

PLAUTUS

From Plautus, *The Pot of Gold and Other Plays* (trans. E.F. Watling) (Harmondsworth, 1965)

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INTRODUCTION

THE comedies of Plautus are the earliest complete works of Latin literature that we possess; and we possess them virtually in the form in which they were collected and edited a little more than a century after his death; the twenty plays, and a fragment of a twenty-first, are with little doubt those selected as genuine by the critic M. Terentius Varro out of a large body of imitative or contaminated work. Already in his lifetime and shortly afterwards the name of Plautus was a hallmark which his competitors were anxious to attach to any productions which could claim even a partial relationship to the master.

The volume and completeness of the extant work, and the brightness of the image which it presents of a single and original genius, make all the more remarkable, and regrettable, the scantiness of the available evidence – outside the works themselves – as to the personal life of the author, the sources and method of his work, and the theatrical conditions for which he worked. His name itself is a matter of doubt, but has been explained as follows. *Titus*, the son of a similarly named father, was born in the Umbrian town of Sarsina about 254 B.C. Coming at an early age to seek his livelihood in Rome, he was employed as a stage assistant to a company of players, and soon discovered a talent for acting. He had already acquired, after the Italian custom, a second name derived from a physical peculiarity: *Plautus*, the flat- or broad-footed man. His success in the playing of stock comic parts led to his being dubbed with the name of one of them – *Maccus*, the clown of popular farce. By some means or other he saved sufficient capital to

leave the stage and go into business as a merchant shipper, but this venture rapidly collapsed and left him again out of work. He was unable or unwilling to resume his theatrical connexion – or if he did he filled in his time between engagements by working as a miller's labourer. In any case, what time he could spare from milling or acting he employed to good purpose in studying Greek drama, and from about his fortieth year he became increasingly successful and famous as an adaptor of Greek comedies for the Roman stage. When the time came for him to be acknowledged and rewarded by the privilege of Roman citizenship, it was necessary for Titus Flatfoot the Clown to assume a formal *praenomen*, *nomen*, and *cognomen*, and he became TITUS MACCIUS PLAUTUS. As there was in fact a *gens Maccia*, his adoption into this clan was convenient and appropriate. Whether his name was in fact *Maccus* or *Maccius* has always been uncertain (owing to the ambiguity of the genitive case *Macci* cited with the titles of his plays), and indeed for some centuries a misinterpretation of the literary evidence led to his being known as M. Accius Plautus.

This – and the date of his death, 184 B.C., according to Cicero – is all that the extant tradition can tell us; and clearly it amounts to little more than might have been guessed or invented about a figure notable in his own day but of whom no tangible record other than his written work was ever preserved. Meagre as it is, the tradition even raises doubts as to its own accuracy. Could the profession of acting, or stage-management, in the early years of his life, have been a young man's only gainful occupation, or one likely to lead to an early and affluent retirement? The theatre was nothing like an established full-time industry in Rome at that date; plays were commissioned for certain periodical festivals and acted on a single day or for a short series of days; as far as our evidence goes, it would seem that the licensed occasions for play-acting

(*ludi scaenici*) before 200 B.C. probably did not amount to more than ten days in the year.

We have, of course, no idea in what circumstances Plautus left his native town. He may have been already in possession of some patrimony, or may even have been a slave – and thus (it has been suggested) introduced to Greek language and literature in the capacity of favoured pupil of some cultivated master. Stage actors were, in any case, in a sense slaves, if not always strictly in that category; subject at least, as long as they chose to put up with it, to the absolute control of their employer, and subject to dire penalties for incompetence or slackness in their craft ('the whip for anyone who has made a mistake, and a drink for those who haven't' is the prospect looked forward to by the actors speaking the epilogue in *Cistellaria*). It is difficult to resist seeing some connexion between this fact – the slavery of actors and Plautus's close association with their class – and the brilliantly vivacious portrayal of the slave characters in his comedies. He drew the accepted comic types – the old men gullible, irascible, or lecherous – the young men lovelorn and usually prodigal – the maidens virtuous, the matrons formidable, and the courtesans professionally seductive – on conventional lines, though not without individual subtleties. But his slaves are never mere conventional types or incidental adjuncts to the cast; they are the instigators and pivots of most of the comic intrigues, and each one of them, down to the smallest bit-player, springs to life with an individual and irresistible spontaneity. If we had to point to one particular feature of Plautine comedy that bears the clearest mark of indigenous and original invention, it would surely be the impudent, the indispensable, the endlessly resourceful, the badgered, bullied, and beaten, but ever coming-up-smiling Plautine slave.

But now we must approach the oddest fact about the

reputation of Plautus – that nobody knows for certain how much he originated and how much he translated from his Greek predecessors. The vast amount of research, and bewildering variety of conjecture, that have been expended on this problem, have proved virtually nothing but the impossibility of finding textual support for the strong general impression, which every reader receives, of an original and inventive hand at work in 'Plautus'. It is known that the plays were usually based on Greek models – that is, on examples of the Greek New Comedy of the late fourth century. We possess the names of some of the Greek authors, a large number of titles and quotations from their works, and five plays of Menander sufficiently complete to be readable. But nowhere is there any fragment of text by which the Latin of Plautus could be checked, as translation, against a Greek original. Even if a few isolated lines could be compared, we should still need to find a complete Greek comedy comparable to its Plautine successor, in order to form any idea of the Latin translator's way of working.

That the plays of Plautus actually were, at least in some cases, translated from the Greek, appears directly from internal evidence such as – to mention only one instance – the reference in the prologue of *Rudens* to Diphilus as the author of the play; and indirectly from the received literary tradition as attested, for example, by Cicero (*De Fin.*, 1:2:4) when he describes Roman comedy as '*fabellas Latinas ad verbum de Graecis expressas*' ('plays in Latin literally translated from the Greek'). But both these types of evidence need qualification. If a prologue mentions a Greek original, it does not guarantee that the original has been faithfully and completely reproduced; in some cases the contrary is indicated: in the prologue of *Casina* we find an acknowledgement of the Greek authorship (Diphilus again), and the Greek title, and a synopsis of the plot,

with a reference to a young man who has been sent away from home by his father; then – 'but you mustn't expect to see this young man in the play we are giving you today; he won't be coming home; Plautus didn't want him, so he has broken down the bridge by which he would have returned'. In other words, he took leave, when it suited him, to make alterations in the construction of the play.

As to the general practice of imitation of Greek models, the reader to whom these facts are new may be wondering how it comes about that the only extant specimens of Roman comedy are merely second-hand versions of Greek comedy. Were there no native productions, and did the writers of comedy never seek their material in local and contemporary life? They did, but we have no examples of the kind. The extant plays belong to the class known as *fabulae palliatae*, that is, by definition, plays in Greek dress and therefore representing, at least superficially, Greek manners. Of other recognized types of drama the most clearly defined were: (1) *fabula Atellana* – rustic farce employing stock clownish characters such as the Maccus already mentioned; (2) *fabula praetextata* – serious dramas on legendary or historical themes or even contemporary public events; (3) *fabula togata* – light domestic comedy of Italian middle-class or village life. That the first of these categories should have left no written specimens of its kind is not surprising. Of the other two the names of some authors, some titles, and indirect allusions to their contents are all that remain to tantalize us with a sense of great loss. Even one or two specimens of these native comedies would have added much to our knowledge of the normal social life of the time.

What is pertinent to our present purpose is the knowledge that such varied forms of entertainment did exist. And it is not a very bold step to assume that in practice – theatrical

practice being apt to make its own way regardless of academic theory – the formal boundaries could occasionally be overstepped. The same writers, actors, and audiences were familiar with all these types of drama, and nothing could have prevented a certain amount of cross-infection from one to another. What we should expect, then, is exactly what the texts of the Plautine plays themselves suggest: an original type of play, based on the theme of a Greek model, using so much of its predecessor's plot and dialogue as might be needed to keep the action going, but digressing freely into elaboration of comic situations and verbal banter in the native popular vein.

It is easy enough to find the small incidental clues to Plautus's interpolations: when he uses the word *pergraecari*, 'to behave in Greek fashion' (that is, with reprehensible extravagance or affectation) – when he makes someone say 'if you're surprised at such behaviour, don't forget we are supposed to be in Athens, not in Rome' – when he uses Roman legal, military, or political terms in figurative or punning senses – it is obvious that he is not merely translating, even if some of his verbal tricks are happy approximations to similar effects in the original. (And perhaps this may be the place for the translator into English to admit that some of his word-play may be gratuitous invention, to compensate for the loss of such Latin puns as defy translation.) For the broader problem of Plautus's use of plot, the absence of any model for exact comparison handicaps all attempted solutions. But from such comparison as can be made, the same impression of free adaptation, and often of a change in the comic emphasis, emerges.

When, with the loss of political belligerence and intellectual freedom, Athens lost the robust virility of Aristophanic comedy, her dramatists discovered, in due course, the art of fiction – the charm of lightly amusing narratives in dramatic

form, comfortably reassuring tales of misfortunes mended by kindly providence, quarrels amicably settled by justice and good neighbourliness, lost children restored to their parents, the course of true love threatened by adverse winds but finally guided into safe harbour. The comic traits of character incidentally emerging from such tales gradually built themselves up into the stock types of the New Comedy, and as the plots were cut to a pattern, so the characters, like the pieces on a chessboard, became standardized for use in an infinite variety – subject to the rules – of situations.

Such plots, and such characters, provided Plautus with all he needed as a foundation on which to build his own style of Graeco-Roman comedy. He was not, it would seem, primarily interested in the plot for its own sake. He was ready to 'break down bridges' and to take short cuts, to gain time for the exploitation of comic opportunities on the way. Where the New Comedy tended towards a romantic or sentimental treatment of courtship and marriage, Plautus is more likely to make satirical fun of the hazards of matrimony or to mock with gentle irony the extravagant raptures of the lover. A typical New Comedy theme (perhaps traceable to a ritual origin) is the recognition of a lost child through the discovery of 'tokens'; this appears in its Plautine dress in *Rudens* – where the affinities to Menander's *Arbitration* are obvious, though this is not the acknowledged source. But in Plautus's play, not only is the love story reduced to the smallest proportions (the lovers never meet on the stage, and the young man makes only brief appearances) but the discovery and recognition of the tokens is conducted in an atmosphere of hilarity rather than romance – thanks to the interventions of the slaves Gripus and Trachalio. Even the fortunate father is only permitted an occasional note of emotion and tends rather towards irony and opportunism; his most Menandrian speech of moral edification is

neatly deflated by his irrepressible slave's retort ('I've heard actors in comedies spouting that sort of stuff . . .'). As for the rest of the play, it will need a ghost from the grave to convince us that the doleful bickering of Labrax and his confederate, the battle for possession of the luckless young women, the tussle of Gripus and Trachalio for the treasure trove, and the ribald retorts of Sceparnio are the work of a Latin translator bound to the letter of his Greek text.

In his portrayal of slaves – where, as has been suggested, the voice of Plautus seems to come across most unmistakably – this further characteristic may be noticed: he likes to bring two contrasted types into opposition – the uncouth, aggressive, and perhaps more honest, against the artful and sophisticated lightweight; and he uses this trick sometimes to enliven a comparatively unimportant incident. In *Mostellaria*, the plot requires a slave to attend and escort his master Callidamates from the drinking-party and so reveal to the returning owner what is going on in the house. Plautus (as I guess) provides *two* slaves, Pinacium the rough bullying type and Phaniscus an elegant and sycophantic youth; and so an extra comic point is gained when the old gentleman pointedly confines his attention to the latter, only to learn some most unwelcome news.

When all is said and done, however widely students may differ in their estimates of Plautus's originality, his place as a constructive artist is most securely based on the admiration, sometimes to the point of veneration, which he won from his contemporaries and immediate successors. There were dissenting voices – notably that of Horace, who thought 'our ancestors were far too indulgent to the humour and poetry of Plautus' – because for the Augustan purist the rules of style had become set in a very different mould and 'literature' had withdrawn to a safe and respectable distance from the vulgar

sounds of the street and market-place. The reasons for this change from a vernacular to an academic mode of composition may also be the reasons why, after Plautus and his nearest successor Terence (already tending towards a more classic style), vernacular comedy received little new blood; drama became a literary art, and popular entertainment was provided by spectacles and physical contests.

