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# LYSISTRATA

An Adaptation of the Greek Comedy by Aristophanes

In a New English Version

by **Robert Lehan**

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# LYSISTRATA

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## ***SETTING:***

The Ancient Greek City-State of Athens

## ***CHARACTERS:***

LYSISTRATA  
KALONIKE  
MYRRHINE  
LAMPITO  
A YOUNG THEBAN  
A YOUNG KORINTHIAN  
A WOMAN GUARD  
KORYPHAIOS, LEADER OF MALE CHORUS  
CHORUS OF MEN  
KORYPHAIOS, LEADER OF FEMALE CHORUS  
CHORUS OF WOMEN  
SCYTHIAN GUARDS  
MAGISTRATE  
A THEBAN WOMAN  
A KORINTHIAN WOMAN  
PREGNANT GUARD  
KINESIAS  
MANES, KINESIAS SLAVE  
SPARTAN MESSENGER  
SPARTAN AMBASSADOR  
ATHENIAN AMBASSADOR  
PEACE

# LYSISTRATA

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*(AT RISE: Suggestions of a classical Greek stage; the main structure, the skene building, stands upstage. It is a marble rectangle with one large central door opening onstage to a platform with stone steps leading to the stage floor, the orkestrai, or "dancing place", of the chorus. Several actors will soon stand on the roof of the skene. In the center of the orkestrai is an altar from which incense smoke will rise. To left and right, below the skene, and sharing the platform, are arched entrances, or parodoi, the entrances of the chorus. Behind all of this is a large sky drop. Dawn's red light now fades up on this drop, reminding us that a red sky in the morning suggests that trouble is brewing. The skene is now black against the red sky.)*

## PART ONE

*(Quiet GREEK INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC fades in as A SLAVE carrying a smoking bowl of incense, enters in the near-dark, sets it on the altar, and exits. A ROOSTER CROWS in the close distance and MORNING LIGHT fades up on the door area as LYSISTRATA enters from right parodos and walks onto the platform into the light. MUSIC fades away as SHE looks out at us, trying and failing to see anyone out front in the dim light. SHE gestures and sighs.)*

### LYSISTRATA

*(After searching)* Not a woman in sight! If I had asked them here to worship the gods of wine or love, they'd have rushed to crowd the streets of Athens with merry-making, with tambourines and dancing! But now... *(Sees KALONIKE, moves down to meet her)* Ah ha! There's one at last. My neighbor. *(Calls)* Kalonike!

### KALONIKE

*(As SHE moves to LYSISTRATA)* Good morning, Lysistrata! Oh my, you look upset. Don't frown so, dear, you'll line your face.

### LYSISTRATA

Forget about my face, my friend. What lines I have, I've earned. What I'm upset about is this; I recently have heard— We have been slandered by the men, Kalonike.

### KALONIKE

No!

### LYSISTRATA

They say we're artful at deceit and win our selfish ways by trickery.

KALONIKE

Well, by Zeus, we do. It's a skill our mothers taught us.

LYSISTRATA

Tell me then; why is it, when they have a chance to plot and scheme right here with me for something truly serious, do they stay home in bed and do not come?

KALONIKE

Oh, they'll come. I know it's hard . . . to leave the house, I mean, what with the servants or the children... or you get all wrapped up in your husband...

LYSISTRATA

My meeting is more important!

KALONIKE

Oh? Well, what *did* you call us women all together for? What's the point?

LYSISTRATA

It's something really big, Kalonike.

KALONIKE

Ah ha! I knew it! I knew it! And thick?

LYSISTRATA

Yes. Thick indeed, and very, very big.

KALONIKE

Oooh! And with all that, they come late?

LYSISTRATA

No, no, no. It isn't what you think. (*Laughs*) If that's what was up, they'd all be here.

KALONIKE

Yes indeed they would. But what else is up if that's not it?

LYSISTRATA

It's something that just came to me. I've tossed and turned upon it many a sleepless night.

KALONIKE

It must be getting worn if you've been so long upon it.

LYSISTRATA

Oh, stop it, Kalonike; it came to this: The women, and only the women can save our country.

KALONIKE

Only the women? Great Zeus, then Greece is doomed!

LYSISTRATA

It's doomed alright, if we don't take her fate into our hands. Sparta will be annihilated...

KALONIKE

Good!

LYSISTRATA

Boeotia will be destroyed...

KALONIKE

Oh! But not those delicious Theban eels, I hope.

LYSISTRATA

Listen to me! And our beloved Athens...

KALONIKE

Oh? Athens too?

LYSISTRATA

Yes! I can barely speak of it. I can't say the words. Do you know the horror that I mean?

KALONIKE

Yes.

LYSISTRATA

If only they would come. Together, the women from Sparta, Boeotia and Athens can save all of Greece!

KALONIKE

But, Lysistrata, how can women do anything so heroic? Our place is at home. You of all people know; beautifully gowned, slippared and perfumed.

LYSISTRATA

Those are our weapons, Kalonike! Our pretty little slippers, our most seductive scent, our most transparent silks and saffron gowns!

KALONIKE

What sort of women's-wear weapons are these?

LYSISTRATA

Weapons designed to prevent men from ever again raising their spears—

KALONIKE

*(Cries out)* Ooh!

*(Overlapping speeches)*

LYSISTRATA

—against another man!

KALONIKE

Oh. Well, if it will help, I'll have a dress dyed saffron.

LYSISTRATA

Or take up his shield.

KALONIKE

...and then I'll get the sheerest gown I can find.

LYSISTRATA

Or pull out his sword.

KALONIKE

I saw the most marvelous sandals!

*(Continuing now individually)*

LYSISTRATA

You see? Don't you think those women should have come?

KALONIKE

They should have flown!

LYSISTRATA

Of course I expected the Athenians to come late as usual, but there's no one here from the seacoast towns, or from Salamis either.

KALONIKE

Oh, they'll come. It's hard for them in the early morning. I mean they have to row all the way across the strait.

LYSISTRATA

And our neighbors, the Acharnians, I would expect them to be the first ones here.

KALONIKE

Well, if she's sober, Theagene's wife will be here. She's even consulted Hecate's oracle. Oh. Look, look over there! Some women are coming.

LYSISTRATA

Yes, I see them. And there are more over there.

KALONIKE

Where are they from?

LYSISTRATA

*(Sniffing)* Anagyros. I know that perfume. *(KALONIKE finds LYSISTRATA'S reference to "perfume" to be hilarious, considering SHE meant their particular body odor.)*

*(MYRRHINE enters, moving like a runway model.)*

MYRRHINE

Good morning, Lysistrata! *(Pause)* Why don't you say something? Hmm? Oh, am I a tiny bit late? Am I?

LYSISTRATA

I shouldn't speak to you at all, Myrrhine, for being so casual about something so important.

MYRRHINE

Well, I'm sorry, but I had a little trouble.

LYSISTRATA

Oh?

MYRRHINE

Yes. I couldn't find my girdle in the dark. Now why have you called this meeting?

KALONIKE

Just let's wait for the Spartan and Theban women.

LYSISTRATA

Good advice. And look, here's Lampito, our Spartan friend. *(Calls)* Dearest Lampito, welcome! *(As LAMPITO approaches)* Goodness, you're so healthy! Look at that complexion, Kalonike. *(To LAMPITO)* Oh, you look as if you could wrestle a bull!

LAMPITO

I could! We Spartans work out every day... We're always kicking ourselves in the ass.

LYSISTRATA

What?

LAMPITO

It's a Spartan dance. Good exercise. See?

*(SHE demonstrates. TWO OTHER WOMEN, one Theban and one Korinethian, enter and watch.)*

KALONIKE

(*To LAMPITO*) And what a beautiful pair of boobs you have!

LAMPITO

Oooh! Don't pat me like a sacrificial cow.

LYSISTRATA

Who's your young friend, Lampito?

LAMPITO

Oh, she's the representative from Thebes.

LYSISTRATA

Ah, beautiful Thebes. (*Referencing the Theban's body*) I love her gardens, her hills and valleys. (*A laugh*)

KALONIKE

I'll bet she's been recently plowed! (*A bigger laugh*)

LYSISTRATA

And who's this?

LAMPITO

She's from Korinth. Her family's very big there.

LYSISTRATA

Well, *she's* very big here... and here. (*Biggest laughter*)

LAMPITO

All right. All right. Say, who called for this meeting?

LYSISTRATA

I did.

LAMPITO

Good. Glad to help. What can we do for you?

LYSISTRATA

I'll tell you. But first I must ask you a question.

MYRRHINE

Anything you like, Lysistrata.

LYSISTRATA

Thank you. This is it. Do you women not miss your husbands?

THEBAN

Yes!

LYSISTRATA

Are you not saddened that the fathers of your children are endlessly away fighting in an endless war?

KORINTHIAN

Oh, yes!

LYSISTRATA

Is there any one of you with a husband safe at home?

MYRRHINE

Mine is. Kinesias just came home, but he'll go back to the war in a few days.

