

# The Braggart Soldier

by Plautus  
(Sometime before 184 B.C.)  
Translated by Erich Segal<sup>1</sup>  
(Research by Rose de Le Mans)

*This version of this play is  
Copyright ©2003-2004, The Golden Stag Players<sup>2</sup>*

Dramatis Personae	Pronunciation <sup>3</sup> :	English
Pyrgopolynices, <i>a soldier</i>	Greek peer-go-pol-ee-NEE-kays	peer-go-pol-ee-NIE-sees
Artotrogus, <i>his parasite</i>	ar-TOH-tro-gus	
Periplectomenus, <i>an old man from Ephesus</i>	pehr-i-plek-TOM-en-us	
Palaestrio, <i>a slave to the soldier</i> (formerly to Pleusicles)	pal-EYE-stree-o	
Sceledra, <i>a slave to the soldier</i>	skel-ED-ra	
Pleusicles, <i>a young man from Athens</i>	PLAYOU-seek-lays <sup>4</sup>	PLOO-zik-lees
Lurcio, <i>slave to the soldier</i>	LUR-kee-o	
Philocomasium, <i>a girl abducted by the soldier</i>	feel-o-ko-MAH-see-oom	feel-o-ko-MAY-zee-um
Acroteleutium, <i>a courtesan</i>	ak-ro-tell-AYOU-tee-oom	ak-ro-tell-ee-OU-shum
Milphidippa, <i>her maid</i>	mill-fid-IPP-a	mill-FID-ipp-a
A Slave Boy		
Caria, <i>Periplectomenus' cook</i>	KAR-ee-a	

*The entire action takes place on a street in Ephesus, before the adjoining houses of Pyrgopolynices and Periplectomenus.*

*[Typist's comment: Many of the longer names have been shortened in the left margin to avoid misspellings and dealing with formatting fun. So for example, "Periplectomenus:" appears as "Perip:", but in the actual dialog and stage directions the name is spelled out so that the actor(s) aren't making mistakes with the shortened version of the name ... Hirsch]*

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<sup>1</sup> Plautus: Four Comedies, Oxford University Press, 1996, ISBN 0-19-283896-2.

<sup>2</sup> This script was trimmed down because our typical productions are 1 hour, and the original script appears to run (based on page-count and other scripts we have done) about 2 ½ to 3 hours, which is a bit long for our production times, and is harder to get the time at SCA events for. We believe we have trimmed this to about 1 hour 45 minutes, give or take a bit.

<sup>3</sup> Provided by Vittoria Aureli, who has studied ancient literature at Cal Berkeley in her real-world life ... She notes: "Classical and Modern Greek have vastly different pronunciation rules. Since you're doing Plautus (which \*totally\* rocks! his stuff is wonderful), the Classical pronunciation is what you probably need. (And these names are not strictly Greek - the spelling, and hence the pronunciation, are Latinized.) However, there is also a standard Anglicized pronunciation, which is different for some of these names, but will probably sound more familiar to the audience (and is the pronunciation typically used in English-language renditions of the Greek and Roman classics). I'll give you both versions, and you can decide which you would rather use. Hope that's not too confusing! (Also, just a note in Greek and Latin, you flip the "r" the same way you do in Italian or Spanish.)"

<sup>4</sup> Pleusicles – Pronunciation: PLAYOU-seek-lays – "The first syllable is a diphthong of "ay" and "ou," I don't think there's an equivalent in English." – Vittoria Aureli

*[Enter Prologue (who is also the director of the show)]*

Prologue: Now folks, if you'll be kind enough to hear me out,  
Then I'll be kind and tell you what our play's about.  
Whoever doesn't want to listen, let him beat it  
And give a seat to one of those in back who need it.

I'll tell you why we've gathered in this festive spot,  
What comedy we will enact, its name and plot.  
This play is called the *Alazon* in Greek,  
A name translated 'braggart' in the tongue we speak.  
This town is Ephesus ...<sup>5</sup>

*[Enter Palaestrio, in a huff]*

Palaestrio: Hey! That's my opening speech! What are you *doing*?

Prologue: You complained about having this huge opening speech, so I took it on myself to make things easier for you, and at the same time let the audience know what's gone before ...

*[Stage Manager steps on stage from backstage area, with script in hand ... she listens to the conversation ... tapping her foot, trying to get Palaestrio off-stage without actually grabbing him ...]*

Palaestrio: But, it was my OPENING SPEECH! That's not fair.

Prologue: Listen, why don't you just go back stage and get ready for your entrance, which will be soon enough. You'll have lots of stage time from that point to the end of the show, after all.

Palaestrio: *(gives in rather than arguing, but ...)* Well, okay ... *(grumbling and muttering as he walks offstage – see Stage Manager note below ...)*

*[Stage Manager grabs three pages of "script" and yanks them out of her script, then exits offstage waving to Palaestrio to get him to leave, maybe even "commiserating" with Palaestrio, arm on his shoulder, etc. ... Palaestrio follows her off, leaving Prologue on stage ...]*

Prologue: Boy, you try to do someone a favor, and see what it gets you ... wow *(flipping pages)*, this is a long speech, let me see if I can sum up:

The soldier you are about to meet is the braggart for which the play is named. He's a lecher and believes he's the gods' gift to women. His name is Pyrgopolynices. Palaestrio, whom you just met, has been his slave for awhile, and here we get to the plot:

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<sup>5</sup> The Prologue's speech is actually taken from the original script and adapted quite a bit. It was originally written for Palaestrio to give to the audience a bit of background, however we cut this speech, and then decided to use some of it for the prologue. This is not the entire speech, and we added a bit ...

His master back in Athens was a fine young man, named Pleusicles. In Athens, Pleusicles was crazy for a courtesan named Philocomasium. She loved him too. The master was sent on a journey, a “Government Quest”. While Pleusicles was away, the soldier came to Athens, and made advances to Philocomasium. He played up to her mother, and eventually made off with her and brought her here to Ephesus.

When Palaestrio learned of this, he headed for Naupactus, where Pleusicles was, to tell him about this kidnapping.

*[Pause]* The heralds have asked me to warn you that this kind of thing only happens in romance novels and plays – please don’t use this for your persona story!

Just when Palaestrio’s ship got out to sea, it was attacked by pirates. The pirates made a gift of Palaestrio to Pyrgopolynices! When the soldier took him home, what did he find, but Philocomasium ... when she saw him, she made a sign to come talk to her later. She then explained what had happened, and how unhappy she was. She longed to flee back to Athens, to Pleusicles whom she loved. Palaestrio, being a resourceful type, sent a letter to Pleusicles explaining the situation.

Pleusicles has recently arrived here in Ephesus and is staying with a neighbour right next door! The neighbor, Periplectomenus, is a kindly old man, who is doing all that he can to assist Pleusicles. In order to make things easier for Pleusicles and Philocomasium, Palaestrio has contrived with Periplectomenus to have a hole made between the two houses, through which the young lady can travel to see her lover, and yet not let the Soldier know anything is amiss.

Now you know how things stand to this point. My job is done. I hope that I have explained things well enough, and in the process saved poor Palaestrio a bit of work. And if not, well ... COPE!

*[Exit Prologue]*

*[Enter Pyrgopolynices, followed by his parasite Artotrogus and several minions who carry his monstrous shield.]*

Pyrg: *[Posing pompously, declaiming in heroic fashion.]*  
Look lively – shine a shimmer on that shield of mine  
Surpassing sunbeams – when there are no clouds, of course.  
Thus, when it's needed, with the battle joined, its gleam  
Shall strike opposing eyeballs in the bloodshed – bloodshot!  
Ah me, I must give comfort to this blade of mine  
Lest he lament and yield himself to dark despair.  
Too long ere now has he been sick of his vacation.  
Poor lad! He's dying to make mincemeat of the foe.  
*[Dropping the bombastic tone]*  
Say, where the devil is Artotrogus?

Arto: He's here –  
By Destiny's dashing, dauntless, debonair darling,  
A man so warlike, Mars himself would hardly dare  
To claim his powers were the equal of your own.

Pyrg: *[Preening]* Tell me – who was that chap I saved at Field-of-Roaches,  
Where the supreme commander was Crash-Bang-Razzle-Dazzle  
Son of Mighty-Mercenary-Messup, you know, Neptune's nephew?

Arto: Ah yes, the man with golden armour, I recall.  
You puffed away his legions with a single breath  
Like wind blows autumn leaves, or straw from thatch-roofed huts.

Pryg: A snap – a nothing, really.

Arto: Nothing, indeed – this is  
Compared to other feats I could recount – *[aside]* as false as this.

*[To the audience, as he hides behind the soldier's shield]*

Arto: If any of you knows a man more full of bull  
Or empty boastings, you can have me – free of tax.  
But I'll say this: I'm crazy for his olive salad!

Pyrg: Hey, where are you?

Arto: *[Popping up]* Here! And then that elephant in India –  
The way your fist just broke his arm to smithereens.

Pyrg: What's that – his *arm*?

Arto: I meant his leg, of course.

- Pyrg: I gave him just an easy jab.
- Arto: A jab, of course! If you had really tried, you would have smashed his arm  
Right through his elephantine skin and guts and bone!
- Pyrg: No more of this.
- Arto: Of course. Why bother to narrate  
Your many daring deeds to me – who knows them all.  
*[Aside, to the audience]* It's only for my stomach that I stomach him.  
While ears are suffering, at least my teeth are suppering.  
And so I yes and yes again to all his lies.
- Pyrg: How good's your memory?
- Arto: It's perfect, sir. In Cilicia<sup>6</sup>,  
A hundred fifty. In darkest I-robya, hundreds more.  
Add thirty Sardiens, those Macedonians, and there's  
The total men you've slaughtered in a single day.
- Pyrg: 'The total men', your final sum is –
- Arto: Seven thousand.
- Pyrg: I believe you're right. You're good at your accounts.
- Arto: I didn't even write it down; it's all by heart.
- Pyrg: My god, you've got a memory!
- Arto: Food feeds it.
- Pyrg: Well, if you keep behaving as you have, you'll eat  
Eternally. I'll always have a place for you at dinner.
- Arto: *[Inspired by this.]* And then in Cappadocia<sup>7</sup>, you would have slain  
Five hundred with one blow – except your blade was dull.
- Pyrg: Just shabby little soldiers, so I let them live.

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<sup>6</sup> Cilicia – Pronunciation – Greek: keel-ee-EE-a; English: sill-ISS-ee-a. Provided by Vittoria Aureli

<sup>7</sup> Cappadocia – Pronunciation – Greek: kap-a-do-KEE-a; English: kap-a-DO-sha. Provided by Vittoria Aureli

Arto: Why bother to repeat what every mortal knows –  
 There's no one more invincible in all the earth  
 In duties or in beauties than – Pyrgopolynices!  
 Why, all the women love you – who can blame them, either –  
 Since you're so ... so attractive? Why, just yesterday  
 Some women grabbed me by the tunic –

Pyrg: Yes, what said they?

Arto: They badgered me with asking – 'Isn't that Achilles?'  
 'No', said I, 'it's just his brother.' 'Ah', said one,  
 'That's why he looks so beautiful and genteel!  
 Just look at him – that handsome head of hair he has!  
 Oh, blessed are the women that can sleep with him!'

Pyrg: They really said all that?

Arto: And then both begged me to parade you by today so they could see you.

Pyrg: How wretched to be such a handsome man.

Arto: How true. They are a bother, screeching and beseeching me  
 For just one little look at you. And sending for me!  
 That's why I can't give all my time to serving you.  
*[Suddenly, duty calls]*

Pyrg: Now is the hour, fall in! On to the forum  
 To seek the mercenaries I conscripted yesterday.  
 I must distribute salaries to all enlisted.  
 King Seleucus<sup>8</sup> has urgently appealed to me  
 To gather fighting men for him and sign them up.  
 I have decreed this day devoted to the king's demands.

Arto: Then off we go!

Pyrg: Faithful fellows – follow!