The competition of popular attractions was of course a factor which had an influence on the Plautine theatre. 'Theatre' in the architectural sense is here an anachronism; the first permanent theatre in Rome was built in 55 B.C., a hundred years after a previous attempt to provide such a building had been suppressed. What sort of temporary equipment served the purposes of drama before then can only be a matter of conjecture. An ordinance providing seats (presumably movable and in the open air) for senators, in 194 B.C., suggests the picture of an open arena, with an acting area, raised or flat, some kind of background setting, and an indeterminate space for standing or promenading spectators as far as, or further than, the voice could carry. From passages of the prologues which obviously depart from the Greek text to interpolate remarks appropriate to the Roman performance, we can pick up some impressions of the rough and ready conditions of the show, the crowding and the noise, the need to capture attention by shock tactics, to compete with the acrobats and rope-dancers in the neighbouring enclosure. A faithful reproduction of a Greek New Comedy piece would scarcely have held its audience, without the broader comic or topical touches. It is rather surprising that so much intelligent wit did prevail, and that the baser elements were kept in a subordinate place. Plautus could supply the baser elements as well as anyone, but it should not be held against him that his most shameless farce *Casina* was not only revived but commended (in the

prologue as rewritten for a revival) to the younger generation of playgoers as a masterpiece of the golden age of comedy known to their fathers.

In these conditions, the staging of Plautus's plays, in his own day, must have been of a simple kind – even though the plays lent themselves equally well, in later centuries, to increasingly elaborate productions, up to the degree represented by such a theatre as the Palladian Teatro Olimpico of Vicenza. Rules of practice applicable to Plautus's own time cannot be safely deduced from the evidence of later years; and, though much research has been applied to such matters as the construction of the house doors which are a feature of almost every Plautine scene, interpretation of the evidence has been too often, it seems to me, restricted by the conventions of realistic proscaenium theatre – by the assumption that everything mentioned in the play must be literally visible on the stage. Now that our own theatre has rediscovered the principles of 'open' staging, appreciation of Plautine stagecraft should be less hampered by fallacious traditions. The Plautine stage was the reverse of realistic. Instead of an illusion of reality there is an open approach to the audience, a drawing-in of the audience to participation in the play. Long solo speeches, or brief asides, may be delivered confidentially to the audience and at the same time, if necessary, overheard and countered by asides from other speakers; illusion is discarded in such exchanges as: 'Speak quietly'; 'Why, are you afraid of waking them [the audience] up?'; and 'Here is the gold [offering property money]; of course it isn't really gold, it's only beans; they feed cattle on this in barbarian countries.' In relation to stage setting, the effect of the 'open' technique is that the dialogue supplies the setting. In the realistic theatre the dramatist, relying on practicable setting and properties, writes stage directions – 'he knocks at the door', 'she comes down the stairs'. Ancient drama-

tists, it seems, never wrote stage directions; but Plautus, for his theatre of the imagination, supplies plenty of 'built-in' directions – to the point of redundancy, we may sometimes feel; he is always telling us explicitly what is happening, what is about to happen, or even what has just happened – 'I am going to knock at this door'; 'The door is opening, and here comes my master'; 'Why are you trying to force open that door?' The inference from these, which are only the most elementary, examples of his method is surely *not* that such-and-such a setting of houses and doors (or rocks or sand-dunes) *must* have had visible and solid existence on the stage; on the contrary, the more explicit the 'spoken stage directions' the less need is there for visual realism; a blind audience could follow every move in a Plautine play.

In the same way, the fiction (frequent in Plautus) that two persons are so far away from each other as to be mutually inaudible, or even invisible, can just as well be *acted* on a stage twenty feet wide as on one sixty feet wide – which we are sometimes told *must* have been the minimum width of a Plautine stage (as if the actors could then be audible to the audience but not to each other!) The ability of Plautus to carry his hearers' imagination over a wide range of locality is well seen in *Rudens*; whatever distance we may assume to lie between the cottage, the temple, and the wild seashore, our imagination travels effortlessly from one to the other, and the same acting area represents now one now another part of the landscape. In *Mostellaria*, the lady's dressing-room, the drinking party, and possibly part of the scene at Simo's house, require a kind of imaginary *ekkyklema* (exposure of the interior), but probably no actual interior setting was attempted. There is, it is true, evidence that a kind of alcove setting was used in later theatres for such purposes as this; and a modern producer could think of several amusing solutions of the

problem. It remains unlikely that Plautus's own arena stage employed any elaborate architecture.

After this, it is hardly necessary to add that the stage directions in this volume are my own; they are intended to assist the reader's visualization of the action, but not to solve all production problems, still less to imply any theory about the practice of the ancient stage. There is the question of intervals, for instance. The division of the play into acts, which has come down to us in the manuscripts, is an academic refinement imported into the texts by later hands and has little or no relevance to the structure of the play. I have omitted the act-numbering but indicated places where a pause is possible though not obligatory. I should mention also that, to avoid overloading the text with bracketed directions, I have dispensed with the rubric '*aside*' (which would otherwise occur with tiresome frequency) except where the intention of the speaker might be in doubt.

With the aim of putting these plays into a form suitable for the modern English stage, I have allowed myself either expansion, for greater clearness, or compression, for dramatic speed; preferring, that is to say, the pace and idiom of our own speech to a cautious reproduction of Latin diction – but always without any omission or reconstruction of the sequence of the dialogue. (Those who read these versions beside the Latin text will find that they follow primarily the Oxford Text of Lindsay, with occasional variants derived from the Loeb or Budé editions.) And I have preferred, in general, prose to verse.

This last point could be the subject of longer debate than can be attempted here. The prosody of Plautus – a system of intricate metrical versatility – was perhaps his most original contribution to the Roman stage. But though we may, with difficulty, scan his verses, we are far from being able to visual-

ize (that is, to 'auralize') the way in which they were spoken or sung on the stage. A considerable part of each play was 'sung' to a flute accompaniment; but the lyrical – that is the more metrically varied – portions cannot be regarded as analogous to the lyrics of a modern musical play, distinct in style from the dialogue which carries forward the action. Plautus does not appear to have used specific types of metre characteristically for particular kinds of mood or situation. The same natural and colloquial idiom runs through all the varied metrical schemes – a natural idiom, though enlivened by ingenious puns, alliterations, and assonances. Attempts to translate the dialogue into an English metrical form are hampered by lack of any equivalent stage convention. The Gilbertian lyric is a particularly unsuitable model, having (as in Gilbert) the disadvantage of making all the characters speak in the same artificial idiom, or else use language in their songs quite different from that of their spoken lines. Nevertheless, I have made some use of a loose iambic rhythm, and other metrical forms, to give relief to the longer solo passages; and there seemed to be good excuse for a song or two in *Rudens*. These vagaries may be regarded as experiments alongside the general rule of prose.

To the founder editor of this series, eighteen years after my first experience of his kindly guidance in the early days of the Penguin Classics, I am again indebted for generous encouragement and perceptive criticism. I have also profited much from the advice and scholarship of Professor Eric Laughton and Mrs Betty Radice, who have read and in many places improved my versions. Such errors as remain are entirely my own.



THE BROTHERS MENAECHMUS
(MENAECMI)

INTRODUCTORY NOTE TO *THE BROTHERS MENAECHMUS*

As the prototype of Shakespeare's *The Comedy of Errors*, the *Menaechmi* of Plautus has gained a special place in the attention of English readers, a place of privilege perhaps rather higher than is justified by its merits. Neither play, needless to say, is the brightest jewel in its author's crown, but their existence provides the closest link of which we have evidence between our own poet and the father of European comedy. The fact that no English version of *Menaechmi* is known to have existed prior to the production of *The Comedy of Errors* leaves enticingly open the question whether Shakespeare's acquaintance with Plautus was direct or indirect. It is more than likely that he had the opportunity, and ability, at least to dip into the Latin; on the other hand, there is nothing in his version of the comedy that could not have been derived from a mere second-hand hearing of the plot of *Menaechmi*.

Be that as it may, critics have employed themselves in comparing, and coming to different conclusions about, the merits of these two comedies. Shakespeare enlarged the scope of the play by providing the twin masters with twin servants (taking a cue perhaps from the *Amphitryo* of Plautus) and by adding a note of gravity or pathos in the situation of the wives and of Aegeon. Plautus is content with one pair of twins and the merely farcical possibilities of the impossibly identical resemblance between them; he was right, it may be felt, in thinking that any concession to serious reflection would make the improbabilities of the affair all the more conspicuous. It is, however, something of a weakness in the comedy that both the brothers are equally callous in their treatment of the women; there is no hint of censure upon the infidelity of Menaechmus, and Sosicles first appears as a staid and virtuous young man, only to be easily tempted into debauch and theft.

The character of the 'parasite' (for which see some remarks in the foreword to *Captivi*) is here effectively employed as a link in the chain of events, and not merely as a mouthpiece for the traditional

THE BROTHERS MENAECHMUS

'gluttony' jokes. His name, *Peniculus* (*pencil*), means 'little brush', i.e. a crumb-brush for sweeping a table clean; I call him 'Sponge', which may convey the appropriate suggestion of his nature and occupation.

The Prologue bears signs of confusion and incompleteness. For this reason I have thought it a permissible improvement to transfer its last five lines (72-6) to an earlier place (after 55) where the speaker is interrupting his narrative with humorous asides about himself and the stage-setting.

CHARACTERS

MENAECHMUS	<i>a young married man living in Epidamnus</i>
SOSICLES	<i>his twin brother, also generally known by the name Menaechmus</i>
PENICULUS	<i>nicknamed The Sponge, a cadging friend of Menaechmus</i>
EROTIUM	<i>Menaechmus's mistress</i>
MESSENIO	<i>slave of Sosicles</i>
CYLINDRUS	<i>cook in the house of Erotium</i>
A MAID	<i>in the house of Erotium</i>
THE WIFE	<i>of Menaechmus</i>
THE FATHER	<i>of Menaechmus's wife</i>
A DOCTOR	<i>Slaves and baggage-porters</i>

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The scene is at Epidamnus, outside the houses of Menaechmus and Erotium.

A Prologue is spoken by an unnamed character.

THE BROTHERS MENAECHMUS

PROLOGUE:

First, friends, a hearty welcome to you all –
And to myself. My business is to call
Plautus before your . . . ears, not eyes, today;
So please attend to what he has to say.
And please attend to me, while I unfold,
Briefly, the tale that here is to be told.

You know our comic writers have a way
Of claiming that what happens in the play
Takes place in Athens, that it may appear
To have a truly Grecian atmosphere.
For this play's setting – you must take my word
It happened in . . . the place where it occurred.
The story breathes a Grecian air, you'll see,
Though not of Attica, but Sicily.
So much for preface to my argument.
Now for the argument – which I present
In generous measure, bags and bushels packed
And running over, a whole barn in fact,
Because I have so much to *give away*
In setting out the story of the play.

In Syracuse a merchant, it appears,
Begot twin sons, who from their earliest years
Were so alike that neither nurse nor mother
Could ever tell one baby from the other,
So little was the difference between them,
As I was told by somebody who'd seen them –
I never saw them, I would have you know.
Now, when the boys were seven years old or so,

Their father planned a business trip abroad,
 Loaded a ship and, with one child aboard,
 Sailed to Tarentum, leaving the twin brother
 At home, in Syracuse, with his mother.
 Tarentum was *en fête* when they got there;
 Hundreds of folk had come to see the fair.
 And wandering in the crowd, the little lad
 One day got separated from his dad.
 An Epidamnian trader found the child
 And took him off to Epidamnus. Wild
 With desperate grief at losing his dear son,
 The father, ere a few more days were done,
 Fell sick and died upon Tarentine land.
 When in due course the tidings came to hand
 At Syracuse, and the grandfather knew
 His son was dead, his grandson missing too,
 He changed the name of the surviving brother
 (Because, in fact, he much preferred the other)
 And *Sosicles*, the one at home, became
Menaechmus – which had been his brother's name.
 That was the name of the grandfather too
 (I do know that, from hearing much ado
 About a debt he owed). I hope that's clear . . .
 But don't forget . . . the twins, when they appear,
 Will both be called Menaechmus. Now again
 I move to Epidamnus [*He takes a few steps*] to explain
 The rest of this affair . . . [*He breaks off, and
 continues prosaically.*]

Anybody got any commissions for me in Epidamnus? Now's the time to say so, if you have. Don't be afraid. Give me your orders – and of course the necessary funds for the business. No money, no business. And what happens to your money if you give it me is no business of yours either! . . . [*Indicating the scene on the stage*] All this is Epidamnus – as long as this play lasts, anyway. In another play it will be another place, I expect. Same with the houses – they may be occupied by a young man one day, an old man the next; rich man, poor man, beggarman, king, client, or clairvoyant . . . But to get back to where I was – while still remaining where I am! . . .