KALONIKE

Mine's been the last five months in Thrace. His duty is to guard General Eucrates... and to keep him from deserting.

THEBAN

Mine's been seven months in Pylos.

LAMPITO

Mine gets home on leave sometimes, but he just comes and goes again.

LYSISTRATA

There's hardly a single lover left!

WOMEN

*(In agreement)* Ah!

LYSISTRATA

And since the Milesians deserted us—

WOMEN

Oh, YES!

LYSISTRATA

I haven't even seen a single one of those eight-inch leather husband substitutes they make.

WOMEN

*(Keening)* Ah! Ahhh!

LYSISTRATA

Would you be willing then, providing I can do it, to help me end this awful war?

MYRRHINE

I would. I surely would! Even if I have to sell my favorite dress for drinking money.

KALONIKE

And so would I! Split me like a flounder and I'll give half of me to end the war!

LAMPITO

Me too! I'd climb to the top of Mount Taygetos on my knees if I could look down on a peaceful country.

LYSISTRATA

Then listen to this; Women, if we want to drive our men to peace, we must abstain... We must abstain from... Ooh...

MYRRHINE

Abstain from what?

ALL

Tell us, Lysistrata!

LYSISTRATA

But will you do it?

MYRRHINE

Yes! Even if it kills us!

ALL

Yes!

LYSISTRATA

All right then; we must abstain from making love!

ALL

Wha! Whoa!

LYSISTRATA

From any and all sex with our men!

ALL

*(AD LIB among one another)* Oh, no. Did you hear that? What? I don't think so!

*(THE WOMEN begin to exit.)*

LYSISTRATA

Where are you going? Why do you turn away? Myrrhine, why are you weeping?

MYRRHINE

*(Sobbing)* I can't do it, Lysistrata! Let the war go on.

KALONIKE

I can't either. Let the war go on!

ALL

Let the war go on!

LYSISTRATA

*(To KALONIKE)* What's wrong, my little flounder? A moment ago you were willing to be split up the middle.

KALONIKE

Oh, Please! Anything else! I'll walk through fire if you like, but give up sex? I can't!

LYSISTRATA

And what do you say, Myrrhine?

MYRRHINE

*(After a long thought)* I'll take the fire.

LYSISTRATA

Ohhh! It is little wonder that the poets write only tragedies about women!! Our gender is entirely depraved. Our life is wasted in kisses and babies and we can think about nothing else. But you! You, my Spartan friend, you're strong. If you stand with me, perhaps we still can win.

LAMPITO

It's hard, you know? It's really hard, to ask a girl to sleep alone... And who can say for how long? But...but— By the two goddesses, peace comes first. I'll do it!

LYSISTRATA

My friend! My only friend! And the only real woman here!

KALONIKE

But, Lysistrata, if we do abstain from... all you say... are you *sure* that peace will come?

LYSISTRATA

Yes, by Zeus, I'm sure of it. We'll keep ourselves perfumed and oiled. We'll keep our Venus mountains plucked and smooth. We'll wear our most transparent silks. We'll tease them 'til they're rigid; and then we put them off! Our answer's always NO! In time they'll make a truce. *(WOMEN laugh at the idea.)*

LAMPITO

You might be right. She could be right. We in Sparta know that Menelaos threw away his sword after just one look at Helen's naked breasts. (*WOMEN laugh.*)

KALONIKE

What if they get mad and leave us?

LYSISTRATA

Then we go back to our old, you know, "devices".

KALONIKE

The leather ones? They're just no substitute. And what do we do if they drag us into bed?

LYSISTRATA

Hang onto the door!

KALONIKE

And if they beat us?

LYSISTRATA

(*Thinks*) Give in to them. But do it grudgingly. Do it joylessly. Do it coldly. Don't join in any pleasure. Oh, you know. They'll give up soon enough.

KALONIKE

(*Gestures*) Over here, ladies. (*All except LYSISTRATA and LAMPITO huddle at far left. THE WOMEN argue amongst themselves then finally come to an agreement.*) All right, Lysistrata! We agree to join you two.

LAMPITO

I know I can convince the Spartans to keep an honorable peace, but how will you persuade that undisciplined Athenian mob of yours?

LYSISTRATA

I'll find a way. They'll keep the peace, I promise.

LAMPITO

Not while their ships are armed, rigged and manned so well. And not while your Acropolis is filled with the wealth of your treasury.

LYSISTRATA

That's all been provided for. Any moment now, the older women, pretending to be making sacrifices, will occupy the Acropolis.

LAMPITO

Why, that's good. That's very good! We just might succeed.

LYSISTRATA

We will, Lampito. And now, we must bind ourselves with an oath.

LAMPITO

Agreed. Say the oath and we will swear to it.

LYSISTRATA

Good. *(Calls)* Guard! *(Enter armed LADY GUARD)* Guard, place your shield there. *(LYSISTRATA points to ground)* Then fetch me a goat.

KALONIKE

Wait! What kind of oath is this?

LYSISTRATA

I thought I'd do the same as Aeschylus in *Seven Against Thebes*. They killed a goat, Remember? And swore on the shield full of its blood.

KALONIKE

But we shouldn't take an oath for peace upon a weapon.

LYSISTRATA

Well, on what, then?

KALONIKE

Upon a horse. A great white horse.

LYSISTRATA

But, Kalonike, we don't have a horse.

KALONIKE

Oh, that's right. Then what is a good symbol for us?

LYSISTRATA

Oh, I know, I know. We'll set a chalice here upon the ground, decapitate a jug of Thracian wine and swear to add no water to it.

LAMPITO

Now there's an oath I could swear to!

LYSISTRATA

Guard; bring a chalice and a jug of wine!

*(LADY GUARD jogs double-time off stage, returns with a large jug and a chalice. We hear her measured steps. SHE re-enters quickly with the chalice and jug of wine.)*

ALL

Oooh! Oh, yes!

LYSISTRATA

Well done, Guard.

GUARD

Thank you, ma'm.

KALONIKE

*(Reverently)* Oh, what a beautiful jug!

LYSISTRATA

*(To GUARD)* Set it down there *(GUARD places wine at center)* Now gather 'round, all of you, *(They form an open half circle around the wine.)*, and place a hand upon the victim. *(THEY do so.)* Now: *(Chanting)* O Goddess of persuasion. And you, oh Loving Cup, receive our sacrifice to you and we will drink it up!

ALL

*(Chanting)* And we will drink it up!

*(LYSISTRATA cuts the top off the jug.)*

KALONIKE

Ohh! Look at that blood spurt!

LAMPITO

Oh, smell it, just smell it!

MYRRHINE

Let me be the first to swear!

KALONIKE

I'll match you for first.

LYSTRATA

We'll do it altogether. Quiet now. All of you touch the chalice. Lampito? Touch it. Good. *(A pause)* Now, repeat our oath: *(Slow, loud chant)* **TO NO MAN WILL I BE ACQUIESCENT.**

ALL

To no man will I be acquiescent.

LYSISTRATA

*(A note higher)* **THOUGH HE COMES TO ME HUGELY TUMESCENT.**

ALL

Though he comes to me hugely tumescent.

KALONIKE

Oh! My knees are shaking!

LYSISTRATA

*(Higher yet)* I **SWEAR** TO MAINTAIN A **LIFE MOST CHASTE!**

ALL

I swear to maintain a life most chaste.

LYSISTRATA

*(Even higher)* **THOUGH GOWNED** IN THE MOST **SEDUCTIVE** TASTE!

ALL

Though gowned in the most seductive taste.

LYSISTRATA

*(Highest of all)* I **SWEAR** TO MAKE IT **HARD** FOR HIM!

ALL

I swear to make it hard for him.

LYSISTRATA

*(Quieter now and slower)* AND IF **HE** SHOULD **FORCE ME** AGAINST MY WILL . . .

ALL

If he should force me against my will . . . ?

LYSISTRATA

LIKE **DEAD** I'LL LIE, **COMPLETELY STILL.**

ALL

Like dead I'll lie, completely still.

LYSISTRATA

**DON'T** THRASH WITH SLIPPERS KICKING AIR.

ALL

*(Weak, unconvinced)* Don't . . . . uhh . . .

LYSISTRATA

*(Shouts)* **THRASH!**

ALL

*(Rushing)* Don't thrash with slippers kicking the air!

LYSISTRATA

NOR LIKE CROUCHED LION WITH **TAIL BARE**.

KORINTHIAN

Oh, come on!

LYSISTRATA

Swear it!

ALL

*(Off handedly)* Nor like crouched lion with –uhh – tail bare. Whatever.

LYSISTRATA

*(Threateningly)* **AND IF I FAIL THIS OATH OF MINE—**

ALL

And if I fail this oath of mine—

KORINTHIAN

What could be worse?

LYSISTRATA

**TO-AWFUL-WATER-CHANGE-THIS-WINE!**

ALL

To awful water change this — Oh. *(Severally Ad. Lib.)* Oh! Ahh! I guess we wouldn't... We wouldn't... We wouldn't want that! No! No, no!

