

THE KNIGHTS

by Aristophanes

anonymous translator

CHARACTERS IN THE PLAY

DEMOSTHENES

NICIAS

AGORACRITUS, a Sausage-Seller

CLEON

DEMOS

CHORUS OF KNIGHTS

KNIGHTS

(SCENE:-The Orchestra represents the Pnyx at Athens; in the background is the house of DEMOS.)

DEMOSTHENES

Oh! alas! alas! alas! Oh! woe! oh! woe! Miserable Paphlagonian! may the gods destroy both him and his cursed advice! Since that evil day when this new slave entered the house he has never ceased belabouring us with blows.

NICIAS

May the plague seize him, the arch-fiend-him and his lying tales!

DEMOSTHENES

Hah! my poor fellow, what is your condition?

NICIAS

Very wretched, just like your own.

DEMOSTHENES

Then come, let us sing a duet of groans in the style of Olympus.

DEMOSTHENES AND NICIAS

Boo, hoo! boo, hoo! boo, hoo! boo, hoo! boo, hoo! boo, hoo!!

DEMOSTHENES

Bah! it's lost labour to weep! Enough of groaning! Let us consider now to save our pelts.

NICIAS

But how to do it! Can you suggest anything?

DEMOSTHENES

No, you begin. I cede you the honour.

NICIAS

By Apollo! no, not I. Come, have courage! Speak, and then I will say what I think.

DEMOSTHENES (in tragic style)

"Ah! would you but tell me what I should tell you!

NICIAS

I dare not. How could I express my thoughts with the pomp of Euripides?

DEMOSTHENES

Oh! please spare me! Do not pelt me with those vegetables, but find some way of leaving our master.

NICIAS

Well, then! Say "Let-us-bolt," like this, in one breath.

DEMOSTHENES

I follow you-'Let-us-bolt."

NICIAS

Now after "Let-us-bolt" say "at-top-speed

DEMOSTHENES

"At-top-speed!

NICIAS

Splendid! just as if you were masturbating; first slowly, "Let-us-bolt"; then quick and firmly, "at-top-speed!"

DEMOSTHENES

Let-us-bolt, let-us-bolt-at-top-speed!

NICIAS

Hah! does that not please you?

DEMOSTHENES

Yes, indeed, yet I fear your omen bodes no good to my hide.

NICIAS

How so?

DEMOSTHENES

Because masturbation chafes the skin.

NICIAS

The best thing we can do for the moment is to throw ourselves at the feet of the statue of some god.

DEMOSTHENES

Of which statue? Any statue? Do you then believe there are gods?

NICIAS

Certainly.

DEMOSTHENES

What proof have you?

NICIAS

The proof that they have taken a grudge against me. Is that not enough?

DEMOSTHENES

I'm convinced it is. But to pass on. Do you consent to my telling the spectators of our troubles?

NICIAS

There's nothing wrong with that, and we might ask them to show us by their manner, whether our facts and actions are to their liking.

DEMOSTHENES

I will begin then. We have a very brutal master, a perfect glutton for beans, and most bad-tempered; it's Demos of the Pnyx, an intolerable old man and half deaf. The beginning of last month he bought a slave, a Paphlagonian tanner, an arrant rogue, the incarnation of calumny. This man of leather knows his old master thoroughly; he plays the fawning cur, flatters, cajoles, wheedles, and dupes him at will with little scraps of leavings, which he allows him to get. "Dear Demos," he will say, "try a single case and you will have done enough; then take your bath, eat, swallow and devour; here

are three obols." Then the Paphlagonian filches from one of us what we have prepared and makes a present of it to our old man. The other day I had just kneaded a Spartan cake at Pylos, the cunning rogue came behind my back, sneaked it and offered the cake, which was my invention, in his own name. He keeps us at a distance and suffers none but himself to wait upon the master; when Demos is dining, he keeps close to his side with a thong in his hand and puts the orators to flight. He keeps singing oracles to him, so that the old man now thinks of nothing but the Sibyl. Then, when he sees him thoroughly obfuscated, he uses all his cunning and piles up lies and calumnies against the household; then we are scourged and the Paphlagonian runs about among the slaves to demand contributions with threats and gathers them in with both hands. He will say, "You see how I have had Hylas beaten! Either content me or die at once!" We are forced to give, for otherwise the old man tramples on us and makes us crap forth all our body contains. (To NICIAS) There must be an end to it, friend Let us see! what can be done? Who will get us out of this mess?

NICIAS

The best thing, friend, is our famous "Let-us-bolt!"

DEMOSTHENES

But none can escape the Paphlagonian, his eye is everywhere. And what a stride! He has one leg on Pylos and the other in the Assembly; his arse gapes exactly over the land of the Chaonians, his hands are with the Aetolians and his mind with the Clopidians.

NICIAS

It's best then to die; but let us seek the most heroic death.

DEMOSTHENES

Let me think, what is the most heroic?

NICIAS

Let us drink the blood of a bull; that's the death Themistocles chose.

DEMOSTHENES

No, not that, but a bumper of good unmixed wine in honour of the Good Genius; perchance we may stumble on a happy thought.

NICIAS

Look at him! "Unmixed wine!" Your mind is on drink intent? Can a man strike out a brilliant thought when drunk?

DEMOSTHENES

Without question. Go, ninny, blow yourself out with water; do you dare to accuse wine of clouding the reason? Quote me more marvellous effects than those of wine. Look! when a man drinks, he is rich, everything he touches succeeds, he gains lawsuits, is happy and helps his friends. Come, bring hither quick a flagon of wine, that I may soak my brain and get an ingenious idea.

NICIAS

My God! What can your drinking do to help us?

DEMOSTHENES

Much. But bring it to me, while I take my seat. Once drunk, I shall strew little ideas, little phrases, little reasonings

everywhere.

(NICIAS enters the house and returns almost immediately with a bottle.)

NICIAS

It is lucky I was not caught in the house stealing the wine.

DEMOSTHENES

Tell me, what is the Paphlagonian doing now?

NICIAS

The wretch has just gobbled up some confiscated cakes; he is drunk and lies at full-length snoring on his hides.

DEMOSTHENES

Very well, come along, pour me out wine and plenty of it.

NICIAS

Take it and offer a libation to your Good Genius.

DEMOSTHENES (to himself)

Inhale, ah, inhale the spirit of the genius of Pramnum. (He drinks. Inspiredly) Ah! Good Genius, thine the plan, not mine!

NICIAS

Tell me, what is it?

DEMOSTHENES

Run indoors quick and steal the oracles of the Paphlagonian, while he is asleep.

NICIAS

Bless me! I fear this Good Genius will be but a very Bad Genius for me.

(He goes into the house.)

DEMOSTHENES

And I'll set the flagon near me, that I may moisten my wit to invent some brilliant notion.

(NICIAS enters the house and returns at once.)

NICIAS

How loudly the Paphlagonian farts and snores! I was able to seize the sacred oracle, which he was guarding with the greatest care, without his seeing me.

DEMOSTHENES

Oh! clever fellow! Hand it here, that I may read. Come, pour me out some drink, bestir yourself! Let me see what there is in it. Oh! prophecy! Some drink! some drink! Quick!

NICIAS

Well! what says the oracle?

DEMOSTHENES

Pour again.

NICIAS

Is "Pour again" in the oracle?

DEMOSTHENES

Oh, Bacis!

NICIAS

But what is in it?

DEMOSTHENES

Quick! some drink!
NICIAS
Bacis is very dry!
DEMOSTHENES
Oh! miserable Paphlagonian! This then is why you have so long taken such precautions; your horoscope gave you qualms of terror.
NICIAS
What does it say?
DEMOSTHENES
It says here how he must end.
NICIAS
And how?
DEMOSTHENES
How? the oracle announces clearly that a dealer in oakum must first govern the city.
NICIAS
That's one tradesman. And after him, who?
DEMOSTHENES
After him, a sheep-dealer.
NICIAS
Two tradesmen, eh? And what is this one's fate?
DEMOSTHENES
To reign until a filthier scoundrel than he arises; then he perishes and in his place the leather-seller appears, the Paphlagonian robber, the bawler, who roars like a torrent.
NICIAS
And the leather-seller must destroy the sheep-seller?
DEMOSTHENES
Yes.
NICIAS
Oh woe is me! Where can another seller be found, is there ever a one left?
DEMOSTHENES
There is yet one, who plies a first-rate trade.
NICIAS
Tell me, pray, what is that?
DEMOSTHENES
You really want to know?
NICIAS
Yes.
DEMOSTHENES
Well then! it's a sausage-seller who must overthrow him.
NICIAS
A sausage-seller! Ah! by Posidon! what a fine trade! But where can this man be found?
DEMOSTHENES
Let's seek him. But look! there he is, going towards the market-place; 'tis the gods, the gods who send him! (Calling out) This way, this way, oh; lucky sausage-seller, come forward, dear friend,

our saviour, the saviour of our city.

(Enter AGORACRITUS, a seller of sausages, carrying a basket of his wares.)

SAUSAGE-SELLER

What is it? Why do you call me?

DEMOSTHENES

Come here, come and learn about your good luck, you who are Fortune's favourite!

NICIAS

Come! Relieve him of his basket-tray and tell him the oracle of the god; I will go and look after the Paphlagonian.

(He goes into the house.)

DEMOSTHENES

First put down all your gear, then worship the earth and the gods.

SAUSAGE-SELLER

Done. What is the matter?

