

HERODAS
Ἡρώδης

HERODAS

STATES
of

MIME

Douglass Parker

ΗΡΩΙΔΑ

ΜΙΜΙΑΜΒΩΝ Α΄

ΠΡΟΚΥΚΛΙΣ Η ΜΑΣΤΡΟΠΟΣ

HERODAS:

AUNTIE

DROPS

BY

SCENE: The third-century BC equivalent of an *apartement meublé*. It contains, at the moment, MÉTRICHÉ, a young professional woman who has left private practice to specialize, and TRESSY, a slattern slavegirl. They will shortly be joined by GYLLIS, an entrepreneuse of advanced years who formerly managed MÉTRICHÉ's career.

NB: The dialects (MÉTRICHÉ Southern American, GYLLIS Southwestern American) are only approximate; indications serve mainly to suggest a range of non-standard speech. In any case, they are by no means consistently indicated, and readers should make their own arrangements.

A knock.

METRICHE

Tressy! There was a thump at the doah. Go see
if someone's here from the farm to visit.

—Well, go!

TRESSY

Whoozat who's at the door?

GYLLIS

It's me.

TRESSY

Who's *you*?

Scared to come close?

GYLLIS

So here I am, up close.

TRESSY

So who are *you*?

GYLLIS

I'm Gyllis. Philainis's mama.
(You know Philainis. Everybody knows Philainis.)
You git in there an announce my presence to Métriché.

TRESSY

She says. . .

METRICHE

Who is it?

TRESSY

Gyllis.

METRICHE

Why, Auntie Gyllis!

(Gal, you find somethin to do.)
It must be fate,
you droppin by!
Ah wonder why.
Well, *Gyllis!*
Why this epiphany fo us mere mo'tals?
Gyllis!
It's gotta be, lemme think now, five whole *months*
since anyone even halLUCinated that you'd
be standin befoah this doah!

GYLLIS

It's quite a piece
to my place, honey, an the mud an muck in these alleys
comes up over my *knees*, an, you know me, I got
no more zip than a *fly*. It's Old Age, that's what's
draggin me down. Sticks to me like my shadow.

METRICHE

Tut tut, Auntie. Let's not go bad-mouthin Time.
'Sides, look at you. There's many a good bout left
in that. . . shapely frame: All-in, catch-as-catch-can. . .

GYLLIS

Go on, make cracks. Wisht I was young. You girls
got nothin better to do. . .

METRICHE

Come on, now, really!
All hot an bothered at a frenly observation?

They sit. A short but pregnant pause.

GYLLIS

Brightly.

Well, now, dearie, how long's it goin to be?
This solitary life, this single blessedness,
this makin the bed creak all by yourseff. . . how long?
Mandris, than man of yours, it's been ten months
since he set out for Egypt, an nary a letter,
not even an alpha, from Mandris's fine white han.
He has for-got-ten you; he drinks to forget,
he gulps his wine these days from a fine new goblet
(not like some weaker vessels I could mention). . .
an nacherly so:

Why, he's in the Lan where Love lives—
Egypt the Gorgeous! Birthplace an Homeland of, oh,
jist everythin there is in this world! You name it:
Riches, an Physical Fitness, an Power, an Peace,
an Pee-rades, an Pageants, an Terribly Serious Thinkers,
an Spring All Year, an Glory, an Fine Young Studs,
an the Holy Holy Home of the Sacred Siblings,
an a King who's top-drawer, first-class, A-double-plus,
and the Great State University, home of the Muses,
an Wine, an evry blessin you could want,
an WIMMIN!

Yes, wimmin!

So many, the sky's ashamed
to boast about her double hanful of stars. . .
An *lookers*?

Not mentionin any names, but all
them goddesses that trotted over to Ida to enter
that beauty contest, well, they better look out,
(An I better look out, too. No offense, up there!)

Anyway, what do you mean by spendin these
best years of your life jist keepin your chair warm? Huh?
You stick with that, an afore you know it, you're *old*,
yes, OLD, and your bloomtime's swallowed up in ashes!
You need new vistas. Set yourself some bran-new goals. . .
jist fer two-three days: Like Joy. . .

or Love. . .

Might take a look-see at somebody new.

Male.

You know what they say:

A ship that's hitched
to only one single anchor goes down with all hans.
Once Death comes by in his bright bathrobe, aint no one
gonna bring us aroun again.

The wild wins blow,
an away we go.

Don't none of us know the future.
There's nothin certain about tomorrow.

So listen. . .

Looking around nervously.

We haven't got compny, have we?

METRICHE

Nobody here.

GYLLIS

That's good.

Now, listen close, an I'll tell you the Matter
of Mutual Profit that brung me here today:
You know Patafkion's daughter Matakínê?

Well, she's
got a son, name of Gryllos. A real winner.
At the Games, *five times!*

He was jist a tad at Delphi,
then twicet at Korinth while he was still all peach-fuzz,
but up at Olympia, now that he's a man,
he won the boxin, yes, he did, TWO TIMES,
by knockouts!

An he's *rich* (but tasteful, 'course),
an *manners?* He walks so nice the grass don't rustle.
PLUS: When it comes to lovin, he's not jist merely
untouched. . . this boy is still in the *wrapper!*

(In trainin.)

Well, Gryllos saw you in church the second day
of the hallowtide celebration, and then and there
his insides went *flip-flop*, Love needled his heart,
an he's been over to my place ever since,
both day an night, jis buglin at my front door,
an callin me Granny an generly dyin by inches
of un-re-qui-ted passion!

Well, now, dearie,
might that suggest goin back on the active list?
Can't you stretch your ethics a little, jist once?
In a holy cause?

Piously.

It's all for Aphrodite.
Ree-dedicate yourseff to the Goddess's service,
Métriché honey. . .

Savagely.

cause if you don't, but keep on
playing OLD, you'll be it 'fore you see it!

Cooing.

I might point out that you're gonna profit twicet over:
The thrill of the sport—or joy of lovin, PLUS

Chinking coins.

a little somethin on the side. Let's call it a gift.
See, now? You know you can trust me. I'm your fren,
so-help-me-Fate-an-may-she-drive-me-up-
to-my-neck-in-the-groun-if-I-aint.

METRICHE

My goodness, Gyllis,
Ah do believe that white hair saps the brain.

As Ah expeck to see Mandris' sail swoosh safe into harbuh,
as Ah reveah the love of the goddess Demetah,
Ah sweah Ah wouldn't have stood an *effusion* like that
from any woman else.

Why, by the tahm
Ah'd taught her a lesson, her legs'd be as lame
as her logic, and she'd've conceived a propuh distaste
fo' the mat at my doah.

So don't bringin stories
like that aroun to my place ever again, heah?
You peddle your granny-tales to lil-bitty gals,
but Métriché, Pythias' daughtuh, you leave her keep her
chair warm.

Savage in turn.

There isn't *nobody* goin to sass
my Mandris!

Cooing.

But that's not hardly polite, not nice
conversation like Gyllis is used to.
—You! Tressy!
Wipe the mug clean an poah out, oh, three fingers
of wine from the bottle, with jus a *splash* of watuh,
an give our guest a drink.

Tressy complies and offers the mug.

GYLLIS

I rilly couldnt...

METRICHE

Grabbing the mug from Tressy and shoving it in Gyllis' face.

Here, Gyllis. Drink up!

GYLLIS

Groping.

Where is it?

Oh, thanks.

I didden

drop by to lead you astray. I reckoned it was
my duty as a good ree-ligious woman. You know, the rites
of Aphrodite.

An that's the reason. . .

METRICHE

Give it up, Gyllis.

Drinking.

Down the hatch!

GYLLIS

Drinking, then:

But, dearie. . .

Oh, well, anyway,
it *is* good wine. Yes. Damn me Demeter, old Gyllis
hasn't imbibed a tastier slug than this in, oh,
how long's it been?

An so goodbye, sweet thang,
an DO take care of yourseff, now, won't you?

'Bove all,
don't you grow OLD. . .

a fate what's only reserved
for naughty girls what don't stick by their Auntie.
I'll remember you in my prayers, missy.

'Bye now!