LYSISTRATA

DO YOU ALL **SWEAR** TO THIS? **DO YOU?**

ALL

We swear.

LYSISTRATA

Then I consummate the oath! *(SHE drinks. ALL applaud, cheer.)*

KALONIKE

Save some for us!

THEBAN

Pass it around!

*(As THEY pass the wine, loud cheers are heard off.)*

LAMPITO

What's all that racket?

LYSISTRATA

I told you. The older women have seized the Acropolis! Let us join them. Hurry we can help them bar the gates. Lampito, get home to Sparta and spread the word of our rebellion!

LAMPITO

I'm off.

*(LAMPITO gulps a drink and runs offstage.)*

KALONIKE

But won't the men attack us?

LYSISTRATA

What if they do? Neither knees nor gates will open to their threats until they bring us peace!

KALONIKE

That's right, by Aphrodite! Come on, Women, let's really make it hard for them!

*(The WOMEN exit into the skene building. Bolts clang as the door shuts behind them.)*

## **MUSICAL INTERLUDE WITH OPTIONAL DANCE**

### **PART TWO**

*(The CHORUS OF MEN, a group of older men past their days at war, enters through the parodoi, some with smoking fire pots and some carrying logs for burning. KORYPHAIOS is the leader. Note: The Director will designate which actors within the CHORUS OF MEN will speak the individual CHORUS MAN lines. )*

KORYPHAIOS, LEADER, CHORUS OF MEN

Onward, Draces! Never mind that log that's bruising your behind.

A CHORUS MAN

I'm an old man, Strymodorus, and I know what life's about, but this rebel femininity is something that's quite new to me. So let's march up this hill and see if we can't burn 'em out!

## A CHORUS MAN

They've got a lot of gall, I'd say,  
To seize the nation's treasures—  
And after all we do for them,  
To shut off all our pleasures!

## A CHORUS MAN

On, Philurgus! Once we get there,  
Set a fire to the doors  
And when we're through the Propylaea,  
We can fry those rebel whores!

## A CHORUS MAN

Kleomenes, that great king, attempted this exact same thing.  
He occupied the Parthenon a long, long time ago.

## A CHORUS MAN

And we got rid of him in time. We laid a siege and made him climb  
Unwashed, in rags, with six-year's grime, defeated, through the town below.

## A CHORUS MAN

What a siege that was, my friends. Six entire years we stayed!  
And seventeen ranks thick we stood and not one soldier strayed.

## A CHORUS MAN

If we can't do the same to these, despised by gods and Euripides,  
These women that we're set upon, I'll trash my medals from Marathon!

## KORYPHAIOS, LEADER, CHORUS OF MEN

Well, up we go! On we go! Your backs are bruised from the logs, I know. Why an ox would  
be tired from such a load, but we're very close to the end of our road.

## A CHORUS MAN

Blow on the fire, it mustn't die. We'll need it when we get there. March on, men! A little  
higher. Then, what a blaze we'll set there. We'll rescue Athens' temple and we'll scourge  
these rebel bitches.

*(THE MEN blow on their fires, causing the smoke to billow in their own faces.)*

## A CHORUS MAN

Ow! My eye!

## A CHORUS MAN

I choke on *(Coughing)* smoke!

## A CHORUS MAN

There's a fire in my britches! (*Coughing*)

## KORYPHAIOS, LEADER, CHORUS OF MEN

Well, there isn't any question that our fire hasn't died. Ah! There's the gate! Thank all the gods. Now, how to get inside. Set down your loads and take a rest. We'll strategize a minute. (*Puzzled*) I wish we had a general who could scheme how to get in it.

## A CHORUS MAN

How's this: we'll thunder at the door and make a noise to fright 'em  
And after they run outta' there, we take these logs and light 'em.

## KORYPHAIOS, LEADER, CHORUS OF MEN

That's it! Get your fire pots real hot and hurl yourselves against the doors.  
I'll prepare myself a flare to barbecue these upstart whores.  
Men, years from now a monument will stand here to remind us  
Of how we quelled these rebel sluts!

## CHORUS OF OLD MEN (ALL)

(*Shouting*)

Goddess Victory, get behind us!

**PART THREE**

(*The OLD MEN make a start toward the skene doors just as the CHORUS OF WOMEN appear carrying water jugs.*)

## KORYPHAIOS, LEADER, CHORUS OF WOMEN

Women, move! We're very late. I've never seen such a crowd at the watering place! But our jugs are full now and our friends may need water. There's a rumor that some doddering old veterans have a plan to burn us out. Let's hope we're there in time. Ah! Look! I see smoke! Oh, and fire, too! We must attack these ancient asses or Kalyke and Kritylla and all our friends will be cooked! Forward, women, forward to drown the fire, and if we must, these old fools with it!

## CHORUS OF WOMEN

(*Struggling with water jugs*) Goddess Athena, we call on you to help us carry water too!

## KORYPHAIOS, LEADER, CHORUS OF WOMEN

(*Shouting*) You there! You antiquity! You walking dead! What do you think you're doing?

## KORYPHAIOS, LEADER, CHORUS OF MEN

My god, men, look! We're being attacked by a ladies army!

KORYPHAIOS, LEADER, CHORUS OF WOMEN

Do we frighten you, old man? Just we few? Well, there are thousands more of us to fear.

KORYPHAIOS, LEADER, CHORUS OF MEN

Oh? Phaidrias, help me bash this big mouth.

KORYPHAIOS, LEADER, CHORUS OF WOMEN

Set your jugs down, ladies.

A CHORUS MAN

A couple a' cracks o the jaw should stop her waggin' mouth.

A CHORUS WOMAN

Go ahead, try it. I'll claw your old balls off.

A CHORUS MAN

Shut up, you, if you want to get any older.

A CHORUS WOMAN

You touch Stratyllis with one little finger and see what happens.

A CHORUS MAN

Oh? And what will happen?

A CHORUS WOMAN

I'll chew up your guts with my teeth!

A CHORUS MAN

Euripides was right. There is no beast as vicious as a woman.

KORYPHAIOS, LEADER, CHORUS OF WOMEN

Get your water jug, Rhodippe.

KORYPHAIOS, LEADER, CHORUS OF MEN

Why did you come up here with that water, you trollop?

KORYPHAIOS, LEADER, CHORUS OF WOMEN

Why did you come up here with that fire, you cadaver? To cremate yourself?

KORYPHAIOS, LEADER, CHORUS OF MEN

No! To cremate you and your friends!

KORYPHAIOS, LEADER, CHORUS OF WOMEN

Well, your fire is the reason for our water.

KORYPHAIOS, LEADER, CHORUS OF MEN

You're going to put out our fire?

KORYPHAIOS, LEADER, CHORUS OF WOMEN

You'll soon see.

A CHORUS MAN

I think I'll give you a touch of my torch.

KORYPHAIOS, LEADER, CHORUS OF WOMEN

I think I'll give you a wedding bath, old bridegroom.

A CHORUS MAN

You think that, do you, you hag? Somebody burn off her hair!

KORYPHAIOS, LEADER, CHORUS OF WOMEN

Ready, girls? Make. Water!

*(THE WOMEN pour water on THE MEN. THE MEN scream in response to the cold water, which not only has put out their fires but chilled them to the bone.)*

KORYPHAIOS, LEADER, CHORUS OF WOMEN

Is your bath too hot?

A CHORUS MAN

It's freezing!

KORYPHAIOS, LEADER, CHORUS OF WOMEN

Hah! If I water you enough perhaps you'll grow.

A CHORUS MAN

I've got a chill!

KORYPHAIOS, LEADER, CHORUS OF WOMEN

Pity. If you had a fire, maybe you could dry yourselves.

## **PART FOUR**

*(From OFF, we hear: "Hup, hup, hup, hup, hup" as Two SCYTHIAN GUARDS march onto the platform followed by THE MAGISTRATE.)*

GUARD 1

*(Shouting)* Clear the way!

## GUARD 2

Clear the way for the Magistrate.

GUARDS, *Together*

Clear the way for the Magistrate!

## MAGISTRATE

Thank you, Scythians. (*Stepping forward with great pomp and addressing THE WOMEN condescendingly.*) Ladies, ladies what's going on here? You're making a habit of disturbing the peace, are you not? (*To SCYTHIANS*) Do you recall, about four years ago, when what's-his-name – Demonstratus – was badgering the assembly to send the fleet to Sicily? What an ass. Nobody would have paid him any attention if these women hadn't started to scream drunken prayers at him from the rooftops, "Woe for Adonis, beat your breasts for Adonis!" We didn't know what it was all about so we sent the troops to Sicily and that turned into a disaster. We should never have listened to women!

## KORYPHAIOS, LEADER, CHORUS OF MEN

Do you know, Magistrate, what they did just now? They attacked us. They insulted us, that's what. They poured filthy water on us. We're as soaked as if we had pissed ourselves! We're freezing!