DEMOSTHENES

Happiness, riches, power; to-day you have nothing, to-morrow you will have all, oh! chief of happy Athens.

SAUSAGE-SELLER

Why not leave me to wash my tripe and to sell my sausages instead of making game of me?

DEMOSTHENES

Oh! the fool! Your tripe! Do you see these tiers of people?

SAUSAGE-SELLER

Yes.

DEMOSTHENES

You shall be master to them all, governor of the market, of the harbours, of the Pnyx; you shall trample the Senate under foot, be able to cashier the generals, load them with fetters, throw them into gaol, and you will fornicate in the Prytaneum.

SAUSAGE-SELLER

What! I?

DEMOSTHENES

You, without a doubt. But you do not yet see all the glory awaiting you. Stand on your basket and look at all the islands that surround Athens.

SAUSAGE-SELLER

I see them. What then?

DEMOSTHENES

Look at the storehouses and the shipping.

SAUSAGE-SELLER

Yes, I am looking.

DEMOSTHENES

Exists there a mortal more blest than you? Furthermore, turn your right eye towards Caria and your left toward Carthage!

SAUSAGE-SELLER

Then it's a blessing to be cock-eyed!

DEMOSTHENES

No, but you are the one who is going to trade away all this.
According to the oracle you must become the greatest of men.

SAUSAGE-SELLER

Just tell me how a sausage-seller can become a great man.

DEMOSTHENES

That is precisely why you will be great, because you are a sad rascal without shame, no better than a common market rogue.

SAUSAGE-SELLER

I do not hold myself worthy of wielding power.

DEMOSTHENES

Oh! by the gods! Why do you not hold yourself worthy? Have you then such a good opinion of yourself? Come, are you of honest parentage?

SAUSAGE-SELLER

By the gods! No! of very bad indeed.

DEMOSTHENES

Spoilt child of fortune, everything fits together to ensure your greatness.

SAUSAGE-SELLER

But I have not had the least education. I can only read, and that very badly.

DEMOSTHENES

That is what may stand in your way, almost knowing how to read. A demagogue must be neither an educated nor an honest man; he has to be an ignoramus and a rogue. But do not, do not let go this gift, which the oracle promises.

SAUSAGE-SELLER

But what does the oracle say?

DEMOSTHENES

Faith, it is put together in very fine enigmatical style, as elegant as it is dear: "When the eagle-tanner with the hooked claws shall seize a stupid dragon, a blood-sucker, it will be an end to the hot Paphlagonian pickled garlic. The god grants great glory to the sausage-sellers unless they prefer to sell their wares."

SAUSAGE-SELLER

In what way does this concern me? Please instruct my ignorance.

DEMOSTHENES

The eagle-tanner is the Paphlagonian.

SAUSAGE-SELLER

What do the hooked claws mean?

DEMOSTHENES

It means to say, that he robs and pillages us with his claw-like hands.

SAUSAGE-SELLER

And the dragon?

DEMOSTHENES

That is quite clear. The dragon is long and so also is the sausage; the sausage like the dragon is a drinker of blood. Therefore the oracle says, that the dragon will triumph over the

eagle-tanner, if he does not let himself be cajoled with words.

SAUSAGE-SELLER

The oracles of the gods flatter me! Faith! I do not at all understand how I can be capable of governing the people.

DEMOSTHENES

Nothing simpler. Continue your trade. Mix and knead together all the state business as you do for your sausages. To win the people, always cook them some savoury that pleases them. Besides, you possess all the attributes of a demagogue; a screeching, horrible voice, a perverse, cross-grained nature and the language of the market-place. In you all is united which is needful for governing. The oracles are in your favour, even including that of Delphi. Come, take a chaplet, offer a libation to the god of Stupidity and take care to fight vigorously.

SAUSAGE-SELLER

Who will be my ally? for the rich fear the Paphlagonian and the poor shudder at the sight of him.

DEMOSTHENES

You will have a thousand brave Knights, who detest him, on your side; also the honest citizens amongst the spectators, those who are men of brave hearts, and finally myself and the god. Fear not, you will not see his features, for none have dared to make a mask resembling him. But the public have wit enough to recognize him.

NICIAS (from within)

Oh! mercy! here comes the Paphlagonian!

(CLEON rushes out of the house.)

CLEON

By the twelve gods! Woe betide you, who have too long been conspiring against Demos. What means this Chalcidian cup? No doubt you are provoking the Chalcidians to revolt. You shall be killed and butchered, you brace of rogues.

DEMOSTHENES (to the SAUSAGE-SELLER)

What! are you for running away? Come, come, stand firm, bold Sausage-seller, do not betray us. To the rescue, oh, Knights. Now is the time. Simon, Panaetius, get you to the right wing; they are coming on; hold tight and return to the charge. I can see the dust of their horses' hoofs; they are galloping to our aid. (To the SAUSAGE-SELLER) Courage! Attack him, put him to flight.

(The CHORUS OF KNIGHTS enters at top speed.)

LEADER OF THE CHORUS

Strike, strike the villain, who has spread confusion amongst the ranks of the Knights, this public robber, this yawning gulf of plunder, this devouring Charybdis, this villain, this villain, this villain! I cannot say the word too often, for he is a villain a thousand times a day. Come, strike, drive, hurl him over and crush him to pieces; hate him as we hate him: stun him with your blows and your shouts. And beware lest he escape you; he knows the way Eucrates took straight to a bran sack for concealment.

CLEON

Oh! veteran Heliasts, brotherhood of the three obols, whom I fostered by bawling at random, help me; I am being beaten to death by rebels.

LEADER OF THE CHORUS

And justly too; you devour the public funds that all should share in; you treat the treasury officials like the fruit of the fig tree, squeezing them to find which are still green or more or less ripe; and, when you find a simple and timid one, you force him to come from the Chersonese, then you seize him by the middle, throttle him by the neck, while you twist his shoulder back; he falls and you devour him. Besides, you know very well how to select from among the citizens those who are as meek as lambs, rich, without guile and loathers of lawsuits.

CLEON

Eh! what! Knights, are you helping them? But, if I am beaten, it is in your cause, for I was going to propose to erect a statue in the city in memory of your bravery.

LEADER OF THE CHORUS

Oh! the impostor! the dull varlet! See! he treats us like old dotards and crawls at our feet to deceive us; but the cunning wherein his power lies shall this time recoil on himself; he trips up himself by resorting to such artifices.

CLEON

Oh citizens! oh people! see how these brutes are bursting my belly.

LEADER OF THE CHORUS

What shouts! but it's this very bawling that incessantly upsets the city!

SAUSAGE-SELLER

I can shout too-and so loud that you will flee with fear.

LEADER OF THE CHORUS

If you shout louder than he does I will strike up the triumphal hymn; if you surpass him in impudence the cake is ours.

CLEON

I denounce this fellow; he has had tasty stews exported from Athens for the Spartan fleet.

SAUSAGE-SELLER

And I denounce him; he runs into the Prytaneum with an empty belly and comes out with it full.

DEMOSTHENES

And by Zeus! he carries off bread, meat, and fish, which is forbidden. Pericles himself never had this right.

(A screaming match now ensues, each line more raucous than the last. The rapidity of the dialogue likewise increases.)

CLEON

You are travelling the right road to get killed.

SAUSAGE-SELLER

I'll bawl three times as loud as you.

CLEON

I will deafen you with my yells.

SAUSAGE-SELLER

And I you with my bellowing.

CLEON

I shall calumniate you, if you become a Strategus.

SAUSAGE-SELLER

Dog, I will lay your back open with the lash.

CLEON

I will make you drop your arrogance,

SAUSAGE-SELLER

I will baffle your machinations.

CLEON

Dare to look me in the face!

SAUSAGE-SELLER

I too was brought up in the market-place.

CLEON

I will cut you to shreds if you whisper a word.

SAUSAGE-SELLER

If you open your mouth, I'll shut it with shit.

CLEON

I admit I'm a thief; that's more than you do.

SAUSAGE-SELLER

By our Hermes of the market-place, if caught in the act, why, I perjure myself before those who saw me.

CLEON

These are my own special tricks. I will denounce you to the Prytanes as the owner of sacred tripe, that has not paid tithe.

CHORUS (singing)

Oh! you scoundrel! you impudent bawler! everything is filled with your daring, all Attica, the Assembly, the Treasury, the decrees, the tribunals. As a furious torrent you have overthrown our city; your outcries have deafened Athens and, posted upon a high rock, you have lain in wait for the tribute moneys as the fisherman does for the tunny-fish.

CLEON (somewhat less loudly)

I know your tricks; it's an old plot resoled.

SAUSAGE-SELLER

If you know naught of soling, I understand nothing of sausages; you, who cut bad leather on the slant to make it look stout and deceive the country yokels. They had not worn it a day before it had stretched some two spans.

DEMOSTHENES

That's the very trick he played on me; both my neighbours and my friends laughed heartily at me, and before I reached Pergasae I was swimming in my shoes.

CHORUS (singing)

Have you not always shown that blatant impudence, which is the sole strength of our orators? You push it so far, that you, the head of the State, dare to milk the purses of the opulent aliens and, at

sight of you, the son of Hippodamus melts into tears. But here is another man who gives me pleasure, for he is a much greater rascal than you; he will overthrow you; 'tis easy to see, that he will beat you in roguery, in brazenness and in clever turns. Come, you, who have been brought up among the class which to-day gives us all our great men, show us that a liberal education is mere tomfoolery.

