The Haunted House

by Plautus
(Sometime before 184 B.C.)
Translated by Erich Segal
(Research by Rose de Le Mans)

Dramatis Personae

Tranio, slave to Philolaches
Grumio, a slave
Philolaches, a young man
Philematium, a girl of joy
Scapha, her maid, an old hag
Callidamates, a young man
Delphium, a girl of joy to Callidamates
Theopropides, an old man, father to Philolaches
Misargyrides, a moneylender
Simo, an old man, neighbour to Theopropides
Sphaerio, a slave boy to Theopropides
Phaniscus, a slave to Callidamates
Pinacium, a slave to Callidamates
Slaves
Whippers in the employ of Theopropides

Pronunciation:

Greek
TRAHN-ee-o
GROOM-ee-o
feel-ole-AH-khays
feel-ay-MAH-tee-oom
SCAH-fa
cal-ee-da-MAH-tays
DEL-fee-um
thay-o-prope-EE-days
mis-ar-gyr-EE-days
SEE-mo

English
fill-OL-ah-kees
fill-eh-MAY-shum
fill-OL-ah-kees
fill-eh-MAY-shum
cal-ih-DA-ma-tees
thay-o-PROP-ih-dees
miz-ar-JEER-ih-dees

The scene is a street in Athens. There are two houses on stage, with an alley between them. One house belongs to Theopropides, the other to Simo. The latter has an altar before it.

(NOTE: This is the version used by the Golden Stag Players in January, 2007 – it has been changed radically – cut in some places, and text altered in others, with some of the text replaced from another translation of the play.)

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2 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, 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.)"

3 Misargyrides (pronounced: mis-ar-gyr-EE-days) – “the "y" is somewhere between "ee" and "ou" - like the French "u," or the German u with an umlaut.” – Vittoria

4 Simo (pronounced: SEE-mo) – “some might say "SIE-mo" in English, but I think it's slightly less common.” – Vittoria
[Enter Grumio, a puritanical slave from one of Theopropides’ farms. In a huff, he storms up to the door of Theopropides’ house, and shouts inside.]

Grumio: Come out here from the kitchen, will you, whipping post? You show such cleverness amidst the pots and pans. Come out, you kitchen stink-up; don’t you hide from me!

[From inside the house saunters Tranio.]

Tranio: [Smiling and calm] Why all this shouting here outside the house, you wretch? You think you’re in the country? Go away from here. Go to the country, go to hell – but go away. [Throws a flurry of punches] Do you want this?

Grumio: [Cringing] Oh no! Why beat me up?

Tranio: Because you live.

Grumio: All right. If our old master comes – [Melodramatically, to heaven] Oh, let him come back safe, the man you’re eating up!

Tranio: Your symbols and your similes are terrible. How can a person eat a person who’s not here?

Grumio: Terrific city wit! The people love your jokes. You mock my country ways, but you wait, Tranio. And did you think this is the way good slaves behave – By ruining Master’s wealth and Master’s son as well? For ruined he is, to judge by his behaviour now. That boy, who out of all the boys in Attica Was once so chaste, so frugal, once so well behaved, Now takes the prizes in completely different sports, Thanks to all your tutoring and your talent.

Tranio: What business have you with me, or what I do? Haven’t you got your cows to look after? If I choose to drink and plot and make love, I’m only risking my back – now yours.

Grumio: How bold he talks! [To Tranio] Well, ‘foo’ to you!

Tranio: May Jupitor and all the Dieties confound you; you stink of garlic! You unmistakable filth, you clod, you she-goat, you dog!

Grumio: Well, what do you want? Not all of us can smell of fancy foreign perfumes, Or have the place of honour at a banquet table, Or live as high and mighty off the hog as you do. You keep your doves, the fancy fish and fancy birds, And let me live my life the way I like – with garlic.
Right now you’re very high, I’m very low. I’ll wait. As long as in the end we end up in reverse.

Tranio: Why, Grumio, it seems to me you’re acting jealous! But things are best when best for me and worst for you; For I was made for wooing – you were made for ... mooing. Thus I live very high and you, of course, live low.

Grumio: Oh, torture-target – which I know you’ll soon become, When whippers prod you manacled right through the streets With goads – [reverently] if ever our old master does return.

Tranio: Can you be sure your turn won’t come before my own?

Grumio: I’ve not deserved it. You deserve it, always have.

Tranio: Oh, save your efforts, save your words as well, Unless you’d like a lot of lashing for yourself.

Grumio: [To business] Look, are you going to give me feed to feed the cows? Unless you eat that, too. Go on and gallivant The way you’ve started, drink and Greek-it-up like mad, Eat on and stuff yourselves, destroy the fatted calf.

Tranio: Shut up, back to the sticks! I’m off to the Piraeus To buy myself a little fish for this night’s dinner. I’ll have someone deliver you the feed tomorrow. [Starts to go off, notices Grumio glaring at him.] What’s up? What is it now you want, you gallows bird?

Grumio: I think you’ll be the gallows bird – and very soon.

Tranio: I have my ‘now’, let ‘very soon’ come when it comes.

Grumio: Oh, yes? Remember this one thing: ‘What comes in life Is not so much what you would like, but what you don’t.’

Tranio: Right now you bother me. Go back to farming, move! By Hercules, I want no more delays from you.

[Tranio skips off-stage.]

Grumio: Well, has he gone and treated my words just as straws? [Fervently, to heaven] O ye immortal gods, I call on you and pray, Do let our senior master come back home to us – Although he’s gone three years. And let him come before It all is lost, the house and holdings. If not now, In little time, there’ll only be remains remaining.
I’m for the farm. [Notices off-stage] But look – here comes our junior master.
Behold – a most corrupted youth – once oh so fine.

[Grumio walks sadly off-stage in the opposite direction to that in which Tranio left. Young Philolaches enters. This lad is typical of Plautus’ young men, wide-eyed and handsome, but not very bright. In fact Philolaches is rather an imbecile. When he reaches centre stage, Philolaches sings a doleful lament.]

Philolaches: What pain to see me now, and know what once I used to be:
There never was a cleaner-living youth than me.
No greater athlete in the arts gymnastic,
In throwing, riding, running, fighting – I was just fantastic.
It nourished me with joy
To be a model of restraint and ruggedness to every boy.
All the noblest people looked to me for discipline,
But now, it’s all my fault, I’m nothing – see the awful shape I’m in.

[After his song, Philolaches hears the sounds of someone approaching from the back [the women’s quarters] of his house. He steps to the side of the stage to observe, as Philematium and Scapha enter. The first is a dazzling young girl of joy, recently freed by Philolaches, the second a wise and wizened ex-whore, now serving as Philematium’s personal maid. Scapha carries a sort of make-up table and a stool on which her mistress can sit to perform her toilette. Philematium and Scapha converse, as young Philolaches observes from the sidelines, and comments.]

Philolaches: [aside, ecstatic] O queen of Venus!
[To the audience, pointing at the girl] Look, there’s my storm, the one that unroofed all my reputation.
I used to have a roof, but Love and Cupid showered on me.
Love soaked right through my heart, and it’s beyond repair.
My walls are oozing and my house is losing its whole structure.

Philematium: Do look me over, Scapha. Is my costume nice enough?
I long to please my darling benefactor Philolaches.

Scapha: No need for lovely ornaments when you yourself can glitter.
The lovers don’t love women’s clothes; [with a leer] they love what’s stuffed inside them.

Philolaches: [aside] By all the gods, that Scapha’s charming; she knows all the tricks!
How charmingly she speaks of love affairs and lovers’ thoughts!

Philematium: And now?

Scapha: My dear?
Philematium: Please look me over. Am I nice enough?

Scapha: You’re beautiful inside and so you beautify your clothes.

Philolaches: [aside] For that nice thought, dear Scapha, you shall get a gift today.
You won’t have complimented my sweet love without reward.
Philematium: I don’t want simple flattery.

Scapha: You’re such a silly girl.
I think you’d rather have false criticism than true praise.
By Pollux, I myself would much prefer false flattery.
Who wants true criticism? People laughing at my looks?

Philematium: Not I. I much prefer the truth. I can’t abide a liar.

Scapha: And yet I’m quite amazed. I thought that you were shrewd and wise.
You’re being foolish foolishly.

Philematium: What’s this? What have I done wrong?

Scapha: You’re wrong to put your hopes in just one lover,
To be so dutiful to him, rejecting other men.
Fidelity’s for wives, but not for mistresses.

Philolaches: [aside] By Jupiter, what sort of evil earthquake shakes my house?
May all the gods and goddesses destroy me with distress
If I don’t kill that hag with hunger, thirst and freezing cold!