## CHORUS MEN

We're freezing!

## MAGISTRATE

Well by, uhh, by Poseidon! The god of waters...

(*THE WOMEN erupt in laughter, pointing at the wet MEN, some of whom are wringing-out clothes.*)

## CHORUS WOMEN

Look! Poseidon peed on them! (*Laughter*)

## MAGISTRATE

(*Shouting over THE WOMEN*) What sort of manners can we expect of these? It's our fault.

## CHORUS MEN

No!

## MAGISTRATE

Yes, it's our fault. We've been much too lenient with them. Too generous with them. We spoil them terribly. I have a story for you.

## KORYPHAIOS, LEADER, CHORUS OF WOMEN

Listen to this, ladies.

## MAGISTRATE

I bought my wife an expensive necklace and she broke it. While dancing, she said. So I went to the Jeweler and told him that the fastening-peg fell out of the hole. If he came over and slipped a new peg in it, I'd be very grateful. Or her poor little toe was being squeezed by her Sandal. Would the cobbler come over and stretch it for her, maybe? We would both appreciate it. Oh yes, we've been too lax, too generous. And look what we get for it. Look at this! I'm on city business today. I have been sent for money to buy oars for the fleet and by some god, these same women have locked up the treasury! (*To SCYTHIANS*) What are you mercenaries looking for? An ouzoria? Take a pry-bar to that door! Get it open! I need some help over here!

(*LYSISTRATA appears on the roof of the skene building.*)

## LYSISTRATA

(*Speaking from the rooftop*) Stop! Don't break down the doors. I'm coming down of my own free will. We don't need force here, we need intelligence.

## MAGISTRATE

Oh. Oh! Is that so, you...you traitorous slut! (*LYSISTRATA disappears from the roof.*) Where did she go? I have to talk to her. Where did she go? (*LYSISTRATA opens skene doors, standing firmly in place.*) There she is! There she is! Scythians! Arrest that woman! Tie her hands!

(*The SCYTHIANS advance on LYSISTRATA.*)

## LYSISTRATA

Halt! (*THEY do*) By Artemis, if he so much as touches me with a little finger, there will be one grafter less on the public payroll.

(*The SCYTHIANS, confused, look at MAGISTRATE.*)

## MAGISTRATE

Hah! Are you afraid, Scythian? (*To both SCYTHIANS*) Seize her 'round the waist. (*LYSISTRATA pulls away and kicks one of the SCYTHIANS. The MAGISTRATE screams at the other.*) Help Him, stupid!

(*The SCYTHIANS regroup, threatening LYSISTRATA as KALONIKE appears in doorway.*)

## KALONOKE

(*Pointing at one of the SCYTHIANS.*) Don't do it, stupid! Unless you want your insides outside.

## MAGISTRATE

Tie up that big-mouth.

*(One of the SCYTHIANS advances on LYSISTRATA just as MYRRHINE enters from the doorway.)*

MYRRHINE

*(Shouting) Stop! (The SCYTHIAN stops) Don't move! Just stay where you are or by Hecate you'll need a surgeon to put you back together!*

MAGISTRATE

Another? Well, seize her too. *(The THEBAN steps quickly in.)*

THEBAN

You take one step closer and I'll rip your hair off! *(SCYTHIANS whimper with frustration.)*

MAGISTRATE

You'd let women get the best of you? Shame! Scythians! Atten-shun! *(THEY come to rigid attention)*

LYSISTRATA

What's the use of this? You're badly outnumbered.

MAGISTRATE

Forward, Scythians!

LYSISTRATA

Forward, women! Forward, shopgirls! Forward, housewives; you dealers of meat, vegetables, garlic and pastries! Forward, you tavern maids!

CHORUS OF WOMEN

Give it to 'em, sock it to 'em!  
Knock 'em in the grass!

KORYPHAIOS, LEADER, CHORUS OF WOMEN

Show 'em what you think of 'em.

LEADER AND CHORUS OF WOMEN

And kick 'em in the ass!

*(THE WOMEN descend upon the MAGISTRATE and the SCYTHIANS who are quickly defeated. THE WOMEN cheer in victoriously.)*

LYSISTRATA

Enough, ladies! Enough! *(SEVERAL WOMEN begin stripping the SCYTHIANS of their ornaments.)* Now, now, girls, don't rob the helpless. Back inside. Now!

*(ALL WOMEN except LYSISTRATA and the CHORUS OF WOMEN exit into the skene.)*

MAGISTRATE

*(On the ground)* I'm afraid, Scythians, that we came out second best.

LYSISTRATA

Hah! You came out worst! But what did you expect? Did you think you were dealing with a mob of slaves? Didn't you know that we women can be driven just so far and that's it?

MAGISTRATE

*(Rising and brushing himself off)* I was aware, madam, only that you can be driven to drink.

*(LYSISTRATA moves quickly into the skene and bolts the doors from within. SHE and her friends appear on skene roof as KORYPHAIOS, MAGISTRATE and OTHERS gather. LYSISTRATA and THE WOMEN watch what follows below from the skene roof.)*

KORYPHAIOS, LEADER, CHORUS OF MEN

Don't waste your time talking to them, Magistrate, reason means nothing to these animals. You saw the water they hit us with? Did you smell it? Here, smell!

MAGISTRATE

Argh! Yuk!

A CHORUS MAN

Yuk is right! That was not your normal water. I fear to think what might be in it.

KORYPHAIOS, LEADER, CHORUS OF WOMEN

*(From rooftop)* Well, you started it. And if you try it again with your little firepots, you'll get a finger in your eye!

CHORUS OF MEN

Ooo!

KORYPHAIOS, LEADER, CHORUS OF WOMEN

We aren't usually violent. On the contrary, I'd rather stay home and read, but like the hornet, if you rattle my hive, beware my sting.

ALL WOMEN

That's right!

CHORUS OF MEN

*(Ad Lib. Whispering; gathering around MAGISTRATE)* Oh, what will happen do you think? We cannot overcome them. Please, Magistrate, you question them. What sense can you get from them? Why have they climbed our holy hill and locked those doors behind them? Make clear the reasons for these acts; your brilliant mind can find them!

KORYPHAIOS, LEADER, CHORUS OF MEN

Go on, Magistrate, question them. You must, even though we can't believe a word they say.

MAGISTRATE

All right. Let's get to the bottom of this.

*(The MAGISTRATE crosses to just below LYSISTRATA.)*

A CHORUS MAN

*(Indicating KORYPHAIOS, LEADER, CHORUS OF WOMEN)* Now *there's* a bottom I wouldn't touch!

*(LEADER and OTHER MEN laugh loudly.)*

MAGISTRATE

Woman! Answer me. Why have you barred the way to the holy Acropolis?

LYSISTRATA

To keep you from the treasury and stop the reason for the war.

MAGISTRATE

You believe money makes war?

LYSISTRATA

Indeed I do. And worse, war makes money. But there will be no more money from here spent for war.

MAGISTRATE

What do you propose to do?

LYSISTRATA

We'll handle the money properly, that's what we'll do.

MAGISTRATE

*(Snorting)* Forgive me . . . You *women?* Manage the money?

LYSISTRATA

I don't think it's very strange. We have always managed the house money.

MAGISTRATE

The house money? Well, that's not quite the same thing, is it?

LYSISTRATA

And why not?

MAGISTRATE

Because most of our treasury is for military matters.

LYSISTRATA

Oh, the very first thing we will do is abolish the military.

MAGISTRATE

Oh really? And what about our national defense?

LYSISTRATA

We'll defend you.

MAGISTRATE

You?

CHORUS OF MEN

*(Echoing the MAGISTRATE)* **You?**

LYSISTRATA

Us.

MAGISTRATE

*(After a very long pause)* We're doomed. Absolutely doomed.

LYSISTRATA

We will save you from doom. That's our wish.

MAGISTRATE

Madness. This is total madness!

LYSISTRATA

Well, we're going to do it anyway.

MAGISTRATE

It . . . . It's *ILLEGAL!*

LYSISTRATA

I'm told that it is.

MAGISTRATE

But . . . I don't *want* to be saved!

LYSISTRATA

Yes I know, but like it or not, we will save you.

MAGISTRATE

This is . . . This is *OUTRAGEOUS!* How dare women concern themselves— How dare women even *mention* matters of peace and war!

LYSISTRATA

I'll tell you.

MAGISTRATE

*(Shaking his fist)* Well, be quick about it!

LYSISTRATA

There's no need to shake that fist, sir.

MAGISTRATE

I can't help it. I've never been so angry.

KORYPHAIOS, LEADER, CHORUS OF WOMEN

Be quiet and listen!

MAGISTRATE

Fall down dead, you hag! *(To LYSISTRATA)* Go on! Go on!

LYSISTRATA

I will. Just be calm.

MAGISTRATE

Sorry. I'll try. Please speak.

