern of yours?

THEOPROPIDES. No concern of mine?

PINACIUM. Unless you've just been made a new official,\*  
 Authorized to make interrogations and to spy and eavesdrop.

THEOPROPIDES. Where you stand is my own house.

PINACIUM. Has Philolaches sold the place?

PHANISCUS [*to PINACIUM*]. Maybe that old geezer's simply trying to bamboozle us.

THEOPROPIDES [*firmly*]. Look, I speak the truth. Now tell me what's your business here.

PHANISCUS. It's this:

Here is where our master's boozing.

THEOPROPIDES. Boozing here?

PHANISCUS. That's what I said.

THEOPROPIDES. I don't like your cheekiness, my boy.

PHANISCUS. We're here to pick him up.

THEOPROPIDES. Pick who up?

PINACIUM. Our master. Must we tell you all this twenty times?

THEOPROPIDES [*to PHANISCUS, ignoring PINACIUM*]. Since you seem a decent chap, I'll tell you: no one lives here now.

PHANISCUS. Doesn't that young Philolaches live right here inside this house?

THEOPROPIDES. Used to live here. He moved out of this house quite a while ago.

PHANISCUS [*whispers to PINACIUM*]. This old geezer's mad

940

950

for sure. [*To THEOPROPIDES*] You're very wildly wrong, kind sir.

For, unless he moved last night—or earlier today—I'm certain Philolaches lives here.

THEOPROPIDES. No one's lived here for six months.

PINACIUM. You're dreaming.

THEOPROPIDES. Dreaming?

PINACIUM. Dreaming.

THEOPROPIDES [*to PINACIUM*]. Don't butt in. Allow me to converse with him.

[*Now to PHANISCUS*] No one lives here.

PHANISCUS. Someone lives here now, and also yesterday...

And the day before, the day before, the day before, et cetera.

Since his father went abroad, the party's been continuous.

THEOPROPIDES. What is this?

PHANISCUS. No intermission in the wining or the dining, Or the wenching, Greeking-up, inviting women skilled in music.

960

THEOPROPIDES. Who's been doing this?

PHANISCUS. Why, Philolaches, sir.

THEOPROPIDES. What Philolaches, boy?

PHANISCUS. Son of, I believe, one Theopropides.

THEOPROPIDES [*aside*]. He's killing me! If he tells the truth, he kills me. First I ought to follow further.

[*To PHANISCUS*] So you say this person Philolaches has been boozing here—

With your master?

PHANISCUS. Yessir.

THEOPROPIDES. Boy, you're more a fool than you first seemed.

965

Are you sure you didn't stop to have a little snack somewhere,

Having just a teeny-weeny bit too much to drink?

PHANISCUS. Why so?

THEOPROPIDES. Maybe it's an error and you chose the wrong house by mistake.

PHANISCUS. Sir, I'm well aware of where I'm going, and the place I'm at.  
 Philolaches lives here—he's the son of Theopropides. 970  
 When his father went abroad on business, then the young man freed a Music girl.  
 THEOPROPIDES. What? Philolaches?  
 PHANISCUS. Philematium—the girl.  
 THEOPROPIDES [*almost afraid to ask*]. How much?  
 PHANISCUS. Only thirty.  
 THEOPROPIDES. Thirty talents?  
 PHANISCUS. Thirty minae, sir.\*  
 THEOPROPIDES [*in a state of shock*]. So . . . he freed the girl . . .  
 PHANISCUS [*nodding*]. For thirty minae, yes, indeed, sir.  
 THEOPROPIDES [*still in disbelief*]. Thirty minae . . . really . . . spent by Philolaches for a woman?  
 PHANISCUS. Really.  
 THEOPROPIDES. Then he freed her?  
 PHANISCUS. Really.  
 THEOPROPIDES. Following his father's faring  
 Forth for foreign fields, the fellow fell to full-time festive frolicking\*  
 With your master?  
 PHANISCUS. Really.  
 THEOPROPIDES [*almost too afraid to ask*]. Tell me, has he bought the house next door?  
 PHANISCUS. No, not really.  
 THEOPROPIDES. Was there a down payment to the man who lives there?  
 PHANISCUS. No, not really.  
 THEOPROPIDES. That's the finish!  
 PHANISCUS. Yes—he finished his own father.  
 THEOPROPIDES. So—your tale is truth.  
 PHANISCUS. Would it were fiction! You his father's friend? 980  
 THEOPROPIDES [*nods 'yes'*]. How do you foretell his father's fall in fortune?  
 PHANISCUS. That's not all.  
 Thirty minae is a straw compared to other wild expenses.  
 THEOPROPIDES [*half aside*]. Father's fully finished.

