TERENCE

From Terence, *The Comedies*, (trans. B. Radice) (Harmondsworth, 1976)

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INTRODUCTION

COMEDY is a more intellectual and sophisticated art than tragedy, and on the stage it depends for its effects on verbal exchange. Its characters must be wholly articulate, and if it is to succeed it needs an equally articulate, civilized audience, who can respond not with hilarity so much as with a delighted amusement. Audiences of this kind evidently existed for comedy to flourish in fifth-century Athens, in Hellenistic Greece, in Elizabethan and Restoration England, in the Paris of Louis XIV, eighteenth-century Venice, and in Edwardian London, but Rome of the second century B.C. gave small encouragement to a young man who had all the requisites to make him a great writer of comedy. Terence died young, and could be judged a failure in his own day, but the originality he showed in his treatment of his Greek models had a lasting influence on the history of western drama. The six plays of Terence are his complete works and were preserved in a single corpus from an early date. Attached to each play is an authentic author's prologue, a personal apologia of unique literary interest, and several of the medieval MSS. are headed by a production notice giving the date of the play's composition and details of the first production. There is also a Life of Terence[1] ascribed to Suetonius with an addition by the grammarian Aelius Donatus, preserved with Donatus's very full commentaries on the plays. It would seem that a lot is known about Terence and his work and no early author was more quoted by poets and prose-writers alike; yet he remains one of the most problematic of ancient authors, and there were conflicting accounts of him within a century of his death.

1. See Appendix A, p. 389.

Tradition says that Publius Terentius Afer was born in Carthage in 185 B.C. (some say 195) and came to Rome as the slave of the senator Terentius Lucanus, who gave him a good education and his freedom. He was slight, dark, and good looking, and his abilities won him entry into the 'Scipionic circle' – the group of young intellectuals and philhellenes gathered round Scipio Aemilianus. He made a good impression on the elderly dramatist Caecilius, to whom he read his first play, and so he embarked on his own stormy career. Though he won instant success with *The Eunuch*, *The Mother-in-Law* failed twice and only succeeded at the third attempt through the loyal efforts of his actor–producer, Lucius Ambivius Turpio. His association with the Scipios led to slanderous rumours that his noble friends had helped him, or even written his plays for him, and he was frequently accused by an old playwright, Luscius Lanuvinus, of plagiarizing earlier Latin plays and tampering with the Greek models he professed to be translating. Soon after 160, in his twenty-fifth year, he left Italy in search of more Greek comedies for adaptation, met with some accident in Greece or Asia Minor, and never returned. By the time Suetonius wrote his *Life* at the end of the first century A.D. there were at least four versions of his death and no agreement on whether he died rich or poor.

Amid so many conflicting views it is not surprising that some modern scholars have argued that the *Life* is no more than invention based on the few facts that emerge from the plays themselves, the prologues, and the production notices. For example, the connection with the Scipio circle could have been conjectured simply from the statement in the production notice to *The Brothers* that it was first performed at the funeral games of Aemilius Paullus, Scipio's father before adoption. Even the surname Afer is no proof that Terence was of north African origin; witness the distinguished orator, Gnaeus

Domitius Afer. Terence has been conjectured to be a Semitic Carthaginian, a Berber, or the son of one of Hannibal's captives from South Italy, and so racially either Greek or Italian. What is clear from the multiplicity of opinion quoted by Suetonius is that the Romans themselves were always puzzled by Terence's brief career and sudden end.

There is no doubt that Terence did have 'noble friends', for they are mentioned in the prologues, where he glories in his association with 'men whose services in war, in peace, and in your private affairs are given at the right moment, without ostentation, to be available for each one of you' (*The Brothers*, 19–21). The suggestion that they helped him with his plays lingered on, to be referred to by Cicero in a letter to Atticus (7.3.10) and much later by Quintilian, though with reserve (*Institutio Oratoris*, 10.1.99). But if Scipio or any of his friends wrote the plays, it is surprising that no more of the same type were written after Terence's early death. Internal evidence from the plays themselves points to more indirect influence. The lively farcical element, the colourful word-play, the earthy vulgarity, the song and dance which made Plautus deservedly popular have gone; instead Terence offers subtlety of plot, development and interplay of character, and economy of dialogue. He needs an attentive, educated audience ready to appreciate the finer points of a Hellenistic comedy presented in the most lucid and elegantly simple Latin which had yet been written. *The Mother-in-Law* is not a play likely to succeed on a large open-air stage before a crowd expecting the rollicking gaiety of Plautus, and consequently only too ready to slip off to see the gladiators and tight-rope walkers; but is it too fanciful to imagine its being performed in the house of a cultivated aristocrat to an invited audience of his friends?

Publius Cornelius Scipio Aemilianus Africanus Numantinus Minor was the son of Lucius Aemilius Paullus Macedonicus,

the victor over the Greeks at the battle of Pydna which ended the Third Macedonian War. As part of the spoils of war Paullus took the Greek library of King Perseus of Macedon and sent it home to Rome. Scipio had fought at Pydna and toured Greece with his father; his early education on Greek lines is described by Plutarch in his Life of Aemilius Paullus. Before 168 he was adopted by his cousin, the elder son of Scipio Africanus Major, himself a writer and philhellene, and in Rome he headed a group of young men with literary and philosophic interests, notably Lucius Furius Philus, Gaius Lucilius, the satirist admired by Horace, and Gaius Laelius, surnamed Sapiens for his Stoic inclinations. The philosopher Panaetius of Rhodes (after he came to Rome about 145) and the Greek historian Polybius were among their friends. Laelius and Scipio both appear in Cicero's *de Senectute*, and his *de Amicitia* commemorates their friendship. Furius Philus joins them in the discussion which forms the framework of *de Republica*, and this takes place in Scipio's garden in the winter sunshine. In *de Oratore* (2.6.22) there is the well-known account of Laelius and Scipio on a carefree holiday, picking up shells on the seashore, and Horace writes of Scipio, Laelius, and Lucilius 'fooling about till the cabbage was boiled' (*Satires*, 2.1.71); the scholiast caps this with a tale of how Laelius surprised Lucilius chasing Scipio round the dining-room with a knotted napkin. One can imagine these young men more ready to make a friend of someone of different race and social class than the 'men of consular rank' whom the grammarian Santra believed to have been Terence's patrons. And it seems from the plays that Terence was more in sympathy with the civilizing influence of the new Hellenism than with the strict discipline and conservatism preached by the elder Cato, or the robust humour of Italian rural life. This is what makes the difference between Terence and Plautus more than one of generation;

the great gap which was never again to be bridged over had been made between the mass of the people and a small educated class.

Plautus is said by Cicero to have died in 186 B.C., so that all his plays were first written in the years of austerity at the end of the second Carthaginian war and in the changed social conditions produced by the rapid increase of an urban and slave population. They were all taken from Greek New Comedy of Menander and his contemporaries, and military service must have brought many Romans in contact for the first time with the more sophisticated Greek cities of South Italy and Sicily; but Roman society was still parochial and puritanical, based on the close ties of family life. There was nothing in it to correspond with the *jeunesse dorée* of the Hellenistic world, young men in debt to pimps and mistresses, their elders worldly-wise, and their servants as pert and resourceful as a Figaro or Scapin. Plautus took the stock characters of comedy, 'a running slave, virtuous wives and dishonest courtesans, greedy spongers and braggart soldiers' (*The Eunuch*, 36–8), but he could not risk outraging Roman morality by humanizing them. Sometimes the result is caricature, but at his best Plautus created something more vigorous and exuberant than his original, mixing Roman with Greek elements and developing the comic potentiality of a scene in whatever way his sense of theatre suggested. As well as being a master of *vis comica* he has a gift for verbal extravaganza and metrical technique like that of Aristophanes; and the high spots of his plays are often his musical *cantica*.

Some twenty years after Plautus's death Terence brought out his *Andria*, and from the opening conversation between an Athenian gentleman and his trusted freedman it is immediately apparent that his aims are quite different. There is no formal prologue to describe the plot, and the use of dialogue to explain the situation is Terence's improvement on his Greek

model. The tone is light but sympathetic towards young love, the language is direct and natural, and the whole scene has been beloved and quoted by literary critics from Cicero down to Sainte-Beuve, who compares some of its phrases with Andromache's smiling through her tears. Terence is consistent throughout his six plays in avoiding what is too Greek or too Roman, and this gives them their timeless quality. He creates a beautifully simple, fluid style of Latin to match the lucidity of Hellenistic Greek. He can handle genuine problems with perception and show people as much the same then as now – mixed in their motives, muddled in their intentions, but, like the young men in *The Brothers*, good at heart. In 'translating' Greek comedy into a different world, Terence's achievement was to take over the typical irascible father, irresponsible youth, courtesan and slave-dealer, and present them as individuals caught up in a complex plot which sets them at cross-purposes and has many comic possibilities when no one is in full possession of the truth until the final *dénouement*; in the meantime much is revealed about the persons involved by means of their reactions to the confusion. At the same time Terence's tolerant attitude to his characters is moral and serious. A young man seduces a girl, but 'there were excuses... it is human nature'. Yet he is not allowed to shirk the consequences and leave her in the lurch. A strict father believes he is doing the best thing for his son; but if he makes no allowances for youth he lives in a fool's paradise. A woman can be scorned by her neighbours as a professional courtesan and later show real generosity and an almost maternal affection to her former lover. It is easy to see why his words *homo sum: humani nil a me alienum puto* (*The Self-Tormentor* 77) have been so often quoted out of context with application to Terence himself.

It is also understandable that he has never had wide popular appeal, especially for those unwilling to accept the conventions of formal comedy, where the situations are always relatively stereotyped so as to provide a recognizable framework in which wit can sparkle and intrigue unfold. Some of his double plots and counterplots make great demands upon the concentration of a reader, let alone a theatre audience, and even as early as Cicero and Horace he was more quoted for his humanity and style than for his stagecraft. And in his concern for writing Latin which combines elegance with conversational ease, he makes no attempt to vary it for his different characters. Slaves speak as impeccably as their masters, and only Phormio is allowed more colourful phrases. In his own day he met with instant criticism from his older rivals, and in comparison with Plautus he was judged to be a half-size Menander lacking vigour.[1]

Four of Terence's plays were modelled on Menander's, two (*Phormio* and *The Mother-in-Law*) on plays by Apollodorus of Carystus. (Only three of the twenty-one extant plays of Plautus can be certainly said to follow Menander.) Opinions differ widely on the question how much in a play by Terence is original and how much directly due to the Greek model: T. B. L. Webster in *Studies in Menander* quotes Terence as evidence for the content of lost plays, while Gilbert Norwood in *The Art of Terence* is unwilling to allow anything to Menander at all. The larger surviving fragments of Menander are sufficient to show that his high reputation in antiquity was well deserved; he was a master of plot, of dialogue, of metre, and a creator of characters who are more than mere types. His tolerance and humanity are such as we find in Terence, and both authors are quotable for their observations on life and its problems. What they say may not be strikingly original but it always gives pleasure because it rings true.