LYSISTRATA

Thank you. Now listen. Through every war we women wait, holding our tongues no matter what crimes you men commit. For men forbid us to speak of it although we agree with nothing that you do. And although we're never privy to your plots, we watch, of course, and listen, and we can tell when things do not go well at war. And should we lie a little smile, pretending it's mere dinner talk and chatter, and ask so gently of the progress of the peace, you shout, "That's none of your concern! Why don't you mind your own affairs!" or, "Just be quiet!" And so we were.

A CHORUS WOMAN

Not Me!

MAGISTRATE

Ha! And I'll wager you were silenced soon enough.

LYSISTRATA

*(After gesturing to the CHORUS WOMAN to be calm)* Well, I kept still as my husband asked. And time went by, and time and time again I'd hear of war and plans of war, and each time seemed more stupid than the last, 'til finally I said, "My dear, are men completely mad?" He glared at me and said that I should mind my spinning wheel. He said, in fact, that he would set me spinning with a slap if I concerned myself again with war, which subject was, he said, "the sole concern of men."

MAGISTRATE

And that's well said, by god.

LYSISTRATA

Yes, you would think that, but you're a fool! (*The WOMEN howl with agreement.*) Your solutions all were stupid and we women weren't allowed to speak, but we heard YOU speaking in the market place— And when you asked for men for reinforcements, we heard the answer someone gave: "They're gone! That's all! There are no more!"— And we decided then that it was long past time for us to rescue Greece.

MAGISTRATE

Oh, you thought that, did you?

LYSISTRATA

Yes, and we will do it, too. We women will save Greece. Just shut your mouth and listen.

MAGISTRATE

Me, shut my mouth?

LYSISTRATA

Be quiet!

MAGISTRATE

See here, do you think I'm taking orders from a woman?

LYSISTRATA

Let me think. Oh, yes! You'll find it easier if you put yourself in our place. We take orders all the time. Help him ladies! Here take my veil. (*LYSISTRATA drops her veil from above onto the MAGISTRATE. (A group of CHORUS WOMEN rush in from the skene and wrap it about his head.)*) That's the way, around his head.

KALONIKE

(*Dropping her basket*) Take my market basket, too!

THEBAN

Go home and stir the bean pot!

WOMEN (*On Roof*)

Women's work is ending war!

(*The CHORUS WOMEN begin singing as THEY dance around the MAGISTRATE.*)

## CHORUS OF WOMEN

*I dance a prayer to end all war.  
 Never shall my dancing cease.  
 Beauty and wisdom go before  
 To lead you to a lasting peace.*

## LYSISTRATA

*(Praying)* O sweet Eros up above and Aphrodite, charm our breasts and thighs so that the men of Greece will shed their hate and come to love.

## MAGISTRATE

*(Throwing away the basket and tearing the veil from his head.)* And just what do you think you'll do if you win?

## LYSISTRATA

I can tell you this. The very first thing we'll do is outlaw the wearing of armor in the market place.

## CHORUS OF WOMAN

Right on!

## LYSISTRATA

They frighten us. Clanking their armor like Corybants amid the pots and vegetables and knocking everything over.

## MAGISTRATE

Oh, I've seen them alright. That's merely proper military bearing.

## LYSISTRATA

It seems to be. I suppose it's what they're taught, but it has always struck me as odd to see a huge armored man, carrying a shield emblazoned with a gorgon's, head haggle with some fish wife over the price of herring.

## KALONIKE

Yes! Yes indeed! I saw one the other day. One of those fops who command the cavalry poured hot egg-broth right into his helmet! Yes! And worse than that, ten feet away another fool; a Thracian soldier, threatened an old woman with his lance and stole her figs! We can't have that behavior in our city.

## MAGISTRATE

I agree, but can a government of women establish peace and justice?

## LYSISTRATA

Of course.

MAGISTRATE

*(Sarcastically)* You think so?

LYSISTRATA

Oh, yes. We will unsnarl Greece's troubles as if they were a tangled ball of wool. One hair here, one string there until they're all straight. Then we'll reweave it all together with ambassadors.

MAGISTRATE

Excuse me, but your plan sounds a bit homespun to me. *(Chuckles, looking at THE MEN)* "Homespun." See?

LYSISTRATA

Let me continue my analogy.

MAGISTRATE

Oh, please.

LYSISTRATA

The first thing we women do with new wool is to wash it and pick it over, separating the good from the bad. That's what we'll do to Athens; wash away the sycophants and opportunists, card out the cronies and favor-seekers, pick the heads off the nits who do little work for high salaries and then, when it's all clean, card into one basket all the good wool, all who reside here, native or naturalized, especially the poor. Then we do the same to our colonies, far-flung and scattered like lost hanks of wool; wash them clean and put the good wool in the basket. From all this clean wool, then, we weave a new Athens.

MAGISTRATE

A new Athens? You talk of reweaving Athens as if it were a woman's knitting. What do you know? What have you women ever contributed to the making of Athens? What do you know of statesmanship?

LYSISTRATA

Women receive few honors from the State, it's true; but you listen to me— We certainly do contribute to it. Oh, yes we do! We contribute every single one of the sons whose lives you statesmen waste in wars!

MAGISTRATE

Oh, madam, please, no need for opening wounds.

LYSISTRATA

And what about we wives who waste away our lives alone? Our homes and beds are always empty, for our husbands are forever off at war! And what about our girls? Our girls who spend their youth and beauty waiting for a love that never comes because there are no young men left and they grow old unmarried.

MAGISTRATE

Men grow old as well.

LYSISTRATA

It's just not the same. Even if he's old and wrinkled, he can marry if he wants when he comes home from war. But the girl he marries won't be the woman who waited. Like him she's gray and wrinkled and she's no longer wanted. No! She has nothing to look forward to except an empty future.

MAGISTRATE

It's true; he'll marry a younger girl. Ha! The old veteran still can stand erect.

LYSISTRATA

Promise me you'll die and I will buy your coffin! I'll bake the cakes; I'll decorate you for your funeral! Here! Here's a funeral bath! (*SHE pours water on him from above.*)

MYRRHINE

(*Dropping her girdle*) And here's a girdle!

A KORINTHIAN

(*Turning a basket upside down so that all the contents shower the MAGISTRATE from the rooftop.*) And some laundry!

(*THE CHORUS WOMEN grab up pieces of laundry and dress the MAGISTRATE in women's clothing.*)

KALONIKE

Let me help too!

LYSISTRATA

Charon's waiting to ferry you over the Styx. Don't keep him waiting! Give him this!

(*LYSISTRATA drops a basket of flowers with which THE WOMEN promptly adorn the MAGISTRATE.*)

MAGISTRATE

Insolence! Monstrous insolence! I am going to show myself to my brother magistrates! I'm going to show them the evidence of how women treat elected representatives!

LYSISTRATA

What? Still talking? Disappear! Or else we will lay you out right here!

(*The MAGISTRATE huffily exits. LYSISTRATA and the WOMEN ON THE ROOFTOP abruptly turn and exit. THE LEADERS OF THE CHORUSES as well as THE CHORUS OF MEN and THE CHORUS OF WOMEN remain on stage.*)

## PART FIVE

*(KORYPHAIOS, LEADER OF THE CHORUS OF MEN, crosses to THE MEN who huddle together for warmth.)*

KORYPHAIOS, LEADER, CHORUS OF MEN  
On your feet! No napping now!  
There's a battle to be fought!

A CHORUS MAN  
I smell tyranny around us!

A CHORUS MAN  
I've heard much subversive thought!

KORYPHAIOS, LEADER, CHORUS OF MEN  
I think, conspiring with these women,  
Spartan foes have made this tension.  
They have schemed to seize the treasury.

A CHORUS MAN  
Keeping veterans from their pension!

KORYPHAIOS, LEADER, CHORUS OF MEN  
What a state of affairs! Can you imagine the gigantic insolence of these whores, daring to advise us, the veterans of many foreign wars, on the conduct of men-at-arms and weaponry?

A CHORUS MAN  
They even have the traitorous cheek to suggest reconciliation with our enemy the Spartans.

A CHORUS MAN  
That's like making friends with a hungry wolf.

A CHORUS MAN  
Beware, men, our freedoms are slipping.

A CHORUS MAN  
The very next step is dictatorship!

KORYPHAIOS, LEADER, CHORUS OF MEN  
Yes. Like the hero, Aristogeiton, I will strike down tyranny! And maybe they will carve a statue just like his of me.

A CHORUS MAN  
*(Threateningly towards the LEADER OF THE CHORUS OF WOMEN)* I think that I'll begin by slapping this female slob right in her big mouth!

## KORYPHAIOS, LEADER, CHORUS OF WOMEN

Just you try it, by Zeus! I'll smash your head so badly that your mother wouldn't know you!

## A CHORUS WOMAN

You doddering wreck, do you know who you're talking to? This woman has won honor after honor since she was a child. She should be listened to. Pay attention!