Scapha: ‘Things unhoped-for come more often than things hoped.’
Well, I suppose I never will convince you with my words,
But learn from my example, what I am and what I was:
For once I was a charming beauty just as you are now
And, loved as you are now, was dutiful to just one man.
He loved me, yes, by Pollux, till with time my hair turned grey,
Then left me in the lurch. [A sigh] I know the same will come to you.

Philolaches: [Aside, furious] I’m barely in control, I’d fly at the evil bitch’s eyes.

Philematium: He freed me – spent such sums to be my single swain.
I only think it’s right I stay ... monogamous to him.

Philolaches: [Aside] By the immortal gods, a lovely girl – and ladylike.
By Hercules, it’s worth it to be bankrupt all for her.

Scapha: You’re free.
You’ve got what you desired now. If he won’t love you still,
He really would be suffering a loss from his investment.

Philematium: How can I ever show my gratitude for what he’s done?
Don’t ever bid me love him less, stop all this trying.

Scapha: I will, but do remember this: if you serve one man now
While you’re in full bloom, then when you’re old, you’ll look for men.
Philolaches: [aside] I wish I could transform into a rope to choke that poisoner, 
By winding round her evil, ill-advising throat – and kill her.

Philematium: But since I have my freedom, I should show the same affection, 
And be as lovey-dovey to him as I was before.

Philolaches: [aside] Whatever heaven does, now that I’ve heard those little words, 
I’d free you ten times over – and kill Scapha twice as dead.

Scapha: If you feel that your contract spells eternal love, 
And he’s to be your only lover for your whole life long, 
Then honour and obey – put on a wifely hairdo.

Philematium: Your reputation gets you what you earn in life. 
If I preserve my reputation, then the cash will come.

Philolaches: [aside] Why, I would rather sell my father 
Than let this lovely girl lack anything while I’m alive.

Scapha: His cash will soon be gone, through dining, drinking day and night. 
He never saves a single thing. It’s clear-cut gluttonizing.

Philolaches: [aside] By Hercules, for you I’ll change my style and start to save. 
I won’t give you a thing to eat or drink for ten whole days!

Philematium: Quickly, Scapha, now my mirror, and my box of jewellery. 
I must be completely dressed before my darling Philo comes.

Scapha: Mirrors are for women who have doubts and need a glass to cling to. 
You don’t need a glass; why, you’re really first-rate glass yourself.

Philolaches: [aside] Lovely words, dear Scapha – and they won’t be unrewarded either. 
I’ll be sure and give a little bonus thing to – Philematium.

Philematium: Everything in order? How’s my hairdo, coiffed with quality?

Scapha: You have quality, my dear, and so how could your coif be otherwise?

Philolaches: What on earth could be more awful than that wicked woman there? 
Now she’s full of compliments, when she was all complaints before.

Philematium: [Pleased, looks at herself, kisses the mirror, hands it to Scapha] 
Take the mirror, then.

Philolaches: She kissed it! Oh, my god, she kissed the glass! 
Oh, I want a rock; I want to knock a piece of glass right off!
Philolaches: I can’t wait!
[Dancing out to meet his beloved.]
Hi, what are you doing?

Philematium: Dressing up to please you.

Philolaches: Don’t dress more.
[To Scapha] You be off and take those trinkets with you.
[To Philematium]
Philematium darling, I would love to booze it up with you.

Philematium: I would like to do so with you; everything you love, I love.
Darling –

Philolaches: Ah, that single word is cheaply bought at twenty minae.

Philematium: Give me ten, my darling. For my love I give a lovely discount.

Philolaches: Fine. You’re holding ten – and yet the price for you was thirty minae.
[Leaning over to kiss her] Balance my account.

Philematium: Oh, why assail me with those thirty minae?

Philolaches: I assail my very self about those thirty minae, love.
That’s the best investment deal I ever made in my whole life.

Philematium: Where could I have found a better place to place my loving in?

Philolaches: Look at our accounts: income and outgo balance perfectly.
You love me and I love you. Our two appraisals are the same.

Philematium: Come, sit beside me then. Slave! Bring some water for our hands; put a little table there.
Where are the dice? Would you like some perfumes?

Philolaches: [Puts his arm around her] No, I’ve got sweetness right beside me.
[Looks off-stage] Say – isn’t that my friend, coming this way with his mistress? It is!
Callidamates is coming! See, my sweet one, our friends approach to share these spoils with us.

[Enter young Callidamates, incredibly drunk. He is leaning heavily on his mistress, Delphium.]

Callidamates: Philolaches told me to meet him here,
Told me to meet him on time.
I’m here, I’m on time.
I fled from the party I was at before.
I didn’t have fun there,
It was a big bore.
With Philolaches, I’ll have a great revel,
He’ll welcome me then, and we’ll both raise the devil
And spirits will soar.

[To Delphium] Do I seem to be – [eyes her bosom] tititit-tipsy to you?

Delphium: [smiling] You should always live the way you want, pursuing the things you love.

Callidamates: Should I pursue you, and love you all over the place?

Delphium: If it will make you glad –

Callidamates: [Drunkenly embracing her] It’ll make me and make me!
Now take me to them.
[His knees buckle]

Delphium: [holding him up] Oh, don’t fall, baby, stand.

Callidamates: Dadadadadadada-darling, my honey,
I’m yours – to lead by the hand.

Delphium: Oh, baby, don’t fall in the street – there’s a couch here waiting for us!

Callidamates: Let me fall. I like falling and falling and falling ...

Delphium: Then I’ll let you.

Callidamates: And you’ll fall as well, since I’m still holding on to you.

Delphium: Then I will fall on you. And there we will lie until someone picks us up. [To the audience]
He’s tipsy.

Callidamates: [Gazing at her bosom again] I’m tititit-tipsy, you say?

Delphium: Do give me your hand, I don’t want you to get hurt.

Callidamates: [Operatically] Take my hand!

Delphium: Come along.

Callidamates: Where are we going?

Delphium: Where do you think?

Callidamates: Oh, now I recall – going home for a drink.

Delphium: You’re right! I do remember that now!

Callidamates: Yes, it’s all coming back!
[They stagger along a bit. Philolaches, who has been watching all this with amusement, now turns to Philematium.]

Philolaches: I’ll go greet them, my darling. Of all the people I know in this city, he is my best friend. [He stands up to go.] I’ll return before you know I’m gone.

Philematium: It’s too late – I miss you already.

Callisdamates: Hey, anyone home?

Philolaches: Me.

Callisdamates: Philo! [To Delphium] It’s Philo, it’s Philo! That marvelllest, wonderf’lest, friendliest fellow!

Philolaches: Hello!

Callisdamates: Hello!

Delphium: Hello!

Philematium: Hello!

Where have you been?

Callisdamates: Wherever the drunken men are.

Philematium: Well said. Dear Delphium, come sit by me.

Callisdamates: [Suddenly collapsing] And give her something to drink. I’m going to sleep.

Philolaches: [Smiling] As usual. Delphium, what shall we do with him?

Delphium: Nothing – just leave him to sleep it off.

Philematium: Good idea! Slave, pass the wine around quickly. Delphium, you get the first drink!

[Music. Laughter. They revel for at least a few seconds. Tranio runs on-stage, in a great panic.]

Tranio: Jupiter supreme with his supremest might and mighty main
Surely wants to kill me and my master Philolaches, too.
Terrors and titanic tides of troubles have just touched the harbour –
And I saw them. Master’s back from foreign fields – and now I’m finished!
Anybody in the audience would like to make a little money?
All you have to do today is take my place – for crucifixion.
[Smiles] After crucifixion, then present yourself – and I’ll pay up.
[Then reflects] Am I not a tragic fool? I should be sprinting home with speed!

[At this moment, Philolaches notices that Tranio has appeared.]
Philolaches: Ah, he’s back from shopping. Look – there’s Tranio, back from the harbour.

[Tranio now runs up to his master.]

Tranio: Philolaches –!

Philolaches: Hi!

Tranio: Both you and me –

Philolaches: Both you and me?

Tranio: We’re finished!

Philolaches: What?

Tranio: Your father’s here!

Philolaches: What’s that you say?

Tranio: I say we’re both destroyed! Father’s here, your father’s here!

Philolaches: He’s where?

Tranio: He’s here, arrived!

Philolaches: What? Who says so? Who has seen him?

Tranio: I myself.

Philolaches: Oh, woe is me! Gad – I’m lost – where am I now?

Tranio: You’re home – at your table.

Philolaches: Did you really see him?

Tranio: Yes.

Philolaches: For sure?

Tranio: For sure.

Philolaches: For sure – I’m dead! Dead – if what you say is true.

Tranio: But why on earth would I tell lies?
Philolaches:  Tell me what to do – what should I do?

Tranio:  *Pointing to the party stuff* Have this mess cleaned up.  Who’s the guy asleep?

Philolaches:  Callidamates.  *To Delphium* Delphie, wake him up.