She leaves.

ΗΡΩΙΔΑ

ΜΙΜΙΑΜΒΩΝ Β΄

ΠΟΡΝΟΒΟΣΚΟΣ

HERODAS:

JUSTICE

PROCURED

SCENE: A city courthouse on the island of Kôs, ca. 275 BC. In the courtroom we find in process a criminal action for assault and battery. Present are the Jury, the CLERK of the Court, the Timekeeper who oversees the water-clock, and the principals in the case: THALES the defendant, a well-dressed, arrogant young man with a hot temper (he does not speak in the case, but it's nice to know these things); the prostitute MYRTALE, one of those wronged in the assault, waiting patiently if nervously for her appearance before the Jury; and the prosecutor-cum-plaintiff, the old pimp BATTAROS, clad in the most woebegone rags he could find.

BATTAROS, though not connected professionally with the law, is by no means a rank amateur: He knows, and will employ, a great many tricks of courtroom procedure; he may be a fan of the Athenian orator HYPEREIDES, and appears to have made an especial study of that worthy's defence of the courtesan PHRYNE.

As the mime begins, Battaros rises to make the speech for the prosecution.

BATTAROS

Gentlemen of the Jury:

I scarcely need to remind you that you are not here to pass judgment on our birth or social standing. The defendant, Captain Thálês, possesses a ship worth three hundred minas, while I go hungry for want of the merest crust, but such facts are totally without significance here, in a court of law, and hardly entitle Thálês to wreak such aggravated assault on myself, your humble servant, Báltaros. Far from it, Gentlemen!

No,
as sure as the island of Kôs consists of cities welded into one great civilized state, Thálês is guilty as hell, and is gonna get his!

And why?
Because he is a resident alien, just like me, and the courses of both our lives on Kôs are directed, not by our own free choice, but the random blows of circumstance. So he has a patron---Ménês. And *I* have a patron---Aristophôn.

Ménês, of course, won a boxing title, years back. . . but Aristophôn has kept his strangle-hold in pretty good trim, and, if that's not the truth, well, Thálês can test it by going out on the streets after dark. I wonder how long he can keep that expensive cloak he's wearing; he'll learn what kind of a champion barricades *me*. I know his probable line of defense:

"When the curse of famine stared the city in the face, it was I---one man---who came from Acre with a cargo of wheat and stayed its course!"

Well, hell, it was I---one man---who came from Tyre with a cargo of whores and stayed the course of another curse: Am *I* a civic benefactor, too?

Does he give grain away gratis for grinding?

No more than I supply free screwing.

Now, Thálês thinks, and would have you think, that his rights reside in his lifestyle:

He sails the broad blue sea!
He sports a cloak that cost *three minas!* in *Athens!*
But poor old Battaros here is forced to remain on shore, and make his home in this bundle of rags, and flap around town in rotten sandals---which means,

thinks Thálês, that he can rip off whatever one
of my girls he wants, without the Proper Arrangements,
and, to make it worse, in the dead of night, a time
when all decent folks are in bed!

If he can get away
with that, you might as well say farewell and so long
to our city's civil security, and Thálês will wreck
your pride and joy---the vaunted autonomy of Kôs,
City of Laws!

He doesn't Know Himself,
you see, and he should. . . . He doesn't realize that he
is a minor mixture of all-too-common clay,
even as I am; that he should grovel and shiver
in fear and respect before the least of this land's
citizens, even as I do. Since even the *Best*
of Them, society's very ceiling, bloated and swollen
with pride of birth and place far more than he is----
They have Respect for the Laws!

For all that I
am an alien, still, no *citizen* ever attacked me
and pulverized me, no *citizen* ever beat down
my door at night or put my place to the torch,
no *citizen* ever picked through my whores, took one,
and took off!

But this *barbarian*, Thálês the *Phrygian*,
whose name used to be *Artímmas*---he did it all!
And did it in utter contempt for rules and rulers!

---Now, where's the Clerk?

The Clerk of the Court clears his throat.

Please read me the Law on Assault.

To the Timekeeper.

---And you, sir, be kind enough to plug the vent
in the water-clock until he finishes reading,
or else I'll suffer the way it says in the proverb:
*Whenever an asshole speaks, it says goodbye
to the nice clean sheets.*

---Great stuff, the ancient wisdom.

CLERK

*If a free man assault a female slave or batter
and beat her with malice aforethought, the same must pay
double the damages decreed.*

BATTAROS

The words of *Khairóndas*,

our City's Founder, Gentlemen, and not
the words of Báltaros prosecuting Thálês.

CLERK

If he break down the door. . .

BATTAROS

. . . he must pay one mina, he says.

CLERK

If he make an attack with closed fist. . .

BATTAROS

. . . another mina!

CLERK

If he fire the house, or trespass. . .

BATTAROS

. . . the fine was set

at One Thousand minas!

CLERK

*And if he cause injury
of any shape or form. . .*

BATTAROS

. . . he has to pay *Double!*

And that's what the City's Founder said, Thálês. But you
don't know from *living* in cities, much less *founding*---
more like *confounding*:

Today, your home's in a silly
spot like Brikindêra; yesterday, Abdêra;
tomorrow, if somebody slips you the fare, you're off
on the boat to Phasêlis and cut-rate citizenship.

---Well, Gentlemen of the Jury, not to beat
your patience into the ground with wordy digressions
around the bush, just let me declare that my treatment
at Thálês' hands is only matched in misery
by the well-known proverbial pains of the mouse in the pitch-pot:
I was hit with a fist;

the door of the house for which
I pay an exorbitant rent was stove in;
the frame

of that door was burnt right through;
and *this*:
It's time
for Exhibit A.

To Myrtalê who, clad in a breakaway shift, is cowering some distance away.

---Now, Myrtalê, now. Come here,
you're on.

She complies dubiously. She is quite bashful.

Well, display yourself to the court.
No need to be shy. You see those jurors? Pretend
they're just your fathers and brother, looking you over.

She freezes. Impatiently, Battaros rips off the shift, exposing her naked to all.

Gentlemen, look at this!
I ask you, examine
the bare spots that stud this wretched creature!
Up *here*. . .
and down *here*. . .
our blooming innocent Thálês has plucked her,
plucked her *smooth*:

It's a wonder there's any hair *left*!
Oh, when I think how he dragged the poor girl off
and *ravaged* her! All I can say is, that whipper-snapper
had better give thanks to my Old Age! Otherwise,
he would now be breathing his last in bloody bubbles,
like Philip the Basher, who thought he'd caught him a long-haired
nancy-boy over in Sámos. . . .

A guffaw from Thales.

---You find this amusing?
Oh, I see. Yes, a faggot I am, I admit it.
No secret; it runs in the family:
My grandsir they called
Honeysuckle, my daddy was known as *Pansy*, and they all
pimped, to a man---but still, for sheer grit and guts,
if I were a young, strong Thálês, I'd strangle a lion!

But perhaps you're in love with Myrtalê here?
No problem.
I'm in love with food. . . so, tat for tit, as we say
in the trade.

Or, listen to this:
If you're really on fire
inside, and a little bit kinky, well, make her your own;
just stuff her net worth into Báltaros' hot little hand here,
take charge of your cargo, and bang it to your heart's content.

Myrtalê grabs up her shift's remains and retires. Battaros turns to the Jury.

Oh, Gentlemen, one last thing (that little business
was private, between us two):

 There are no witnesses,
so I'll have to ask that you use your honest judgment.
Still, given the thing that Thálês has for slaves' bodies,
he may demand Torture. In which case, I offer. . . *me*.
Take me, Thálês, I'm yours!

 Strap me and stretch me. . .

but put the damage deposit up front, in plain view,
okay?

 If Mínôs were settling this case on his scales,
he couldn't come to a fairer decision than *that*.

---Now, Gentlemen, one final point:

 When you cast your vote,
remember, it's not a vote for Báltaros the Bawd,
but a vote for Each And Every Alien Who Dwells
in Your Fair City.

