

ACT 1 SCENE 1

Philargyrus: For nights and days, I've had this needle in my side, and last night I didn't sleep a wink. It's my son. He just wants money so he can waste it on *ingenuae artes*, the liberal arts, and learn about global communities. He wants more money than I have, money that I sweated for. And what's he going to do? He would use it and lose it. Most kids these days, all they want is sex and strippers, and they waste their father's hard-earned money on beer, blackjack, and God knows what else just to torment their parents! And even worse, liberal arts majors, do even 1 in 10 of them end up with a job? What happened to STEM? Is that my friends Eubulus and Philostorgus coming? Why yes, that's them! I will go and talk. Best to you both!

Eubulus: Well met good fellow, but why the long face? What's weighing on your mind? Those wrinkles on your forehead betray your grief. Tell us what it is.

Philargyrus: My son, my eldest, Philomathes, you know him right?

Eubulus: What sin this time? Is he in jail?

Philargyrus: No, no, worse than that. Let me tell you: ever since he was a child, he has loved going to school. Always liberal arts this, liberal arts that. Nothing could distract him, which was great when he was ten. Parent teacher conferences were pure joy, "He's a little miracle, so gifted, so advanced for his age. Always the top of the class." He never even dated once! He spent his whole time in the library. Didn't get an STD, didn't knock up anyone, unlike the other boys his age. What a great job I've done, I said to myself, fool that I was listening to all this praise. Now, I'm just the walking dead; I can hardly breathe. I have an honor student, what am I going to do?

Philostorgus: Back up, what's your problem? Get to the point.

Philargyrus: I'm getting to that. Yesterday, he came to me [*in a whiny voice*] Father, I can no longer live among these pea-brains, please send me to college. I want to major in philosophy just like Cicero did. He called it the lamp of life. Or I could major in Poly Sci because government is the salvation of society. Or, speaking of salvation, I could even join a seminary, if you want, and show people how to go to heaven. In whose footsteps they should follow, so that the Father on High brings them life eternal because of the death of his only-begotten, his son who died to appease his anger against us and open the door to heaven. Father, here I am, going around in circles. I have mastered all those so-called trivial skills. I can't spend my life reading children's books. I was meant for higher things. [*Returning to his regular voice*] When he said that, I nearly had a stroke. What was there to say? He may as well have said, "Dad, I'm going to throw you off a cliff into the sea." Why does he think I have so much money? Even if I did, why does he think I would give it to him? Doesn't he know how much my family spends every day? Doesn't he know how much it costs to be rich? So many things to look after, so many headaches; they're driving me to an early grave. They're tearing me apart! And now, my son wants money, God knows how much. My wife and her designer clothes, my fields, my vineyard, they need to be tended, and the house is falling apart, not to mention the summer cottage. I live in Hell and these Furies are torturing me! Why does God hate me, Eubulus?

Eubulus: Seriously? Are you a moron? Snap out of it. Your son has ambition and you're not supporting him? *You're* the one killing *him*! What you're saying makes no sense for him. He wants to study and you're just getting in his way. Take my word for it, you're making a big mistake, Philargyrus. Do you know how few educated people there are out there? Not many. You should be encouraging him, not stopping him. What's he supposed to do? Is he going to live in your basement forever? Why are you such a tight-wad, especially when you have money, and lots of it? Someone ought to lock you up for child neglect. You're supposed to invest in him, not enslave him. And what about God? He coined this whole world and put a lot of it in your pocket. When he calls you, what good will it do to have all that on your

CV? You're going to die, and you can't¹ take it with you. What's the point of working so hard to hoard your wealth? Besides, one day he's going to judge you, and he will condemn and fine you with a heavy punishment. He charged you not to hide away your money, but to share it with your neighbor in his hour of need. Come on you dog, what will you do for your neighbor in need when you won't even pay for your son to study the humanities? Themistocles got it right when he said he prefers a man without money, that money is useless without a man². He nailed you there, didn't he? What does all your wealth get you when you don't know how to use it? By Hercules, I would give everything I've got to educate my son, but he doesn't like the beatings and won't listen to a word I say. Do your part, get out your chequebook, and pay your son's tuition. How can a decent society continue without educated people? Men used to live like savage beasts, scattered on mountain tops, and educated people tamed them and gave them laws. They built cities and surrounded them with walls so that people could live, safe from the violence and attacks of foreigners, and they used laws to restrain criminals from violence. Professors created society and they are our salvation! How about this, I'll send my kid with yours.

Philargyrus: Your stupid words are killing me. As if I don't know what campus life is like. They send out silver-tongued recruiters to scam poor, wretched fathers of their hard earned money, committing crimes under the guise of building a good name. And what do students do? They have orgies, drink all day every day, start riots, break into peoples' houses, here a beating, there a brawl, abducting innocent women in broad daylight, or seducing proper girls and giving their faith and promise that they'll marry them, which the now pregnant girls insist on. And on top of that, my favorite part, they compromise the lawfully wedded wives of citizens, and that's why, more than once, they end up dead or lose those parts that make life worth living. Or, they get arrested and tortured. You want to send your son to college? Fine. I'm not sending mine. It's rough and littered with mines, that road to learning. And so, when students try in class, but fail, and never graduate, they turn to crime, "for wide and broad is the path which leadeth to

¹ Possible nec rather than the printed ne

² Plutarch, *Life of Themistocles*, 18.5

destruction.” This generation, have you seen them? They’re all about pleasure and sex, not studying. Give them an inch, they’ll take a mile when there’s no one who can rein them in or keep them in line.