Delphium:  *shaking Callidamates* Dear Callidamates, do wake up.

Callidamates:  *drunkenly* I am awake.  *quickly* I want a drink.

Delphium:  Do wake up now – Philolaches’ father’s back!

Callidamates:  *toasting drunkenly* Welcome, Father!

Philolaches:  Welcome Father, goodbye me!

Callidamates:  *drunkenly, half-hearing* Who’d buy me?  Buy me?  What for?

Philolaches:  Please, by Pollux, do stand up – my father’s here!

Callidamates:  *drunkenly* Your father’s here?  Tell him to go off again.  Why did he have to come back here?

Philolaches:  *Terribly upset* What can I do now, when Father comes and finds me drunk like this?  Finds his house is overflowing full of girls and party guests?  What a thing – to start to dig a well when you’re already thirsty.  That’s my problem – what to do.  My father’s here and I’m in trouble.

Tranio:  *Indicating Callidamates* Look, your friend has fallen off asleep again.  Do shake him up.

Philolaches:  Hey – wake up, my father’s come back home.

Callidamates:  What’s that?  Your father?  Get my sandals and my weapons, then I’ll go and kill your father!

Philolaches:  You’ll destroy us!

Delphium:  Do be quiet.

Philolaches:  *To slaves* Carry this guy in at once.

Callidamates:  *Drunkenly, to one of the slaves carrying him inside*  Hey – are you a chamber pot?  You will be in another second.

[They carry Callidamates inside]

Philolaches:  Oh, we’re dead!
Tranio: Be brave. I’ll medicate your misery ... with wit.

Philolaches: Oh, I’m finished.

Tranio: Quiet, will you? I’ll dream up some remedy. Look – will it suffice you if I see your now-arriving father Doesn’t set foot in this house and even rushes far from it? For the moment, go inside and clear the party stuff away.

Philolaches: Where will I be?


Delphium: Wouldn’t it be better if we left?

Tranio: Don’t even budge, my dear. If you stay inside, you can drink up no less than right out here.

Philolaches: Oh, ye gods, what will your sweet words bring? I’m drunk with fear!

Tranio: Look – can you keep calm and follow all my orders?

Philolaches: Yes, I think.

Tranio: First, and foremost, girls, I want the two of you to go inside.

Delphium: Both of us will be most dutiful to you.

[The girls slink off into the house.]

Tranio: Jove make it so. [Playing commander in chief, to Philolaches]

All right, pay attention now; I’ll tell you what I want from you: First and foremost, have the house completely closed and locked up tight. Be on guard inside; don’t let a single person mumble –

Philolaches: [nods] Yes.

Tranio: Make it look like no one really lives here.

Philolaches: [repeating] ‘No one lives here.’

Tranio: Right. When the old man knocks, nobody answers. Not a living soul.

Philolaches: Yes, what else?
Tranio: The front-door key, that locks you in from here outside,  
Get it to me, then I’ll lock the house and close it up completely.

Philolaches: [Getting emotional] Tranio, it’s in your hands – my welfare and my wealth as well.

[He goes into the house.]

Tranio: [much bravado] If a man has talent, it’s no different if he’s slave or master.  
We’re ready for him.  
The games we hold today, while this old man’s alive,  
Will far outmatch whatever games he’ll get when dead.  
I’ll leave the door and set a lookout post up here.  
[He skips to a corner of the stage, peers off]  
And when the old man comes, I’ll fill him full of it.

[Finally, enter old Theopropides, dressed in his traveling clothes.]

Theopropides: O Neptune, what a dept of gratitude I owe thee!  
For thou allowed me, half alive, to reach my home.  
Indeed, if after this you learn I’ve gone to sea,  
Or set a single foot upon a wave, proceed  
To do me in the way you almost did me now.  
Away with you, away, away for evermore!  
I’ve trusted you with everything I’ll ever trust.

Tranio: [aside] By Pollux, Neptune, thou has really blundered badly:  
For though allowed the perfect chance to slip right by.

Theopropides: I’m coming home from Egypt after three long years.  
My people surely are most anxious to receive me.

Tranio: [aside] The man your people are most anxious to receive  
Is someone who would bring them news that you were dead!

[Theopropides has gone up to his house]

Theopropides: I say, what’s this? The doors are all locked up in daytime?  
I’ll knock. [He knocks] Hello – is someone home? Hey – open up!

Tranio: [Revealing himself to Theopropides, melodramatically]  
What man is this who now approaches our front door?

Theopropides: It’s Tranio, my slave!

Tranio: O Theopropides!  
Dear master, greetings! Great to see you safe and sound.  
Have you been well?
Theopropides: As well as now.

Tranio: [a bit uneasy] That’s nice to hear.

Theopropides: And you – are you unwell?

Tranio: Unwell?

Theopropides: Well, look at you –
You stroll while not a living soul stays in the house.
No guard, no janitor, no one to open up.
I nearly broke both doors from knocking on and on.

Tranio: [in mock shock] What’s that – you touched the house???

Theopropides: You have to touch to knock.

Tranio: You touched it?

Theopropides: Yes, I knocked it too.

Tranio: Oh, god!

Theopropides: What’s wrong?

Tranio: A dirty deed.

Theopropides: What’s going on?

Tranio: Impossible
To say how horrible, horrendous – also bad.

Theopropides: But what?

Tranio: Just flee! Flee far from this most foul front door!
Flee hither, flee to me. [Theopropides approaches Tranio] Sir, did you really touch?

Theopropides: You tell me how to knock and still not touch a door.

Tranio: By Hercules, you killed –

Theopropides: [quivering] I killed?

Tranio: Your near and dear ones.

Theopropides: Oh, what an omen – gods and goddesses forbid!

Tranio: I tremble ... Can you purify yourself and kin?
Theopropides: But why? What is this unexpected shock you bring?

[Tranio sighs a deep sigh, as if to say, ‘This is it’]

Tranio: It’s seven months now since we haven’t gone in there.
It’s seven months since we have all moved out.

Theopropides: But why? Speak up!

Tranio: First look around for other people.
Does someone try to catch our conversation?

Theopropides: [looks high and low. Sees nothing] All clear.

Tranio: [stalling for time – to dream up a story] Uh – look around again.

Theopropides: [looks high and low] There’s no one. Speak up, will you?

Tranio: The sin ... was a murder.

Theopropides: What sort of sin? And who committed it? Tell, tell!

Tranio: A guest was taken unawares by a host – and slaughtered.
I think it was the man who sold the house to you.

Theopropides: S-slaughtered?

Tranio: Yes. And robbed his own guest’s gold, and then –
He buried his own guest right in this house of yours.

Theopropides: [trembling] But how – how did you know of it – did you suspect?

Tranio: I’ll tell you. Listen carefully: he had dined out –
Your son, that is – and after dinner he came home.
We went to bed. We all of us were sleeping tight.
By chance, I had forgotten to put the lantern out.
And suddenly he screamed. An awful scream he screamed!

Theopropides: Who screamed? My son?

Tranio: Be quiet, will you? Listen closely.
He told me that the corpse came to him in a dream.

Theopropides: So it was in a dream?

Tranio: It was, but listen closely.
He told me that the corpse addressed him in this manner –
Theopropides: Within a dream?

Tranio: How could he talk to him awake?  
The man was murdered over sixty years ago!  
At times you can be rather silly, sir ...

Theopropides: [chastened] I’ll shut my mouth.

Tranio: And then within the dream, he spake:

‘My name’s Transoceanus from ... across the sea.  
I’m housed in this house where I must house myself –  
The King of Hades has refused to let me in  
Because I died ... too early. And I was deceived  
By someone’s word of honour: my host slaughtered me,  
And buried me in secret – here unfuneralled.  
A sin. A sin for gold. Now, boy, move out of here!  
The house is full of sin, the habitation cursed.’  
[To Theopropides] I’d need at least a year to tell you all the horrors, sir.

[Suddenly, noise filters out from the closed house]

Tranio: [Whispering loudly to those within] Sh, sh!

Theopropides: By Hercules, what’s happened now?

Tranio: The door has creaked.  
It’s he who tapped.

Theopropides: [in terror] I haven’t got a drop of blood left!  
The dead can carry me alive right down to Hades!

Tranio: [To himself] I’m lost! Those folk inside perturb my perfect story!  
I greatly fear he’ll catch me in the act of lying!

Theopropides: What are you saying to yourself?

Tranio: [stirring up panic again] Retreat! Retreat! And flee, by Hercules!

Theopropides: Flee where? Why don’t you flee?

Tranio: I have no fear. I’ve made my peace with all the dead.

[From inside the house, young Philolaches’ voice]

Philolaches: Hey, Tranio!
Tranio:  
[Whispering through the door] Take care – don’t call me by my name!
[Now aloud, a statement to ‘the ghost’] I’m wholly blameless. I’ve not tapped these sinful
walls.