SAUSAGE-SELLER

Just hear what sort of fellow that fine citizen is.

CLEON

Will you not let me speak?

SAUSAGE-SELLER

Assuredly not, for I too am an awful rascal.

DEMOSTHENES

If he does not give in at that, tell him your parents were awful rascals too.

CLEON

Once more, will you let me speak?

SAUSAGE-SELLER

No, by Zeus!

CLEON

Yes, by Zeus, you shall!

SAUSAGE-SELLER

No, by Posidon! We will fight first to see who shall speak first.

CLEON

I will die sooner.

SAUSAGE-SELLER

I will not let you....

DEMOSTHENES

Let him, in the name of the gods, let him die.

CLEON

What makes you so bold as to dare to speak to my face?

SAUSAGE-SELLER

Because I know both how to speak and how to cook.

CLEON

Hah! the fine speaker! Truly, if some business matter fell your way, you would know thoroughly well how to attack it, to carve it up alive! Shall I tell you what has happened to you? Like so many others, you have gained some petty lawsuit against some alien. Did you drink enough water to inspire you? Did you mutter over the thing sufficiently through the night, spout it along the street, recite it to all you met? Have you bored your friends enough with it? And for this you deem yourself an orator. You poor fool!

SAUSAGE-SELLER

And what do you drink yourself then, to be able all alone by yourself to dumbfound and stupefy the city so with your clamour?

CLEON

Can you match me with a rival? Me? When I have devoured a good hot tunny-fish and drunk on top of it a great jar of unmixed wine. I say "to Hell with the generals of Pylos!"

SAUSAGE-SELLER

And I, when I have bolted the tripe of an ox together with a sow's belly and swallowed the broth as well, I am fit, though slobbering with grease, to bellow louder than all orators and to terrify Nicias.

DEMOSTHENES

I admire your language so much; the only thing I do not approve is that you swallow all the broth yourself.

CLEON

Even though you gorged yourself on sea-dogs, you would not beat the Milesians.

SAUSAGE-SELLER

Give me a bullock's breast to devour, and I am a man to traffic in mines.

CLEON

I will rush into the Senate and set them all by the ears.

SAUSAGE-SELLER

And I will pull out your arse to stuff like a sausage.

CLEON

As for me, I will seize you by the rump and hurl you head foremost through the door.

DEMOSTHENES

By Posidon, only after you have thrown me there first.

CLEON

(Beginning another crescendo of competitive screeching)

Beware of the carcan!

SAUSAGE-SELLER

I denounce you for cowardice.

CLEON

I will tan your hide.

SAUSAGE-SELLER

I will flay you and make a thief's pouch with the skin.

CLEON

I will peg you out on the ground.

SAUSAGE-SELLER

I will slice you into mince-meat.

CLEON

I will tear out your eyelashes.

SAUSAGE-SELLER

I will slit your gullet.

DEMOSTHENES

We will set his mouth open with a wooden stick as the cooks do with pigs; we will tear out his tongue, and, looking down his gaping throat, will see whether his inside has any pimples.

CHORUS (singing)

Thus then at Athens we have something more fiery than fire, more impudent than impudence itself! 'Tis a grave matter; come, we will push and jostle him without mercy. There, you grip him tightly under the arms; if he gives way at the onset, you will find him nothing but a craven; I know my man.

DEMOSTHENES

That he has been all his life and he has only made himself a name by reaping another's harvest; and now he has tied up the ears he gathered over there, he lets them dry and seeks to sell them.

CLEON

I do not fear you as long as there is a Senate and a people which stands like a fool, gaping in the air.

CHORUS (singing)

What unparalleled impudence! 'Tis ever the same brazen front. If I don't hate you, why, I'm ready to take the place of the one blanket Cratinus wets; I'll offer to play a tragedy by Morsimus. Oh! you cheat! who turn all into money, who flutter from one extortion to another; may you disgorge as quickly as you have crammed yourself! Then only would I sing, "Let us drink, let us drink to this happy event!" Then even the son of Ulius, the old wheat-fairy, would empty his cup with transports of joy, crying, "Io, Paean! Io, Bacchus!"

CLEON

By Posidon! You! would you beat me in impudence! If you succeed, may I no longer have my share of the victims offered to Zeus on the city altar.

SAUSAGE-SELLER

And I, I swear by the blows that have so oft rained upon my shoulders since infancy, and by the knives that have cut me, that I will show more effrontery than you; as sure as I have rounded this fine stomach by feeding on the pieces of bread that had cleansed other folk's greasy fingers.

CLEON

On pieces of bread, like a dog! Ah! wretch! you have the nature of a dog and you dare to fight a dog-headed ape?

SAUSAGE-SELLER

I have many another trick in my sack, memories of my childhood's days. I used to linger around the cooks and say to them, "Look, friends, don't you see a swallow? It's the herald of springtime." And while they stood, their noses in the air, I made off with a piece of meat.

CHORUS

Oh! most clever man! How well thought out! You did as the eaters of artichokes, you gathered them before the return of the swallows."

SAUSAGE-SELLER

They could make nothing of it; or, if they suspected a trick, I hid the meat in my crotch and denied the thing by all the gods-so that an orator, seeing me at the game, cried, "This child will get on; he has the mettle that makes a statesman."

LEADER OF THE CHORUS

He argued rightly; to steal, perjure yourself and make your arse receptive are three essentials for climbing high.

CLEON

I will stop your insolence, or rather the insolence of both of you. I will throw myself upon you like a terrible hurricane ravaging

both land and sea at the will of its fury.

SAUSAGE-SELLER

Then I will gather up my sausages and entrust myself to the kindly waves of fortune so as to make you all the more enraged.

DEMOSTHENES

And I will watch in the bilges in case the boat should make water.

CLEON

No, by Demeter! I swear, it will not be with impunity that you have thieved so many talents from the Athenians.

DEMOSTHENES (to the SAUSAGE-SELLER)

Oh! oh! reef your sail a bit! Here is a Northeaster blowing calumniously.

SAUSAGE-SELLER

I know that you got ten talents out of Potidaea.

CLEON

Wait! I will give you one; but keep it dark!

DEMOSTHENES (aside)

Hah! that will please him mightily; (to the SAUSAGE-SELLER) now you can travel under full sail. The wind has lost its violence.

CLEON

I will bring four suits against you, each of one hundred talents.

SAUSAGE-SELLER

And I twenty against you for shirking duty and more than a thousand for robbery.

CLEON

I maintain that your parents were guilty of sacrilege against the goddess.

SAUSAGE-SELLER

And I, that one of your grandfathers was a satellite....

CLEON

To whom? Explain!

SAUSAGE-SELLER

To Byrsina, the mother of Hippias.

CLEON

You are an impostor.

SAUSAGE-SELLER

And you are a rogue.

(He strikes CLEON with a sausage.)

DEMOSTHENES

Hit him hard.

CLEON

Alas! The conspirators are murdering me!

DEMOSTHENES (to the SAUSAGE-SELLER)

Hit him! Hit him with all your might! Bruise his belly and lash him with your guts and your tripe! Punish him with both hands!

(CLEON sinks beneath the blows.)

CHORUS-LEADER

Oh! vigorous assailant and intrepid heart! See how you have totally routed him in this duel of abuse, so that to us and to the

citizens you seem the saviour of the city. How shall I give tongue to my joy and praise you sufficiently?

CLEON (recovering his wits)

Ah! by Demeter! I was not ignorant of this plot and these machinations that were being forged and nailed and put together against me.

DEMOSTHENES (to the SAUSAGE-SELLER)

Look out, look out! Come outfence him with some wheelwright slang.

SAUSAGE-SELLER

His tricks at Argos do not escape me. Under pretence of forming an alliance with the Argives, he is hatching a plot with the Lacedaemonians there; and I know why the bellows are blowing and the metal that is on the anvil; it's the question of the prisoners.

DEMOSTHENES

Well done! Forge on, if he be a wheelwright.

SAUSAGE-SELLER

And there are men at Sparta who are hammering the iron with you; but neither gold nor silver nor prayers nor anything else shall impede my denouncing your trickery to the Athenians.

CLEON

As for me, I hasten to the Senate to reveal your plotting, your nightly gatherings in the city, your trafficking with the Medes and with the Great King, and all you are foraging for in Boeotia.

SAUSAGE-SELLER

What price then is paid for forage by Boeotians?

CLEON

Oh! by Heracles! I will tan your hide.

(He departs.)

DEMOSTHENES

Come, if you have both wit and heart, now is the time to show it, as on the day when you hid the meat in your crotch, as you say. Hasten to the Senate, for he will rush there like a tornado to calumniate us all and give vent to his fearful bellowings.

SAUSAGE-SELLER

I am going, but first I must rid myself of my tripe and my knives; I will leave them here.

DEMOSTHENES

Stay! rub your neck with lard; in this way you will slip between the fingers of calumny.

SAUSAGE-SELLER

Spoken like a finished wrestling coach.

DEMOSTHENES

Now, bolt down these cloves of garlic.

SAUSAGE-SELLER

Pray, what for?

DEMOSTHENES

Well primed with garlic, you will have greater mettle for the fight. But hurry, make haste rapidly!

SAUSAGE-SELLER

That's just what I'm doing.

(He departs.)

DEMOSTHENES

And, above all, bite your foe, rend him to atoms, tear off his comb and do not return until you have devoured his wattles.

(He goes into the house of DEMOS.)