This Epidamnian trader, he who stole
 The boy, was childless; money was his whole
 Life and existence, but he had no son
 To leave it to when his day's work was done.
 So he adopts the boy, and when of age
 Gives him a wife, dowry, and heritage.
 He died. While on a country walk, they say,
 Outside the city, on a stormy day,
 Trying to cross a torrent, in he fell;
 And thus the thief was carried off to hell,
 Who carried off the boy! The adopted heir
 Inherited a large estate, and there [*showing the house*]
 Menaechmus lives today. Now watch; for here
 You'll see the twin from Syracuse appear
 In Epidamnus, with one slave behind him,
 To search for his twin brother – and to find him.

*

[PENICULUS *enters from the town, about to pay a visit to the house of Menaechmus.*]

PENICULUS: My name is Peniculus – or Sponge, as the young fellows call me – Sponge, because whenever I eat I wipe the table clean! . . .

You know, it's ridiculous for people to throw prisoners into chains and put fetters on runaway slaves – at least I think so; because if a man is in trouble, and you give him more trouble, he'll be all the more anxious to escape and commit more crimes. They always get themselves out of their chains by some means or other; if they're in fetters, they file away the ring or smash the bolt off with a stone; it's child's play. If you really want to keep a man from running away, the best way to do it is with food and drink; keep his nose down to a full table; give him anything he asks for, every day; I guarantee he'll never run away then, not even if he's on a capital charge; you'll have no difficulty in keeping him, as long as you keep him in that sort of confinement. Food – it's a marvellously effective kind of strait-jacket; the more you stretch it the closer it clings . . .

Take me, now; I'm just on my way to my friend Menaechmus. I've been his bond-slave for some time now, and I'm still offering myself voluntarily to imprisonment. I tell you, that man doesn't just give you a meal; he builds you up, makes you a new man; there isn't a doctor to touch him. That's the sort of host he is; has a tremendous appetite himself, gives banquets fit for Harvest Festival, piles the tables so high with culinary contraptions, you have to stand on your couch to reach anything off the top.

But alas, as far as I am concerned, there has been an intermission for many days past. All this time I have been housebound and homebound in the company of my own dear ones – and everything I buy or eat comes *very* dear, I can assure you! Moreover, I'm now running out of my dearly bought supplies. So I'm paying a call on my dear patron . . . Ah, the door's opening . . . and it's Menaechmus himself coming out . . . [*He retires to a corner.*]

[MENAECHMUS, a young man, appears at the door of his house, finishing off an altercation with his wife, who is just inside.]

MENAECHMUS: . . . And if you weren't such a mean, stupid, obstinate, and impossible female, you wouldn't want to do anything that you see your husband dislikes . . . If you go on like this any longer, I'll divorce you and pack you off to your father . . . Every time I choose to go out of doors you try to stop me and call me back, pester me with questions, what am I going to fetch, what have I brought back, what did I do when I was out. I might as well have married an immigration officer, the way I have to declare every blessed thing I've done or am doing . . . I've spoiled you, that's what it is. But I give you due warning: in consideration of my providing you with servants, food, clothes, jewellery, household linen, and finery, everything you could possibly need, you will kindly behave yourself or there'll be trouble – and you will cease spying on your husband's movements . . . [*Turning away from the door*] Come to that, if you want something to spy on, you can have it . . . I'm going to take my girl out tonight and get an invitation to supper somewhere.

PENICULUS: He may think it's his wife he's telling off, but I'm the one he's getting at. If he's not going to be home for supper, that's one in the eye for me, not his wife.

MENAECHMUS: Good; that's done it! My language has frightened

her from the door. Now then, all you *loving* husbands . . . aren't you going to load me with gifts and congratulations for my heroic fight? . . . [*He now reveals that he is wearing one of his wife's gowns under his cloak*]. Look, I've just stolen this gown of my wife's and I'm taking it to my girl! That's the way to treat 'em . . . that's a slap in the face for the sharp-eyed wardress! A beautiful, neat, ingenious masterly trick, my friends! That's going to cost the wretched woman something – or cost me, for that matter, since I've got to say goodbye to it . . . Ah well, let's say I've filched some booty from the enemy for the benefit of my friends.

PENICULUS: What about me, boy? Do I get a share of the booty?

MENAECHMUS [*hearing but not seeing him*]: Damn it! Someone else spying on me?

PENICULUS: No, someone protecting you; don't be alarmed.

MENAECHMUS: Who's there?

PENICULUS: Me.

MENAECHMUS; Oh, it's you, my old friend On-the-Spot, my dear Mr Come-in-Time. How are you?

PENICULUS: Very well, thanks, how are you? [*They shake hands.*]

MENAECHMUS: What are you doing now?

PENICULUS: Holding my guardian angel by the hand.

MENAECHMUS: You couldn't have found me at a more favourable moment.

PENICULUS: I know. I'm like that. I can tell a favourable moment to the nearest second.

MENAECHMUS: Would you like to see a sight to gladden your eyes?

PENICULUS: It depends who cooked it. Show me the leavings and I'll tell you if there was anything wrong with the cooking.

MENAECHMUS: Did you ever see a mural painting . . . the eagle abducting Ganymede, or Venus seducing Adonis?

PENICULUS: Often. But why should such paintings interest me particularly?

MENAECHMUS [*posing in a graceful attitude in the female gown*]: Behold . . . do I look like anything like them?

PENICULUS: What on earth are you dressed up like that for?

MENAECHMUS: Say I'm a smart fellow.

PENICULUS [*ignoring the inexplicable eccentricity*]: Where are we going to eat?

MENAECHMUS: First say what I told you to say.

PENICULUS [*obediently*]: You're a smart fellow.

MENAECHMUS: Is that all you can say?

PENICULUS: And a most amusing fellow.

MENAECHMUS: Anything else?

PENICULUS: Good Lord, no, nothing else – until I know what it's in aid of. You've got some quarrel with your wife, I suspect, so I shall have to be careful where I tread.

MENAECHMUS: Don't worry; we're going to bury our troubles and burn up the day in some place the wife doesn't know about.

PENICULUS: Come on, then; now you're talking sense. Say the word and I'll light the pyre; the day's already dead down to the waist. What are we waiting for?

MENAECHMUS: Only for you to stop talking.

PENICULUS: Knock my eye out if I utter another word except at your orders.

MENAECHMUS: Come away from this door.

PENICULUS [*moving a little, but keeping an anxious eye on the house door*]: All right.

MENAECHMUS [*also cautiously watching the door*]: Farther this way.

PENICULUS: If you like.

MENAECHMUS: Come on, there's nothing to be afraid of. You can turn your back on the lioness's den.

PENICULUS: What about you? You'd do well as a chariot-racer.

MENAECHMUS: Why a chariot-racer?

PENICULUS: The way you keep looking over your shoulder to see if the enemy is gaining on you . . .

MENAECHMUS: Look, tell me something –

PENICULUS: Me? I'll tell you anything you like, or deny it if you prefer.

MENAECHMUS: Are you good at smelling? Can you identify a thing by its scent?

PENICULUS: Why? Do you want to propose me for the College of Augurs?

MENAECHMUS: Smell this dress . . . What does it smell of? [*Offering him the skirt of the gown*] You don't want to?

PENICULUS: I'd rather smell the upper part of a woman's garment; elsewhere the nose detects a somewhat unwashed odour.

MENAECHMUS: Smell this part, then . . . Oh, you *are* a fussy man.

PENICULUS: I should hope so.

MENAECHMUS: Well, what does it smell of?

PENICULUS: It smells of . . . [*knowing Menaechmus's intentions*] stolen goods, secret amours, and a free lunch. I hope there'll be –

MENAECHMUS: Right you are! Lunch is the word. This gown is going to my girl Erotium, and I'll have lunch laid on at her place, for her, for me, and for you.

PENICULUS: Good enough.

MENAECHMUS: There we will carouse until tomorrow's dawn.

PENICULUS: Grand! It's a pleasure to listen to you. Shall I knock at the door? [*That is, of the neighbouring house where Erotium lives.*]

MENAECHMUS: Please do . . . No, wait.

PENICULUS [*disappointed*]: Oh, now you've pushed the loving cup a mile off.

MENAECHMUS: Knock gently.

PENICULUS: Why? The doors aren't made of Samian pottery, are they? [*He thumps the door.*]

[*The door immediately opens and EROTIUM is seen to be about to come out.*]

MENAECHMUS: Wait, wait, for goodness sake! Here she comes herself . . . Oh, see how the sun is dimmed beside the radiance of that lovely person!

EROTIUM: Menaechmus, my sweetheart! Welcome!

PENICULUS: No welcome for me?

EROTIUM: You don't count.

PENICULUS: Like on the battlefield – camp-followers don't count.

MENAECHMUS: That's right; and today I have planned an engagement for myself at your house.

EROTIUM: You shall have it.

MENAECHMUS: He and I are going to have a drinking battle; and whichever proves himself the superior fighter on the bottle-field, becomes your conscript. You shall be umpire and choose which you will have for your – night. Oh my darling, when I look at you, how I hate my wife!

EROTIUM: Meanwhile you apparently feel compelled to wear her clothes. What is this?

MENAECHMUS: Spoils from my wife for your adornment, my rose.

EROTIUM: That puts you head and shoulders above any other of my suitors, darling.

PENICULUS: Just like her sort, to talk pretty when she sees something to get her hands on . . . If you loved him, my dear, you ought to have bitten his nose off by now.

MENAECHMUS [*removing his cloak to get rid of the gown*]: Hold this, Peniculus. I must hand over my promised gift.

PENICULUS: Give it here. But wait a bit; won't you give us a dance in that thing?

MENAECHMUS: Me dance? Are you out of your mind?

PENICULUS: One of us is, I'm not sure which. All right, if you won't dance, take it off.

MENAECHMUS: I risked my life getting hold of this today . . . I doubt if Hercules ran such a risk when abstracting Hippolyta's girdle . . . Here you are, a present for the only girl in the world who likes to do what I like.

EROTIUM [*taking the gown*]: You set an example to all true lovers.

PENICULUS: All who are hell-bent to ruin themselves.

MENAECHMUS: I bought it for my wife a year ago; four hundred drachmas it cost me.

PENICULUS: Four hundred down the drain, as I figure it.

MENAECHMUS: Now then, do you know what I want you to do for me?

EROTIUM: I know. I'll see to it.

MENAECHMUS: Good. Tell your people to prepare lunch for the three of us - and send to the market for something toothsome . . . say, pork kidneys, or smoked ham, or pig's head . . . something of that kind, a nicely done dish to give me a vulture's appetite. And the sooner the better.

EROTIUM: You shall have it, my love.

MENAECHMUS: We'll get off to town. We shan't be long; and then we can do some drinking while the things are cooking.

EROTIUM: Come back as soon as you like. We'll be ready for you.

MENAECHMUS: Don't waste any time, then. Come along, Sponge . . . [*He hurries off.*]

PENICULUS: I'm with you . . . and watching you. I wouldn't lose sight of you today for all the treasures of heaven. [*He follows.*]

EROTIUM [*at her door*]: Tell Cylindrus I want him out here at once, please.

[CYLINDRUS, *her cook, appears.*]

Take a basket, and some money. Here . . . here's three pounds for you.

CYLINDRUS: Three pounds . . . that's right, ma'am.

EROTIUM: Get us something to eat; enough for three, please; not too little, and not too much.

CYLINDRUS: Three. What kind of three?

EROTIUM: I and Menaechmus and his table-companion.

CYLINDRUS: That's more like ten. These table-companions can easily do the work of eight men each.

EROTIUM: I've told you how many guests there are; go and do your business.

CYLINDRUS: Very good, ma'am. Consider the meal cooked, call the guests in.

EROTIUM: Don't be long.

CYLINDRUS: I'll be back in two shakes.

[*He hurries off to market. EROTIUM goes indoors.*]

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[*The twin MENAECHMUS, who exactly resembles his brother and was originally called SOSICLES (as we shall call him), has now arrived by sea and comes from the harbour with his slave MESSENIO and other slaves carrying baggage.*]

SOSICLES: Messenio, I don't believe sea-farers can ever enjoy a greater pleasure than their first sight of land from the ocean.

MESSENIO: For my part, I'd say the pleasure would be greater if it were your own homeland you were sighting. Can you tell me, sir, what we're doing now in Epidamnus? Are we going to circulate round all the islands, like the sea itself?

SOSICLES: I have come to look for my twin brother.

MESSENIO: And how long do you propose to go on looking for him? We've been at it now for six years. The Danube, Spain, Massilia, Illyria, all over the Adriatic, the Greek colonies, and the

entire coast of Italy – we've visited the lot. You would have found a needle by this time, long ago, if it were there to find. We're looking for a dead man among the living; if he were alive, we should have found him long before this.

