

LYSISTRATA

By Aristophanes

Adapted for City Lights Theatre by Will Huddleston

Spring 2008

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PROLOGUE

LIGHTS and SET—morning before the Gates at the top of the great rock, the Akropolis. Behind the gates is the Temple of Athena. The stage is flat and bare for dancing. Overlooking the stage is scaffolding which represent battlements or perhaps the temple itself.

Dramatic MUSIC plays—An anguished cry is heard. Bellowing with anger LYSISTRATA bursts through the gates. She wears a veil thrown back behind her.

LYSISTRATA

(Closing the gate) If I had made the announcement—today there will be a Bacchic orgy or a Feast for Genetyllus—the streets would be jammed—you wouldn't be able to push your way through the crowds of tambourine-playing women. But today, not one in sight! Wrong! Here comes my neighbor. Kleonike! Up here!

Enter KLEONIKE who has stopped to catch her breath after the long climb up the Akropolis. Everything KLEONIKE says is weighted with innuendo.

KLEONIKE

Lysistrata, Darling! *(kiss)* You look so angry! What's wrong? Unknit those brows for me, please. What can I do to make you happy?

LYSISTRATA

Oh, Kleonike, my heart is on fire. I burn in shame for our sex. The men are right—what they say about us. Women are crafty, sly and completely unreliable.

KLEONIKE

Of course we are, darling. We have to be.

LYSISTRATA

I summon the wives of Athens—to meet me here—before the gates of the Akropolis—and what do they do? They lie home in bed!

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KLEONIKE

It's our favorite place.

LYSISTRATA

I tell you, Kleo, I'm sick of women.

KLEONIKE

A woman has a lot to do, you know. The maid has to be instructed, babies have to be fed and washed—the husband has to be worked up so he can face the day.

LYSISTRATA

There are more important things than feeding babies and bending over backwards for husbands.

KLEONIKE

You should have told the ladies something big was up.

LYSISTRATA

Yes, I should have.

KLEONIKE

—and that the business would be very pressing.

LYSISTRATA

That would get them here, all right.

KLEONIKE

And there would be enough business for everyone!

LYSISTRATA

Oh, Stop! Is sex all we can think about?

KLEONIKE

That and death.

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LYSISTRATA

Well, I agree.

KLEONIKE

You do?

LYSISTRATA

Sex is all we think about—that’s why I called you here.

KLEONIKE

What are you planning, Strata dear, sly and crafty woman?

LYSISTRATA

I’ve been tossing and turning for nights

KLEONIKE

You see! I knew it was something big.

LYSISTRATA

Don’t start.

KLEONIKE

Sorry. Go on.

LYSISTRATA

Only women can save Greece.

KLEONIKE

Not much hope for Greece then, is there?

LYSISTRATA

Greeks are killing Greeks in a war that never ends. I’ve thought about it. Only women can bring this terrible war to an end.

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KLEONIKE

Lysistrata, women cannot end the war. The women of Greece have neither weapons nor armor of any kind. They sit at home in their slippers and perfume with nothing to protect them but a sheer and elegant dress of yellow silk. It's absurd!

LYSISTRATA

That's where you're wrong! Those silk dresses and perfumes and elegant slippers are going to end the war.

KLEONIKE

Really! Then I'd like to do my part. There's a gown I've been wanting to buy.

LYSISTRATA

Not one man will lift his spear against another.

KLEONIKE

I could use a new perfume.

LYSISTRATA

He will not pick up his shield...

KLEONIKE

New slippers! I feel so patriotic.

LYSISTRATA

...or draw his sword.

KLEONIKE

I've heard about this theory. You make your country stronger when you buy things. Well, I'm off. I'll run down to the market this very minute and start buying as fast as I can.

LYSISTRATA

Kleonike, that's not the sacrifice I have in mind.

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KLEONIKE

What is it?

LYSISTRATA

First, tell me why the women of Athens are not here!

KLEONIKE

I don't know. They must be mad! I'll whip them out of bed myself. Look, we're saved! Here they come now.

ATHENIAN WOMEN enter. KLEONIKE runs to them.

My dears, I have the most wonderful news. Women are going to be the salvation of Greece. And we're going to do it with a new religion—it's called Materialism. Lysistrata will tell you all about it, but first—there's not a moment to lose! We must all go shopping at once!

The ATHENIAN WOMEN chatter excitedly and begin to exit.

LYSISTRATA

Come back here!

The WOMEN return sheepishly. MYRRHENE runs on.

(To her) Myrrhene, you are late. Everyone is late.

MYRRHENE

You called us so early I couldn't find my girdle in the dark, but now I'm here.

(Avoiding LYSISTRATA) Hello everybody. What's up?

KLEONIKE

Lysistrata has a plan. We women are going to bring an end to the war.

MYRRHENE

Oh, that's nice! Then my husband will be able to come home.

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ATHENIAN WOMEN

(Talking simultaneously) It's just terrible but what can we do? The men just won't listen. *Etc.*

LYSISTRATA

Listen to me! I've been thinking about it. Wars are usually ended in one of two ways. Either peace is declared or the enemy is exterminated.

MYRRHENE

I vote for extermination. It would teach those wicked Spartans a lesson they'd never forget.

KLEONIKE

Myrrhene, we can't exterminate all of them. It's not practical. There's too many.

MYRRHENE

We could start with their allies the Corinthians, then—No, the Boiotians! They're smaller and weaker than the Spartans.

LYSISTRATA

Myrrhene...

MYRRHENE

Only not the food—Boiotian food is my favorite—especially the eels.

KLEONIKE

Mine too! Boiotian eels are so long!

MYRRHENE

They are!

KLEONIKE

And so firm and solid!

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MYRRHENE

I would love to eat one right now. Yum!

LYSISTRATA

Stop it, Kleonike—Myrrhene! No one is going to exterminate anybody. It's a horrible thought.

MYRRHENE

All right, let's make peace then.

LYSISTRATA

Let's do. Ah—here they come at last!

MYRRHENE

Foreigners!

ATHENIAN WOMAN

It's the enemy!

ATHENIAN WOMEN

What are they doing here? Is this some sort of attack? *Etc.*

MUSIC – Enter LAMPITO of Sparta and ISMENIA, a woman in a burkha. A KORINTHIAN Representative also enters—a very large woman.

LAMPITO

Women of Athens! Ho!

LYSISTRATA

Ho! Spartan!

KLEONIKE

By the Arms of Aphrodite! It's a Spartan Ho!

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The ATHENIAN WOMEN snicker.

LYSISTRATA

(Saving the day) Greetings Lampito! What a figure you have! You look like you could strangle a bull.

MUSIC -- LAMPITO goes through a series of poses demonstrating her physique and tattoos—the poses are a combination of classic statues, erotic pole dancing and competitive body sculpture.

LAMPITO

I work out.

LYSISTRATA

(Examining LAMPITO closely) Spartan Princess, you are a piece of work. *(Offering to feel her breasts)* May I?

LAMPITO

If you like.

MYRRHENE

Oh, me too!

The WOMEN run over to feel LAMPITO’S breasts, buttocks and biceps.

KLEONIKE

(Joining in) As the saying goes—“So round, so firm, so fully-packed!”

LAMPITO

Thank you.

LYSISTRATA

(Spotting ISMENIA) And who are you? You haven’t said much.

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LAMPITO

This is Princess Ismenia.

LYSISTRATA

An aristocrat! Welcome, Ismenia!

LYSISTRATA attempts to open ISMENIA’S burhka. At first, ISMENIA refuses.

Excuse me, but I have to check your credentials.

ISMENIA faces upstage and opens the burhka—the ATHENIANS rush to look.

ATHENIAN WOMAN

She’s not a spy!

LYSISTRATA

I see you come from a land of lush meadows and fruited plains.

KLEONIKE

(Looking) —the garden is very well manicured.

MYRRHINE

(Looking) I wonder if Kinesias would go for something like that?

KLEONIKE

At your age, what does it matter?

LYSISTRATA

(Looking at the KORINTHIAN) And who is this little thing?

LAMPITO

(Bringing her forward) Ambassador from Korinth—she’s very big back home.

MYRRHINE

She’s very big back here!

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KORINTHIAN

Who is Athenian woman who summons me from Korinth?

LYSISTRATA

I have called upon all the women of Greece...

(LYSISTRATA glances at ISMENIA)

...and some countries beyond apparently—to be represented here.

KORINTHIAN

And what do you have to say to us?

LYSISTRATA

I will speak—but first let me ask you a question. Where are the fathers of your children?

KORINTHIAN

You know where the men of Korinth are. They are at the wars.

MYRRHINE

My Kinesias has been gone for seven months.

LAMPITO

My man comes home for one night in a year—he bangs me—he bangs the dents from his shield—then, bang—he’s gone! Maybe I see him in a year. Maybe I never see him again.

LYSISTRATA

Then you find lovers to take away the pain. Isn’t that right?

The WOMEN answer “yes”

And then the war becomes worse and your lovers are called upon to go and fight, aren’t they?

The WOMEN answer “yes”

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LAMPITO

In Sparta we wrap an eight inch piece of leather around a handle.

LYSISTRATA

Some consolation!

KORINTHIAN

Then all the leather scraps are gathered up to help the war effort and we are left with nothing!

The WOMEN laugh and agree

LYSISTRATA

Nothing! We live like widows—whether our husbands are alive or dead! This war-without-end makes widows of us all—proud Grecian women! I can’t even speak of the sons that we have lost. Well, I’ve had enough of widowhood! Women of Greece, who among you is willing to join me and make the sacrifice that will bring this war to an end!

KLEONIKE

To end the war I would pawn all my jewelry and dresses.

The WOMEN murmur “yes”.

LAMPITO

To end this war I’d run from here to the top of Mount Taygetus and back.

The WOMEN answer “yes”.

MYRRHINE

To end the war I would let myself be split up the middle like a...like a...like a very flat fish!

The WOMEN laugh—then answer “yes”.

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LYSISTRATA

In plain words then, I will tell you my secret. (*Joining their hands*) Sister Women, if we are to force our men to lay down their arms and forge a strong and lasting peace—we must refrain from...

KLEONIKE

Anything! I'll give up anything!

LYSISTRATA

Will you swear it?

MYRRHINE

Yes, even if it kills me!

The WOMEN answer “yes”

LYSISTRATA

Women of Greece—here then is the thing that you must sacrifice—you must give up sex—you must refrain from having sex!

Stunned silence – then the women howl with laughter.

KORINTHIAN

Let the war go on!

ATHENIAN WOMEN

Let the war go on!

LYSISTRATA

You're laughing! What's so funny about this terrible war? Will you laugh at the next funeral—whose will it be? Go on, laugh! We can set your son or husband sailing into the next world on gales of laughter!

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Oh, now you are serious at last. Now your faces are pale—you stand there stupid and stunned as any cow, as any woman—no idea what to do.

KLEONIKE

(After a time) Lysistrata, it's not possible. We can't give up sex.

LYSISTRATA

Didn't I hear you say that you were willing to do anything? *(To MYRRHENE)*
Weren't you willing to be split up the middle like a flounder?

MYRRHINE

I thought you were going to ask us to walk through fire or something like that. I think I could walk through fire—if I drank some wine first.

KLEONIKE

Strata darling, we pretend we don't need sex, but we do. You can't ask us to give up that.

LYSISTRATA

Look at yourselves—what long, sad faces—no wonder the men write tragedies about us—drama queens—women unable to make the sacrifice that would save the country—women who do nothing but have love affairs and babies.

Lampito, what do you say? You are a true Queen of Sparta. Your word will convince them. I ask you—Athenian to Spartan—will you give up love for the good of your country?

LAMPITO

By the two goddesses it's a hard thing for a woman to sleep without a man in her bed. But there is greater need for peace. I stand by Lysistrata.

LYSISTRATA

Lampito, you are my dearest friend—the one true woman here.

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LAMPITO

There are two.

LYSISTRATA

The rest of you—will you stand beside us as women, or do we stand alone?

KLEONIKE

If we refrain—the gods forbid—from what you say—how can it work? It seems like such an extreme thing to do.

LYSISTRATA

It will work, if you go about it with care. Here's what you must do. When your man returns sit quietly indoors—remain as soft and attractive as you can. Paint your cheeks—whatever it takes—put on your sheerest gown of Amogoros silk—watch him as he grows—grows wild for you. Watch as desire slowly but surely leads him into a rage of passion. And when he calls for you to come and lie with him—refuse! He'll soon be begging for peace just to get a piece of you.