It is certain that Terence was never a *translator* of Greek

1. By Caesar, quoted in Suetonius's *Life*, p. 393.

comedies; he has sharp words to say in his prologues about people who were. Moreover, Donatus says more than once in his commentaries that he has read the Greek original, for the purpose of comparison, and in the case of *Andria* that he has studied both the plays cited in the prologue in order to estimate how Terence had used them. He sometimes quotes a line in Greek to show that Terence took it over word for word, but the very fact that he singles out these passages shows that they were comparatively rare. Elsewhere he remarks on Terence's improvement on his original – the opening scene, in dialogue, of *Andria*, for instance. From the six remarkable prologues to the plays in which Terence answers his critics, it is possible to see what he set out to do. He was accused of writing thin dialogue, of stealing characters and scenes from earlier Latin plays, of accepting unacknowledged help from his noble patrons, and of tampering with his Greek originals by picking and choosing from more than one for each of his plays, thus rendering them useless to other translators. Instead of formally refuting the charges, Terence counter-attacks. His critic, he says, is a competent translator with no stage sense, whose fidelity to the text only turns a good Greek play into a bad Latin one. The question of plagiarism in his own work does not arise; he has only made use of stock situations and characters and ignored the plays of his Roman predecessors. 'Nothing in fact is ever said which has not been said before.' He is proud of his 'noble friends', and dismisses the charge that they helped him with his plays as no more than a 'spiteful accusation'. He has no intention of courting popularity by noisy crowd scenes or animals on the stage; all he asks for is an attentive audience. And if 'spoiling' plays (*contaminare*) means selecting what he wants from any source he likes, that is precisely what the great Plautus did and what Terence proposes to do.

Much has been written about the precise meaning of *contaminatio*.[1] The general meaning of the verb is 'pollute' or 'soil', and in its specialized sense it appears twice in Terence's prologues and nowhere else. Luscius Lanuvinus is quoted as protesting that this upstart young dramatist is 'soiling' or 'spoiling' Greek plays, and again as charging Terence with 'spoiling' Greek plays for others by using more than one to make a single Latin play. It seems very unlikely that so strong a word used pejoratively could mean no more than 'combine'. Luscius surely means that Terence makes a Greek play useless to a straight translator if he picks bits out to incorporate in another play. Terence's reply is that he intends to revert to the freedom and inventiveness of the earlier dramatists, seeing that pedantic accuracy in translation can never create a living Roman play.

The portrait of Terence which emerges from the prologues is one of a conscious artist, impatient of criticism which he feels to be malicious, and confident (as gifted young men must be) that he has it in him to do good work. He is self-assured and intolerant of the second-rate, but he is as sensitive and eager for appreciation as one of his own young men. He says more than once that his main concern is to give pleasure, and he knows very well that a play can never come to life without the support of its audience. Hence his repeated pleas for a fair hearing to enable a young man to make his way in the world, and his tone of hurt surprise in reference to the repeated failure of *The Mother-in-Law*. (No doubt he was well aware that in many ways it was his best-constructed play.) He certainly thought he was bringing something new to the stage, and it must be allowed that he did. Whatever Terence owed to Greek New Comedy, and however confused and contradictory were the traditional accounts of his life collected by

1. See W. Beare, *The Roman Stage*, pp. 96 ff. and Appendix K.

Suetonius, it remains a matter of astonishment to his latter-day admirers, as it was to their Roman predecessors, that six plays of such assurance and maturity could be written in as many years at that point in Rome's history by a young man who was apparently an obscure foreign immigrant, but had the power and personality to win the support of the leading actor-producer and be recognized as a dangerous rival by established older playwrights.

His chief original contribution was the double plot, and this enabled him to enlarge on his major interest, the effect of plot on character, and the contrasted reactions of different types of character to the same situation. He could then draw carefully diversified portraits of closely connected persons, the two young men and the two old fathers in *The Brothers*, the two neighbours in *The Self-Tormentor*, the three young men in *The Eunuch*, and end his plays with two resolutions of plot, each acting as a foil to the other: one young man enjoys a socially acceptable and legal marriage when the true identity of his bride is known, while the other is allowed only a temporary liaison with a *meretrix*, less romantic and less seriously taken by his elders. He created a Latin style which was an admirable counterpart to the natural rhythms of Hellenistic Greek, less rhetorical and dense, simpler and purer than anything written before. As Sainte-Beuve puts it, '*C'est le secret des âges polis. Térence est le premier chez les Romains qui "D'un mot mis en sa place enseigne le pouvoir".*'[1] He settled comedy more firmly in the real world by removing the formal expository prologue (which Plautus kept) and dispensing with divine intervention, thus retaining an element of suspense and making his plays more logical. He moved away from caricature in his minor characters, and was more sympathetic towards old people – the father is never a mere dupe nor the mother a figure of fun –

1. *Nouveaux Lundis*, 10 August 1863.

and more interested in women as persons. *The Mother-in-Law* is essentially a woman's play. He was the creator of serious or problem comedy, and became a major influence on European drama from the earliest days of the Renaissance.

THE BROTHERS

[ADELPHOE]

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

The Brothers has always provoked discussion and is essentially a problem comedy, looking into the relations between fathers and sons, and setting out the conflict between the rival educational policies which in Rome were represented by the strict discipline of Cato versus the new liberal Hellenism. This is a question which every generation must try to answer – shall youth be guided by rules of conduct or allowed to have its fling? Both systems have had bad effects on the young brothers of the play: Aeschinus has been spoilt by Micio and is thoughtless and irresponsible, and Ctesipho lacks self-confidence and deceives his strict father Demea, though we feel Micio is right in insisting that they are both good at heart. Both the elder brothers are complex characters subtly drawn. For all his worldly wisdom, Micio worries about Aeschinus and has misgivings about having allowed him so much freedom; he pulls Aeschinus up sharply when the boy apparently intends to shirk the consequences of his folly. In the end Demea proves to him that a lot of his theorizing was no more than taking the line of least resistance. Demea is repressive and fussy, and at first may seem a conventional killjoy until we realize that he has a sardonic sense of humour, and can thoroughly enjoy putting on an act to teach Micio a lesson. The sudden ironic end to the play has been variously assessed, but whether it is to be found in Menander's original or is Terence's own solution, it is surely not to be taken as a true change of heart on Demea's part – he may end more willing to allow some concessions to Ctesipho, but his principles are unshaken and he never does more than play a part. Micio does not seem so harshly treated if we remember that Pamphila's mother is not necessarily

unattractive, and is certainly not likely to be the 'decrepit old hag' of Micio's exaggerated outburst. No doubt he will adapt himself to a different way of living with his usual ironic detachment.

The minor characters are well drawn – Hegio, the old family friend, Geta the excitable family retainer, and Syrus with his quick wits and ready tongue which recall Phormio in an earlier play. Syrus and his like were excluded from *The Mother-in-Law*, where Parmeno's part is cut to a minimum, and perhaps Terence brought them back into his last play to ensure its success with a popular audience. The episode with Sannio the slave-dealer, which Terence took from a second source, has been skilfully integrated into the play so that it provides much more than a comic scene. It serves to bring out Aeschinus's high-handedness in dealing with an inferior, and Ctesipho's nervous apprehensions about his father's knowing what he has been doing.

Terence provides no ready answer to the problems which engage him and which continue to be discussed today, and *The Brothers* is his last word before he met his unexplained end. It is a mature achievement and a unique contribution to classical literature. It has had many imitators and translators, and was the model for Molière's *L'École des maris*.

PRODUCTION NOTICE

THE BROTHERS by Terence: performed at the funeral games for Lucius Aemilius Paulus held by Quintus Fabius Maximus and Publius Cornelius Africanus.[1]

Produced by Lucius Ambivius Turpio and Lucius Hatilius (*or* Atilius) of Praeneste.

Music composed by Flaccus, slave of Claudius, for Sarranian[2] pipes throughout.

Greek original by Menander.

The author's sixth play, written during the consulship of Marcus Cornelius Cethegus and Lucius Anicius Gallus.[3]

1. The sons of Aemilius Paullus, both aediles in the year of his death (160 B.C.). The younger was already adopted into the Scipio family and is better known as Scipio Aemilianus Africanus Numantinus (see Introduction, p. 14).

2. According to Servius (on *Georgics* 2. 506) these are equal pipes, called after the old Latin name for Tyre.

3. i.e. in 160 B.C.

SYNOPSIS

Demea has two young sons. He gives Aeschinus to his brother Micio for adoption and keeps Ctesipho. The latter is captivated by the charms of a lute-player while under his stern father's strict authority; his brother Aeschinus keeps the secret, takes on himself the scandal and intrigue of the affair, and ends by abducting the girl from a slave-dealer. Aeschinus has also seduced an Athenian citizen, a girl in humble circumstances, and promised to make her his wife. Demea grumbles and scolds; but soon the truth is revealed, Aeschinus marries the girl he wronged, and Ctesipho is allowed to have his lute-player.

CHARACTERS

DEMEA, MICIO	*elderly brothers. Micio lives in Athens and Demea farms just outside*
AESCHINUS, CTESIPHO	*Demea's sons. Aeschinus has been adopted as his son by Micio*
SYRUS	*a slave, Micio's head servant*
DROMO, STEPHANIO	*two of Micio's house slaves*
PARMENO	*Aeschinus's personal slave*
SOSTRATA	*a widow, Micio's next-door neighbour*
PAMPHILA	*her daughter*
CANTHARA	*her old nurse*
GETA	*her slave and house servant*
HEGIO	*a neighbour and friend of her late husband*
SANNIO	*a slave-dealer*
BACCHIS	*a music-girl*

*

The scene is laid in Athens in front of the houses of Micio and Sostrata. To the audience's right the street leads to the centre of the town and the harbour, to the left to the country

AUTHOR'S PROLOGUE TO *THE BROTHERS*

THE poet is well aware that his writing is scrutinized by unfair critics, and that his enemies are out to depreciate the play we are about to present; he therefore intends to state the charge against himself in person, and you shall judge whether his conduct deserves praise or blame. *Joined in Death* is a comedy by Diphilus:[1] Plautus made a Latin play out of it with the same name. In the beginning of the Greek play there is a young man who abducts a girl from a slave-dealer. Plautus left out this incident altogether, so the present author took it for his *Brothers* and translated it word for word. This is the new play we are going to act; watch carefully and see if you think the scene is a plagiarism or the restoration of a passage which had been carelessly omitted.

As to the spiteful accusation that eminent persons[2] assist the author and collaborate closely with him: his accusers may think it a grave imputation, but he takes it as a high compliment if he can win the approval of men who themselves find favour with you all and with the general public, men whose services in war, in peace, and in your private affairs, are given at the right moment, without ostentation, to be available for each one of you.

After this, you must not expect an outline of the plot – the old men who come on first will explain part of it, and the rest will be clear during the action of the play. Make sure that your goodwill gives the author fresh enthusiasm for his work.

1. Diphilus of Sinope, a New Comedy poet of the later fourth century B.C. About sixty titles of his plays are known, and Plautus used him as a model, though this title does not appear in any list of Plautus's plays.