*[Pyrgopolynices leads his minions off. Enter Palaestrio.]*

*[Old Peripletomenus comes out of his house, still shouting back angrily at the slaves within.]*

Perip: After this, by Hercules, if you don't beat the daylights out of  
 Anyone who's on our roof, I'll make your raw sides into rawhides!  
*[In exasperation, to the audience.]*  
 Now my neighbours see the show of all that happens in my house –  
 Looking right down through my skylight! *[Back to his slaves]*  
 Listen, I command you all:

<sup>8</sup> Seleucus – Pronunciation – Greek: sell-AYOU-kus ; English: sell-OO-kus. Provided by Vittoria Aureli

Anyone you see on our roof, coming from the soldier's house –  
That's excepting Palaestrio – throw 'em down into the street!  
Should they claim to be pursuing monkeys, pigeons or the like,  
You'll be finished if you don't just pound and pummel 'em to pulp!

Palaestrio: Someone from our house has done a naughty thing, from what I hear –  
The old man's commanded that my fellow slaves be beaten up.  
Well, he said except for me – who gives a hoot about the rest?  
I'll go see him. How are you, Periplectomenus?

*[Palaestrio steps into view.]*

Perip: There aren't many men I'd rather meet right now than you, Palaestrio.

Palaestrio: What's going on? Why are you in such an uproar with our household?

Perip: We're all finished!

Palaestrio: What's the matter?

Perip: It's discovered!

Palaestrio: What's discovered?

Perip: On my roof –  
Someone from your household has been spying on us, through the skylight,  
Where he saw Philocomasium in my house, with my guest – Kissing.

Palaestrio: Who saw this?

Perip: A fellow slave of yours.

Palaestrio: But which, I wonder.

Perip: I don't know, the fellow got away too fast.

Palaestrio: Oh, I suspect – that I'm a dead man.

Perip: As he fled, I cried, 'Why are you on my roof?'  
He replied, still on the run, 'I had to chase our little monkey.'

Palaestrio: Pity me – I'll have to die – all for a worthless animal!  
But the girl – is she still in your house?

Perip: She was when I came out here.

Palaestrio: Quick – have her cross back to our house, so the slaves can see her there.  
Make her hurry – that's unless she'd rather see her faithful slaves  
Just for her affair become fraternal brothers – on the cross!

- Perip: She'll be told. *[Going off]* If that is all ...
- Palaestrio: It isn't. Also tell the girl to see to it she doesn't lose her woman's ingenuity. Have her practice up her tricks and female shrewdness.
- Perip: What's this for?
- Palaestrio: She must force the fellow who found her into full forgetfulness. Even if he saw her here a hundred times, have her deny it. Wiles she has, guiles she has, very smoothing smiles she has. 'Seasoned' women never have to get their spices at the grocer's – Their own garden grows the pepper for their sharp and saucy schemes.
- Perip: I'll convey this all to her, if she's still there. *[Stops, amazed]* What's going on? What are you debating there inside yourself?
- Palaestrio: Some silence, please, while I call my wits to order to consider what to do In retaliation: to outfox my foxy fellow slave, who Saw her kissing in your house. We've got to make the seen ... *unseen*.
- Perip: *[Starts to head for his house.]*  
Cogitate – while I withdraw and go in here. *[Turns]* Well, look at him!  
Standing pensive, pondering profundities with wrinkled brow.  
Bravo! *Molto bello*, standing slavewise and theatrically  
He won't rest at all today until he finds the plan he's seeking.  
Now I think he has it.
- Palaestrio: Hey – get busy, man, don't slip to sleep. That's unless you'd rather be on guard right here and *[points to his own back]* scarred right here.  
Come, concoct a cunning clever new campaign, and quickly too.  
Make the visible invisible, undo every deed that's done.
- Perip: What fantastic feats he's fixing, fortified with fortitude!
- Palaestrio: Tell me that you'll take command yourself and then I'll rest secure, Knowing we can crush the foe.
- Perip: *[Magnanimously]* I do accept the office and do take command!
- Palaestrio: I think we'll win the prize we seek.
- Perip: *[Paternally and grateful]* May Jupiter shower blessings on you. Won't you share your plans?
- Palaestrio: Be silent, sir, while I show you through the landscape of my 'plot', so you'll be sharing Equally in all the plans.
- Perip: I'll guard them as I would my own.

- Palaestrio: Master hasn't normal skin – it's thicker than an elephant's. He's about as clever as a stone.
- Perip: That much I know myself.
- Palaestrio: I will say Philocamasium has got a real twin sister  
Who has just arrived from Athens with a young man she's in love with.  
These two 'sisters' are alike as drops of milk. We'll say the lovers  
Stay at your house, as your guests.
- Perip: Bravo – it's a brilliant plan!
- Palaestrio: Should this fellow slave of mine make accusations to the soldier,  
Claiming that he saw the girl there kissing someone else, why then  
*I'll* accuse my fellow slave of having spied on you and seen the  
*Sister* with her lover, kissing and embracing.
- Perip: Oh, that's fine! If the soldier questions me, I'll back you up.
- Palaestrio: Remember that the sisters are identically alike. Remind the girl as well, so  
When the soldier asks her, she won't foul it up.
- Perip: A perfect ploy! [*Suddenly*] Wait – what happens if the soldier wants to see 'em both  
*together?*  
What do we do then?
- Palaestrio: It's easy; there are thousands of excuses:  
'She's not home, she took a walk, she's sleeping, dressing, washing,  
Dining, drinking, busy, indisposed, it's just impossible.'  
If we start this on the right foot, we can put him off for ever.  
Soon he'll get to thinking all the lies we tell him are the truth.
- Perip: This is terrific.
- Palaestrio: Go in – if the girl is there, then have her  
Hurry home. And train her. She must fully comprehend our plan, the  
web we're weaving with her new twin sister.
- Perip: You shall quickly have a girl who's very quick.
- [*The old man rushes into his house, leaving Palaestrio to ponder his next move.*]
- Palaestrio: Now I myself must go back home  
And by secret subterfugitive investigation find out  
Who of my fellow servants chased that monkey on the roof today.  
Surely he'll have shared the secret with the other household slaves,  
Whispering of Master's mistress.  
'I can't keep it secret, I'm the only one who knows,' he'll say.  
When I find the man who saw her, my equipment will be ready.

Wait – our door is creaking – I had better quiet down for now.  
Look – here comes my fellow slave, the one they picked to guard the girl.

*[Enter Sceledra, one of the soldier's household slaves. Normally a nervous nail-biter, she is now completely bewildered.]*

Sceledra: If I wasn't walking in my sleep today upon that roof, I  
Know for sure, by Pollux, that I saw Philocamasium,  
Master's mistress, right here in our neighbour's house – in search of trouble.

Palaestrio: *[Aside]*. There's the slave who saw her kissing. I can tell from what she said.

Sceledra: Who is that?

Palaestrio: Your fellow slave. How goes it Sceledra?

Sceledra: Palaestrio! I'm glad to see you.

Palaestrio: Why? What's wrong?

Sceledra: I'm afraid –

Palaestrio: Of what?

Sceledra: Today I fear we slaves are really *leaping* into  
Trouble and titanic tortures!

Palaestrio: So leap solo, – I don't care the slightest bit for any leaping – up or down.

Sceledra: Maybe you don't know the crime committed in our house today.

Palaestrio: Crime? What sort of crime?

Sceledra: A dirty one!

Palaestrio: Then keep it to yourself. I don't want to know.

Sceledra: Well, I won't allow you *not* to know it!  
Listen: as I chased our monkey over neighbour's roof today –

Palaestrio: Sceledra, I'd say one worthless animal pursued another.

Sceledra: Go to hell!

Palaestrio: *You* ought to go – on with your little tale, I mean.

*[Sceledra glares at Palaestrio, then goes on with her story.]*

Sceledra: On the roof, I chanced by chance to peek down through our neighbour's skylight –  
And what do I see? Philocamasium! She's smooching with some  
Utterly unknown young man!

Palaestrio: [*Horried*] What scandal, Sceledra, is this?

Sceledra: There's no doubt of it, I saw her.

Palaestrio: Really?

Sceledra: With my own two eyes.

Palaestrio: Come on, this is all illusion, you saw nothing.

Sceledra: Look at me! Do my eyes look bad to you?

Palaestrio: Ask a doctor; don't ask me!  
[*He now becomes the friendly advisor*]  
By the gods, don't propagate this tale of yours so indiscretely.  
Now you're seeking trouble head-on, soon it may seek you – *head off!*  
And unless you can suppress this absolutely brainless banter,  
*Double death* awaits you!

Sceledra: What's this 'double' death?

Palaestrio: Well, I'll explain it: First, if you've accused our master's mistress falsely, you must die.  
Next, if what you say *is* true, you've failed as guard – you die again.

Sceledra: I don't know my future, but I know I'm sure of what I saw.  
Why – She's inside our neighbour's house right now.

Palaestrio: [*With mock surprise*] What's that, she's not at home?

Sceledra: You don't have to take my word. Go right inside and look yourself.

Palaestrio: Yes, indeed I will!

[*He strides with severity into the soldier's house.*]

Sceledra: And I'll wait here and ambush her, the  
Minute our young filly trots from pasture to her storehouse stall.  
[*He reflects a moment, then groans.*]  
What am I to do? The soldier chose me as her guardian.  
If I let this out – I die. Yet, if I'm silent, still I die,  
Should this be discovered. Oh, what could be wickeder than women?  
While I was on the roof there, she just left her room and went outside!  
Bold and brazen badness, by the gods! If master learns of this,  
Our whole household will be on the cross, by Hercules. Me too!

*[Resolves herself]* Come what may, I'll shut my mouth.  
Better stilled than killed, I say.

*[Exasperated, to the audience]*

I can't guard a girl like this who's always out to sell herself!

*[Palaestrio marches out of the soldier's house, a very stern look on his face.]*

Palaestrio: Sceledra! Is there a woman more insolent in all the earth, or  
Born beneath more angry or unfriendly stars –

Sceledra: What's wrong? What's wrong?

Palaestrio: My friend, the girl's *at home!*

Sceledra: She's at home?

Palaestrio: At home she is.

Sceledra: Oh, cut it out; you're fooling with me.

Palaestrio: Then my hands are very dirty.

Sceledra: Why?

Palaestrio: Because I fool with filth.

Sceledra: Damn your hide!

Palaestrio: No, Sceledra, it's *your* hide that is now at stake.  
That's unless you make some changes in your visions and derisions.  
Wait – our door is creaking.

Sceledra: *[At the old man's door.]*  
I shall stay right here and block *this* door.  
For sure she can't cross over if she doesn't use the door!

Palaestrio: What's caused all this scurvy scoundrelism, Sceledra? She's *home*.

*[Sceledra keeps blocking the old man's door, looking straight ahead, trying to reassure herself.]*

Sceledra: I can see ... I know myself ... I trust myself implicitly.  
No one bullies me to make me think she isn't in this house.  
*[She spreads her arms across the doorway.]*  
Here – I'll block the door. She won't sneak back and catch me unawares.

Palaestrio: *[To the audience]* There, she's where I want her.  
Now I'll push her off the ramparts.  
*[To Sceledra]* Do you want me to convince you of your stupi-vision?

- Sceledra: Try it!
- Palaestrio: And to prove that you don't know what eyes or brains are for?
- Sceledra: Well, prove it!
- Palaestrio: Now ... you claim the concubine's in there.
- Sceledra: Why, I *insist* she is, and I saw her kissing some young man as well – a perfect stranger.
- Palaestrio: There's no passage from this house to our house, you know that –
- Sceledra: *[Impatiently]* I know it.
- Palaestrio: There's no balcony or garden, just the skylight –
- Sceledra: I know *that* too!
- Palaestrio: Well ... if she's in *our* house and I bring her out so you can see her, Would you say you're worthy of a whipping?
- Sceledra: *[Nods]* Worthy.
- Palaestrio: Guard the door – See she doesn't sneak out on the sly and slip across to our house.
- Sceledra: That's my plan.
- Palaestrio: I'll have her standing in the street here right away.