LAMPITO

When Helen showed a breast to Menelaus, he threw away his sword.

KLEONIKE

If we tease the men like that, they'll use force. They'll drag us into the bedroom.

LYSISTRATA

Hold on to the door.

KLEONIKE

And if they beat us?

LYSISTRATA

Then give in. But do it with a very bad grace—give him nothing for his trouble. There's no satisfaction for men if they have to use violence. Wives know a thousand ways to torment their husbands. No man wants to live with an unhappy wife.

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MYRRHINE

That is true. I know it. I think it will work.

KLEONIKE

I suppose it's worth a try. Count me in.

LAMPITO

The Spartan men—they will soon conclude an honest peace. But can you promise the same for your men of Athens? It is a joke among Spartans that Athenian men prefer to lie with boys.

MYRENE

Is that true? (*The ATHENIAN WOMAN assure her*)

LYSISTRATA

Don't worry. The women of Greece will guarantee the men of Athens.

LAMPITO

There is something else. Athens is richer than all the rest of Greece combined. The treasure stored behind that gate is vast. With such a fortune Athenian men can import all the sex they need.

LYSISTRATA

This is a problem, yes. But I have taken care of it. The older women of Athens are inside disguised as worshippers. When I give the signal they will seize the gates and hold the treasure hostage.

LAMPITO

Your plan is brilliant. We cannot lose.

LYSISTRATA

You must swear an oath, all of you—swear that you will never fail.

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KLEONIKE

What shall we swear to? What will be our sacrifice?

LYSISTRATA

The standard—we'll offer a sheep, and swear by that.

KLEONIKE

Sheep guts are so common. I suggest we kill a white stallion. The gods will be impressed.

LYSISTRATA

I suggest we don't kill anything at all. That's our plan isn't it—to put an end to killing? One of you, bring me a skin of the reddest wine, and a bowl. Go!

KLEONIKE

Make sure the bowl is black—black is the proper color for an offering like this.

A large skin of wine and a bowl are brought.

LYSISTRATA

Beautiful! This is the animal we shall sacrifice and the Thrasian wine within will be its blood.

KLEONIKE

This wine must not be diluted with a single drop of water.

LAMPITO

I like this oath already.

MYRRHENE

Me, too!

LYSISTRATA

Lay your hands on the victim, all of you.

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The WOMEN stroke the wineskin.

Almighty Goddess, happy sister of joy and merriment, fill this bowl and grant to all women your great powers of persuasion. Accept into this cup our sacrifice.

*LYSISTRATA plunges her knife into the skin and red wine pours into the bowl.
MUSIC suggesting a dark and powerful ritual plays.*

MYRRHINE
Smell that!

KLEONIKE
Delicious!

LAMPITO
It smells as sweet as blood!

KLEONIKE
I want to be the first to taste the wine.

LYSISTRATA
No, by Aphrodite! Not until you've sworn! Hold on to me all of you. Swear for all of us, Kleonike.

LYSISTRATA speaks first, KLEONIKE repeats the oath.

LYSISTRATA & KLEONIKE
**I have nothing to do with husband or lover
Even when he approaches me upright and ready.**

KLEONIKE
Oh, Lysistrata, I can't do this!

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LYSISTRATA
You can! Swear!

The WOMAN kneel. KLEONIKE continues speaking the oath alone.

KLEONIKE
**I will appear to him continually soft and desirable
Beautifully dressed in see-thru saffron silk
And make his longing flame forever into the skies.
But I will never yield to his desire.
If he does force himself upon me
Then to his touch I shall remain as ice, cold and unmoving.
I will not lift my Persian slippers to the ceiling
Nor crouch upon all fours like the lioness on the knife handle.
If I keep this oath may I always drink wine.
But if I break it, let my bowl be only filled with water.**

Ritual MUSIC ends

LYSISTRATA
Does every woman take this oath?

WOMEN
We do.

LYSISTRATA
I will now consummate the offering.

KLEONIKE
My turn! My turn! To our newfound friendships, darling!

*LYSISTRATA and the WOMEN pass the bowl and drink.
Tumultuous MUSIC is heard.*

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LAMPITO

Tell me what's happening!

LYSISTRATA

It's the older women. They've driven the priests from the temple and seized the treasure. Lampito, do your part to tame the Spartans. Your allies will remain with us as hostages. Go!

LAMPITO exits. The gates open.

Everyone inside! Bar the gates!

The WOMEN enter the Akropolis. LYSISTRATA passes through the gates. They slam shut.

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LYSISTRATA – PARADOS
CHORAL EPISODE 1

The KORUS MEN enters. They are masked and carry heavy logs. (The “logs” can be 2x4s stenciled with Greek letters that suggest phallic euphemisms.) Among them are VIAGRUS, DRAKES and HOMER. HOMER is blind and the eyes of his mask are covered with a bandage. Oddly, his disability rarely diminishes his ability to find his way around and execute choreography. Though the KORUS MEN are very old they believe themselves to be supreme examples of masculine vigor. Their leader, SOCRATES, the KORYPHAIOS, dances wildly before the group urging them along and pounding on his drum. SOCRATES is not masked.

MUSIC

KORUS MEN

**More wood, more wood
Wood to teach a lesson good.
More wood, more bone
Just to bring the women home.**

**More iron, more steel
Bring the female dog to heel,
More iron, less brass
Drag her home and pound her ass**

DRAKES

I can't carry this log another step.

SOCRATES

Keep moving, Drakes, even though your shoulder chafes and aches under the weight of the olive log it bears.

DRAKES

I just carried this thing up 300 steps.

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VIAGRUS

Don't do no good to cringe, man.

SOCRATES

Well said, Viagrus, there is no need for us to complain. Behold, Oh Men of Athens! The city spreads in beauty here before us. Again we stand atop the mighty rock.

HOMER

The rock of the Akropolis—behind whose gates lie the Temple of Athena, goddess patron of our famous city. Oh Athens, city most high in man's esteem!

SOCRATES

Thank you Homer—what say you, men—is it not time to address the audience directly? Is it not time for us to speak of this sad day?

KORUS MEN

A sad day! Sad, sad day!

SOCRATES

Speak first, Viagrus. Tell the citizens of our reason for bearing these great logs. Tell them why we build this pyre before the gates of the Akropolis.

VIAGRUS

(Addressing the audience) Well, it's like this, man. I never thought I would see the day my own wife would shun the shelter I put her in. Then she spits the bread out that I placed on her table to eat with my own sweat and runs off to join this Lesbo army.

SOCRATES

Perhaps we should call upon someone with better communication skills. Homer, Oh Great Poet, I call upon you to articulate our suffering and shame.

The KORUS MEN stand HOMER upon a bench. The KORUS MEN illustrates the speech with tableau and pantomime.

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HOMER

Rage Goddess! Sing the rage of Democracy herself—born atop these many steps. Remember Goddess—remember the time—when the traitor Kleomenes with his Spartan mercenaries seized the Akropolis and from its lofty heights down-pissed upon Athenian below. In outrage every man of Athens held up his shield. Three long days and nights did the Athenian block the path—seventeen ranks deep—determined to prevent the escape of the usurper. Then when night was darkest the common men of Athens—fearless warriors all—with teeth-clenched daggers—then began to scale the stony, steep Akropolean cliffs...

SOCRATES

Thank you, Homer! Every citizen seated here can recite from memory your great epic—“A Fool’s Guide to Democracy”. But today another traitor has dared to seize the citadel and lurks within. Once more the men of Athens will rise to glory as did Athenians of old.

The KORUS MEN cheer.

DRAKES

“Old” is right.

SOCRATES

The time has come to write a new epic, Oh Men of Athens. The time has come for us to tell these screechy voicing, gossip-spreading, double-breasted, squat-to-peeing, tambourine banging bi-polar-baby-makers that hide behind this gate—that the men of Athens have risen once again!

SOCRATES beats his drum—MUSIC plays—the KORUS MEN cheer, pick up the logs and dance a phallic dance.

KORUS MEN

**More wood, more wood
Wood to teach a lesson good.
More wood and more bone**

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Just to bring the women home.

**More iron, more steel
Brings the female dog to heel,
More steel, less brass
Drag her home and pound her ass.**

SOCRATES

Enough, men! Let's not waste time singing. This cult must be stopped. It's an infection to society—a boil on the body politic that must be lanced and burned.

KORUS MEN

Lysistrata—burn her first!

SOCRATES

Throw your faggots down here, boys. Check your firepots, men!
The KORUS MEN bring out their firepots and blow on them

Anybody have a spark?

VIAGRUS

Don't think so. My fire's been out for a while now. *(The KORUS MEN express similar difficulties.)*

SOCRATES

Blow on them! How do you know you don't have any sparks left if you don't give it a blow? What's the matter, Viagrus? You can always get a fire going.

VIAGRUS

I forgot to bring kerosene.

SOCRATES

Never mind. The gods will help us out. Homer, Man of Words, will you entreat the gods?

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MUSIC—HOMER lifts his firepot to the heavens as the KORUS MEN gather around.

HOMER

**Oh, God of the firepot hear my cry
Touch with your tongue of flame this torch.
Oh, who will be the first to scorch
The olive wood and burn her feet
That these women learn how truly sweet it is to be “in heat.”**

VIAGRUS

That was heavy, man.

DRAKES

I like the way sex and death were sort of blended.

SOCRATES

Now let's see if prayer can light my fire.

SOCRATES blows gingerly on his firepot—smoke appears—the KORUS MEN gather around him—then SOCRATES explodes around the stage in desperate agony.

**GODDAMNMOTHERFREAKINGCOCKSUCKINGSONOFABITCHINGCUNTS
NATCHINGGOBBLEWALLOW...OH...OH...OH...SHIT...SHIT...SHIT...OH...
SHIT! That hurts!**

The KORUS MEN finally manage to subdue SOCRATES.

DRAKES

What's wrong?

SOCRATES

An ember blew into my eye. Dammit, it's a big one! Ow!

DRAKES

Let me see. Oooh! It's a big one all right. Maybe I can get it out. Hand me stick.

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VIAGRUS finds one. He sharpens it.

VIAGRUS

Gotta be good and sharp, man.

DRAKES approaches SOCRATES' eye with the stick. His palsy begins to act up.

SOCRATES

Never mind! Get that stick away! I can live with it. My tears will wash it out.

VIAGRUS

I don't know, man.

SOCRATES

On your knees, Athenians! Get that fire going!

The KORUS MEN gather around the funeral pyre and blow. Smoke appears. The KORUS MEN erupt away from the fire hacking and coughing.

Don't stop! Smoke! Smoke! Where there's smoke there's fire.

VIAGRUS

My eyebrows are totally gone, man.

SOCRATES

I see sparks. I see flame.

KORUS MEN

My lips are singed. My nose is filled up with smoke. *Etc.*

SOCRATES

Stop bellyaching and blow!

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The KORUS MEN return to the task of blowing on the pyre. XANTIPPE, the KORAPHAIUS of WOMEN, appears above the walls. As she cries for help the KORUS of very OLD WOMEN appear. Except for XANTIPPE the WOMEN are masked.

MUSIC – “Women’s Theme”

XANTIPPE

Smoke! The harbinger of conflagration! Sisters! Ululate the alarm! (*Ululation is heard*) Fetch water! We’re going to be consumed by the flames.

The KORUS WOMEN open the gates and dance off to fetch water. They carry empty vessels. They do not notice the KORUS MEN bent over their firepots.

KORUS WOMEN

**Before your dear sisters
Are covered with blisters
For all the gods’ sakes fetch water
Water, more water, to save every daughter
Fill every bucket and ewer with water.**

XANTIPPE enters through the gates.

XANTIPPE

Hold it! What’s this I see? A bunch of ancient men! And we’ve caught them red-handed blowing on their firepots.

The KORUS WOMEN re-enter—their vessels now filled with water. They spot the men huffing and puffing at the pyre.

SOCRATES

Be aware, men, be aware. There’s a mighty host of women come out to defend the gates.

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XANTIPPE

Oh, go fart in another direction, old man. You think this host is mighty? It's only a fraction of the army we can muster any time we want.

SOCRATES

“Muster”? How military! Look out, men—this woman is going to “muster” an army. And just how many women can you “muster”, woman?