2. The 'Scipionic circle'; see Introduction, p. 13–14.

[MICIO *comes out of his house calling to the servants within; as there is no answer he comes forward, and is revealed as a dapper middle-aged bachelor.*]

MICIO: Boy! ... Then Aeschinus didn't come home last night from that dinner-party, nor any of the servants he took with him. It's true what they say: you may have stayed away from home or be late coming back, but you'll have a better reception from your angry wife for all her hard words and suspicions than you'll get from your loving parents. Suppose you're late; your wife merely imagines you're in love or someone loves you, or you are drinking and enjoying yourself and like to go off alone while she mopes by herself. Now look at me when my son hasn't returned, full of fancies and forebodings. The boy may have caught a chill or fallen down and broken a leg. ... Why on earth should a man take it into his head to get himself something to be dearer to him than his own self? It's not as if he's my own son – he's my brother's, and my brother and I have had quite different tastes since boyhood. I've always chosen an easy life, stayed in town and enjoyed my leisure; and my married friends count me lucky never to have taken a wife. My brother's the opposite in every way – lived in the country, always saved, and chose the hard way; he married and had two sons, then I adopted the elder and brought him up from boyhood, and regarded him as my own. I've loved him like my own son: he has been my joy and sole delight. And I do all I can to ensure that he returns my affection. I give him money, turn a blind eye, don't feel called on to exercise my authority in everything; in fact, I've brought

him up not to hide from me those youthful misdeeds which other sons conceal from their fathers. For a young man who has acquired the habit of telling lies and deceiving his father, and has the effrontery to do so, will do this all the more to everyone else. A gentleman's children should be treated honourably and like gentlemen. They can be restrained better that way, I believe, than through fear. But none of this suits my brother – he has different ideas. He keeps coming to me crying 'What are you doing, Micio? Why are you ruining our boy? Why do you let him drink and go after women, pay his bills for all this, and give him so much to spend on clothes? You've no sense.' Well, *he* has no feeling. It's beyond all right and reason, and it's quite wrong (in my view, at any rate) to hold that there's more weight and stability in authority imposed by force than in one which rests on affection. This is my system and the theory I have evolved; if the threat of punishment alone drives a man to do his duty, he'll be careful only so long as he thinks he may be detected: once he hopes not to be found out, he falls back into his old ways. But a man won by kindness is sincere in his behaviour, eager to make you a return, and stays the same whether he's with you or not. A father's duty then is to train his son to choose the right course of his own free will, not from fear of another; this marks the difference between a father and a tyrant in the home. If he fails to do this, he should admit he doesn't know how to manage his children. . . . But I do believe that's the man himself. . . . Yes it is, and I can see something has made him cross; I suppose I'm in for a scolding as usual. [DEMEA *comes on right from the town: shabby and workworn, he looks older than his years.*] Glad to see you well, Demea.

DEMEA: Good, I was looking for you.

MICIO: You look put out. Why?

DEMEA: Put out indeed! Can you ask me why, with a son like Aeschinus on our hands?

MICIO [*aside*]: I told you so. [*Aloud*] What has he done?

DEMEA: Done? He has neither shame nor scruple nor fear of the law! Never mind his past deeds; look at his latest exploit!

MICIO: Well, what *is* it?

DEMEA: Breaking open a door, bursting into someone else's house, beating the master and the entire household pretty well to death, and making off with the girl he's carrying on with. The scandal's all over the town. I can't tell you, Micio, how many people came up to tell me; everyone's talking about it. Good heavens, if he needs an example, why on earth can't he look at his brother, thrifty, sober, living in the country, and managing his affairs in very different style? I'm talking of Aeschinus, but it's you I mean, Micio; you have let him go astray.

MICIO: Is anything as unjust as a narrow-minded man! He can only see right in what he has done himself.

DEMEA: What do you mean?

MICIO: Simply that you are all wrong, Demea. It's no crime, believe me, for a young man to enjoy wine and women; no, and neither is it to break open a door. If you and I didn't do these things it was only because we hadn't the money. Are you claiming credit now for your conduct when it was only restricted by poverty? How unfair! If we had had the means, we should have done the same. As for that boy of yours, if you had any humanity you would let him behave as a young man should, here and now; if not, he will only wait to bundle your corpse out of the house before carrying on just the same when he's past the right age.

DEMEA: Good heavens, man, you drive me mad! No crime for a young man –

MICIO: Now listen to me, instead of going on and on about this. You gave me your son to adopt; he's my son now. If he does wrong, it's my affair, Demea; I meet most of the bills. He dines and wines and reeks of scent: I pay for it all. He keeps a mistress: I shall pay up as long as it suits me, and when it doesn't, maybe she will shut her door on him. He has broken a door-lock; I'll have it mended. He has torn someone's clothes; they can be repaired. Thank God I have the means to do so, and so far it hasn't worried me. Once and for all, either shut up or name anyone you like to judge between us; I'll prove it's you who are more in the wrong.

DEMEA: Damn it all, why not learn how to be a father from others who really know!

MICIO: You may be his natural father, but morally he is my son.

DEMEA: You? A moral father?

MICIO: Oh, if you are going on, I'm off.

DEMEA: Leaving me like this?

MICIO: Why should I listen to the same tale again and again?

DEMEA [*after a pause*]: I'm worried, Micio.

MICIO: So am I worried, Demea, but we must stick to our own worries. You look after one boy and I the other. If you worry about both, it's as good as demanding back the son you gave me.

DEMEA: No, no, Micio.

MICIO: Well, that's how it seems to me.

DEMEA: All right, have it your own way. . . . Let him squander his money, ruin others and himself; it's no concern of mine. And if ever again a single word –

MICIO: Temper again, Demea?

DEMEA: Don't you believe me? But am I asking for him back? All the same, it's hard: he's my flesh and blood. . . . If I

oppose – All right, I've done. You want me to look after one son, and so I do. Thank heaven he's a boy after my own heart. The one you've got will learn some day – but I won't be too hard on him. [*He goes off right towards the town.*]

MICIO: There's something in what he says, but it's not the whole story. I don't really like it, but I wasn't going to show him I was upset. However much I try to placate him, I only start arguing and put him off; he's that sort of man. He's being unreasonable, and if I were to add to his fury or even try to share it, I should soon be as crazy as he is. All the same, Aeschinus has treated me pretty badly over this. He has been the round of the whores, and they've all cost money; then only the other day he got sick of them, I suppose, and announced his intention of marrying. I hoped he was growing up and settling down, and I was delighted. Now it's all starting again! But in any case I must know the facts and find the boy if he's still in town. [*He goes off towards the town.*]

[*The young man,* AESCHINUS, *comes on from the other direction with the music-girl,* BACCHIS, *and his slave,* PARMENO, *followed by the slave-dealer,* SANNIO.]

SANNIO: Help, help, everyone, help a poor innocent man! I need your help!

AESCHINUS [*to the girl*]: Don't worry, now just stand here. Don't look round, there's no danger, he shan't touch you while I'm here.

SANNIO: I'll have her in spite of all –

AESCHINUS: He's a scoundrel but he won't want to risk a second thrashing today.

SANNIO: Aeschinus, listen; you can't say you don't know my character. I'm a slave-dealer –

AESCHINUS: I know.

SANNIO: – but as honest a man as ever was. You may apologize afterwards and say you meant me no harm, but I shan't give that [*snapping fingers*] for it. Take it from me, I'll have my rights, and you'll pay with more than words for what you've done to me. I know what you'll say: 'I'm sorry, I'm willing to swear you were attacked without provocation.' Meanwhile the way I've been treated is a disgrace.

AESCHINUS [*to* PARMENO]: Go on, get a move on and open the door.

SANNIO: You aren't listening to what I say?

AESCHINUS [*to the girl*]: Quick, go inside.

SANNIO: No you don't!

AESCHINUS: Stand over him, Parmeno, you're too far off; here, close up to him; that's right. Now watch, don't take your eyes off mine, and when I give the wink, be quick and plant your fist straight in his jaw.

SANNIO: Just let him try!

AESCHINUS: Now look out! [*With a look at* PARMENO, *who gives* SANNIO *a violent blow.*] Let go that girl!

SANNIO: It's monstrous!

AESCHINUS: He'll give you another if you don't watch out! [*He does.*]

SANNIO: Oh, oh!

AESCHINUS: I didn't wink, but it's a fault on the right side. [*To the girl*] Now go in.

[PARMENO *takes the girl into* MICIO*'s house.*]

SANNIO: What's all this? Are you king here, Aeschinus?

AESCHINUS: If I were I'd see you got the reward you merit.

SANNIO: What do you want with me?

AESCHINUS: Nothing.

SANNIO: Do you know the sort of man I am?

AESCHINUS: I don't want to.

SANNIO: Have I ever touched anything of yours?

AESCHINUS: If you had, you'd suffer for it.

SANNIO: The girl's mine; I paid cash for her. What right have you to detain her? Answer me that.

AESCHINUS: You'd do better to stop this row outside my house. And if you go on making a nuisance of yourself, you'll find yourself *inside* being whipped within an inch of your life.

SANNIO: I'm a free man – you can't whip me.

AESCHINUS: Can't I!

SANNIO: You brute! Is this where all free men are supposed to be equal?

AESCHINUS: If you've quite finished making a scene, you pimp, be so good as to listen to me.

SANNIO: Who's making a scene? I or you?

AESCHINUS: Drop it. Talk business.

SANNIO: What business? What talk?

AESCHINUS: Are you ready now to hear something to your advantage?

SANNIO: I'm all ears, as long as it's a fair deal.

AESCHINUS: Bah! Now a pimp wants me to stick to fair dealing!

SANNIO: I know I'm a pimp, the bane of youth, a plague and a liar, but I never did any harm to *you*.

AESCHINUS: No, that's the only thing to come.

SANNIO: Go back to where you began, please, Aeschinus.

AESCHINUS: You paid two thousand drachmas for that girl, and much good may it do you! I'll pay you the same.

SANNIO: What if I refuse to sell? Will you use force?

AESCHINUS: No –

SANNIO: Good; I was afraid you would.

AESCHINUS: The girl is free-born and shouldn't be sold at all. That's my view and I'm laying hands on her to set her free.

Now make up your mind, take the money or get up a case. You can be thinking it over till I come back: you pimp. [*He goes into* MICIO*'s house.*]

SANNIO: Gods above, I don't wonder folk go mad with the injustice done them! That fellow has dragged me out of my house, beaten me, carried off my girl under my nose, rained blows galore on my wretched back, and on top of all he has done insists I hand her over at cost price. Supposing it's a fair offer, and he's demanding his rights. Well, I'm willing, as long as he pays up. But I can predict just what'll happen; once I agree to sell for a price he'll have witnesses on the spot to prove I *have* sold her. As for the money – moonshine. 'Soon,' he'll say: 'come back tomorrow.' I can put up with that too, so long as he pays up in the end, although it's a swindle. But I have to face facts: when you follow my profession you must put up with insults from these young men and keep your mouth shut. Well, nobody's going to pay me here. I'm only wasting time totting up accounts like this.

[SYRUS *comes out of* MICIO*'s house, talking to* AESCHINUS *within: he is a smart middle-aged manservant.*]

SYRUS: All right, sir, I'll see the man myself. He'll be only too keen to take the money when I've dealt with him, and think himself well treated into the bargain. [*Coming forward*] What's this I hear, Sannio? Have you been having a scrap with my master?

SANNIO: Scrap? I never saw a fight on worse terms than the one we've just had. He dealt all the blows and I took them till we're both worn out.

SYRUS: It was your own fault.

SANNIO: What should I have done?

SYRUS: Humoured him: he's young.