Philostorgus: Congratulations, you’re the village idiot, a natural born fool, if you think you can restrain this generation with rules and regulations and lock them in their tower. Do you want your son to be Timon, who shunned all human contact and locked himself at home alone, or do you want him to be Odysseus, “the cities of a world of nations, with all their manners, minds, and fashions, he saw and knew?” *Pollon anthropon* he knew the *noon*. That’s why they called him *polutropon*! And now, he’s “woke” because he’d gone everywhere and used his crafty mind. Because he suffered losses and felt the hand of bitter fate, that’s how he got his wisdom. So, if you have any sense, don’t stop your boy from partying. He’ll learn more from them than if he spends his nights and days in books. Make him hang around with deadbeats. They’ll lie to him and leave him with nothing; afterwards, he won’t trust anyone, believe me. And suppose he visits prostitutes, they’ll rip him off and he’ll never see them anymore. He’ll avoid them of his own accord, and *that* is wisdom, true and simple. The one who’s loved and lost and learned a lot, he’s not so easily deceived as simpletons who rush into other peoples’ traps like careless fools. And the best part is, when they enter public office, they run things with admirable foresight. Those who have never had these experiences never profit. They’re totally useless on committees. Give your boy a chance to get around. He’ll get tired of being a frat boy and then he’ll stop, trust me, and he’ll make a better life for himself. That’s why, if it’s okay with you, I’m sending my boy to school with yours.

Philargyrus: Okay, fine. I give, you win. You’ve convinced me. It’s time to go inside. [*He turns inside the house, and calls out a servant.*] Go find Philomathes and tell him I want to talk to him. [*Servant exits*] [*Turns back to fathers*] Go and get your sons.

Eubulus [*to Philargyrus*]: Go on in, we’ll send our sons immediately. [*Exit left with Philostorgus*]

[*Philargyrus enters the house, right*]

ACT 1 SCENE 2

Philomathes [Happily entering right with (mute) servant]: My father called for me, that's great, I wonder what he wants. I hope it's what I've been praying for. I hope he's going to send me off to study liberal arts so I can cultivate my mind. That's what I've wanted all my life. I know he laid down the law and said it was too expensive to go to college, and now I'm going to go inside our house and find out why he summoned me. But wait, who's this I see running over here? My friends Acrates and Acolastus? I'll see what's new with them. What's the rush?

Acolastus: Your dad told our dads to send servants to call us to come here without delay to your house.

Philomathes: Come on, let's go! I wonder what this is all about.

Acrates: I know this at least, this is something we need to hear. You do the talking and ask them what they want. We've got your back.

ACT 1 SCENE 3

[The fathers re-enter.]

Philomathes: Salutations, most beneficent progenitors, we have been summoned here by your command, and we have come without delay, obedient to your injunctions in speedy haste.

Eubulus: And we give thanks to you, oh best of youth, for hastening to us so swiftly. You have put aside your other business, and you merit our applause for your constancy. Now, therefore, shall I speak the reason that we called you to our company. We've come to a consensus as to the path of life that's best for you to follow. It's our decision, most beloved children, that upon close consideration you apply your souls to the study of [*pause*] the humanities. And, if this plan should please you, in simple words, one of you speak your mind, and do not keep us in suspense for long, and we will send you to the university forthwith. [*Gesture of knighting*] We will pay for your tuition, however much you need.

Philomathes [*To Philargyrus*]: Dad, that's fantastic! It's music to my ears! I've never heard anything so beautiful in my whole life. You've *gaudeamus*'ed my *igitur*! I didn't even dream of asking you for this, and now you give it to me. I promise that I'll work hard and won't waste your money. And I'll return really smart, just watch!

Acolastus [*to Eubulus*]: Wow Dad, that sounds like a lot of work, but I hear they offer Greek at the fraternities.

Acrates [*to Philostorgus*]: Ditto. You're GOATed dad.

Eubulus: You'll never understand how much this modest response pleases me. And so, in short order, I'm sending you to study abroad. [*Sons celebrate, begin to leave*] But wait! I have some life-saving wisdom for you. [*Sons sit*] You're living in a very dangerous time, and you don't know it. You're totally ignorant about what traps there are waiting for you out there. It's a jungle! The biggest problem that you'll ever run into, the greatest nuisance, is women. You must take care; they'll try to lure you into loving them with their lovely words. Outside, they drip with the sweetest honey, but inside they fester with bitterness. There's nothing worse. They scam innocent young men out of their money, then throw them out, mock them, and give them the finger, the index finger. Nothing is more *mobile* than a *donna*. Their minds wander here and there, like a ship without a captain, driven far and wide by the faithless winds across the sea to God knows where, and that's why women cause so many problems! So many I can't even name

them all right now, and everybody already knows them. While you still can, don't let them put a ring around your neck. Just stay away from them, that's my advice. These things have led many a well brought up young man into the greatest peril, sometimes even to the brink of death. Don't drink, don't gamble, or anything like that. Don't fight, don't kill anyone. Every evil comes from those things just like rivers flow from the sea. Run away! [Sons attempt to exit again] Wait! [Sons sit again] There's another thing you should avoid: influencers. You know the saying, and it's worth knowing, "It's better to live among crows that eat the dead than among flatterers, for they eat the living." Finally, remember the words of Epictetus, "Keep calm and carry on." Words to live by. Study hard, night and day. Do your homework. Know the local laws. Do not get arrested. Take these words of mine to heart. Let's go in, and I'll count out the money for you right now. [To *Philargyrus & Philostorgus*] We will go and ready the path that they're headed down [To *the Sons*] so that by tomorrow, at the crack of dawn, God willing, you'll set off on a happy journey.

