

Stasimus: (Whispering to Lesbonicus.)
Are you cuckoo or something? How can you refuse such a splendid offer from such a rich person? He will help your financial difficulties.

Philo: I will not allow you to make such a foolish decision

Stasimus: Hear, hear!

Lesbonicus: If you don't stay out of my business, I'll knock off one of your ears!

Stasimus: (To the audience.)
I can listen with one ear as well as two.

Philo: I propose to accept your sister as a bride for my son without any dowry. You see, it is not a question of status. Well . . . say something. Give me an answer.

Lesbonicus: I agree, sir, but I insist on making our farm, not far from the city, my sister's dowry.

Philo: I just told you that I want no dowry.

Lesbonicus: And I say I insist upon one.

Stasimus: (Whispering to Lesbonicus.)
Are you mad? The farm is the only good possession we have left. You have spent or sold everything else.

Lesbonicus: Will you be quiet. I don't have to explain things to you.

Stasimus: (To the audience.)
It looks like the bitter end for all of us. I must think of something. (To Philo.) Sir, may I speak to you way over here? (They move to the far side of the stage.)

Philo: What do you wish to speak to me about, Stasimus?

Stasimus: This is most confidential, so keep your mouth closed about it.

Philo: I give you my word.

Stasimus: I'm doing you a great favor by telling you this, sir . . . don't accept the farm as the dowry. First of all, the land is so infested with sickness that the oxen drop dead whenever the land is ploughed.

Philo: Really?

Stasimus: And furthermore, the grapes are bitter and nasty tasting.

Philo: Is that so?

Stasimus: Everyone who has owned that land has had nothing but bad fortune. One owner of that farm even killed himself, he became so discouraged.

Philo: Really?

Stasimus: And the slaves drop like flies from farm fever. If you're looking for trouble and headaches, you'll find it on that farm.

Philo: Thank you, Stasimus, for all the inside information. Your secret is safe with me.

Lesbonicus: What has my servant been telling you, sir?

Philo: Oh, what all servants talk about . . . their freedom. Since we can't come to an agreement about the dowry, why don't you settle that with my son, Lysiteles? But what is your answer about your sister marrying Lysiteles?

Lesbonicus: I give my consent.

Stasimus: Good!

Philo: And I say good, too!

Lesbonicus: Stasimus, run to the house of Callicles and tell my sister what we have arranged.

Stasimus: Yes sir!

Lesbonicus: And offer her my warmest congratulations.

Stasimus: Yes sir!

Philo: Now off to my house to draw up the wedding contract and pick the wedding day. (Exits.)

Lesbonicus: Stasimus, do as I tell you.

Stasimus: Are you going to Philo's house?

Lesbonicus: First I must see how I can settle the dowry business.

Stasimus: But are you going to Philo's house?

Lesbonicus: I'm determined not to have her marry without a proper dowry.

Stasimus: But are you . . .

Lesbonicus: I don't intend to embarrass my sister for . . .

Stasimus: Are you going . . .

Lesbonicus: My own stupidity, of course . . .

Stasimus: But . . .

Lesbonicus: It's only fair that she should . . .

Stasimus: Sir, are you . . .

Lesbonicus: . . . have a decent dowry.

Stasimus: Go, sir, go.

Lesbonicus: I'm going. (Exits.)

Stasimus: (To the audience.)
Finally, I made him move. . . . Well, at least I saved the farm for us. Now to carry out my master's orders. I can't stand the sight of this house since we were turned out of it. (He enters the house of Callicles. Luxury enters.)

Luxury: (To the audience.)
You see how nicely the characters are helping you to understand the plot? Keep listening carefully, and you'll discover more. My poor daughter, Poverty, is still hanging on to Lesbonicus. Poor Poverty. The characters are ready to speak again, so I shall leave. (Exits. Enter Callicles and Stasimus.)

Callicles: What are you so excited about Stasimus?

Stasimus: My young master, Lesbonicus, has made arrangements for his sister to marry the son of Philto without a dowry.

Callicles: I don't believe it! Marry her into a wealthy family like that without a dowry? Unthinkable!

Stasimus: Philto does not want a dowry.

Callicles: That poor girl. It will be most embarrassing for her to marry without a dowry. Something must be done about this. I'll visit Megaronides to see what advice he can offer. (He enters the house of Megaronides.)

Stasimus: (To the audience.)
That greedy old Callicles. I know what he's after! He is going to try to buy the farm from my master, just as he bought the house. Poor Charmides, all your property will be gone by the time you return from your trip. Here comes Lesbonicus and Lysiteles . . . they don't look too happy. I must hear what they have to say to one another . . . I'll go over to the side and listen to every word.