Theopropides:  Who are you talking to?

Tranio:  [To Theopropides, pretending surprise] Oh, was that you who called?
Dear gods above, I thought it was the dead man speaking,
Perhaps to ask me why you dared to touch the door.
But why do you still stand there? What of my advice?

Theopropides:  What should I do?

Tranio:  Flee! Don’t look back – and shroud your head!

Theopropides:  And you don’t flee?

Tranio:  I told you, I’m at peace with them.

Theopropides:  But just awhile ago you were in fear and trembling.

Tranio:  Don’t worry, please, I’ll look out for myself.
But you go on – go flee and fly with utmost speed.
And call ‘Sweet Hercules!’

Theopropides:  [obeys completely, starts running] I call ‘Sweet Hercules!’

[He scurries off-stage.  From the exit nearer the forum, enter Misargyrides, the moneylender, a miser-of-
misers.]

Misargyrides:  It’s been a cursed year for lending cash at interest.
I’ve never seen a season worse than this has been.
I’m in the forum all day long from dawn till dusk
Unable to find customers to lend a bit.

Tranio:  [noticing Misargyrides, aside] Oh, now we’re fully finished off forevermore!
The broker’s here, who lent us cash on interest
To buy the girl and pay for our expensive parties.
We’re caught red-handed if I don’t do something fast
To keep this from our senior master. I’ll go meet him.

[And now enter Theopropides as well! Tranio sees the old man and is struck by yet another blow.]
And do I know! But since I’ve stirred things up already,
I’ll go on stirring. That’s the order of the day.

[He goes to Theopropides]

What a surprise!

Theopropides: I met the chap I bought the house from.

Tranio: [taken aback] Uh – did you mention anything – of what I told you?

Theopropides: By Hercules, I told him everything!

Tranio: [aside] Oh no!
I tremble – all my tricks have permanently perished!

Theopropides: [To Tranio] What are you mumbling?

Tranio: Nothing, nothing. Tell me this:
What did you say?

Theopropides: Why, everything from start to finish.

Tranio: Did he confess about his guest?

Theopropides: No, he denied it.
[A new topic] What’s your advice for now?

Tranio: You’re asking my advice?
By Hercules, I’d take the thing to arbitration.
[Aside] But get a judge who’d swallow anything I say.
You’d win as easily as foxes eat a pear.

Misargyrides: But look – there’s Philolaches’ slave man Tranio.
Those fellows never pay me principal or interest.

[Tranio starts toward Misargyrides, who is on one side of the stage, while Theopropides stands at the opposite end.]

Theopropides: [To Tranio] But where are you going?

Tranio: [To himself] Nowhere. I’m in no condition.
Oh, am I cursed, born under inauspicious stars.
The man will dun me while my master’s here. It’s tragic.
On either side of me an awful time awaits.
I’ll seize the situation.
Misargyrides: He approaches. All is saved.
There’s hope for money yet.

Tranio: [aside] He’s happy – but he’s wrong.
[calling] Hello, Misargyrides, hope you’re feeling well.

Misargyrides: Well, what about my money?

Tranio: Be off with you, you brute! The moment you arrive, you begin your attack against me.

Misargyrides: [Aside] I believe he comes empty-handed.

Tranio: [ironically] Now there’s a truthful prophecy.

Misargyrides: Let’s put an end to all this trifling.

Tranio: Then speak – what’s on your mind?

Misargyrides: Where’s Philolaches?

Tranio: [too, too friendly] Ah, dear friend, you couldn’t have arrived more opportunely than you’ve just arrived.

Misargyrides: How come?

Tranio: Come over here ... [beckons Misargyrides to a quiet corner]

Misargyrides: [loudly] Do you have my money or don’t you?

Tranio: I know you’ve got a healthy voice; please don’t shout.

Misargyrides: Why shouldn’t I shout?

Tranio: Do me a little favour.

Misargyrides: What sort of little favour?

Tranio: Won’t you please ... go home?

Misargyrides: Go home?

Tranio: Come back here sometime after midday, please.

Misargyrides: But will I get my interest then?

Tranio: You will, now go.
Misargyrides: ['adding’ things up in his miserly mind]
But why expend the effort and exhaust myself?
I think I’ll wait around right here till midday.

Tranio: Oh no, go home. By Hercules, it’s better home.

Misargyrides: Why don’t I get my interest? Why these jokes with me?

Tranio: By Hercules, I wish you would ... go home for now.

Misargyrides: By Hercules, I’ll call my Philolaches to repay me!

Tranio: [ironically] Loudly, I’m sure!
Your greatest joy is loudness.

Misargyrides: I just want what’s mine.
For days and days you’ve held me off with tricks like this.
If I annoy you, pay me, then I’ll go away.
The single phrase ‘I’ll pay’ will end all complications.

Tranio: [a sudden thought – to faze Misargyrides]
Well – take your principal.

Misargyrides: I want my interest first!

Tranio: What’s that? You lowest, basest, vilest man on earth!
You’re practicing extortion? No, go do your worst.
He owes you zero.

Misargyrides: [flabbergasted] Owes me zero?

Tranio: Now you won’t get
A single spot of dust from us. Are you afraid
He’ll leave the city, just to dodge your interest?
He’s offering the principal.

Misargyrides: But I don’t want it!
I first and foremost want to get some interest paid me.

Tranio: Look, don’t annoy us. Nothing you can do will help.
You think that you’re the only moneylender here?

Misargyrides: [starting to foam at the mouth]
My interest now, my interest, interest; pay me interest!
I want my interest!
Tranio: ‘Interest’ here and ‘interest’ there,  
The only interest this man has in life is ‘interest’.  
Do go away. I think in all my years on earth  
I’ve never seen a fouler, viler beast than you.

Misargyrides: By Pollux, you don’t scare me with those words of yours!

[Across the stage, old Theopropides has been waiting quasi-patiently]

Theopropides: Hot talk! Why, even over here I feel the heat.  
[A bit louder] I wonder what that interest is the man is after.

Tranio: [To Misargyrides, indicating Theopropides]  
Look, there’s his father, just returned from overseas.  
He’ll give you back your principal and interest too,  
So stop your bearing down and shady practices.  
That man won’t make you wait.

Misargyrides: I’ll take what I can get.

Theopropides: [To Tranio] Hey, Tranio!

Tranio: Yes, sir?

[Dashes over to Theopropides]

Theopropides: Who is that man? What does he want? Why is he speaking rudely of my son, Philoloaches, and  
abusing you to your face? What do you owe him?

Tranio: He’s an extortionist, sir. I beg of you, give orders for us to throw money in his dirty, brutish face.

Theopropides: Give orders?

Tranio: Yes. Order your faithful servants to pelt him with money.

Misargyrides: I think I could put up with that.

Tranio: Did you hear that? The perfect moneylender speaks.  
A moneylender – vilest, foulest breed there is.

Theopropides: Don’t tell me what he is; I don’t care where he’s from.  
What money is he speaking of? What is this sum that Philolaches owes this man?

Tranio: A teeny bit.

Theopropides: How teeny?
Tranio: Forty thousand drachmae. That isn’t very much.

Theopropides: [ironically] Oh no, it’s tiny.
I hear there’s interest due as well. So what’s the total?

Tranio: Our total debt to him is – [quickly] forty-four thousand drachmae.
Just say you’ll pay – and send him off.

Theopropides: Just say I’ll pay???

Tranio: Just say you’ll pay.

Theopropides: Myself?

Tranio: You, yourself. Go on, say you will. You know you want to. Go on, do it, I beg of you.

Theopropides: Tell me this:
That money – what’d you do with it?

Tranio: It’s solid.

Theopropides: If it’s save, then pay it yourself.

Tranio: [Coming up with a big idea, makes a big announcement]
Your son –
Has bought a house.

Theopropides: A house?

Tranio: A house.

Theopropides: [Ecstatic] Oh, bravo! Philolaches is finally taking after his father and thinking about his future! A house, you say?

Tranio: [nods] A house. And do you know what kind?

Theopropides: How could I know?

Tranio: Oh, boy!

Theopropides: What kind?

Tranio: Don’t even ask!

Theopropides: Oh, tell!

Tranio: A house as bright as a mirror, pure brilliancy itself!
Theopropides: By Hercules, well done! What did he pay for it?

Tranio: As many great talents as you and I put together make; but these forty minae he paid were just a deposit. [Indicating the moneylender.] From him, Philolaches received what we paid for the seller. Do you understand? After we discovered that your house was cursed, Philolaches immediately went out and purchased another house.

Theopropides: By Hercules, well done!

Misargyrides: [to himself] The day is fast collecting noon.