*[Palaestrio dashes into the soldier's house.]*

- Sceledra: *[Muttering to himself.]* Go ahead and do it! I'll soon know if I saw what I saw. Or if – as he says he will – he'll prove the girl is still at home.  
*[Tries to reassure himself]* After all, I have my eyes. I never borrow someone else's ...  
*[Having second thoughts]* Yet he's always playing up to her – and he's her favourite: First man called to dinner, always first to fill his face with food. And he's only been with us about three years – not even that. Still, I tell you, no one's slavery could be more savoury. Never mind, I'd better do what must be done, that's guard this door. Here I'll stand, by Pollux. Never will they make a fool of me!

*[Sceledra stands with her arms spread across the doorway to the old man's house. Palaestrio enters from the soldier's house, leading the girl Philocomasium.]*

- Palaestrio: Remember your instructions.
- Philo: I'm astonished I'm admonished so.
- Palaestrio: I'm worried you're not slippery enough.

Philo: What? I could make a dozen decent damsels devils with my surplus shrewdness!

Palaestrio: Now concentrate on trickery. I'll slip away from you.

*[Palaestrio strides jauntily up to Sceledra, who is still blocking the old man's door with all possible concentration.]*

Palaestrio How are you, Sceledra?

Sceledra: *[Staring straight ahead.]* I'm on the job. Speak – I have ears.

*[Palaestrio looks at Sceledra's pose, amused.]*

Palaestrio: You know, I think you'll travel soon in that same pose – beyond the gates  
With arms outstretched – to bear your cross.

Sceledra: Oh yes? What for?

Palaestrio: Look to your left. Who is that woman?

Sceledra: Oh – by all the gods – That girl – she's the master's concubine!

Philo: Where is this 'loyal' slave who falsely brands an honest woman with unchastity?

Palaestrio: *[Points to Sceledra]* Right here! She told me all the things I told you.

Philo: You say you saw me – rascal – kissing in our neighbour's house?

Sceledra: By Hercules, I did.

Philo: You saw me?

Sceledra: With these eyes, by Hercules.

Philo: You'll lose them soon – They see more than they see.

Sceledra: By Hercules, I won't be frightened out of seeing what I really saw!

Philo: I waste my breath conversing with a lunatic. I'll have her head, by Pollux!

Sceledra: Oh, stop your threats! I know the cross will be my tomb.  
My ancestors *all* ended there – exactly like my forefathers – and five-fathers.  
And so these threats of yours can't tear my eyes from me!  
*[Meekly motioning Palaestrio to one side.]*  
But – could I have a word with you, Palaestrio? ... Please tell me:  
Where *did* she come from?

Palaestrio: Home, where else?

Sceledra: From home?

Palaestrio: *[Checking Sceledra' eyes]* You see me?

Sceledra: Sure. But it's amazing how she crossed from one house to the other!  
For certainly we haven't *got* a balcony, no garden,  
Every window's grated. *[To Philocomasium]* Yet I'm sure I saw you here inside.

Philo: By Castor, now I think it must have been the truth – that dream I dreamed last night.

Palaestrio: What did you dream?

Philo: I'll tell you both, but please pay close attention:  
Last night it seemed as if my dear *twin sister* had arrived  
In Ephesus from Athens – with a certain man she loved.  
It seemed as if they both were staying here next door as guests.  
It seemed – though I was glad my sister came – because of her,  
There seemed to be a terrible suspicion cast upon me.  
Because it seemed that, in my dream, one of our slaves accused me,  
*[To Sceledra]* Just as you're doing now, of having kissed a strange young man,  
When really it was my *twin sister* kissing her beloved.  
And so I dreamt that I was falsely and unjustly blamed.

Palaestrio: What seemed like dreams now happen to you wide awake!  
By Hercules – a real live dream! *[To Philocomasium]* Go right inside and pray!  
*[Casually]* I think you should relate this to the soldier ...

Philo: Why, of course! I won't be falsely called unchaste – without revenge!

*[She storms into the soldier's house. Palaestrio turns to Sceledra.]*

Sceledra: I'm scared. What have I done? I feel my whole back itching.

Palaestrio: You know you're finished, eh?

Sceledra: Well, now at least I'm sure she's home.  
And now I'll guard our door – wherever she may be!

*[Sceledra plants herself astride the soldier's door in the same position she used to block the old man's doorway.]*

Palaestrio: *[Sweetly]* Sceledra – That dream she dreamt was pretty similar to what went on –  
Even the part where you suspected that you saw her kissing!

Sceledra: I don't know what I should believe myself. I thought I saw  
A thing ... I think ... perhaps ... I didn't see.

Palaestrio: You're waking up – Too late. When Master hears of this, you'll die a dandy death.

Sceledra: I see the truth at last. My eyes were clouded by some fog.  
I can't say anything for sure. I saw her, yet I didn't ...

Palaestrio: By Jupiter, your folly almost finished us for good!  
In trying to be true to Master, *you* just missed disaster!  
But wait – our neighbour's door is creaking. I'll be quiet now.

*[Enter Philocamasium again, this time from the old man's house.]*

Philo: *[In a disguised voice]* Put fire on the altar; let me joyfully give thanks  
To Diana of Ephesus. I'll burn Arabian incense.  
She saved me in the turbulent Neptunian territory,  
When I was buffeted about, beset by savage seas.

Sceledra: Palaestrio, Palaestrio!

Palaestrio: *[Mimicking her]* O Sceledra! What now?

Sceledra: That girl that just came out – is that our master's concubine,  
Philocamasium? Well – yes or no?

Palaestrio: It seems like her, yet it's amazing how she crossed from one house to the other.  
If it is she ...

Sceledra: Well, let's accost her. Hey, what's going on, Philocamasium?  
What were you doing in that house? Just what's been going on?  
Well, answer when I talk to you!

Palaestrio: You're talking to yourself – She doesn't answer.

Sceledra: You! I'm speaking to you, wicked woman! So naughty with the neighbours –

Philo: *[Coldly]* Madam, with whom are you conversing?

Sceledra: Who else but you?

Philo: Who are you, madam? What do you want with me?

Sceledra: Asking me who I am?

Philo: Why not? – I don't know you, so I ask.

Palaestrio: I suppose you also don't know who *I* am?

Philo: Well, you *and* she – Are both a nuisance.

Sceledra: You don't know us?

Philo: Neither one.

Sceledra: I'm scared, I'm scared.

Palaestrio: Scared of what?

Sceledra: I think we've lost our own identities somewhere – Since she says she doesn't know us!

Palaestrio: *[Very seriously]* Let's investigate this further.  
Sceledra – are we ourselves – or are we other people now?  
Maybe, unbeknownst to us, one of our neighbours has *transformed* us!

*[Sceledra ponders this for a split second.]*

Sceledra: I'm myself for sure.

Palaestrio: Me too. Hey, girl – you're going after trouble. *[Philocamasium ignores him completely.]*  
Hey, Philocamasium!

Philo: *[Cooly]* What madness motivates you, sir, to  
Carelessly concoct this incoherent name to call me?

Palaestrio: *[Sarcastically]* Well now, tell me – what's your real name, then?

Philo: My name is Dicea<sup>9</sup>.

Sceledra: No, you're wrong, the name you're forging for yourself is phoney, Philocamasium.  
You're not *decent*, you're *indecent* – and you're cheating on my master!

Philo: I?

Sceledra: Yes, you.

Philo: But I only arrived from Athens yesterday, with my faithful lover, an Athenian young man.

Sceledra: Then tell me – What's your business here in Ephesus.

Philo: Looking for my dear twin sister. Someone said she might be here.

Sceledra: *[Sarcastically]* Oh, you're a clever girl!

Philo: No, I'm foolish, by the gods, to stand here chattering with you two. I'll be going ...

Sceledra: No, you won't be –

*[She grabs her.]*

Philo: Let me go!

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<sup>9</sup> Pronounced: Dee-see-ah

Sceledra: You're caught red-handed! I won't let you –

Philo: Then beware the noise – when my hand meets your cheek. Let me go!

Sceledra: *[To Palaestrio]* You idiot, don't stand there; grab her other arm!

Palaestrio: I don't want to get my back involved in this. Who knows –  
Maybe she's our girl ... or maybe someone else who *looks* like her.

Philo: Will you let me go or not?

Sceledra: You're coming home, no matter what! If you don't, I'll drag you home.

Philo: My home and master are in Athens –  
*[Pointing to the soldier's house]*  
I don't know and I don't care about that house – or who you are!

Sceledra: Go and sue me! I won't ever let you go unless you swear that if I do you'll come inside.

Philo: Whoever you are, you're forcing me. All right, if you let me go, I give my word to go inside.

Sceledra: Go then.

*[She releases her]*

Philo: Go I shall ... goodbye!

*[She dashes into the old man's house.]*

Sceledra: That's typical: a woman's word.

Palaestrio: Sceledra, you let the prize slip through your fingers. No mistaking –  
She's our master's mistress. *Now* – you want to be a woman of action?

Sceledra: *[Timidly]* Tell me how.

Palaestrio: *[Boldy]* Bring forth a sword for me!

Sceledra: *[Frightened]* What will you do with it?

Palaestrio: *[Imitating his master's bombastic manner]*  
I'll burst boldly through these portals and the man I see inside  
Kissing Master's mistress, I shall slash to slivers on the spot!

Sceledra: I'll do it right away.

*[Sceledra dashes headlong into the soldier's house. Palaestrio, convulsed with laughter, addresses the audience.]*

Palaestrio: All the king's horses and all the king's men could never act with such great daring,  
Never be so calm, so cool, *in anything*, as one small *woman*!  
Deftly she delivered up a different accent for each part!  
How the faithful guard, my foxy fellow slave, was fully flim-flammed!  
What a source of joy for all – this passage passing through the wall!

*[Palaestrio laughs gleefully as Sceledra peeks out of the soldier's house, then sheepishly approaches.]*

Sceledra: Say, Palaestrio ... forget about the sword.

Palaestrio: What's that? Why so?

Sceledra: She's at home ... our master's mistress.

Palaestrio: Home?

Sceledra: She's lying on her couch.

Palaestrio: *[Building up to a frightening crescendo.]*  
Now it seems you've found the trouble you've been looking for, by Pollux!

Sceledra: Why?

Palaestrio: Because you dared disturb a lady who's our neighbour's guest.

Sceledra: Hercules! How horrible!

Palaestrio: Why, there's no question, she must be the real twin sister of our girl –  
And *she's* the one that you saw kissing!

Sceledra: Yes, you're right. It's clearly she, just as you say. Did I come close to  
Getting killed! If I'd said a word to Master –

Palaestrio: Now, be smart: Keep this all a secret. Slaves should always know more than they tell.  
I'll be at our neighbour's here. If Master needs me, he can send for me in here.

*[Palaestrio strides into the old man's house.]*

Sceledra: At least he's gone. He cares no more for Master's matters  
Than if he weren't slaving here in slavery!  
Well, *now* our girl's inside the house, I'm sure of that;  
I personally saw her lying on her couch.  
So now's the time to pay attention to my guarding.