PHANISCUS. And from one slave, one unholy terror:  
 Tranio, a sinful rogue who'd even bankrupt Hercules!\*  
 Oh, by Pollux, how I pity pitifully that boy's poor father. 985  
 When he finds this out, the fellow's little heart will fall apart!  
 THEOPROPIDES [*agonized*]. If the things you say are true—  
 PHANISCUS. What profit, sir, would lying get me?  
 PINACIUM [*knocking*]. Hey, will someone open up?  
 PHANISCUS [*to PINACIUM*]. Why are you knocking—no one's there!  
 I suppose they've moved the party to another place. Let's go . . .  
 [The two slaves start to exit]  
 THEOPROPIDES [*calling*]. Boy—  
 PHANISCUS [*to PINACIUM*]. . . . and search some more for Master. Follow me.  
 PINACIUM. I'll follow you. 990  
 THEOPROPIDES. Boy—you can't just go.  
 PHANISCUS [*going*]. You have your freedom to protect your back.\*  
 I have no protection for my own . . . unless I serve my master.  
 [With this, PHANISCUS and PINACIUM leave the stage]  
 THEOPROPIDES [*in total consternation*]. By Hercules, I'm finished. Why, from what I hear,  
 I haven't travelled back and forth from Egypt,  
 But through the vastest reaches, farthest beaches too. 995  
 I've circled so, I don't know where I am right now.  
 [Looks off-stage] I'll soon find out, for here's the man who sold my son  
 The house. [To SIMO] How are you?  
 SIMO [*entering*]. Coming from the forum home.  
 THEOPROPIDES. Did anything that's new transpire in the forum?  
 SIMO. Why, yes.  
 THEOPROPIDES. Well, what?  
 SIMO. I saw a funeral.\*  
 THEOPROPIDES. And so? 1000

SIMO. The corpse was new: he'd just transpired recently.

At least, that's how I heard it told.

THEOPROPIDES. Oh, go to hell!

SIMO. It's your own fault, you busybodied me for news.

THEOPROPIDES. But look, I've just come back from overseas.

SIMO [*sarcastically*]. I'm sorry

I can't ask you to dinner. I'm invited out.\* 1005

THEOPROPIDES. Look, I'm not hinting—

SIMO [*jocular*]. But tomorrow's dinner, then—

I'll let you ask me—if nobody else does first.

THEOPROPIDES. Look, I'm not hinting for that, either. If you're free,

Please give me your attention now.

SIMO. Of course, of course.

THEOPROPIDES. From what I know, you've gotten forty minae from 1010

My son.

SIMO. From what I know, I've got no such thing.

THEOPROPIDES. From Tranio, his slave?

SIMO. That's *more* impossible.

THEOPROPIDES. The first deposit that he gave to you?

SIMO. You're dreaming!

THEOPROPIDES [*now suspicious of SIMO's motives*]. Oh no—you're dreaming if you hope this is the way

You'll cancel our negotiation by some masquerade.

SIMO. I'd cancel what?

THEOPROPIDES. The deal concluded with my son

While I was gone.

SIMO [*surprised*]. Negotiations with your son—

While you were gone? What were the terms? What was the date? 1020

THEOPROPIDES. To start with, I still owe you eighty minae . . . cash.

SIMO. Oh no, you don't—[*stops, thinks*] Well, if you say so, then . . . pay up!

A deal's a deal, don't try to duck out with a dodge.

THEOPROPIDES. I don't deny the debt at all. I'll gladly pay.

But you behave, and don't deny you got the forty.

SIMO. By Pollux, look me in the eye and tell me that!

What did they say you bought with all the cash?

THEOPROPIDES. Your house.

[That's why I toured your portico and women's quarters.

SIMO. Why, Tranio told me a wholly different story:]\*

He said you were about to give your son a wife 103

And wanted to add women's quarters to your house.

THEOPROPIDES. I wanted to build . . . over *there*?