 That time is now at hand
when you will display the greatness and might of Merops
the King and Kôs, his daughter---

 when you will affirm
the glory of Héraklês the Hero and Théssalos his son---
when you will show why Asklêpios left the mainland
and voyaged here---

 why Phoebê selected this spot,
this very spot, for the birth of the goddess Leto!

Take all this under advisement, then steer the course
of the case with unswerving thought to safe harbor,
where you will discover that:

A Phrygian improves with beating. . . .

Unless the wisdom of the ancients is telling a lie.

He retires to await the speech for the Defense.

ΗΡΩΙΔΑ

ΜΙΜΙΑΜΒΩΝ Γ΄

ΔΙΔΑΣΚΑΛΟΣ

HERODAS:

PARENT-

TEACHER

CONFERENCE

[SCENE: The school run by one LAMPRISKOS in a Greek town, possibly on one of the Aegean islands, in the early 3rd century BC. It is at present occupied by its master and at least three young boys, EU'THIES, KOK'KALOS, and PHILLOS. Though not elaborate, the school is a true temple of the Muses, whose statues are ranged around the room. As the mime begins, the lucubrations of master and pupils are interrupted by the entrance of a distraught matron, METROTIME, who is alternately dragging and pushing her young son KOT'TALOS. He, by the way, is that maddening mixture of indolence and hyperkineticism that so frustrates parents in any era.]

[METROTIME's first act, on entrance, is to notice the statues of the Muses.]

METROTIME

Oooh---*Culture!*

If that's what you want from your friends the Muses,
Lampriskos---adequate pleasure, an existence that you can
extract enjoyment from---you'd better do this:

Shoving Kottalos at him violently.

FLOG this specimen till his disgusting soul
pops up to his lips and hangs on for dear life!

I'm a wreck:

He's ransacked the roof off my head with his ruinous gambling
at *Pitch-Penny!*

Other boys play knucklebones. . .
but that's too tame for this kid, and our situation
is on a downhill course with *Disaster!*

Ask him how

to find this school---

(oh, god, it's the end of the month,
the deadly due-date, and fees to be paid, never mind
that I'm a martyr they should write a myth about)---
but ask him where Teacher's door is. . . and don't hold your breath
till he answers. But Where's the Casino, Where's the Gambling
Hell where no-goods and runaways spend their lives
hunkered down, Where's THAT?. . . He'll spout out directions,
with alternate routes, yet!

But where is his writing tablet?

I wear myself out every month to give it a fresh coat
of wax, and Where is that poor abandoned tablet?
---(Sometimes he makes a few squiggles---you'd think he was holding
a Piece of Hell---and scrapes it right down to the board)---
Where *IS* it? It's right where he threw it, between the post
on his cot and the wall!

But his *dice* are out in plain view,
all right, on top of the bags and the sacks, and they *gleam*;
the all-purpose bottle of oil we use every day
isn't half as bright!

He doesn't quite grasp his letters;
has trouble with Alpha, unless you prompt him, loudly,
five or six times.

The other day, his father
gave him a little drill, and dictated CAT---
and What did our paragon do?

He wrote down *BET!*

It made me feel as stupid as he is for trying
to make him a prop and support for my old age. Why teach
him letters? Better I should have him learn the fine points
of slopping donkeys.

When either I or his father---
(a very old man; he's losing his eyes---and his ears)---
whenever we tell him to do what little boys *do*,

recite us a nice, long tragic speech, you'd swear
he was dribbling it out through a sieve:

"Ap-pol-lo. . .

Hun-ter. . . ."

I have to tell him. "You're worthless!" I say. "Your granny
could say that much, and she's illiterate. And so
could any Phrygian slave you meet on the street."
But that's all the scolding we dare do, or *think* about doing,
or else he doesn't know where home is for three days:
He either goes to his granny's---she's very old;
she lives on nothing at all---and he *pillages* her;
or he climbs up on top of the building, spreads his legs,
and *sits* there, peeking over the edge like some sort of
baboon! How do you think I feel when I see him---
how do you think my *stomach* feels?

I'm a wreck!

Not that I'm worried for *him*, of course, but the *roof*!
All the tiles get smashed like a batch of cookies,
and when winter comes on, I have to replace them---
I bawl when I have to do it---an obol and a half *apiece*!
I mean, the whole building knows; they shout out in chorus,
"*KOTTALOS DID IT, METROTIME'S BOY!*"
And they're right. I'd bite them back if I could, but I can't.

Just look at his back! All sunburned and rough from lolling
around in the woods, like a Delian lobsterman does
at sea. What kind of a life is that---it's *stunted*!
But *holiday*---the seventh, the twentieth, feasts of Apollo---
those he knows better than calendar-makers, and sleep
can't touch him whenever he's busy figuring up
the celebrations that'll make you shut down school!

Out of ammunition, she stops her tirade for an instant, then returns to the beginning.

Well, anyway, Lamprískos, as what you wish
from the Muses is honored success in life,
as what you wish is a chance at good luck, then don't
just BEAT him, but. . . .

LAMPRISKOS

Breaking in, on the theory that enough is, after all, enough.

Please, Mêtrotímê, let's leave
the Muses out of this, shall we? Your son will receive
no less than he deserves.

He calls the other students.

Eúthiês, where are you?

Kókkalos? Phíllos?

They assemble before him.

Quickly, now. Hoist him up
on your shoulders and let his tender backside greet
the beams of the Pilot's Moon.

They lift Kottalos as directed, face down, and Euthiēs and Kokkalos hold the wriggling boy in place. Lampriskos moves to address his face, lifting it up, and speaks in elaborate school-masterly irony.

I highly approve
of your behavior, Kottalos. Mere knucklebones
no longer find your favor, as they do your schoolmates'---
is that it?

And off you go to take instruction
in Pitch-Penny from the no-goods at the casino?
Well. I shall impart to you the demure demeanor
of a refined, retiring, retarded *girl*, since that is
your dearest desire.

Savagely, to Phillos.

Where is my *Stinging Strap*?
Where is the bulltail with which I flay the miscreants
confined in fetters, the sinners sequestered in the closet?

Phillos runs to get the whip.

Place it in my hand before my choler chokes me!

Phillos returns with the whip and hands it to him.

KOTTALOS

Oh, no, no, DON'T! Oh, please, Lamprískos, I beg you
by the Muses, and by your beard, and I beg you again
by the life of your poor little Kotty, please don't flog me
with the *Stinging Strap*! Oh, use the other one! Puh-leeze?

LAMPRISKOS

But you're a bad boy, Kottalos, such a bad boy
that should you be up for sale, no merchant could find
a reason to buy you, not even in *Hell*, a land
so poor that all the miced make their diet of iron.

WHOP!

KOTTALOS

H-How many lashes, Lamprískos? Please, how many lashes
are you going to give me?

LAMPRISKOS

Don't ask me, ask *her*.

Drawing back his arm for another stroke, he holds up.

KOTTALOS

Momma! How many lashes are you and him gonna give me?

METROTIME

As I hope to go on living, at least as many
as your wretched hide can stand!

WHOP! again from Lampriskos.

KOTTALOS

STOP, Lamprískos!

Enough!

LAMPRISKOS

Then *you* must stop, too, stop this bad
behavior.

KOTTALOS

I'll never, never do it again,
Lamprískos! I swear by the darling Muses I won't!

LAMPRISKOS

But what a tongue we have on us, little man!
Make one more sound, and I'll stuff *The Mouse* in your mouth!

He raises the whip.

KOTTALOS

Look, I'm quiet! No sound! Don't kill me, please!

LAMPRISKOS

Eúthiēs, Kókkalos, let him go.

METROTIME

As the boys comply.

You shouldn't

have stopped, Lamprískos. Flog him until the sun sets!

LAMPRISKOS

You heard what he said: He's agreed to mend his ways.

METROTIME

But this kid is sneaky---he has more tricks than a snake!
He has to be punished---even reading a book,
you've got to give him. . .

KOTTALOS

Breaking in.

Nothing at all!

METROTIME

... TWENTY
more lashes, at least, and I don't care if he reads

With a look at one of the statues.
better than Klío herself!

KOTTALOS

Himself again, he runs around and makes faces at his mother.

Nyahnyahnyahnyahnyahnyahhh!