*[Sceledra paces before the soldier's door, concentrating on her guarding. Periplectomenus rushes out angrily from his own house.]*

- Perip: By Hercules, those men must take me for a sissy –  
My military neighbour's slaves insult me so!  
Did they not lay their hands upon my lady guest –  
Who yesterday arrived from Athens with my friend?  
*[Indignantly to the audience]*  
A free and freeborn girl – manhandled and insulted!
- Sceledra: Oh, Hercules, I'm through. He's heading to behead me.  
I'm scared this thing has got me into awful trouble –  
At least that's what I gather from the old man's words.
- Perip: *[Aside]* Now I'll confront her. *[To Sceledra]* Scurvy scoundrel Sceledra!  
Did you insult my guest right by my house just now?
- Sceledra: *[Near panic]* Dear neighbour, listen please –
- Perip: I listen? *You're* the slave!
- Sceledra: I want to clear myself –
- Perip: How can you clear yourself, when you've just done such monstrous and disgraceful things?  
Perhaps because you're used to plundering the foe  
You think you're free to act here as you please, scoundrel?
- Sceledra: Oh, please, sir –
- Perip: May the gods and goddesses not love me  
If I don't arrange a whipping for you – yes,  
A good long-lasting lengthy one, from dawn to dusk.  
I'll see to it your master's hit by more disgrace  
Than oceans are by waves during a mighty storm!
- [Sceledra trembles with fright]*
- Sceledra: I'm so upset, Periplectomenus, I just don't know  
Whether I'd better argue this thing out with you,  
Or else – if one is not the other – she's not *she* –  
Well then, I guess I should apologize to you.  
I mean – well, now I don't know *what* I saw at all!  
Your girl looks so much like the one we have – that is,  
If they are not the same –
- Perip: *[Sweetly]* Look in my house; you'll see.
- Sceledra: Oh, could I?
- Perip: I insist. Inspect – and take your time.
- Sceledra: Yes, that's the thing to do.



- Sceledra: Forgive my foolishness and my stupidity. At last  
I know that I've been thoughtless – idiotic – blind!  
*[Sheepishly]* Philocomasium ... is right inside.
- Perip: Well, gallows bird – You've seen them both?
- Sceledra: I've seen.
- Perip: Would you please call your master?
- Sceledra: *[Beseeching]* I do confess I'm worthy of a whopping whipping,  
And I do admit that I abused your lady guest.  
But I mistook her for my master's concubine –  
The soldier has appointed me her guardian.  
Two drops of water from a single well could not be drawn  
Much more alike than our girl's like your lady guest.  
*[Quietly]* I also peeked down in to your house through the skylight,  
I do confess.
- Perip: Why not confess? I saw you do it! And there you saw my guests – a man and lady  
– kissing – Correct?
- Sceledra: Yes, yes. Should I deny the things I saw? But, sir, I thought I saw Philocomasium.
- Perip: Did you consider me a man so vile and base  
To be a party to such things in my own house,  
And let my neighbour suffer such outrageous harm?
- Sceledra: At last I see how idiotically I've acted.  
I know the facts now. But it wasn't done on purpose. I'm blameless –
- Perip: But not shameless. Why, a slave should have his eyes downcast, his hands and tongue  
in strict control – His speech as well.
- Sceledra: If I so much as mumble, sir, from this day on – and even mumble what I'm sure of –  
Have me tortured. I'll just give myself to you. But now I beg forgiveness.
- Perip: *[Magnanimously]* I'll suppress my wrath and think you really didn't do it on purpose.  
So – you're forgiven.
- Sceledra: May the gods all bless you, sir!
- Perip: Now, after this, by Hercules, you guard your tongue  
And even if you know a thing, *don't* know a thing –  
And *don't* see even what you see.
- Sceledra: That's good advice. I'll do it. Have I begged enough?
- Perip: Just go away!

Sceledra: Do you want something else?

Perip: Yes – *not* to know you!

*[Periplectomenus turns away from Sceledra in disgust and walks inside.]*

Sceledra: *[Suspiciously]* He's fooling me. How easily he just excused me.  
He wasn't even angry. But I know what's up:  
The minute that the soldier comes home from the forum,  
They'll grab me in the house. He and Palaestrio,  
They have me up for sale – I've sensed it for a while now.  
By Hercules, I won't snap at their bait today.  
I'll run off somewhere, hide myself a day or two,  
Till this commotion quiets and the shouting stops.  
I've earned myself much more than one man's share of troubles.

*[Sceledra runs off.]*

Perip: Well, she's retreated. Now, by Pollux, I'm quite sure  
A headless pig has far more brains than Sceledra.  
She's been so gulled she doesn't see the things she saw.  
Now to our little senate, for Palaestrio  
Is there inside my house and Sceledra is gone.  
We now can have a meeting with the whole committee.  
I'd better go inside before they vote without me!

*[He goes inside his own house. The stage is empty for a moment, then Palaestrio tiptoes out of the old man's house.]*

Palaestrio: *[Motioning to the others who are still inside.]*  
Pleusicles, have everybody wait inside a little longer.  
Let me reconnoitre first to see if there are spies about.  
*[Looks to either side]*  
Good – the coast is clear. I'll call them out.  
Hey, Periplectomenus and Pleusicles, produce yourselves!

*[They come out eagerly]*

Perip: Here – at your command.

Palaestrio: Commanding's easy when your troops are good.  
How about it now – that plan we figured out inside – shall we now carry on with it?

Perip: We couldn't do it better.

Palaestrio: What do you think, Pleusicles?

Pleusicles: *[Mindlessly devoted]* What could be fine with you and not be fine with me?  
No one's more my friend than you are. Yet I am troubled and tormented too –

- Perip: What troubles you? Speak up, my boy!
- Pleusicles: That I burden someone who's as old as you with childish trifles.  
These concerns are so unworthy of your noble qualities –  
Asking you for so much help in what is really my concern:  
Bringing reinforcements to a lover, doing different duties,  
Duties which most men of your age would prefer to dodge – not do!  
I'm ashamed to bring annoyance to you in your twilight years.
- Palaestrio: You're a novel lover if you blush at doing anything!  
You're no lover – just the palest shadow of what lovers should be.
- Pelusicles: Troubling a man of his age with a youthful love affair?
- Perip: What's that? Do I seem so six-feet-under to you – is that so?  
Do I seem so senile, such a coffin candidate?  
After all, I'm barely fifty-four years old – not even that.  
I've got perfect vision still, my hands are quick, my legs are nimble.
- Palaestrio: Maybe he's white-haired on top, but not inside his head – that's sure.  
All the qualities that he was born with haven't aged a bit.
- Pleusicles: I know that, by Pollux, what you say is true, Palaestrio.  
He's been absolutely youthful in his hospitality.
- Perip: Try me in a crisis, boy. The more I'm pressed the more you'll note how  
I'll support your love affair –
- Pleusicles: No need to note – I know it well.

*[Periplectomenus is enjoying the compliments, but he doesn't like being called an old man.  
Acting very impressed, Palaestrio turns to Pleusicles]*

- Palaestrio: *[To Pleusicles]* Whatever else could you wish for if you'd even wish for something else?
- Pleusicles: Just the talent to express my gratitude for everything.  
Thanks to you *[to Periplectomenus]* and thanks to you, for taking such good care of me.  
I must be a burdensome expense to you –
- Perip: You silly boy!  
Thank the gods I can afford to entertain you as I'd like to.  
Eat! Drink up! Indulge yourself, let laughter overflow the brim!  
Mine's the house of freedom – I am free – I live my life for me.
- Palaestrio: All the gods have blessed you, for, by Hercules, if you let go of  
Freedom just one second, it's no easy thing to get it back.
- Pleusicles: Don't you think it's noble for a man of wealth and high estate to  
Bring up children as a sort of monument to his good name?

Perip: I have relatives aplenty, so what need have I of children?  
I live happily and well, I suit myself, do what I please.  
When I die, my relatives can split the money that I leave 'em.  
'Let them chase my money; they're all eagerly supporting me!'

Perip: *[He starts to go off.]*  
Now I'll buy the groceries to entertain my guest with something  
Worthy of us both, a welcome of good wishes *and* good dishes!

Pleusicles: Please – I've been a terrible expense to you already. Surely  
No guest can accept such friendly treatment as you've offered me and  
Not become an inconvenience after three days in a row.  
After *ten* days, he becomes an *Iliad* of inconvenience!  
Even if his host is willing, still the servants start to mutter.  
But, if you must – Please don't buy extravagantly – anything is fine for me.

*[Periplectomenus now stops to discuss this topic.]*

Perip: Stop that kind of talk, that stale cliché is older than the hills.  
Really, now you're talking like *hoi polloi* – you know the kind, who  
When they're at the table and the dinner's set before 'em say,  
'Did you go to all this trouble for *me* – you shouldn't have.  
Hercules, it's madness. Why, there's food enough for ten at least!  
Much too much for them! But while they're frowning, they are downing it!

Perip: I haven't told the hundredth part of what I could expound upon if only we had time to talk –

*[Palaestrio seizes this opportunity to cut Periplectomenus' monologue short.]*

Palaestrio: Right! But we had better turn our thoughts to what we're doing now.  
Listen closely, both of you. *[To Periplectomenus]* I'll need your services in this,  
Periplectomenus. I've figured out a lovely scheme to help us  
Take our curly-headed soldier to the barber's for a trimming.  
And we'll give our lover here the chance to get his sweetheart back, and  
Take her off from here for good!

Perip: Now there's a plan I'd like to hear!

Palaestrio: First, I'd like to ask for that ring of yours.

Perip: *[Suspiciously]* How will you use it?

Palaestrio: When I have the ring you'll have the reason – and my whole invention.

Perip: Here's the ring.

Palaestrio: And here's your reason in turn. Master is the wildest wenching wanton man who ever was –  
Or who ever will be for that matter.

- Perip: I believe it too.
- Palaestrio: Could you find a woman for me – someone beautiful and charming,  
Someone full of cleverness and trickery from tip to toe?
- Perip: Freed or free-born girl?
- Palaestrio: It doesn't matter, just be sure and get me one who's money-loving, and who earns her  
keep by being kept. One who's got a mind – she doesn't need a heart – no woman has one.
- Perip: Do you want a ... green one ... or a ripe one?
- Palaestrio: Just be sure she's juicy. Get the freshest, most appealing girl you possibly can find.
- Perip: Say – I have a client – a luscious, youngish little courtesan! But – why do you need her?
- Palaestrio: Bring her home to your house, right away.  
Have her in disguise, so she'll look like a married woman –  
Hair combed high, with ribbons and the rest. She must pretend that  
She's your wedded wife. Now train the girl!
- Perip: I'm lost. What's all this for?
- Palaestrio: You'll soon see. Now, does she have a maid?
- Perip: A very clever one.
- Palaestrio: We'll have need of her as well. Now tell the woman and her maid the  
Mistress must pretend that she's your wife – who's dying for the soldier boy.  
We'll pretend she gave her little maid this ring – to give to me.  
I'll give it to him, pretending I'm the go-between.  
I'll pretend it's been presented as a present from your wife so  
She could ... get together with him. I know him – he'll be in flames!  
Nothing gets that lecher more excited than adultery!
- Perip: If you asked the Sun himself to find the girls you've asked me for,  
He could never find a pair more perfect for the job. Relax!
- Palaestrio: Fine, hop to it then. We need 'em right away.

*[Periplectomenus exits]*

- Palaestrio: Now, Pleusicles, when the soldier gets back home, remember *not* to call your  
girl Philocomasium.
- Pleusicles: What should I call her then?
- Palaestrio: Dicea.

Pleusicles: Yes, of course, the name we just agreed upon.  
*[Pleusicles remains stationary for a moment, 'memorizing' the name.]*  
I'll remember. *[To Palaestrio]* But I'd like to ask you *why* I should remember.

Palaestrio: When you have to know, I'll tell you. For the moment, just keep still,  
While the old man does his part – and very soon you'll play your role.

Pleusicles: Then I guess I'll go inside.

*[He starts to walk off.]*

Palaestrio: *[calling after him]* And follow orders carefully!

*[Pleusicles walks slowly into the house, rehearsing to himself.]*

Palaestrio: *[To the audience, with a broad smile.]*  
What storms I'm stirring up – what mighty machinations!  
Today I'll snatch that concubine back from the soldier –  
That is, if all my troops remain well disciplined.  
Now I'll call her. Hey, Sceledra! If you've got time  
Come out in front. Palaestrio is calling you.

*[A pause. Not Sceledra, but another slave, Lurcio by name, appears at the door, extremely drunk.]*

Lurcio: She's busy now.

Palaestrio: At what?

Lurcio: She's pouring ... as she sleeps.

Palaestrio: Did you say 'pouring'?

Lurcio: 'Snoring' 's what I meant to say. But snoring, pouring – isn't it about the same?