LEADER OF THE CHORUS

Go! make your attack with a light heart, avenge me and may Zeus guard you! I burn to see you return the victor and laden with chaplets of glory. And you, spectators, enlightened critics of all kind of poetry, lend an ear to my anapests. (The Chorus moves forward and faces the audience.)

Had one of the old authors asked me to mount this stage to recite his verses, he would not have found it hard to persuade me. But our poet of to-day is likewise worthy of this favour; he shares our hatred, he dares to tell the truth, he boldly braves both waterspouts and hurricanes. Many among you, he tells us, have expressed wonder, that he has not long since had a piece presented in his own name, and have asked the reason why. This is what he bids us say in reply to your questions; it is not without grounds that he has courted the shade, for, in his opinion, nothing is more difficult than to cultivate the comic Muse; many court her, but very few secure her favours. Moreover, he knows that you are fickle by nature and betray your poets when they grow old. What fate befell Magnes, when his hair went white? Often enough had he triumphed over his rivals; he had sung in all keys, played the lyre and fluttered wings; he turned into a Lydian and even into a gnat, daubed himself with green to become a frog. All in vain! When young, you applauded him; in his old age you hooted and mocked him, because his genius for raillery had gone. Cratinus again was like a torrent of glory rushing across the plain, up-rooting oak, plane tree and rivals and bearing them pell-mell in his wake. The only songs at the banquet were, "Doro, shod with lying tales" and "Adepts of the Lyric Muse," so great was his renown. Look at him now! he drivels, his lyre has neither strings nor keys, his voice quivers, but you have no pity for him, and you let him wander about as he can, like Connas, his temples circled with a withered chaplet; the poor old fellow is dying of thirst; he who, in honour of his glorious past, should be in the Prytaneum drinking at his ease, and instead of trudging the country should be sitting amongst the first row of the spectators, close to the statue of Dionysus and loaded with perfumes. Crates, again, have you done hounding him with your rage and your hisses? True, it was but meagre fare that his sterile Muse could offer you; a few ingenious fancies formed the sole ingredients, but nevertheless he knew how to stand firm and to recover from his falls. It is such examples that frighten our poet; in addition, he would tell himself, that before being a pilot, he must first know how to row, then to keep watch at the prow, after that how to gauge the winds, and that only then would he be able to command his

vessel. If then you approve this wise caution and his resolve that he would not bore you with foolish nonsense, raise loud waves of applause in his favour this day, so that, at this Lenaeon feast, the breath of your favour may swell the sails of his triumphant galley and the poet may withdraw proud of his success, with head erect and his face beaming with delight.

FIRST SEMI-CHORUS (singing)

Posidon, god of the racing steeds, I salute you, you who delight in their neighing and in the resounding clatter of their brass-shod hoofs, god of the swift galleys, which, loaded with mercenaries, cleave the seas with their azure beaks, god of the equestrian contests, in which young rivals, eager for glory, ruin themselves for the sake of distinction with their chariots in the arena, come and direct our chorus; Posidon with the trident of gold, you, who reign over the dolphins, who are worshipped at Sunium and at Geraestus beloved of Phormio, and dear to the whole city above all the immortals, I salute you!

LEADER OF FIRST SEMI-CHORUS

Let us sing the glory of our forefathers; ever victors, both on land and sea, they merit that Athens, rendered famous by these, her worthy sons, should write their deeds upon the sacred peplus. As soon as they saw the enemy, they at once sprang at him without ever counting his strength. Should one of them fall in the conflict he would shake off the dust, deny his mishap and begin the struggle anew. Not one of these generals of old time would have asked Cleaenetus to be fed at the cost of the State; but our present men refuse to fight, unless they get the honours of the Prytaneum and precedence in their seats. As for us, we place our valour gratuitously at the service of Athens and of her gods; our only hope is that, should peace ever put a term to our toils, you will not grudge us our long, scented hair nor our delicate care for our toilet.

SECOND SEMI-CHORUS (singing)

Oh! Pallas, guardian of Athens, you, who reign over the most pious city, the most powerful, the richest in warriors and in poets, hasten to my call, bringing in your train our faithful ally in all our expeditions and combats, Victory, who smiles on our choruses and fights with us against our rivals. Oh! goddess! manifest yourself to our sight; this day more than ever we deserve that you should ensure our triumph.

LEADER OF SECOND SEMI-CHORUS

We will sing likewise the exploits of our steeds! they are worthy of our praises; in what invasions, what fights have I not seen them helping us! But especially admirable were they, when they bravely leapt upon the galleys, taking nothing with them but a coarse wine, some cloves of garlic and onions; despite this, they nevertheless seized the sweeps just like men, curved their backs over the thwarts and shouted, "Hippapai! Give way! Come, all pull together! Come, come! How! Samphoras! Are you not rowing?" They rushed down upon the coast of Corinth, and the youngest hollowed out beds

in the sand with their hoofs or went to fetch coverings; instead of luzern, they had no food but crabs, which they caught on the strand and even in the sea; so that Theorus causes a Corinthian crab to say, "'Tis a cruel fate, oh Posidon neither my deep hiding-places, whether on land or at sea, can help me to escape the Knights."

(The SAUSAGE-SELLER returns.)

LEADER OF THE CHORUS

Welcome, oh, dearest and bravest of men! How distracted I have been during your absence! But here you are back, safe and sound. Tell us about the fight you have had.

SAUSAGE-SELLER

The important thing is that I have beaten the Senate.

CHORUS (singing)

All glory to you! Let us burst into shouts of joy! You speak well, but your deeds are even better. Come, tell me everything in detail; what a long journey would I not be ready to take to hear your tale! Come, dear friend, speak with full confidence to your admirers.

SAUSAGE-SELLER

The story is worth hearing. Listen! From here I rushed straight to the Senate, right in the track of this man; he was already letting loose the storm, unchaining the lightning, crushing the Knights beneath huge mountains of calumnies heaped together and having all the air of truth; he called you conspirators and his lies caught root like weeds in every mind; dark were the looks on every side and brows were knitted. When I saw that the Senate listened to him favourably and was being tricked by his imposture I said to myself, "Come, gods of rascals and braggarts, gods of all fools, and toad-eaters, and thou too, oh market-place, wherein I was bred from my earliest days, give me unbridled audacity, an untiring chatter and a shameless voice." No sooner had I ended this prayer than a pederast farted on my right. "Hah! a good omen," said I, and prostrated myself; then I burst open the door by a vigorous push with my arse, and, opening my mouth to the utmost, shouted, "Senators, I wanted you to be the first to hear the good news; since the war broke out, I have never seen anchovies at a lower price!" All faces brightened at once and I was voted a chaplet for my good tidings; and I added, "With a couple of words I will reveal to you how you can have quantities of anchovies for an obol; all you have to do is to seize on all the dishes the merchants have." With mouths gaping with admiration, they applauded me. However, the Paphlagonian winded the matter and, well knowing the sort of language which pleases the Senate best, said, "Friends, I am resolved to offer one hundred oxen to the goddess in recognition of this happy event." The Senate at once veered to his side. So when I saw myself defeated by this ox dung, I outbade the fellow, crying, "Two hundred!" And beyond this I moved that a vow be made to Diana of a thousand goats if the next day anchovies should only be worth an obol a hundred. And the Senate looked towards me again. The other, stunned with the blow, grew delirious in his speech, and at last the Prytanes and the Scythians dragged him out. The

Senators then stood talking noisily about the anchovies. Cleon, however, begged them to listen to the Lacedaemonian envoy, who had come to make proposals of peace; but all with one accord cried "Certainly it's not the moment to think of peace now! If anchovies are so cheap, what need have we of peace? Let the war take its course!" And with loud shouts they demanded that the Prytanes should close the sitting and then they leapt over the rails in all directions. As for me, I slipped away to buy all the coriander seed and leeks there were on the market and gave it to them gratis as seasoning for their anchovies. It was marvellous! They loaded me with praises and caresses; thus I conquered the Senate with an obol's worth of leeks, and here I am.

CHORUS (singing)

Bravo! you are the spoilt child of Fortune. Ah! our knave has found his match in another, who has far better tricks in his sack, a thousand kinds of knaveries and of wily words. But the fight begins afresh; take care not to weaken; you know that I have long been your most faithful ally.

SAUSAGE-SELLER

Ah! ah! here comes the Paphlagonian! One would say it was a hurricane lashing the sea and rolling the waves before it in its fury. He looks as if he wanted to swallow me up alive! Ye gods! what an impudent knave!

CLEON (as he rushes in)

To my aid, my beloved lies! I am going to destroy you, or my name is lost.

SAUSAGE-SELLER

Oh! how he diverts me with his threats His bluster makes me laugh! And I dance the mothon for joy, and sing at the top of my voice, cuckoo!

CLEON

Ah! by Demeter! if I do not kill and devour you, may I die!

SAUSAGE-SELLER

If you do not devour me? and I, if I do not drink your blood to the last drop, and then burst with indigestion.

CLEON

I, I will strangle you, I swear it by the front seat which Pylos gained me.

SAUSAGE-SELLER

By the front seat! Ah! Ah! might I see you fall into the hindmost seat!

CLEON

By heaven! I will put you to the torture.

SAUSAGE-SELLER

What a lively wit! Come, what's the best to give you to eat? What do you prefer? A purse?

CLEON

I will tear out your insides with my nails.

SAUSAGE-SELLER

And I will cut off your victuals at the Prytaneum.

CLEON

I will haul you before Demos, who will mete out justice to you.