Philomathes: That's great, dad! [To *Acrates & Acolastus*] Can you believe how nice he is? I think I'm about to burst with joy. Who thought that this would happen? I give endless thanks to God almighty, everything I have, for putting this idea into our fathers' minds. Cover us with your heavenly grace and bounty, and make our education as happy as possible.

ACT 1 SCENE 4 OMITTED

FIRST CHORUS OMITTED

ACT 2 SCENE 1

[*One or two days later.*]

Acolastus: That took forever, I thought we'd never get here! I'm tired, aren't you? Let's hope that there's a place to stay around here, and something to eat. Where's the food? I don't think I've ever been this exhausted in my life. Time for a break. I've heard there's a good and friendly inn-keeper living around here. Let's go visit him and recover. I'll go knock on his door. [*Calling inside*] Hey, you! Someone, open up these doors!

Dan Iste the Student Loan Officer: What pleasure it gives me that you have arrived at my door safely. I could not be more delighted, but what do you want? I desire most earnestly to know why you've come to me. Please, do tell me the reason for your arrival here. And do be quick.

Acolastus: Our fathers have sent us here to study the humanities at this world-famous university. Could we rent some rooms from you? Nice ones, maybe? Is there anywhere to get a bite to eat?

Dan: Say no more. It's done. We've got it all prepared. Go right inside and eat your fill.

Acolastus: We're right behind you.

[*They pass the night.*]

ACT 2 SCENE 2

[*The next morning, Ted Colax walks out of the house, staring at his phone. Bill enters from stage left, takes out his phone and calls Ted.*]

Bill Musopolus [*on phone to Ted*]: Hey bro, you up? I'm outside your place.

[*Ted stares at phone.*]

Bill [*cont.*]: Pick up, [*knocks on the door*] I know you're in there, man. [*keeps knocking*] You have to come out sometime. The sun is shining. It's great weather! Spring is springing, man. Don't you have the munchies?

Ted: You're right. [*Bill is alarmed*] I'm glad you came, dude. I have something I gotta tell you. No joke, man, this is serious.

Bill: Cool, what?

Ted: Listen to what I heard in my astronomy class, or was it music? Anyway, there are these ethereal orbs, man. Have you ever heard of those?

Bill: I know all about that heavy shit, dude, listen to this. The sky's got these eight celestial spheres with seven planets – they call them Wanderers – and sphere eight is the firmament. It doesn't move. That one they call heaven. All of these go around in a big circle, some slow, some fast, and they all make their own sounds. And there's, like, no way they could be quiet, man, because they're moving through all this air. It's like air drums.

Ted: Sweet.

Bill: And that's why they each have a Muse. The moon is Clio and Mercury's Euterpe. Venus is Thalia, the sun's Melpomene, Mars Terpsichore, Jupiter Erato, Saturn's called Polyhymnia, and heaven is Urania.

Ted: Cool names.

Bill: And all of these are part of a singing group called Calliope, I got that from Hesiod. The eight of them make, like, this beautiful music together like a big boy band singing in harmony.

Ted: Oh, man. My head's spinning, how did they ever figure that out? That sounds so sweet, but, dude, why can't I hear it?

Bill: That's easy, man. The sky is really big, and the earth is really small. And so the sky makes these really big waves that can't get in your tiny ear holes. You see, we're all really atoms, that's Democritus, and it's like if you live near a waterfall, you stop hearing the noise after a while.

Ted: Dope. I love what you're saying, man. Don't stop, please.

Bill: If it sounds that good, it must be true, right? But you know, man, I'm not sure there's all this harmony out there, and let me tell you why and see if you agree. How can they make a sound if they're not beaten? And even if they were, the air up there is, like, mega thicc. No way the sound can get through that. And anyway, sound happens when things collide and it reaches our ears because the air is beaten. You've gotta have all three: collision, air, and more collision. But there's no colliding, man. Planets don't touch each other. How can they collide? And even if they did, there's no air up there to make a sound when they collide. Not beyond the moon, that's what my professor said³. Nothing up there changes, right? It can't⁴. And what smooth-brain would say that air can't change? It does, so if there's no air, nothing can change.

Ted: Naturally.

Bill: So, man, when you lay everything out and see all the principles and the causes, it comes down to this: Circumgyration.

Ted: Ouch.

Bill: That's why there's no sound. Period. It's totally bogus, man. I gotta get to class. [*Exits*]

³ Aiunt, rather than the printed aut

⁴ Offendi?

Ted: Holy macaroni, you got a gigantic brain. I'm outta here too, man. My head hurts. I think I learned too much. *[Exits]*

ACT 2 SCENE 3

[The same day.]

Philomathes: I needed that shower. I feel a lot better. Now, let's find a professor, someone really educated, who can lead us to the pinnacle of learning. Let's go register for classes! I hear that's really fun!

Acolastus: If we're going, let's go. I'm not seeing many pious and learned people around here. They're not going to teach us how to be good and decent people, that's for sure. Let's go find someone who's obviously learned and pious, who can teach us the humanities. Then we'll have decent character.

[Humanities Advisor enters, carrying a sign]

Acrates: Look at that lady, the way she's dressed. She looks like an advisor. Let's ask her.

Acolastus: What's that sign next to her? Is she from the university? I don't want to follow some doofus, the blind leading the blind, you know.

Acrates: You go talk to her, Philomathes.

Philomathes *[Very formally]*: *Salve*, greetings ma'am.

Humanities Advisor: *Salve* yourself. Please, spit it out. What do you want? I'm really busy here. I'm not supposed to be talking to people. I have a job to do, so make it short.