XANTIPPE

Half the people of the earth—that's how many. “Women hold up half the sky.”

SOCRATES

“Women hold up half the sky” I've heard that. “Women hold up half the sky—and fill up half the outhouse!”

KORUS MEN find this hilarious.

Grab your hot dogs, men, and hold them high. We're going to put them in the buns of these “mustered” women.

KORUS MEN find this even more hilarious.

XANTIPPE

Put your pitchers down, ladies—get ready to demonstrate how fast your feet can find a pair of testicles.

SOCRATES

Another smart word from you and my stick will make this day your last.

XANTIPPE

I'll tear your lungs out and put them in my soup.

SOCRATES

I'll knock you senile.

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XANTIPPE

That would make the fight more even.

The KORUS WOMEN find this hilarious.

SOCRATES

I'll knock you cross-eyed.

XANTIPPE

I'll chew your balls off.

SOCRATES

A woman talking common trash—your mother must be proud.

XANTIPPE

It's called freedom of speech, oh great democrat!

SOCRATES

Here's some freedom of speech for you. Fuck you!

XANTIPPE

Fuck you!

SOCRATES

Fuck you!

XANTIPPE

Fuck you!

SOCRATES

Fuck you!

XANTIPPE

Fuck you!

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SOCRATES

Fuck you!

XANTIPPE

Fuck you!

SOCRATES

(Dancing himself breathless) Fuck, fuck, fuck, fuck, fuck, fuck, fuck, YOU!

XANTIPPE

FUCK YOU!

SOCRATES

I'm not going to stoop to this sort of foulness. It's time for action. Light your torches, men.

XANTIPPE

What's the fire for, spindle shanks—self-cremation?

SOCRATES

What's the water for, detestable cow—bathing babies?

XANTIPPE

You got that part right.

XANTIPPE douses SOCRATES in the crotch with water.

SOCRATES

Hey! What are you doing?

XANTIPPE

Watering your beanstalk, so it'll be fresh and green!

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SOCRATES

That's it! I'm through negotiating. You had your chance but you blew it. Bring the on fire men! Scorch them with your torches! Burn them! Singe them!

XANTIPPE

Soak them, ladies!

MUSIC AND CHOREOGRAPHY – GRECIAN WATER FIGHT—The KORUS MEN dance with firepots, the KORUS WOMEN with pitchers of water. The KORUS WOMEN give the MEN a good soaking and exit cheering into the Akropolis.

VIAGRUS

I'm freezing, man.

DRAKES

I'm so wet my ass is going to wrinkle up.

SOCRATES

Retreat! Retreat!

The KORUS MEN retreat to Athens.

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LYSISTRATA – Scene 1

The MAGISTRATE enters, a magnificent politician in his prime. Three SYCTHIAN OFFICERS run into position. They wear terrifying masks.

MAGISTRATE

Women! Is the world not filled with noise enough—must we also endure the constant ululation and banging of tambourines of angry women? Will somebody tell me what in Hades is going on?

SOCRATES and THE KORUS OF MEN.

SOCRATES

It's the women again, oh Magistrate.

MAGISTRATE

The women! What is it this time—low self-esteem—unfair distribution of butt-sizes? It's always something, isn't it?

SOCRATES

It's more religious than that, sir.

MAGISTRATE

I hope it's not that Adonis business again—weeping and wailing from the rooftops, “Woe for Lord Adonis! Beat your breasts for Adonis!” Every woman in Athens—absolutely mad! It was so distracting that the Assembly lost its focus and voted to reinstate the draft. Every young man in Athens was shipped off to Sicily, and you know what happened then.

SOCRATES

They all died.

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MAGISTRATE

They all died—that’s right—they all died a miserable death in a god-forsaken far-off land because a bunch of women became hysterical.

SOCRATES

This situation is nearly as dire, Magistrate. We have been violated by these women in a very personal way.

MAGISTRATE

What did they do?

SOCRATES

We ordered them to disband and they responded by dousing us with water. Look at me! Looks like I pissed all over myself.

MAGISTRATE

By Poseidon, you are well soaked! But you know who’s to blame, don’t you?

SOCRATES

Yes, the women!

MAGISTRATE

No, the men! When women are allowed to misbehave it’s the men who are to blame.

SOCRATES

How’s that?

MAGISTRATE

We asked for their disrespect—and they gave us what we asked for. We taught our women to love riot and have sewn the seeds of contempt in the female heart. I’ll give you an example. Yesterday, I overheard a man in a jewelry shop saying to the jeweler, “You know that necklace you made for my wife? She just loves it, but the prong doesn’t quite fit into the clasp. I thought you might come by my house tonight

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and work on the hole a little. I'll be off on to Salamis so you can take your time"—
you hear what I'm saying?

SOCRATES

I hear what you're saying.

MAGISTRATE

Next day, I'm at the sandal-makers—he's an athletic young man with a very large
tool—

SOCRATES

I hear what you're saying.

MAGISTRATE

A male customer walks up to the sandal-maker and says to him, "My wife's sandal
strap is rubbing her a little—right where she's most sensitive. Would you mind
dropping by this afternoon and give it a stretching? She'll be very grateful." Now you
see what happens when men forget the way to be a man. You hear what I'm saying?

SOCRATES

I hear what you're saying.

MAGISTRATE

Today I arrive in Athens to buy oars for our galleys—a critical naval campaign where
real men are fighting and dying. What do you want me to tell these men—that the
women of Athens have decided that the money is not available to them—that the
needs of dying men are not important—that the sacrifice of these brave warriors is of
no value? You men here sicken me. I sicken myself. You—get a crowbar—one for
me too. This gate is going to open if I have to do it myself.

The Gates open. The MAGISTRATE peers in.

You, is it? I should have known.

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LYSISTRATA walks out the KORUS WOMEN watch from the open gate. (The KORUS WOMEN at this point consist of masked and unmasked characters previously introduced—XANTIPPE, KLEONIKE, MYHENE, the KORINTHIAN.)

LYSISTRATA

(LYSISTRATA walks out) The gates are open. There's no need to use force. What is needed here is reason and common sense.

MAGISTRATE

I am placing you under arrest. Officer, seize that woman and tie her hands.

Ominous MUSIC—A SCYTHIAN OFFICER advances menacingly toward LYSISTRATA. The MUSIC stops.

LYSISTRATA

(To the OFFICER) By Artemis, the virgin goddess, you will rue the day you ever lay a finger on me.

The OFFICER begins to tremble—a small fart SOUND is heard. The OFFICER retreats in terror. There is a turd where the OFFICER was standing.

MAGISTRATE

What's this? You shit yourself! I can't believe it—you shit yourself. Clean it up! *Two of the KORUS OF MEN run on with a bucket and small shovel. The turd is tossed high in the air and is caught with a "bonk".*

I can't believe it—an officer of the law afraid of a woman! *(To another OFFICER)* You there, help him. Throw her to the ground if you have to.

MUSIC—KLEONIKE intercepts the advance of the second OFFICER.

KLEONIKE

By Artemis, if you go near Lysistrata I'll trample the stuffing right out of you.

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The small sound is heard. The SECOND OFFICER retreats in terror. He too has defecated.

MAGISTRATE

I don't believe this! And you stepped in it. Is there no man here that has the bowels to face up to a woman?

The cleaning crew runs on—scoop, toss, “bonk”.

(To the third OFFICER) You! Get over here. Use the rope—tie up the “stuffing” lady first.

MUSIC—OFFICER THREE advances, and MYRRHINE steps into his path.

MYRRHINE

By Phoebe, if you lay a hand on that woman your next visit will be to the surgeon.

OFFICER THREE defecates in terror and retreats, leaving yet another deposit.

MAGISTRATE

Unbe—goddamned—lievable! This is making me sick. Close ranks! Maybe all of you together can add up to a single man. I want these women bound!

The OFFICERS and KORUS MEN rush to battle positions.

LYSISTRATA

By the holy goddess, if you charge these gates you'll meet up with four full companies of warrior-women fully armed!

MAGISTRATE

She's bluffing, men. Charge!

THE BATTLE—The KORUS WOMEN pour out of the Akropolis armed with pots and pans. The KORUS MEN and KORUS WOMEN face each other for battle.

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LYSISTRATA

On! On!

**On Shop-keepers, floor sweepers, servers of food,
You who sell baskets of barley and grain,
Waitresses, hostesses, wet nurses, too,
Keepers of taverns and makers of change!
On! Captains of Kitchens, Lieutenants of laundry!
Scold them, deride them, pour insult upon them.
Teach them a lesson they won't soon forget!**

MUSIC and DANCE--The SCYTHIAN OFFICERS and KORUS MEN are driven away by the pot-banging KORUS WOMEN.

That's enough! We are an honest army—there'll be no looting or booty-grabbing in this war.

MAGISTRATE

Dammit! Whipped like curs by a bunch of women!

LYSISTRATA

What did you expect? Do you think you are dealing with slaves? Do you think that women have no pride or passion?

MAGISTRATE

Women have a passion for a skin of wine and a good roll in the hay, and that's it!

SOCRATES and the KORUS MEN creep out of hiding.

SOCRATES

Magistrate, it's no use arguing with them. These women are shameless beasts. They gave everyone of us a bath and, believe me, they didn't use soap. I'm still wet.

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MAGISTRATE

You again! Civilization crumbles around our ears and all you can do is whine and piss your pants.

SOCRATES

But I didn't piss my pants! That's what I'm telling you. These women made it look like I did.

MAGISTRATE

Why are you squinting? You look like some ridiculous sailor-man.

XANTIPPE

What's in your eye?

SOCRATES

Never you mind, witch!

XANTIPPE

I can be nice, but if you stir me up you'll think you walked into a wasp nest.

KORUS MEN

**What can we do with women like this?
They've all gone psycho, completely insane.
They blaspheme the gods and the high, holy temple
They seize and they keep all the treasure we've gained.**

MAGISTRATE

Enough with the chanting! *(To the KORUS MEN)* One of you bring me a sword. Leave me alone with these women. When you return you will find that this revolution has been taken care of.

A sword is found and handed to the MAGISTRATE.

Now get the hell out of here!

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The KORUS MEN exit. The MAGISTRATE turns to face the KORUS WOMEN. He lunges at them, as they scatter to avoid his sword the MAGISTRATE neatly separates LYSISTRATA from the group.

This is not a piece of firewood, woman, nor is it a saucepan. It is battle-tested iron and it means business. Now! You will submit to the authority of Athens or I will kill you on the spot.

LYSISTRATA

You would do that to me? Are you that brutal?

MAGISTRATE

You give me no choice.

LYSISTRATA

You would kill me here in Athens—birthplace of discourse and reason?

MAGISTRATE

Athens is a city of laws.

LYSISTRATA

--The laws of a barbarian.

MAGISTRATE

Submit to me now or I use this.

LYSISTRATA kneels. There is a cry as a young woman flies out of the Akropolis and through the KORUS WOMEN. She leaps upon the MAGISTRATE who slings her to the ground and raises the sword to strike.

MAGISTRATE

Dawn! What are you doing here?

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DAWN
FUCK YOU, DADDY!

Before the MAGISTRATE can recover, another WOMAN steps behind and whacks him over the head with a saucepan—“BONK!”

MAGISTRATE
Mother! Not you too!

MOTHER throws herself across LYSISTRATA and bares her breasts to the MAGISTRATE.

MOTHER
Go on! Stab the breasts that nursed you into life!

MAGISTRATE
(Dropping his sword) MOTHER! NO!

Horrified that the sensibilities of the audience will be damaged beyond repair, XANTIPPE and the KORUS WOMEN rush to cover the Pocahontan tableau with a long beautiful cloth. Improvising madly, XANTIPPE grabs DAWN and addresses the audience.

XANTIPPE
Citizens! Now would be a very good time for these women to offer their credentials as true Athenians. It’s true that only men are allowed to be named “citizens of the city”. However, all the women you have seen so far have been raised in luxurious splendor by families that loved them and spared nothing in their upbringing. And now, representing these exemplary women—I present to you, Dawn, youngest member of our female chorus.

DAWN
(Smiling but very self-conscious) What do I say?

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XANTIPPE

(In the manner of a beauty pageant hostess) Dawn. It has recently been said that Athenian women cannot find Greece on a map. Why do you think this is?

DAWN

I personally believe that Athenian women are unable to do so because—uh—some people out there in Greece don't have maps and—uh—I believe that our education like such as Africa and in the Persias...