SANNIO: What else did I do? I let him punch me on the jaw.

SYRUS: Come, you know what I mean. Forget money on occasion; that's sometimes the best way to make it. If you were afraid that if you gave up a fraction of your rights and humoured the young man you wouldn't get your cash back – and with interest – you really are a prize fool.

SANNIO [*sulkily*]: I don't pay down cash for expectations.

SYRUS: You'll never make your fortune, Sannio; you've no idea how to set your traps.

SANNIO: Maybe your way's best, but I'm not sharp enough. I've always liked to make what I could on the spot.

SYRUS: Go on, I know you. It's well worth two thousand to you to keep on the right side of my young master; and besides, I'm told you are off to Cyprus and [*ignoring* SANNIO*'s interruption*] you've made all your purchases to take there and hired a boat. I know you can't give your mind to this now, but once you're back again you'll fix things up with him all right.

SANNIO: I'm not going anywhere! [*Aside*] Damn it: that's what set them on to this.

SYRUS [*aside*]: That stung him; he's afraid.

SANNIO [*aside*]: Curse him, look what a moment for a hold-up! All those women and other things are bought ready to take over to Cyprus. If I miss the market there, it's a hell of a loss. If I drop this matter now and take it up when I'm back again – no go, it'll have gone stale and all I'll get will be 'Why come now? Why did you allow it? Where have you been?' It would be better to cut my losses than go on waiting here now or bring a case later on.

SYRUS: Have you finished working out what you stand to gain?

SANNIO: Is this the right way for him to behave? Should Aeschinus set about getting the girl away from me by force?

SYRUS [*aside*]: He's wavering: one word more. See if you like this better, Sannio. Rather than risk saving or losing the whole sum, halve it. He'll scrape up a thousand from somewhere.

SANNIO: No, no! Now can't a poor man be sure of his capital? Has your master no shame? Thanks to him every tooth in my head is loose and my skull is one great bump with his blows. Now he wants to cheat me, does he? I'm not going.

SYRUS: As you please. Anything more, or can *I* go?

SANNIO: No, damn it, please listen, Syrus. Never mind how I've been treated, sooner than go to law just let me have back the money I paid for her. Up to now I know you've had no proof of my friendship, Syrus, but you'll see I'll be grateful and remember you.

SYRUS [*accepting the proffered bribe*]: I'll do my best. Look, here comes Ctesipho, all smiles about his mistress.

SANNIO: Now what about my request?

SYRUS: Wait a minute.

[*Enter* CTESIPHO *from the town, right, a volatile young man in high spirits.*]

CTESIPHO [*not seeing the others*]: Any man's welcome in time of need, but the real joy comes when your helper is the very man you want! Aeschinus my brother, how can I find words to praise you? At least I'm sure that nothing I can say will be too good for you, and I know, too, that no one alive has what I possess – a brother who stands first among men in every virtue!

SYRUS: Sir –

CTESIPHO: Oh Syrus, where is Aeschinus?

SYRUS: In there, at home, waiting for you.

CTESIPHO [*in raptures*]: Ah!

SYRUS: What do you mean by that?

CTESIPHO: What indeed! It's all his doing, Syrus, that I can live today! The splendid fellow! He put my interests before all his own, took on himself all the hard words and gossip, my own trouble and misdeeds; no one could do more. Who's that at the door?

SYRUS: Wait, it's your brother coming out.

[AESCHINUS *comes out of the house.*]

AESCHINUS: Where's that dirty liar?

SANNIO [*aside*]: That's me he wants. Anything in his hand? Damn it, nothing.

AESCHINUS: Ah, good, I was looking for you, Ctesipho. How are you? Everything's settled now, so you can cheer up.

CTESIPHO: I can indeed, with a brother like you, Aeschinus, my own dear Aeschinus! I daren't praise you more to your face, or you might take it for flattery rather than true gratitude.

AESCHINUS: Come, come, you idiot, surely we know each other well enough by now. . . . I'm only sorry we heard of it so late and had almost reached the point of finding it impossible for anyone to help you, though we all wanted to.

CTESIPHO: I was ashamed –

AESCHINUS: Not ashamed but stupid, to let a little thing like that nearly drive you out of the country. It doesn't bear speaking of. God forbid such a thing!

CTESIPHO: I'm sorry.

AESCHINUS [*to* SYRUS]: And now what has Sannio to say?

SYRUS: Oh, he's calmed down.

AESCHINUS: I'm going to town to settle up with him. You go in to her, Ctesipho.

SANNIO [*to* SYRUS]: Try now, Syrus. [CTESIPHO *goes in.*]

SYRUS [*to* AESCHINUS]: Let's go, sir. This chap's in a hurry to be off to Cyprus.

SANNIO: Not so much hurry as you'd like! I've got time, and here I'll wait.

SYRUS: You'll be paid, don't worry.

SANNIO: But will he pay in full?

SYRUS: He will. Now shut up and come along.

SANNIO: I'm coming.

[AESCHINUS *and* SANNIO *go off right;* SYRUS *is following when* CTESIPHO *reappears.*]

CTESIPHO: Hi, Syrus!

SYRUS: Well, what is it?

CTESIPHO: Do please pay that horrible man as soon as you can. If he carries on worse than this it may reach my father's ears, and that'll be the death of me – for ever.

SYRUS: I'll see it shan't. [*With growing self-importance*] Now, courage, sir; enjoy yourself with your lady indoors, and have dinner laid and all ready for us. I'll see this business settled and then come home with the fish.

CTESIPHO: Yes, do. Everything's so marvellous we must celebrate today.

[*He goes back into* MICIO*'s house and* SYRUS *goes off after the others. After a short pause* SOSTRATA *comes out of her house, followed by the nurse,* CANTHARA.]

SOSTRATA: Please, nurse, how is my daughter? How are things going?

CANTHARA: How are things? All right, I hope, ma'am. My poor dear, your pains are only just beginning. . . . You're not worrying already, as if you'd never seen a birth nor had a baby yourself?

SOSTRATA: Alas, I'm friendless, we are two women alone – even Geta isn't here and I've no one to send for the midwife or to fetch Aeschinus.

CANTHARA: Bless you, he'll soon be here; he never lets a day pass without coming, whatever happens.

SOSTRATA: He's my sole comfort in my woes.

CANTHARA: And you couldn't have done better, ma'am, as it turns out, once the damage was done, at least as regards him – such a nice young man, well-born and good-hearted, coming from a grand home like his!

SOSTRATA: Yes, you're right; heaven keep him safe for us.

[SOSTRATA*'s elderly slave,* GETA, *rushes on right in a state of great agitation, without seeing the women.*]

GETA: Here's a state of affairs! O world, unite, take counsel, seek a remedy, but what good will it do – such trouble as I'm in, and my mistress and her daughter too! O misery! Beset on all sides and no way out! Violence, destitution, injustice, desertion, disgrace! What times! What crimes! O wicked world, O vile wretch!

SOSTRATA: Heavens, why is Geta running about in such a state?

GETA: Honour, his promised word, pity, nothing could hold him back and turn him from his purpose – nor the thought that the poor girl he vilely seduced was just about to bear his child!

SOSTRATA: What *is* he saying? I still can't understand.

CANTHARA: Let's go nearer, ma'am, please.

GETA [*dancing about*]: O woe! I'm nearly out of my mind with fury. I'd like nothing better than to see that household in front of me – I'd vent my rage on the lot while my blood is roused! I'd have vengeance enough if I could wreak it on them! First I'd choke the life out of that old villain who brought up this monster, then that Syrus who put him up to this, how I'd smash him up! I'd grab him by the waist and fling him up, I'd dash his head on the ground and spatter his brains in the street! I'd take that young man and gouge out his eyes and pitch him headlong! As for the rest of them, I'd rush and knock them out, hit and hammer and stamp

them underfoot! [*Pausing to get his breath back*] . . . Now I'd best hurry and tell the mistress what's gone wrong. [*He moves towards the house.*]

SOSTRATA: Let's call him. Geta!

GETA: Don't bother me, whoever you are.

SOSTRATA: It's me, Sostrata.

GETA: Where? I was looking for you, madam.

SOSTRATA: And I was waiting for you. You're back in the nick of time.

GETA: Madam –

SOSTRATA: What is it? You're trembling.

GETA: Oh –

CANTHARA: What's the hurry, Geta? Get your breath back.

GETA: We are quite –

SOSTRATA: Quite what?

GETA: Done for. Ruined.

SOSTRATA: For heaven's sake, explain.

GETA: Now –

SOSTRATA: Now what, Geta?

GETA: Aeschinus –

SOSTRATA: What has he done?

GETA: He's broken away from us all.

SOSTRATA: No, it can't be. . . . But *why*?

GETA: He has found a new girl –

SOSTRATA: O heaven help me!

GETA: And he makes no secret of it. He carried her off quite openly from the pimp.

SOSTRATA: Are you quite sure?

GETA: Quite, madam. I saw it with my own eyes.

SOSTRATA: Oh no, no. What can one believe? Who can be trusted? Our Aeschinus, the life of us all, in whom we put all our hopes and everything, who swore he could not live a day without her! And he promised he would put the baby

in its grandfather's arms and beg the old man's leave to marry her!

GETA: Madam, try to stop crying and think of the future; what ought we to do? Put up with it and say nothing, or tell someone?

CANTHARA: Heavens, man, are you crazy? Do you think this the sort of news to spread around?

GETA: No, I don't. First, the facts show he cares nothing for us. If we make this public now, he'll deny it, I'm sure, and we'll risk your reputation, madam, and your daughter's life. And then, however much he might admit this is his doing, as he loves someone else it won't help your daughter to be married to him. So whichever way you look at it, best keep it quiet.

SOSTRATA [*after a pause for thought*]: No, not for the world! I won't.

GETA: What will you do then?

SOSTRATA: I'll tell everything.

CANTHARA: Oh my dear lady, think what you are doing.

SOSTRATA: Things couldn't be worse than they are now. In the first place she has no dowry, and then she's lost the next best thing – her reputation is ruined and she can't be married without one. There's just one thing we can do; if he denies it, I've got proof in the ring he sent her. Finally, my conscience is clear; no money, nothing unworthy of her or me has passed between us. I shall take him to court.

GETA [*dubiously*]: Very well, I suppose you're right.

SOSTRATA: Geta, you be off as fast as you can to her relative Hegio and tell him the whole story. He was my husband's dearest friend and has always looked after us.

GETA: Just as well, for no one else will. [*He goes off right.*]

SOSTRATA: You hurry too, Canthara, run and fetch the midwife; she mustn't keep us waiting when she's needed.

[CANTHARA *goes off to the town, right, and* SOSTRATA *into her house. After a short pause* DEMEA *comes back from the town.*]

DEMEA: I'm finished. Ctesipho, my own son, was with Aeschinus, they say, and had a hand in this abduction. This is the last straw, if the one who's still some good can be led astray by the other. Where am I to look for the boy? In some low dive I suppose, taken by that dissolute brother of his, you may be sure. [*Looking down the street, right*] Now here comes Syrus: he'll know where he is, but he's one of the gang and if he guesses I'm trying to find him he'll never say a word, the brute! I won't let him see that's what I want.

[SYRUS *comes back from the town with a basket of fish, pretending not to see* DEMEA.]