*[Lurcio starts to reel off-stage. Palaestrio stops him.]*

Palaestrio: Hey – Sceledra inside asleep?

Lurcio: Except her nose. That's making quite a noise.  
*[Confidentially]* She took some secret snorts  
'Cause she's the steward and was spicing up the wine.

*[Lurcio again turns to go; Palaestrio stops him again.]*

Palaestrio: But wait, you scoundrel, you're the substeward – wait!

Lurcio: Your point?

Palaestrio: *[Indignantly]* How could she let herself just go to sleep?

Lurcio: She closed her eyes, I think.

Palaestrio: I didn't ask that! Come here! You're dead if I don't know the truth at once!  
Did you serve her the wine?

Lurcio: I didn't.

Palaestrio: You deny it?

Lurcio: I do, by Hercules. She told me to deny it. I also didn't pour four pints into a pitcher.  
She also didn't drink 'em all warmed up at dinner.

Palaestrio: You also didn't drink?

Lurcio: Gods blast me if I did. I wish I'd drunk.

Palaestrio: How come?

Lurcio: Because I *guzzled* it instead. The wine was overheated and it burned my throat.

Palaestrio: Some slaves get drunk, while others get weak vinegar!  
Our pantry has some loyal steward and substeward!

Lurcio: You'd do the same, by Hercules, if you had charge.  
You're acting jealous now, because you can't copy us.

*[He turns to go once again.]*

Palaestrio: Wait, wait, you scoundrel! Has she drunk like this before?  
And just to help your thinking let me tell you this:  
If, Lurcio, you lie, you'll suffer horribly.

Lurcio: Oh, really now?  
Then you can tattle what I've told to get me kicked out from my storeroom stuffing job,  
And pick a new substeward when *you're* put in charge.

Palaestrio: By Pollux, no, I won't. Come on, be brave and speak.

Lurcio: She never poured a drop, by Pollux. That's the truth.  
She'd order me to do it – and I'd pour for her.

Palaestrio: Get in! You held that storeroom bacchanal yourselves.  
By Hercules, I'll go bring master from the forum.

*[Palaestrio takes a few steps toward the forum, then stops to listen to Lurcio's lament.]*

Lurcio: I'm dead. Master will crucify me when he comes and finds out what's been done because I didn't tell him. I'll run off somewhere so I can postpone the pains.  
*[To the audience]* Folks, please don't tell Palaestrio, I beg of you.

*[He starts to tiptoe off. Palaestrio scares him with a shout.]*

Palaestrio: Hey – where are you going?

Lurcio: *[Nervously]* I'll be back. I'm on an errand.

Palaestrio: For whom?

Lurcio: Philocomasium.

Palaestrio: Go – rush right back!

Lurcio: Do me a favour, will you? If while I'm away  
 There's punishment distributed ... please take my share.

*[Lurcio scampers off.]*

Palaestrio: *[To the audience.]* Ah, now I understand our young girl's strategy.  
 With Sceledra asleep, she sends her underling off on some business while she sneaks across.  
*[Looks off-stage to his left]*  
 But here's our neighbour with the girl I requisitioned –  
 And, oh, is she good-looking! All the gods are with us.  
 She's dressed so finely – most unprostitutishly.  
 This whole affair now seems most charmingly in hand!

*[Periplectomenus enters with a girl on either arm. One is the courtesan Acroteleutium, a reasonably young old pro, and the other is her maid Milphidippa.]*

Perip: *[To the girls]* Now I've explained this whole thing to you from start to finish, Acroteleutium and Milphidippa. If you haven't grasped this artful artifice as yet, I'll drill you once again. But if you understand it all, then we can change the subject.

Acro: Now don't you think I'd be a stupid idiot to undertake an unfamiliar project or to promise you results, if I were unacquainted with the whole technique – the art of being wicked?

Perip: Forewarn's forearmed, I say.

Acro: Not to a real professional – A layman's words are little use. Why, didn't I myself, The minute that I drank the smallest drop of your proposal, Didn't I tell you the way the soldier could be swindled?

Perip: But no one ever knows enough. How many have I seen  
 Avoid the region of good sense – before they even found it.

- Acro: But when it's wickedness or wiles that's wanted of the woman,  
Why, then she's got a monumentally immortal memory.  
It's only when it comes to something fine or faithful  
That suddenly she's scatterbrained – and can't remember.
- Perip: Well, that's what I'm afraid of. Here your job is double-edged:  
For when you do the soldier harm, you're doing *me* a favour.
- Acro: Relax, you're safe as long as we don't know we're doing good.
- Perip: What mangy merchandise a woman is.
- Acro: Just like her customers.
- Perip: That's typical. Come on.
- Palaestrio: I ought to go ahead and meet them. It's good to see you, sir, so charmingly accompanied.
- Perip: Well met, Palaestrio. Look – here they are – the girls  
You ordered me to bring – and in their costumes.
- Palaestrio: [*Pats him on the back*] You're my man! Palaestrio salutes Acroteleutium.
- Acro: Who's this who speaks to me as if he knew me?
- Perip: He's our ... architect.
- Acro: My greetings to the architect.
- Palaestrio: The same to you. Has he indoctrinated you?
- Perip: The girls I bring are well rehearsed.
- Palaestrio: I want to hear how well. The fear of failure frightens me.
- Perip: I didn't add a thing to those instructions that you gave me.
- [Acroteleutium approaches Palaestrio and speaks to him in a very blasé manner.]*
- Acro: Now look, you want the soldier to be swindled, right?
- Palaestrio: That's right!
- Acro: Neatly, sweetly, and completely – everything's arranged.
- Palaestrio: I want you to pretend to be his wife –
- Acro: I *am* his wife.

- Palaestrio: Pretend that you're enamoured of the soldier –
- Acro: So I will be.
- Palaestrio: Pretend that I'm the go-between for this – with Milphidippa.
- Acro: You should have been a prophet – all you say will soon come true.
- Palaestrio: Pretend this ring was given by your little maid to me  
To offer to the soldier with your compliments.
- Acro: That's true!
- Perip: Why bother to remind the girls of things they know?
- Acro: It's good. Remember if you're dealing with a first-rate architect,  
And if this man designs a ship with well-drawn plans,  
You'll build the ship with ease if everything's laid out and set.  
Now we've a keel that's accurately laid and nicely set,  
Our architect has helpers who are not exactly ... amateurs,  
So if our raw material is not delayed *en route*,  
I know our capabilities – we'll have that ship in no time.
- Palaestrio: [*To Acroteleutium*] I guess you know my military master –
- Acro: What a question! How could I *not* know such a public menace, such a big-mouth,  
Fancy-haired, perfumed lecher?!
- Palaestrio: Hmm – does he know you?
- Acro: He never saw me, so how could he?
- Palaestrio: Ah, that's lovely talk. I'm sure the action will be lovelier.
- Acro: Now just relax – Leave him to me. If I don't make a fancy fool of him,  
Then put the blame on me completely.
- Palaestrio: Fine, now go inside and concentrate completely on this project.
- Acro: [*Going*] Just relax.
- Palaestrio: Periplectomenus, take them inside. I'm for the forum.  
I'll find my man, I'll offer him this ring and I'll insist  
That it was given to me by 'your wife', who's dying for him.  
[*Pointing to Milphidippa*]  
As soon as we get back here from the forum, send her out.  
Pretending she was sent to him in secret.

*[Palaestrio rushes out toward the forum.]*

Perip: Now walk and talk successfully! Oh, if we work this out,  
And if my guest gets back the soldier's concubine today,  
I'll send you such a gift –

Acro: *[Casually]* Say – is the girl co-operating?

Perip: Absolutissimo, bellissimo.

Acro: *[Facetiously]* Swellissimo.  
When all our roguery is pooled together, I'm convinced,  
We'll never meet defeat by any tricker deceit.

Perip: Let's go inside and then rehearse our parts with care.  
We all must follow our instructions nicely and precisely,  
So when the soldier comes, there'll be no blunders.

Acro: You're the slow one.

*[Periplectomenus leads the two women into his house. Enter Pyrgopolynices, smiling with pleasure at his accomplishments this morning. Palaestrio follows at his heels, trying to get his master's attention.]*

Pyrg: *[Smiling smugly]* What a pleasure when affairs go well – exactly as you planned them.  
I've already sent a parasite of mine to King Seleucus,  
Leading mercenaries I conscripted for His Majesty.  
While they guard his kingdom, I shall have a little relaxation.

Palaestrio: Come now, think of your affairs, not King Seleucus'. Why, look, a  
Promising new venture's been proposed to me as go-between.

Pyrg: *[Condescendingly]* Well, I'll put the other things aside and give you my attention.  
Speak – I now surrender both my ears to you and to this venture.

Palaestrio: *[Suspiciously]* Reconnoitre first – I'm commanded to pursue this business with all secrecy.

*[Pyrgopolynices 'scouts' the area, then whispers to Palaestrio.]*

Pyrg: No one.

Palaestrio: *[Giving the ring]* Take this – it's the first deposit on a love account.

Pyrg: What's this? Where'd you get it?

Palaestrio: From a lovely and lively lady who adores you and who longs to have  
your handsome handsomeness.  
She has had her maid give me this ring to forward on to you.

Pyrg: But who is she – is she free-born or some manumitted slave?

Palaestrio: Feh! How could I dare negotiate for you with freedwomen –  
You're already swamped with offers from the well-born girls who want you!

*[Pyrgopolynices smiles and continues his questions.]*

Pyrg: Wife or widow?

Palaestrio: Wife *and* widow.

Pyrg: Tell me how a woman can be both a wife and a widow?

Palaestrio: Easy: she is young, her husband's old!

Pyrg: Goody!

Palaestrio: She's delectable and dignified.

Pyrg: Tell me no lies –

Palaestrio: She alone could be compared to *you* in beauty.

Pyrg: How gorgeous! Who is she?

Palaestrio: The wife of old Periplectomenus, next door.  
How she's dying for you, longing to escape – she hates the old boy.  
I've been asked to beg you – to beseech you – let her have a chance to  
Give herself completely.

Pyrg: Hercules, why not? If she is willing –  
*[Suddenly remembering]* Say – what shall we do about the girl at home?

Palaestrio: Let her go – wherever she would like to. *And it just so happens*  
Her twin sister and her mother have arrived to fetch the girl.

Pyrg: What – her mother's come to Ephesus?

Palaestrio: Those who saw say so.

Pyrg: Hercules – the perfect chance for me to kick the woman out!

Palaestrio: Yes, but you should do it in the 'perfect' way.

Pyrg: All right, what's your advice?

Palaestrio: Don't you want to have her hurry from your house with no hard feelings?

Pyrg: Yes yes yes.

- Palaestrio: Here's what to do: you're rich enough, so let the girl have  
All the gold and all the jewels and all the things you dressed her up with.  
Better not upset her; let her take the stuff where she would like.
- Pyrg: That sounds good. But watch out when I let her go this other woman  
Doesn't change her mind!
- Palaestrio: Oh, feh! Don't be absurd – the girl adores you!
- Pyrg: *[Preening]* Venus loves me!
- Palaestrio: Quiet now – the door is open – hide yourself.  
*[Milphidippa enters from the old man's house.]*  
That one coming out is madam's clipper ship, the go-between who brought the ring that  
I just gave to you.
- Pyrg: By Pollux, she's not bad, not bad at all!
- Palaestrio: A chimpanzee – a harpy set beside her mistress!  
Look at her there – hunting with her eyes and using ears as traps.
- Milphidippa: *[To the audience]* There's the circus where I must perform my little act right now.  
I'll pretend that I don't see them – I won't even know they're there.
- Pyrg: *[Whispering to Palaestrio]*  
Shh ... let's listen in to see if there's a mention made of *me*.
- Milphidippa: Are there men about who care for others' business, not their own,  
Idlers who don't earn their supper, who might spy on what I'm doing?  
I'm afraid of men like these, lest they obstruct me or delay me –  
If they come while my mistress crosses over – burning for *his* body.  
How she loves that man – too beautiful, too too magnificent, the  
Soldier Pyrgopolynices.
- Pyrg: *[Aside]* This one's mad about me too! She just praised my looks.
- Palaestrio: By Pollux, her speech needs no further rubbing.
- Pyrg: How is that?
- Palaestrio: Because her words are bright enough – already polished.  
And why not? She speaks of you – she has a shining subject, too!
- Pyrg: Say, her mistress surely is a gorgeously attractive woman.  
Hercules, I'm getting sort of warm for her already, boy.
- Palaestrio: Even when you haven't seen her yet?