Philomathes: Sure, please explain to us who's in charge here and who in this university does the most teaching. We've been sent here to enlighten our minds with the humanities.

Humanities Advisor: Oh, so you have rich parents? Nice clothes. We'll need to check your application. Any criminal record? Come here. [*Advisor sniffs, checks box on paper*] Not drunk. Okay, you're admitted. I'll introduce you to a professor. He's a specialist in religion and moral theology. We don't get many majors in that department anymore. Are you sure you want to do this? [*Students nod*] Alright, follow me. I'll take you to him.

ACT 2 SCENE 4

Humanities Advisor: Hello? Hello? No one's there.

[*Department Secretary opens the door and enters*]

Secretary: Who are you? Why are you beating on our door? What do you want?

Humanities Advisor: Is the professor in?

Secretary: Yes, but it's his office hours and no one can disturb him. Just wait here, I'll be right back. [*Picks up phone*] Some advisor's here with three kids and wants to talk to you, just for a moment. [*To Students & Advisor*] He's checking his calendar. He'll be right out.

[*Humanities Professor enters*]

Humanities Advisor: Hello, professor.

Professor Pedant: Hello. Are you the ones who want to meet with me?

Humanities Advisor: These kids have a few questions. [*To Students*] Go ahead.

Professor Pedant: You found me at a good time. But why have you come? Tell me.

Philomathes: We've read all your books and articles, and our fathers sent us to this prestigious institution so we can enlighten our minds with the humanities and, imbued with wisdom, someday we can be pastors and politicians. You're a specialist in religion and moral theology, right? There aren't many of you left, are there? We're registering, are your classes full? We promise to complete all of our assignments on time and show our gratitude to you not only in the price of our tuition, but also celebrate your memory, which we will keep alive as long as you are here and long after you're gone.

Professor Pedant: The great talent that has been entrusted to me will not go to the grave with my body, and the use of this wisdom will be returned with interest. It has always been my fondest ambition to do the best I can for all my students and never hide my light. I gladly accept you into my class. I can see that you have a lot of natural talent. It shines in your eyes. I see many signs of it: your bangs hang halfway down your forehead, your complexion is not too dark and not too light, and you have curly hair. Your silhouette prognosticates great and magnificent things to me. This is the law of this school: no one enters un-geometried. If you apply yourselves, I'm sure that in no time at all you'll see the fruits of your labors. But the path to the humanities is not a wide one. Indeed, it is very narrow and filled with many pitfalls before you reach the mountain top, where Phoebus sits with the nine muses, strumming his melodious strings. Do not be lazy, for the slothful never make it up that hill⁵, which indeed is never scaled without the greatest effort, diligence, and sweat. You will have to labor constantly if you wish to pluck the fruits of knowledge. [*Students nod and attempt to walk away, Professor continues*] For remember, as Isocrates reminds us, the roots of learning are bitter, but the fruits are sweet. Hence the ancients depicted Mercury, Hercules, and Cupid as examples of wit, labor, and passion⁶, which all need who wish to reach the mountain and molehill of learning. Be brave and put your shoulder to the grindstone, reach for the stars, for effort and labor are the price the gods charge us mortals for all good things. And soon, you will run free with the Muses, and in no time, through my assistance, they will help you see and show you the knowledge of many subjects, and your immortal fame will shine forever. [*Students nod again and attempt*

⁵ Cf. Petrarch, Ascent to Mont Ventoux

⁶ Cf. Didascalion of Hugh of St. Victor, as well as Martin Luter

to walk away, Professor continues] For not only will the humanities make you rich, but will also guide you into the corridors where kings and dukes wield power. You may not have money now, but far richer will you be than anyone who has great wealth but no Latin. Humanities students do not fear fire, or misfortune, or expulsion, but all things good and true in life surround them. *Ergo*, toil and lucubrate, climb the peaks of learning. The gates of knowledge are guarded by diligence and labor. I will take you under my wing. You can count on that. Moreover,.. [*Philomathes interrupts*]

Philomathes: You will be our guide, and we will work hard and stick to our books. We know the dangers of leisure and laziness. There is much temptation towards vice, which saps the power of the mind and corrupts it. The only way to counteract it is through the greatest effort, just as iron turns to rust if it's not used. *Ergo*, we'll grind our shoulders and never stop, no matter how hard the assignment is so that we can penetrate every little nook and cranny in the mountain. Farewell, O dearest teacher.

Professor Pedant [*As the students leave*]: And you too, best of students. May heaven smile upon your pious quest.

ACT 2 SCENE 5

[*The next day.*]

Bill [*hungover*]: Yesterday, man, that was rough. How long were we drinking? Till midnight? Ted, dude, we were so drunk, all of us. I could barely stand. I nearly fell on my face. They thought I was having a seizure. I had a professor that said being drunk and having a seizure is the same thing.

Ted [*equally hungover*]: Really?

Bill: Yeah, my philosophy class. When we were totally plastered, we went out into the street, and ran into a bunch of construction workers. They pulled out knives and attacked us. Dude, you should have

seen us. We totally wasted them, and they ran away. There was blood everywhere. They're lucky we didn't merc them. Then, a SWAT team showed up, packing heat in full riot gear. It was a monster shit-show. Nightsticks, helmets, the works. We beat them up too and chased them out of there like bats out of hell. We were like wolves and they were sheep, lions on gazelles.

[Ted & Bill laugh]

Bill: I was laughing so hard I almost pissed myself. I can't believe this city hires these lame-ass beta-males to patrol it.

Ted: What happened next? Did you have to fight the bystanders, too? They all hate students, you know that.