SOSICLES: Very well, then, I am looking for someone who can give me certain news, someone who can say he knows for certain that my brother is dead. If it be so, I shall search no longer; but short of that, I shall never give up the quest as long as I live. No one but I knows how much I love him.

MESSENIUS: Might as well look for a knotted bullrush . . . Why don't we go home, master? We're not writing a book of our travels, are we?

SOSICLES: Kindly do what you're told, eat what you're given, and mind your manners. I don't want any more of your impudence; and I'm not arranging my plans to suit you.

MESSENIUS [*aside*]: There you are, you see. That's to remind me I'm a slave. He puts it in a nutshell. All the same, I can't hold my tongue . . . Sir, Menaechmus, I've just been looking at our purse, and I must say there's a bit of a drought in the reservoir. As far as I can see, if you don't make tracks for home, you'll be down to nothing, and then . . . looking for your brother . . . will be rather a bother. Do you know what sort of people live here? In Epidamnus you'll find all the worst drunkards and debauchees; the place is full of sharks and swindlers; and as for the harlots, I'm told they're the most seductive in the world. That's why it's called Epidamnus – anyone that lands up here is doomed to damnation.

SOSICLES: I'll be careful. Give me that purse.

MESSENIUS: What do you want with the purse?

SOSICLES: I don't trust you after what you just said.

MESSENIUS: Me? What are you afraid of?

SOSICLES: Lest you see me damned in Epidamnus. You're rather too fond of the women, Messenius; and I'm rather quick-tempered, and not always responsible for my actions. If I take charge of the money, it'll save us from both dangers – you from putting a foot wrong, and me from having to be angry with you.

MESSENIUS: Take it, and welcome. Mind you don't lose it.

[CYLINDRUS returns from market with his provisions.]

CYLINDRUS: I've done some good shopping . . . got just what I

wanted. I shall have a nice meal to offer the party . . . Hullo, there is Menaechmus! Oh dear, I shall catch it . . . guests waiting outside the door before I can get back with the provisions. I'd better go and speak to him . . . Good morning, sir.

SOSICLES: Who in the world may you be?

CYLINDRUS: Who am I? Don't you know me, then?

SOSICLES: I swear I don't.

CYLINDRUS [*passing this off with a grin*]: Are your fellow-guests with you?

SOSICLES: What fellow-guests?

CYLINDRUS: Your table-companion.

SOSICLES: My table-companion?

CYLINDRUS [*aside*]: The man is surely off his head.

MESSENIUS: Didn't I tell you the place was swarming with swindlers?

SOSICLES: Who is this table-companion of mine you're expecting, young fellow?

CYLINDRUS: Your . . . Sponge.

MESSENIUS: Sponge? I've got that here in the kitbag.

CYLINDRUS: I'm afraid you're a bit early for lunch. I've only just got back from market.

SOSICLES [*kindly, thinking he has to do with a lunatic*]: I say, young man, can you tell me how much a pig costs here – a perfect one, suitable for sacrifice?

CYLINDRUS: About . . . two drachmas.

SOSICLES: Here's two drachmas for you . . . go and make the offerings and get yourself absolved, at my expense. It's clear you must be a lunatic, whoever you are, to come pestering a perfect stranger.

CYLINDRUS: Well! I'm Cylindrus. Surely you know me by name?

SOSICLES: You may be Cylindrus or Coriendrus or what you please, but go to hell. I don't know you and I don't want to know you.

CYLINDRUS: Well, I know you; your name is Menaechmus.

SOSICLES: Now you're talking like a sane man, I will say. That is my name. But where have you met me?

CYLINDRUS: Where have I met you? Aren't you the lover of my mistress Erotium?

SOSICLES: I certainly am not, and I haven't the slightest idea who you are.

CYLINDRUS: Not know who I am, after all the times I've served you with drink at your parties at our place?

MESSENIUS: God help me! Why haven't I got something to break this fellow's head with?

SOSICLES: How can you have served me with drink, when I've never seen or set foot in Epidamnus till this day?

CYLINDRUS: You haven't?

SOSICLES: I swear I haven't.

CYLINDRUS: Aren't you the occupant of that house there?

SOSICLES: May the gods damn the occupants of that house there!

CYLINDRUS [*aside*]: It's he that's off his head, cursing himself like that . . . Excuse me, Menaechmus -

SOSICLES: What now?

CYLINDRUS: If you want my advice, I think you should take that two drachmas you offered me just now . . . it's you that must be out of your mind, sir, calling down curses on your own head . . . the best thing would be to buy a pig for yourself . . .

MESSENIUS: By all the gods, this fellow's unbearable. I'm sick and tired of him.

CYLINDRUS [*chatting on cheerfully to the audience*]: It's just his way; he often pulls my leg like this. He can be ever so amusing - when his wife's not there . . . I say, Menaechmus . . . Menaechmus!

SOSICLES: Well?

CYLINDRUS: Do you think I've got enough food here for the three of you - or should I get some more - for you and the lady and your table-companion?

SOSICLES: What lady, what table-companion are you talking about?

MESSENIUS: What devil has got into you, man, to pester my master like this?

CYLINDRUS: I'm not concerned with you. I don't know you. I'm talking to this gentleman. I know him.

MESSENIUS: I know you're a raving lunatic, and that's a fact.

CYLINDRUS: Anyway, I must go and get these things cooked. It won't take long, so don't go far away. With your leave, sir -

SOSICLES: You have my leave to go and be hanged.

CYLINDRUS: And you'd better go and . . . lie down, while I apply the powers of Vulcan to these articles. I'll go in, then, and let Erotium know you're standing out here . . . then she can ask you

in . . . so you needn't hang about outside the door . . . [*He goes into the house.*]

SOSICLES: Has he gone at last? He has. Upon my word, Messenio, I begin to perceive that you spoke only too truly.

MESSENIUS: You'll have to be careful, sir. I shouldn't wonder if this is some harlot's house, from what that mad fellow said.

SOSICLES: But how extraordinary that he should know my name!

MESSENIUS: Bless you, no, nothing extraordinary in that. It's a way these women have; they send their slave boys or girls down to the port, and if there's a foreign ship in, they find out where she's from, and the master's name and everything; then they freeze on to him, and never let him out of their sight; and once they've got him hooked they send him home squeezed dry. And if I'm not mistaken, there's a pirate ship in that port at this moment [*pointing to Erotium's house*] and we'd do well to give her a wide berth.

SOSICLES [*sceptical*]: I'm sure that's very good advice.

MESSENIUS: I'll believe it's good advice when I see you taking good heed of it.

SOSICLES: Say no more now, I hear the door opening. Let's see who comes out. [*He hides in some corner.*]

MESSENIUS: I'll get rid of this meantime [*the bag he is carrying*]. Hey, galley-slaves, look after this stuff. [*He joins SOSICLES.*]

[*EROTIUM appears at the door, speaking to someone within.*]

EROTIUM: No, don't shut the door; leave it as it is. See that everything is ready in there; make sure we have all that we need. Spread the couches and burn some perfumes; a gentleman likes to have things nice and comfortable. The more comfortable they are, the worse for his pocket, and the better for us! . . . The cook said my friend was waiting out here; where has he got to, I wonder? . . . [*Spying Sosicles*] Ah, there he is - my most valuable and helpful friend! And of course he gets the consideration he deserves here; he's quite at home in this house . . . I'll go nearer and speak first . . . Darling! Why in the world are you standing out in the street, when the door's wide open for you? You know this house is more of a home to you than your own. We've got everything ready as you ordered, just as you like it; you won't be kept waiting. Lunch is prepared as you wished; we can sit down to it as soon as you like.

SOSICLES: Who is the woman talking to?

EROTIUM: She is talking to you, of course.
 SOSICLES [*coming further into view*]: And what have you, or did you ever have, to do with me?
 EROTIUM: Is it not you, above all other men, whom by the will of Venus I must most honour and worship, as you well deserve, since it is to you alone and to your generous hand I owe all my good fortune?
 SOSICLES: The woman is either insane or intoxicated, Messenio. I've never seen her before, and she greets me as her dearest friend.
 MESSENIUS: What did I tell you? That's the way things are here. This is only a shower of leaves; you'll have trees falling on your head if we stay here three days. She's just like all the harlots here, experts at wheedling the money out of you. Let me have a word with her . . . Hey, woman, listen to me.
 EROTIUM: I beg your pardon?
 MESSENIUS: Where have you seen this gentleman before?
 EROTIUM: In the same place where he has often seen me, here, in Epidamnus.
 MESSENIUS: Here in Epidamnus? A man who has never set foot in the place till this day?
 EROTIUM: Huh! Very funny! . . . Won't you come in, Menaechmus darling? You'll be much more comfortable inside.
 SOSICLES: Blest if she doesn't call me by my right name too! I'm hanged if I know what this means.
 MESSENIUS: It means she's got wind of that purse you're carrying.
 SOSICLES: Yes, that's very thoughtful of you, by Jove. Here, you take it. I'll soon find out whether it's me or my purse she's in love with.
 EROTIUM: Come along, let's go in to lunch.
 SOSICLES: It's very kind of you; but . . . please excuse me.
 EROTIUM: Then why did you ask me to cook a lunch for you, not an hour ago?
 SOSICLES: I? Asked you to cook lunch for me?
 EROTIUM: Of course you did; for you and your table-companion.
 SOSICLES: Damn it, what table-companion? . . . The woman is undoubtedly mad.
 EROTIUM: Your friend The Sponge.
 SOSICLES: Sponge? The one I clean my shoes with?

EROTIUM: Oh you know, the man who was with you just now - when you brought me the robe you'd stolen from your wife.
 SOSICLES: What is all this? I gave you a robe - stolen from my wife? Are you in your right mind? . . . This woman must be dreaming on her feet, like a horse.
 EROTIUM: Why do you have to mock at everything I say, and deny everything you've done?
 SOSICLES: Just kindly tell me what it is that I am supposed to have done and am denying.
 EROTIUM: You denied that you had given me, this very morning, a robe belonging to your wife.
 SOSICLES: And I still deny it. What's more, I haven't got a wife and never had one, and I have never before in the whole of my life put a foot inside the gate of this town. I have had lunch on board my ship, then I came ashore and here I've met you.
 EROTIUM [*now thinking he must be mad*]: Oh, just think of it! Oh dear, this is terrible . . . What do you mean by a ship?
 SOSICLES [*explaining whimsically*]: Well, it's a sort of a wooden affair . . . gets a lot of knocking about, nailing and banging with a hammer . . . full of bolts and pegs, like a furrier's drying-frame.
 EROTIUM: Oh for heaven's sake, stop joking and come in with me.
 SOSICLES: My good woman, it's someone else you're looking for, not me.
 EROTIUM: As if I didn't know you perfectly well! You're Menaechmus, son of Moschus; born, by all accounts, in Sicily, the country which was ruled first by Agathocles, then by Phintias, then by Liparo, and after his death by Hiero who is the present king.
 SOSICLES: All that is perfectly correct, madam.
 MESSENIUS: Jupiter! Do you think she comes from those parts? She seems to know all about you.
 SOSICLES: Upon my word, I don't think I can go on refusing her invitation.
 MESSENIUS: Mind what you're about. You're done for if you cross that doorstep.
 SOSICLES: Shut up. This is going to be all right. I'll agree to everything she says, in return for a little hospitality . . . [*He returns to Erotium, confidentially*] Look, my dear, I had a good reason for contradicting you just now. I was afraid this man of mine might

tell my wife about the dress and about our lunch party. I'm ready to come in as soon as you like.

EROTIUM: Are you going to wait for your friend?

SOSICLES: I am not; he can go to blazes; and if he does come I don't want him admitted.

EROTIUM: That'll suit me all right! But there's something else I'd like you to do for me, darling.

SOSICLES: Anything you say, beloved.

EROTIUM: That robe you've given me - could you take it to a dressmaker to have it refashioned with some improvements which I would like added?

SOSICLES: Of course I will. That's a good idea; it'll make it look different and my wife won't know it if she sees you wearing it in the street.

EROTIUM: You can take it away when you go.

SOSICLES: I'll do that.

EROTIUM: Let's go in, then.

SOSICLES: I'll be with you directly. I just want to have a word with my man first.

[EROTIUM goes in.]

Messenio! Come here.

MESSENIUS: What are you up to? You ought to think what you're doing.

SOSICLES: Why ought I?

MESSENIUS: Because -

SOSICLES: All right, I know; you needn't tell me.

MESSENIUS: More fool you, then.

SOSICLES: I've captured a prize; so far so good. Get along and find a billet for those men, as soon as you can. Then come back and meet me here before sunset.

MESSENIUS: You don't know what you're letting yourself in for, master - those women . . .