Pyrg: *[Ogling Milphidippa]* I take your word for it.  
Meanwhile, 'clipper ship' here whets my appetite for love.

Palaestrio: No, you don't, by Hercules! Don't you fall in love with her – that girl's engaged to *me*. If you should wed the mistress, *she* becomes my bride at once.

Pyrg: *[Impatiently]* Then speak to her.

*[They approach Milphidippa, who still pretends not to see them. She gets even more melodramatic.]*

Milphidippa: Would I could find him – find the man I've left the house to meet. Oh, heaven grant me this!

Palaestrio: All you dreamed will appear, you can be of good cheer – there is certainly no cause for fearing,  
For the person that's speaking knows just who you're seeking –

Milphidippa: My goodness – who is this I'm hearing?

Palaestrio: Of your council a sharer – and also a bearer of counsel, should you be confiding it.

Milphidippa: Oh no, heaven forbid, what I'm hiding's not hid!

Palaestrio: Well, you may or may not still be hiding it.

Milphidippa: Tell me how that can be?

Palaestrio: It's not hidden from me – but I'm trusty, a tacit and mum one.

Milphidippa: Can you give me a sign that you know our design?

Palaestrio: Let us say that a woman loves someone.

Milphidippa: There are hundreds who do –

Palaestrio: Ah, but ever so few send a gift given straight from their finger.

Milphidippa: Ah, now I understand, I've the lay of the land now – and no more uncertainties linger.  
Are there spies hereabouts?

Palaestrio: *[Pointing to the soldier]* We're both with and without.

*[Milphidippa motions Palaestrio to one side.]*

Milphidippa: I must see you alone, so I beckoned.

Palaestrio: Well, for many or few words?

Milphidippa: I only want two words.

- Palaestrio: *[To the soldier]* I'll be back with you in a second.
- Pyrg: What of me – hey, explain – must I stand here in vain, looking fiery, fierce ... fascinating?
- Palaestrio: Yes, sir, stand there in view – I'm just working for you.
- Pyrg: *[In great heat]* But I'm wasting away with this waiting.
- Palaestrio: But it's best to go slow, for I'm sure you well know of the kind of low mind that her stock has.
- Pyrg: Yes yes yes – on with your quest – do what you think is best.
- Palaestrio: *[Aside to Milphidippa]* This man has no more brains than a rock has! Now I'm back here with you – ask me.
- Milphidippa: What shall I do? What's your method for storming our Troy here? Can you give me a plan?
- Palaestrio: Just pretend if you can, that you're dying with love –
- Milphidippa: *[Nodding]* For our boy here!
- Palaestrio: Don't forget when you speak, praise his face and physique – and his courage in every endeavour.
- Milphidippa: Now you don't have to harp, I've got everything sharp. As I showed you before, I'm quite clever.
- Palaestrio: In respect to the rest, you resolve what is best – hunt a hint in whatever I'm saying.
- Pyrg: *[Chafing at the bit]* Well, I wish we would start and you'd tell me my part in all this – come back here – you're delaying.
- [Palaestrio scampers back to the soldier's side.]*
- Palaestrio: Here I am, don't be nervous, I'm back at your service –
- Pyrg: Tell me what she has said –
- Palaestrio: It's her mistress –  
Why, the poor dear's been sighing and crying – near dying – in short, she's in terrible distress.  
For she's crazy about you and can't live without you, so she sent out her maid on this mission.
- Pyrg: Let her come –

- Palaestrio: Why so pliant? Do act more defiant, disdainful of this proposition.  
Shout – why did I annoy you, debase, hoi-polloi you? – pretend that this whole affair piques you.
- Pyrg: Say, there is something to that, I'll certainly do that.
- Palaestrio: [*Aloud*] Shall I call this woman who seeks you?
- Pyrg: Let her come if she wants something.
- Palaestrio: Come if you want something, woman.
- Milphidippa: [*Hurling herself at the soldier's feet*] O beauty so beaming!
- Pyrg: What a clever young dame – she remembers my name.  
[*To Milphidippa*] May the gods grant whatever you're dreaming –
- Milphidippa: Why, to live out this life as your own wedded wife.
- Pyrg: That's too much!
- Milphidippa: Oh, it's not *my* desire – It's for my mistress I woo – she's just dying for you.
- Pyrg: My girl, there are thousands on fire. And there just isn't time –
- Milphidippa: Oh, by Castor, sir, I'm quite aware that you've so high a rating.  
You're a man so attractive, in action so active – and 'fiery, fierce ... fascinating'.  
[*Aloud to Palaestrio*] And there never could be one more godlike than he –
- Palaestrio: He's *not* human – you're right, no debating.  
[*Aside*] Why, it couldn't be plainer, a vulture's humaner than he is.
- Pyrg: [*Not hearing this*] I'll act more imposing. I must put on a show since she's praising me so –
- Palaestrio: [*aside to Milphidippa*] What an ass – will you look at him posing!  
[*Aloud, to the soldier*] Will you deign a reply to her mistress's cry?  
You remember, I spoke a while back of it.
- Pyrg: I don't quite understand – from *which one*? The demand is so great that I cannot keep track of it.
- Milphidippa: Well, she took from her hand something grand, something handsome, to hand you in elegant fashion.  
Look – you're wearing the ring I was bidden to bring – from a woman who's burning with passion.
- Pyrg: All right, what's her request – speak out, woman, I'm pressed.

- Milphidippa: How she wants you – oh, please don't reject her!  
She lives only for you – who knows what she may do – she's near death –  
but *you* could resurrect her!
- Pyrg: What's her wish now?
- Milphidippa: To touch you, to clasp you, to clutch you – she cries for complete consummation.  
And unless you relieve her, I truly believe her to be very near desperation.  
O Achilles so fair, won't you answer my prayer – save this pretty one all the world pities.  
Oh, produce something kind from your merciful mind – noble king-killer, sacker of cities!
- Pyrg: Ah, these girls who adore me do nothing but bore me.  
*[To Palaestrio]* You shouldn't be letting me near all this.  
Do you think it's your job – giving me to the mob?
- Palaestrio: *[To Milphidippa]* Hey there, woman, I hope that you hear all this!  
Look, I've told you before – must I tell you once more?  
This great stud must always be rewarded.  
He can't give out his seed to just any old breed – it's too valuable not to be hoarded!
- Milphidippa: Let him make his demand; we have cash here on hand.
- Palaestrio: Well ... one talent – not silver, but golden. And he never takes less –
- Milphidippa: By the gods, I confess that he's cheap at the price; we're beholden!
- Pyrg: Oh, I'm not one for greed, I've got all that I need. To be frank, I've got wealth  
beyond measure:  
Silver too, not in pounds, no, not even in mounds, but in mountains, like Aetna – or higher.
- Milphidippa: *[Aside]* Oh, ye gods, how he's lying!
- Palaestrio: *[Aside to her]* And how I'm supplying him fuel –
- Milphidippa: And I'm stoking the fire! But do hurry, I pray, send me back right away.
- Palaestrio: *[Aloud]* Will you deign, sir, to give her an answer?  
Say you do you don't, say you will or you won't –
- Milphidippa: Save a suffering wretch while you can, sir!  
Why torment her so long? She has done nothing wrong.
- Pyrg: *[Magnanimously]* Have her come here to me for a viewing.  
You may say that I'm willing; I'll soon be fulfilling her dreams –
- Milphidippa: *[Excitedly]* Just as you should be doing! Being very astute you will do what is mutual –
- Palaestrio: *[Waving her off]* Experts need no further cuing.

- Milphidippa: You're so kind to be heeding my passionate pleading and letting me speak to  
your soul myself!  
*[Aside to Palaestrio]* Well, speak up – how's my act?
- Palaestrio: *[Aside to Milphidippa]* As a matter of fact, I have all I can do to control myself!
- Milphidippa: That's why I turned aside, I was trying to hide – *[she breaks into giggles]*
- Pyrg: *[Completely involved in self-praise]* Do you know this occasion is stellar?  
Do you know the great honour I lavish upon her?
- Milphidippa: I know, and I'll certainly tell her.
- Palaestrio: The demand is so great I could ask for his weight in pure gold –
- Milphidippa: By the gods, you'd receive it!
- Palaestrio: And the women he lies with he fecundifies with real heroes – and would you believe it –  
The children he rears live for eight hundred years –
- Milphidippa: *[Aside]* Oh, please stop it, you joker – I'm crying!
- Pyrg: My dear boy, there are many who live a millennium – from age to age without dying!
- Palaestrio: Oh, I knew it but hid it – and I underdid it so she wouldn't think I was lying.
- Milphidippa: Oh, I'm simply aghast – why, how long will *he* last – if his sons are of such great duration?
- Pyrg: Jove was born of the Earth just preceding my birth – I was born one day after Creation.
- Palaestrio: And what is more – had he been born before, *he* would be in the heavens now, reigning!
- Milphidippa: *[Aside to Palaestrio]*  
Please – one more and I'll crack! By the gods, send me back – let me go with some  
breath still remaining.
- Palaestrio: *[Aloud]* Don't stand lazily by – go – you've got your reply.
- Milphidippa: Yes – I'll go and I'll bring back madam now.  
How her spirits will soar! *[To Pyrgopolynices]* Do you want something more?
- Pyrg: To be no handsomer than I am now. It is so aggravating to be devastatingly handsome ...
- Palaestrio: Go on, girl!
- Milphidippa: I'm going.

- Palaestrio: Now, remember, be smart – use your head and your heart.  
Have *her* heart fairly dance, have her glowing!  
*[Aside to Milphidippa]*  
And if our girl's in there, have her cross and prepare – say the soldier's returned  
to his station.
- Milphidippa: She's with mistress inside; they found a place to hide where they took in  
our whole conversation.
- Palaestrio: That was smart – what they're hearing will help them in steering their own course  
with good navigation.
- Milphidippa: Come – you're holding me back –
- Palaestrio: I'm not holding you actually, nor am I –  
*[Gives a knowing glance]* No further mention now.
- Pyrg: Have your mistress make haste, I have no time to waste.  
I shall give this my foremost attention now.
- [Pyrgopolynices paces back and forth, deep in thought, then turns to Palaestrio]*
- Pyrg: Palaestrio, you're my adviser, what about my concubine?
- Palaestrio: Why ask me for advice on what to do? I've told you  
How to do it gently – with the most compassion:  
Let her keep the jewels and fancy clothes you gave her.  
Say the time is ripe for her to go back home –  
Her mother's here with her twin sister – say that too.  
It's fitting she go home accompanied by them.
- Pyrg: *[Worried]* How do you *know* they're here?
- Palaestrio: Why with these very eyes I saw our lady's twin.
- Pyrg: And have the sisters met?
- Palaestrio: Yes.
- Pyrg: *[Lecherously]* How's the twin – good-looking?
- Palaestrio: Sir! You want to grab at everything!
- Pyrg: *[More lechery]* Where did she say the mother is?
- Palaestrio: Aboard the ship, in bed with swollen and infected eyes.  
The skipper told me -- that's the man who brought 'em here.  
He happens to be staying as our neighbor's guest.

Pyrg: How's *he* -- is he good-looking?

Palaestrio: Cut it out! Indeed --  
You really have been quite the model stud --  
Pursuing both the sexes -- male and female!  
Enough of this!

Pyrg: *[A bit cowed, changing the subject]* Now this advice you've given me --  
I would prefer your speaking to her of the matter.  
You seem to get on well with her in conversation.