XANTIPPE

(Cutting DAWN off) Dawn! Don't talk politics. Talk about your childhood.

DELICATE MUSICAL UNDERSCORING—DAWN is confident and has an interpretive story/dance ready to go. XANTIPPE goes to monitor whatever's going on behind the cloth.

DAWN

Oh—yes! When I was a girl of seven I was chosen to be an Arreploros, and you all know how important that is. *(The audience does not)* Well then I will tell you. To be an Arreploros is to be chosen to live right here on the Akropolis and wait upon Athena in her temple for one full year. After that, at about age ten I was among the proud and the few selected to wear the yellow dress of honor and grind the flour to bake the cakes for the goddess Demeter. Her temple is right down there. When I outgrew my girlhood I was chosen to play lead nymph in the pageant ATHENA AND THE BEAR which I'm sure you have all seen. *(They haven't)* Oh, really? Well, ATHENA AND THE BEAR is about a mortal bear and one day Athena stabs him with her lance but the bear falls in love with her anyway and... *(XANTIPPE signals for the DAWN to move the story along)* And in the end the poor bear dies of a broken heart. My performance was so applauded that I was chosen to dance in the Grand Procession of Athens. I got to wear a necklace of figs—and I don't have to tell you what that means. You don't? *(They don't. The XANTIPPE signals with a throat cutting gesture. DAWN speaks as quickly as possible.)* After achieving all these honors and many others that I don't have time to tell you about, the goddess blessed me and I was able to proceed directly into womanhood. *(Curtsey)* Thank you.

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MUSIC ends. DAWN runs behind the cloth.

XANTIPPE

Thank you, Dawn. You may return and help comfort your father.

The KORUS WOMEN circle the cloth to serve as a backdrop behind the MAGISTRATE who sits on a bench in a family tableau with DAWN and his MOTHER. SOCRATES has returned to lurk to one side.

MAGISTRATE

What did you mean, Mother, when you said—“...the breasts that nursed me into life”? I always had nursemaids.

MOTHER

That’s true, darling. And you had your choice of them. It spoiled you, I think. But never mind, it’s the symbolism that counts.

MAGISTRATE

No man wants to see his mother’s breasts used as symbols.

SOCRATES

Hear! Hear!

MOTHER

I think my breasts make a very nice pair of metaphors. Now, sit quietly and listen to what Lysistrata is going to say.

DAWN

Daddy!

MAGISTRATE

(Relenting) All right! Then may I have your august permission to speak my own mind?

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MOTHER

It's a free country.

LYSISTRATA

Will you accept a challenge to debate?

MAGISTRATE

I'm ready. Give me your best shot.

SOCRATES

You can do it, Magistrate. Battle her with nothing but words—you can do it. Destroy her with wit.

MAGISTRATE

I'll begin—why have you barred men from the Akropolis?

LYSISTRATA

Easy question—so we can seize the treasury and control the money—no money—no war.

MAGISTRATE

You believe money is the cause of this war?

LYSISTRATA

Yes—and all our troubles as well. You men like to keep things stirred up. War is your favorite excuse when it comes to looting the treasury. First, you declare war—then you help yourself to all the money you want—whenever you want. This way of doing things is going to stop.

MAGISTRATE

And what do you plan to do with the treasury?

LYSISTRATA

I don't know yet. But women are now going to manage the money.

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MAGISTRATE

Women! Manage money? Ridiculous!

LYSISTRATA

Why not? We run the finances of our households.

MAGISTRATE

The finances of a great city do not compare with a household budget!

LYSISTRATA

What's different?

MAGISTRATE

Households do not go to war for one thing.

LYSISTRATA

That's the point—no more war.

MAGISTRATE

And when the enemy arrives at the gates?

LYSISTRATA

Don't worry. We'll take care of it.

MAGISTRATE

"We'll take care of it." Great thinking—great plan to save the city.

LYSISTRATA

We'll save the city by saving you men from yourselves.

MAGISTRATE

Suppose I don't think you can save me? Suppose I don't want you to save me!

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LYSISTRATA

That's why we had to seize the treasury. You gave us no other choice. Men obviously don't have enough sense to save themselves.

MAGISTRATE

You reason like a tyrant.

LYSISTRATA

No one's putting you in chains. Keep listening. We will explain it all to you.

MAGISTRATE

I don't need explanations from a tyrant! *(Raising a hand to strike)* Here's where I stand up for my freedom!

LYSISTRATA

Do not raise your fist to me. Listen when I speak!

MAGISTRATE

When tyranny speaks my fist rises up by itself.

DAWN

Daddy!

MOTHER

Don't make me use my metaphors again!

MAGISTRATE

Oh, keep your shirt on, Mother! *(To LYSISTRATA)* Go on! Speak!

LYSISTRATA

I shall.

MUSIC – TABLEAU CHOREOGRAPHY

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A “play-within-a-play” begins—XANTIPPE directs the action—KORUS WOMEN hold the cloth as a backdrop. XANTIPPE, DAWN, and MOTHER illustrate.

LYSISTRATA

There was a time when a great city was at war—a war decreed and fought by the men of the city. For many years the women practiced restraint. They endured everything that the men chose to do. The women were commanded never to speak and the women obeyed. But their eyes and ears always remained open. They listened as the men discussed plans and justified their actions; they saw how the men would construct reasons to prove that the war was inevitable—that war had to be. And if a woman dared to ask, “Dear husband, today in the Assembly, did the men take any steps towards ending the war? Did any man today make the smallest effort towards achieving peace?” The husband would always answer, “Mind your own business!” or “Hold your tongue!”

MOTHER

I never held my tongue.

MAGISTRATE

A good smack from father would have silenced you!

MOTHER

But that didn’t happen, did it?

LYSISTRATA

So, every good woman held her peace. And as the reasons for the war became more meaningless and lame—the women grew sick at heart and would dare to cry out, “The men have gone completely mad!” The answer, “Weave your web, woman, or I’ll redden your cheeks and it won’t be from shame! “War is the business of men!”

MAGISTRATE

Well quoted—Homer! “War has always been the business of men.” I agree.

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LYSISTRATA

You agree? Your ears are so full of arrogance that you can't hear what we are saying. I have had enough! The women of Greece have had enough. Men will hold their own tongues for a change. Men will open up their own ears and men will listen to what the women have to say!

MAGISTRATE

I will die a thousand deaths before I obey someone who hides behind a veil.

LYSISTRATA

Then you shall be the one to wear it. Wrap this around you, Sonny boy.

MUSIC – CHOREOGRAPHY—LYSISTRATA removes her veil. DAWN and MOTHER put it on the MAGISTRATE'S head. The KORUS WOMEN wind the MAGISTRATE in the cloth. The KORUS WOMEN dance as the MAGISTRATE is displayed as a woman.

KORUS SOLO

**I will never tire of dancing
Nor will my knees grow stiff and old.
I will dance in front of danger; I will dance into my grave.
Lysistrata is who I dance for, Nature's child and Nature's sage.
Dance her courage, dance her virtue
Dance her wisdom, dance her rage.**

MYRHENE

Go home and card your wool and munch on beans. War will be the business of women.

LYSISTRATA

Each and every woman here—remember your mother and your grandmother—remember the women that were before them. These women were all nettles—they knew how to irritate and burn—never let your anger fade.

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KLEONIKE

O Gentle Goddess, let your seductive charms rain down upon our breasts and thighs, so that men throughout all Greece will stand as upright as sticks and follow after us like slaves.

MAGISTRATE

So you'd make all men slaves. What would you do then?

LYSISTRATA

First we will not permit them to swagger around the marketplace with lances in their hands.

KLEONIKE

That would be an improvement.

LYSISTRATA

The soldiers strut among the shops and stalls, armed to the teeth, admiring all the pots and saucepans—Athenian braggarts in brass and black leather. You men like to dress like hunters come fresh from the mountains.

MAGISTRATE

So? That's what men do!

LYSISTRATA

It is not necessary to put on a battle helmet just to go buy fish!

KLEONIKE

The other day I saw a Phylarch on horseback—he was very handsome by the way—with curly hair—anyway, I saw him push his way up to a booth and fill his helmet with soup. Right after that a Thracian soldier went up to a young sales-girl and waved his lance at her. The poor girl ran away in terror and the brute helped himself to all the ripest figs.

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MAGISTRATE

Men behave badly from time to time. So what? Tell me how women would restore peace and order to all of Greece?

LYSISTRATA

Easy!

MAGISTRATE

Easy! Tell me then. My ears are open.

LYSISTRATA

War is no different than the tangled wool a woman weaves every day. You see this yarn—matted and tangled, full of filth and lice—a mess, isn't it? How does a man deal with it?

KORUS WOMEN spread the tangled yarn. XANTIPPE hands the sword to LYSISTRATA who parodies a mighty blow chopping through the yarn.

Problem solved. Hurrah for men and war. However, as you can see, there is nothing left of any value.

MAGISTRATE

Ah—the illusive wooly metaphor!

The KORUS WOMEN dance/pantomime weaving.

LYSISTRATA

A woman knows how to deal with a tangled skein like this. With great patience she passes the spool across and through the yarn—this way, then that—up and down. Just as we women will be sending emissaries here and everywhere—back and forth among our allies and enemies both so that we can disentangle matters.

MAGISTRATE

Yarn diplomacy!

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LYSISTRATA

Lesson in textiles number two—after sorting out the wool you must wash it to remove the grease and filth. The lice are bad citizens—these you would drive from the city.

MAGISTRATE

“Drive them from the city”—how?

LYSISTRATA

With rods, if necessary.

MAGISTRATE

How peaceful!

LYSISTRATA

The clean wool that remains will represent the citizens—some of them spoiled and greedy—others hard working. We put them all in the same basket along with a sample of resident foreigners. Then we card them all vigorously into a good Athenian blend—not forgetting to pull in tightly the strings of our colonies—and what do we have—a great cascade of shining wool from which the City can weave a good, strong, beautiful cloak.

KORUS WOMEN reveal a beautiful cloak.

MAGISTRATE

(Clapping sarcastically) Thank you for the show, ladies. Very impressive! You’ve obviously spent many hours in rehearsal—and those beautiful props! But I have one small objection. Remind me, please, is it your plan to bring an end to war, or to reinvent Athens as a kind of—I don’t know—some kind of giant loom thingy looming over all mankind?

LYSISTRATA

To bring an end to war—that’s the first step.

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MAGISTRATE

And the soldiers who have sacrificed so much—are they to have no part in this cloth of state that you propose?

LYSISTRATA

Do women make no sacrifices? We give birth to the sons that fight and die in this war. Is this not a great sacrifice?

MUSIC—the same dark music that underscored the women’s oath over the wine.

MAGISTRATE

(Furious) Don’t you say another word! There is nothing worthwhile in recalling sad and sorry memories.

LYSISTRATA

I yield the point—no sons—no sons will be mentioned. Let us speak of the women instead. The women who are alive and are left alone—alone in the best of their youth—left to languish far away from husbands. Girls grow old in loneliness and grief.

MAGISTRATE

Do not men grow old?

LYSISTRATA

It’s not the same. When a soldier finally returns—his hair grown white—he can still take a young wife. But a woman has only one summer. When she grows old no one has anything to say to her. She spends her days consulting with oracles and fortunetellers who promise husbands that never come.

MAGISTRATE

Old men can still get it up.

The KORUS WOMEN who have settled around the bench to listen rise hissing and move toward the MAGISTRATE.

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LYSISTRATA

Why don't you go back to your war and die? Oh, I forgot! You are rich. Well then, go buy yourself a coffin and lie down in it. I'll bake the honey cake myself and stuff your mouth with coins. Here's a funeral wreath.

LYSISTRATA flings a skein of yarn at the MAGISTRATE.

KLEONIKE

And here's another. *(Throws flowers)*

The KORUS WOMEN with great difficulty shove the MAGISTRATE towards the exit.

DAWN

Hold this lily in your hand.

LYSISTRATA

What are you standing there for? You're late. Run! Charon is waiting for you. You wouldn't want to miss the boat.

MAGISTRATE

This is how women would run a country?

The MAGISTRATE exits. LYSISTRATA calls after him.

LYSISTRATA

Don't worry. In three days I'll offer sacrifices to your memory.