Bill: Better believe it. The townspeople ran home and armed themselves and attacked us. That's when we split the scene. We weren't stupid enough to take on the whole city.

Ted: Good move. What an unbelievable story. You got balls, dude. Gotta fight fire with fire, man, that's the only way. It's a jungle out there. Animals don't think, they just leap into a fight, so why can't we? But let's blow this popsicle stand, where's the nearest bar? I need a drink. Hey wait, isn't that Acrates and Acolastus coming this way?

Bill: Yeah, it's them.

Ted: I wonder what's up. What's their hurry?

Bill: They're probably late for class.

Ted: Let's see. *[Calling to Acolastus & Acrates]* Hey guys!

ACT 2 SCENE 6

Ted (cont.): What are you doing, bro? Where ya headed? What's the rush?

Acolastus: I heard a bell and I'm on my way to class. I can't miss it since he doesn't record his lectures. Once it's gone, it's gone forever, water under the bridge.

Ted: You're actually going to class?

Acrates [*to Ted and Bill*]: Where are you headed?

Ted: There's this chick, Dele...something, she's having a party at her dad's house. He's got lots of booze. It's gonna be a good time. We're gonna be there all day partying. You can come with us if you want, I'm sure they'll let you in. My whole frat is going to be there. [*Acolastus & Acrates look at each other with suspicion.*] They're great guys, totally trustworthy, pure of heart, nothing fake about them, honest to the core. Nothing bad is gonna happen to you there. There's nothing to fear. I'm happy to vouch for you.

Acrates: I can't, I gotta get to class. I really can't miss it. My father would totally freak out if he heard I was day drinking. He told me to stick to my studies day and night.

Bill (Frat Guy?): Don't listen to him, I don't listen to mine. We're young, we're alive, it's our springtime. Our bodies are strong. We're supposed to be happy and get in all sorts of trouble. Time will pass and we won't be able to do this forever, you know. There's no place for sadness in my life. I've seen what old age does to people. It weakens them, makes them depressed, and slow, and flabby. They're sick and miserable all the time. They're slowly going crazy, sitting around, waiting for death to show up at any moment, or something like that. When I turn that corner, then I'll act my age, be wise and prudent, since I won't be strong enough to do anything else. Then I'll choose to stop and trash the way young people act, the same way old people are always roasting us. I'll tell you the real reason: when they were young, they

never got to do any of this. Their teachers frowned and their fathers laid down the rules, and they didn't have any money anyway, and now they want to do the same to us: no fun allowed. They're just jealous, jealous that we have a chance at happiness. Well, screw them. I'm having fun. That's what being a teenager is for. If you're not a sheep and have any balls, you'll come with us.

Acolastus: I don't know, man. I don't think I should.

Bill/Frat Guy: Come on, man, what are you, scared? I'm not. It's not like people will die there.

[Acolastus shakes his head]

Bill/Frat Guy (cont.): Dude, remember that play we read? Iphigenia in... Trouble. Remember that guy Pilates who said he was Arrestes, some prince guy. They met this king Thorax of the Scything people, and he risked his own life to save his friend from death. You're Pilates, man. You're gonna make so many good friends there.

Acolastus: Like who?

Bill/Frat Guy: Oh man, SBOs, football players, all the cool people, the best and brightest, the GOATs, man.

Acolastus: Alright, I'm in. Let's go. I can study tomorrow. Time to live a little. Who wants to die in a library, anyway?

[Omnes exeunt, the night passes.]

SECOND CHORUS OMITTED

ACT 3 SCENE 1

[The next morning.]

Acolastus (*love-lorn*): God Almighty! I'm on fire! I'm a hunk, a hunk of burnin' love! My insides are melting, my heart's ablaze, and there's fire in my veins. If I belched right now, I'd cook you like a dragon. If this were Sicily, I'd be a raging Etna erupting like crazy. I don't care who knows, not even my father, I'll shout it from the rooftops: I'm in love! It's Deleasthisa, she's cooked me with her beauty and her looks. And she's a virgin, too! Not to mention all the other virtues of her mind and body. But her body *is* really great. There's never been anything like it, no one that compares. Even Jupiter would go after her. Not Europa, not Calisto, or Io, or Semele comes even close. If she were at the Judgment of Paris, he would have been hot for her, not Venus, and given her the golden apple. I don't have to tell you: those dark eyes, her porcelain skin, her golden hair, the rosy blush that stains her satin cheek, and what a rack! She's quite a package. 10 outta 10. Every god and goddess up in heaven competed with each other to see who could endow her with better qualities, a shape like nothing ever seen before. Venus gave her beauty, Minerva brains, Mercury a silver tongue. I can't stop thinking about our conversation yesterday. I'm so hot for her, if I don't get to see her again, I'll just die. It's done, there's no hope left for me. O Deleasthisa, I wish there were a sea between us, just like Hero and Leander, so that I could swim to you and show you how brave I am, and hold you in my arms. Love does not favor the fearful and the lazy. And besides that, I'm a good swimmer. I'm not gonna die that way; that's for other people. Come on, Venus, I'm down bad. Help me get this girl! Aren't you supposed to be there for lovers? We're the heroes who've enlisted in the Cupid battalion. Make her love me just as much as I love her. You showed that stud Hippomenes how to pass Atalanta by throwing golden apples, which she picked up, and then lost the race. It is you that helped Paris win over Helen, and that led to the total destruction of Troy. But I'm a blockhead. Who gives a rip about these lovers? They're all made-up anyway.

[Deleasthisa enters from the house]

Acolastus: Here's my chance. It's her, she's coming outside. We can talk without any chaperones around and I can tell her how I love her. And if words fail, I'll buy her something. Offerings work on gods, surely they work on women too.