LAMPRISKOS

To Kottalos, in resigned benediction.

May you wake someday to find that the Muses
have douched your tongue in honey!

METROTIME

On second thought,
Lamprískos, I guess I'll go home and tell my old man
what's happened, and get our fetters and bring them back here
and tie his feet together:

And then the Muses
he hated so much can *watch him hop up and down!*

She leaves Lampriskos and the boys to continue the educational process.

ΗΡΩΙΔΑ
ΜΙΜΙΑΜΒΩΝ Δ'
ΑΣΚΛΕΠΙΩΙ
ΑΝΑΤΙΨΕΙΣΑΙ ΚΑΙ
ΨΥΣΙΑΖΟΥΣΑΙ

HERODAS:

ART
IS LONG

[SCENE: An art-laden temple of the God Asklepios, possibly on the island of Kos. It is not yet daybreak; the real crowds have not yet arrived. Enter a retinue of four women: Sugah, Dearie, and Sugah's slaves, Kókkalê and Kydilla. They carry with them two offerings: a roast rooster, and a small picture.

[It would appear from her excitement that this is Dearie's first trip to view this temple's particular treasures; Sugah, who is probably older, is familiar with the place, though not quite so blasé as she would like to convey.

[Both women give the impression of being respectable housewives—though it is entirely possible that this is no more than pretense, and they are actually mildly successful prostitutes from a local bordello. This would make them none the less devout, of course; and they have reason to be grateful to the God of Healing.]

SUGAH

Addressing the God Asklepios.

Glory be to you, Healuh! You who rule ovuh Triikka,
who have yo dwellin in lovely Kos and in Epidauros.
An Glory be to Korônîs who bore you, an Glory be to yo daughtuhs,
Health—the one what you grace with the soothing touch of yo right han—
an those whose honuhed altuhs stan right heah befo us:
sweet Panacaea, an gentle Epio, an healin Iëso.
An to that pair of doctor-soldiers who looted and sacked
Laömedon's house and walls, who cure the savage plagues,
Podaleirios and Machâon, Glory be to them both.
And Glory, oh Fathuh Asklêpios, to evry god an goddess
what dwells heah on yo hearth.

She holds up the roast rooster.

Be present and graciously deign
to receive this rooster Ah offuh, this herald of the household's hassles;
accept this bit as dessert.

Ah bettuh explain: Abundance
dont exackly gush unbroken out of the groun
aroun ouah place. If it did, ouah grateful offrin
wouldnt be no roostuh. An ox or a pig stuffed full with cracklins
an fat, now that's what we'd offuh in thanks fo the blessed
stretch an touch of yo smoothin hands that cuahed the mis'ries.
— Kókkalê, take this pickchuh heah an set it up
right at the right of the goddess of Health.

Kókkale takes the picture [NB] and does so.

DEARIE

Sugah, honey,
would you look at all these *Luhvly* statues! Who in the wuhld
could evvuh have made this stone? An who was the donuh
what set it up?

SUGAH

“School of Praxiteles.”Aint you got eyes?
Written right theah on the base. And Eúthiês set it up...
the son of Prêxon.

DEARIE

Ah suttinly hope the Healuh will deign
t be gracious to that school, an Eúthiês, too: such *Luhvly* Aht!

Sugah and Dearie walk around and inspect the other statuary.

SUGAH

Dearie, looky that lil girl heah what's got her eyes
starin up at that apple? Wouldnt you bet that if
that lil girl dont get that apple quick, she'll faint away dead?

DEARIE

Entranced with another statue.

Sugah, this ole man ovah heah...

SUGAH

Engrossed with yet a different statue.

The Fates presehve us!
Would you look at that lil old boy ovah hear jes chokin that goose?
Why, if that wasn't no more'n a stone when you got close up,
wouldn't you bet it could *talk*?
Jes give men tahm, though.
Soonuh or latuh they'll figger a way t put lahf into rocks.

DEARIE

Look ovuh this way, Sugah—it's *Blubbuh!* A statue of *Blubbuh!*
Ah'd know thet limp anywheah; it's Muttie's daughtuh, all right.
A real lahkness: If anyone aint seen Blubbuh befo,
she kin look at this. Dont need the real Blubbuh no moah.

SUGAH

Dearie, you come this way with me, and Ah will show you
somepn so lovely you aint never seen in all yore born days.

To the other slave, who is gawking at the statues.

—Kydilla, girl, you go and call the sexton.

No response from Kydilla, who continues to gawk.

Kydilla,
Ah'm talkin to you, yes, you theah swallowin flies!
—Lawdy, she aint paid no attention to what Ah say,
jes stans an sticks her eyes out at me—could be a crab.
—Kydilla, girl, Ah repeat: You Go An Call The Sexton!

Nada from Kydilla.

You ah a stummick, that's all! They aint no pious woman—
an no IMpious one, eithuh—what's gonna give you a refrence;
evvyone rates you the same. That's bad and below.

Still no response from Kydilla.

—Kydilla!

Ah'm callin the god heah to witness that it is against mah will
that you ah heatin me to a boil till Ah swell up an bust.
Ah'm callin him to witness, heah?

Kydilla evidently does not hear.

The day is comin when you
will scratch the scabs on yo scalp an wonduh what happened to you!

DEARIE

You shouldnt be so easy upset at evvythin, Sugah.
This gal's a slave, an laziness squeezes slaves' ears togethuh.

SUGAH

But it's day already, and the crowdins gettin worse an worse.
—Wait! Stop heah! They've opened the doah to the Holy of Holies!
Theah pullin back the cuhtain!

They goggle, first at a new batch of statues...

DEARIE

Oh, Sugah, honey, *look!*
What wonderful wuhks of Aht—an they been theah all the tahm!
What you want to bet Athene sculpted these?
Theah all so *Luhvly!*

Seeing a statue of Athene.

It's the goddes hersef: Glory be, Lady!

Her eye is drawn to a large painting.

Oh, lookit that naked lil boy! You want to bet if Ah scratch
that suhface, Sugah, he'll like to have an open wound?
That skin on him in the pictchah, and the hot blood pulsing beneath!
An oh those silvuh firetongs! If silly old Myllos sees 'em,
or little Pataikos, Lamprion's boy, they'll knock theah eyes out!
Those stupid thangs 'll think the paintuh used real silvuh!
An the ox...an the ox's leaduh...an the girl helpin out at the side...
an the man with the hook in his nose...an the man with the snub nose theah...
haven't they all got the look of lahf, as real as daytime?
Ah sweah, if Ah didden think that it wasn't really propuh
fo a propuh woman to do, Ah would've cut loose with a holler
fo feah that ox maht do me some hurt! Look at him, Sugah!
Aint that a sidewise glare he's givin me with his off-eye?

SUGAH

An, Dearie, that's because that's the genuwine skill that Apelles of Ephesos shows in all his pictchahs. Can't say that man was picky in choosin subjicks, saw *this* but threw *that* out. Whatevvuh came into his mahnd, he was off at a run and *anxious* to give it a try.

An whoevvuh has taken a look at Apelles an Apelles' paintins, an aint excited, an perfeckly fair, deserves to be hung up by one foot an dipped in cleanin fluid!

The sexton appears, and inspects their roast rooster.

SEXTON

Ladies, youah offrins ah foun to be fine, an ritually sound, an theah prospecks ah betteh yet. Nobody has pleased the Healuh in greatuh measuah than yawl.

—Glory be to You, Healuh,
Glory be to You! May these fair offrins bring You
to incline youah mahnd in faires' favuh to these women heah,
and to such spouses an neah an deah as they may have.
Glory be to You, Healuh! An so may it be. Amen.

SUGAH

An Amen again, oh Mighties' One. In the height of Health may we retuhn once moah, bringin still greatuh offrins... not to fohget ouah husbins and children, of co'se.

—Kókkalê,
you cahve the bird with care, now. Some slices off the leg;
give them to the sexton heah.

Then the ritual mixture;
you put that right in the hole for the snake—be revrent about it.
An give the cakes a dippin befo they go on the altar...
An don't fohget to take the leavins. We'll eat em at home.