Tranio: [to Theopropides] Sir, please send this puking fellow away so that he doesn’t bother us any more. We owe him forty-four minae, both principal and interest.

Misargyrides: And that’s all I seek.

Tranio: I’d like to see you demand a penny more!

Theopropides: [to Misargyrides] Young man, you’ll deal with me.

Misargyrides: [to Theopropides] So I collect from you?

Theopropides: Collect tomorrow.

Misargyrides: Good. Tomorrow. Good, good, good.

[Rubbing his greedy hands in anticipation, Misargyrides shuffles off.]

Tranio: [at Misargyrides, as he goes] May all the gods and goddesses give trouble to you! You missed destroying all my plans by half-a-hair’s breadth. [To audience] By Pollux, you won’t find a fouler class of men Or men less lawful than the moneylending breed!

Theopropides: What sort of neighbourhood did my boy by this house in?

Tranio: [aside] I’m lost again!

Theopropides: Well, are you going to tell me?

Tranio: I can’t – I just forgot the former owner’s name.

Theopropides: Come on, just use your wits, my lad.

Tranio: [aside] What can I do? Unless I choose our neighbour’s house ... And claim this is the house his son just bought. I’ve heard That lies taste best when served up piping hot. All right, Whatever hodgepodge heaven hints, I’ll hand it to him.
Theopropides: Well, have you thought it out?

Tranio: [Aside] The gods confound that fellow! No, not this fellow, that fellow! [Aloud] Sir, it is your neighbor’s house. Your son just bought this house.

Theopropides: [Wide-eyed with joy] I can’t believe it’s true!

Tranio: Well, if you pay whatever cash is due, it’s true. If you don’t pay the cash, then what I’m saying isn’t true.

Theopropides: And not just in a goodly part of town –

Tranio: [feeding his enthusiasm] The very best!

Theopropides: By Hercules, I’d love to look inside. Please knock. Yes, Tranio. Go summon someone from inside.

Tranio: [aside] I’m lost again – I really don’t know what to say! Another time the tide has turned me on the rocks!

Theopropides: What now?

Tranio: [aside] By Hercules, I don’t know what to do. I’m caught red-handed.

Theopropides: Call somebody out at once. I want a tour.

Tranio: [nervously] But, sir ... There are the women, sir. We ought to ask permission – if they are presentable.

Theopropides: The proper thing to do. You go ahead and ask. And while you do, I’ll wait outside right here.

Tranio: [aside to the audience] May all the gods and goddesses destroy this old man – For giving all my plans attacks from every side!

[At this very moment, the door of the ‘new’ house opens, and out comes Simo, a chubby old man, who is slightly drunk from dinner.]

Tranio: What luck! The owner of the house is stepping out. Old Simo in the flesh. I’ll step aside to watch, And call a senate assembly inside my interior soul. I’ll broach the man as soon as I think up a plan.

[As Tranio slinks into the alley to eavesdrop, Simo steps down-stage.]
Simo: That was the best meal of the year.
Never have I eaten better.
What a fine dinner prepared by my wife.
But after she wanted to ‘sleep’ and I wouldn’t let her.
That old hag made a dinner better than usual,
Simply a plot to get me to bed.
‘Sleep isn’t good after dinner,’ I said.
Secretly, quietly, I have slipped out.
Wife will be wild at me, I have no doubt.

Tranio: [aside] What a bad evening’s preparing for that old duffer.
In sleep and at supper he’ll suffer.

Simo: The more I reflect, as I think very deep,
I see wedding a hag for some gold in a bag
Means you won’t oversleep.
The bedroom is torture, so I’d rather roam.
Better work in the forum than bed her at home.

[Winks at the audience]
By Pollux, I don’t know of your wives – are their ways diverse?
I know my case is bad and it’s bound to get worse.

Tranio: [aside] If your escape, old man, turns out badly, it won’t be the fault of the gods! You can take the blame for that yourself! Aha! I’ve a plan to fool the old man, and drive grief away from myself – now to accost him. [To Simo] Hello, Simo! May the gods send you many blessings!

Simo: Ah, Tranio!

Tranio: How have you been?

Simo: Not too bad.

[They shake hands warmly.]
Doing what?

Tranio: Shaking hands with a wonderful guy.

Simo: [smiles] Thank you, lady.
I would like to requite those nice words you just gave:

[With a smile] I am not shaking hands with a wonderful ... rogue of a slave.

Theopropides: [Calling from across the stage]
Hey, you whipping post, come over here.

Tranio: [Calling over, nervously] One minute, one minute!

Simo: [To Tranio, confidentially] How’s the Party?

Tranio: Sir, I don’t know what you’re speaking about.
Simo: The usual goings-on! The way you and Philolaches live! To tell the truth, Tranio, it befits you young people to live it up since life is so short.

Tranio: Uh, sir? Beg your pardon?
I scarcely can grasp what you’re saying.

Simo: In faith, all of you live a merry life in that house – good food, good wine and good company. You enjoy yourselves.

Tranio: [confidentially, to Simo] That life is ... all over.

Simo: What?

Tranio: All of us, one great big fall of us, Simo.

Simo: It was all going well for you.

Tranio: I don’t deny that it has been as you say. We lived heartily, just as we pleased. But, Simo, the breeze has now forsaken our ship.

Simo: But your ship was so sound, pulled right up on dry ground.

Tranio: But another ship rammed. Now we’re damned – and we’re drowned!

Simo: I’m on your side, but what’s the problem? Tell me, please.

Tranio: Master – back from overseas.

[ A pause. Simo gets the picture.]

Simo: [to Tranio, with a wry smile] For you a slight ironic twist. You’re in a kind of cruci-fix?

Tranio: I beg you, please don’t tell my master.

Simo: He won’t get a thing from me.

Tranio: Thank you, you’re my patron.

Simo: I don’t need your kind of client, thank you.

Tranio: But now the reason Master sent me here to you –

Simo: No, first you answer something I would like to ask: How much of your affairs does he already know?

Tranio: Why – not a thing.

Simo: He hasn’t shouted at his son?
Tranio: He is as calm as calm can be. But now he’s asked me to convey a strong request. He’d like to take a look around inside your house.

Simo: It’s not for sale.

Tranio: I know, of course. But the old man is anxious to build women’s quarters in his own house, and baths and paths and porticoes, a big construction.

Simo: Whatever made him dream of doing this?

Tranio: I’ll tell you, sir. He’s very anxious that his son now take a wife as soon as possible. And so – the women’s quarters. He said he heard some architect, I don’t know who, discuss your house design. The man was mad with praise. And so he’d like to copy from it, do you mind? The special thing he wants to copy from your house is this: he’s heard you have terrific shade, all summer through, and all day long, and even if it’s awfully bright.

Simo: [surprised] But listen here – when shadows fall all over town there’s never shade in here. It’s sunny all day long. The sun just stays – as if it were a bill collector. The only shade I have at all is down my well.

Tranio: [with a weak laugh] Well … shady things are shady, sun is … nice and bright.

Simo: Look, don’t annoy me. Things are as I’ve just explained.

Tranio: But still, he’d like to look around.

Simo: Well, let him look! If he sees anything he likes and wants to copy, why, let him build it.

Tranio: Can I call him?

Simo: Go and call him.

[Tranio struts across the stage and shares his satisfaction with the audience.]

Tranio: Now I must talk to him, walk up and talk to him. Hey, Theo, hey!

Theopropides: Who’s calling, I say?

Tranio: Your multi-faithful servant.
Theopropides: Say, where have you been?

Tranio: Your mission, sir, is, sir, accomplished. You now can begin.

Theopropides: But what on earth caused such a delay?

Tranio: The man was engaged in some business, so I had to wait.

Theopropides: I know you – the slow you – you’ve always been late.

Tranio: Sir, even I can’t be in two places at once.

Theopropides: What now?

Tranio: You can visit his house just as long as you care to.

Theopropides: Go on, lead the way.

Tranio: Am I causing delay?

Theopropides: Lead the way.

Tranio: [confidentially to Theopropides] Look at the old boy just standing there – sad to behold it. He’s very unhappy – regrets having sold it.

Theopropides: Why so?

Tranio: He’s been constantly begging, pursuing And pleading to cancel the sale.

Theopropides: [The tough businessman] Nothing doing! ‘A man sows his crop, and the man must then reap it.’ If we were complaining, he’d force us to keep it. No, ‘All sales are final’, ‘What’s been done, don’t undo’, ‘Pity’s a luxury’, ‘Eat what you chew’.

Tranio: Your words of wisdom slow me down. Please follow me.

Theopropides: That’s what I’ll do.

Tranio: Faithfully I’ll follow you.

[They cross the stage to Simo]

Tranio: [to Theopropides] Look – there’s the old man. [To Simo] Here’s your man ...

Simo: Greetings, Theopropides, I’m glad you’re back both safe and sound.