Palaestrio: What better than to go yourself; it's your affair.  
Just say that it's imperative you take a wife.  
Say your relations tell you and your friends compel you.

Pyrg: You think so?

Palaestrio: Would I tell you what I didn't think?

Pyrg: I'll follow your advice.

*[Pyrgopolynices dashes into his house. Palaestrio smiles broadly as he watches his master, then turns to the audience.]*

Palaestrio: Now I need Acroteleutium, or else  
That little maid of hers, or Pleusicles.  
By Jupiter! My luck is coming through for me at every turn!  
For just the ones I wanted most of all to see,  
I see -- coming together from the house next door!

*[Enter Acroteleutium from the old man's house, leading Milphidippa and Pleusicles.]*

Acro: *[To the others]* Follow me and look around to see there's no one spying on us.

Milphidippa: I see no one here -- except the man we want to see.

Palaestrio: Well met!

Milphidippa: How are you doing, architect?

Palaestrio: Feh, I'm no architect.

Milphidippa: What's that?

Palaestrio: Why, compared to you, my talent couldn't bang two boards together.

Milphidippa: Come now, don't exaggerate --

- Palaestrio: *[Smiling]* Why, you're a filly full of felony!  
And you polished off the soldier charmingly.
- Milphidippa: We haven't finished.
- Palaestrio: Smile a little; this affair is well in hand – at least for now.  
Simply keep on giving helpful help as you have done so far.  
Soldier boy is there inside, beseeching her to go away:  
'Please go back to Athens with your mother and your sister!'
- Pleusicles: Great!
- Palaestrio: And he gave her all the gold, the jewels, the stuff he dressed her up with  
As a gift – to go away. He's following the plan I gave him!
- Pleusicles: It looks easy: he is all insistence – she gives no resistance.
- Palaestrio: Yes but now's the time to be our sharpest. Pay attention now –
- Acro: That's why we've come – to find out what you want.
- Palaestrio: Now I'll command you in your line of duty.
- Acro: You'll command commendably. I'll do my best for your request.
- Palaestrio: Lightly ... brightly ... and in spritely fashion – fool the soldier boy.  
I command it.
- Acro: Your command's a pleasure.
- Palaestrio: You've got the way?
- Acro: I pretend I'm torn apart for love of ... him, that I've divorced my present husband,  
Since I'm burning so to marry ... him.
- Palaestrio: *[Smiling]* It's all in order now.  
One more thing – this house is *yours* – since it was in your dowry. Say the  
Old man has gone off already, since the separation's final.  
We don't want our man afraid to enter someone else's house.
- Acro: Well advised.
- Palaestrio: When he comes out, be hesitant – don't come too close.  
Act as if you're too ashamed to place your beauty near his own.  
Have you been rehearsed enough?
- Acro: Of course. Won't it be quite enough to render you a polished piece of work?  
I know you'll find it flawless.

Palaestrio: Fine. *[To Pleusicles]* It's your turn now to be commanded in your line of duty. When what we've discussed is done, and she goes in – you come at once. Get yourself disguised the way the skipper of a ship would dress. One way or another, you must seem the master of a ship.

*[Pleusicles nods, having taken great pains to memorize all this.]*

Pleusicles: Well, when I am here ... all dressed up like you just described ... what then?

Palaestrio: Come here – and pretend you're fetching Philocomasium for her mother. Say that if she's going to Athens she must hurry to the harbour. Also have them carry all the things she wants to take on board.  
*[Affecting an old-salt accent]*  
If she doesn't come, you'll cast off anyway – the wind is fair. Then right away he'll urge the girl to hasten, hurry – don't keep the Mother waiting. I'll have her request my aid in taking luggage to the harbour. He'll command me to escort her. When I'm there, be sure of this – Straightaway I'll be away, straight ... back to Athens.

Pleusicles: When you're there, you won't be a slave for three days longer. I'll release you.

Palaestrio: Quickly now, and dress yourself.

Pleusicles: There's nothing else?

Palaestrio: Just don't forget.

Pleusicles: I'll be going ...

*[He goes.]*

Palaestrio: *[To the women]* You two hurry in as well, since any minute He'll be coming out again, I know.

Acro: *[Taking leave]* Your wish is our command.

Palaestrio: Everybody go – retreat. *[Turns]* And just in time – our door is open!  
*[To the audience]*  
Here he comes – so chipper – he's 'succeeded'! Fool – he gapes at nothing!

*[Pyrgopolynices bursts out, overjoyed with himself.]*

Pyrg: I've succeeded! I got what I wanted as I wanted it – Sweetly and completely she agreed.

Palaestrio: What took so long in there?

Pyrg: Never was I loved as madly as that little woman loves me.

Palaestrio: Oh?

Pyrg: I needed countless words; she was the toughest nut to crack.  
Finally, I triumphed. Did I give her gifts! I gave her  
Everything that she demanded. [*Sheepishly*] I even had to give her ... you.

Palaestrio: [*Mock shock*] Even me! How could I live away from you?

Pyrg: There was no other way. I couldn't get the girl to go without you.

Palaestrio: [*Dramatically*] Well, I trust the gods – and you, of course. I know that  
After this, though, 'twill be bitter, parted from the best of masters,  
This at least will comfort me: that your surpassing beauty will have –  
Through my humble efforts – won that lady. I will now arrange it.

Pyrg: Ah, what need of words. If you succeed, you'll be a free man – and a rich man.

Palaestrio: I'll succeed.

Pyrg: [*Impatiently*] I'm bursting – hurry!

Palaestrio: Self-control! Wait – she's coming out.

[*Palaestrio pulls the soldier aside, as Milphidippa leads Acroteleutium from the old man's house.*]

Milphidippa: [*Aside to Acroteleutium*] Oh, mistress, there's the soldier.

Acro: Where?

Milphidippa: Right to your left.

Acro: I see.

Milphidippa: Take just a hasty glance so he won't know we're looking at him.

Acro: All right, by Pollux, now's the time for bad girls to be worse girls.

Milphidippa: You take the lead.

Acro: [*Melodramatically*] Please tell me – did you see the man in person?  
[*Aside*] Don't speak too softly – let 'im hear.

Milphidippa: I spoke to him myself, quite calmly, easily – and just as long as I desired.

Pyrg: You hear?

Palaestrio: I hear. She's overjoyed just to have talked to you.

- Acro: Oh, what a lucky woman!
- Pyrg: How they love me.
- Palaestrio: You deserve it.
- Acro: What a miracle – you got to him and begged him to submission.  
I heard one needed letters, or a page – like for a king.
- Milphidippa: Indeed, it took a bit of effort getting through to him.
- Palaestrio: You're a legend with the women.
- Pyrg: I accept the will of Venus.
- Acro: *[Picking up a cue]* I give my thanks to Venus and I beg her and beseech  
That I may be successful with the one I love and long for.  
May he be kind to me and not deny me my desire.
- Milphidippa: I hope so too. And yet so many women long for him.  
He spurns them all, despises them – except for you alone.
- Acro: I'm terribly tormented, since he's so discriminating,  
That, seeing me, his eyes will make him change his mind.  
Why, his own splendiddness will spurn with speed my plain appearance.
- Milphidippa: He won't. Be of good cheer.
- Pyrg: *[Taken – and taken in]* How she disparages herself.
- Acro: I'm frightened you exaggerated my good looks to him.
- Milphidippa: Oh, I was careful – you'll be prettier than I described.
- Acro: If he won't take me for his wife, then I'll embrace his knees  
And I'll implore him. Otherwise, if I can't win him over,  
I am resolved to die. I know I can't live without him.
- [Pyrgopolynices starts toward her with open arms.]*
- Pyrg: I must prevent that woman's death. I'll go –
- Palaestrio: *[Restraining him]* Oh, not at all!  
You're cheapening yourself to give yourself so liberally.  
No man was *ever* loved by woman thus – except for two:  
Yourself and Phaon, Sappho's lover on the Isle of Lesbos.
- Acro: Dear Milphidippa, call him out – or I'll go in myself!

Milphidippa: Let's wait at least till someone else comes out.

Acro: But I can't wait – I'm going in!

Milphidippa: The doors are locked.

Acro: I'll break 'em.

Milphidippa: *[Rushing to the soldier's door]* You're insane!

Acro: But if he's ever loved, or if his wisdom match his beauty,  
Then he'll forgive whatever I may do because of love.

Palaestrio: *[To the soldier]* The poor girl's burning up for love of you.

Pyrg: *[Trembling]* It's mutual!

Palaestrio: *[Hushing him.]* Don't let her hear!

Milphidippa: You're standing stupefied – why don't you knock?

Acro: The man I love is not inside.

Milphidippa: How do you know?

Acro: My nose would sense if he were inside.

Palaestrio: A prophetess!

Pyrg: She loves me, therefore Venus gave her powers of prophecy.

Acro: He's near – somewhere – the man I long to see. I smell him!

Pyrg: She sees more with her nose than with her eyes.

Palaestrio: She's blind with love.

*[Acroteleutium begins an elaborate fainting act.]*

Acro: Oh, hold me!

Milphidippa: Why?

Acro: I'm falling!

Milphidippa: Why?

Acro: Because I can't stand up! My soul's retreating from my eyes –

Milphidippa: By Pollux, then you've seen the soldier!

Acro: Yes!

Milphidippa: I don't see – where?

Acro: You'd see him if you loved him!

Milphidippa: What's that? Why, if you'd let me, I would love him more than you do!

Palaestrio: It's obvious that every woman loves you at first sight.

Pyrg: *[In a confidential tone]* I don't know if I told you, but my grandmother was ... Venus.

Acro: Dear Milphidippa, please go up to him.

Pyrg: *[Preening]* How she reveres me!

Palaestrio: Well, here she comes.

Milphidippa: I want you –

Pyrg: *[Aside]* I want you!

Milphidippa: As you commanded, I've brought my mistress out.

Pyrg: I see.

Milphidippa: Well, tell her to approach.

Pyrg: Your pleas have forced me not to hate her as I do the others.

*[Pyrgopolynices starts toward Acroteleutium, but Milphidippa suddenly blocks his way.]*

Milphidippa: If she approaches nearer you – she couldn't speak a word.  
For when she simply looks at you, her eyes cut off her tongue.

Pyrg: I'll cure milady's malady.

Milphidippa: Oh, how she shaked and quaked when she beheld you.

Pyrg: Mighty men in armor do the same –  
I do not wonder that a woman does. What does she want?

Milphidippa: She wants to live a lifetime with you, so – come to her house.

Pyrg: *[Hesitantly]* I – to her house? She's married – why – her husband – he might catch me!

Milphidippa: But, sir, for love of you, she's thrown her husband out.

Pyrg: How could she?

Milphidippa: *[Smiling]* The house was in her dowry.

Pyrg: Then take her home – I'll be there in a second.

Milphidippa: Please don't keep her waiting long – Don't break her heart.

Pyrg: I won't – of course. Be off!

Milphidippa: We're off.

*[Milphidippa helps her 'fainting' mistress back into the old man's house.]*

Pyrg: *[Looking off-stage.]* What do I see?

Palaestrio: What do you see?

Pyrg: Someone's approaching, dressed in sailor's clothes.

Palaestrio: He's heading for our house. Why, that's the skipper –

Pyrg: Come to fetch the girl, no doubt.

Palaestrio: No doubt.

*[Enter Pleusicles, looking very uncomfortable in his elaborate sailor's costume. Among other items of apparel, he has a huge patch over his left eye.]*

Pleusicles: If I were not aware how many others have done awful things because of love, I'd be afraid  
To march around dressed up like this to win my love. I'd better change my language  
to a different style.

*[Affecting the accent Palaestrio demonstrated earlier]*

Why, woman's born the daughter of Delay herself. For any other plain delay of equal length  
Seems less of a delay than waiting for a woman. I really do believe it's in their constitution.  
But now to fetch this girl Philocomasium.  
I'll knock – Hey – anybody home?

Palaestrio: *[Rushing up to him.]* Young man – what's up?  
What are you knocking for?