SAUSAGE-SELLER

And I too will drag you before him and belch forth more calumnies than you. Why, poor fool, he does not believe you, whereas I play with him at will.

SAUSAGE-SELLER

Is then Demos your property, your contemptible creature?

CLEON

It's because I know the dishes that please him.

SAUSAGE-SELLER

And these are little mouthfuls, which you serve to him like a clever nurse. You chew the pieces and place some in small quantities in his mouth, while you swallow three parts yourself.

CLEON

Thanks to my skill, I know exactly how to enlarge or contract this gullet.

SAUSAGE-SELLER

My arse is just as clever.

CLEON

Well, my friend, you tricked me at the Senate, but take care! Let us go before Demos.

SAUSAGE-SELLER

That's easily done; come, let's do it right away.

CLEON (loudly)

Oh, Demos! Come, I adjure you to help me, my father I

SAUSAGE-SELLER (more loudly)

Come, oh, my dear little Demos; come and see how I am insulted.

DEMOS (coming out of his house followed by DEMOSTHENES)

What a hubhub! To the Devil with you, bawlers! Alas! my olive branch, which they have torn down! Ah! it's you, Paphlagonian. And who, pray, has been maltreating you?

CLEON

You are the cause of this man and these young people having covered me with blows.

DEMOS

And why?

CLEON

Because you love me passionately, Demos.

DEMOS (to the SAUSAGE-SELLER)

And you, who are you?

SAUSAGE-SELLER

His rival. For many a long year have I loved you, have I wished to do you honour, I and a crowd of other men of means. But this rascal here has prevented us. You resemble those young men who do not know where to choose their lovers; you repulse honest folks; to earn your favours, one has to be a lamp-seller, a cobbler, a tanner or a carrier.

CLEON

I am the benefactor of the people.

SAUSAGE-SELLER

In what way, please?

CLEON

In what way? I supplanted the Generals at Pylos, I hurried thither and I brought back the Laconian captives.

SAUSAGE-SELLER

And I, whilst simply loitering, cleared off with a pot from a shop, which another fellow had been boiling.

CLEON

Demos, convene the assembly at once to decide which of us two loves you best and most merits your favour.

SAUSAGE-SELLER

Yes, yes, provided it be not at the Pnyx.

DEMOS

I could not sit elsewhere; it is at the Pnyx that you must appear before me.

(He sits down on a stone in the Orchestra,)

SAUSAGE-SELLER

Ah! great gods! I am undone! At home this old fellow is the most sensible of men, but the instant he is seated on those cursed stone seats, he is there with mouth agape as if he were hanging up figs by their stems to dry.

FIRST SEMI-CHORUS (singing)

Come, loose all sail. Be bold, skilful in attack and entangle him in arguments which admit of no reply. It is difficult to beat him, for he is full of craft and pulls himself out of the worst corners. Collect all your forces to come forth from this fight covered with glory.

LEADER OF THE CHORUS

But take care! Let him not assume the attack, get ready your grapples and advance with your vessel to board him!

CLEON

Oh! guardian goddess of our city! oh! Athene if it be true that next to Lysicles, Cynna and Salabaccho none have done so much good for the Athenian people as I, suffer me to continue to be fed at the Prytaneum without working; but if I hate you, if I am not ready to fight in your defence alone and against all, may I perish, be sawn to bits alive and my skin cut up into thongs.

SAUSAGE-SELLER

And I, Demos, if it be not true, that I love and cherish you, may I be cooked in a stew; and if that is not saying enough, may I be grated on this table with some cheese and then hashed, may a hook be passed through my balls and let me be dragged thus to the Ceramicus!

CLEON

Is it possible, Demos, to love you more than I do? And firstly, as long as you have governed with my consent, have I not filled your

treasury, putting pressure on some, torturing others or begging of them, indifferent to the opinion of private individuals, and solely anxious to please you?

SAUSAGE-SELLER

There is nothing so wonderful in all that, Demos; I will do as much; I will thief the bread of others to serve up to you. No, he has neither love for you nor kindly feeling; his only care is to warm himself with your wood, and I will prove it. You, who, sword in hand, saved Attica from the Median yoke at Marathon; you, whose glorious triumphs we love to extol unceasingly, look, he cares little whether he sees you seated uncomfortably upon a stone; whereas I, I bring you this cushion, which I have sewn with my own hands. Rise and try this nice soft seat. Did you not put enough strain on your bottom at Salamis?

(He gives DEMOS the cushion; DEMOS sits on it.)

DEMOS

Who are you then? Can you be of the race of Harmodius? Upon my faith, that is nobly done and like a true friend of Demos.

CLEON

Petty flattery to prove him your goodwill!

SAUSAGE-SELLER

But you have caught him with even smaller baits!

CLEON

Never had Demos a defender or a friend more devoted than myself; on my head, on my life, I swear it!

SAUSAGE-SELLER

You pretend to love him and for eight years you have seen him housed in casks, in crevices and dovecots, where he is blinded with the smoke, and you lock him in without pity; Archeptolemus brought peace and you tore it to ribbons; the envoys who come to propose a truce you drive from the city with kicks in their arses.

CLEON

The purpose of this is that Demos may rule over all the Greeks; for the oracles predict that, if he is patient, he must one day sit as judge in Arcadia at five obols per day. Meanwhile, I will nourish him, look after him and, above all, I will ensure to him his three obols.

SAUSAGE-SELLER

No, little you care for his reigning in Arcadia, it's to pillage and impose on the allies at will that you reckon; you wish the war to conceal your rogueries as in a mist, that Demos may see nothing of them, and harassed by cares, may only depend on yourself for his bread. But if ever peace is restored to him, if ever he returns to his lands to comfort himself once more with good cakes, to greet his cherished olives, he will know the blessings you have kept him out of, even though paying him a salary; and, filled with hatred and rage, he will rise, burning with desire to vote against you. You know this only too well; it is for this you rock him to sleep with your lies.

CLEON

Is it not shameful, that you should dare thus to calumniate me

before Demos, me, to whom Athens, I swear it by Demeter, already owes more than it ever did to Themistocles?

SAUSAGE-SELLER (declaiming)

Oh! citizens of Argos, do you hear what he says? (to CLEON) You dare to compare yourself to Themistocles, who found our city half empty and left it full to overflowing, who one day gave us the Piraeus for dinner, and added fresh fish to all our usual meals. You, on the contrary, you, who compare yourself with Themistocles, have only sought to reduce our city in size, to shut it within its walls, to chant oracles to us. And Themistocles goes into exile, while you gorge yourself on the most excellent fare.

CLEON

Oh! Demos! Am I compelled to hear myself thus abused, and merely because I love you?

DEMOS

Silence! stop your abuse! All too long have I been your dupe.

SAUSAGE-SELLER

Ah! my dear little Demos, he is a rogue who has played you many a scurvy trick; when your back is turned, he taps at the root the lawsuits initiated by the peculators, swallows the proceeds wholesale and helps himself with both hands from the public funds.

CLEON

Tremble, knave; I will convict you of having stolen thirty thousand drachmae.

SAUSAGE-SELLER

For a rascal of your kidney, you shout rarely! Well! I am ready to die if I do not prove that you have accepted more than forty minae from the Mitylenaeans.

SECOND SEMI-CHORUS (singing)

This indeed may be termed talking. Oh, benefactor of the human race, proceed and you will be the most illustrious of the Greeks. You alone shall have sway in Athens, the allies will obey you, and, trident in hand, you will go about shaking and overturning everything to enrich yourself. But, stick to your man, let him not go; with lungs like yours you will soon have him finished.

CLEON

No, my brave friends, no, you are running too fast; I have done a sufficiently brilliant deed to shut the mouth of all enemies, so long as one of the bucklers of Pylos remains.

SAUSAGE-SELLER

Of the bucklers! Hold! I stop you there and I hold you fast. For if it be true that you love the people, you would not allow these to be hung up with their rings; but it's with an intent you have done this. Demos, take knowledge of his guilty purpose; in this way you no longer can punish him at your pleasure. Note the swarm of young tanners, who really surround him, and close to them the sellers of honey and cheese; all these are at one with him. Very well! you have but to frown, to speak of ostracism and they will rush at night to these bucklers, take them down and seize our granaries.

DEMOS

Great gods! what! the bucklers retain their rings! Scoundrel!
ah! to long have you had me for your dupe, cheated and played with me!

CLEON

But, dear sir, never you believe all he tells you. Oh! never
will you find a more devoted friend than me; unaided, I have known how
to put down the conspiracies; nothing that is hatching in the city
escapes me, and I hasten to proclaim it loudly.

SAUSAGE-SELLER

You are like the fishers for eels; in still waters they catch
nothing, but if they thoroughly stir up the slime, their fishing is
good; in the same way it's only in troublous times that you line
your pockets. But come, tell me, you, who sell so many skins, have you
ever made him a present of a pair of soles for his slippers? and you
pretend to love him!

DEMOS

No, he has never given me any.

SAUSAGE-SELLER

That alone shows up the man; but I, I have bought you this pair of
shoes; accept them.

(He gives DEMOS the shoes; DEMOS puts them on.)

DEMOS

None ever, to my knowledge, has merited so much from the people;
you are the most zealous of all men for our country and for my toes.

CLEON

Can a wretched pair of slippers make you forget all that you owe
me? Is it not I who curbed the pederasts by erasing Gryttus' name from
the lists of citizens?