Exeunt

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LYSISTRATA – CHORAL EPISODE 2

MUSICAL FANFARE—CALL TO ARMS

SOCRATES enters. The KORUS MEN follow.

SOCRATES

O men of Athens—awake and arise! Can you smell it—the stench of treason in the air?

KORUS MEN

**I smell a rat, a serious whiff, is an open sewer near?
No, what I smell is cowardice, the open smell of fear.
It's freedom-hating traitors that fill the air with pong.
The odor makes us snort and sneeze and makes us sing a song.**

The KORUS MEN provide a “doo-wop” back up.

SOCRATES

(To audience) Treachery has its own noxious odor, it's true. Just think about what these women are saying. They want us to trust the Spartans. Can you believe it—trust a Spartan?

KORUS MEN

**Only fools would trust a Spartan
Only fools believe in hope.
If we love them then they'll love us back.
And down the slippery slope
Goes Freedom and democracy and all of Athens too.
Believe me—what's at stake is so much more than me and you.**

SOCRATES

These women are not interested in peace. They're after the money. That's what they don't say. That's the elephant in the room. Women refuse to see themselves for what they are. Creatures that have no interest beyond the material world—money for food,

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shelter, and luxuries for the kids—and the women are satisfied. They are content to stare at the fire—they never see anything beyond the smoke on the walls. Men on the other hand—men are philosophers. We have a burning desire to see the world that lies outside the cave—to go see what’s on the other side of the mountain—to see the big picture. We’re dreamers—we are—men are dreamers. Our gaze is forever fixed on that magical kingdom called TruthandBeautyland. That’s what men love—Truth and beauty. With men, it’s not about the money.

SONG AND DANCE CONTINUES

**It’s not about the money.
It is freedom we hold dear.
It’s not about the money.
It’s dictatorship we fear.
Let them keep the treasure
Let them party and make hay.
It’s not about ... THE MONEY!
MY GOD! THEY HAVE MY PAY!**

KORUS MEN

(Throwing themselves against the gates) Boil them in oil! Chain them to trees! Bury them upside down in barley! *Etc.*

SOCRATES

All right, men. The situation is desperate. The treasury must be recaptured by any means.

The proverbial dagger must be hidden in the proverbial olive branch.

DRAKES

I know! We can paint ourselves white and mingle among the statues.

VIAGRUS

Yeah—strike some heroic poses!

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The KORUS MEN try some poses. XANTIPPE and two KORUS WOMEN appear above, laughing.

XANTIPPE

What a bunch of fools? Are you thinking what to tell your mother when you get home?

SOCRATES

The money you have confiscated is tax money—to be used by the citizens of Athens. Not by the women!

XANTIPPE

Do I not pay tolls? Do I not pay taxes?

DRAKES

Women don't pay taxes as a matter of fact!

XANTIPPE

Women pay a higher tax than any man in Greece.

DRAKES

How's that?

XANTIPPE

Women bear and raise the sons and daughters of Athens. How's that for a tax payment?

KORUS WOMAN

You squat on the fortune of your forefathers and devise a hundred ways to lose it all.

KORUS WOMAN

What man among you can say that he gave birth to a nation? Miserable graybeards—the richer you get the less you pay.

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XANTIPPE

I want to smack you in the face with my shoe!

SOCRATES

You heard it with your own ears, men—reckless, empty rage, all of it—women are incapable of reason or compromise.

VIAGRUS

If they get so much as a toehold they’ll start building ships and sailing their own navy. We’ll be sunk!

DRAKES

They’ll fight us on horseback and gallop about like Amazons. When it comes to riding there’s no man alive who can out-gallop a woman. Their butts are so wide they can’t fall off. But when a man gets on a horse, it’s hopeless—his balls keep getting in the way.

SOCRATES

It’s clear what has to be done. Strip for action! When the time for battle comes no Greek Warrior will let himself be encumbered by clothing. Let’s give these women a whiff of true man scent.

XANTIPPE

By Persephone and Demeter we’ll tear into you like mad sows. If these old men want to sniff around, let’s give them something to sniff. Come on, girls—off with your dresses. Let them smell the passion of a true woman.

XANTIPPE and the KORUS WOMEN disappear from above.

MUSIC OF SEXY DRUMS—THE STRIPPING

KORUS MEN first remove their masks, then strip out of their “old men” tunics. The KORUS WOMEN enter—masks and baggy dresses now gone. Both KORUSES are now young and vital and engage each other in a dueling dance of seduction. The dance ends with the KORUS WOMEN exiting slowly and seductively through the gates leaving the KORUS MEN prostrate and reaching after them in agony.

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XANTIPPE

Is that the best that you can do? Come on! Attack us! But remember—when you do there'll be no more garlic and beans—and when it comes to your two huevos rancheros—remember what the dung beetle did to the eagle's eggs.

XANTIPPE exits.

KORUS MAN

What did the dung beetle do to the eagle's eggs?

SOCRATES

You don't want to know.

XANTIPPE appears above.

XANTIPPE

Hey!

SOCRATES

Hey, what?

XANTIPPE

Hey this sex-war isn't so bad. We should have done this a long time ago. The food in here is great and we girls are getting to know each other very well. What do you think about that?

SOCRATES

(No answer)

XANTIPPE

I know. It's depressing to stare into the pit of your own uselessness. I know what will make you feel better! Go and pass six or seven more laws—that would ensure a

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further decline in your popularity. Like the time you outlawed Boiotian eels. Brilliant move! I thought every man in the Assembly was going to be killed.

Two KORUS WOMEN enter with a plate of sausages.

KORUS WOMEN

Oh look, Boiotian eel! Yum!

Suggestive eating and blackout

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LYSISTRATA – Scene 2

LIGHTS UP – Night, just before dawn. Five days have passed.

HOMER wanders on and addresses the audience.

HOMER

Five times five the rosy dawn is fingered—the men have ceased buying for money at the temple gates. It’s quiet—too quiet. The suspense lies heavy as a sack of beans placed on the face of an unsuspecting sleeper. Lysistrata, brow furrowed with concern, appears above the gates. (*LYSISTRATA appears above in high dramatic fashion*) She searches the skies—what does she expect to see? At last she speaks.

LYSISTRATA

Ahhhhh!

HOMER exits. XANTIPPE enters through the gates in order to clarify things for the audience.

XANTIPPE

She’s not speaking actually—she’s throwing some kind of “god-fit”. I’ll try to speak to her. (*Speaking very formally with broad, ritualistic gestures*) Ho, Lysistrata, architect of our great enterprise, why appear you thus with brow so furrowed with concern, and why search you the skies in such high dramatic fashion?

LYSISTRATA

None of your beeswax!

XANTIPPE

(*To audience*) Lysistrata does not choose to reveal the secret workings of her mind.
(*To LYSISTRATA*) Oh, come on, girl—talk to me!

LYSISTRATA

I cannot. I am so filled with loathing that I am loathe to speak.

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XANTIPPE

I understand completely. Men do the same for me.

LYSISTRATA

I don't mean men. I mean women. I hate my sex.

XANTIPPE

(To audience) What is she saying? *(To LYSISTRATA)* How puzzling are these words, oh bright and guiding comet of the female heart.

LYSISTRATA

The female heart is a vessel that contains nothing but weakness. I shall despair!

LYSISTRATA wails. XANTIPPE runs to the gate gestures the KORUS WOMEN to join her.

XANTIPPE

Ah, Lysistrata, know you not we love you? Trust the sisterhood and speak this thing that disconcerts you so. Come now, vomit up your feelings.

LYSISTRATA

I will speak though I fear my philosophical regurgitations will bring nothing but revulsion and disgust.

XANTIPPE

That's the spirit! Come on, girl—heave!

LYSISTRATA

The problem is this—we—I mean you—all of us—we want to get laid!

KORUS WOMEN

Ah, Zeus! Zeus!

LYSISTRATA

And not by Zeus—by ordinary men!

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KORUS WOMEN

We were praying!

LYSISTRATA

Prayer cannot stop our constant lusting after men. Communal songs and exercise only make the problem worse—the group hugs and massages are driving everybody mad. The women are beginning to desert the cause. I caught one crawling through a hole near the cave of Pan. Another was lowering herself down the wall with a rope and pulley. A third was filling out applications for a job as a government sex worker. And just now I found a woman trying to mount a sparrow. She thought she could just fly away to her lover. I had to drag her back by the hair.

KORUS WOMAN ONE is seen sneaking out the gates.

Look! There's another one. You—stop where you are! You'll eat worms in Hades if you don't stand still.

LYSISTRATA exits above. The KORUS WOMEN cut off the escape of KORUS WOMAN ONE.

KORUS WOMAN ONE

I have to go home. If I don't do something right away caterpillars will eat up all my wool.

XANTIPPE

I know the kind of caterpillar you want.

LYSISTRATA

(Bursting through the gate) Get back inside.

KORUS WOMAN ONE

They're munching my Milesian wool, I tell you. I'll be back in an hour.

LYSISTRATA

Absolutely not!

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KORUS WOMAN ONE

I'll spread my wool on the bed and be right back.

KORUS WOMEN

*(Chanting and circling LYSISTRATA and KORUS WOMAN ONE) Spread my wool—
Spread my wool. Etc.*

LYSISTRATA

You'll spread nothing on the bed, I say.

KORUS WOMAN ONE

My wool will be spoiled!

LYSISTRATA

Yes, it might. You're staying here.

The chanting stops. KORUS WOMAN TWO appears.

KORUS WOMAN TWO

Oh, woe, woe is me! I must return home and pluck my flax.

LYSISTRATA

Ah! Here's another one whose flax needs to be plucked.

The KORUS WOMEN pick up the chant again.

KORUS WOMEN

Pluck my flax—Pluck my flax. *Etc.*

KORUS WOMAN TWO

I swear by all the goddesses of light. When I'm finished plucking I'll come straight back.

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LYSISTRATA

If I allow you to pluck your flax then everybody else will have to pluck their flax too.
NO! NO PLUCKING!

The KORUS WOMEN stop chanting and recoil from LYSISTRATA.

And no one is going home to get their carpet cleaned either. I don't want to hear about getting your butter churned or having your chimneys swept—no going home to hide the sausages, or dip any wicks, either—you will not peel zucchinis, varnish canes, shuck oysters or whip any peanut butter. And absolutely no one is going home to put any bees into anybody's hive! I've heard them all, ladies! No! Now back inside!

The KORUS WOMEN move ashamedly to the gate when KORUS WOMAN THREE enters and pushes through the crowd. She is visibly pregnant.

KORUS WOMAN THREE

Make way, make way! Pregnant woman here—pregnant woman coming through—make way for the glory of birth.

LYSISTRATA

What's all this?

KORUS WOMAN THREE

It's forbidden to give birth in Athena's temple and I'm going to have a child any moment now. Oh, my goddess, here comes a contraction. Breathe—breathe, breathe and blow.

KORUS WOMEN

(Chanting again) Breathe and blow—breathe and blow. Etc.

LYSISTRATA

Strange, you weren't pregnant yesterday.

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KORUS WOMAN THREE

Yes! It's a miracle. Thanks to the blessed goddess.

LYSISTRATA

Come here! (*LYSISTRATA knocks on the woman's belly—"bonk, bonk, bonk"*) Your baby is very hard.

KORUS WOMEN THREE

It's going to be a boy.

LYSISTRATA

By the arms of Aphrodite, what's in there? (*A helmet clangs to the floor*) You liar! You've stolen the helmet from Athena's statue.

KORUS WOMAN THREE

I know that. I'm going to have my baby inside the helmet—the pigeons do it all the time.

LYSISTRATA

This is sacrilege! Get back inside and purify yourself for blasphemy.

KORUS WOMAN THREE

Please don't make me go back in there. I saw a snake. It was guarding the temple!

KORUS WOMEN

(*Chanting again*) Hide the snake—Hide the snake.

LYSISTRATA

There are no snakes in Athena's temple! Back inside—all of you!

KLEONIKE

Strata, darling, there may be no snakes in the temple but it does have owls. They keep us awake all night with that terrible hooting. I'm dying for lack of sleep.

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LYSISTRATA

Oh, stop! I know what this is all about. You want your husbands, don't you? It's plain enough. Don't you think they want you just as badly? Hold on for a few more days and...

An eagle's screech is heard.

KORUS WOMAN

Look an eagle! It's a sign—a sign!

The KORUS WOMEN run and point, scream, then duck and cover. A message falls from the sky.