SOSICLES: That's quite enough, now. It's my funeral, not yours, if I make a fool of myself. This woman is the fool, an ignorant fool; from what I've seen so far, there's booty waiting for us here. [He goes into the house.]

MESSENIUS: No, you're not going in there? . . . Oh, damn and blast it, he's properly done for now. That pirate ship has got our little

boat in tow for destruction. I'm the fool, though, to expect to be able to control my master; he bought me to obey orders, not give them . . . [He turns to the slaves] Come on, you lot; let's be off, so that I can get back here at the time he said. [He takes them off with the baggage.]

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[An hour or two later, PENICULUS returns from the town.]

PENICULUS: Well, that was the most stupid and fatal thing I have ever done in all the thirty odd years of my life - to go and get myself mixed up in that public meeting, fool that I was. While I was standing there gaping, Menaechmus must have slipped off and gone back to his mistress - not wanting to take me with him, of course. Gods confound the man who first invented public meetings, that device for wasting the time of people who have no time to waste. There ought to be a corps of idle men enrolled for that sort of business, every one of them to answer his name when called or pay a fine on the spot. After all, there are plenty of men who don't need more than one meal a day and have nothing else to do - never get invited out to eat, or invite their friends in; they could very well spend their time on meetings and committees. If things were managed that way, I wouldn't have lost that lunch today; I'm pretty sure he meant to give it me, sure as I'm alive. I think I'll go in, anyway; there's always the attractive prospect of left-overs . . .

[The door opens and SOSICLES is about to come out, carrying the gown, and wearing a garland at a rakish angle on his head.] But what's this? Menaechmus is coming out, with a garland on his head. They've cleared away, then, and I'm just in time to escort him home. I'll see what he's up to first, then I'll go and speak to him.

[SOSICLES is speaking back to Erotium within.]

SOSICLES: Now you go and have a nice sleep, there's a good girl. I'll see that you get this back in plenty of time today, all nicely cleaned and altered. In fact it'll look so different you won't know it's the same one.

PENICULUS: Well, I'll be blowed, and he's off to the dressmaker's with that gown! Eaten all the lunch and drunk all the wine, and his table-friend left outside all this time! I'll jolly well get even

with him for this treatment or I'm not the man I think I am. Just you wait, young man.

SOSICLES [*coming out*]: Oh gods above, did ever a man expect less of your bounty and receive more in one day than I have? Lunch, drinks, a woman, and . . . this for a prize, which its rightful owner is not going to see again.

PENICULUS: I can't quite catch what he's saying from here. Is it about the trick he's played me, now that he's got his belly full?

SOSICLES: The girl says I stole this from my wife and gave it to her! I could see there was some mistake, but I immediately agreed with her, as if we were on familiar terms; anything she said, I fell in with it. In short . . . I never had a better time at less expense.

PENICULUS: I'm going to talk to him. I'm dying to have a scrap with him.

SOSICLES: Now who's this coming my way?

PENICULUS: And what have you got to say for yourself, you base, vain, fickle and flighty, false and faithless, crooked and inconstant man? What have I done to deserve such infamous treatment at your hands? I know how you gave me the slip down in town not an hour ago, how you put away a luncheon without me there to assist at the obsequies. How dare you? Had not I as much right to be at the graveside as you?

SOSICLES: I don't know what business you have to be pitching into me, young fellow, when you don't know me and I've never seen you before. Unless you want me to give you the punishment your impudence deserves.

PENICULUS: As if you hadn't punished me enough already, by Jupiter!

SOSICLES: Perhaps you will be good enough to tell me your name at any rate?

PENICULUS: Is that your idea of a joke, pretending not to know my name?

SOSICLES: I swear I've never seen or met you till this minute, to the best of my knowledge. All I can say is, whoever you are, I shall be obliged if you will cease to annoy me.

PENICULUS: Come on, Menaechmus; wake up.

SOSICLES: I am quite awake, thank you.

PENICULUS: Do you mean to say you don't know me?

SOSICLES: If I did, I wouldn't deny it.

PENICULUS: You don't know me - your table-companion?

SOSICLES: It's quite clear to me, your brain is out of order.

PENICULUS: Tell me, didn't you steal that gown from your wife today and give it to Erotium?

SOSICLES: Damn it, I haven't got a wife and I never stole a gown and never gave one to Erotium.

PENICULUS: Have you gone mad? Oh dear, this is the end. Didn't I see you come out of your house this morning wearing that gown?

SOSICLES: God blast you, do you think we're all pansies like you?

You mean to say you saw me wearing a woman's gown?

PENICULUS: I do, so help me.

SOSICLES: Oh go to . . . where you belong. Or go and get yourself certified, lunatic.

PENICULUS: That settles it. I'm going to tell your wife everything that's happened, and no one shall stop me. You'll find this high-handed treatment will recoil on your own head. I'll make you pay for eating up that lunch, you see if I don't. [*He goes into Menaechmus's house.*]

SOSICLES: What *does* all this mean? It seems that everyone I set eyes on is determined to make a fool of me . . . I hear someone coming.

[*A MAID comes out of Erotium's house.*]

MAID: Oh, Menaechmus, my mistress asks if you will be so very kind as to take this bracelet to the jeweller's at the same time and get him to add an ounce of gold to it and have it remodelled.

SOSICLES: With pleasure; tell her I'll do that and anything else she wants me to do - anything she wants.

MAID: You know this bracelet, of course?

SOSICLES: I don't know anything about it, except that it's a gold one.

MAID: It's the one you stole, so you said, some time ago from your wife's chest when she wasn't looking.

SOSICLES: I certainly never did.

MAID: Goodness, don't you recognize it? You had better give it back to me, in that case.

SOSICLES: No, wait a minute. Yes, of course I remember now. Yes, it is the one I gave her. This is it all right. And where are the armlets I gave her at the same time?

MAID: You never gave her any armlets.

SOSICLES: Didn't I? No, you're quite right. This was all I gave her.
MAID: Shall I say you'll look after it?

SOSICLES: Yes, you can say I'll look after it. I'll get the gown and the bracelet back to her at the same time.

MAID: If you'd like to do something for me, love, you could get me some gold earrings made - say about two pounds worth of gold - pendants, you know - then I'd be glad to see you next time you visit us, wouldn't I?

SOSICLES: I'll do that with pleasure - if you can give me the gold. I'll pay for the making.

MAID: Oh - I thought you could provide the gold. I can pay you back later.

SOSICLES: No, you provide the gold, and I'll pay you back - with interest.

MAID: But I haven't any gold.

SOSICLES: Then give it me when you have some.

MAID: I'd better be going, then -

SOSICLES: Say I'll take care of these things . . . [*The MAID goes in.*]
. . . and get them sold as soon as possible for what they'll fetch! Has she gone? Oh yes, the door's shut . . . How all the gods love, aid, and exalt me! But I mustn't stop here. I must get away while I can from this den of vice. Get moving, Menaechmus! About turn, quick march. I'd better get rid of this garland too . . . I'll throw it away . . . over on this side . . . so that if anyone is after me they'll think I've gone that way. Now I'll go and find that man of mine, if I can, and tell him how good the gods have been to me.
[*He goes away to the town.*]

[PENICULUS and the WIFE of Menaechmus come out of the neighbouring house.]

WIFE: How much longer am I expected to put up with this kind of marriage, I'd like to know, with my husband quietly robbing me of all I possess to make presents to his mistress?

PENICULUS: Don't say any more now. You're about to catch him red-handed, I promise you. Come this way. I've just seen him, drunk and with a garland on his head, taking your stolen gown to the dressmaker's . . . Oh look, here is the very garland he was wearing . . . now do you believe me? He must have gone this way, then, so you can follow his tracks if you want to. [*Looking in the*

opposite direction to that taken by Sosicles.] Here he is too, by Jove, on his way back . . . that's fine! He hasn't got the gown, though.
WIFE: How shall I deal with him?

PENICULUS: Just as usual; give it him hot. That's what I would do. Come over here and stalk him from cover.

[*They retire into an alley. MENAECHMUS comes along the street.*]

MENAECHMUS: What fools we are to cling to this idiotic and supremely boring custom! Yet we do, and the more important we are, the more we cling to it. To have a large following of clients is everybody's ambition. Whether the clients are honest men or worthless, is immaterial; nobody bothers about that; a client's wealth is what matters, not his reputation for honesty. A decent poor man is of no account at all, but a rich rogue is considered a most desirable client. Yet look at the trouble a lawless and unscrupulous client can cause his patron. He will deny his debts, and be for ever going into court; he is avaricious, fraudulent, having made his fortune by usury and perjury; his whole mind is bent on such things. When his day of trial comes, it's a day of trial for the patron too (for we have to plead for the malefactors), whether the case is before a jury or judge or magistrate. That is the way I have been worried to death by a client today, and prevented from getting on with anything I wanted to do. The man button-holed me and wouldn't let me go. I had to put up a defence in court of all his countless crimes; I offered all kinds of involved and complicated terms of settlement; and just when I had more or less succeeded in getting the parties to agree to a decision by wager, what must the fellow do but demand a guarantor? Oh dear! . . . and a more manifest villain I have never seen exposed; there were three unshakeable witnesses for every one of his misdeeds. Gods curse the wretched man, for spoiling my day! Curse me too, for ever going near the forum this morning. A perfectly good day wasted - lunch ordered, and my mistress no doubt anxiously awaiting me. I've hurried away from town as soon as I possibly could; and now, I suppose, she will be angry with me - unless the gift of the gown has placated her; the one I stole from my wife, you remember, and gave to Erotium.

PENICULUS [*to the Wife*]: What do you think of that?

WIFE: I am cruelly married to a cruel husband.

PENICULUS: You heard what he said all right?

WIFE: I heard all right.

MENAECHMUS: My best plan will be to go in and join the party and have a good time.

PENICULUS [*coming forward*]: Just a minute. You're going to have a bad time first.

WIFE: Yes, indeed you are. You're going to pay heavy interest on that property you've borrowed.

PENICULUS: There's a nice surprise for you.

WIFE: Did you think you could get away with a mean trick like that?

MENAECHMUS: I don't know what you're talking about, my dear.

WIFE: You don't?

MENAECHMUS: Shall we ask *him* to explain? [*Taking her hand.*]

WIFE: Take your dirty hands off me, please.

PENICULUS: That's the way to talk to him.

MENAECHMUS: What have you got against me?

WIFE: As if you didn't know.

PENICULUS: He knows all right, but he pretends he doesn't, the scoundrel.

MENAECHMUS: What *are* you talking about?

WIFE: A robe -

MENAECHMUS: A robe?

WIFE: Yes, a robe, a wrap, which somebody -

MENAECHMUS: A wrap?

PENICULUS: What are you trembling at?

MENAECHMUS: I'm not trembling at anything.

PENICULUS: Well, you look as if you'd taken the rap! And who ate up the lunch behind my back? [*To Wife*] Let him have it.

MENAECHMUS: I wish you'd shut up. [*Trying to make signals to Peniculus.*]

PENICULUS: I certainly won't shut up. [*To Wife*] He's trying to tip me the wink to keep quiet, you see.

MENAECHMUS: Damn it, I'm not tipping you any winks or nods.

PENICULUS: There's boldness for you - to deny what's plainly visible.

MENAECHMUS: Woman, I swear by Jupiter and all the gods - if that will satisfy you - that I *did not wink or nod at that man!*

PENICULUS: All right, you didn't nod at 'that man'; she'll take your word for it. Now let's get back -

MENAECHMUS: Back where?

PENICULUS: Back to the dressmaker's, I suggest, and get that gown back.

MENAECHMUS: What gown?

PENICULUS [*after looking at the Wife, who is too upset to reply*]: It's no use my saying any more, if she's not going to play.

WIFE [*sobbing*]: I'm . . . so . . . unhappy . . .

MENAECHMUS: What are you unhappy about, my dear? Tell me, please. Has one of the servants been troublesome? Have the men or women been answering you back? If so, please tell me, and I'll have them punished.

WIFE: Stupid man!

MENAECHMUS: She *is* upset about something. I don't like to see her -

WIFE: St . . . stupid man!

MENAECHMUS: There's someone in the house you're angry with, I'm sure.

WIFE: *Stupid man!*

MENAECHMUS: It surely can't be me . . . can it?

WIFE: Oh? Sense at last, then?

MENAECHMUS: But I've done nothing wrong.

WIFE: Stupid man again!

MENAECHMUS [*trying to fondle her*]: My dear, do tell me what is troubling you.

PENICULUS: Trying to play the sweet hubby with you now!

MENAECHMUS [*to Peniculus*]: Can't you mind your own business? I'm not talking to you, am I?

WIFE: Take your hands off me, please.