SAUSAGE-SELLER

Ah! noble Inspector of Arses, let me congratulate you. Moreover,
if you set yourself against this form of lewdness, this pederasty,
it was for sheer jealousy, knowing it to be the school for orators.
But you see this poor Demos without a cloak and that at his age too!
so little do you care for him, that in mid-winter you have not given
him a garment with sleeves. Here, Demos, here is one, take it!

(He gives DEMOS a cloak; DEMOS puts it on.)

DEMOS

This even Themistocles never thought of; the Piraeus was no
doubt a happy idea, but I think this tunic is quite as fine an
invention.

CLEON

Must you have recourse to such jackanapes' tricks to supplant me?

SAUSAGE-SELLER

No, it's your own tricks that I am borrowing, just as a drunken
guest, when he has to take a crap, seizes some other man's shoes.

CLEON

Oh! you shall not outdo me in flattery! I am going to hand Demos
this garment; all that remains to you, you rogue, is to go and hang
yourself.

DEMOS (as CLEON throws a cloak around his shoulders)

Faugh! may the plague seize you! You stink of leather horribly.

SAUSAGE-SELLER

Why, it's to smother you that he has thrown this cloak around you on top of the other; and it is not the first plot he has planned against you. Do you remember the time when silphium was so cheap?

DEMOS

Aye, to be sure I do!

SAUSAGE-SELLER

Very well! it was Cleon who had caused the price to fall so low, that all might eat it, and the jurymen in the Courts were almost asphyxiated from farting in each others' faces.

DEMOS

Hah! why, indeed, a Dingtowntite told me the same thing.

SAUSAGE-SELLER

Were you not yourself in those days quite red in the gills with farting?

DEMOS

Why, it was a trick worthy of Pyrrhandrus!

CLEON

With what other idle trash will you seek to ruin me, you wretch!

SAUSAGE-SELLER

Oh! I shall be more brazen than you, for it's the goddess who has commanded me.

CLEON

No, on my honour, you will not! Here, Demos, feast on this dish; it is your salary as a dicast, which you gain through me for doing naught.

SAUSAGE-SELLER

Wait! here is a little box of ointment to rub into the sores on your legs.

CLEON

I will pluck out your white hairs and make you young again.

SAUSAGE-SELLER

Take this hare's tail to wipe the rheum from your eyes.

CLEON

When you wipe your nose, clean your fingers on my head.

SAUSAGE-SELLER

No, on mine.

CLEON

On mine. (To the SAUSAGE-SELLER) I will have you made a trierarch and you will get ruined through it; I will arrange that you are given an old vessel with rotten sails, which you will have to repair constantly and at great cost.

SAUSAGE-SELLER

Our man is on the boil; enough, enough, enough, he is boiling over; remove some of the embers from under him and skim off his threats.

CLEON

I will punish your self-importance; I will crush you with imposts;
I will have you inscribed on the list of the rich.

SAUSAGE-SELLER

For me no threat-only one simple wish. That you may be having some cuttle-fish fried on the stove just as you are going to set forth to plead the cause of the Milesians, which, if you gain it, means a talent in your pocket; that you hurry over devouring the fish to rush off to the Assembly; suddenly you are called and run off with your mouth full so as not to lose the talent and choke yourself. There! that is my wish.

LEADER OF THE CHORUS

Splendid! by Zeus, Apollo and Demeter!

DEMOS

Faith! here is an excellent citizen indeed, such as has not been seen for a long time. He's truly a man of the lowest scum! As for you, Paphlagonian, who pretend to love me, you only feed me on garlic. Return me my ring, for you cease to be my steward.

CLEON

Here it is, but be assured, that if you bereave me of my power, my successor will be worse than I am.

DEMOS

This cannot be my ring; I see another device, unless I am going purblind.

SAUSAGE-SELLER

What was your device?

DEMOS

A fig-leaf, stuffed with bullock's fat.

SAUSAGE-SELLER

No, that is not it.

DEMOS

What is it then?

SAUSAGE-SELLER

It's a gull with beak wide open, haranguing the people from the top of a stone.

DEMOS

Ah! great gods!

SAUSAGE-SELLER

What is the matter?

DEMOS

Away! away out of my sight! It's not my ring he had, it was that of Cleonymus. (To the SAUSAGE-SELLER) Wait, I'll give you this one; you shall be my steward.

CLEON

Master, I adjure you, decide nothing till you have heard my oracles.

SAUSAGE-SELLER

And mine.

CLEON

If you believe him, you will have to prostitute yourself for him.

SAUSAGE-SELLER

If you listen to him, you'll have to let him peel you to the very stump.

CLEON

My oracles say that you are to reign over the whole earth, crowned with chaplets.

SAUSAGE-SELLER

And mine say that, clothed in an embroidered purple robe, you shall pursue Smicythe and her spouse, standing in a chariot of gold and with a crown on your head.

DEMOS

Go, fetch me your oracles, that the Paphlagonian may hear them.

SAUSAGE-SELLER

Willingly.

DEMOS

And you yours.

CLEON

I'll run.

(He rushes into the house of DEMOS.)

SAUSAGE-SELLER

And I'll run too; nothing could suit me better!

(He departs in haste.)

CHORUS (singing)

Oh! happy day for us and for our children if Cleon perish. Yet just now I heard some old cross-grained pleaders on the marketplace who hold not this opinion discoursing together. Said they, "If Cleon had not had the power, we should have lacked two most useful tools, the pestle and the soup-ladle." You also know what a pig's education he has had; his school-fellows can recall that he only liked the Dorian style and would study no other; his music-master in displeasure sent him away, saying; "This youth, in matters of harmony, will only learn the Dorian style because it is akin to bribery."

CLEON (coming out of the house with a large package)

There, look at this heap; and yet I'm not bringing them all.

SAUSAGE-SELLER (entering with an even larger package)

Ugh! The weight of them is squeezing the crap right out of me, and still I'm not bringing them all!

DEMOS

What are these?

CLEON

Oracles.

DEMOS

All these?

CLEON

Does that astonish you? Why, I have another whole boxful of them.

SAUSAGE-SELLER

And I the whole of my attic and two rooms besides.

DEMOS

Come, let us see, whose are these oracles?

CLEON

Mine are those of Bacis.

DEMOS (to the SAUSAGE-SELLER)

And whose are yours?

SAUSAGE-SELLER (without hesitating)

Glanis's, the elder brother of Bacis.

DEMOS

And of what do they speak?

CLEON

Of Athens and Pylos and you and me and everything.

DEMOS

And yours?

SAUSAGE-SELLER

Of Athens and lentils and Lacedaemonians and fresh mackerel and scoundrelly flour-sellers and you and me. Ah ha! now watch him gnaw his own tool with chagrin!

DEMOS

Come, read them out to me and especially that one I like so much, which says that I shall become an eagle and soar among the clouds.

CLEON

Then listen and be attentive! "Son of Erechtheus, understand the meaning of the words, which the sacred tripods set resounding in the sanctuary of Apollo. Preserve the sacred dog with the jagged teeth, that barks and howls in your defence; he will ensure you a salary and, if he fails, will perish as the victim of the swarms of jays that hunt him down with their screams."

DEMOS

By Demeter! I do not understand a word of it. What connection is there between Erechtheus, the jays and the dog?

CLEON

I am the dog, since I bark in your defence. Well! Phoebus commands you to keep and cherish your dog.

SAUSAGE-SELLER

That is not what the god says; this dog seems to me to gnaw at the oracles as others gnaw at doorposts. Here is exactly what Apollo says of the dog.

DEMOS

Let us hear, but I must first pick up a stone; an oracle which speaks of a dog might bite my tool.

SAUSAGE-SELLER

"Son of Erechtheus, beware of this Cerberus that enslaves free men; he fawns upon you with his tail when you are dining, but he is lying in wait to devour your dishes should you turn your head an instant; at night he sneaks into the kitchen and, true dog that he is, licks up with one lap of his tongue both your dishes and.... the islands."

DEMOS

By god, Glanis, you speak better than your brother.

CLEON

Condescend again to hear me and then judge: "A woman in sacred Athens will be delivered of a lion, who shall fight for the people against clouds of gnats with the same ferocity as if he were defending his whelps; care ye for him, erect wooden walls around him and towers of brass." Do you understand that?

DEMOS

Not the least bit in the world.

CLEON

The god tells you here to look after me, for I am your lion.

DEMOS

How! You have become a lion and I never knew a thing about it?

SAUSAGE-SELLER

There is only one thing which he purposely keeps from you; he does not say what this wall of wood and brass is in which Apollo warns you to keep and guard him.

DEMOS

What does the god mean, then?

SAUSAGE-SELLER

He advises you to fit him into a five-holed wooden collar.

DEMOS

Hah! I think that oracle is about to be fulfilled.

CLEON

Do not believe it; these are but jealous crows, that caw against me; but never cease to cherish your good hawk; never forget that he brought you those Lacedaemonian fish, loaded with chains.

SAUSAGE-SELLER

Ah! if the Paphlagonian ran any risk that day, it was because he was drunk. Oh, too credulous son of Cecrops, do you accept that as a glorious exploit? A woman would carry a heavy burden if only a man had put it on her shoulders. But to fight! Go to! he would empty his bowels before he would ever fight.

CLEON

Note this Pylos in front of Pylos, of which the oracle speaks, "Pylos is before Pylos."

DEMOS

How "in front of Pylos"? What does he mean by that?

SAUSAGE-SELLER

He says he will seize upon your bath-tubs.