SYRUS [*aside*]: Well, we told the whole tale to our old man, just as it happened, and I never saw anyone better pleased.

DEMEA: Ye gods, the stupidity of the man!

SYRUS: He congratulated his son and thanked me for the advice I gave him. . . .

DEMEA: I shall explode!

SYRUS: He counted out the cash on the spot, and then gave me something to spend – which I've done to my liking [*looking in the basket*].

DEMEA: Here's the fellow for your orders if you want the job well done!

SYRUS: Why, sir, I didn't see you. What's the matter?

DEMEA: Matter? I never cease to marvel at the way you people behave.

SYRUS: Silly I know, in fact to be honest it's ridiculous. [*Calls indoors as he hands in the basket*] Gut all these fish, Dromo, except that biggest conger. Let it swim in water for a bit and it can be filleted when I come back, not before.

DEMEA: It's a scandal!

SYRUS [*virtuously*]: I don't like it either, sir, I often protest. [*Calls indoors*] This salt fish, Stephanio, see it's properly soaked.

DEMEA: Heavens above, does the man do it deliberately, or think he'll gain merit if he ruins my son? Damn it, I can see the day when that young man will have to leave home penniless and serve overseas.

SYRUS: Ah, sir, you can look to the future as well as seeing what's under your nose: that's true wisdom.

DEMEA: Tell me, is that girl still in your house?

SYRUS: She's there, indoors.

DEMEA: And she'll be kept there?

SYRUS: I suppose so; your son's crazy about her.

DEMEA: Impossible!

SYRUS: It's his father's foolish weakness, sir. He spoils him dreadfully.

DEMEA: I'm sick and tired of the man!

SYRUS: Ah, there's a world of difference between you and him, sir, and I don't say this just to your face. You're all wisdom, from top to toe; he's nothing but notions. Now *you* wouldn't have let your son carry on like this.

DEMEA: Of course not. I should have got wind of it at least six months before it all began.

SYRUS: No need to tell *me*, sir, how watchful you'd be.

DEMEA: So long as Ctesipho stays as he is, that's all I want.

SYRUS: Like father, like son, that's all we want.

DEMEA: What about him? Have you seen him today?

SYRUS: Ctesipho? [*Aside*] I'll pack this one off to the country. [*Aloud*] He's been up at the farm for some time I believe.

DEMEA: Are you quite sure?

SYRUS: Oh yes, sir, I went along with him myself.

DEMEA: Splendid. I was afraid he was hanging around here.

SYRUS: And what a temper he was in!

DEMEA: What about?

SYRUS: Oh, he'd had a row in town with his brother over that girl.

DEMEA: Really?

SYRUS: Yes, he spoke out all right. Just as the money was being counted out, up he came unexpectedly: 'Oh, Aeschinus!' he cried, 'Fancy you doing this! Think of the disgrace to the family!'

DEMEA: I could weep for joy.

SYRUS: 'It's not just money you are wasting, it's your life.'

DEMEA: Bless him, he's a chip off the old block; I have hopes of him.

[SYRUS *shrugs his shoulders expressively.*]

DEMEA [*ignoring this*]: He's full of maxims like that.

SYRUS: Naturally; he could learn them all at home.

DEMEA: I spare no pains, let slip no chance, and give him a sound training; in fact I'm always telling him to look at other men's lives as in a mirror, and choose from them an example for himself. 'Do this' I say –

SYRUS: And quite right too.

DEMEA: 'Avoid that' –

SYRUS: Splendid.

DEMEA: 'This does you credit' –

SYRUS: That's the way.

DEMEA: 'There you'll be wrong' –

SYRUS: Perfect.

DEMEA: 'And then' –

SYRUS: Excuse me, sir, I haven't time at the moment to listen to you. I've got just the fish I wanted and I must see they're not spoiled. It's as bad a fault in us servants not to see to such things as it is in you and yours, sir, not to do what you've just been saying, and as far as I can I train the other servants

on the same lines as you. 'This is too salt,' I say, 'this is burnt to a cinder, this is not cleaned properly; but that's just right, remember to do that next time.' I spare no pains to give all the advice I can, as I understand it, and I end up by telling them to look in the pans like a mirror, sir, while I tell them what they ought to do. All this sounds silly I know, but what would you have us do? You have to take men as they are. . . . Anything else you want, sir?

DEMEA [*angrily*]: Only that you all had more sense.

SYRUS: You're off to the country now?

DEMEA: At once.

SYRUS [*blandly*]: Well, if no one takes your good advice, you're not really doing much good here, are you, sir? [*He goes into* MICIO*'s house.*]

DEMEA: Off to the country then, as the boy I wanted here is there already. He belongs to me, and he's the one to worry about. As for the other one, Micio can see to him, as that's what he wants. Now who can I see coming? My comrade Hegio I do believe, if my eyes don't deceive me, my old boyhood friend, a man of worth and honour of the good old sort, and heaven knows we've all too few citizens like him! It will be a long day before the country suffers anything from *him*. I *am* pleased; as long as I can still set eyes on one of his kind, life's worth living. I'll wait here to greet him and have a word with him.

[GETA *returns right, talking to* HEGIO, *and not seeing* DEMEA.]

HEGIO: Good heavens, Geta, what a monstrous story. Can it be true?

GETA: It's a fact, sir.

HEGIO: Such ungentlemanly conduct in a member of that family! Aeschinus, this is not like your father's son!

DEMEA [*aside*]: He must have heard about that girl. *He* can

feel it, though it's not his son, while the boy's own father thinks nothing of it. Damn it, I wish Micio were here to listen to him!

HEGIO: They must do the right thing; they shan't get away with this.

GETA: We pin all our hopes on you, sir: you're all we have and we all look to you as our father and protector. Our old master entrusted us to you with his dying words, and if you abandon us we're lost.

HEGIO: Never: don't talk like that. I can't do enough when duty calls me.

DEMEA: I'll meet him. [*Coming forward*] Hegio, I hope with all my heart I see you well.

HEGIO [*coldly*]: Oh, I was looking for you. The same to you, Demea.

DEMEA: You wanted me?

HEGIO: Yes. Your elder son Aeschinus, the one you gave to your brother to adopt, has shown himself neither an honest man nor a gentleman.

DEMEA: What do you mean?

HEGIO: You knew our old friend Simulus –

DEMEA: Of course I did.

HEGIO: Your son has seduced his daughter.

DEMEA: Oh no!

HEGIO: Wait, Demea; you haven't heard the worst.

DEMEA: Can anything be worse?

HEGIO: Yes indeed. This could have been borne somehow – there were excuses: darkness, passion, drink, and youth; it is human nature. When he realized what he had done, he went of his own accord to the mother, weeping, begging, praying, promising, and swearing to marry the girl. He was forgiven and trusted, and the matter was hushed up. The girl was pregnant, and today her time is near. Now our fine

gentleman has bought himself another girl to live with, a music-girl, heaven help us, and the other is abandoned.

DEMEA: Are you sure this is true?

HEGIO: The girl is here and her mother too, and the facts are obvious; then there's Geta, an honest man as slaves go, and an active one – he's the prop and mainstay of the whole household. Take him, tie him up, get the truth out of him!

GETA: Put me on the rack, sir, if that's not the truth. Besides, the boy won't deny it; bring him face to face with me.

DEMEA [*aside*]: I'm ashamed. I can't think what to do or say to him.

PAMPHILA [*from inside the house*]: Ah, the pain! Juno Lucina, help me, save me, save me!

HEGIO: What, has her labour started?

GETA: It must have, sir.

HEGIO: Now you can hear her calling on the honour of your family, Demea. Do what you must do, and let it be of your own good will. I pray heaven you will take the proper course, but if your intentions are otherwise, I warn you I shall defend this girl and her dead father with all my power. He was my relative, and we were brought up together from our earliest childhood; we stood together in peace and war, and together we faced the hardships of poverty to the end. Hence I shall make every effort, do all I can, go to law if need be, lay down my life in fact, before I fail these women. . . . What is your answer?

DEMEA [*at a loss*]: I'll find my brother, Hegio, and do what he advises.

HEGIO: But bear this in mind, Demea. The more easy your life, the higher you people rise in power, wealth, good fortune and rank, the more you must judge rightly what is right and fair, if you want to be known as honest men. [*He turns away.*]

DEMEA: Just a moment; everything proper shall be done.

HEGIO: That is no more than your duty. Geta, take me in to Sostrata.

[*They go into* SOSTRATA*'s house.*]

DEMEA: I warned him this would happen. I only hope it will end here! But indulgence carried so far is bound to end in disaster of some sort. I'll go and find my brother and pour out the whole story. [*He goes off right.*]

HEGIO [*coming out of the house*]: Bear up, Sostrata, and do what you can to comfort her. I'll find Micio, if he's in town, and tell him exactly what has happened. If he intends to do his duty, let him do it. But if he has other ideas, he must give me an answer so that I know at once what steps to take.

[*He goes off, right, towards the town. Almost immediately* CTESIPHO *and* SYRUS *come out of* MICIO*'s house.*]

CTESIPHO: Do you really mean my father's gone off to the country?

SYRUS: Yes, some time ago.

CTESIPHO: Go on, please, tell me about it.

SYRUS: He's at the farm, busy with something at this very moment, I expect.

CTESIPHO: I hope he is! And so long as he doesn't kill himself, I wish he'd end up so tired that for the next three days he'd be unable to get out of bed!

SYRUS: Hear, hear; or something even better.

CTESIPHO: Agreed. I do so much want to spend this whole day as happily as I began. There's only one thing I don't like about our farm – it's too near. If it were farther off he couldn't be back before dark. As it is, I know what'll happen: he won't find me there, so he'll come running back here to ask me where I've been. 'I haven't seen you all day.' What's the answer to that?

SYRUS: Can't you think of anything?

CTESIPHO: Nothing at all.

SYRUS: The more fool you. Haven't you a dependant, a companion, or a friend?

CTESIPHO: Yes I have. What then?

SYRUS: You could have been doing business with them.

CTESIPHO: But I wasn't. I can't say that.

SYRUS: Yes you can.

CTESIPHO [*dubiously*]: That might account for the day. . . . If I spend the night here, what excuse have I then?

SYRUS: Oh, if only people made a habit of doing business with their friends by night as well! Never mind, don't worry, I know him and his ways. Let him seethe with fury, but I'll soon have him as quiet as a lamb.

CTESIPHO: How?

SYRUS: He likes to hear the best of you. I can sing your praises to heaven and go through the list of all your virtues.

CTESIPHO: *My* virtues?

SYRUS: Yours all right. I can have the old man crying like a child for joy. Now look out!

CTESIPHO: What is it?

SYRUS: Talk of the devil. . . .[1]

CTESIPHO: Is it my father?

SYRUS: His very self.

CTESIPHO: Oh, Syrus, what are we to do?

SYRUS: Quick, go in. I'll see to it.

CTESIPHO: If he wants me you haven't seen me, do you hear?

SYRUS: You shut up!

[*He pushes* CTESIPHO *into the house and stands back, by the door.* DEMEA *returns from the town.*]

DEMEA: Just my luck! First I can't find my brother anywhere; then while I'm looking for him I run into one of the farm

1. Literally, 'the wolf in the fable', a popular expression.

hands and he tells me Ctesipho is *not* at the farm. Now I don't know what to do.