PENICULUS: Serve you right. Let's see you again eating up the lunch in my absence, and playing the drunken fool with me in front of the house with a garland on your head.

MENAECHMUS: Heavens above! I tell you I haven't had any lunch, nor put a foot inside that house this day!

PENICULUS: You haven't?

MENAECHMUS: By the head of Hercules, I haven't.

PENICULUS: He's the most brazen liar I've ever known . . . Haven't

I just seen you out here in the street with a wreath of roses on your head – when you told me my brain was out of order, pretended you didn't know me, and said you were a stranger here?

MENAECHMUS: But, good heavens, I parted from you some time ago, and have only just now come home.

PENICULUS: Go on, you can't fool me. And you didn't reckon on my being able to pay you out, did you? Well, I have. I've told your wife all about it.

MENAECHMUS: What have you told her?

PENICULUS: Oh, I forget. You'd better ask her yourself.

MENAECHMUS: What is it all about, my dear? What has he told you? What has been happening? Can't you speak? Can't you tell me what it is?

WIFE: Still asking me that? As if you didn't know.

MENAECHMUS: I wouldn't ask, would I, if I knew?

PENICULUS: What a double-faced scoundrel the man is! . . . You'll never get away with it, my lad. She knows all about it. I gave her all the details myself.

MENAECHMUS: *What details?*

WIFE: Very well, since you have no shame and no wish to confess voluntarily, just listen to this. I'll tell you why I am angry, and what this man has told me. A gown has been stolen and taken out of the house.

MENAECHMUS: A gown? I've been robbed of a gown?

PENICULUS: The rascal's still trying to twist you, you see . . . No, *you've* not been robbed, *she* has. If you've been robbed, we shall never see it again, that's certain.

MENAECHMUS: You keep out of this . . . Explain to me, my dear.

WIFE: A gown, I repeat, is missing from the house.

MENAECHMUS: Who can have taken it?

WIFE: The man who removed it can best answer that, I should think.

MENAECHMUS: And who would he be?

WIFE: His name is Menaechmus.

MENAECHMUS: Really? What a rotten thing to do. Who is this Menaechmus?

WIFE: *You* are this Menaechmus.

MENAECHMUS: Am I?

WIFE: You are.

MENAECHMUS: And who is my accuser?

WIFE: I am.

PENICULUS: So am I. And I add that you gave it to your mistress Erotium.

MENAECHMUS: I gave it to her?

WIFE: Yes, *you* did, *you* did.

PENICULUS: If you like, we'll bring on an owl to keep repeating 'yoo, yoo'; we're tired of it.

MENAECHMUS: No, no, my dear, I never gave it away. By Jupiter and all the gods I swear –

PENICULUS: You'd much better swear that we are telling the truth.

MENAECHMUS: I didn't give it outright; I only lent it.

WIFE: Did you indeed? And have you ever known me lend your cloaks or tunics outside the house? It's a woman's place to lend out women's clothes, and a man's the men's. Perhaps you will kindly bring the gown back.

MENAECHMUS: I will certainly see that it comes back.

WIFE: It will certainly be in your interest to do so. You're not coming into this house again until you bring the gown with you. I'm going home.

PENICULUS: And what do I get for what I've done for you in this business?

WIFE: I'll do as much for you, when something is stolen from your house. [*She goes into her house.*]

PENICULUS: That'll be never; there's nothing in my house that I'm likely to lose. May the gods blast you both, wife and husband! I'll get along to town; it's obvious I'm no longer a friend of this family. [*He goes off.*]

MENAECHMUS: She thinks she's got her own back, does she – shutting me out of the house? As if I didn't know of another place, and a better one, where I shall be welcome. All right, my lady, if you don't want me, I shall have to grin and bear it. Erotium will want me; she won't shut me out; she'll shut me in, both of us together. I'll go now, and beg her to let me have the gown back – tell her I'll buy her a better one. [*He knocks at her door.*] Hey there! Is there a doorkeeper here? Open please, and let someone ask Erotium to come out here.

EROTIUM [*within*]: Who is asking for me?

MENAECHMUS: Someone who loves you more than his own life.

[*EROTIUM comes out.*]

EROTIUM: Menaechmus, my dear! Don't wait outside, come in.

MENAECHMUS: No, stay. Let me tell you what I've come for.

EROTIUM: I know quite well what you've come for – so that you and I may enjoy ourselves.

MENAECHMUS: The fact is . . . darling, will you please let me have that gown back, the one I gave you this morning. My wife has found out all about the whole affair. I'll buy you another one worth twice as much, any kind you like.

EROTIUM: But I have just given it you, not half an hour ago, to take to the dressmaker; and the bracelet you were to take to the jeweller to be re-made.

MENAECHMUS: You gave me the gown and a bracelet? You're mistaken; you never did any such thing. After giving it you this morning, I went off to town, and now I have just come back; this is the first time I've seen you since then.

EROTIUM: Oh? I can see through that little game all right. I put the things into your charge and now you've thought up a nice way to do me out of them.

MENAECHMUS: Good heavens, no! I'm not trying to do you out of anything, by asking for it back. I told you, my wife has found out –

EROTIUM: And I never asked for it in the first place, did I? It was your idea to bring it to me; you said it was a present for me; now you want it back. It's all the same to me; you can keep it, take it back, wear it yourself, let your wife wear it, or lock it up in a cupboard for all I care. If that's all you think of me, after all I've done for you, you're not coming into this house any more, I give you my word – not without ready money in your hand. You can't muck about with me like that, young man. You can go and find someone else to make a fool of. [*She goes in.*]

MENAECHMUS: Oh, no, please, you can't be as angry as all that. Please, wait, listen, come back! You're not going? Oh do come back, just for my sake! . . . She's gone. The door's locked. Now I'm properly locked out. No one will believe a word I say, either at home or at my mistress's. I don't know what I'm going to do

now . . . I shall have to go and find a friend somewhere to advise me. [*He goes off to the town.*]

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[*Later. SOSICLES returns from town, with the gown under his arm.*]

SOSICLES: I was a fool to let Messenio have the purse and money this morning. He'll have gone to ground in some grog-shop by now, I expect . . .

[*The WIFE looks out of her house.*]

WIFE: I wonder if there's any sign of my husband coming home . . .

Oh yes, there he is. I'm saved! He's bringing the gown back.

SOSICLES: I wish I knew where the man had got to.

WIFE: I'll go and give him a suitable welcome . . . Well, you sinner, aren't you ashamed to appear in my sight with that thing on you?

SOSICLES: I beg your pardon? Is anything the matter, madam?

WIFE: Heartless creature! Are you still daring to bandy words with me?

SOSICLES: Why shouldn't I address you, pray? Have I committed any crime?

WIFE: Still asking me that? Oh, you're utterly shameless.

SOSICLES: Have you ever heard, madam, why the Greeks used to call Hecuba a bitch?

WIFE: I certainly haven't.

SOSICLES: It was because Hecuba used to do exactly what you are doing, pour every kind of abuse on anyone she came across. So she came to be called The Bitch – and rightly too.

WIFE: Oh! I won't put up with this infamous conduct any longer. I'd rather live and die without a husband than endure such outrageous behaviour.

SOSICLES: And what business is it of mine, whether you can endure your married life or intend to part from your husband? Is it perhaps the custom here to babble your affairs to any stranger that comes along?

WIFE: Babble! I tell you I won't stand it any longer. I'll get a divorce sooner than suffer such treatment for the rest of my life.

SOSICLES: Well, bless me, I've no objection. Get a divorce, and

remain divorced, for the rest of your life, or as long as Jupiter is king.

WIFE: An hour ago you denied having stolen that gown, and here you are with it before my eyes. Aren't you ashamed of that?

SOSICLES: Oh my goodness, woman, what wicked impudence! Do you really claim that this gown was stolen from you, when it was given to me by another lady for me to take to the repairer's?

WIFE: Oh! I shall . . . I shall send for my father and tell him all about your wicked doings. [*She goes to the door.*] Decio! Go and find my father, and bring him back with you. Tell him it's urgent . . . I'll soon expose all your evil practices!

SOSICLES: I think you must be mad. What are these evil practices of mine?

WIFE: Stealing my clothes, and stealing my jewels, your wife's property, out of the house, and carrying them off to your mistress! Isn't that something to 'babble' about?

SOSICLES: My good woman, if you know of any medicine that would help me to swallow your venomous insults more easily, I should be glad if you would tell me of it. I haven't the faintest idea who you think I am; and I know no more of you than I do of Hercules's grandfather-in-law.

WIFE: Mock me if you like; you won't mock him so lightly - my father, who will be here in a minute. [*Looking down the street.*] There he is, do you see? Perhaps you know him?

SOSICLES: Oh yes, I know him as well as Calchas! I met him that day when I first met you.

WIFE: Not know me indeed! Not know my father!

SOSICLES: Bring me your grandfather if you like; I shan't know him either.

WIFE: Huh! Just like you too. Just what I would expect from your conduct.

[*The Wife's FATHER comes slowly along the street. As he is assumed to be still some way off, he has time for a good grumble before reaching the others.*]

FATHER: I'm coming, I'm coming, as fast as an old man can, and as fast as the need may be . . . but it isn't easy . . . don't I know it? I'm not as nippy as I used to be . . . the years tell on me . . . more weight to carry and less strength. Yes, age is a bad business, a dead

loss. It brings you nothing but troubles, and plenty of them. I could tell you what they are, but it would take far too long. . . . What chiefly worries me at this moment is, what on earth does my daughter want, suddenly sending for me like this? She hasn't given me the least idea what she wants me for. Why should she demand my presence so urgently? . . . I think I've a pretty good idea what it's all about, though. She's had some quarrel with her husband, I expect. They're like that - these women who expect their husbands to be at their beck and call; with a good dowry behind them, they're terrors. Not that the husbands are always blameless, if it comes to that. Still, there are limits to what a wife should have to put up with; and you can be sure a woman doesn't send for her father without good reason - some misconduct on the husband's part or a serious quarrel. Well, we shall soon know . . . Ah yes, there she is outside the house . . . and her husband, in no good temper by the looks of him. Just as I thought. I'll get a word with her first. [*He beckons to her.*]

WIFE: I'll go to him . . . Oh, father, I'm glad to see you.

FATHER: I'm glad to see you. I hope you're well. All well here, eh? Nothing wrong, I hope, to bring me over here? You look a bit downcast, though; why is that? And why is he standing over there looking so grumpy? I believe you've been having a bit of a tiff over something or other. Have you? Come on, out with it, tell me whose fault it was, and don't make a long tale of it.

WIFE: It is not I that have done anything wrong, you can make your mind easy on that, father. But I cannot live here any longer; I simply cannot stand it; you must take me away.

FATHER: What's the trouble, then?

WIFE: I am being treated like dirt.

FATHER: By whom?

WIFE: By my husband, the husband you found for me.

FATHER: So that's it - a bit of a squabble. How many times have I told you that I won't have you, either of you, running to me with your complaints?

WIFE: How can I avoid it, father?

FATHER: Do you want me to tell you?

WIFE: If you please.

FATHER: I've told you dozens of times; it's your business to try to

please your husband, not keep spying on everything he does, always wanting to know where he's going and what he's up to.

WIFE: What he's up to is making love to the harlot next door.

FATHER: I don't blame him; and I warrant he'll go on loving her all the more, the more you keep on at him like this.

WIFE: Drinking there too.

FATHER: And do you think you have a right to stop him drinking, there or anywhere else he chooses? I never heard such impudence, girl. I suppose you think you can also stop him accepting invitations to supper, or inviting friends to his own house? Do you expect a husband to be your slave? You might as well expect him to do the housework for you, or sit with the women and spin.

WIFE: I see I've brought you here to plead for my husband, not for me. My advocate has gone over to the other side.

FATHER: My dear girl, if he commits any criminal offence, I shall have a lot more to say to him than I have said to you. He keeps you in clothes, jewellery, and all the servants and provisions you could possibly need; your best plan is to accept the situation sensibly.

WIFE: Even if he robs me, steals my clothes and jewels out of my cupboards, empties my wardrobe behind my back to make presents to his strumpets?

FATHER: Ah well, he has no right to do that - if that is what he is doing. But if he isn't, you have no right to accuse an innocent man.

WIFE: I tell you, father, at this very moment he has a gown and a bracelet of mine, which he had given to that woman, and which he is only now bringing back because I found out about it.

FATHER: Oh dear . . . I'd better learn the truth about this, from his own lips. I'll have a word with him . . . Now then, Menaechmus, what's this that you two are quarrelling about? I want to know. Why are you moping over here, and she in a temper over there?

SOSICLES: Whoever you are, old gentleman, and whatever your name may be, I swear by Jupiter and all the gods above -

FATHER: Good heavens, what's coming?