SEXTON

Ahem. Theah's one moah offrin—the blessed bread. Give it heah.
Us really holy types would soonuh eat than pray.

Offerings duly made and received, and leavings packed, the women depart.

ΗΡΩΙΔΑ
ΜΙΜΙΑΜΒΩΝ Ε΄
ΖΗΛΟΥΤΥΠΟΣ

HERODAS:

NO
FURY
LIKE

SCENE: The front façade of a modest but solid urban dwelling, somewhere in the Greek Mediterranean, ca. 275 BC. It is occupied, as the piece begins, most notably by BITINNA, a widow of ripe charms and choleric temperament, and her sleek slave HUMPTY, whose erotic talents and endowments have relieved him of most of the usual servile duties. Somewhere on the periphery are KYDILLA, an attractive girl slave with a cool intelligence, and LIGHTNIN, a slow but unsure slave, probably asleep on his feet. SANDY, an aging but tough Thracian slave with no sense of hearing to speak of, is somewhere abroad. Taken all in all, house and yard could stand work

BITINNA

Humpty! Ten-SHUN!

HUMPTY

Presenting himself.

Yes'm.

BITINNA

Ooh, we *are*
a swollen little devil today, aren't we?
So much so, we've left our natural employment
of shoving away between *my* legs and deserted,
to give a great big rush to Mrs. Menon?

HUMPTY

Menon?

BITINNA

Try Amphitaía.

HUMPTY

Me? Amphitaía?
Have I ever laid eyes on the woman?

BITINNA

And are we cle-ver!
Excuses, deceptions, concealments—all day long.

HUMPTY

Bitinna, I am a slave. Your slave. You can do
whatever you want with me, and I wish you would.
But this full-time sucking my blood has got to stop.

BITINNA

Sau-cy! We've got a tongue on us, mister, don't we?
-- Kydilla, where's old Sandy? Get him for me.

SANDY

Appearing suddenly.

Whatcha's want?

BITINNA

Pointing at Humpty.

I want you to tie him up!

Immediately, as all stand frozen

Well, don't just stand there! Go get the well-rope, quick—
and don't forget to take it off the bucket!

Sandy shambles off. She turns to Humpty.

I propose to *mutilate* you horribly,
to make you a ghastly example throughout the country. . .
or else I resign as a woman!

—Lousy Phrygian.

I should have started beating him years ago.
—Oh, I plead guilty, yes, I'm responsible, Humpty:
I'm the one who made you a Man instead
of a menial, exalted you to high place. . . by the gift
of certain. . . er. . . favors. But don't you get the idea
that one long-ago mistake, however ruinous,
makes me a perpetual idiot! You Shall See!

To Sandy, who is lurching back with the rope.

Well, hurry! Strip off his smock and tie him up!

HUMPTY

Throwing himself at her feet.

The *smock!* Oh, no, Bitinna, not the *smock!*

BITINNA

I tell you, Strip It Off.

RIP!

Attend to the lesson:

You are a *SLAVE!*

HUMPTY

But I said. . . .

BITINNA

I *PURCHASED* you!

HUMPTY

I know you did. . . .

BITINNA

For three hundred *DRACHMAS!*

HUMPTY

Seems fair. . . .

BITINNA

In good hard *CASH*, on a day which I pray will live
in catastrophe's annals, the day that first dumped you
inside these walls!

—Sandy, I'll have your hide!

I told you to tie him up; you are not tying, and I
can tell.

Now, look. Like this:

You bang those elbows
together behind his back, and whip the rope
around them, *tight*, and then constrict them, *so*,
sawing firmly away on the rope until. . .
his arms drop off!

HUMPTY

AWOOO!

BITINNA

You see? Quite simple.

HUMPTY

In extremis.

I admit I made a slip, Bitinna. Forgive me.
A purely huOOOman error. If ever you catch me
doing it AHAHAHgain, or anything else
in the whOOOOOle wide world that it happens that you
don't liYIYIYIke, you can do your woRRRRst:

Tattoo me!

BITINNA

Don't grope for MY heartstrings, Monster! Address all requests
to Amphitaía when you're taking her over the jumps
and telling her how you use your pliant Bitinna

as a nasty shoe-rag to wipe your filthy feet!

SANDY

Finishing one last, hideous twist.

Dat's whatcha's wannid. I tied 'im.

BITINNA

Well, you be careful
he doesn't slip free.

Now hustle him down to the Pound,
and hunt for Hermon, the Pounder, and have him pounded:
One thousand clouts delivered straight to the kidneys,
and another thousand right in the pit of the stomach.

HUMPTY

Bitinna, this is murder! Have you no justice?
The charges are unsubstantiated!

What about
due process?

BITINNA

There's that tongue again. Aren't we
the little lawyer? And didn't I hear us say,
"I admit I made a slip, Bitinna. Forgive me"?

HUMPTY

Er, yes. A tactical move. I was merely trying
to somehow lessen the force of your—justified—fury.

BITINNA

To Sandy.

Well, don't just stand there gawking! Take him where I
TOLD you to take him!

You *DO* remember?

-- Kydilla,
fetch this human flotsam a rap on the snout.

Kydilla gives Sandy a whack as indicated. Bitinna turns to another male slave of stupefying slowness.

—Lightning, you'd better help him make up a crowd.
You follow Sandy, no matter where. So, quick!

She looks at Humpty again.

Oh, lord.

—Kydilla, can you find a rag or a towel,
or a sack, and give to Humpty to hide that appendage
which shall be nameless? We can't have a naked exhibit
parading its way through the heart of the market at rush hour!

—Sandy, I'll say it again: Tell Hermon to lay on
a thousand *here*. . .

Hitting Humpty in the back.

HUMPTY

A-WUFF!

BITINNA

. . . and a thousand good ones

here.

Hitting Humpty in the stomach.

HUMPTY

A-WUMP!

BITINNA

That's perfectly clear?

You're sure?

Because, if you lay a *toe* outside the lines
of any order I've given you, You Will Pay:
Dip into capital, interest and principal, *ALL*
your assets will be liquidated!

-- So Forward!

The trio--Sandy and Lightnin conducting Humpty--makes for the right.

—No! Not that way—not by Míkkalê's place!
If she gets a peek at Humpty's. . .

—Here, the Highroad!

She points off left. The trio stumbles away in that direction.

Oh, God! How could I forget *that*?

To Kydilla.

Quick, girl, *run!*

Start screaming! Call that bunch back before
they've gone too far to hear!

KYDILLA

Running after the group, which hasn't left the stage.

Sandy, you loser!

The mistress wants you home. Hey, Sandy, stop!
Oh, damn. I forgot, he's deaf. But look at the slaughter
he's worked on Humpty. No love lost between slaves;
you'd think he'd trapped a grave-robber. Pulling him apart.

She bellows at Sandy and approaches.

HOO BOY!

—Hey, Sandy, cut the violence, please!
He doesn't get punished until you reach the Pound.
And if you don't stop, next week Kydilla here
with these very same eyes, *HOO BOY*, is going to see YOU,
on the very same chaingang you left last week, and twisting
your ankles to give a high-class sheen to the shackles!

Bitinna runs up. Sandy adopts a hands-off policy with Humpty.

BITINNA

All right, you! Turn around and haul that man back home.
But leave him the way he is: Immobile. Still.
I have another plan.

To Sandy, with a definite effort to be distinct.

Your job is to run for the man
who does those *lovely tattoos*. I think his name
is Kossis or something like that. Make sure he doesn't
forget his needles and ink.

—Yes, Humpty, you
are about to be *illuminated*. All in one go.
And then we can stuff a gag in your mouth and stick you
up on the wall, a conversation piece:
Hanging Slave, or *The End of the Trail*.

Like it?

KYDILLA

Now, Mumy, no no *NO!* A gentle, sensitive
woman like you, a mother whose dearest wish
is to see her daughter Batyllis married off,
Batyllis settled in her husband's home, Batyllis
lifting her little darlings into grandma's arms. . .
that maternal figure can *NOT* behave like a gorgon!
I admit he made a slip, Bitinna, but this time. . . .