LYSISTRATA

(Picking up a small scroll) Thanks to the goddess. It's what I've been praying for. I sent a message to the oracle, and here is her reply. Who would like to hear the message from the oracle?

KORUS WOMEN

What says the message from the oracle?

LYSISTRATA

Then silence!

**When swift-winged swallow rises and from gaudy Hoopoe flies,
To join the gathering flock that shuns the Hoopoe's lustful eyes.
Then all the ills that plague the world will then come to a stop.
And what was underneath will Zeus then place upon the top.**

DAWN

Does that mean the men are going to be on the bottom from now on?

LYSISTRATA

**But if among the swallow flock disunities arise,
Abandoning the sisterhood one bird takes wing and flies.**

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**And if this scattered bird returns to join the Hoopoes' rut,
The cause is lost, and each bird bears the name: Eternal Slut.**

XANTIPPE

Well, that's pretty clear.

KLEONIKE

We don't need a priest to explain that prophecy.

LYSISTRATA

Sisters, the oracle has spoken and we must return to the temple of Athena. Remember the words of the prophecy—if we remain true to our oath it will be our joy to bring the ills of the world to an end.

XANTIPPE

Inside, everybody! Lift up those downcast eyes.

DAWN

I'll get my lute—we'll have a sing-along!

MYRRHINE

Group hug, everybody! Group hug!

Everyone exits.

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LYSISTRATA – CHORAL EPISODE 3

The KORUS MEN and SOCRATES enter. The KORUS WOMEN watch from the walls above.

SOCRATES

It's time you citizens heard the argument from the man's point-of-view. Gentlemen.

KORUS MEN

I'll tell you a tale of long ago of a young man named Melanion.

He was kissed and pawed at all day long and the women would all try to hop on him.

So he fled to the wilderness with only his dog where he snared and fed on rabbit.

He polished his male philosophy and perfected the masculine habit.

The birds would nest in his beard and hair and of women he never thought twice.

He lived to the end of his happy days in a one-man paradise.

SOCRATES knocks on the gate. XANTIPPE enters.

SOCRATES

So what do you think?

XANTIPPE

Not bad.

SOCRATES

Then, how about a big, wet kiss?

XANTIPPE

(Coming to him) I'll make you cry if you try, and I won't need any onions.

SOCRATES

How about a kick to the face instead?

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SOCRATES demonstrates his best kick.

XANTIPPE

My word! That was the hairiest butt I ever saw!

SOCRATES

It's a well-known fact that your average genius has more body hair than your ordinary man. Body hair is also a sign of courage—take General Myronides for example, he was so hairy the enemy took one look and ran away—and don't forget Admiral Pheramon.

XANTIPPE

Who could forget Pheramon the Furry.

SOCRATES

Pheramon was hairy as hell.

XANTIPPE

Stand back. The women have an answer to your scenario.

The KORUS WOMEN sing a pouty sexy version.

KORUS WOMEN

**Timon was a man-hater like Melanion and he fled into wild and fog.
His hatred and scorn were so complete he didn't even take a dog.
He polished his hate till it shone like a coin, and he swore and raved at the air.
It was women screamed at and women he dreamed, but the women were not really there.
The voices he thought he heard were birds, and the rain, and the wind in his hair.**

XANTIPPE

How about you? Want a good kick in the jaw?

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SOCRATES

Yes, please. Then I would get a look at your snatch. I've heard it's wild and shaggy.

XANTIPPE

It's a well known fact that men who are attracted to hairy women are gay.

SOCRATES

That's not true!

XANTIPPE

Don't worry, my pocketbook is singed and waxed to perfection. Where'd you get the eye-patch?

SOCRATES

Nice, huh? Makes me look like a man to be reckoned with.

XANTIPPE

You should get that eye fixed.

SOCRATES

Don't you worry about it!

XANTIPPE

Don't worry—I won't. (*XANTIPPE exits*)

SOCRATES

I said don't worry about it!

XANTIPPE

(*Off*) Don't worry—I won't

Exeunt

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LYSISTRATA -- Scene 3

LIGHTS – Night—MUSIC—LYSISTRATA again paces the walls. She spies something.

LYSISTRATA

Awake, Sisters! To your battle stations—Awake and arise! We're under attack!

KLEONIKE

(First to appear) How many?

LYSISTRATA

Only one.

KLEONIKE

Where is he? Are you sure it's a man?

LYSISTRATA

I'm sure of it. See—there he is—a young one by the look of him.

KLEONIKE

Yes, I see him—skulking in the shadows. He's positively bulging.

LYSISTRATA

Divine queens of Cypress—Cythera and Paphos—I pray you smile upon our enterprise.

The KORUS WOMEN have arrived

DAWN

Where is he? I want to see.

WOMAN THREE

Down there—under the statue of Demeter the Overflowing.

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DAWN

Where?

WOMAN ONE

How can you miss him?

WOMAN TWO

It's a man all right.

LYSISTRATA

Can anyone identify him?

MYRRHINE

By the gods I know who it is. It's Kinesias, my husband.

The WOMEN are impressed.

LYSISTRATA

Myrrhine, you know your duty. Arouse him. Smother him with kisses. Give him everything he wants except the one thing that you have sworn an oath not to give.

MYRRHINE

Don't worry. I know what I'm doing.

KLEONIKE

I better show you how it's done.

LYSISTRATA

No you won't! Go inside! Be careful, Myrrhine, dear, it's not as easy as you think. Go put on something...

MYRRHINE

Yellow?

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LYSISTRATA

No—blue. I'll get him started—but hurry! *(To the KORUS WOMEN)* And no watching! *(To XANTIPPE)* Keep an eye on every one of them.

XANTIPPE

No problem. All right, girls, who's up for another tattoo?

KORUS WOMEN

Oh, me! My turn! Pick me! *Etc.*

The KORUS WOMEN exit happily. KINESIAS enters tending his erection with some difficulty. He is followed by a manservant, MANES, who carries a baby.

KINESIAS

Wait in the shadows till I call for you, Manes. *(To the audience)* Ooof! I am in an extreme state of agony as you can see. My balls are fifty shades of blue. They look like eggplants. I'd show you but I can't even touch them anymore.

LYSISTRATA

Halt! Who goes there?

KINESIAS

Here stand I.

LYSISTRATA

What—a man?

KINESIAS

As you can see.

LYSISTRATA

It is verboten for men to approach the temple of Athena. Begone!

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KINESIAS

What country are you from that dares to say, “Begone!” to me in such a fashion?
What is your name?

LYSISTRATA

You may call me—The Sentinel.

KINESIAS

Well, Madam Sentinel, I order you to fetch Myrrhine at once.

LYSISTRATA

And who shall I say calls for her?

KINESIAS

I am Kinesias.

LYSISTRATA

Say that again.

KINESIAS

I said I am Kinesias, husband to Myrrhine.

LYSISTRATA

By the gods, can this be? Are you Kinesias—the one all women call—“the Pounder”?

KINESIAS

The what?

LYSISTRATA

Kinesias the Pounder—your name is well known here. Myrhene speaks of you constantly. She never nibbles an egg or an apple without saying, “Ah! This reminds me of my husband—the Pounder.”

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KINESIAS

Myrrhine says that?

LYSISTRATA

Yes, by Aphrodite. When our talk turns to men Myrrhine declares, “Compared to Kinesias other men have nothing.”

KINESIAS

Well bring her out here!

LYSISTRATA

What’s in it for me, pounder-man?

KINESIAS

You see what I have to offer—send for Myrrhine and you can help yourself—until my wife gets here, that is.

LYSISTRATA

Tempting! I may faint. But no—I can see that it would be too much for me. I’ll go fetch your wife.

KINESIAS

The Pounder! I like the sound of that! You hear that, little Hercules? Around here you and I are known as “the Pounder”. Ahhh! I’m going to explode! (*To the audience*) I have to confess that it’s gotten very hard since Myrrhine left. I don’t mean little Hercules here—I mean life—life has gotten harder. The house is cold and empty, the bed is huge, food has no taste anymore. I want Myrrhine!

MYRHENE

(*Seeing KINESIAS*) Oh dear.

KINESIAS

There she is!

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MYRRHINE

This may not be as easy as I thought. What if he's angry with me for leaving home?
What if he doesn't love me anymore? (*Turning to go*) I can't do it!

KINESIAS

Myrrhine! Is that you? Stop this nonsense and come down to me.

MYRRHINE

I can't.

KINESIAS

Why not?

MYRRHINE

You don't really need me.

KINESIAS

Look at me! Myrrhine, I'm dying!

MYRRHINE

You don't look like you're dying to me. Anyway, you're just saying that because you want me to come down.

KINESIAS

Please.

MYRRHINE

No.

KINESIAS

Please, please, please.

MYRRHINE

No, no, no.

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KINESIAS

Myrrhine! Look at me! I'm rigid with desire.

MYRRHINE

There, you see! You don't really love me. You just want help with your stiffy.

KINESIAS

Myrrhine! The Kinesias the Pounder demands that you come to him!

MYRRHINE

The who?

KINESIAS

The Pounder—the Pounder!

MYRRHINE

I don't know what you're talking about, and I don't like your tone. Goodbye!

KINESIAS

Myrrhine, wait—if not for me then for the sake of your child! Come here, Manes. (*MANES appears with the child—in the original production MANES and the child were played by one actor.*) Come on, kid, cry for Mama.

CHILD

Mama! Mama! Mama!

KINESIAS

There! Do you hear that? Doesn't it break your heart? It's been six days now and this child has not been washed or fed.

MYRRHINE

Poor darling baby, what a bad father you have!

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KINESIAS

Come down, come down, my darling, little fuzzy bee, come down for the sake of your child.

MYRRHINE

All right then, I suppose I must. Bother! What a thing it is to be a mother!

KINESIAS

(MYRRHINE disappears behind the gate) Did you see how she looked at me? I tell you, the angrier she gets the more I think I'll explode!

MYRRHINE

(Running out of the gate to the child) How's my little sweetie baby?

KINESIAS

She looks so much younger and prettier than I remember!

MYRRHINE

Oh, you're not dirty at all. Your father was teasing me. Kissy, kissy, treasure mine? You are such a sweet little thing, Mommy's little darling.

BABY makes happy sounds.

KINESIAS

Myrrhine, how can you let yourself be led away by these women? How can you give me such pain?

MYRRHINE

(KINESIAS reaches for her) Don't you touch me, mister!

KINESIAS

Manes, take the baby home.

MANES and the BABY exit.

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The house is going to rack and ruin.

MYRRHINE

I don't care.

KINESIAS

Your weaving is being pecked to pieces by the chickens. Don't you care about that?

MYRRHINE

No.

KINESIAS

And we haven't celebrated the mysteries of Aphrodite for the longest time. We are committing sacrilege! Oh Myrrhine, please come home!

MYRRHINE

I will come home. Just as soon as you men make a treaty that puts an end to the war.

KINESIAS

Is that what this is about? Sure! We can make a treaty.

MYRRHINE

You can?

KINESIAS

Sure.

MYRRHINE

You promise?

KINESIAS

I promise.

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MYRRHINE

Well, that's good! When you've finished with the treaty, I will come home—until then I swore an oath.

KINESIAS

I understand completely. Come here and lie down with me for a while.

MYRRHINE

No, no, no!

KINESIAS

Why not? Don't you love me—fuzzy bee?

MYRRHINE

Yes, I love you—fuzzy butt.

KINESIAS

Come and lie down with me, just for a little while.

MYRRHINE

Out in the open?

KINESIAS

Why not? There's no one watching.

MYRRHINE

What about my oath? Do you want me to commit perjury?

KINESIAS

I'm the man. I'll assume the responsibility.

MYRRHINE

All right, then—I'll go find a bed for us.

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KINESIAS

(Tugging her back) Whoa! Whoa! Whoa! Who needs a bed? We can lie on the ground.

MYRRHINE

No, no! Even though you are bad, I don't want my husband lying on the bare earth. *She goes back into the Akropolis.*

KINESIAS

She loves me—what can I say?

MYRRHINE

(Coming back with a cot) Come, get in the bed; I'll take my dress off. Oh dear, I forgot the mattress!

KINESIAS

A mattress? Who cares?

MYRRHINE

Kinesias, we can't lie on bare sacking! That would be squalid!

KINESIAS

That's what they call me—Mister Squalid.