CTESIPHO [*putting his head out*]: Syrus!

SYRUS: What?

CTESIPHO: Is it me he wants?

SYRUS: Yes.

CTESIPHO: Then I'm done for.

SYRUS: Bear up.

DEMEA [*still talking to himself*]: Nothing but bad luck . . . what the devil does it mean? I can't make it out. Maybe I'm to believe I was born for nothing but misery. I was the first to guess our troubles, the first to find everything out, the first to give the bad news. Whatever happens, I'm the one who suffers.

SYRUS [*aside*]: He makes me laugh. The first to know! He's the only one who hasn't a clue.

DEMEA: Now I'm back to see if Micio's home again.

CTESIPHO [*peeping out*]: Syrus! For heaven's sake don't let him in here.

SYRUS: Be quiet, can't you? I'll do my best.

CTESIPHO: Yes, I dare say, but I just can't trust you. I'll find a room and lock myself in with her, that'll be safest.

SYRUS: All right. I'll move him on, anyway.

DEMEA: There's that scoundrel Syrus.

SYRUS [*aloud, pretending not to see* DEMEA]: How the devil can anyone carry on here at this rate! I should just like to know how many masters I'm supposed to have. It's a dog's life!

DEMEA: What's all this whining about? What can he want? Now then, my man, is my brother at home?

SYRUS: Why the hell do you call me your man? I'm finished.

DEMEA: What's the matter with you?

SYRUS: Matter? Ctesipho's pretty well pummelled me to death, and that girl too.

DEMEA: What's that you say?

SYRUS: Just you take a look at the way he's split my lip.

DEMEA: Why was that?

SYRUS: He says it was all my doing that the girl was bought.

DEMEA: I thought you said just now that you'd gone with him to the farm.

SYRUS: So I did, but he came back in a towering rage. He spared nothing. Fancy not being ashamed to beat an old man like me! Why it seems only yesterday I held him in my arms and he was only *so* high.

DEMEA: Splendid! You're your father's son, Ctesipho! Why, you're a man at last!

SYRUS: Splendid indeed! If he's any sense he'll keep his fists to himself in future.

DEMEA: Well done!

SYRUS: Oh very, beating up a wretched girl and a poor slave who didn't dare hit back. Oh yes, well done!

DEMEA: Couldn't be better. He sees as I do that you're at the bottom of all this. Now, is my brother at home?

SYRUS [*sulkily*]: No he isn't.

DEMEA: I wonder where I can find him.

SYRUS: I know all right, but I'm certainly not telling you.

DEMEA: You say that?

SYRUS: Yes, I do.

DEMEA: Then I'll knock your head off here and now.

SYRUS: Well, there's a man. . . . I don't know his name, but I know where to find him.

DEMEA: Tell me then.

SYRUS: You know this colonnade near the meat market, down that way?

DEMEA: Of course I do.

SYRUS: Go straight up the street past it. Then there's a turning going downhill; go straight down and you'll see a chapel on this side and next to it that alley –

DEMEA: Which one?

SYRUS: Where there's a big fig-tree.

DEMEA: I know.

SYRUS: Go on through it.

DEMEA [*after some thought*]: That alley hasn't *got* a way through.

SYRUS: So it hasn't. What a fool I am! My mistake. Go back to the colonnade. Yes, this is a much shorter way and less chance of going wrong. Do you know Cratinus's house, that rich fellow's?

DEMEA: Yes.

SYRUS [*rapidly*]: Go past it, turn left, straight up the street, come to the Temple of Diana, then turn right and before you come to the town gate just by the pond there's a small flour mill and a workshop opposite. . . . That's where he is.

DEMEA [*suspiciously*]: What's he doing there?

SYRUS [*airily*]: Oh, giving orders for some seats . . . for sitting in the sun . . . to be made with oak legs.

DEMEA: For one of your drinking-parties I suppose. Very nice too! I'll be off. [*He goes off to the town, right.*]

SYRUS: That's right, go; and today I've given you the marching orders you deserve, old drybones. Well, Aeschinus is horribly late, lunch is spoiling, and Ctesipho – all *he* wants is love. That gives me time for myself. I'll go and have a sip of the wine and a pick at all the best bits . . . a nice easy way to spin out a day like this.

[*He goes into the house.* MICIO *and* HEGIO: *come on right together from the town.*]

MICIO: I really can't see I deserve your praise for this, Hegio. The offence was on our side, and it is no more than my duty to put things right. I know there are men who see a wanton insult in any criticism of their conduct and deliberately turn the attack on their critics, but did you think I was one of them? Are you thanking me for being different?

HEGIO: No, no, of course not. I never thought you other than you are, Micio. But now please come with me to the girl's mother and tell her in person all you've said to me, that all her suspicions of Aeschinus were on account of his brother and that music-girl.

MICIO: Let us go in then, if we must and you think it's the right thing.

HEGIO: That's good of you. She's wearing herself out with grief and worry, and you can take this weight off her mind. It will be a duty well done. But if you prefer, I can tell her what you've said to me.

MICIO: No, I'll go.

HEGIO: It really is good of you. People who are not so lucky in life somehow always tend to be a bit suspicious and ready to take offence at everything; I suppose their poverty makes them feel inadequate. If you can explain to her yourself she'll take it better.

MICIO: True: how right you are.

HEGIO: Come in with me then.

MICIO: Certainly.

[*They go into* SOSTRATA*'s house; there is a short pause, then* AESCHINUS *hurries on right and paces about distractedly.*]

AESCHINUS: This is sheer torture! I never thought to receive such a cruel blow. I just can't think what I'm to do with myself or what to do at all. I'm numb with terror, dazed with fear, robbed of reasoning power! How can I find a way out of this confusion? This awful suspicion – it all

seemed so natural! Sostrata is convinced I bought this girl for myself – so I discovered from the old woman when I caught sight of her on her way to fetch the midwife; I ran up and asked her how Pamphila was, whether labour had started and the midwife had been sent for. 'Get out!' was all she said. 'Clear off, Aeschinus, we've had enough of your lying words and your broken promises!' 'What on earth do you mean by that?' I said. 'Good-bye, you can keep the girl you've chosen.' I guessed at once what they suspected, but held my tongue – one word about my brother to that old gossip and all would be out.

Now what can I do? Say the girl is my brother's? But this mustn't get abroad at all costs. I can't let it out if it's still possible to keep the secret. . . . Besides, I doubt if they would believe me: it all hangs together and sounds likely enough. It was I who carried off the girl and I who paid the money, and our house she was brought to. This at least was all my doing, I admit. If only I'd told it all to my father however I'd managed it! I could have persuaded him to let me marry Pamphila. . . . [*After a pause*] Here I am, still putting things off! Now's the time, Aeschinus, to pull yourself together! And first of all I'll go to the women and clear myself. [*He moves towards* SOSTRATA*'s house.*] Here's the door. . . . No, I can't face it. . . . I'm a poor thing, I can never raise a hand to this door without a shudder. . . . [*He makes a tremendous effort and knocks loudly*] Anyone there? It's Aeschinus. Open the door, somebody, at once! Someone's coming out; I'll stay over here.

[MICIO *comes out of* SOSTRATA*'s house speaking back to her.*]

MICIO: Do as I say, Sostrata, both of you, while I find Aeschinus and tell him our arrangements. [*Coming forward*] Someone knocked – who was it?

AESCHINUS [*aside*]: Heavens, it's my father; I'm done for!

MICIO: Aeschinus!

AESCHINUS [*aside*]: What can he want?

MICIO: Was it you who knocked? [*Aside*] No reply; I think I must tease him a bit – he deserves it for never wanting to trust me over this. [*Aloud*] Can't you answer me?

AESCHINUS [*in confusion*]: I didn't knock – at least I don't think I did.

MICIO: No? I was just wondering what you were doing here. [*Aside*] He's blushing: all's well.

AESCHINUS: Excuse me, father, but what took you there? [*pointing to* SOSTRATA*'s house*].

MICIO: No business of mine. A friend brought me here just now – to act as a witness.

AESCHINUS: Witness for what?

MICIO [*watching him closely*]: I'll tell you. There are some women living here, in a poor way. I don't think you know them, in fact I am sure you can't, for they have not been here long.

AESCHINUS: Well, what then?

MICIO: There is a girl with her mother –

AESCHINUS: Go on –

MICIO: The girl has lost her father, and this friend of mine is her next-of-kin; so he must marry her. That's the law [1]

AESCHINUS [*aside*]: No – I can't bear it.

MICIO: What was that?

AESCHINUS: Nothing: it's all right: go on.

MICIO: He has come to take her away to Miletus – where he lives.

AESCHINUS: What, to take the girl away with him?

MICIO: That's right.

1. The provision of Attic law which is the basis of the plot in *Phormio*, set out there in ll. 125 ff.

AESCHINUS: All the way to Miletus did you say?

MICIO: I did.

AESCHINUS [*aside*]: Oh my head reels! [*Aloud*] But the women – what do they say?

MICIO: What do you expect? Nothing, in fact. The mother has a trumped-up story about the girl having a baby by another man, whom she won't name. He came first, she says, so the girl ought not to be married to my friend.

AESCHINUS: Then don't you think that's right?

MICIO: No, I don't.

AESCHINUS: You don't? And will he really take her away, father?

MICIO: Why on earth shouldn't he?

AESCHINUS [*in a passionate outburst*]: It was cruel of you both, it was heartless, and if I must speak plainly, father, it was – it was – downright dishonourable!

MICIO: But *why*?

AESCHINUS: You ask me why? What about the unhappy man who first loved her and for all I know, poor wretch, still loves her desperately? What do you suppose *he* will feel when he sees her torn from his arms and carried off before his very eyes? I tell you, father, it's a sin and a scandal!

MICIO: How do you make that out? Who promised this girl in marriage and who gave her away? Who was the bridegroom and when was the wedding? Who witnessed it? She was meant for another – why did this man take her?

AESCHINUS: Then was this girl to sit at home, at her age, waiting for a relative to turn up from heaven knows where? You could have said *that*, father, and stuck to it.

MICIO: Nonsense! I had come to help a friend; was I to turn against him? In any case, Aeschinus, the girl is no concern of ours. Why should we bother about them? Let us go. . . . But what's the matter? Why are you crying?

AESCHINUS: Father, please listen. . . .

MICIO [*gently*]: My son, I have heard the whole story; I understand, for I love you, so all you do touches my heart.

AESCHINUS: Then I'll try to deserve your love in future all your life, father – I feel so guilty and ashamed of what I've done that I can't look you in the face.

MICIO: I believe you; I know you are honourable at heart. But I worry about you and your heedless ways. What sort of a country do you think you live in? You seduced a girl you should never have touched. That was your first fault, and quite bad enough, though no more than human: honest men have done the same before you. But afterwards, tell me, did you give it a thought? Or did you look ahead at all and think what you should do and how to do it? If you were ashamed to confess to me yourself, how was I to find out? You delayed and did nothing while nine months went by. This was the greatest wrong you could do, to yourself, to that poor girl, and the child. Well: did you think you could leave everything to the gods and go on dreaming? And that she would be brought to you as a bride without your lifting a finger? I trust you are not so thoughtless in all your personal affairs. [*Changing his tone, after a pause*] Cheer up, you shall marry her.