(Enter Lysiteles and Lesbonicus.)

Lysiteles: Lesbonicus, please don't run away from me. Don't try to avoid me.

Lesbonicus: Please don't bother me. I have things to do.

Lysiteles: I'm trying to help you.

Lesbonicus: The way I see it, you're playing a dirty trick on me.

Lysiteles: I am?

Lesbonicus: Yes, you are!

Lysiteles: Only a fool would refuse an honest favor from a friend.

Lesbonicus: You're not doing me a favor. I know what the citizens of the city will say. And I would be disgracing my sister to allow her to marry you without a suitable dowry.

Lysiteles: But if you give me your farm as the dowry, then you will live in poverty forever.

Lesbonicus: Why don't you stop worrying about my living in poverty and be more concerned with my reputation.

Lysiteles: Oh no, you're not trapping me. As soon as the wedding is over and you have given me the farm as the dowry, you will be a pauper, and you won't associate with your friends, and then the citizens of the city will blame me. They will say that my stingy personality drove you away. Oh, no! Oh no you don't!

Stasimus: (Jumping out.)
Three cheers for Lysiteles. Bravo! Bravo!

Lesbonicus: Who asked you to put in your two cents' worth?

Stasimus: I'm going. (Hides again in the corner.)

Lesbonicus: Come into the house, and we will continue our conversation.

Lysiteles: No! Here is my final offer to you. Let me marry your sister without a dowry, and you remain in the city and share all my wealth. If that offer is not satisfactory to you, then I can no longer be your friend. These are my last words to you!

(Lysiteles exits and Lesbonicus enters his annex.)

Stasimus: (To the audience.)
Well, that was a fast exit by those two. Where does that leave me? Now I suppose my young master will join the army, and I will have to go along as his servant. Oh, what a miserable life that will be! Oooohhh! Poor me!
(Exits. Megaronides comes out of his house with Callicles.)

Megaronides: I agree that the girl should have a dowry.

Callicles: How can I allow her to be married when I have her father's money hidden in the secret room?

Megaronides: You are right! The dowry is right there waiting for her. And you can't wait for her father, Charmides, to return, for that might mean waiting forever.

Callicles: What a mess! I simply can't trust Lesbonicus with the secret of all that money in the hidden room. Why he would go absolutely berserk and spend it all in two weeks!

Megaronides: Wait! I just had a brilliant idea!

Callicles: Yes? Yes? What?

Megaronides: Yes, my idea is brilliant. It's an ingenious plan!

Callicles: Yes? Yes?

Megaronides: We will have to hire some fellow who looks like a foreigner.

Callicles: I don't understand.

Megaronides: He will have to be a very good liar.

Callicles: I still don't understand.

Megaronides: This person we shall hire will go to ~~Lesbonicus~~ pretending that he is a messenger from his father. He will have two letters with him. One letter for ~~Lesbonicus~~ will say he is well and in good health, and the other letter will be for you saying that he has sent with the messenger a bag of gold for his daughter's dowry, in case she plans to be married. Get the idea, now?

Callicles: Yes. Excellent!

Megaronides: When you dig up the hidden treasure in the secret room, Lesbonicus won't suspect a thing. Now go along quickly to get some of the gold out of the room. Take care that no one sees you.

Callicles: Immediately.

Megaronides: Don't let anyone in on the plan. I'll go find a suitable impostor for the job.

Callicles: Fine!

(Callicles enters his house. Megaronides exits. Enter Charmides, back from his long business trip.)

Charmides: Back at last to my own native land! I thank you, Neptune, for guiding me safely home! (To the audience.) Yes, I am Charmides, father of Lesbonicus. I have been away on a long business trip. Yes, I made a great deal of money, and now I can rest. Someone is coming, dressed in a very strange manner. I'll step to one side to hear what he has to say.

(Enter the Impostor hired by Callicles and Megaronides.)

Impostor: Well, this is my three dollar day! (To the audience.) That's how much I'm earning today. I'm supposed to pretend that I've come from a far away land with some letters. But three dollars is three dollars! Right?

Charmides: (To the audience.)
He looks like some kind of a nut! I'm going to keep an eye on him, for I believe he's up to no good.

Impostor: (To the audience.)
Ah! There's the house where I'm supposed to knock!

Charmides: Heaven help me! He's heading right for my door!

Impostor: (Knocking on the door.)
Open up!

Charmides: Why are you knocking on that door?