*(KORYPHAIOS, LEADER, CHORUS OF MEN walks disdainfully away from the CHORUS OF WOMEN.)*

## KORYPHAIOS, LEADER, CHORUS OF WOMEN

Don't be deaf to me because I am a woman. That's not a problem. I offer better counsel than you men. You argue that I pay no tax and so have no share in this, our city. And I argue that I've paid my tax in sons. And tell me, what do you contribute, you dried, impotent relics? Not a thing. You pay no tax either and you're living on a pension sucked from out of our treasury. A pension for some minor bit you played in some forgotten Persian war. Well, our treasury's nearly bankrupt now from paying out your payoff— *(THE LEADER OF THE CHORUS OF MEN scoffs loudly.)* What? Did you say something? Close your mouth or by Zeus, I'll kick you in the head!

## A CHORUS MAN

That did it! Strip for action, men! I clearly heard a threat.

## A CHORUS MAN

These insolent and ugly sows will smell our manly sweat.

## A CHORUS MAN

Throw off your years; march strongly on and just as in your youth. I know, you triumphed at Leipsydriion so many years ago!

## KORYPHAIOS, LEADER, CHORUS OF MEN

We must stop them now and here, while they only have infantry. Or before you know it they'll have their own fleet, like Artemisia. Or they'll raise a cavalry like those Amazons!

## A CHORUS MAN

Women have always been pretty good in the saddle!

*(Derisive laughter among THE MEN)*

KORYPHAIOS, LEADER, CHORUS OF WOMEN

We heard what you said!  
 You're out of your head!  
 Stay out of our way, you walking dead!  
 Touch me once, I swear to you,  
 Our feet will kick you black and blue!

A CHORUS WOMAN

Go home!

A CHORUS WOMAN

Go home!

A CHORUS WOMAN

You haven't a chance!

A CHORUS WOMAN

Let me kick one in the pants!

*(THE CHORUS OF WOMEN surrounds THE MEN.)*

KORYPHAIOS, LEADER, CHORUS OF WOMEN

You jerks just aren't equipped for ruling  
 You seem so dumb we think you're fooling.

A CHORUS WOMAN

Men have issued their last decree.

A CHORUS WOMAN

That last was way too much for me.

A CHORUS WOMAN

They made Theban eels against the law!

A CHORUS WOMAN

Oh, Zeus! Someone break his jaw!

A CHORUS WOMAN

Someone break his leg at least.

A CHORUS WOMAN

No Theban eels at Hecate's feast?

KORYPHAIOS, LEADER, CHORUS OF WOMEN

Such abysmal legislation!  
Mental delinquents lead our nation!  
Go away, you senile wrecks!

ALL WOMEN

Before somebody breaks your necks!

*(The OLD MEN withdraw. LYSISTRATA appears. SHE is angry.)*

KORYPHAIOS, LEADER, CHORUS OF WOMEN

Oh! Lady! Leader of our enterprise,  
Why do you have such angry eyes?

LYSISTRATA

*(Pointing to her WOMEN)* Ahh! These women! These wretched women are slaves of their own biology!

KORYPHAIOS, LEADER, CHORUS OF WOMEN

What does this mean?

LYSISTRATA

It means precisely what I say.

KORYPHAIOS, LEADER, CHORUS OF WOMEN

Please tell your friends here what is the matter?

LYSISTRATA

It brings me shame to say it, yet I must speak it to someone.

KORYPHAIOS, LEADER, CHORUS OF WOMEN

Speak to me then, Lady. Let me hear our women's troubles.

LYSISTRATA

These women – all the women – are squirming to GET LAID!

CHORUS OF WOMEN

Ahh!

KORYPHAIOS, LEADER, CHORUS OF WOMEN

Ah! Oh, Zeus!

## LYSISTRATA

Zeus hasn't a thing to do with it. They're all in heat! They're climbing the walls! All they want is one thing!— Men! I'm losing my control over them. They're all trying to desert their posts. I caught one trying to dig an escape tunnel to Pan's grotto. I stopped another one escaping down a rope. One yesterday had harnessed sparrows and planed to fly to Orsilochus' brothel to do volunteer work! I pulled her back by the hair. Most simply invent reasons for leaving. God! Here comes another one. Just listen to *her* story! (*Calls*) You, there! Where do you think you're going?

## THEBAN WOMAN

(*Piteously*) Oh! Oh, Lysistrata, I must get home! The moths are eating my Milesian wool!

## LYSISTRATA

Moths in her wool! (*Points to the skene*) Hah! You get back in there!

## THEBAN WOMAN

I won't be long. I'll be right back. I want to lay it out on my bed.

## LYSISTRATA

Yes, I know you do, but you're not leaving... And you're not laying anything!

## THEBAN WOMAN

But my *wool!* Do you want it ruined?

## LYSISTRATA

I don't care about your wool!

(*THEBAN WOMAN goes into the skene door as KORINTHIAN WOMAN approaches.*)

## KORINTHIAN WOMAN

I left my flax. My expensive flax! My flax is at home unstripped! (*Heads offstage*)

## LYSISTRATA

And off she goes to strip her flax. Oh, no you don't! Come back here, you!

(*Some WOMEN in the CHORUS grab the KORINTHIAN WOMAN by her trailing veil.*)

## KORINTHIAN WOMAN

But, Lysistrata, it's important! I swear by Artemis, I'll return... The moment that my flax is stripped.

## LYSISTRATA

Just leave it as it is, unstripped. I can't let you go and not the others— And their flax needs stripping too.

*(The KORINTHIAN WOMAN goes back reluctantly into the Skene. A. LADY GUARD appears. SHE seems huge with child and SHE prays as SHE enters.)*

LADY GUARD

Oh, Eilithya most holy! Patroness of women in labor! Stay, I pray thee, my contractions 'til I leave this sacred spot.

LYSISTRATA

What, by all the Gods, is *this* madness?

LADY GUARD

My time has come! My time is here!

LYSISTRATA

Nonsense. This is nonsense! Yesterday you weren't even pregnant!

LADY GUARD

I was! Uhh, well, I am today! Oh, Lysistrata, I need a midwife right away!

LYSISTRATA

Fantastic. What *is* this thing that you have here...?

LADY GUARD

My baby... (*LYSISTRATA seizes a protrusion on the "baby".*) It's a boy!

LYSISTRATA

Oh, stop it! It's something hollow. Something METAL! (*Uncovers it*) Hah! It's a helmet! An Athenian helmet! Pregnant, are you?

LADY GUARD

Yes, I am!

LYSISTRATA

And what is this for?

LADY GUARD

It's uhh... It's uhh.... A catcher! A baby catcher. If I can't get to a midwife soon, I plan to drop the baby into this helmet like a chick into a metal egg.

LYSISTRATA

Well, you win the prize. Oh ye Gods, what bold transparent lies they tell! Don't you know your true purpose is obvious? Here, read my lips; you-may-NOT-leave! But, if you like, we'll help you choose a name for your tinny, tiny, baby boy.

## LADY GUARD

But I can't stay here any longer. I can't sleep, I'm too nervous. I've seen the sacred snake of the Acropolis. It scares me!

## THEBAN WOMAN

And those stupid owls! I don't care if they're sacred to Athena! All night long! Hoot! Hoot! I just can't sleep here!

*(THE WOMEN moan and grumble.)*

## LYSISTRATA

*(After deep thought)* Ladies, ladies. That's quite enough. Let's admit the simple truth. You want your men. *(Strong agreement among THE WOMEN.)* Of course you do! But please, think a minute. They want YOU. And, listen, if you think YOUR nights are hard, I promise you, their nights are harder. Please, please persevere just a little longer. Our plan is succeeding. I'm told this from an Oracle. Would you like to hear her prediction?

## KORINTHIAN WOMAN

Oh, yes!

## ALL

*(Severally)* Yes! Please! Yes! Yes!

## LYSISTRATA

Then listen to this. *(Produces a scroll, reads)*

*If the hens will band together,  
Shunning cocks, though it brings woe,  
Zeus will make the lower upper,  
Zeus will bring the upper low.*

*(THE WOMEN ponder the meaning of the Oracle.)*

## KALONIKE

Does that mean women will be on top?

## LYSISTRATA

There's more. *(Reads threateningly)*

*Should the hens deny their oath?  
Admit the cocks through open doors,  
Throughout history Zeus will curse them  
Lascivious and faithless whores!*

## THE WOMEN

Ahh!

## THEBAN WOMAN

For an Oracle, that's all very clear.

## LYSISTRATA

Yes it is. So remain strong in our oath. Let's not dare to betray the god. Everyone; back to your posts.

*(THE WOMEN grudgingly return to the skene. Doors lock loudly behind them. THE CHORUS OF WOMEN and THE CHORUS OF MEN remain.)*

## A CHORUS MAN

When we were children we were told a tale that illustrates the view that men did better not to wed, to live alone, the story said, and shun like plague the marriage bed, than share that bed with such as you.

## A CHORUS MAN

Melanion, our hero, left Atlanta's lusty love behind.  
He took his worldly goods and dog  
And took to living in a log.  
A happy hermit with no hog  
Like you to clutter-up his mind.