BITINNA

Damn it, Kydilla, enough! Don't hassle the mistress!
You've got me so upset I'll leave—desert—
run away from home!

That Humpty consistently proves
he's servile down to the core! If I forgive
a Thing like that, after what he's done, why, strangers
can stop me dead in the street and spit in my face!
And they'll be perfectly right!

So gird me the Goddess,
NO! I refuse!

To Humpty.

We're quite the philosopher, aren't we?
But we don't Know Ourselves at all, not us!
And that's what we must remember, and have tattooed
across our forehead:

Tracing the letters on Humpty's forehead.

K - N - O - W - T - H - Y

KYDILLA

Firmly.

Can't punish him now. It's only five days till the Feast
of the Dead.

BITINNA

It is?

KYDILLA

Today's the twentieth. Sacrilege,
that's what you'd be doing.

BITINNA

Well, how 'bout that?

Beginning to untie Humpty.

It does look like I'll have to forgive you this time,
no thanks to you; you pay your respects to Kydilla,
little Kydilla whom I brought up with these hands
and love as much as Bathyllis.

And so that's that.
But once the festival's over, and we've mixed our wine
with honey, and poured it out to the souls of the Dead,
you needn't think that life around here will be
just one mad round of honey and wine.

Parker / Herodas / Mimiamb Five

—My goodness!

We're quite the little voluptuary, aren't we?

She goes on, but we stop.

ΗΡΩΙΔΑ

ΜΙΜΙΑΜΒΩΝ 5'

ΦΙΛΙΑΖΟΥΣΑΙ Η ΙΔΙΑΖΟΥΣΑΙ

HERODAS:

BETWEEN

US

GIRLS

SCENE: The front room (or only room, depending) of a middle-class Greek dwelling somewhere in Asia Minor in the early 3rd century BC. It is the home of the youngish matron KORITTO, her slaves, her chickens, and presumably her husband, though we never see or hear him, or, in fact, hear of him. Her slaves, including one whom we shall call TRESSY again (though she is not named in the text) are asleep on the floor, her chickens are roosting somewhere, and KORITTO herself is seated on the room's one visible chair. As the mime begins, METRO, another youngish matron, enters from the afternoon heat for a visit.

KORITTO

Why, Mêt rô---sit down!

There being nothing to sit on, she turns in mild consternation to the sleeping Tressy.

Well, get up and get the lady
a chair!

To Metro, as Tressy, yawning and scratching, begins to comply.

I have to spell out everything for her
myself.

Calling after the exiting Tressy.

—You're a slut, you know that? Never show any
initiative. . . I've got me a *rock*, not a maid,
the way you lie round the house. Except,
of course, when I measure out your supper: THEN
you count every crumb, and if the least little bittibit
dribbles away, you grumble and sniffle and puff till
you blow the walls out!

Tressy shuffles back in, clumsily polishing the chair she carries.

You're wiping it off; that's nice,
you little felon. It wouldn't do to have it
clean before it was needed, now would it?

Tressy places the chair and Metro sits.

You better
thank this lady I didn't give you a taste
of my fists!

METRO

Koritto, honey, I *know*. We're snagged
on the same yoke, you and I. I'm a regular bitch
all day and all night, what with barking and gnashing my teeth
at my unmentionable wenches.

But getting to the reason
for my little visit. . . .

She looks around nervously. Koritto picks up her cue and howls at the slaves.

KORITTO

All right, little pitchers! Get
the hell out of here and leave us alone!

To Metro, as the slaves scurry to exit.

I swear,
they're nothing but ears and tongues attached
to a long vacation. . . .

KORITTO

Unable to restrain herself now that the room is cleared, she breaks in.

Please, Koritto honey,
tell me, and please don't lie: Who was it who stitched you
The Vermilion Dildo?

KORITTO

The Vermilion Dildo, Metro?
Where did you see *that*?

METRO

Oh, Nossis got it—
you know, Erinna's daughter—the other day.
Oooh, what a fabulous gift!

KORITTO

Nossis? Who gave it
to Nossis?

METRO

You won't tell on me if I tell you, will you?

KORITTO

May these eyes drop out of their sockets, Metro darling,
if anyone hears from the mouth of Koritto a *word*
of what you tell me.

METRO

It was Bitas's wife, Eubúlê.
She gave it to Nossis and told her no one was supposed
to find out.

KORITTO

Oh, *Women!* Some day that Woman will pull *me*
out by the roots! She *implored* me, Mêtroph, and I
respected her need, and gave it to her before
I'd used it myself!

But Eubúlê snatches it up
like a nest on the ground and takes it and gives it away
to the very people you shouldn't. Well! Goodbye
forever to a friend like that! She can find herself
another friend 'stead of me! To lend what's mine
to Nossis—a *writer*—well, I think not!

Trying to restrain herself.

But, no;
I'm bitching more than is really right. Be lucky
if Nemesis doesn't get me—

Breaking out again.

But still, if I had
a *million* dildos, I wouldn't give *her* the bristliest
one of the bunch!

METRO

Come on, Koritto, let's not
get all in a snit at a bit of bad news. Remember:
A decent woman takes all things in stride.
Besides, it's all my fault. I talk too much.
It comes down to this: I should have cut my tongue out.

A pious pause, then she charges ahead.

Getting back to that particular point I mentioned,
who was it who stitched it? If you love me, tell me.
Well,
why are you looking at me like that? Why the smile?
—Now, look, this is Mêtôrô; you've seen me before. No reason
for all this shyness.
I *beseech* you, Koritty, don't play
any more games, but tell me the name of the stitcher!

KORITTO

Goodness, no need to *beseech*. The stitcher was Profutt.

METRO

Profutt? Well, tell me which one!

There are two Profutts.
There's the Profutt who has grey eyes and lives next door
to Myrtalínê, Kylaíthis's daughter. . . . Not him:
What he'd stitch wouldn't be fit to pluck the strings
on a lyre!

There's the other Profutt, who lives over near
Hermodórus' apartments, just as you leave Broadway:

Now, *he* was quite somebody once. . . but now *he's old*.
He used to have a thing going with Pylaíthis—with dear,
departed Pylaíthis, may she rest in peace.

KORITTO

You're perfectly right, Mêtrô, it's neither of those.
This Profutt comes from Khíos, or maybe Erythrai—
I'm not sure which. He's short and bald; the spit
and image of Praxínos; you couldn't find two figs
that look more alike. . . until he opens his mouth,
and then you know he's not Praxínos, but Profutt.
He manufactures at home, and sells under cover—
these days, every door shakes at the tax-assessors.
But oh, his products, what products they are! And *craft?*
You think you're seeing *Athênêwork*, not Profutt's!
I took one look---he brought two along with him, Mêtrô—
at the very first sight, my eyes swelled out of their sockets!
No men can make their instruments so, well, so—
we're by ourselves?—

so erect!

And not only that,
but they're *smooth* as sleep, and the straps aren't leather, but *wool!*
I tell you, seek as you will, you'll never find
a cobbler more kindly disposed to a woman's needs!

METRO

With the practicality of the deprived.

Why didn't you get them both?

KORITTO

Well, Mêtrô, I tried,
tried *everything!* There isn't a type of persuasion
I didn't apply: I kissed him, I stroked his bald head,
I poured him sweet wine to drink, I called him pet names. . .
I *barely* refrained from granting the use of my body!

METRO

But if that's what he wanted, you *should* have granted it to him.

KORITTO

Oh, I should, I should. But one has to be careful to choose
the right time for these things. . . and there was Bítas's wife,
my *friend* Eubúlê, right in the middle of this,
grinding her grain. It'd cost four obols to have
her millstone pointed and set, so she uses ours
all day, all night. She's ground it right into gravel.

METRO

But how did Profutt find out the way to *your* house,
Koritto honey? Don't play me any tricks.

KORITTO

You know the tanner Kandas? Well, Artemis, his wife,
pointed out our house to Profutt and sent him along.

METRO

That Artemis---always turning up something new!
It must be the wine she drinks—and the places she drinks it.
But still: If you couldn't liberate both dildos,
you should have found out who ordered the other one.