Theopropides: Greetings.
Simo: Your man told me you’d like to look around.

Theopropides: If you wouldn’t mind.

Simo: I wouldn’t mind. Go in and look around.

Theopropides: But of course, the women –

Simo: Women? Don’t you care a hoot for them! Stroll around in any room you’d like; pretend the house is yours.

Theopropides: [whispers to Tranio] What – ‘pretend’?

Tranio: [whispers back] Oh, let’s not put the gentleman through further pain, Throwing up the fact you’ve bought his place. You see how sad he looks.

Theopropides: Yes, I see.

Tranio: Well, let’s not make it worse by making fun of him. Let’s not mention that you’ve bought it any more.

Theopropides: I see your point. Well advised. I think that’s very sensitive of you, my boy. Now what, Simo?

Simo: Go inside, take your time and look around.

Theopropides: Very nice, considerate. I thank you kindly.

Simo: You’re quite welcome.

[Tranio further ‘sells’ his master the qualities of the house.]

Tranio: Look at what a vestibule it has; observe the wonderful front path.

Theopropides: Splendid, splendid, oh, by Pollux –

Tranio: Take a good look at those pillars. [Ironically gestures to the audience that he means the two old men.] Solid, strong, and oh so thick. Oh yes, dear Master, oh so thick!

Theopropides: Never have I seen more pretty pillars.

Simo: And the price I paid –

Pretty penny, even long ago.

Tranio: [to Theopropides] You hear that ‘long ago’? He can scarcely keep from weeping.
The Haunted House, by Plautus

Theopropides: [To Simo] How much did you pay for them?

Simo: Paid three hundred drachmae for them both; delivery was extra, too.

Theopropides: [examining more closely] Hercules! I see they’re not as good as what I first believed.

Tranio: Why?

Theopropides: Because, by Pollux, they’ve got termite trouble, both of them.

Tranio: [again, ironically to the audience, suggesting the old men]
Past their prime is what I’d say’s the major trouble with them both. Still and all, they’d do quite well, if we’d just throw some tar on them. They’re well built. No pasta-eating foreign workmen did the job. Also, sir, observe the door joint.

Theopropides: Yes, I see.

Tranio: Terrific dolts!

Theopropides: Dolts, what dolts?

Tranio: Excuse me, sir, I meant ‘terrific bolts’, of course. Seen enough?

Theopropides: The more I see, the more I really like the house!

Tranio: [to mock them still further, points above the doorway] See the picture painted there – the crow who’s mocking two old vultures?

Theopropides: I don’t see a thing.

Tranio: But I do. I can see the crow is standing right between the vultures and by turns he twits at each of them. Look at me, just look at me, and tell me if you see the crow. [Theopropides turns] See the crow?

Theopropides: [confused] Why no, I see no crow of any kind at all.

Tranio: Look in your direction, then, although the crow’s not in your sight. Maybe if you glance about, you’ll catch a glimpse of those two vultures.

Theopropides: [frustrated] Stop this, will you, I can’t see a painted bird of any sort!

Tranio: Well, forget it, I forgive you. At your age, it’s tough to spot.

Theopropides: What I can see I adore, I’ll tell you that. I just adore it!
Simo: Look some more; you’ll find it worth the effort.

Theopropides: Pollux, good advice!

Simo: [calling to a slave inside his house]
Boy, come here and take this fellow round the house and all the bedrooms.
[To Theopropides] Can’t take you around myself. I’ve got some business in the forum.

Theopropides: [feeling very smart] Never mind a run-around from anyone; I need no leading.
When it comes to being taken in, I’m taken in by no one.

Simo: Even into houses?

Theopropides: [smiles] No one ever takes me in.

[They both enter Simo’s house. After a pause, enter Phaniscus, slave to young Callidamates.]

Phaniscus: Our own slaves at home are the worst on this earth;
Their ‘goods’ are expended, bad treatment is all that they’re worth.
Just now we were commanded to meet Master here,
But not one volunteer!
They all mocked me for going, the duties I’m showing,
I’ve gone out and my goodness will pay:
I’m the one single slave to fetch Master today,
So that breakfast for them will be cowhide to eat.
[smiles] I am one slave who’s too good to be beat.
I don’t really care about their backs, I just care for mine.
They’ll be drawn and quartered, I’ll do what I’m ordered ... and be fine.

[Another slave, Pinacium, rushes in after Phaniscus]

Pinacium: Wait, Phaniscus!
Stop a mite!

Phaniscus: [haughtily] Don’t annoy me!

Pinacium: What a monkey!
Won’t you wait – you parasite?

Phaniscus: I, a parasite?

Pinacium: [sarcastically] Wherever you see food – you bite.


Pinacium: Talk tough – you share the master’s bed!
Phaniscus: You’re blurring my eyes. Whenever you talk, there are fumes that arise!

Pinacium: Hush, you counterfeit coin. You’re as fake as lead money.

Phaniscus: Nothing you do, boy, will make me lose my temper. Our master knows me.

Pinacium: But of course! You’ve been sleeping together!

Phaniscus: Sober up, and don’t curse me.

Pinacium: I know you can’t bear me, I feel quite the same about you.

Phaniscus: Kindly spare me. Your lecture’s a bore.

Pinacium: Fine, don’t listen. I’ll knock on the door. [Knocks at the ‘haunted house’, calls grandiloquently] Hello there! Is there any person at home to protect this door from a most serious injury? Is anyone going to come open the door? Really, everyone in this house is so worthless and lazy that they can’t be bothered to answer the door. But they’re so spiteful and wicked, we need to be especially careful around them.

[Pinacium and Phaniscus stand at the door, periodically knocking [in pantomime] while the next dialogue takes place. Tranio and Theopropides come out of Simo’s house. The slave is really baiting his master.]

Tranio: Tell me how the deal seems to you now.

Theopropides: I’m overjoyed with it!

Tranio: Too expensive, do you think?

Theopropides: Expensive? Oh, by Pollux, never Ever have I seen a house just tossed away!

Tranio: So then you’re pleased.

Theopropides: What do you mean, am I pleased? Of course, I’m pleased! Upon my faith it pleases me very much!

Tranio: Fantastic! I don’t think you’d find a public portico that’s any bigger.

Tranio: Actually, your son and I, we personally toured the city, Measuring the public porticoes.

Theopropides: You did?

Tranio: And ours is biggest.
Theopropides: What a splendid bargain. By Hercules, if someone offered
Half a dozen silver talents, cash in hand, to buy this house here,
I’d refuse it.

Tranio: Even if you tried to take it, I’d prevent you.

Theopropides: I would say our capital is well invested in this deal.

Tranio: I don’t blush to say how much I prompted and promoted this,
Forcing him to borrow cash on interest from the moneylender,
Giving it to Simo as deposit ...

Theopropides: Lad, you saved the ship!
And we owe the moneylender eighty minae?

Tranio: Nothing more.

Theopropides: He’ll be paid today.

Tranio: You’re smart. That way, there’ll be no complications.
Or – you could give me the cash, and I’ll go pay the man myself.

Theopropides: [warily] Give the cash to you? Some little trick is lurking in that thought.

Tranio: [irony-clad protestation] Would I ever dare to fool you for a fact – or even just for fun?

Theopropides: Would I ever dare to not distrust you, or be off my guard?

Tranio: Since I’ve been your slave, have I bamboozled you in any way?

Theopropides: That’s because I’ve been on guard. So thank me and my wits for that.
Being on my guard with you is proof I’m smart.

Tranio: [aside] I quite agree.

Theopropides: [an order to Tranio] To the country now, and tell my son I’m back.

Tranio: At your command.

Theopropides: Have him sprint with you back to the city – at full speed.

Tranio: Yessir.

[Tranio starts off, then stops to address the audience.]
Now I’ll join my fellow fighters by arriving through the rear guard
To report the situation’s calmed – and he’s been beaten back.
Tranio now skips down the alley between the two houses to get into the ‘haunted’ one through the back door. Our attention now returns to the two slaves, who have kept knocking at the ‘haunted’ front door in pantomime all during the Tranio-Theopropides conversation.

Phaniscus: Not a sound of merrymaking, as there used to be. I can’t hear the singing of a musical girl – or anyone.

Theopropides: [finally noticing the two servants] Now what is this? Whatever do those people seek at my old house? Wonder what they want, what they are peeking at.

Pinacium: I’ll knock again. Open up! Hey, Tranio, come loose the locks!

Theopropides: What farce is this?

Phaniscus: Open up – we’ve come to fetch our master, we were ordered to.

Theopropides: [calls over] Hey, you boys, what are you doing, what’s this beating on the house?

Pinacium: Hey, old man, why do you ask about what’s no concern of yours?

Theopropides: No concern of mine?