SIMO. That's what he said.

THEOPROPIDES. Oh no, I'm lost, I'm absolutely speechless. 103

Oh, neighbour, I'm for ever finished.

SIMO [*suspecting*]. Tranio

Has started something?

THEOPROPIDES. No, he's finished everything!

He flim-flammed me today in a disgraceful way.

SIMO. What's this?

THEOPROPIDES. The situation can be summarized:

He flim-flammed me today for good, forevermore.

But now, I beg you, Simo, aid me and abet me.

SIMO. In what?

THEOPROPIDES. Please let me go with you back to your house.

SIMO. I will.

THEOPROPIDES. Then give me several slaves and several whips.

SIMO. They're yours.

THEOPROPIDES. And while you do I'll tell you everything—

The many-splendoured ways he put me in a haze! 1040

[*The two old men exit into SIMO's house*

A pause [*musical interlude?*]. TRANIO *struts*

*happily out of THEOPROPIDES' house*

TRANIO. Any man who trembles in a crisis isn't worth a pittance.

[*Aside*] Actually I wonder what a 'pittance' means—I'd love to know.

[*To the audience*] Anyway, when Master sent me countryward to get his son,

I sneaked off in secret down the alley to our own back garden,

Flinging open wide the garden gate we have there in the alley,  
Leading out my whole entire legion, boy and girl divisions.  
When I led my troops out of the siege conditions into safety,\*

Then I thought it time to summon all my soldiers in a senate.

But no sooner summoned than the senate moved—to move  
*me* out!

Seeing how they planned to sell me out in my own forum,  
quickly,

I reacted as men should whenever storms of trouble stir:  
Stir the storm up even further. Not a thing could calm it  
now.

It's for certain there's no way to keep this all from my old  
master.

So I'll seek him out to sign a treaty. I delay myself!  
Wait, what's this? I hear the door creak in our neighbour's  
neighbourhood.

It's my master! I would like to drink in what he has to say.

[TRANIO *sneaks back towards  
the alley to eavesdrop*

THEOPROPIDES *enters from SIMO's house, giving  
instructions to the slave whippers he has enlisted*

THEOPROPIDES. Stand inside the doorway there, all ready to  
be called to action,

Then be quick to leap right out and manacle the man with  
speed.

I'll just linger here until my flim-flam man comes on the  
scene,

Then I'll flim and flam his hide as sure as I'm alive today!  
TRANIO [*to audience*]. All is out! Now, Tranio, think up a  
plan to save yourself!

THEOPROPIDES. I'll be wise and wily if I want to catch him  
when he comes,

Won't show him my hook at once; I'll play him out with  
lots of line.\*

I'll pretend I'm ignorant of everything.

1050

1054

1061

1070

TRANIO [*sarcastically*].

O tricky man!

No one in all Athens could be shrewder than that fellow is.  
Fooling him's as hard a task as fooling some great—hunk  
of stone.\*

Now I'll broach him and approach. . . .

THEOPROPIDES. I just can't wait till that man comes.

TRANIO. Looking for me, sir? I'm present to present myself to  
you.

THEOPROPIDES [*barely able to conceal his satisfaction that  
the victim's here*]. Tranio—hel-lo! What's new?

TRANIO. The hicks are coming from the sticks.\*

Philolaches is *en route*.

THEOPROPIDES [*still welcoming TRANIO*]. By Pollux, what a  
nice arrival.\*

Say, our neighbour there is very bold and cunning, as I see  
it.

TRANIO. Why?

THEOPROPIDES. Denies he ever dealt with you.

TRANIO. Denies?

THEOPROPIDES. And what is more—

Claims you never paid a thing.

TRANIO. Oh no, you're joking. He denies it? 1080

THEOPROPIDES. Well?

TRANIO. I know you're joking; it's not possible  
that he denies it.

THEOPROPIDES. Still, he does deny it, and he claims he never  
sold the house.

TRANIO. Unbelievable! And he denies we paid him cash for  
it?

THEOPROPIDES. He'd be willing to go under oath, if I would  
like him to,

Swearing that he's never sold the house or got any cash.

Still, I claimed he had.

TRANIO. What did he answer?

THEOPROPIDES. Offered all his slaves—

All of them to me for trial by torture.\*

TRANIO. Oh, he'll never give them.