SOSICLES: - that I have never done the slightest wrong to that woman who keeps accusing me of having stolen and abstracted a garment from her house -

WIFE: A wicked lie!

SOSICLES: - and if I have ever put a foot inside that house, may I be the damnedest of all damned creatures on earth!

FATHER: Why, you imbecile, have you taken leave of your senses, to utter such a curse upon yourself, and say you have never set foot inside the house you live in?

SOSICLES: Are you now saying that I live in that house too?

FATHER: Well, do you deny it?

SOSICLES: I most certainly deny it.

FATHER: Then you are telling a flat lie - unless you've moved out of the house since yesterday . . . Daughter, come over here . . . have you and your husband moved out of this house?

WIFE: Where in the world should we move to, and why, for goodness sake?

FATHER: I'm hanged if I know.

WIFE: He's pulling your leg, of course. Can't you see that?

FATHER: Come now, Menaechmus, that's enough of your joking; let's come to the point.

SOSICLES: What point? What has my business got to do with you? I don't know who you are or where you come from or how I am supposed to be concerned with you or with this woman who has done nothing but insult me ever since I met her.

WIFE [*in alarm*]: Look at him, father! His eyes are turning green; all his face is turning green; and that glitter in his eyes - look!

SOSICLES [*aside*]: If they are going to declare me insane, the best thing I can do is to pretend to be insane; perhaps that will frighten them off. [*He acts accordingly.*]

WIFE: Now he's gaping and flinging himself about. Oh father, what ever shall I do?

FATHER: Come away, my dear, come away as far as possible from him.

SOSICLES [*raving*]: Euhoe! Euhoe! Bacchus ahoy! Wilt thou have me go hunt in the woods away? I hear thee, I hear thee, but here I must stay. I am watched by a witch, a wild female bitch, on my left, and behind her a smelly old goat, a lying old dotard whose lies have brought many an innocent creature to ruin . . .

FATHER: Ay, ruin on you!

SOSICLES: Now the word of Apollo commands me, commands me to burn out her eyes with firebrands blazing . . .

WIFE: Ah!! Father, father, he is threatening to burn out my eyes!

SOSICLES: Woe is me, when madmen themselves call me mad.

FATHER: Here, girl!

WIFE: Yes?

FATHER: What are we going to do? Shall I get some servants here?

Yes, that's it; I'll get some men here to carry him home and tie him up before he can do any worse harm.

SOSICLES: Now what am I going to do? They'll have me carried off to their house if I don't think of something quickly . . . [*Making to attack the Wife*] I hear thee, Apollo, bid me strike this woman's face and spare not, if she will not speedily avoid my sight and begone to whatever hell she chooses. Thy will be done, Apollo!

FATHER: Go inside, girl, go inside at once before he murders you!

WIFE: I'm going. Watch him, father. Don't let him get away. Oh! What terrible things for a poor wife to hear! . . . [*She escapes into the house.*]

SOSICLES: That's got rid of her nicely. Now for this wicked whiskered tottering Tithonus, so-called son of Cygnus . . . At thy command, Apollo, I shall pound his body to bits, smash every bone and limb with his own walking-stick . . .

FATHER: You dare touch me, or come a step nearer, and you'll be sorry for it.

SOSICLES: I obey, Apollo. With a two-edged axe I will mash this old man's flesh and bones to mincemeat . . .

FATHER: My goodness, I must look out for myself, or I'm afraid he really will do me as much harm as he threatens.

SOSICLES: More commands, Apollo? Ay, now thou biddest me harness my fierce wild horses and mount my chariot to ride down this aged toothless stinking lion . . . So be it . . . now I am in my chariot, now I hold the reins, here is the goad in my hands . . . Gallop apace, my steeds! Let me hear the ring of your hoofs! Swift be the flight of your feet on your tireless courses!

FATHER: You keep your horses away from me!

SOSICLES: Apollo, Apollo! Still thou art bidding me charge on the foeman who stands in my path and destroy him . . . [*The old man stands his ground and grapples with the madman.*] . . . Ah! Who is this who seizes me by the hair and drags me from my car? Who is this

who defies and obstructs thy orders, thy royal commands, O Apollo! . . . [*He gives up the battle and falls to the ground.*]

FATHER: Well I never! He must have had a terribly sudden and serious stroke. He was perfectly well a few minutes ago, and now raving mad. I've never seen a man taken so suddenly. Good gods, what ever shall I do? I'd better go and find a doctor as quick as I can . . . [*He hurries off.*]

SOSICLES: Have they gone at last? Have I got rid of those two pests who have turned a sane man into a raving lunatic? . . . My best plan now is to get back to my ship while the going's good. You won't tell him, friends, will you? Don't tell the old man, if he comes back, which way I've gone. Goodbye. [*He goes.*]

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[*Later. The FATHER returns, wearily.*]

FATHER: All this time I've been waiting for the doctor to get back from his rounds. My bottom's numb with sitting, and my eyes sore with watching out for him. At last the tiresome fellow finished with his patients and came home. Tells me he had to set a broken leg for Aesculapius and mend an arm for Apollo - whatever he meant by that . . . Oh, now I come to think of it, I wonder if I've summoned a stonemason instead of a doctor? Anyway, here he comes now . . . Hurry up, man; can't you move faster than an insect?

[*The DOCTOR arrives.*]

DOCTOR: Now, sir, what did you say was the nature of the illness? Is it a case of possession or hallucination? Are there any symptoms of lethargy or hydropsical condition?

FATHER: I've brought you here to tell me that, and to cure him.

DOCTOR: There'll be no difficulty about that; we'll cure him all right, I can promise you.

FATHER: I want him to have the most careful attention.

DOCTOR: I'll care for him most carefully. I shall be sighing over him every minute of the day.

FATHER: Look, here he comes. Let's watch his behaviour.

[*They stand aside. MENAECHMUS comes from the town.*]

MENAECHMUS: Upon my word, I don't know when I spent a more

fatal and frustrating day. All my carefully concealed schemes have been exposed by that satellite of mine. Like a Ulysses, he has plotted against his lord, and made me look a cowering guilty fool. I'll get even with the fellow, if I live; I'll put an end to his life - if you can call it his life - my life, I should say, since it's my food and money he's been living on! Anyway, I'll stop his breath. As for that woman, she has behaved just as you would expect from her kind. I ask her to let me have the gown returned to my wife, and she says it was a gift to her. Oh dear, what a life!

FATHER: Do you hear what he's saying?

DOCTOR: He's saying what an unhappy creature he is.

FATHER: Go and speak to him, do.

DOCTOR: Good afternoon, Menaechmus. Oh dear me, you shouldn't have your arm uncovered like that. Don't you know that is the worst possible thing for your complaint?

MENAECHMUS: Why don't you go and hang yourself?

FATHER: Do you notice anything?

DOCTOR: I should think I do! It'll take bushels of hellebore to get the better of this malady . . . Tell me, Menaechmus -

MENAECHMUS: Tell you what?

DOCTOR: Just one question - do you drink white wine or red?

MENAECHMUS: Oh go to blazes!

DOCTOR [*to Father*]: Yes, indeed, the fit is coming on him again.

MENAECHMUS: Why don't you ask me whether I eat pink, purple, or yellow bread? Whether I eat birds with scales or fish with feathers?

FATHER: Ts, ts! Listen to his raving. Can't you give him a dose of something immediately to save him from going completely mad?

DOCTOR: All in good time. I'll ask him some more questions.

FATHER: You'll kill us all with your rigmarole.

DOCTOR: Tell me, young man, do you ever feel your eyes scaling over?

MENAECHMUS: Imbecile, do you take me for a lobster?

DOCTOR: And another thing: have you noticed any rumbling in the bowels?

MENAECHMUS: They don't rumble when I'm full; they rumble when I'm empty.

DOCTOR: Well, I don't see anything unreasonable in that answer.

Do you sleep all night? Do you fall asleep easily when you get into bed?

MENAECHMUS: I sleep soundly enough - if I've paid all my bills.

Oh, Jupiter and all the gods blast you and your silly questions!

DOCTOR: Madness coming on again. Be careful when he talks like that.

FATHER: He's talking as sanely as Nestor, compared with what he was a little time ago; then he was calling his wife a crazy bitch.

MENAECHMUS: I was?

FATHER: You certainly were - in your madness, of course.

MENAECHMUS: I was mad?

FATHER: You were; you threatened to run me down with a chariot and four. I saw you. I can bring eye-witness evidence against you.

MENAECHMUS: Oh, can you? And I can prove you stole the sacred crown off Jupiter's head and were put in prison for it; I have evidence that when you were let out you were flogged at the stake; and I know how you murdered your father and sold your mother. Take that slander back in your teeth to convince you I'm a sane man.

FATHER: For heaven's sake, doctor, whatever you're going to do, do it quickly. You can surely see he's out of his mind.

DOCTOR: Yes . . . well . . . this is what I would advise you to do. Have him brought over to my house.

FATHER: Do you think that will be best?

DOCTOR: I certainly do. There I shall be able to supervise his treatment.

FATHER: Just as you please.

DOCTOR [*to Menaechmus*]: I'll put you on to hellebore for three weeks.

MENAECHMUS: I'll put you on to a rack and have you pricked with goads for a month.

DOCTOR: Go and find some men to carry him to my house.

FATHER: How many men will it take, do you think?

DOCTOR: Judging by his present condition of insanity, not less than four.

FATHER: I'll have them here directly. You keep an eye on him, doctor, meanwhile.

DOCTOR: Oh, I must go home and see to the necessary preparations. You tell your men to bring him along.

FATHER: Very well. We'll get him to your house immediately.

DOCTOR: I'll go, then.

FATHER: Goodbye.

[*They go their ways.*]

MENAECHMUS: Exit doctor. Exit father-in-law. Now I am alone.

Jupiter! Whatever can have possessed those two to pronounce me insane? Me – who have never had a day's illness in my life! I'm not insane at all, nor am I looking for a fight or a quarrel with anybody. I'm just as sane as every other sane man I see; I know my friends when I see them, I talk to them normally. Then why are they trying to make out that I am insane – unless it's they who are insane? Now what do I do? I'd like to go home, but wife says no. Next door there's no welcome for me either. What a damnable business! I shall just have to wait here; they'll let me in at nightfall, I should hope. [*He sits down at his own doorstep.*]

[*Messenio comes from the town.*]

MESSENIUS: It's the mark of a good slave, I always say – one who can be trusted to watch and provide for his master's welfare, plan and organize his affairs – that he attends to his master's business just as well in his master's absence as in his presence, or better. Every right-thinking slave ought to value his own back more than his own throat, look after his shins rather than his belly. He'll remember, if he has any sense, how their masters reward worthless, idle, and dishonest slaves: floggings, chains, the treadmill, sweating, starving, freezing stiff – that's what you get for laziness. I'd rather take the trouble to keep out of that sort of trouble. That's why I've decided to be a good slave, not a bad one. I can bear a lash of the tongue more easily than a lash of the whip; and I'd much rather eat corn than grind it. So I do as my master tells me, carry out his orders in an efficient and orderly manner; and I find it pays me. Others can do as they think best; I'm going to do my duty. That's my resolution – to play safe, do no wrong, and always be where I'm wanted. The way to be a useful slave is to be afraid of trouble even when you've done no wrong; the ones who are not afraid of anything, even when they *have* deserved trouble – they've got something to be afraid of! I shan't have much to fear. It won't be long before my master rewards me for my services. Anyway, that's my idea of service – making sure my own back doesn't suffer.

So now I've done everything he told me, seen the baggage and the slaves settled at an inn, and come back here to meet him. I'll knock at the door and let him know I'm here, so that I can rescue him safely out of this den of thieves. Although I'm very much afraid the struggle may be over and I have come too late.

[*As he goes up to Erotium's door, the FATHER comes back with four strong slaves.*]

FATHER: Now you men, you have your orders and I repeat them again, and by heaven and earth I charge you to observe them diligently. I want that man picked up and carried at once to the doctor's house; see to it, unless you care nothing for the comfort of your own legs and sides. And don't, any of you, take the slightest notice of anything *he* may threaten to do to you. Well? Jump to it. What are you waiting for? He ought to be on your backs and away by now. I'll go along to the doctor's; I shall be ready to meet you there when you arrive.

[*He goes. The slaves grapple with Menaechmus.*]

MENAECHMUS: Help! Murder! What's happening? Why am I being set on like this? What do you want? Have you lost something? Why are you attacking me? Where are you dragging me? Where are you carrying me? Help, help, people of Epidamnus! Citizens, help! Let me go, can't you!