## A CHORUS MAN

I accept him as my hero, too.

The sight of women makes me ill.  
If, in my youth, I'd been as bold  
As in that story we were told  
Was brave Melanion of old,  
I'd be a virgin still!

## A CHORUS MAN

Hey, Ugly! Do you care for rape?

## A CHORUS WOMAN

I'll claw your face off if you dare!

## A CHORUS MAN

You hag, I'll kick you out of shape.

## A CHORUS WOMAN

What a thatch of graying hair.

## A CHORUS MAN

These very hirsute qualities of General Myronides  
Once terrified his enemies.

## A CHORUS WOMAN

Let me tell a story, please. (*Brief pause*)

A more famous misanthrope than yours,  
Was Timon, of this city.  
He cursed all men, throughout his life,  
But he found women rather pretty.

## A CHORUS WOMAN

Yes, like Melanion, he roughed it – avoided soap and water, too – avoided men, both small and great— A beggar or a head of state, but did not hesitate to mate with women. He preferred us girls to you!

## A CHORUS WOMAN

Just let me give your jaw a smash.

## A CHORUS MAN

Don't threaten, please. I'm terrified.

## A CHORUS WOMAN

With this, my foot, your guts I'll mash!

## A CHORUS MAN

What's this? Is it a bush I've spied?

## CHORUS OF WOMEN

Pity these impotent wrecks  
How faintly they remember sex.

## MUSICAL INTERLUDE AND OPTIONAL DANCE

### PART SIX

(*LYSISTRATA* appears on top of the skene as *THE CHORUS OF WOMEN* exits. *SHE* watches, smiling. *LYSISTRATA* sees something offstage.)

## LYSISTRATA

(*Suddenly calling*) Women! Women, quickly! Look!

*(THE MUSIC fades as KALONIKE, MYRRHINE and LAMPITO appear on the skene roof with LYSISTRATA who points offstage.)*

KALONIKE

What is it, Lysistrata?

LYSISTRATA

What is it? It's a man!

KALONIKE

A man!

LAMPITO

A man?

LYSISTRATA

No doubt about it. Can't you see? There! Beside Demeter's shrine.

KALONIKE

*(In hushed wonderment)* Oh, there he is! Oh, holy Zeus!

LAMPITO

I took him for a Doric column.

MYRRHINE

Really? *(Looks closer)* Why that's my husband!

LYSISTRATA

*(Praying)* Oh, Cyprus, Kythera and Paphos Queen, come to us and aid us. Now, Myrrhine, you recall your oath, hmm? Get busy now and tease him.

MYRRHINE

I surely will!

*(MYRRHINE quickly moves away.)*

LYSISTRATA

Myrrhine! *(MYRRHINE freezes.)* Remember!

MYRRHINE

What?

LYSISTRATA

What not to give.

MYRRHINE

Oh. Yes. Of course I will. Just let me at him!

LYSISTRATA

Just wait a minute. Everybody, disappear. I'll go down and sort of warm him up.

*(LYSISTRATA exits skene roof as Myrrhine's distraught husband, KINESIAS, enters orkestra, followed closely by a slave carrying a baby.)*

KINESIAS

Ah, pain! Oh Zeus! Ah, lover's guts! I just can't stand it anymore!

LYSISTRATA

*(Enters at center door)* Halt! Who goes here?

KINESIAS

Watta ya' mean, "Who's there"? It's ME!

LYSISTRATA

A man?

KINESIAS

No question about that. Can't you see?

*(KINESIAS looks down at his swollen groin, then back up.)*

LYSISTRATA

Oh. Hmmm. Sorry, you'll have to leave.

KINESIAS

Leave? Who says so?

LYSISTRATA

I do. I'm the Captain of the Guard.

KINESIAS

Oh. Well, Captain, would you send Myrrhine down here?

LYSISTRATA

No I won't. What a question. What's your name?

KINESIAS

Kinesias. I'm her husband.

LYSISTRATA

*(Feigning "impressed")* Kinesias Paionides? Really?

KINESIAS

That's me.

LYSISTRATA

Oh, wonderful! Welcome friend, your name is very familiar to us.

KINESIAS

Oh. Well, that's nice.

LYSISTRATA

Oh, yes indeed. Myrrhine speaks of you all the time. Your name is always on her lips.

KINESIAS

Aww . . .

LYSISTRATA

If she eats an apple or nibbles an egg, she always says, "this makes me think of Kinesias", or, "Oh, I wish Kinesias were here now" and her eyes are damp and dreamy.

KINESIAS

*(Squats a bit, in a contraction.)* Ohhh. Oh, Zeus! She dreams of me?

LYSISTRATA

Oh yes she does. And when we women speak of men, as we do, she always smiles and says, "No man can possibly compare with my little Kinesias!" She was really quite emphatic.

KINESIS

Oh, marvelous! That's wonderful. Just wonderful! Oh, Captain, please, please, won't you send her down, no, ASK her to come down to me, Please? Hmm?

LYSISTRATA

What will you give me if I do?

KINESIAS

I haven't much.

LYSISTRATA

Oh, you've quite enough.

KINESIAS

You're more than welcome, Captain, to share anything I have.

LYSISTRATA

Oh? Well, I'll go up and get her.

*(LYSISTRATA waits.)*

KINESIAS

*(With increasing discomfort)* Well, go, go, won't you? *(SHE goes, though slowly, into the skene, leaving the door open.)* Hurry! *(LYSISTRATA exits.)* Oh, dear Zeus! This life without a wife is no joke. Cold bed, cold food, an empty house. I've become depressed, I swear, and it grows harder every day!

MYRRHINE, *Off*

Of course I want him! But he hates me! Please don't make me go to him!

KINESIAS

Myrrhine! Myrrhine! Come down here!

MYRRHINE

*(Appears on skene roof)* Oh! Hello, there Kinesias. What's up? *(KINESIAS groans.)* No I won't come down.

KINESIAS

Oh, dear Zeus! Why not?

MYRRHINE

Because I know that you don't need me.

KINESIAS

Don't need you. Oh, Myrrhine, can't you SEE how much I need you?

MYRRHINE

I'm sorry, Kinesias, I'm leaving. *(MYRRHINE starts to go.)*

KINESIAS

*(Snatches BABY from SLAVE)* But the child is crying for you! *(To the BABY)* Cry! You must listen to your baby. *(To BABY)* Cry, damn you! *(Pinches BABY. BABY CRIES. MYRRHINE returns.)* Oh, listen to him, sweetheart! The poor thing hasn't been washed or fed for a week!

MYRRHINE

Oh, poor, poor helpless baby. With such a terrible daddy!

KINESIAS

Then come down here for a minute. For the starving, dirty little baby's sake.

MYRRHINE

Oh, motherhood. I suppose I'll have to go help it.

*(MYRRHINE disappears from the skene roof.)*

KINESIAS

Do you know? She's prettier than I've ever seen her! She looks a little younger, don't you think? And did you see her eyes flash when she got angry at me. Oh, Zeus! I've never seen her more exciting!

*(MYRRHINE enters through the skene door.)*

MYRRHINE

Ohhh, my baby! Oh, let me have him. Oh, the poor little baby has such an awful daddy!

KINESIAS

See? Do you see what happens when you listen to those women? You just make us all suffer.

*(KINESIAS reaches for MYRRHINE.)*

MYRRHINE

Don't touch! *(Slaps his hand)* Don't touch. Keep those hands away.

KINESIAS

Ow! Oh, Myrrhine, our home is going to pieces. The whole house is a mess!

MYRRHINE

Don't care. Just don't care.

KINESIAS

Yeah? Your favorite weaving is being picked apart by the chickens. You don't care about that either?

MYRRHINE

Not a tiny bit.

KINESIAS

And we haven't...you know...done Aphrodite's horizontal dance in a long, LONG time! Oh, Myrrhine, come HOME.

MYRRHINE

No!

KINESIAS

No?

MYRRHINE

Not until you men stop this terrible war. Not a minute before!

KINESIAS

Oh...Well...That shouldn't be too, uhh, too difficult. We'll just end the war. Sure!

MYRRHINE  
Wonderful! Well, that's a relief.

KINESIAS  
Oh, I hope so.

MYRRHINE  
So when you do that, you just let me know. Bye for now. (*Starts to exit*)

KINESIAS  
Stop! Stop!

MYRRHINE  
Sorry, I can't. I'll come back when you stop the war.

KINESIAS  
But that could take...a little time. A few uhh...HOURS!

MYRRHINE  
Hours?

KINESIAS  
I think. Maybe not. I don't know.

MYRRHINE  
Call me.

KINESIAS  
Can't we have just a quickie?

MYRRHINE  
Oh, I'd love to.

KINESIAS  
There's nothing to stop you. Absolutely nothing...

MYRRHINE  
Well, I promised. I've sworn not to.

KINESIAS  
Oh.

MYRRHINE  
Still I can't say that I don't want you.