DEMOS

Then I shall not bathe to-day.

SAUSAGE-SELLER

No, as he has stolen our baths. But here is an oracle about the fleet, to which I beg your best attention.

DEMOS

Read on! I am listening; let us first see how we are to pay our sailors.

SAUSAGE-SELLER

"Son of Aegeus, beware of the tricks of the dog-fox, he bites from

the rear and rushes off at full speed; he is nothing but cunning and perfidy." Do you know what the oracle intends to say?

DEMOS

The dog-fox is Philostratus.

SAUSAGE-SELLER

No, no, it's Cleon; he is incessantly asking you for light vessels to go and collect the tributes, and Apollo advises you not to grant them.

DEMOS

What connection is there between a galley and dog-fox?

SAUSAGE-SELLER

What connection? Why, it's quite plain-a galley travels as fast as a dog.

DEMOS

Why, then, does the oracle not say dog instead of dog-fox?

SAUSAGE-SELLER

Because he compares the soldiers to young foxes, who, like them, eat the grapes in the fields.

DEMOS

Good! Well then! how am I to pay the wages of my young foxes?

SAUSAGE-SELLER

I will undertake that, and in three days too! But listen to this further oracle, by which Apollo puts you on your guard against the snares of the greedy fist.

DEMOS

Of what greedy fist?

SAUSAGE-SELLER

The god in this oracle very clearly points to the hand of Cleon, who incessantly holds his out, saying, "Fill it."

CLEON

That's a lie! Phoebus means the hand of Diopithes. But here I have a winged oracle, which promises you shall become an eagle and rule over all the earth.

SAUSAGE-SELLER

I have one, which says that you shall be King of the Earth and of the Red Sea too, and that you shall administer justice in Ecbatana, eating fine rich stews the while.

CLEON

I have seen Athen& in a dream, pouring out full vials of riches and health over the people.

SAUSAGE-SELLER

I too have seen the goddess, descending from the Acropolis with an owl perched upon her helmet; on your head she was pouring out ambrosia, on that of Cleon garlic pickle.

DEMOS

Truly Glanis is the wisest of men. I shall yield myself to you; guide me in my old age and educate me anew.

CLEON

Ah! I adjure you! not yet; wait a little; I will promise to

distribute barley every day.

DEMOS

Ah! I will not hear another word about barley; you have cheated me too often already, both you and Theophanes.

CLEON

Well then! you shall have flour-cakes all piping hot.

SAUSAGE-SELLER

I will give you cakes too, and nice cooked fish; all you'll have to do is eat.

DEMOS

Very well, mind you keep your promises. To whichever of you shall treat me best I hand over the reins of state.

CLEON

I will be first.

(He rushes into the house.)

SAUSAGE-SELLER

No, no, I will.

(He runs off.)

CHORUS (singing)

Demos, you are our all-powerful sovereign lord; all tremble before you, yet you are led by the nose. You love to be flattered and fooled; you listen to the orators with gaping mouth and your mind is led astray.

DEMOS (singing)

It's rather you who have no brains, if you think me so foolish as all that; it is with a purpose that I play this idiot's role, for I love to drink the livelong day, and so it pleases me to keep a thief for my minister. When he has thoroughly gorged himself, then I overthrow and crush him.

CHORUS (singing)

What profound wisdom! If it be really so, why! all is for the best. Your ministers, then, are your victims, whom you nourish and feed up expressly in the Pnyx, so that, the day your dinner is ready, you may immolate the fattest and eat him.

DEMOS (singing)

Look, see how I play with them, while all the time they think themselves such adepts at cheating me. I have my eye on them when they thieve, but I do not appear to be seeing them; then I thrust a judgment down their throat as it were a feather, and force them to vomit up all they have robbed from me.

(Cleon comes out of the house with a bench and a large basket; at

the same moment the SAUSAGE-SELLER arrives with another basket; the two are placed beside one another.)

CLEON

Get out of here!

SAUSAGE-SELLER

Get out yourself!

CLEON

Demos, all is ready these three hours; I await your orders and I

burn with desire to load you with benefits.

SAUSAGE-SELLER

And I ten, twelve, a thousand hours, a long, long while, an infinitely long, long, long while.

DEMOS

As for me, it's thirty thousand hours that I have been impatient; very, long, infinitely long, long, long that I have cursed you-

SAUSAGE-SELLER

Do you know what you had best do?

DEMOS

I will, if you tell me.

SAUSAGE-SELLER

Declare the lists open and we will contend abreast to determine-who shall treat you the best.

DEMOS

Splended! Draw back in line!

CLEON

I am ready.

DEMOS

Off you go!

SAUSAGE-SELLER (to CLEON)

I shall not let you get to the tape.

DEMOS

What fervent lovers! If I am not to-day the happiest of men, it will be because I am the most disgusted.

CLEON (putting down the bench for DEMOS)

Look! I am the first to bring you a seat.

SAUSAGE-SELLER

And I a table.

(He places his sausage-tray in front of DEMOS.)

CLEON

Wait, here is a cake kneaded of Pylos barley.

SAUSAGE-SELLER

Here are crusts, which the ivory hand of the goddess has hallowed.

DEMOS

Oh! Mighty Athene! How large are your fingers!

CLEON

This is pea-soup, as exquisite as it is fine; Pallas the victorious goddess at Pylos is the one who crushed the peas herself.

SAUSAGE-SELLER

Oh, Demos! the goddess watches over you; she is stretching forth over your head.... a stew-pan full of broth.

DEMOS

And should we still be dwelling in this city without this protecting stew-pan?

CLEON

Here are some fish, given to you by her who is the terror of our foes.

SAUSAGE-SELLER

The daughter of the mightiest of the gods sends you this meat cooked in its own gravy, along with this dish of tripe and some paunch.

DEMOS

That's to thank me for the peplus I offered to her; good.

CLEON

The goddess with the terrible plume invites you to eat this long cake; you will row the harder on it.

SAUSAGE-SELLER

Take this also.

DEMOS

And what shall I do with this tripe?

SAUSAGE-SELLER

She sends it you to belly out your galleys, for she is always showing her kindly anxiety for our fleet. Now drink this drink composed of three parts of water to two of wine.

DEMOS

Ah! what delicious wine, and how well it stands the water.

SAUSAGE-SELLER

The goddess who came from the head of Zeus mixed this liquor with her own hands.

CLEON

Hold, here is a piece of good rich cake.

SAUSAGE-SELLER

But I offer you an entire cake.

CLEON

But you cannot offer him stewed hare as I do.

SAUSAGE-SELLER (aside)

Ah! great gods! stewed hare! where shall I find it? Oh! brain of mine, devise some trick!

CLEON (showing him the hare)

Do you see this, you rogue?

SAUSAGE-SELLER (pretending to look afar)

A fig for that! Here are some people coming to seek me. They are envoys, bearing sacks bulging with money.

CLEON

(Hearing money mentioned CLEON turns his head, and the SAUSAGE-SELLER seizes the opportunity to snatch away the stewed hare.)

Where, where, I say?

SAUSAGE-SELLER

Bah! What's that to you? Will you not even now let the strangers alone? Dear Demos, do you see this stewed hare which I bring you?

CLEON

Ah! rascal! you have shamelessly robbed me.

SAUSAGE-SELLER

You have robbed too, you robbed the Laconians at Pylos.

DEMOS

Please tell me, how did you get the idea to filch it from him?

SAUSAGE-SELLER

The idea comes from the goddess; the theft is all my own.

CLEON

And I had taken such trouble to catch this hare and I was the one who had it cooked.

DEMOS (to CLEON)

Get you gone! My thanks are only for him who served it.

CLEON

Ah! wretch! you have beaten me in impudence!

SAUSAGE-SELLER

Well then, Demos, say now, who has treated you best, you and your stomach? Decide!

DEMOS

How shall I act here so that the spectators shall approve my judgment?

SAUSAGE-SELLER

I will tell you. Without saying anything, go and rummage through my basket, and then through the Paphlagonian's, and see what is in them; that's the best way to judge.

DEMOS

Let us see then, what is there in yours?

SAUSAGE-SELLER

Why, it's empty, dear little father; I have brought everything to you.

DEMOS

This is a basket devoted to the people.

SAUSAGE-SELLER

Now hunt through the Paphlagonian's. (Pause, as Demos does so) Well?

DEMOS

Oh! what a lot of good things! Why it's quite full! Oh! what a huge great part of this cake he kept for himself! He had only cut off the least little tiny piece for me.

SAUSAGE-SELLER

But this is what he has always done. Of everything he took, he only gave you the crumbs, and kept the bulk.

DEMOS (to CLEON)

Oh! rascal! was this the way you robbed me? And I was loading you with chaplets and gifts!

CLEON

I robbed for the public weal.

DEMOS (to CLEON)

Give me back that crown; I shall give it to him.

SAUSAGE-SELLER

Return it quick, quick, you gallows-bird.

CLEON

No, for the Pythian oracle has revealed to me the name of him who shall overthrow me.

SAUSAGE-SELLER

And that name was mine, nothing can be clearer.

CLEON

Reply and I shall soon see whether you are indeed the man whom the god intended. Firstly, what school did you attend when a child?

SAUSAGE-SELLER

It was in the kitchens, where I was taught with cuffs and blows.

CLEON

What's that you say? (aside) Ah! this is truly what the oracle said.

(To the SAUSAGE-SELLER) And what did you learn from the master of exercises?