Impostor: I'm looking for a young chap named Lesbonicus and an old man called Calicles.

Charmides: (To the audience.)
Why that sounds like he's looking for my son, Lesbonicus, and my good friend, Calicles. What do you want of them?

Impostor: Why do you want to know?

Charmides: Just answer my question. What do you want with those two people?

Impostor: The father of young Lesbonicus gave me two letters to deliver.

Charmides: (To the audience.)
I never gave him any letters.

Impostor: This letter is for Lesbonicus, and this letter is for Calicles. The gentleman I met made me promise to deliver them in person.

Charmides: (To the audience.)
Now, I'm going to have a bit of fun. (To the impostor.)
Can you describe the man who gave you these letters to deliver?

Impostor: Certainly! He was much taller than you . . . oh, at least twelve inches taller.

Charmides: (To the audience.)
Strange that I'm taller in one country and shorter in my own. Are you sure you know this man who gave you the letters?

Impostor: What a silly question! Of course I know him. How else did I come by the letters?

Charmides: What did you say his name was?

Impostor: Let me see It's . . . uh . . . uh . . . uh . . .

Charmides: Are you telling me his name is uh-uh-uh?

Impostor: It's on the tip of my tongue, but I just can't seem to say it.

Charmides: (To the audience.)
I think I arrived home just in time, don't you?

Impostor: (To the audience.)
I think he has me trapped!

Charmides: I have a feeling that you don't know this gentleman very well.

Impostor: But, of course, I know him very well.

Charmides: Is his name by any chance Charmides?

Impostor: Yes . . . yes . . . that's it!

Charmides: (To the audience.)
This is really a crazy situation. Would you recognize this man if you saw him?

Impostor: Of course I would. How ridiculous! I've known him all my life. Why else would he trust me with a bag of gold to deliver? We are best friends.

Charmides: (To the audience.)
What a liar! I never saw him before this very day, and yet he insists that I gave him some gold. Are you sure it was Charmides who gave you this gold?

Impostor: Sure I'm sure!

Charmides: Give me the gold!

Impostor: What gold?

Charmides: The money you said you received from me.

Impostor: Money I received from you?

Charmides: Yes, from me.

Impostor: Who are you, anyway?

Charmides: My name is Charmides, and I'm the man who gave you the gold.

Impostor: Oh no you aren't.

Charmides: Yes I am.

Impostor: You are an impostor! It takes one to know one. You can't swindle me!

Charmides: Listen carefully. I repeat, I am Charmides!

Impostor: Are you really?

Charmides: Yes, really, really!

Impostor: The real Charmides?

Charmides: Yes, the real Charmides!

Impostor: Well, so you finally have returned to your native soil after all these years. Well, well!

Charmides: Yes. Now be gone before I report you to the authorities! (Impostor exits. To the audience.) Now I can relax a bit! What an obnoxious fellow! Well, well, here comes Stasimus, my loyal servant.

(Enter Stasimus.)

Stasimus: (To the audience.)
I suppose nothing has been settled yet about the dowry?

Charmides: My greetings to you, Stasimus.

Stasimus: Can I believe my very own eyes? It is really the master returned? Oh beloved master, welcome, welcome!

Charmides: Tell me, is all well with my son and daughter?

Stasimus: Both alive!

Charmides: For that I'm grateful. Now, let us enter the house. (He starts toward the door of his former house.)

Stasimus: Where do you think you're going, sir?

Charmides: I'm entering my home, of course.

Stasimus: Sir, do you think this is your home?

Charmides: Of course it's my home.

Stasimus: Sir, I'm afraid that this is no longer your house.

Charmides: Am I hearing you correctly?

Stasimus: Sir, your house has been sold.

Charmides: My house sold?

Stasimus: Sir, your son has sold your house!

Charmides: Sold my house?

Stasimus: Sir, you seem upset.

Charmides: Who me, upset? Upset? Upset? I'm ruined! Betrayed! I can't breathe . . . help . . . I faint!

(Charmides falls into the arms of Stasimus. They both fall to the ground.)

Stasimus: Help! Help! My master is dead!

(Enter Callicles from the house.)

Callicles: What is the trouble?

Charmides: So! You call yourself a friend? Some friend! You certainly took very poor care of my property, friend!

Callicles: I'll explain everything! Come into the house.

(They all enter the house. The annex door swings open, and Poverty is kicked out.)

Poverty: (To the audience.)

I'm delighted this comedy has come to an end. Save your pennies, my friends, or I might be visiting your houses!

(Curtain falls.)