KORITTO

I *implored* him to tell me her name; he swore he wouldn't.
He's fond of her, Mêtôrô, and she's in love with him.

METRO

Rising from her chair to go.

Which means a trip for me. I'm going to see Artemis
now, and find out all I can about Profutt.
Goodbye, Koritty. Someone's simply *starving*;
it's time for me to be moving along.

She leaves. Koritto calls to a slave.

KORITTO

Chickie!

There you are; you close that door! And count
the hens to see if they're safe. And throw them their feed.
Too many bird-thieves around to plunder your flock,
even if you raise your chickens right in your lap.

Metro reaches down under her chair, pulls out a box, opens it, and extracts a large vermilion dildo, at which she gazes as the mime comes to an end. [There is absolutely no warrant for this in the original, where it would no doubt be impossible, but it does solve some points.]

ΗΡΩΙΔΑ

ΜΙΜΙΑΜΒΩΝ Ζ'

ΣΚΥΤΕΥΣ

HERODAS:

IF THE SHOE

FITS

[The Vermillion Dildo, Pt. 2]

[SCENE: The front and principal interior ground floor room of a cobbler's shop. Or what appears to be a cobbler's shop. At any rate, is the shop of the cobbler Profutt, prime purveyor of specialized leather goods, including shoes, to a city in Asia Minor in the mid-3rd century BC. It is really a very seedy place, occupied at the moment the mime begins, by the cobbler Profutt and, in the inner room behind, his two slaves, Deadeye and Goober. Arriving shortly will be an attractive young matron of Profutt's acquaintance, name of Metro, and some friends.]

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METRO

Entering from the street with two Ladies of her acquaintnace, about her age.

Profutt?

Ah brought these ladies to see your stock? Ah hope
you have a sample or two of youah fines' know-how to show 'em?

PROFUTT

Metro honey, lovin you is all to credit.

He claps his hands twice.

We got ladies heah! Bring out the biggah bench!

No response. He claps again.

Ah'm addressin

Deadeye.

He peers inside the inner room.

Snoozin again?

Gooper, you bang that boy
on his bugle till he sloughs this sleepin for good, you heah?

No, wait:

jes take the spiky collar an tie it roun his neck:
His screams'll keep him awake.

With a yowl, the slave Deadeye enters, wearing the spiked collar and carrying the bench.

Now look who's all gussied up.

Let's pump ouah kneesies, lessen we want a wake-up remindah
that goes clank-clank.

Deadeye struggles with the bench, puts it down as designated, then starts back into the other room.

We do inten' to polish it clean, now, don't we?

Lessen we want ouah mastuh to plane ouah ass off flat?

Deadeye, in a sort of sulky terror, wipes the bench with his tunic and re-enters the inner room.
Profit breaks from his vicious aside for a moment.

Metro, Ladies, Be Seated.

—Now, Gooper, open the cab'net...

No, not the one out heah...

Inside. Upstairs. Third Floor.

The Special. Private. Stock.

Gooper exits inside.

Metro, yawl ready yourselves

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for a showin of quality goods.

Hideous noises as Gooper bangs back outside with an elaborately finished chest.

In silence, now—vergin on awe—
open and showcase the shoecase...

This first lil...shoe here, Metro,
fits you down to the ground. In paht and in whole.
—Now, Ladies,
step up, look close:

That outsole aint gonna wiggle loose.
Pullstraps fit in fo good. That's quality craft throughout,
not spotty, not good work heah an bad work ovuh theah.
An the coluh? Why, bless you the Paphian queen an may she grant yawl
the absolute fulfillment of all youah deepes' desiahs,
yawl kin search the tanners', but yawl will nevvuh find
anothuh coluh lahk that, and waxin won't equal its sheen.
Mah middleman paid Kandas the tannuh three golden statuhs
night befo last fo that skin an one of a diffrent coluh—
an that is the hones' truth which, Ah sweah by all thats holy,
Ahve told unbroken up till today with evrythin showin
since lies dont pull a smidgin of weight in the scales
as Profutt hopes to live an breathe and turn an hones' mahk-up—
an mah man, he actually asked to be thanked, he really did,
the way those tannuhs are on the grab fo a price-rise....

Oh,

it was evvuh so awfly true:

The fruit of mah Aht is youahs,
Metro, but pore ole cobbluh heah's left with the moanin mis'ries.
Ah drain mah days and nights, mah stool is nevvuh cool,
an nobody heah goes wolfin away till the sun goes down
or stahts theah drinkin at dawn. But the place is worsen a hahv—
an whoever heard of bees makin honey for bees?

Ah didn't
mention kids. That's thirteen head Ah run on this spread,
Ladies, and not a lick of work in the lot. Come rain,
come shine, they sing one single tune: "Give if you got it."
Elsewise, they sit like chickies an keep theah assholes hot.

—Well. Lakh they say, the mahket don't want chattuh but cash.
If this paih aint to yo likin, Metro, he'll bring anotheh,
an yet anotheh paih aftuh that, till yawl believe,
deep down inside yawl's hearts, that Profutt dont tell lies.
—Gooper, bring 'em all out. Evry last shoecase we got.
—Ah cain't let you ladies go back home withouten a fittin.

Gooper nips in, staggers out almost immediately loaded with a variety of chests. He puts them down and he and Profutt open them.

Yore attention, Ladies, please!

Leather goods of all sorts!
We got yore white Sicyonians, yore very hot Ambraciots,

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yore ever-popular Mary Janes, yore smooth lil flats,
yore stubs, yore spikes, yore scuffs, yore shuffle-alongs, yore pumps
(still pluggin away), plus mules, Ionian boots (the button
right at the top), openwork, fretwork, yore loafer, yore lounge,
yore slipper, yore sneaker, yore wedgie, in emerald, scarlet, taupe...
an flesh.

Speak up, now, Ladies! Let each heart voice its choice.
An shortly yawl will know, by personal test an trial,
jes why ladies an dogs so love to gobble up leather.

A WOMAN

Ah'd lahk to have a look at the paih you stahted with—
what is yo' price on that?

An please dont howl so loud, now,
mistuh; I sweah you'll drahve us pellmell raht away f'm the shop.

PROFUTT

Well, now, ma'am, if yore willin, you be the judge of that.
You figger up the price of the paih an set it yose'f.
You got to admit that allowance makes fo difficult diddlin.

A pause.

If whut you want is the genuine product of the cobbluh's Aht,
you'll make an offuh—Ah sweah by the haihs on my grizzled head,
wheah the wild dandruff has come to nest—you'll make an offuh,
an fast, an put bread in the mouths of the hands that hold the tools.

Aside.

Hermes, God of Profit! Persuasion, Ouah Lady of Gain!
please don't let me haul in an empty net this time,
or else the pot in the house will have to keep boilin on empty!

THE WOMAN

What ah you mumblin about? You talk like yo tongue is chained.
Why not dig down deep and come up with what the price is?

PROFUTT

Lady, ma'am, this paih wukks out at one hundred drachs,
no mattuh whut yo reaction might be. If Goddess Athene
herse'f were buyin, Ah coulden cut it no finah than that.

THE WOMAN

It's logical, Mistuh Profutt, that yo substandahd dwellin heah
is simply stuffed with mastuhpieces in plenty. You mind
you keep em safe for yose'f, you heah?

But come the twentieth

day of Taureon, Hekatê's marryin off her daughtuh
Artakênê, and whut they need is shoes, an shoes, an mo shoes.
Po man, yo luck appeahs to be in. They'll likely rush—
mo likely theah sure to rush—right down to yo shop. Yo better
orduh a nice stout purse to keep the neighborhood kitties
from dashin away with yo drachmas.

PROFUTT

So Hekate comes to buy,
so Hekate pays one hundred drachs. Artakênê, ditto.
A lesson theah, if you want it.

METRO

Ahn't you the lucky one, Profutt,
strokin an neadin the feet that the Loves an Desiahs
stroke an nead? An such an elite clientele you have!
But that don't mattuh to me; a scab on the body politic
an general blight lahk you will rouse up my pitiful instincks.
But this lady heah, how much will it cost her to buy that othuh
paih? You kin puff an blast away as loud as you want,
but this tahm do yose' some justice.