MESSENIUS: Almighty gods! What do I see? My master man-handled and carried off by a gang of ruffians!

MENAECHMUS: Won't anyone come to my aid?

MESSENIUS: I will, master. I'll fight 'em. Oh, men of Epidamnus, look at this horrible wicked outrage – my master being kidnapped in the street, in broad daylight, a freeborn visitor abducted in your peaceful city! Drop him, you villains!

MENAECHMUS [*taking Messenio for a stranger*]: Oh thank you, my man, whoever you are; help me, for goodness sake; don't let them do this outrageous thing to me.

MESSENIUS: I'll help you, I'll defend you, I'll put up a fight for you. I'll not see you die – sooner die myself. Go on, sir, knock his eye out – that one that's got you by the arm. I'll plant a crop of fisticuffs among these other faces . . . You try to carry this man off and it will be the worse for you. Drop him!

MENAECHMUS: I've got my fingers in this one's eye.

MESSENIUS: Leave him with an empty socket in his head. You villains! You robbers! You thugs!

SLAVES: Murder! Help!

MESSENIUS: Let him go!

MENAECHMUS: How dare you attack me! [*To Messenio*] Tear the skin off them!

[*The slaves are by this time routed, and decamp.*]

MESSENIUS: Get out of it, the lot of you; off with you to hell.

[*Clouting the last of them*] And here's one for you . . . a prize for being the last . . . I gave their faces a good doing over, didn't I? Gave 'em all I wanted to. By jingo, sir, it was a lucky thing I got here just in time to help you.

MENAECHMUS: May the gods bless you, my good fellow - [*aside*] whoever you may be. But for you, I doubt if I should have lived to see this day's end.

MESSENIUS: I'm sure you can't refuse to give me my freedom after this, master.

MENAECHMUS: I? Give you your freedom?

MESSENIUS: Surely, after I've saved your life, master.

MENAECHMUS: What *do* you mean? You're under some misapprehension, my good man.

MESSENIUS: I am? Why?

MENAECHMUS: I'll take my oath, by Jupiter above, you're not one of my servants.

MESSENIUS: Don't talk -

MENAECHMUS: I mean it. No slave of mine ever did so much for me as you have done.

[*Messenius is puzzled for a moment; then, taking Menaechmus at his word:*]

MESSENIUS: You mean . . . ? I'm no longer a slave of yours? I can go free, then?

MENAECHMUS: You have my permission to go free and to go wherever you please.

MESSENIUS: Is that an order, sir?

MENAECHMUS: It's certainly an order, so far as I have any power to give you orders.

MESSENIUS: Hail, one time master, now my patron! [*Shaking hands with himself, as if being congratulated by his master's friends*] 'Con-

gratulations, Messenio, on your freedom' . . . 'Thank you, sir, it's very kind of you' . . . But I say, master . . . please, to please me, just go on giving me orders the same as when I was your slave. I still want to go on living with you. I'll go home with you when you go.

MENAECHMUS: Indeed you won't!

MESSENIUS: I'll pop round to the inn and collect the baggage and your purse and bring them back here. The purse with our travelling money is safely sealed up in the trunk; I'll have it back here in a jiffy.

MENAECHMUS [*amused*]: Do, by all means.

MESSENIUS: You'll find the money's all there just as you gave it to me. Wait here for me. [*He dashes off.*]

MENAECHMUS: This is a day of wonders and no mistake! First I'm told I'm not myself, then I'm shut out in the street, and now comes this fellow saying he's my slave, so I set him free and he says he's going to bring me a purse full of money! If he does, I shall certainly tell him to clear off and be as free as he likes and go wherever he likes. I don't want him coming to claim the money back again when he comes to his senses. And that doctor and my father-in-law said I was out of my senses. It makes no sense to me. It's like a bad dream . . . However, I'll go and call on my mistress again, even if she is in a bad temper with me, and see if I can get her to let me have my wife's gown back. [*He knocks at Erotium's door, and is admitted.*]

[*Messenius had not gone far when he met his real master again, and back they come.*]

SOSICLES: Have you the impudence to tell me you have met me anywhere else today since we parted here and I told you to come back to find me here?

MESSENIUS: What, and haven't I just rescued you from four men who were trying to carry you off, here in front of this house? And you were howling for help to heaven and earth, and up I came and by force of my own fists got you away safe in spite of the lot of them. And for having saved your life you gave me my freedom. And then I said I was going to fetch the money and our baggage, and meanwhile you, it seems, took a short cut to intercept me and try to pretend none of this ever happened.

SOSICLES: Are you telling me I have given you your freedom?

MESSENIUS: Of course you have.

SOSICLES: Oh dear, no. You can rest assured I would rather become a slave myself than ever let you out of my hands.

[MENAECHMUS comes out of Erotium's house, with a parting shot at someone within.]

MENAECHMUS: I have *not* taken a gown and a bracelet from here today; swear if you like by your own bright eyes that I have, it won't alter the fact – bitches!

MESSENIUS: Gods preserve us! What do I see?

SOSICLES: What do you see?

MESSENIUS: Your living image.

SOSICLES: What do you mean?

MESSENIUS: Your double. As like as two peas.

SOSICLES: There is certainly a remarkable resemblance – so far as I can tell what I look like.

MENAECHMUS [seeing Messenio]: Oh there you are again, my preserver, whoever you are.

MESSENIUS: If you please, young sir, be good enough to tell me your name . . . for heaven's sake . . . if you have no objection.

MENAECHMUS: Well, bless me, I can't grudge you that much after what you've done for me. My name is Menaechmus.

SOSICLES: But that is my name!

MENAECHMUS: I am a Sicilian – from Syracuse.

SOSICLES: That is my home town.

MENAECHMUS: No, really?

SOSICLES: It's the truth.

MESSENIUS [now thoroughly confused, aside]: Of course, I know him [Menaechmus] now; he's my master; I'm his slave, but I thought I was the other man's. [To Menaechmus] The fact is, sir, I thought this man was you . . . and I'm afraid I've caused him a bit of trouble. [To Sosicles] I hope you'll pardon me, sir, if I unwittingly said anything stupid to you.

SOSICLES: You seem to me to be talking utter nonsense. Don't you remember coming ashore here with me today?

MESSENIUS: Did I? Yes, you're quite right. You must be my master, then. [To Menaechmus] You'll have to find another slave, sir. [To Sosicles] Pleased to meet you, sir. [To Menaechmus] Good day to you, sir. This is Menaechmus, of course.

MENAECHMUS: But *I* am Menaechmus.

SOSICLES: What *are* you talking about? You Menaechmus?

MENAECHMUS: Certainly I am. Menaechmus, son of Moschus.

SOSICLES: Son of my father?

MENAECHMUS: No, sir, son of my own father. I don't want to claim yours or deprive you of him.

MESSENIUS: Gods above! [He goes aside] Oh gods, make what I think I expect come true – more than could ever be hoped for! If I'm not mistaken, these are the twin brothers. They both claim the same father and home. I'll speak to my master alone . . . Menaechmus!

MENAECHMUS and SOSICLES: Yes?

MESSENIUS: No, not both of you. The one that came here with me by sea.

MENAECHMUS: Not me.

SOSICLES: No, me.

MESSENIUS: You then. Come here, sir, please.

SOSICLES: Here I am. What do you want?

MESSENIUS: That man, sir, is either an impostor – or your twin brother. I've never seen two men more alike; you and him – he and you – water is not more like water nor milk like milk than you two are. What's more, he says he's from the same country and has the same father as you. We must go and ask him some more questions.

SOSICLES: By the gods, Messenio, that's a wonderful idea. Thank you. Go on, and stand by me, do. If you find that he is my brother, you are a free man.

MESSENIUS: That's what I hope.

SOSICLES: And I.

MESSENIUS [to Menaechmus]: Excuse me, sir; I think you said your name was Menaechmus?

MENAECHMUS: I did.

MESSENIUS: Well, this gentleman's name is Menaechmus too. And you said you were born in Syracuse, I believe; so was he. And your father was Moschus, you said? So was his. Now, this is where you can both do something for me, and for yourselves too.

MENAECHMUS: You have earned the right to ask, and be granted, any favour you desire. I am a free man, but I am willing to serve you as your bought slave.

MESSENIO: I have every hope, sir, of finding that you two are twin brothers, owning one father, one mother, and one birthday.

MENAECHMUS: That sounds like a miracle. I hope you can make your promise good.

MESSENIO: I am sure I can; if you will both be good enough to answer my questions.

MENAECHMUS: Ask away. I'll tell you anything I know.

MESSENIO: Your name is Menaechmus?

MENAECHMUS: It is.

MESSENIO: And yours the same?

SOSICLES: It is.

MESSENIO: And your father, you say, was Moschus?

MENAECHMUS: That is correct.

SOSICLES: So was mine.

MESSENIO: You are a Syracusan?

MENAECHMUS: Yes.

MESSENIO: And you?

SOSICLES: You know I am.

MESSENIO: Good. So far all the indications agree. Now for some further points. Can you tell me what is the earliest thing you remember about your life at home?

MENAECHMUS: I remember my father taking me to Tarentum on a business trip, and how I lost my father one day in the crowd and so got kidnapped.

SOSICLES: Jupiter Almighty, preserve me!

MESSENIO: No exclamations, please. Wait your turn to speak ... How old were you when you left home with your father?

MENAECHMUS: Seven years old. I was just beginning to lose my first teeth. That was the last time I saw my father.

MESSENIO: Next question: how many sons did your father have at that time?

MENAECHMUS: To the best of my recollection, two.

MESSENIO: You and another one - which was the elder?

MENAECHMUS: Neither.

MESSENIO: Neither? How could that be?

MENAECHMUS: We were twins - both of us.

SOSICLES: Gods be praised, I am saved!

MESSENIO: If you keep interrupting, I shall stop talking.

SOSICLES: No, please, I'll keep quiet.

MESSENIO: Tell me now, were you and your twin brother both given the same name?

MENAECHMUS: Oh no; I was called Menaechmus, as I still am; my brother was called Sosicles.

SOSICLES: That settles it! I cannot refrain any longer from embracing him. Brother, my twin brother, greeting! I am Sosicles.

MENAECHMUS: Then how have you since got the name of Menaechmus?

SOSICLES: After the news reached us that you were lost and our father dead, our grandfather changed my name and had me called Menaechmus after you.

MENAECHMUS: That sounds possible. Tell me one thing more.

SOSICLES: What?

MENAECHMUS: What was our mother's name?

SOSICLES: Teuximarcha.

MENAECHMUS: It's true! Bless you, my brother! Given up for lost, and found again after all these years!

SOSICLES: Bless you, brother. At last my sad and weary search is ended and I rejoice to have found you.

MESSENIO: Now I see why that woman called you by your brother's name, and invited you to lunch. She must have thought you were he.

MENAECHMUS: Gad, yes, that's quite right. I did ask to be given lunch here today. I was eluding my wife, having just borrowed one of her gowns to give to my mistress.

SOSICLES: Is this the gown you are referring to?

MENAECHMUS: That's the one. How did you get hold of it?

SOSICLES: Your mistress insisted on my going in to lunch with her, and said I had given her the gown. I had an excellent lunch, enjoyed myself with wine and woman, and came away with the gown and a gold bracelet.

MENAECHMUS: I am delighted to have put a bit of good luck in your way. The woman obviously thought it was me she was entertaining.

MESSENIO: Well, sir, does the offer of freedom which you made to me still stand?

MENAECHMUS: Of course, a very fair and just request. Brother, will you grant it, for my sake?

SOSICLES: Messenio, you are a free man.

MENAECHMUS: Messenio, I congratulate you on your freedom.

MESSENIUS: Thank you, sirs ... [*aside*] but it'll need more than congratulations to keep me a free man for life.

SOSICLES: Well, brother, after this satisfactory solution of our troubles, shall we return home together?

MENAECHMUS: I shall be happy to do so, brother. But first I shall hold an auction and sell all I have here. Let me welcome you to my house meanwhile.

SOSICLES: I shall be delighted.

MESSENIUS [*seizing a good chance*]: May I ask you one other thing, gentlemen?

MENAECHMUS: What is that?

MESSENIUS: Let me be your auctioneer.

MENAECHMUS: You shall.

MESSENIUS: Shall I announce the sale immediately?

MENAECHMUS: Let us say a week today.

MESSENIUS [*proclaiming*]: Sale by auction - this day week in the forenoon - the property of Menaechmus - sale will include - slaves, household effects, house, land, etcetera - and a wife, should there be any purchaser. All to be sold at an agreed price, cash down. [*Confidentially*] And I doubt if the whole lot will fetch more than - fifty thousand.

So farewell, friends; let's hear your loud applause.

EXEUNT