ACT 3 SCENE 2

Deleasthisa: What is this feeling I'm feeling inside me? What's going on? I never thought I'd fall for some guy. I've always hated on love, but apparently I was wrong. Look at Medea, Scylla, Ariadne, idiots, all of them for letting themselves get caught up in a relationship. See how they ended, I said to myself. But now, I'm forced to admit I was a total hypocrite. Love conquers all, and we women are especially defenseless. But so was mighty Jove. It made him dress up like a bull and a swan. I never could understand why, but now I do. I regret all the bad names I used to call love. Whether you're willing or not, it'll drag you in, and that's what's happened to poor me. You won't believe what I've been feeling. Acolastus has cooked me with his beauty and his looks. I met him yesterday at the party at our house. One look at him, and my burners ignited. My heart caught fire. I'm so hot to win his love, I'll just die if I don't. [*Praying*] O gods above, I beg Hymen and Juno to join us one day in holy matrimony. If not, I'll hang myself. Or maybe stab myself to death. Either way, I'll sever my thread of life, whether the Fates like it or not.

Acolastus: Are you listening, Acolastus? Your life is in the balance. It's time for you to act. God helps those who help themselves. Come on, just go up to her and say hello. [*To Deleasthisa*] Hey. Wassup pretty lady? You lookin' real fine. [*To himself*] Oh god, I suck. What the hell was that?

Deleasthisa: Hey yourself, Acolastus. Lookin' good from top to bottom. What's with the long face? [*Acolastus stammers*] You okay? You seem out of breath. Is something wrong? [*Acolastus stares*

silently] I mean, besides the times we live in. You know, everybody's just looking out for his own self and no one else.

Acolastus: Oh god.

Deleasthisa: Honey, come over here and sit down. [*The pair sit*] Tell me what's the matter. Don't hold back. What's eating you? [*Acolastus continues stammering*] I'll do everything I can to help you out.

Acolastus: I'm okay. [*Pause*] How about this weather we're having?

Deleasthisa: Then why do you look so sad? I'm dying to know. Tell me, do you need a therapist? Someone who can treat you?

Acolastus: No one but you. Help me!

Deleasthisa: The doctor will see you now. [*She lays Acolastus down on the bench.*] Tell me what's bothering you.

Acolastus: Just to be clear, we have doctor-patient confidentiality here, right? You won't tell anyone, anywhere, about anything I say, right?

Deleasthisa: [*raising her right hand*] I swear on my diploma. I'll be Angerrona, your goddess of silence, [*holding finger to mouth*] or Harpocrates of Egypt.

Acolastus: Do you remember yesterday, when you were sitting by me at the party and I couldn't take my eyes off you? [*sitting up*] You're really pretty, I mean like, better than any girl I've ever seen by far, like twilight is to the night, like the sun to the moon. When you walk in a room, your radiance outshines everyone else [*scooting closer*] you're a total babe. You put all the other girls to shame. [*She giggles and turns away modestly.*] I mean, every part of you. I can't praise them enough. No poet could do them justice, not even Gallic Hercules, or Nestor. Who could capture the fire in your eyes, [*turning back*

to him] the both of them? It's like a thousand graces shine in each, all of them crowded in there. That rosy lip, those ruddy cheeks, those smokin' lashes, who could do those golden locks justice? And *those* [pauses, looking at her breasts], I don't know how to praise them enough. [Deleasthisa closes her blouse and folds her arms, Acolastus scoots closer, she moves away.] You have perfect proportions [Deleasthisa stands up.] from top to bottom. I really like how there's one thing on each side. Nothing too big, nothing too small, you're so symmetrical. [Acolastus stands up, she moves away.] And now that I look at you and add up all your parts, it's no wonder that I fell so hard for you. Yesterday, cruel love pierced my eyes. Today, it shot a flaming arrow straight into my heart, like a needle. [Acolastus moves toward her.] I'm restless all day, I can't sleep at night, all I can think about is what you look like. [Deleasthisa crosses away from him.] Come on, give me a chance, it's a matter of life and death! [She turns away.] I'm young, I'm like a rose, I'll dry up in the sun and wither, and fall! [He chases her around the bench.] You decide. It's in your hands. Which is it? I'm begging you, give me life, don't let me die. Please, let me love you, darling. [She sits down on the bench and looks away.] I'll do whatever you want! I'll give you anything, no matter what it costs, just ask it. [He sits down next to her.] Name your price! [Deleasthisa stands up.]

Deleasthisa: What the hell is wrong with you!? [He stands up.] Are you crazy? Have you lost your mind? [She pushes him around the bench.] You have the nerve to tell me we should do it? And you'll pay me? Right out here in public? Is that what you think of me? I have no shame? I'm some sort of prostitute? You think that you can talk to me like that? You have no idea who you're talking to, you slimy creep. [She turns away.] If I hadn't promised to keep quiet, I'd make your life a mess. [She sits on the bench and crosses her arms.] You do not understand the difference between boys and girls. You're gold, but we're silk. You can't be stained, but we girls, if even a drop of filth touches us, or any kind of dishonor, there's no way we can wash it out. Not by any means, or any labor. Crud just wipes off gold, but it ruins silk. If anything, wiping it off makes it shine brighter. You guys don't care about stuff like that because it's never a problem for you, but the slightest rumor stains us, and we can never get it out, no

matter how hard we try. Our reputation is ruined. That's why we have to always be careful not to lose our virginity; it's our greatest asset. If we lose that, we can never buy it back, even with gold.