MYRRHINE

Funny! Wait a minute—Mister Squalid! *(She disappears coyly through the gate.)*

KINESIAS

Good god, hurry up

MYRRHINE

(She comes back with a mattress) Here we go. Lie down. Now for my dress—no peeking! Oh you poor thing—there's no pillow!

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KINESIAS

I don't care! I don't care!

MYRRHINE

But I do. (*She leaves him again.*)

KINESIAS

Oh god, oh god, I wonder if she feels the way I do?

MYRRHINE

(*Returns with a pillow*) There, lift your head, dear! Is your little man ready for me?

KINESIAS

Little Hercules is standing at attention—ready to do one of his wonders.

MYRRHINE

My, he certainly looks ready! Why do you call him little Hercules? We're Greek! You should call him little Heracles.

KINESIAS

I like to think of him as Italian.

MYRRHINE

I'll just unfasten my sash. Remember that you promised to make a peace treaty?

KINESIAS

Yes, yes, I remember the treaty!

MYRRHINE

Oh, no! There's no blanket!

KINESIAS

Who needs a blanket? I want to make love!

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MYRRHINE

(Going out again) Back in no time!

KINESIAS

This woman will kill me with her pillows and blankets!

MYRRHINE

(Coming back with a blanket) Now, up you go!

KINESIAS

I'm already up. I've been up for days!

MYRRHINE

I know what you like. *(Getting on him)*

KINESIAS

Yes. Oh yes. Show me what I like.

MYRRHINE

You like to be rubbed all over with scented oil.

KINESIAS

What? No! I don't!

MYRRHINE

Yes, you do! Yes, you do!

KINESIAS

No, Myrrhine, please don't!

MYRRHINE

Can't fool me, you big tease. I'll go get the perfume. *(She goes out again.)*

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KINESIAS

God damn the man who invented perfume!

MYRRHINE

(Coming back with a flask) Oh dear! I brought the wrong bottle. *(She goes.)*

KINESIAS

Little Hercules, this must be one of your labors.

MYRRHINE

(Coming back with another flask) Here we come! Ooh-la-la! This bottle is the real stuff.

KINESIAS

I have a bottle for you right here, and it's ready to go! Come to bed with me and don't go get another thing.

MYRRHINE

Kinesias, dear, will you vote for the peace treaty?

KINESIAS

I'll think about it. *(MYRRHINE squeezes out from under him and runs away.)*
Myrhene? Myrhene? I'm dead. I've been killed. The most beautiful woman in the world has worked me to the mountaintop of desire and left me there alone to die. Poor little Hercules! How can I give you what you want so badly?

The KORUS MEN enter to commiserate

SOCRATES

Is there a doctor in the house? This poor man clearly suffers from a blockage in his amorosity—It's quite severe—the strain on his back and loins must be intense—sheer torture I imagine. I ask again, is there a doctor in the house?

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KINESIAS

What are you talking about? I don't want a doctor. I want a woman, and the woman I want is Myrrhine.

SOCRATES

Only one thing we can do then. (*Calling to KLEISTHENES*) Kleisthenes?

KLEISTHENES steps out from the chorus.

KLEISTHENES

What can I do you?

KINESIAS

I don't want Kleisthenes. He's a big hairy man.

SOCRATES

You could sing the hair off his butt with a torch.

KLEISTHENES

I would like that!

KINESIAS

I don't want Kleisthenes! (*Beating on the gates*) I want a woman! I want a woman! I want a woman!

SOCRATES

We heard you the first time, you big whiner! How can you speak about women like that after what your wife did to you? Take a lesson from your own dingus and stand up straight for a change! Cry out to Zeus, the manly god of thunder to send down his punishment.

KINESIAS

How do I cry out for something like that?

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SOCRATES

Not easy—let’s call upon the expert. Is Homer around somewhere?

KORUS MAN

I’ll get him.

KORUS MAN runs off tunnel Right. SOCRATES sees HOMER coming tunnel Left.

SOCRATES

Never mind! Here he comes. Whups, too late! *(To HOMER off Left)* Homer, this young man would like you to call upon Zeus to rain down punishment upon women in general and his wife in particular.

HOMER

(Entering) Not a problem. What’s her name?

KINESIAS

Myrrhene. No, wait. Don’t use her name.

HOMER

Not as effective.

KINESIAS

Just don’t use her name.

HOMER

Whatever you say.

MUSIC

**Cloud gathering Zeus, Zeus of the wide brows, I call on you to
Seize these women by the hair and yank them up from face of earth.
Set them spinning in the air until they yearn and learn the worth
Of men. Then release them—let them sail—spread-eagled down
And there impale themselves—let each one stick on upright dick.**

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**There stuck, the helpless, ruptured duck—Zeus will bless with such good luck
The duck will have a stupefying, death-defying, really fun and flying fuck.**

SOCRATES

How's that?

KINESIAS

No good! You can't pray a woman into your bed. It's impossible. *(Running off)* I want a woman! I want a woman! I want a woman!

EXEUNT after KINESIAS

KLEISTHENES

(Following) Group hug! Everybody! Group hug!

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LYSISTRATA -- Scene 4

PANTOMIME—The “Trojan Burkha”

The cry of a damsel in distress is heard. A female figure wearing a burkha enters as if running for her life. She bangs on the gate. XANTIPPE appears above, signals to open the gate and exits. The gates open a crack and the figure in the burkha squeezes through. The KORUS MEN, the MAGISTRATE and SOCRATES enter “commando style” and flatten against the walls. The gate is opened by the burkha-wearing KORUS MAN, head now uncovered and true gender revealed. With a cry the KORUS MEN enter the gates. Pause. There is the sound of ululating women and men being beaten. The KORUS MEN are thrown through the gates. Before they can pick themselves up there a musical fanfare is heard.

MUSIC—Fanfare

The SPARTAN HERALD enters, his enormous erection covered with his cloak.

HERALD

Ho!

KORUS MEN

Ho!

HERALD

Be you men of Athens?

KORUS MEN

We be men of Athens.

HERALD

I seek the meeting place of your Elected Ones.

SOCRATES

Are you a man or a signpost?

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HERALD

I am Herald from Sparta. I bring a secret message.

MAGISTRATE

If you come as an assassin you are a clumsy one. It's obvious you hide your spear beneath your cloak.

HERALD

It is no spear—it is a message.

SOCRATES

Doesn't look like a message to me—looks more like a hernia.

HERALD

By the twin brothers Castor and Pollox, I have no hernia! It is a message—behold the message from Sparta!

Throwing back his cloak the HERALD reveals an enormous erection.

MAGISTRATE

Mother of the gods—you're huge! Can I send for a bucket of cold water?

HERALD

Won't do any good—I've tried. Do you accept the message?

MAGISTRATE

When you say this is a message, what exactly are you trying to say?

HERALD

The message is written on the skytale—read it.

MAGISTRATE

You have some sort of tattoo?

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HERALD

No, it's a skytale!

MAGISTRATE

A what?

HERALD

A Spartan skytale.

MAGISTRATE

You speak in riddles.

SOCRATES

(Aside to MAGISTRATE) I think I understand, Magistrate. Skytale—rhymes with Italy—it's a kind of code.

MAGISTRATE

A code?

SOCRATES

Yes. You take a leather strap and emboss letters on it. When the strap is wound around a rod of a pre-determined size the letters line up and form the message.

MAGISTRATE

Oh. You may be right. Go take a look.

SOCRATES

Me?

MAGISTRATE

I'm not going near that thing.

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SOCRATES

(Muttering) I have to do everything around here. *(Approaching the HERALD who is strokes his enflamed member and looks wistfully women sitting in the front row of the audience.)* Herald—may I call you Herald?

HERALD

You may.

SOCRATES

May I examine your skytale?

HERALD

You may—but first you must locate the leather tab.

SOCRATES

Locate the leather tab—I assume you mean the tab that unwinds the skytale?

HERALD

Yes. Pull on it.

MAGISTRATE

Is this a game that Spartan boys play with each other?

HERALD

It is no game. Find the leather tab, slave, and pull on it!

SOCRATES

I'm a philosopher not a slave! Let me see—let's take a look at this Carthaginian Jungle snake here. Looks like a bandage.

HERALD

That's the skytale. It bears the encoded message. Unwind it. Easy! Easy! Ah!

SOCRATES unwinds it and hands the skytale to the MAGISTRATE.

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MAGISTRATE

(Reading the skytale) What am I supposed to do with this—it’s gibberish?

HERALD

Like your slave says, it’s in code.

SOCRATES

I’m not a slave!

HERALD

The receiver of the message must wind the strap around a rod that is the same size as the rod used by the sender.

SOCRATES

(Yelling) Why didn’t you tell me that before I unwound it?

HERALD

(Yelling back) Then it wouldn’t be a code, would it?

SOCRATES

Come here! Put it back on!

HERALD

No. The principle of a code is that the key must be held by both the sender and receiver. Otherwise the whole purpose of a secret code would be defeated—and that would be absurd! One of you must provide the key!

MAGISTRATE

Silence, Herald! I’ve had enough of this Spartan logic. All right, men, which one of you has a “key” that can match the “key” of Herald here?

The KORUS MEN look at each other—no one apparently has a “key” big enough to match the Herald. SOCRATES steps forward.

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SOCRATES

Give it here. This looks like a job for a philosopher.

MUSIC—a grim battlefield theme begins to play as SOCRATES takes the skytale and turns upstage.

MAGISTRATE

Give him some cover men!

The KORUS MEN rush to cover SOCRATES with their cloaks as he prepares to decode the skytale. SOCRATES cries out with anguish.

KORUS MAN

It's not working.

HERALD

Hah! (*contemptuously*) Athenians!

MAGISTRATE

Kleisthenes? See if you can get him started.

KLEISTHENES

About time somebody around here appreciated my talents.

SOCRATES

No! Not Kleisthenes!

KLEISTHENES disappears behind the cloaks that cover SOCRATES.

No! Get him away from me!

KLEISTHENES

(*Popping up*) It's too small! I can't get a reading!

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SOCRATES

I can do it myself! Just get away from me!

The music rises. SOCRATES begins his epic struggle. The encouragement and cheers of the KORUS MEN signal that success is being achieved.

KLEISTHENES

(Now running back and forth between the MAGISTRATE and SOCRATES) The Spartan was right. It is a message. The letters are matching up to form words.

MAGISTRATE

What does it say?

KLEISTHENES

It's a message and it's been signed by every general in the Spartan army—there must be 20 or more signatures!

HERALD

Hey. Mine didn't say that!

MAGISTRATE

That's because you're not an Athenian, Spartan!

SOCRATES

Arghhh!!

MAGISTRATE

Read the code! Quick—before he loses it! Read the code!

KLEISTHENES

SITUATION DESPERATE—MUST MAKE PEACE AT ONCE—FOR GOD'S SAKE—HURRY—THE SPARTANS!

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The KORUS MEN cheer. SOCRATES collapses. Smoke rises from beneath his costume.

MAGISTRATE

What say you, Herald? Does this message speak true? How are things in Sparta?

HERALD

Everything's up in the air. Men walk around hunched over—they look like monks carrying candles in a windstorm.

MAGISTRATE

We have to act fast before this uprising spreads over all of Greece. Return at once to Sparta, Herald. Say the Athenians will accept a treaty as soon as one can be arranged. And tell every man in your city that my standing is as high as any man in Greece. Tell it to the Spartans—go!

HERALD

I go!

The HERALD exits with difficulty.

MAGISTRATE

(With grudging admiration) Somebody get that man a wheelbarrow.

Exeunt all but SOCRATES

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CHORAL EPISODE 4

SOCRATES lies on the ground— a dying hero on the battlefield—smoke rises from underneath his tunic. XANTIPPE enters from the gates—a Grecian Florence Nightingale.

XANTIPPE

If you would let me, please sir, I would like to extract the beast in you.

SOCRATES

No woman can ever remove the beast that lives within the heart of every man.

XANTIPPE

Yes, but the beast that's plaguing you is not in your heart it's in your eye.

SOCRATES

Don't touch me!

XANTIPPE

I just want to see.

XANTIPPE cradles SOCRATES and lifts his eyelid.

There it is. It's huge! It's a bug or something.

SOCRATES

Yes, I know it's been bothering me for the longest time.

XANTIPPE

Only one safe way to remove something like that—hold still.

SOCRATES

What are you doing?