KINESIAS

You can't? Oh, dear Zeus! Lie down.

MYRRHINE

Lie down? You must be teasing. (*Whispering*) Kinesias, the slave is watching us. The child can see us.

KINESIAS

Oh, I forgot. Here, Manes, take the baby home. (*KINESIAS Tosses BABY to SLAVE, who exits.*) There! That was easy.

MYRRHINE

Oh all right, you satyr, where shall we lie?

KINESIAS

Oh, where? Right there. There! (*Indicates downstage*) Pan's Grotto. Terrific spot.

MYRRHINE

All right. Fine. But I'll need someplace to clean up before I go back to the temple.

KINESIAS

Just bathe in the Klepsydra.

MYRRHINE

Kinesias! I swore an oath to Zeus.

KINESIAS

Forget the oath. Blame it on me.

MYRRHINE

Ohh... All right.

KINESIAS

Yes!

MYRRHINE

I'll go get a mattress.

KINESIAS

No, please, the ground is fine.

MYRRHINE

Oh, no! Its not! Despite your many flaws, I won't have you lying in the dirt.

(*SHE exits.*)

KINESIAS

See all the bother she goes to? It's obvious that she loves me!

*(MYRRHINE enters carrying a rolled fiber mat.)*

MYRRHINE

Here you are! Roll this out and lie down. I'll get this dress off and... Oh! We'll need a mattress over that.

KINESIAS

No. We won't!

MYRRHINE

Oh yes we will. That thing is rough and scratchy.

KINESIAS

Myrrhine. Lie down.

MYRRHINE

I'll be right back *(Turns back)* Oh, here's a kiss to keep you thinking.

*(MYRRHINE hastily kisses KINESIAS on his cheek and exits.)*

KINESIAS

Oh, hurry, hurry. Oh, dear God.

*(KINESIAS drops to his knees pounding the mat with his fists. MYRRHINE enters quickly carrying a cot-size mattress.)*

MYRRHINE

There! *(Throws mattress on him)* I'll just slip out of these clothes.

KINESIAS

Yes!

MYRRHINE

Oh!

KINESIAS

What?

MYRRHINE

You have no pillow!

KINESIAS

Who needs a stupid pillow?

MYRRHINE

Me.

*(MYRRHINE instantly exits.)*

KINESIAS

Oh. Some picnic. The only thing getting laid is the table!

MYRRHINE

*(Returning waving a pillow)* Got it! Now I think I've got it all.

KINESIAS

I know you do. Can't you just come to bed?

MYRRHINE

*(Struggles with some unseen knot)* Same old girdle trouble... *(Stopping)* You said you'd end the war. Yes?

KINESIAS

Oh, yes. Yes indeed. Yes!

MYRRHINE

Oh! Oh!

KINESIAS

No!

MYRRHINE

Blanket! You don't have a blanket!

KINESIAS

I won't be cold. You won't either. I guarantee it.

MYRRHINE

Right back. Be patient. *(SHE's gone again.)*

KINESIAS

*(Near tears)* Dearest Zeus, she just won't stop. I think she plans a bedding shop!

MYRRHINE

*(Returns with blanket)* Here you are. Get up a minute.

KINESIAS

I've been up for hours.

MYRRHINE

Some massage oil. Wouldn't that be nice?

KINESIAS

No.

MYRRHINE

I'll get some. (*Gone again*)

KINESIAS

I'm beginning to wonder if I will. Oh Zeus, what next?

MYRRHINE

(*Returns with flask of oil*) Put out your hand. (*Pours oil in his hand*) There. Rub that in.

(*MYRRHINE shoves KINESIAS'S hand into his face.*)

KINESIAS

Yaah! That smells AWFUL! Blah!

MYRRHINE

(*Sniffs oil*) Oh, silly me I brought that rotten old Rhodian oil!

KINESIAS

It's great, it's wonderful. Just LEAVE it!

MYRRHINE

I've always loved your sense of humor.

(*SHE kisses him and exits off.*)

KINESIAS

(*Fervently*) Zeus, I pray you damn the man forever, who first invented perfume.

MYRRHINE

(*Returns with another flask*) Try this one, dear. It's just the thing.

KINESIAS

And I have just the thing for you! Please, please, bring nothing else and come to bed!

MYRRHINE

All right. (*Getting snuggly*) And Kinesias—

KINESIAS

Mmmm. Yes, my love?

MYRRHINE

You *will* vote for the peace, won't you?

KINESIAS

I'LL THINK ABOUT IT! I'LL THINK ABOUT IT, DAMNIT! (*MYRRHINE runs across KINESIAS' prone body and off into skene building. We hear her bolt the door behind her. HE is sobbing.*) AHHHHHHHH, I'm done! I'm dead! I'm just a ghost! She set my fire and let me roast! (*Addressing his crotch*) Poor little friend, you look so sickly. You must have some nursing quickly.

KORYPHAIOS AND CHORUS OF MEN

Pity this man and well you might.  
Love's object's lost. He stands in vain.  
Can his equipage bear the strain?  
Oh, Zeus, can he endure this pain,  
For which there is no end in sight?

KINESIAS

Oh, please, dear God, reduce the tension  
In a spot I shouldn't mention.

KORYPHAIOS AND CHORUS OF MEN

She should be beaten black and blue  
For this pain she's brought on you!

KINESIAS

Don't speak that way of Myrrhine, she's sweet...

KORYPHAIOS AND CHORUS OF MEN

...So sweet to roast you in a fever heat?

KORYPHAIOS, LEADER, CHORUS OF MEN

(*Praying*)

Curse her Zeus and fling her high,  
Whirl this woman to the sky.  
Spin her higher than the hawk  
Then drop her on our comrade's stalk!

(*KINESIAS exits.*)

## PART SEVEN

(*A SPARTAN MESSENGER shouts "Athenians!" from offstage. The CHORUS OF MEN turns toward the voice just as the MESSENGER enters wearing a cloak or chlamys, which at this moment covers a very large protrusion.*)

SPARTAN MESSENGER

Where is some Athenian in charge? Sparta sends a proposition!

KORYPHAIOS, LEADER, CHORUS OF MEN

(*Pointing at Messenger's groin.*) Whoa!

SPARTAN MESSENGER

Stop that! Who's in charge?

KORYPHAIOS, LEADER, CHORUS OF MEN

Uhh. The Magistrate. I'll call him.

SPARTAN MESSENGER

Thank you.

KORYPHAIOS, LEADER, CHORUS OF MEN

(*Calling off*) Your Honor! Oh, Your Honor!

MAGISTRATE

(*From off*) Yes? (*Entering; sees MESSENGER*) Oh! What's this? (*Studies his protrusion*)  
Are you a man or some sort of Spartan sex symbol?

(*CHORUS OF MEN laugh heartily.*)

SPARTAN MESSENGER

I am a messenger, sir, from Sparta. I'm empowered to suggest to you that our cities might negotiate a peace.

MAGISTRATE

A messenger, you say? Hmm. Yet you seem to have some weapon hidden beneath your cloak.

SPARTAN MESSENGER

I assure you sir, I have no weapon.

MAGISTRATE

Well, you surely have *something* there...

SPARTAN MESSENGER

Don't say it.

MAGISTRATE

Perhaps you're fond of me.

SPARTAN MESSENGER

That is so OLD!

MAGISTRATE

Sorry. What is that thing?

SPARTAN MESSENGER

This is a Spartan scroll. *(Takes it out)* It's Sparta's proposal.

MAGISTRATE

Oh, I see. I have one quite like it. Please tell me the truth; do things go hard in Sparta?

SPARTAN MESSENGER

Hard, yes. You've put your finger on it.

MAGISTRATE

Do you and you allies blame Pan for our affliction?

SPARTAN MESSENGER

Not Pan, no. Lamoito did it. She convinced every single woman in Sparta to lock their knees against any man's advances.

MAGISTRATE

What are you doing about it?

SPARTAN MESSENGER

There's not a thing we CAN do. All the men in Sparta have developed a way of walking... as if they were carrying a burning candle in a strong wind.

MAGISTRATE

I see.

SPARTAN MESSENGER

And those knees will stay locked, I'm told, until our war has ended.

MAGISTRATE

That's what happening here as well. They have intimidated all of Greece. Listen! Go back to Sparta. Have them send ambassadors. Perhaps we can negotiate. I'll speak to these Athenians. I'm sure they'll see my standing argument for peace.

SPARTAN MESSENGER

I'm sure they will. Thank you, sir. I'll bring them your message.

**PART EIGHT**

*(The SPARTAN MESSENGER and the MAGISTRATE exit in opposite directions.)*

KORYPHAIOS, LEADER, CHORUS OF MEN

I'd rather tame a wild beast! I'd rather fight a raging fire! These women are shameless...And VICIOUS!

*(The OLD WOMEN enter singly led by the LEADER OF THE CHORUS OF WOMEN.)*

This is Not the End of the Play  
Ending Intentionally Omitted for Security Purposes