Acolastus: Oh come on, have a heart! Don't be mean like that. Have a little pity! Can't you see I'm dying here? I'm such a nice guy, ask anyone! [*She rolls her eyes and starts to exit. He runs to block her.*] Did you ever hear the story of the nymph in love with Helius? He rejected her just like you rejected me, and she turned into a sunflower and now she stalks him forever. That's what I'm going to do too! [*She turns and walks the other direction.*] And then I'm gonna get a sword or a noose and end my misery! You'll be sorry then because you made me do it! You're being cruel! [*She stops and turns back. He rushes up and throws himself at her feet.*] Deleasthisa, I promise, I swear by all the stars in heaven, I will marry you, I'll take you home. Will you take me?

Deleasthisa: [*She slaps him.*] Take yourself, I hope you die, you shameless pig! [*She turns to exit again, he grabs her by the arm.*]

Acolastus: Where are you going? I thought we were talking.

Deleasthisa: [*She pushes him away.*] Leave me alone; I'm done with you! [*as she is exiting*]
Pervert!

Acolastus: Women are amazing, aren't they? So clever, all of them. They all go to the same school, I think, and learn how to spin their pretty little lies, no matter who it hurts. She totally aced that class. I know she loves me, I can see it, but she's just playing hard to get. And she's really good at it. That's just the way that women are. The more they want it, the more they fight against it. The hotter they burn, the cooler they act. She won't admit she wants me, but she does, I just have to keep trying. I need to apologize and be extra nice. I know, I'll throw a party and ask her to join us! Ted, Bill, Philostatius, and Acrates, I'll have them all over for dinner. It'll be chill. Her parents are off visiting friends.

[*Some length of time passes.*]

ACT 3 SCENE 3

Acolastus [*clapping his hands, speaking offstage*]: Hey, you there, bring in the table and set it up! [*The servants bring in a table with food.*] Now, go tell Ted and the others to hurry up and come here. Everything is ready. When you're done, go find someone to sing for us while we eat; gotta have music. [*He goes to the door.*] Deleasthisa! [*Pause, she comes out with her arms crossed.*] Get us some party stuff, leis, something you can give to the guests when they arrive. Okay? You're the hostess, we need nice things to give them. Kind words, maybe a hug, so that there's nothing missing. [*She holds out her hand for money, he gives her a coin, she examines it and gestures for more.*] I'll pay you back tomorrow, whatever that doesn't cover.

Deleasthisa: Fine, I'll take care of it. You just make sure your guests have fun, drinking and telling jokes. [*She goes back inside the house.*]

Acolastus: This is gonna be the best party ever! I'll see to it. Nobody is going to leave here sober. Everyone is gonna love me.

[*Bill, Ted, & Philostatius enter.*]

Ted: Hey, dude. What's up?

Acolastus: Great to see you, guys, you're the best.

Bill: You won't think so when we're done here. We're ready to eat and drink, let's get to it! Where's the good stuff? [*Deleasthisa enters carrying leis.*]

Deleasthisa [*hugging them*]: Good to see you, again, boys.

Ted: That's what I like, a warm welcome.

Deleasthisa: Here, want a lei? They're from our garden. [*Bill & Ted share a look.*] Okay, they're not much, now don't be rude.

Philostatius: I like the way they smell.

Acolastus: Someone, get some water so we can wash our hands.

Acrates: You're gonna sprinkle us with water? What is this, church? Why do we need to wash our hands?

Acolastus: Have a seat, boys. Let's get this party started. [*He holds up a bottle.*] Time to live like Alexander [*He pours a drink.*] and burn the place down! We're young, we're strong, let's *gaudeamus* our *igiturs*. [*He raises his glass.*] Drink or get out! Let's do this the ancient Greek way. [*He holds out his drink.*] I toast you, Ted! [*He takes a drink.*] May this bring you health and happiness. [*He hands the drink to Ted.*]

Ted: Don't mind if I do. Thanks man. [*He takes a drink, hands the drink back to Acolastus.*]

Acolastus: Now, Bill, it's your turn. Shotgun it! [*Bill finishes the drink, hands it back to Acolastus. Acolastus refills it and turns to Deleasthisa.*] Babe, you go first this round. [*She refuses.*]

Bill: I'll take it! Heads up. [*He drinks it, hands it to Ted.*]

Ted: Hey Acrates, this one's for you.

Acrates [*Taking the drink*]: Gladly. [*He downs it and sets it on the table. Bill grabs it.*]

Bill: What about you, Philostatius? Here's a toast to you. [*Bill drinks again.*]

Philostatius: I can do that, too. [*He pours himself a drink.*] Here's to you! [*He drinks.*]

Bill: Watch this, no one can drink me under the table.

Acolastus: Hey, where's the music? Wasn't there supposed to be a singer? [*He pounds his fist on the table.*] Someone's gonna get it if I don't hear a banger. [*Singer enters.*] There you are! Come here to the center. Now, sing us a little song! [*Everybody applauds.*] So what are you gonna sing?

Singer: A Homeric Hymn to Venus & Mars.

[*He sings while the others are eating.*]

Apollo went out, lookin' so fly | doin' his job way up in the sky

When he saw a sight that gave him a shock | Venus the babe doin' Mars the jock.

He ran to her man and told him the news | and Vulcan came up with this sweet little ruse.

He cooked up some chains and a trap he set | above their bed he put up a net.

So Mars sets out to Venus' house | to have some fun on the goddess' couch,

But when the pair start to get it on | they're caught unaware by Vulcan's con.

No matter how hard they try to hustle | they cannot move a single muscle.

Her husband sees them trapped in chains | and calls together all those who reign

To make sure everybody saw | Mars and Venus in the raw.