Pinacium: Unless you’ve just been made a new official, Authorized to make interrogations and to spy and eavesdrop.

Theopropides: Where you stand is my own house.

Pinacium: Has Philolaches sold the place?

Phinascus: [To Pinacium] Maybe that old geezer’s simply trying to bamboozle us.

Theopropides: [firmly] Look, I speak the truth. Now tell me what’s your business here.

Phaniscus: Our master has been drinking at a party here.

Theopropides: Your master has been drinking at a party here?

Phaniscus: That’s what I said.

Theopropides: You’re carrying this joke to far.

Phaniscus: We’re here to pick him up.

Theopropides: Pick who up?

Pinacium: Our master. Must we tell you all this twenty times?
Theopropides:  *To Phaniscus, ignoring Pinacium* You seem to be the sensible one; I’ll tell you. No one lives here now.

Phaniscus:  Doesn’t that young Philolaches live right here inside this house?

Theopropides:  *Used* to live here. He moved out of this house quite a while ago.

Phaniscus:  *whispers to Pinacium* This old geezer’s mad for sure.

*To Theopropides* You’re very wildly wrong, kind sir. For, unless he moved last night – or earlier today – I’m certain Philolaches lives here.

Theopropides:  No one’s lived here for six months.

Pinacium:  You’re dreaming.

Theopropides:  Dreaming?

Pinacium:  Dreaming.

Theopropides:  *To Pinacium* Don’t butt in. Allow me to converse with him.

*Now to Phaniscus* No one lives here.

Phaniscus:  Someone lives here now, and also yesterday ...

And the day before, the day before, the day before, *et cetera.* Since his father went abroad, the party’s been continuous.

Theopropides:  What is this?

Phaniscus:  No intermission in the wining or the dining, or the wenching, Greeking-up, inviting women skilled in music.

Theopropides:  Who’s been doing this?

Phaniscus:  Why, Philolaches, sir.

Theopropides:  What Philolaches, boy?

Phaniscus:  Son of, I believe, one Theopropides.

Theopropides:  *aside* He’s killing me!

If he tells the truth, he kills me. First I ought to follow further.

*To Phaniscus* So you say this person Philolaches has been boozing here – With your master?

Phaniscus:  Yessir.
Theopropides:  Boy, you’re more a fool than you first seemed.  
Are you sure you didn’t stop to have a little snack somewhere, 
Having just a teeny-weeny bit too much to drink?

Phaniscus:  Why so?

Theopropides:  Maybe it’s an error and you chose the wrong house by mistake.

Phaniscus:  Sir, I’m well aware of where I’m going, and the place I’m at.  
Philolaches lives here – he’s the son of Theopropides.  
When his father went abroad on business, then the young man freed a  
Music girl.

Theopropides:  What? Philolaches?

Phaniscus:  Philematium – the girl.

Theopropides:  [almost afraid to ask]  How much?

Phaniscus:  Only thirty.

Theopropides:  Thirty talents?

Phaniscus:  Thirty minae, sir.

Theopropides:  [in a state of shock] So ... he freed the girl ...

Phaniscus:  [nodding] For thirty minae, yes, indeed, sir.

Theopropides:  [still in disbelief] Thirty minae ... really ... spent by Philolaches for a woman?

Phaniscus:  Really.

Theopropides:  Then he freed her?

Phaniscus:  Really.

Theopropides:  And after that his father departed for foreign lands, he has been carousing here continuously  
with your master?

Phaniscus:  Really.

Theopropides:  [almost too afraid to ask] Tell me, has he bought the house next door?

Phaniscus:  No, not really.

Theopropides:  Was there a down payment to the man who lives there?
Phaniscus: No, not really.

Theopropides: That’s the finish!

Phaniscus: Yes – he finished his own father.

Theopropides: So – your tale is truth.

Phaniscus: Would it were fiction! You his father’s friend?

Theopropides: [nods ‘yes’] How do you foretell his father’s fall in fortune?

Phaniscus: That’s not all. Thirty minae is a straw compared to other wild expenses.

Theopropides: [half aside] Father’s fully finished.

Phaniscus: And from one slave, one unholy terror:

Tranio, a sinful rogue who’d even bankrupt Hercules!
Oh, by Pollux, how I pity pitifully that boy’s poor father.
When he finds this out, the fellow’s little heart will fall apart!

Theopropides: [agonized] If the things you say are true –

Phaniscus: What profit, sir, would lying get me?

Pinacium: [knocking] Hey, will someone open up?

Phaniscus: [to Pinacium] Why are you knocking – no one’s there!
I suppose they’ve moved the party to another place. Let’s go ...

[The two slaves start to exit]

Theopropides: [calling] Boy –

Phaniscus: [to Pinacium] ... and search some more for Master. Follow me.

Theopropides: Boy – you can’t just go.

Phaniscus: [going] You have your freedom to protect your back.
I have no protection for my own ... unless I serve my master.

[With this, Phaniscus and Pinacium leave the stage.]

Theopropides: [in total consternation]
By Hercules, I’m finished. Why, from what I hear,
I haven’t travelled back and forth from Egypt,
But through the vastest reaches, farthest beaches too.
I’ve circled so, I don’t know where I am right now. [Looks off-stage] I’ll soon find out, for here’s the man who sold my son the house. [To Simo] How are you?

Simo: [entering] Coming from the forum home.

Theopropides: Did anything that’s new transpire in the forum?

Simo: Why, yes.

Theopropides: Well, what?

Simo: I saw a funeral.

Theopropides: And so?

Simo: The corpse was new: he’d just transpired recently. At least, that’s how I heard it told.

Theopropides: Oh, go to hell!

Simo: It’s your own fault, you’ve busybodied me for news.

Theopropides: But look, I’ve just come back from overseas.

Simo: [sarcastically] I’m sorry I can’t ask you to dinner. I’m invited out.

Theopropides: Look, I’m not hinting –

Simo: But tomorrow’s dinner, then – I’ll let you ask me – if nobody else does first.

Theopropides: Look, I’m not hinting for that, either. If you’re free, Please give me your attention now.

Simo: Of course, of course.

Theopropides: From what I know, you’ve gotten forty minae from My son.

Simo: From what I know, I’ve got no such thing.

Theopropides: From Tranio, his slave?

Simo: That’s more impossible.

Theopropides: The first deposit he gave to you?
Simo: You’re dreaming!

Theopropides: [now suspicious of Simo’s motives]
Oh no – you’re dreaming if you hope this is the way
You’ll cancel our negotiation by some masquerade.

Simo: I’d cancel what?

Theopropides: The deal concluded with my son
While I was gone.

Simo: [surprised] Negotiations with your son –
While you were gone? What were the terms? What was the date?

Theopropides: To start with, I still owe you eighty minae ... cash.

Simo: Oh no, you don’t – [stops, thinks] Well, if you say so, then ... pay up!
A deal’s a deal, don’t try to duck out with a dodge.

Theopropides: I don’t deny the debt at all. I’ll gladly pay.
But you behave, and don’t deny you got the forty.

Simo: By Pollux, look me in the eye and tell me this:
What did they say you bought with all the cash?

Theopropides: Your house.
That’s why I toured your portico and women’s quarters.

Simo: Why, Tranio told me a wholly different story:
He said you were about to give your son a wife
And wanted to add women’s quarters to your house.

Theopropides: I wanted to build ... over there?

Simo: That’s what he said.

Theo: Oh no, I’m lost, I’m absolutely speechless.
Oh, neighbour, I’m for ever finished.

Simo: [suspecting] Tranio
Has started something?

Theopropides: No, he’s finished everything!
He flim-flammed me today for good, forevermore.
But now, I beg you, Simo, aid me and abet me.

Simo: In what?
Theopropides: Please let me go with you back to your house.

Simo: I will.

Theopropides: Then give me several slaves and several whips.

Simo: They’re yours.

Theopropides: And while you do, I’ll tell you everything —
The many-splendoured ways he put me in a haze!

[The two old men exit into Simo’s house. Tranio struts happily out of Theopropides’ house.]

Tranio: Any man who trembles in a crisis isn’t worth a pittance.
[aside] Actually I wonder what a ‘pittance’ means – I’d love to know.
Wait, what’s this? I hear the door creak in our neighbour’s neighbourhood.
It’s my master! I would like to drink in what he has to say.

[Tranio sneaks back towards the alley to eavesdrop. Theopropides enters from Simo’s house, giving instructions to the slave whippers he has enlisted.]

Theopropides: Stand inside the doorway there, already to be called to action,
Then be quick to leap right out and manacle the man with speed.
I’ll just linger here until my flim-flam man comes on the scene,
Then I’ll flim and flam his hide as sure as I’m alive today!

Tranio: [to audience] All is out! Now, Tranio, think up a plan to save yourself!