XANTIPPE

Be still. Be still.

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XANTIPPE sticks her tongue underneath the eyelid of the SOCRATES. When she withdraws she picks a cinder off the tip of her tongue.

It's a cinder from a fire—a big one too. That must have hurt.

SOCRATES

It felt like a boulder in there. It stopped up all my tears and my eyes were so dry! Oh, no, here they come.

XANTIPPE

It's all right, let them flow. The tears will wash your eyes all clear. Here, I'll wipe your face for you, though I don't know why.

SOCRATES

Thank you.

XANTIPPE

And here's a kiss for you.

SOCRATES

No kiss!

XANTIPPE

Sorry, but I'm not giving you a choice.

XANTIPPE kisses SOCRATES. The KORUS MEN enter. The KORUS WOMEN stand watching from the gates.

SOCRATES

Well, the old saying is true enough. The only thing worse than life with a woman, is life without one. Are we in agreement men? *(The KORUS MEN agree)* We will come to terms with you. We men no longer regard you as our sworn enemies. Right men! *(The KORUS MEN agree)*

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XANTIPPE

Very well, then. But at least you can put some clothes on. Or do you intend to spend the rest of your life stripped for battle?

SOCRATES

You're right, We took them off because you put us in such a rage.

XANTIPPE

Here's a tunic. The Spartans would take one look at you and die from laughing.

KORUS WOMEN dress the KORUS MEN

XANTIPPE

Now you look like men.

SOCRATES

Thank you. Now to conclude this new-forged peace between men and women, let us all join together in a song.

Sudden and saucy MUSIC plays. There is a lively DANCE.

KORUS MEN AND WOMEN (*singing*)

**It's all about the money, without it life is hell
It's all about the money, money makes us well.
It's all about the money, It is our favorite perk
Money comes from war, and without war we have to work.**

KORUS MAN (*solo*)

**In joy let everyone that's here stand up and sing and dance
To make you extra happy we loan you money in advance.
Each man and woman here would like a loan that's good as cash,
Don't be afraid to help yourself, you won't be acting rash.
You see I have a secret that among us can be shared
You'll never have to pay it back unless peace is declared.**

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**And what’s the likelihood of that? You’ll never get a bill.
It’s only money anyway, come in and take your fill.**

KORUS MEN AND WOMEN (*singing*)
**It’s all about the money, without it life is hell
It’s all about the money, money makes us well.
It’s all about the money. It is our favorite perk
Money comes from war, and without war we’d have to work.**

KORUS WOMAN (*solo*)
**A banquet I’ve prepared for you. You’re famished! Aren’t you weak?
A suckling pig, a quail, some trout, a salad that is Greek—
Pine nuts, olives—black, of course, a ripe and zesty cheese.
The wine is aged at least five years, the palate it does please!
So come on in, be sure to act as if you owned the place
And we will gladly slam the door right in your fucking face!**

The KORUS WOMEN dance into the Akropolis. As the KORUS MEN try to enter the door is slammed in their faces. The KORUS MEN exit dejectedly.

SOCRATES
I’m getting sick and tired of this.

SOCRATES exits. The LIGHTS blink.

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LYSISTRATA -- SCENE 5

Evening of a new day.

KLEISTHENES runs on from one tunnel as SOCRATES enters from the other.

SOCRATES

Here come the envoys from Sparta, long beards and all, each one with a pig on a leash.

KLEISTHENES

(Calling off) Ho, men of Sparta! What's up?

SPARTAN ENVOY

(Off) Another stupid comment, slave, you will be whipped.

KLEISTHENES

Slave! That'll cost you extra! *(To SOCRATES)* I'll go get the Athenian delegation. No, here they come.

MUSIC—The MAGISTRATE enters with the ATHENIAN DELEGATION. Each member covers his member with a cloak. The SPARTAN DELEGATION enters also with cloak and erection. Oddly, a few of the Spartans resemble members of the WOMENS KORUS except they are wearing beards.

MAGISTRATE

Ho Spartan—though the day be warm I see you come with cloak wrapped tight about you.

SPARTAN ENVOY

It's not heat, Athenian. It's the tumidity.

MAGISTRATE

Ha! Ha! Your words, oh Spartan, may be few but your timing is excellent

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SPARTAN ENVOY

Tell me, man to man, what do Athenians use to bring relief?

MAGISTRATE

Whatever comes to hand.

SPARTAN

Ha! Ha!

KLEISTHENES appears with a list.

MAGISTRATE

—some fall back on Kleisthenes.

KLEISTHENES

I have an opening in 40 minutes, if you can wait that long.

KLEISTHENES sees a taker among the SPARTANS and joins them, taking names.

MAGISTRATE

Let's get this humiliating business over with. (*Calling over the gate*) Lysistrata—come forth!

The Gates swing open—LYSISTRATA appears above. The KORUS WOMEN stand in the opened gateway.

Hail bravest of all womankind—firm and yielding—high and low—Lysistrata, supreme among your sex. All Greece now stands before you.

KORUS MEN

**Brilliant co-joined skill and art
Conquering both head and heart
Of the foremost men of Greece
We kneel before you—sue for peace.**

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The ATHENIAN and SPARTAN MEN kneel with much groaning and adjustment of body parts.

LYSISTRATA

Achieving peace will be easy unless you men turn to each other exclusively for love and comfort. I understand that is already beginning to happen.

XANTIPPE crosses to the SPARTANS to take the reservation list away from KLEISTHENES who scampers back to join the ATHENIAN delegation.

Rise, please. *(They do, and they do)* You have come to have Peace revealed to you and to all the people of Greece. And she shall be revealed. But first, you must approach the citadel in the true spirit of reconciliation. You Spartans are guests here in the city you may first come forward. Ladies, take them by the hand or by any convenient handle.

The KORUS WOMEN lead the happy SPARTANS to one side of the Gate.

Now bring the ATHENIANS to my other side.

The ATHENIANS are equally happy to have their handles pulled. Last one is the MAGISTRATE who eagerly turns to see who his puller might be.

MOTHER

My! My! My!

MAGISTRATE

Mother! *(His erection drops)*

MOTHER

Come along, Sonny. *(She pulls the MAGISTRATE by the ear)*

LYSISTRATA

Do you agree that there will be an end to boorishness and violence of the kind that husbands sometimes bring home to their wives? If this basic principle is understood

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then you shall have the reconciliation you have come for. Do you agree to this principal?

KORUS MEN
We agree!

LYSISTRATA
Hearken then! Behold, the Goddess! I give you Peace!
Celestial sounding MUSIC—PEACE appears—a beautiful woman led onto the citadel wall by two KORUS WOMEN who remove her robe. She stands there naked. The MEN, stunned by her beauty, turn out and experience simultaneous erections. They move as one to stare up the GODDESS PEACE.

Now Grecian men—attend my speech. First of all, I must scold both sides of this conflict—a scolding that you well deserve. Athenians and Spartans—the joys you celebrate in life are the same. Sadness and grief come to Athenian and Spartan alike. Both of you sacrifice to the same gods and perform the same rituals.— And yet you cut each other’s throats and sack each other’s cities. That is my first point.

MAGISTRATE
Lysistrata, please! I’m worried—there might be an explosion.

LYSISTRATA
(Ignoring him) I direct my next remarks to you men of Sparta.
The SPARTANS are staring at PEACE. LYSISTRATA, realizing this, nods to PEACE join her on the other side of the battlements. All MEN, when they turn to follow PEACE, are now facing LYSISTRATA.

Spartans—have you forgotten the time the sea-god ravaged your city with earthquakes and tidal waves? You were left helpless and exposed to the invader. In desperation you turned to Athens and begged them to come and give you aid. And Athens came. 4000 hoplites brought supplies and faced down the invader. Sparta was saved by Athens. And for this service you ravage the soil of your benefactors! What do you say to this?

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SPARTAN ENVOY

(Looking at the GODDESS) Who would have thought Peace would come with such a lovely butt?

PEACE, the North Star, moves again and every compass needle follows.

LYSISTRATA

Men of Athens—do you think I’m going to let you off the hook? Have you forgotten former days when you wore the sheep-skins of slaves?

KORUS MEN

(Gazing at PEACE) Ah, no. Can’t recall. *Etc.*

LYSISTRATA

Let me then remind you. It was Sparta’s turn to come to your aid. And they did come. With spear in hand the Spartans helped you throw off the yoke of Hippias the Tyrant. Does that mean anything to you?

KORUS MEN

Oh, yes. That rings a bell. Uh huh. *Etc.*

LYSISTRATA

Thanks to Sparta you were able to exchange the tunic of slavery for the long and handsome cloak of the free man.

SPARTAN ENVOY

(To LYSISTRATA) Madam, did you know your eyes shine brilliantly when you speak? What’s your sign?

LYSISTRATA

Bound as both cities are by this history of mutual kindness, how can you bear to be a war with each other?

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PEACE is covered with a robe and whisked away. ATHENIANS and SPARTANS immediately turn to each other and become angry and combative.

MAGISTRATE

We would make peace but you Spartans threw yourselves upon us and began storming our breastworks!

SPARTAN ENVOY

You Athenians tried to climb up the legs of Megara and forced your way into the sacred inlet!

ATHENIAN MEN

(Speaking together ad lib) Fucking asshole Spartan savages! *Etc.*

SPARTAN MEN

(Speaking together ad lib) Pig-loving Athenian dogs! I'll kill your ass! *Etc.*

The ATHENIANS and SPARTANS launch themselves at each other, but suffer an immediate cramping in the groin area.

LYSISTRATA

Gentlemen! A truce has been declared. Come to terms. You must not fight over unimportant things.

MAGISTRATE

Lysistrata's right. I propose we turn our swords into farm equipment and I, for one, intend to put my plow unto every furrow that I see.

SPARTAN ENVOY

I will join you. And I for one am ready to fertilize the whole of Greece!

KORUS MEN

All for one and one for me!

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LYSISTRATA

Good! Then I invite you all to come inside the temple where you can purify yourselves. When that is done your wives will entertain and feed you. Every basket of provisions will be emptied for the feast.

The KORUS MEN cheer and enter the Gates.

MAGISTRATE

(To the SPARTAN ENVOY) Will you follow me into Athena's temple?

SPARTAN ENVOY

Point the way.

MAGISTRATE

(Going in first but not wanting the SPARTAN to follow too closely)

Wait for it! Wait for it!

*MUSIC—LIGHTS—it is night—a flickering glow can be seen beyond the gates
Sounds of revelry are heard. The gates open a crack. SOCRATES and XANTIPPE
enter, arms around each other. They share a flask of wine.*

SOCRATES

You're still sitting there!

SOCRATES and XANTIPPE

**A treasure lies beyond this gate
Silken robes and silver plate
Come on in, it's quite a steal
You'll never find a better deal.**

SOCRATES

Oh! I forgot to tell you. There's a dog guarding the gate.

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XANTIPPE

Two dogs, actually—Beware! They both can bite.

SOCRATES and XANTIPPE bark like dogs.

SOCRATES

There's only one way to get past the dogs and get to the treasure and this is how you do it.

XANTIPPE

You tell the dogs exactly what you did today to bring an end to war. That's all there is to it—tell them what you are willing to sacrifice in order to bring peace to the world.

SOCRATES

And the dogs will let you in. (*MUSIC*) Ah! Here they come. The Spartans must be ready to sing.

XANTIPPE

Spartans have such beautiful voices.

The gates open and all MEN and WOMEN enter. All are drunk and happy.

LYSISTRATA

The documents have been signed and now every man may take his wife and go home in peace. Go home. Go home. Go home.

MUSIC – Gospel/Folk

SINGER

PEACE

PEACE

PEACE

PEACE

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PEACE

PEACE

ALL MY SISTERS, ALL MY BROTHERS

PEACE

PEACE

PEACE

ATHENIANS and SPARTANS exit arm in arm with their wives and husbands. The MAGISTRATE is alone on stage with LYSISTRATA. Then he too exits. LYSISTRATA is alone for a time.

MUSIC—XANTIPPE appears. Then KLEONIKE. One by one the WOMEN return and gather around LYSISTRATA holding tightly to one another. KEONIKE addresses the audience.

KLEONIKE

**You who spread warfare and hatred and fear
Lysistrata's women will soon re-appear
Some high and mighty, some wash and wear,
Lysistrata's women, they're everywhere.**

LIGHTS FADE