THEOPROPIDES [*portentously*]. Yes, he will.

TRANIO. I'll go inside and look for him.



[Starts to exit

No—stay, stay, stay.

THEOPROPIDES.

Let's investigate the matter.

TRANIO [stops].

Why not leave the man to me? 1090

THEOPROPIDES. Let me get the slaves out here.

TRANIO.

You should have done that long ago.

Or at least have made a legal claim.

THEOPROPIDES.

What I want first of all is—

[heavy irony] Trial by torture for the slaves.

TRANIO.

Indeed, by Pollux, good idea.

[Leaps onto altar]\* While you do, I'll sit up on this altar.

THEOPROPIDES.

Why?

TRANIO.

Why, don't you see?

While I'm here no other slave can flee for refuge from the torture.

THEOPROPIDES [extra sweetly]. Do get up.

TRANIO.

Oh no.

THEOPROPIDES.

Not on the altar, please.

TRANIO.

Why not?

THEOPROPIDES. Actually . . . I'd like the slaves to flee for refuge on the altar.

Then I'll have a stronger case in court and win more money too.

TRANIO. Don't keep switching plans of action. Why sow seeds for further trouble?

After all, these legal things are very tricky, you know that. 1100

THEOPROPIDES. Do get up. Come over here. I'd like to ask for some advice.

TRANIO. Here I'll be a fine adviser. Sitting down, I'm so much wiser.

Speaking from a holy spot, I can advise with greater strength.

THEOPROPIDES. Do get up, no joking. Look at me.

TRANIO.

I'm looking.

THEOPROPIDES.

Do you see?

TRANIO. Well, I see if someone came between us, he would starve to death.

THEOPROPIDES. Why?

TRANIO [smiles]. We're both so tricky that we give no food for honest thought.

[Now THEOPROPIDES sees that TRANIO knows. He drops his friendly pose

THEOPROPIDES. Go to hell!

TRANIO.

What's up?

THEOPROPIDES.

You tricked me!

TRANIO.

Did I?

THEOPROPIDES.

Oh, and what a way you

Egged me on.

TRANIO [naïvely]. Let's see your face: is any egg still on it now?

THEOPROPIDES. No, of course not, since you egged me out of every brain I had! 1110

Every evil deed of yours is now discovered—and in depth.

And from this discovery there's one recovery—in death!

TRANIO. Well, you'll never get me up from where I sit.

THEOPROPIDES.

But I'll command that

Fire and firewood be put around you, gallows bird. You'll roast!

TRANIO. Don't do that. I'm so much sweeter when I'm boiled, not roasted up.

THEOPROPIDES. I'll make an example of you—

TRANIO [smiling].

Ah, so I'm exemplary.

THEOPROPIDES [angry]. Speak—when I went off abroad, what sort of son did I leave here?

TRANIO. Normal type—two eyes, two ears, two hands, two feet, et cetera.

THEOPROPIDES. That was not the question.

TRANIO.

Sorry, that was what I felt like saying.

[Peering off-stage] Look—I see your son's best friend, Callidamates, coming here.

Why not wait till he arrives and deal with me when he's at hand? 1120

Enter CALLIDAMATES, now clear-headed and sober

CALLIDAMATES [to audience]. After the effects of all my boozing were slept off and under, Philolaches told me that his father's back from overseas, Also how that slave had fooled his father as he just arrived. Philo's too ashamed right now to step into his father's sight.



So our little social circle chose me as ambassador to  
Seek the sire and sue for peace. [*Sees THEOPROPIDES*] But  
look who's here—how wonderful!

[*Calls*] Greetings, Theopropides, I'm glad to see you safe  
and sound,

Back from overseas. Do come to dinner at our house tonight.

THEOPROPIDES. Hail, Callidamates. Many thanks for dinner—  
I can't come. 1130

CALLIDAMATES. Oh, why not?

TRANIO [*to THEOPROPIDES*]. Go on—or else I'll take the  
invitation for you.

THEOPROPIDES. Whipping post—you mock me still?

TRANIO. Because I'd go to dinner for you?

THEOPROPIDES. Well, you won't. I'll see you go where you  
deserve—right on a cross!

CALLIDAMATES [*to THEOPROPIDES*]. Never mind all this; just  
say you'll come to dinner.