Theopropides: I’ll be wise and wily if I want to catch him when he comes,
Won’t show him my hook at once; I’ll play him out with lots of line.
I’ll pretend I’m ignorant of everything.

Tranio: [sarcastically] O tricky man!
No one in all Athens could be shrewder than that fellow is.
Fooling him’s as hard a task as fooling some great – hunk of stone.
Now I’ll broach him and approach ...

Theopropides: I just can’t wait till that man comes.

Tranio: Looking for me, sir? I’m present to present myself to you.

Theopropides: [barely able to conceal his satisfaction that the victim’s here] Tranio – hel-lo! What’s new?

Tranio: The hicks are coming from the sticks.
Philolaches is en route.
Theopropides:  
\[ still welcoming Tranio\]  
By Pollux, what a nice arrival. 
Say, our neighbour there is very bold and cunning, as I see it.

Tranio:  
Why?

Theopropides:  
Denies he ever dealt with you.

Tranio:  
Denies?

Theopropides:  
And what is more – 
Claims you never paid a thing.

Tranio:  
Oh no, you’re joking. He denies it?

Theopropides:  
Well?

Tranio:  
I know you’re joking; it’s not possible that he denies it.

Theopropides:  
Still, he does deny it, and he claims he never sold the house.

Tranio:  
Unbelievable! And he denies we paid him cash for it?

Theopropides:  
He’d be willing to go under oath, if I would like him to, 
Swearing that he’s never sold the house or got any cash. 
Still, I claimed he had.

Tranio:  
What did he answer?

Theopropides:  
Offered all his slaves – 
All of them to me for trial by torture.

Tranio:  
Oh, he’ll never give them.

Theopropides:  
\[portentiously\] Yes, he will.

Tranio:  
I’ll go inside and look for him.

\[Tranio starts to exit\]

Theopropides:  
No – stay, stay, stay. 
Let’s investigate the matter.

Tranio:  
\[stops\]  
Why not leave the man to me?

Theopropides:  
Let me get the slaves out here.

Tranio:  
You should have done that long ago. 
Or at least have made a legal claim.
Theopropides: What I want first of all is –
    [heavy irony] Trial by torture for the slaves.

Tranio: Indeed, by Pollux, good idea.
    [Leaps onto altar] While you do, I’ll set up on this altar.

Theopropides: Why?

Tranio: Why, don’t you see?

Theopropides: [extra sweetly] Do get up.

Tranio: Oh no.

Theopropides: Not on the altar, please.

Tranio: Why not?

Theopropides: Actually ... I’d like the slaves to flee for refuge on the altar.
    Then I’ll have a stronger case in court and win more money too.

Tranio: Don’t keep switching plans of action. Why sow seeds for further trouble?
    After all, these legal things are very tricky, you know that.

Theopropides: Do get up. Come over here. I’d like to ask for some advice.

Tranio: Here I’ll be a fine adviser. Sitting down, I’m so much wiser.
    Speaking from a holy spot, I can advise with greater strength.

Theopropides: Do get up, no joking. Look at me.

Tranio: I’m looking.

Theopropides: Do you see?

Tranio: Well, I see if someone came between us, he would starve to death.

Theopropides: Why?

Tranio: [smiles] We’re both so tricky that we give no food for honest thought.

[Now Theopropides sees that Tranio knows. He drops his friendly pose.]

Theopropides: You tricked me!

Tranio: Did I?
Theopropides: Oh, and what a way you
Egged me on.

Tranio: [naïvely] Let’s see your face: is any egg still on it now?

Theopropides: No, of course not, since you egged me out of every brain I had!
Every evil deed of yours is now discovered – and in depth.
And from this discovery there’s one recovery – in death!

Tranio: Well, you’ll never get me up from where I sit.

Theopropides: But I’ll command that
Fire and firewood be put around you, gallows bird. You’ll roast!

Tranio: Don’t do that. I’m so much sweeter when I’m boiled, not roasted up.

Theopropides: I’ll make an example of you –

Tranio: [smiling] Ah, so I’m exemplary.

Theopropides: [angry] Speak - when I went off abroad, what sort of son did I leave here?

Tranio: Normal type – two eyes, two ears, two hands, two feet, etc.

Theopropides: That was not the question.

Tranio: Sorry, that was what I felt like saying.

[Peering off-stage] Look – I see your son’s best friend, Callidamates, coming here.
Why not wait till he arrives and deal with me when he’s at hand?

[Enter Callidamates, now clear-headed and sober.]

Callidamates: [to audience] After the effects of all my boozing were slept off and under,
Philolaches told me that his father’s back from overseas,
Also how that slave had fooled his father as he just arrived.
Philo’s too ashamed right now to step into his father’s sight.
So our little social circle chose me as ambassador to
Seek the sire and sue for peace. [Sees Theopropides] But look who’s here – how wonderful!
[calls] Greetings, Theopropides, I’m glad to see you safe and sound,
Back from overseas. Do come to dinner at our house tonight.

Theopropides: Hail, Callidamates. Many thanks for dinner – I can’t come.

Callidamates: Oh, why not?

Tranio: [to Theopropides] Go on – or else I’ll take the invitation for you.

Theopropides: Whipping post – you mock me still?
Tranio: Because I’d go to dinner for you?

Theopropides: Well, you won’t. I’ll see you go where you deserve – right on a cross!

Callidamates: [to Theopropides] Never mind all this; just say you’ll come to dinner.

Tranio: Well, speak up!

Callidamates: [to Tranio] Hey, why are you refugeeing on that altar – that’s so stupid!

Tranio: [indicating Theopropides] His arrival frightened me.

[to Theopropides] But tell me what you claim I’ve done. Now we have an arbitrator for us both, so state your case.

Theopropides: I say you corrupted my young son.

Tranio: Now just a minute, please.

Yes, I will confess: he sinned while you were gone. He freed a girl, Drew a lot of cash on interest, threw the lot of cash away. Yet do other boys of noble families do otherwise?

Theopropides: Hercules, I must be careful of you; you’re a tricky advocate.

Callidamates: Let me be the judge. [to Tranio] Get up, and I’ll sit on the altar now.

Theopropides: All the rest I rate at nothing. I’m just angry at the way he Made a fool of me.

Tranio: Well done it was, and I rejoice in it!

Old men with a hoary head should act their age in brains as well.

Theopropides: [to Callidamates] What will I do if my friends find out?

Tranio: Tell them in what way your servant made a fool of you. You’ll provide them the finest plot for their new comedies.

Callidamates: [to Tranio] Quiet, will you? Let me talk a bit. [To Theopropides] Do listen, sir.

Theopropides: All right.
Callidamates: You know well that I’m the very closest friend your son has got. Since he’s too ashamed to set a single foot in sight of you, Knowing that you know all that’s been done, he came and asked my help. Now I beg of you, forgive his youth and folly – he’s your son. Boys are boys, you know, and when they’re young, they play so playfully. What’s been done, we did it both together, and we both were wrong. All the principal and interest, all the cash we paid to free the girl, We’ll both pay it back, we’ll share the cost, and you won’t pay a thing.

Theopropides: No more eloquent ambassador could come to me on his behalf. You succeed. I’m now not angry or annoyed at what he did. Even while I’m here let him drink up, make love, do what he’d like! If he feels ashamed at what he’s done, that’s punishment enough.

Callidamates: Very, very shamed he is.

Tranio: Now what about forgiving me?

Theopropides: I’m for – giving you a thousand lashes.

Tranio: Even if I’m shamed?

Theopropides: Hercules, I’ll kill you if I live!

Callidamates: Oh, can’t you pardon all? Let him go for my sake. Please forgive whatever wrong he’s done.

Theopropides: Anything but that – I would do anything for you but that! No – for every dirty deed, I’ll make that dirty fellow bleed.

Callidamates: Please pardon him?

Tranio: Please pardon me?

Theopropides: But look how insolent he’s posing there!

Callidamates: Tranio, if you have any sense, you’ll be quiet.

Theopropides: [to Callidamates] You should be quiet in urging her to be quiet. She’ll be quiet enough once she’s been punished.

Tranio: Not a chance of that!

Callidamates: Please don’t take the trouble!

Theopropides: Please don’t beg.

Callidamates: I beg.
Theopropides: Don’t beg me, please.

Callidamates: Don’t beg me not to beg. Just this once, I beg you, sir, forgive his wrong – at my request?

Tranio: [to Theopropides] Why persist? You know tomorrow I’ll commit some fresh new wrong. Then you’ll get revenge for both – for what I’ve done and what I’ll do.

Callidamates: Please.

Theopropides: Well then, it shall be so; begone unpunished. [Tranio jumps down off the altar.] Don’t forget to thank Callidamates for helping you get what you deserve. Who is the trickier now? [Calls slaves & whippers to chase Tranio off stage.]

~ finis ~