PROFUTT

Pause for thought. Then, grudgingly, to The Woman:

Five staters, Ah sweah
by the Gods, is the standin offer Ah get fo that paih, from that hahpist,
Euetêris. She drops by heah and spens the whole day, evry day,
chivvyin me to take it. Euetêris called my wahf
some very naughty names, an I purely hate her. Ah wouldnt
sell to her if she offuhed me four whole Darics. But you,
ef yo need that, take it: Three Darics...But no. Lemme give you
these over heah...an these, too...Seven Darics, the lot.
'Cause any fren of Metro's...no, no refusals accepted.
Now, Ah got all the finer feelins of a boulder, but Metro
can take a shoe butchah lahk me and waft me up to Heaven;
Ah never been wafted befo.

—Metro, you dont have a tongue;
you got you a sieve full of joy. The man who bivouacks hard by
yo open lips through night and day might's well be a God.
You give that tiny foot heah, an lemme try for a fit.

He kneels before Metro and bends to his work.

Hoo boy! 'S enough; Not a bit of play in any direction.
Evrythin beautiful fits a beauty. Athene herse'f
might have put that sole in trim.

He takes a deep breath, and turns to the First Woman.

Well, let's see youah foot...

yes, you.

She complies rather dubiously.

What's this we have heah? Pardon me, ma'am, but who does
yo work—an ox? You ain't been fitted, you was gored...
Try this...

—You feel the diffrence? By Profutt's chimley cohnuh,
you couldn't slice the tinies' slivuh of leathuh off
with the shahpes' knife an make it fit any smoothuh.

A girl stops by the door, looks in, laughs.

Hey, you there by the door! You willin' to give me seven
Darics to do this? You better stop that snortin first;
Youah worse as a horse.

He smiles at Metro and her Ladies.

Now, Ladies, fo any othuh needs
yawl might have in the leathuh line—sandals, or somepn
a lil bit loosuh, fo lyin aroun the house, jes send
the maid to collect it, now you know the address.

—Metro,
you bettuh come back heah yose'f, let's say on the ninth.
To get that vermillion consignment, you know. Ah think we jes' may
need some intensive work to finish the inner seam.

Metro follows her Ladies out.

ΗΡΩΙΔΑ

ΜΙΜΙΑΜΒΟΝ Η'

ΕΝΥΠΝΙΟΝ

HERODAS:

DREAM

ON

SCENE: A grungy interior, sole room in a thoroughly loathesome hovel, the home of The Author. It is just before dawn. Three female slaves, Bluebottle, Chanel, and Blackie,¹ are still asleep. The pig, however, has waked up, and is grunting madly around the house. This wakes the Artist, who rises, grabs his crutch, and limps over in a perfect fury to his three snoring Graces, so to speak.

¹ Taking the third slave, with Schmidt, to be a female named Anna.

ARTIST

In a very foul humor.

RISE AN SHINE, you ever-buzzin Bluebottle! How long you gonna lie there gruntin away, while the sow's in here, reduced by unseasonal drought to a batch of slats? You waitin for the sun to come heat up yore pussy?

Ah know, yore jes plumb tuckered. That sleepin's hard on the ribs, when the nights ah nine years long. Oncet moah, with feelin:

RISE AN SHINE!

Now do me a favuh an light the goddam lamp? And then conduct that tonedead sow outside to the meadow?

Go right ahead, dont let me *disturb* you. Jes keep on grumblin and scratchin while Ah get over theah in position... an take my crutch and soften yore prefrontal lobes a bit.

Bluebottle complies with alacrity. Artist looks at the second sleeping slave, Chanel.

Chan~~eh~~-ull?

Anothuh loser. Yore into serious snoozin, jes lahk a enchanted prince in a story. Might could it be all the *work* that's wringin you out? In this house? Aint hardly likely. Sackifice comin up, we need a fillet...an the leastest twist of wool aint nowhere roun. So,

RISE AN SHINE!

you loser!

Chanel hurries out of bed and to work. Artist moves to the third sleeping slave, Blackie. He sits down by her and coos.

Mornin' there, Blackie. Ef you want, come give a listen to the dream Ah had. You aint like some of these greediguts here. The food you swallow is brainfood; you got a brain to feed.

I dreamed I was draggin a billygoat down th'ough a long arroyo—whoppin whiskers he had, nice set of horns. I towed him the distance, an then, along about sunup, I turned aroun an come up out of the gulch; oh, I was purely blowed. Come up to the sound of flutes:...A bunch of goatherds was fixin to hold a service. Tweetlin away and weavin their little vines to drape on the trees. That sort of thing. Well, I'm no thief; I didn't do nothin wrong, but my billygoat he got loose an traipsed aroun the oaktrees, tastin the decorations. A nibble here, a nibble there...

Them goatherds saw him, an was plumb tore up about it. An so was the billygoat: They sackified him, an put the pieces aroun the altar. So then it was time for the games.

Young fellow there in a saffron dress with the skirt slit up as far's the thigh.

I took a good look at how it was draped an he was stacked.
A swoopin mantle aroun his shoulders, caught with a stole
of dappled fawnskin, the whole set off by a crown of ivy
encirclin his brow, while down below he had them hightopped
buskins tied up to his shins. A getup guaranteed
to keep the morning chill off the bones.

Meantime, the goatherds
was settin up the equipment: They'd blown up a humungous goatskin—
about as big as the windbag that Aeolus give to Odysseus—
an greased it for everybody to try his luck at *bouncin*.
Up an down, the way you see the dancers for Dionysus.
The carnage was purely lovely: They flipped, and hit on their heads
in the dust, or slipped an went splat backwards, ass over elbow—
an those roars: a thoroughgoin blend of laughter an torture.
Well, in my dream I joined right in, the only one out of that mess
to jump on twicet. I hit it spang in the middle, stayed on,
an the goatskin grabbed me tight, an my audience shouted an cheered,
declared me the obvious winner, an gave me the prize outright!
Well, most of em did.

But some there was couldn't see that at all.
Especially one old man, all wrinkled an dirty, his nose
stove up in his face, who took his staff an shambled up
an let fly this way:

"You aint from around these parts, are you?
You come in here with your mangy billy, you rip an tear
all our fine decorations off of these shelterin oaks,
you dare to offer that fleabag a yourn on our purty altar,
you shove your way right into a private religious celebration
where you aint been invited, you squash our sacred precinct flat...
an you expeck to win a *prize*? You listen to me:
Fella, you're jes not country...Hell, you aint even a goatherd!
What right you got to preen yourself on your jumpin an bumpin?
Git out of mah face, you impostuh! I may be old, but I still
kin take my herdsman's crook and split you in two equal parts!"

Well, I give as good as I got; I tole the bystanders this:
"If this old men here wants to take me to court, I hereby announce
that I'm willin to die for my country! An I ask this young man here
in the funny clothes to make an official note of that fact!"

Well, that young man, he tole the goatskinner there to take
the old man an me, an tie us up, an throw us both
in the stocks.

An that was the last thing I saw.

End of dream.

He shivers.

—Chilly here. Anna, you fetch me my coat.—

Anna complies

So, vision accomplished;

now comes the litcrit bit:

The goat I dragged out of the gulch
was a purty beast, an so it's the godgiven gift I got
from Dionysus the Purty. And all them goatherds slashin

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and rippin my billy in sections for use in their rube-type rites,
an swallowin down the hunks of goatmeat, that all means
that a passel of critics up in the Library is fixin to DIsect
whatever I strain away at.

Well, that's what it looked like, at least.

But the prize I dreamed that I was the only one to win
while so many men couldn't keep their feet on that blownup goatskin—
an never you mind that me an that nasty old man, we come off
the same—that means, I swear by the Muses, that means this:
my verses' limpin feet are goin to call me to glory...
or else that a change of plans will make me take to my heels
an follow my master, Hipponax the longago great, an sing
my stumblins to Xuthus' Ionian sons, who know the lingo.²

Curtain, or blackout, or whatever.

² Or? "...sing / my stumblins over in Athens, back there where they know the lingo."