TRANIO. Well, speak up!

CALLIDAMATES [*to TRANIO*]. Hey, why are you refugeeing on  
that altar—that's so stupid!\*

TRANIO [*indicating THEOPROPIDES*]. His arrival frightened me.  
[*To THEOPROPIDES*] But tell me what you claim I've done.

Now we have an arbitrator for us both, so state your case.

THEOPROPIDES. I say you corrupted my young son.

TRANIO. Now just a minute, please.

Yes, I will confess: he sinned while you were gone. He  
freed a girl,

Drew a lot of cash on interest, threw the lot of cash away. 1140

Yet do other boys of noble families do otherwise?\*

THEOPROPIDES. Hercules, I must be careful of you; you're a  
tricky advocate.

CALLIDAMATES. Let me be the judge. [*To TRANIO*] Get up,  
and I'll sit on the altar now.

THEOPROPIDES. Yes, that's good, get closer to the case.

TRANIO [*as CALLIDAMATES sits next to him*]. I fear some trick  
in this.

[*To CALLIDAMATES*] If you want to sit in my position, take  
my fear from me.

THEOPROPIDES. All the rest I rate at nothing. I'm just angry  
at the way he

Made a fool of me.

TRANIO. Well done it was, and I rejoice in it!  
Old men with a hoary head should act their age in brains  
as well.

THEOPROPIDES [*to CALLIDAMATES*]. What do I do now?

TRANIO. Well, if you know Diphilus or Philemon\*

Go and tell them every way your slave bamboozled you  
today. 1150

You'll provide the finest flim-flam plot for any comedy.

CALLIDAMATES [*to TRANIO*]. Quiet, will you? Let me talk a  
bit. [*To THEOPROPIDES*] Do listen, sir.

THEOPROPIDES. All right.

CALLIDAMATES. You know well that I'm the very closest friend  
your son has got.

Since he's too ashamed to set a single foot in sight of you,  
Knowing that you know all that's been done, he came and  
asked my help.

Now I beg of you, forgive his youth and folly—he's your  
son.

Boys are boys, you know, and when they're young, they  
play so playfully.

What's been done, we did it both together, and we both  
were wrong.

All the principal and interest, all the cash we paid to free  
the girl, 1160

We'll both pay it back, we'll share the cost, and you won't  
pay a thing.

THEOPROPIDES. No more eloquent ambassador could come  
to me on his behalf.

You succeed. I'm now not angry or annoyed at what he  
did.

Even while I'm here let him drink up, make love, do what  
he'd like!

If he feels ashamed at what he's done, that's punishment  
enough.

CALLIDAMATES. Very, very shamed he is.

TRANIO. Now what about forgiving *me*?

THEOPROPIDES. I'm for—giving you a thousand lashes.

TRANIO. Even if I'm shamed?

THEOPROPIDES. Hercules, I'll kill you if I live!

CALLIDAMATES. Oh, can't you pardon *all*?  
Let him go for my sake. Please forgive whatever wrong he's done.

THEOPROPIDES. Anything but that—I would do *anything* for you but that!

No—for every dirty deed, I'll make that dirty fellow bleed.

CALLIDAMATES. Can't you let him go?

THEOPROPIDES. But look how insolent he's posing there!

CALLIDAMATES. Tranio, behave yourself.

THEOPROPIDES [*to CALLIDAMATES*]. And you behave—forget all this.

Don't annoy me, while I *beat* this fellow into deadly silence.

TRANIO. Not a chance of that!

CALLIDAMATES. Please don't take the trouble!

THEOPROPIDES. Please don't beg.

CALLIDAMATES. I beg.

THEOPROPIDES. Don't beg me, please.

CALLIDAMATES. Don't beg me not to beg.

Just this once, I beg you, sir, forgive his wrong—at my request?

TRANIO [*to THEOPROPIDES*]. Why persist? You *know* tomorrow I'll commit some fresh new wrong.

Then you'll get revenge for both—for what I've done and what I'll do.

CALLIDAMATES. Please.

THEOPROPIDES [*won over*]. All right, no punishment. [*To TRANIO*] But you be grateful to your friend.

[*Turning to spectators*] Now I ask the audience to clap their hands. This is—the end!

1170

1180

## THE POT OF GOLD

(*Aulularia*)