Pleusicles: I want Philocomasium. Her mother sent me. If she's coming, let her come.  
The girl's delaying everyone – we're anxious to set sail.

*[Pyrgopolynices dashes over nervously.]*

Pyrg: Oh, everything's all ready. Go, Palaestrio – Get helpers to transport her stuff onto the ship.  
*[Trying to placate him]* He won't be long.  
But tell me, sir, what happened to that eye of yours?

Pleusicles: *[Pointing to his unbandaged eye.]* Why, this one's fine.

Pyrg: I mean your left one.

Pleusicles: It's like this: The *ocean* caused me to use this eye less. And yet  
Were it not for *dev*-otion, I could use it now. But they're delaying me too long –

Pyrg: Ah – here they come!

*[Palaestrio leads a tearful Philocomasium out of the soldier's house.]*

Palaestrio: Will there ever ben an end to all this weeping?

Philo: *[Woefully]* Can I help it? I must leave this beautiful existence ...

Palaestrio: This man's come for you from your mother and your sister.

Philo: Yes, I see.

Pyrg: *[Impatiently]* Palaestrio! Command that all the stuff I gave the girl be carried off!

Pleusicles: Greetings, Philocomasium.

Philo: The same to you.

Pleusicles: Mother and sister also bade me tell you ... greetings.

Philo: Greetings to them both as well.

Pleusicles: *[Delivering his carefully memorized speech]*  
They beseech you ... come ahead .. the wind is fair .. the sails are full.  
If your mothers eyes were better, she'd have come along with me.

Philo: Though I long to stay, one must obey one's mother.

Pleusicles: Very wise.

Pyrg: *[Confidentially to Pleusicles]* If she hadn't lived with me, she'd be a half-wit to this day!

Philo: That's what pains me so – the separation from so great a man.  
Why, with your abilities, you could ... enrich ... most anyone.

*[At this moment, Palaestrio appears from inside the soldier's house, carrying a treasure chest.]*

Philo: And because I used to be with you, I held my head up high.  
Now ... I have to lose that one distinction.

Pyrg: Do not cry.

Philo: I must – When I look at you ...

Pyrg: Stiff upper lip.

Philo: Oh, if you knew my feelings!

Palaestrio: I don't wonder, girl, that you lived happily with him.  
Even I – slave that I am – am brought to tears at leaving him.

Philo: *[To the soldier]* May I hug you one more time before I go for good?

Pyrg: You may.

*[Pyrgopolynices readies himself for her embrace. She starts toward him with open arms, then staggers, wailing]*

Philo: Oh, my darling ... oh, my soul ... oh ...

*[She begins an elaborate faint. Palaestrio catches her 'just in time', and hands her to Pleusicles.]*

Palaestrio: Hold this woman please; she may do damage to herself!

Pyrg: What's going on?

Palaestrio: Because she has to leave you, the poor girl's fainted dead away!

Pyrg: Well, run inside and get some water!

Palaestrio: Never mind the water – she needs rest. *[The soldier starts toward her]*  
No – don't come any closer! Please – let her recover.

*[Pyrgopolynices eyes Pleusicles and Philcomasium with suspicion.]*

Pyrg: Say – their heads are awfully close together!  
I don't like the looks of this. Hey, sailor – take your lips from hers!

Pleusicles: I just tried to see if she was breathing.

Pyrg: Use your ear for that!

Pleusicles: If you'd like, I'll let her go –

Pyrg: No, no – hold on!

Palaestrio: *[Weeping]* Oh, woe is me!

Pyrg: *[Calling inside his house]*  
Men! Come out – bring forth her stuff – bring everything I gave the girl!

*[Various lackeys enter with Philocomasium's luggage and assorted gifts, as Palaestrio readies himself for an impassioned valedictory.]*

Palaestrio: Ere I go ... let me salute you once again ... ye Household Gods.  
And to you, my male and female fellow slaves ... hail and farewell.  
Please don't speak too badly of me 'mongst yourselves when I am gone.

Pyrg: Come, Palaestrio, buck up!

Palaestrio: Alas, I cannot help but cry – I must leave you.

Pyrg: Take it like a man.

Palaestrio: Oh, if you knew my feelings!

*[Philocomasium suddenly 'regains consciousness'.]*

Philo: What? Where am I? What's been going on? Who are you? *[Aside]* Hello, darling!

Pleusicles: Ah, you have revived, *[aside]* my darling.

Philo: Goodness! Who am I embracing? Who's this man? I'm lost – I must have fainted.

Pleusicles: *[Aside]* Never fear, my dearest.

*[She puts her head on Pleusicles' chest.]*

Pyrg: What's all this?

Palaestrio: *[Trying to cover up.]* It's nothing ... nothing ... just another fainting spell.  
Oh, I shiver and I quiver. *[To the lovers]* This is getting *far too public!*

Pyrg: What'd you say?

Palaestrio: Uh – carrying this stuff in public – through the city –  
It might hurt your reputation.

Pyrg: Well, it's mine to give and no one else's.  
I don't care what others think. Now depart – the gods be with you.

Palestrio: *[Aside to Pleusicles]* Hurry, I'll be with you in a second.  
*[Aloud]* Just two words with Master.  
*[He goes to the soldier]*  
Though you have thought other servants far more faithful than myself,  
Still and all, I'm very grateful to you, sir ... for everything.  
And, if you'd seen fit to, I would rather have been slave to you  
Than a freedman, working for another.

Pyrg: Come – stiff upper lip.

Palaestrio: *[Sudden burst of passion.]*  
Fond farewell to following a fiery, ferocious fighter!  
Now I'm flunky to a frilly female ... fortitude forgot.  
*[Palaestrio turns to go, then whirls back toward the soldier.]*  
Don't forget me, sir, for if perchance I should be freed some day,  
I will send you word. You won't forsake me?

Pyrg: Ah, that's not my style.

Palaestrio: Always and for ever think how faithful I have been to you.  
Then at last you'll know who's been a loyal slave and who has not.

Pyrg: I'm aware. I've noticed often – never quite as much till now.

Palaestrio: Yes, today at least you'll know the kind of slave I really am.

*[Palaestrio turns and starts to walk slowly off.]*

Pyrg: I can hardly stop myself from keeping you –

Palaestrio: *[Frantically]* Oh, don't do that!  
There'd be talk – they'd say you didn't keep your word – untrustworthy.  
They would say you had no faithful slaves at all – except for me.  
If I thought it could be done the proper way – why, I'd insist –  
But you simply can't –

Pyrg: Be off then.

Palaestrio: I shall bear whatever comes.

Pyrg: So, farewell.

Palaestrio: I'd better hurry off.

Pyrg: *[Impatiently]* All right – farewell already!

*[Palaestrio races off-stage – with a broad smile.]*

Pyrg: *[Reflecting, to the audience.]*  
Till today I always thought he was the worst of slaves.  
Now I see he was devoted to me. When I think it over,  
I was foolish giving him away. But now I'll head inside,  
Now's the time for love! Wait – I perceive a sound – made by the door.

*[A slave boy enters from the old man's house]*

Boy: *[To those inside the house.]* Stop coaching me, please. I remember what to do.  
*[Getting melodramatic]* Wheresoever in the world he be, I'll find him.  
Yes, I'll track him down; I won't spare any effort.

Pyrg: This one seeks me. I'll go up and meet the boy.

Boy: Aha, I'm looking for you. Hail, you gorgeous creature!  
O man of every hour, beyond all other men Beloved of two gods –

Pyrg: Which two?

Boy: Venus and Mars.

Pyrg: A clever boy.

Boy: She begs of you to go inside. She yearns, she burns, expectantly expecting you.  
Bring solace to the lovelorn, don't wait – go!

Pyrg: *[Hunggrily]* I will!

*[He dashes at full speed into the old man's house.]*

Boy: *[To the audience]* Well, now he's trapped himself, caught in his own devices.  
The ambush is prepared: The old man's standing staunchly  
To attack this lecher who's so loud about his loveliness,  
Who thinks that every woman loves him at first sight,  
When really they detest him, men as well as women.  
Now I'll rejoin the uproar – there's a shout inside!

*[He runs back into the house. Sounds of a scuffle from within, then enter Periplectomenus, followed by his servants, who are carrying Pyrgopolynices. Among them is Caria, the cook, who has a long, sharp knife.]*

Perip: Bring 'im out! If he won't come, then pick him up and throw him out!  
Make a little seat for him – right in mid-air. Tear him apart!

Pyrg: Please – I beg – by Hercules!

Perip: By Hercules, you beg in vain. Caria, see to it that that knife of yours is sharp enough.

Caria: Why, it's long been eager to remove this lecher's vital parts,  
And to hang 'em like a baby's string of beads – around his neck.

Pyrg: Oh, I'm dead!

Perip: Not yet – you speak too soon.

Caria: *[Brandishing the knife]* Can I go at him now?

Perip: First let him be pummeled by your clubs a little more.

Caria: Much more!

*[The slaves pound Pyrgopolynices much more.]*

Perip: So! You dared to make advances to another's wife – you pig!

Pyrg: By the gods, she asked me first – she came to me!

Perip: He lies – hit on.

Pyrg: Wait a second – let me talk.

Perip: *[To the slaves]* Why do you stop?

Pyrg: Please – may I speak?

Perip: Speak.

Pyrg: The woman begged me –

Perip: But you dared to go – hit him again!

Pyrg: Stop – stop – stop – I'm pounded plenty. Please, I beg –

Caria: When do I cut?

Perip: At your own convenience. Spread 'im out and stretch 'im all the way.

Pyrg: Please, by Hercules, I beg you, hear my words before she cuts!

Perip: Well?

Pyrg: I didn't want to – Hercules – I thought she was divorced!  
I was told as much – her maid – that little bawd – she lied to me!

Perip: Swear that you won't harm a single person for this whole affair, or  
For the pounding you've received today – and will receive – if we now  
let you go intact – sweet little grandson of the goddess Venus.

Pyrg: Yes! I swear by Jupiter and Mars, I'll never harm a soul.  
And my beating up today – I grant it was my just reward.  
As a favour, let me leave with testimony to my manhood!

Perip: If you break your promise after this?

Pyrg: Then may I live ... detested.

Caria: I suggest we wallop him a final time and let him go.

Pyrg: Thank you – may the gods all bless you, sir, for speaking up for me.

Caria: Also give us gold – a hundred drachmae.

Pyrg: Why?

Caria: To let you go – Without giving testimony – grandson of the goddess Venus.  
Otherwise, you'll never leave.

Pyrg: You'll get it.

Caria: Now you're being smart. And you can forget about your cloak, your tunic and your sword.  
*[To Periplectomnenus]* Should I pound or let him loose?

Pyrg: Your pounding's made me loose already! Please – I beg of you – no more.

Perip: Release this man.

Pyrg: Oh, thank you, thank you.

Perip: If I catch you after this, you'll never testify again!

Pyrg: How can I object?

Perip: Come, Caria, let's go inside.

*[The old man takes his slaves inside, just as Sceledra appears, with the soldier's lackeys, returning from the harbour.]*

Pyrg: Look now – I see my slaves. Quick, tell me, has the girl set sail – well, has she, has she?

Sceledra: Long ago –

Pyrg: Damn!!

Sceledra: If you knew what I know, that's not all you'd say. That  
Fellow with the woolen patch on his left eye ... was no real sailor!

Pyrg:           What? Who was he?

Sceledra:      Your own sweetheart's lover.

Pyrg:           How'd you know?

Sceledra:      I know. Why, the minute they were past the city gates, right then and there, they  
Started kissing and embracing – constantly.

Pyrg:           Oh, pity me! Now I see I've been bamboozled. Oh, that rogue Palaestrio!  
He enticed me into this. And yet ... I find the verdict's just.  
*[Philosophically]* There would be less lechery if lechers were to learn from this;  
Lots would be more leery and less lustful.  
*[To his slaves]* Let's go in! *[To the audience]* Applaud!

*[All exit into the soldier's house.]*

~ *Finis* ~