SAUSAGE-SELLER

I learnt to take a false oath without a smile, when I had stolen something.

CLEON (frightened; aside)

Oh! Phoebus Apollo, god of Lycia! I am undone! (To the SAUSAGE-SELLER) And when you had become a man, what trade did you follow?

SAUSAGE-SELLER

I sold sausages and did a bit of fornication.

CLEON (in consternation; aside)

Oh! my god! I am a lost man! Ah! still one slender hope remains. (to the SAUSAGE-SELLER) Tell me, was it on the market-place or near the gates that you sold your sausages?

SAUSAGE-SELLER

Near the gates, in the market for salted goods.

CLEON (in tragic despair)

Alas! I see the prophecy of the god is verily come true. Alas! roll me home. I am a miserable ruined man. Farewell, my chaplet. 'Tis death to me to part with you. So you are to belong to another; 'tis certain he cannot be a greater thief, but perhaps he may be a luckier one.

(He gives the chaplet to the SAUSAGE-SELLER.)

SAUSAGE-SELLER

Oh! Zeus, protector of Greece! 'tis to you I owe this victory!

DEMOSTHENES

Hail! illustrious conqueror, but forget not, that if you have become a great man, 'tis thanks to me; I ask but a little thing; appoint me secretary of the law-court in the room of Phanus.

DEMOS (to the SAUSAGE-SELLER)

But what is your name then? Tell me.

SAUSAGE-SELLER

My name is Agoracritus, because I have always lived on the marketplace in the midst of lawsuits.

DEMOS

Well then, Agoracritus, I stand by you; as for the Paphlagonian, I hand him over to your mercy.

AGORACRITUS

Demos, I will care for you to the best of my power, and all

shall admit that no citizen is more devoted than I to this city of simpletons.

(They all enter the house of DEMOS.)

CHORUS (singing)

What fitter theme for our Muse, at the close as at the beginning of our work, than this, to sing the hero who drives his swift steeds down the arena? Why afflict Lysistratus with our satires on his poverty, and Thumantis, who has not so much as a lodging? He is dying of hunger and can be seen at Delphi, his face bathed in tears, clinging to your quiver, oh, Apollo and supplicating you to take him out of his misery.

LEADER OF THE CHORUS

An insult directed at the wicked is not to be censured; on the contrary, the honest man, if he has sense, can only applaud. Him, whom I wish to brand with infamy, is little known himself; he's the brother of Arignotus. I regret to quote this name which is so dear to me, but whoever can distinguish black from white, or the Orthian mode of music from others, knows the virtues of Arignotus, whom his brother, Aripgrades, in no way resembles. He gloats in vice, is not merely a dissolute man and utterly debauched-but he has actually invented a new form of vice; for he pollutes his tongue with abominable pleasures in brothels, befouling all of his body. Whoever is not horrified at such a monster shall never drink from the same cup with me.

CHORUS (singing)

At times a thought weighs on me at night; I wonder whence comes this fearful voracity of Cleonymus. 'Tis said that when dining with a rich host, he springs at the dishes with the gluttony of a wild beast and never leaves the bread-bin until his host seizes him round the knees, exclaiming, "Go, go, good gentleman, in mercy go, and spare my poor table!"

LEADER OF THE CHORUS

It is said that the triremes assembled in council and that the oldest spoke in these terms, "Are you ignorant, my sisters, of what is plotting in Athens? They say that a certain Hyperbolus, a bad citizen and an infamous scoundrel, asks for a hundred of us to take them to sea against Carthage." All were indignant, and one of them, as yet a virgin, cried, "May god forbid that I should ever obey him! I would prefer to grow old in the harbour and be gnawed by worms. No! by the gods I swear it, Nauphante, daughter of Nauson, shall never bend to his law; that's as true as I am made of wood and pitch. If the Athenians vote for the proposal of Hyperbolus, let them! we will hoist full sail and seek refuge by the temple of Theseus or the shrine of the Eumenides. No! he shall not command us! No! he shall not play with the city to this extent! Let him sail by himself for Tartarus, if such please him, launching the boats in which he used to sell his lamps."

(The SAUSAGE-SELLER comes out of the house of DEMOS, splendidly robed.)

AGORACRITUS (solemnly)

Maintain a holy silence! Keep your mouths from utterance! call

no more witnesses; close these tribunals, which are the delight of this city, and gather at the theatre to chant the Paeon of thanksgiving to the gods for a fresh favour.

LEADER OF THE CHORUS

Oh! torch of sacred Athens, saviour of the Islands, what good tidings are we to celebrate by letting the blood of the victims flow in our marketplaces?

AGORACRITUS

I have freshened Demos up somewhat on the stove and have turned his ugliness into beauty.

LEADER OF THE CHORUS

I admire your inventive genius; but, where is he?

AGORACRITUS

He is living in ancient Athens, the city of the garlands of violets.

LEADER OF THE CHORUS

How I should like to see him! What is his dress like, what his manner?

AGORACRITUS

He has once more become as he was in the days when he lived with Aristides and Miltiades. But you will judge for yourselves, for I hear the vestibule doors opening. Hail with your shouts of gladness the Athens of old, which now doth reappear to your gaze, admirable, worthy of the songs of the poets and the home of the illustrious Demos.

LEADER OF THE CHORUS

Oh! noble, brilliant Athens, whose brow is wreathed with violets, show us the sovereign master of this land and of all Greece.

(DEMOS comes from his house, rejuvenated and joyous.)

AGORACRITUS

Lo! here he is coming with his hair held in place with a golden band and in all the glory of his old-world dress; perfumed with myrrh, he spreads around him not the odour of lawsuits, but that of peace.

LEADER OF THE CHORUS

Hail! King of Greece, we congratulate you upon the happiness you enjoy; it is worthy of this city, worthy of the glory of Marathon.

DEMOS

Come, Agoracritus, come, my best friend; see the service you have done me by freshening me up on your stove.

AGORACRITUS

Ah! if you but remembered what you were formerly and what you did, you would for a certainty believe me to be a god.

DEMOS

But what did I do? and how was I then?

AGORACRITUS

Firstly, so soon as ever an orator declared in the Assembly, "Demos, I love you ardently; it is I alone who dream of you and watch over your interests"; at such an exordium you would look like a cock flapping his wings or a bull tossing his horns.

DEMOS

What, I?

AGORACRITUS

Then, after he had fooled you to the hilt, he would go.

DEMOS

What! they would treat me so, and I never saw it?

AGORACRITUS

You knew only how to open and close your ears like a sunshade.

DEMOS

Was I then so stupid and such a dotard?

AGORACRITUS

Worse than that; if one of two orators proposed to equip a fleet for war and the other suggested the use of the same sum for paying out to the citizens, it was the latter who always carried the day. Well! you droop your head! Why do you turn away your face?

DEMOS

I am blushing at my past errors.

AGORACRITUS

Think no more of them; it's not you who are to blame, but those who cheated you in this sorry fashion. But, come, if some impudent lawyer dared to say, "Dicasts, you shall have no wheat unless you convict this accused man!" what would you do? Tell me.

DEMOS

I would have him removed from the bar, I would bind Hyperbolus about his neck like a stone and would fling him into the Barathrum.

AGORACRITUS

Well spoken! but what other measures do you wish to take?

DEMOS

First, as soon as ever a fleet returns to the harbour, I shall pay up the rowers in full.

AGORACRITUS

That will soothe many a worn and chafed bottom.

DEMOS

Further, the hoplite enrolled for military service shall not get transferred to another service through favour, but shall stick to that given him at the outset.

AGORACRITUS

This will strike the buckler of Cleonymus full in the centre.

DEMOS

None shall ascend the rostrum, unless his chin is bearded.

AGORACRITUS

What then will become of Clisthenes and of Strato?

DEMOS

I wish only to refer to those youths who loll about the perfume shops, babbling at random, "What a clever fellow is Phaeax! How cleverly he escaped death! how concise and convincing is his style! what phrases! how clear and to the point! how well he knows how to quell an interruption!

AGORACRITUS

I thought you were the lover of those fairies.

DEMOS

The gods forefend it! and I will force all such fellows to go hunting instead of proposing decrees.

AGORACRITUS

In that case, accept this folding-stool, and, to carry it, this well-grown, big-balled slave lad. Besides, you may put him to any other purpose you please.

DEMOS

Oh! I am happy indeed to find myself as I was of old!

AGORACRITUS

Aye, you will deem yourself happy, when I have handed you the truce of thirty years. Truce! step forward!

(Enter Truce, in the form of a beautiful young girl, magnificently attired.)

DEMOS

Great gods! how charming she is! Can I do with her as I wish? where did you discover her, pray?

AGORACRITUS

That Paphlagonian had kept her locked up in his house, so that you might not enjoy her. As for myself, I give her to you; take her with you into the country.

DEMOS

And what punishment will you inflict upon this Paphlagonian, the cause of all my troubles?

AGORACRITUS

It will not be over-terrible. I condemn him to follow my old trade, posted near the gates, he must sell sausages of asses' and dogs' meat: perpetually drunk, he will exchange foul language with prostitutes and will drink nothing but the dirty water from the baths.

DEMOS

Well conceived! he is indeed fit to wrangle with harlots and bathmen; as for you, in return for so many blessings, I invite you to take the place at the Prytaneum which this rogue once occupied. Put on his frog-green mantle and follow me. As for the other, let them take him away; let him go sell his sausages in full view of the foreigners, whom he used formerly to insult so wantonly.

THE END