AESCHINUS: What?

MICIO: I said, Cheer up.

AESCHINUS: Father, for pity's sake, are you making fun of me now?

MICIO: No, I'm not. Why should I?

AESCHINUS: I don't know, except that I'm so desperately anxious for this to be true that I'm afraid it isn't.

MICIO: Go indoors, and pray the gods to help you bring home your wife. Off with you.

AESCHINUS: What? My wife? Will it be soon?

MICIO: Yes.

AESCHINUS: How soon?

MICIO: As soon as possible.

AESCHINUS [*hugging him*]: Damn me, father, if I don't love you more than my own eyes!

MICIO [*gently disengaging himself*]: What, more than – her?

AESCHINUS: Well, just as much.

MICIO [*ironically*]: Very kind of you.

AESCHINUS [*suddenly remembering*]: But where's that man from Miletus?

MICIO [*airily*]: Lost, gone, on board his ship. . . . *Now* what's stopping you?

AESCHINUS: Father, you go, you pray to the gods. They'll be more likely to listen to you, I know; you're so much better than I.

MICIO: I *am* going in: there are preparations to be made. You be sensible and do what I say. [*He goes into* MICIO*'s house.*]

AESCHINUS [*coming forward*]: What do you think of that? Is this what it means to be a father or a son? A brother or a friend couldn't do more for me. Oh, he's a man to love and cherish in one's heart! Wonderful! If he can be so kind I'll be sure never to be foolish again or do anything he doesn't like. This lesson will be a warning. But I must hurry indoors or I shall delay my own wedding!

[*He goes into* MICIO*'s house, and almost at once* DEMEA *comes on wearily, back from his search.*]

DEMEA: I've walked and walked till I'm worn out. Curse you, Syrus, and your directions! I trailed all over the town, to the gate and the pool and everywhere, and found no sign of a workshop at all nor a soul who said he'd seen my brother. Well, my mind is made up: I'm sitting down here outside his house to wait till he comes back.

[MICIO *comes out of his house talking to* AESCHINUS *inside.*]

MICIO: I'll go across and tell them we are all ready now.

DEMEA: Here he is. I've been looking for you for hours, Micio.

MICIO: What for?

DEMEA: I've more news for you: more wicked deeds of that good young man of yours.

MICIO: What, again!

DEMEA: Unheard-of crimes, appalling ones!

MICIO [*impatiently*]: That'll do.

DEMEA: You've no idea of what he is –

MICIO: Yes I have.

DEMEA [*in a fury*]: You fool, you imagine I'm talking about that music-girl: this time it's an honest girl who is Athenian born.

MICIO [*quietly*]: I know.

DEMEA: You *know*? And you allow it?

MICIO: Why shouldn't I?

DEMEA: How can you be so calm? Aren't you furious?

MICIO: No. It's true I should prefer –

DEMEA: And now there's a child.

MICIO [*sincerely*]: Heaven bless it!

DEMEA: The girl has nothing –

MICIO: So I heard.

DEMEA: She'll have to be married without a dowry –

MICIO: Evidently.

DEMEA: What's to be done now?

MICIO: What the situation requires. She shall be moved from that house to this [*pointing to* SOSTRATA*'s house and his own*].

DEMEA: Good God! Is that the proper thing to do?

MICIO: What more *can* I do?

DEMEA: What indeed! If you really have no feelings about all this, it would surely be only human to *pretend* you have.

MICIO: But I've arranged for him to marry the girl; everything is settled and the wedding is on the way; I've removed all their fears; that is what seems to me only human.

DEMEA [*thoughtfully, after a pause*]: But are you really pleased, Micio, with what you've done?

MICIO: If I could alter the situation – no. But as things are, I can't; so I must accept it quietly. Life is like a game of dice; if you don't get the throw you need most, you must use skill to make the best of what turns up.

DEMEA [*furious again*]: Make the best indeed! And this skill of yours has thrown away two thousand drachmas on that music-girl! Now she'll have to be sold for what she'll fetch, or given away if no one makes an offer.

MICIO: No; I have no intention of selling her.

DEMEA: Then what *do* you propose to do?

MICIO: She shall stay with us.

DEMEA: Heavens above, is he going to keep a mistress in the same house as his wife?

MICIO: Why not?

DEMEA: Are you really in your right mind?

MICIO: *I* think so.

DEMEA [*with heavy sarcasm*]: God help me, all this tomfoolery makes me wonder if your idea is to have this girl to partner your own singing.

MICIO: Perhaps it is.

DEMEA: And the new bride to join in!

MICIO: Of course.

DEMEA: The three of you dancing hand-in-hand –

MICIO: Certainly.

DEMEA: Certainly?

MICIO [*seizing him by the hand*]: With you to make a fourth if we want one!

DEMEA [*shaking himself free with a cry of disgust*]: Have you no sense of shame?[1]

MICIO [*suddenly serious*]: Now then, Demea, that's enough of your ill-temper. Your son is to be married; can't you behave properly? Try to be pleased and look happy. I'm going to call them; then I'll be back. [*He goes into* SOSTRATA*'s house.*]

DEMEA: Ye gods, what a life! what morals! what madness! Here's a bride coming without a penny, and a girl in the house! Too much money in the home, a young man ruined by indulgence, and the old one off his head! Salvation herself might intervene, but this household's beyond saving!

[SYRUS *staggers out of* MICIO*'s house, drunk and self-satisfied. He does not see* DEMEA.]

SYRUS: Well, Syrus my lad, you've done yourself proud! Done your duty handsome-ly. [*Hiccups*] That's better. I've had all I can take *inside*, so I just took a fancy to stretch my legs out here. . . .

DEMEA: Now look at that! A fine example of discipline in the home!

SYRUS [*lurching towards him*]: Why, here's our old man! How do? Feeling glum?

DEMEA: Scoundrel!

SYRUS: Now, now; you spouting here now, Father Wisdom?

DEMEA: If you were in my service –

SYRUS: You'd be a rich man to be sure! You'd have a fortune on a *firm* footing – [*staggers*].

DEMEA: – I would make an example of you to all.

SYRUS: Why? What have *I* done?

1. Demea's sense of outrage at the head of a household dancing and singing can hardly have been in the original, as it shows Roman, not Greek prejudice.

DEMEA: Done? Here's all this trouble and dreadful wrong-doing, and nothing properly settled yet, and all you can do is drink, you wretch, as if there was something to celebrate.

SYRUS [*somewhat dashed*]: Sorry now I came out. . . .

[DROMO *opens the door of* MICIO*'s house to call* SYRUS.]

DROMO: Hey, Syrus, Ctesipho wants you.

SYRUS [*sufficiently sobered to act promptly, pushes him in again*]: Go away!

DEMEA: What's he saying about Ctesipho?

SYRUS: Nothing.

DEMEA: You brute, is Ctesipho in there?

SYRUS: No, he isn't.

DEMEA: Then why did I hear his name?

SYRUS: It's someone else, a pretty little bit of a boy who hangs around here. [*Nudging him*] Know him?

DEMEA [*grimly, as he strides towards the door*]: I shall soon find out.

SYRUS [*catching at him*]: What's this? Where are you going?

DEMEA: Let me go!

SYRUS: You're not going in there!

DEMEA: Keep your hands off me, you rascal, unless you want me to knock your brains out! [*He dashes into* MICIO*'s house.*]

SYRUS: He's gone . . . and a damned unwelcome visitor he'll be, especially to Ctesipho. Now what shall *I* do? Best wait for all this to-do to settle down and find a quiet corner to sleep off this drop I've taken. That's the idea.

[*He staggers off right. Soon afterwards* MICIO *comes out of* SOSTRATA*'s house.*]

MICIO: Everything's ready on our side, as I said, Sostrata. When you want. . . . Whoever is that hammering on my door?

[DEMEA *bursts out.*]

DEMEA: Good God, what can I do? How can I deal with this?

Shame and sorrow, what can I say? Heaven and earth, Neptune's ocean!

MICIO: Just look at that; no wonder he's shouting, he's found it all out. We're done for, the battle's on, and I'll have to go to the rescue.

DEMEA: Here he comes! You corrupter of both our sons!

MICIO: Kindly control your temper. Calm yourself, Demea.

DEMEA: I *am* controlled, I *am* calm. I won't say another word. Let's face facts. Wasn't it agreed between us (and it was your suggestion, Micio) that you'd not worry about my boy and I'd not worry about yours? Answer me that.

MICIO: It was, I don't deny it.

DEMEA: Then why is my boy drinking in your house? Why receive him there? Why buy him a mistress? Haven't I a right to expect fair play, Micio? What do you want from me? I'm not worrying about your boy, so you leave mine alone.

MICIO: Now you're not being fair –

DEMEA: What!

MICIO: There's an old proverb that friends have everything in common.

DEMEA: Witty, aren't you. Isn't it rather late in the day for that sort of talk?

MICIO: Just listen to me a minute, Demea, if you've no objection. First of all, if it's the money the boys spend which is bothering you, please try to look at it this way. At one time you were supporting both your sons according to your means, because you thought you would have enough for two, and I suppose at the time you expected me to marry. Very well, keep to your original plan; hoard, scrape, and save to have as much as possible to leave them. You can see merit in that: all right. My money is something they didn't expect, so let them enjoy it. Your capital won't be touched,

and anything I add can be counted as pure gain. If only you would be willing to see this in a true light, Demea, you'd save yourself and me and the boys a great deal of trouble.

DEMEA: I'm not talking about money. It's their morals, both of them –

MICIO: Wait. I know, I was coming to that. There are a lot of traits in people from which inferences can be drawn. Two men often do the same thing and you might say that one can safely be allowed to do it while the other might not. The difference is not in the thing done but in the doer. I can see signs in these boys which make me confident they will turn out as we want them. I see good sense, intelligence, deference when required, and mutual affection, and we can be sure they are open and generous in heart and mind. You can call them back to the right path any day you like. You may say you are anxious for them not to be so careless about money, but, my dear Demea, you must realize that in every other respect we grow wiser with increasing years, but the besetting fault of old age is simply this: we all think too much of money. Time will develop this in them well enough.

DEMEA: Be careful, Micio: these fine-sounding arguments and easy-going temperament of yours may destroy us all.

MICIO: No, no, impossible. Come along now, try to listen to me and stop frowning.

DEMEA: As things are I suppose I'll have to. . . . But tomorrow morning at crack of dawn I'm taking my boy away from here to the farm.

MICIO [*humouring him*]: *Before* dawn, I dare say. Only make yourself agreeable for today.

DEMEA: And I'm taking that girl too.

MICIO: That'll do the trick! The best way of tying him down. Only mind you keep her there.

DEMEA: I'll see to that. Once she's there I'll have her cooking and grinding corn till she's covered with ash and grime and flour, and then I'll send her out gleaning in the midday sun and make her black and burnt as a cinder!

MICIO [*ironically*]: Good! Now I find you talking sense. Go on: 'And then I'll force my son whatever he says to sleep with her –'

DEMEA: All right, laugh at me. You're lucky to be in the mood. I have my feelings. . . .

MICIO: Now don't start again –

DEMEA: No, I've done.

MICIO: Come in then, and spend this day with us in the proper way.

[*They go into* MICIO*'s house. After a short interval* DEMEA *reappears, much smartened up and perhaps wearing some of* MICIO*'s clothes.*]

DEMEA: A plan for life may be well worked out, but a man can still learn something new from circumstances, age and experience. You find you don't know what you thought you did, and things which seemed so important before, you reject in practice. This is what has just happened to me, for I've lived a hard life up to this very moment, and now I'm giving up when my course is almost run. And why? Hard facts have shown me that a man gains most from affability and forbearance. Look at my brother and me if you want to see the truth of this. He has always led a life of leisure, sociable, easy-going, and tolerant, with never a black look for anyone and a smile for all. He's lived for himself and spent on himself, and he's won praise and affection from everyone. I'm the country bumpkin, mannerless and surly, truculent, mean and close-fisted, and when I took a wife what troubles I brought on myself! Two sons were born – more worry. While thinking of them and struggling to

make all I could for them, see how I've wasted my youth and my life in money-grubbing! Now I'm old, and what's my reward for all my trouble? They don't like me. It's my brother who enjoys the benefits of fatherhood without having lifted a finger. They love him and avoid me. He has their confidence and their affection, the two of them are always with him and I'm left all alone. They offer prayers for his long life, but you may be sure they're counting the days for me to die. I've toiled and slaved to bring them up, but he has made them his own for next to nothing, so he has all the enjoyment while the trouble's left to me. Very well then, two can play at that game; let's see now whether I can take up his challenge and show myself capable of soft answers and winning ways! *I* could also do with a bit of love and appreciation from my own children. If that comes from being generous and agreeable, I can take the lead all right. The property won't stand it, but that needn't worry me – I'm old enough for it to last *my* time.

[SYRUS *comes out of* MICIO*'s house.*]

SYRUS: Please, sir, your brother hopes you're not leaving us.

DEMEA [*genially*]: Who's that? Ah, Syrus, my man, good evening. How are you and how are things going?

SYRUS: All right, sir.

DEMEA: Splendid. [*Aside*] That's three things already which aren't like me, 'my man', 'how are you', and 'how are things going'. [*Aloud*] You may be a slave, but you have your finer points, and I should be glad to do you a good turn.

SYRUS [*incredulous*]: Thank you, sir.

DEMEA: But I mean it, Syrus, as you'll soon see.

[SYRUS *goes back into the house and* GETA *comes out of* SOSTRATA*'s.*]

GETA [*to* SOSTRATA]: I'm just going next door, madam, to see how soon they want the bride. Why, here's Demea. Good evening, sir.

DEMEA: Let me see now, what's your name?

GETA: Geta, sir.

DEMEA: Geta, today has convinced me that you are a most valuable person. Nothing recommends a slave to me so much as his care for his master's interests, such as I have seen in you. For this, if the opportunity arises, I should be glad to do you a good turn. [*Aside*] I think my affability improves with practice.

GETA [*puzzled*]: It's kind of you to think so, sir.

DEMEA [*aside*]: I've made a start, winning over the masses one by one.

[AESCHINUS *and* SYRUS *come out of* MICIO*'s.*]

AESCHINUS: They're killing me with all their fuss over wedding ceremonies! Here's a whole day wasted with preparations.

DEMEA: What's the matter, Aeschinus?

AESCHINUS: Hullo, father, are you there?

DEMEA: Father, yes, in heart and nature, your father who loves you more than his own eyes. But why don't you bring your wife home?

AESCHINUS: That's just what I *want* to do. I'm kept waiting for the flute-player and the choir for the marriage-hymn.

DEMEA: Will you take a word of advice from your old father?

AESCHINUS: What is it?

DEMEA: Scrap the lot – flutes, torches, hymn, and fuss – knock a hole in the garden wall here and now and take her across that way, join the two houses and bring the whole lot of them, mother and all, over to us!

AESCHINUS [*hugging him*]: Father darling, you're splendid!

DEMEA [*aside*]: Bravo, now I'm splendid! Micio'll have to keep open house, with all these people to entertain and no end of expense, but what do I care? I'm splendid and popular! Tell that Croesus[1] to pay out two thousand on the spot! Syrus, what are you waiting for?

SYRUS: What am I to do, sir?

DEMEA: Knock down the wall. Geta, you go and fetch them.

GETA: Heaven bless you, sir, for being so kindly disposed to us all.

DEMEA: It's no more than you deserve. [GETA *and* SYRUS *go in.*] What do you say?

AESCHINUS [*somewhat bewildered*]: I agree.

DEMEA: She's not well yet after having the baby – much better bring her that way than through the street. [*Banging and hammering are heard.*]

AESCHINUS: Nothing could be better, father.

DEMEA [*smugly*]: Ah, it's just my way.... But look, here's Micio.

[MICIO *bursts out of his house.*]

MICIO: My brother's orders? Where is he? *Are* these your orders, Demea?

DEMEA [*impressively*]: They are. In this and every other way we should unite with this family to cherish and support it and make it one with ours.

AESCHINUS: Yes, please, father.

MICIO [*reluctantly*]: I suppose I have to agree.

DEMEA: Believe me, it's our duty. And now, to start with, this boy's wife has a mother.

MICIO: I know; what of it?

DEMEA: She is virtuous and discreet.

1. 'Croesus' as a symbol of wealth instead of *Babylo*, only found here; but Donatus implies that a Babylonian was proverbial for extravagance.

MICIO: So I'm told.

DEMEA: Not too young –

MICIO: I know.

DEMEA: But long since past the age to have children, and with no one to look after her. She's alone....

MICIO: What's the point of all this?

DEMEA: The proper thing for you to do is to marry her. Aeschinus, you persuade him.

MICIO: *I* marry?

DEMEA: You.

MICIO: Did you say *I* should marry her?

DEMEA: I did.

MICIO: You're joking.

DEMEA [*to* AESCHINUS]: Talk to him as man to man and he'll do it.

AESCHINUS: Father –

MICIO: You silly ass, must you listen to him?

DEMEA: It's no good, Micio, you'll have to give in.

MICIO: You're crazy.

AESCHINUS: Do it for my sake, father.

MICIO: You're mad, leave me alone.

DEMEA: Come, do as your son asks.

MICIO: You're off your head. I'm sixty-four: should I embark on matrimony at my age with this decrepit old hag for a wife? Is that your idea?

AESCHINUS: Come on: I've promised them.

MICIO: *Promised* them? Kindly restrict your generosity to your own person, my boy.

DEMEA: But he might be asking more of you....

MICIO: There couldn't be anything more.

DEMEA: Do it for him –

AESCHINUS: Don't be difficult –

DEMEA: Come, promise.
MICIO: Leave me alone, can't you!
AESCHINUS: Not until you'll give in.
MICIO: It's sheer coercion!
DEMEA: Now be generous, Micio.
MICIO: This is monstrous, crazy, ludicrous, entirely foreign to my whole way of life . . . but if you are both so set on it . . . all right.[1]
AESCHINUS: Well done! You deserve all my love now.
DEMEA: But – [*aside*] What else can I say now I've won that point?
MICIO: Now what is it?
DEMEA: There's Hegio, their closest relative, who'll be a connection of ours. He's a poor man, and we ought to do something for him.
MICIO: Well, what?
DEMEA: There's that little bit of property just outside the town which you're always letting out. We can give it to him and he'll make good use of it.
MICIO: Do you call that a 'little bit'?
DEMEA: Big or little, it's what we must do. He has been a father to the girl, he's a good man and one of us, so he ought to have it. After all, I'm only appropriating the sentiment you expressed just now, Micio: 'the besetting fault of us all is that in old age we think too much of money'.[2] Wise words and well put! We must rid ourselves of this defect, and put the truth in this saying into practice.
MICIO [*drily*]: I'm glad to hear it. Very well. Hegio shall have it when Aeschinus likes.
AESCHINUS: Oh, father!

1. Donatus comments that in Menander's play Micio did not object to the marriage, so this scene is Terence's innovation.
2. In ll. 833–4.

DEMEA: Now you are my true brother, body and soul! [*Aside*] And I've got his own knife at his throat!
[SYRUS *comes out of the house, dusting himself down.*]
SYRUS: Your orders have been carried out, sir.
DEMEA: Good man. And now I should like to propose that this very day Syrus ought to receive his freedom.
MICIO: His freedom? *Him*? Whatever for?
DEMEA: For lots of reasons.
SYRUS [*eagerly*]: Oh, master, you're a fine gentleman, sir, indeed you are. I've looked after both the young masters properly since they were boys, taught them, guided them, always given them the best advice I could. . . .
DEMEA [*drily*]: So I see. And there are other things besides – reliable shopping, procuring a girl, putting on a dinner-party at all hours. It needs no ordinary man to perform services like *these*.
SYRUS: Sir, you're really splendid!
DEMEA: To crown all, it was he who helped us to buy the music-girl; in fact, he arranged it all. He ought to get something for it, and it will have a good effect on the others. . . . And then, Aeschinus wants it.
MICIO: Do you, Aeschinus?
AESCHINUS: Yes, very much.
MICIO: Well, if you really want it – Syrus, come here. [*With a blow*] Take your freedom.
SYRUS [*rubbing himself ruefully*]: You're very kind. I'm grateful to you all, especially you, sir [*to* DEMEA].
DEMEA: My congratulations.
AESCHINUS: And mine.
SYRUS: Thank you. Now there's just one thing to complete my happiness. . . . If only I could see my wife, Phrygia, freed as well!
DEMEA: A very fine woman.

SYRUS: And she was the first, sir, to come forward as wet-nurse for your grandson, the young master's son, this very day –

DEMEA: Ah, that's a serious reason. If she was the first, she certainly ought to have her freedom.

MICIO: Just for that?

DEMEA: Why not? I'll pay you her value to settle it.

SYRUS: Oh, sir, heaven always grant you all your wishes!

MICIO: Well, Syrus, you've done pretty well for yourself today.

DEMEA: He has, if you'll carry on with your duty and give him a little something in hand to live on. He'll soon pay you back.

MICIO [*snapping his fingers*]: That's more than he'll get.

DEMEA: He's a good fellow.

SYRUS: I'll pay it back, sir, I promise you, just give me –

AESCHINUS: Come on, father.

MICIO: I'll think about it.

DEMEA [*to* AESCHINUS]: He'll do it.

SYRUS: You're wonderful, sir!

AESCHINUS: Father, you're a darling!

MICIO: What *is* all this? Why this sudden change of heart? What's the idea? Why this sudden outburst of generosity?

DEMEA: I'll tell you. I wanted to show you, Micio, that what our boys thought was your good nature and charm didn't come from a way of living which was sincere or from anything right or good, but from your weakness, indulgence and extravagance. Now, Aeschinus, if you and your brother dislike my ways because I won't humour you in all your wishes, right or wrong, I wash my hands of you – you can spend and squander and do whatever you like. On the other hand, being young, you are short-sighted, over-eager and heedless, and you may like a word of advice or reproof from

me on occasion, as well as my support at the proper time. Well, I'm here at your service.

AESCHINUS: We'd like that, father. You know best what to do. But what's going to happen to Ctesipho?

DEMEA: I've given my consent; he can keep his girl. But she must be his last.

MICIO: Well done, Demea. [*To the audience*] Now give us your applause!

[*They all go into* MICIO*'s house.*]