The gods all laugh and shout with glee | there's not one part that they can't see.

Now not one god will sleep with Venus | except for Hermes, with the golden wand.

Acolastus: Hermes had the right idea. Chain me up with Venus too.

Acrates: That was great, I'm stuffed. Anybody have a deck of cards? Wanna play? Let's see who's lucky.

Acolastus: Here, I've got some. [*He pulls out two decks of cards.*] Everyone, clear the table and make sure your hands are clean.

Bill [*Cutting the cards, to Acrates*]: You deal. No cheating. Ante up, put your money right here in the center. Winner takes all. [*As Acrates is dealing*] I can feel it; Lady Luck is gonna smile on me tonight. She and I are gonna fleece some sheep.

Acrates [*Organizing his cards*]: We'll see whose side she's on. Ted, you're first.

Acolastus: Hey, Deleasthisa, wanna join us? [*She indicates that she has no money.*] You can bet your handkerchief. There's gold on that, right? I'll bet my shirt. Now I'm silk and you're gold. Here, sit next to me.

Deleasthisa: Okay, deal me in. [*Acrates deals cards to her.*] I'll beat you boys, just watch.

[*They play whist, slapping cards on top of each other. Acrates secretly throws a card under the table and puts his foot over it.*]

Acrates: I win! Gimme that. [*He reaches for the money.*]

Philostatius: Hold up. [*He puts his hand over his own money.*]

Acrates: What's your problem? It's mine. [*He pushes Philostatius' hand away and takes the money.*]

Philostatius: Give that back, you cheater!

Acrates: No way.

Philostatus: You didn't win fairly, you crook.

Acrates: What do you mean?

Philostatus: You stacked this deck! You dealt from the bottom! Let me see those cards. [*He shoves Acrates out of his seat.*] Look at that! He was hiding that card under his foot! Give me back my money!

Acrates: No way. Go screw yourself.

Philostatus [*pulling out a dagger*]: Give me my money back, or I'll give you this.

Acrates [*pulling out a dagger*]: Go ahead, try. You wanna fight? Fine with me.

[*They fight. Everyone watches in horror as Philostatus stabs Acrates.*]

Acrates [*cont.*]: Look what you've done! You stabbed me! You jerk! Acolastus, help me! What are you waiting for?

Acolastus [*to Philostatus*]: I can't believe you did that! We're guests here! We're not even supposed to be out this late!

Acrates: What's your problem? Avenge me, kill him!

Acolastus: May all the demons of hell carry you off. [*He looks at Deleasthisa.*] I can't believe he did this in your house. [*He turns back to Philostatus.*] Get the hell out of here, or I'll throw you out myself! Is this how you thank me for dinner?

Philostatus: What are you talking about? I'm not scared of your threats. [*He brandishes the dagger.*] If you don't shut up, you'll be next.

Bill [*to Philostatius*]: Dude, what are you doing? You're not supposed to stab people in other people's houses. You could get in real trouble. Let's get out of here. Our dorm is just down the street, about a block away. We can go there and calm down.

[*Bill, Ted, and Philostatius leave and head down the street.*]

Bill [*cont, pointing off-stage*]: Woah, what's that? Are those townspeople? What are they saying?

[*Three townspeople enter and block Bill, Ted, and Philostatius' path.*]

Townsperson 1: Ba!

Townsperson 2: Ba!

Townsperson 3: Bu!

Philostatius [*to Bill*]: There's only three of them, shut up. We can take them. Watch this! We'll chase them off. They're all bark and no bite. Ted, stand here. [*He points to his right side.*] Bill, here. [*He points to his left side.*] Make sure they can't get away. When I tell you, attack them with your daggers. We'll ambush them and take them out. Got it?

Ted: Got it.

Townsperson 1: Ba!

Townsperson 2: Ba!

Townsperson 3: Bu!

Philostatius: Ho!

Bill: Ho!

Ted: Ho!

Townspeople: Run away! They're gonna kill us! [*They run off.*]

Ted [*laughing and yelling after them*]: Had enough? Want more? Let's get 'em. [*They chase after the townspeople.*]

ACT 3 SCENE 4

[*The next day.*]

Philomathes: I love doing homework, especially Homer. He's right about so many things, for instance, sons are never like their fathers, many are worse, one or two are better. My friend Acrates is a perfect example, Acolastus too. They're total degenerates, wasting their fathers' hard-earned money. There's a saying I've heard somewhere: the miser's son will waste his father's money. And believe me, it's true. It's like the journey to Mt. Parnassus. The path is narrow, thorny, rocky, full of dangers. There are monsters there that leer at you and block your path, and try to lure you away: Sex and Poverty and Loneliness. It's no easy climb. Although you hear the Muses singing high above, and even though they promise laurels, you can't resist the monsters down below, and while you're doing that, you forget to study. That's what happened to my compatriots. They're off having sex, and don't think at all about the Muses and Apollo. I wonder if they're at home. Maybe my words will put them back on the straight and narrow. Aha, there's Acolastus now!

[*Acolastus enters.*]

ACT 3 SCENE 5

Philomathes: Hey, Acolastus! I was just on my way to see you. But where's Acrates?

Acolastus: At home. He's not doing so well.

Philomathes: What? Is he sick? It's not serious, is it?

Acolastus: I don't think so.

Philomathes: That happened pretty quick. Did he have too much to drink?

Acolastus: How would I know?

Philomathes: Don't try to cover for him. I know everything. I'll never understand why you slosh around in these gutters, why you hang out with those people, those sodden scoundrels. They're not honest. They don't go to church.

Acolastus: It's not my fault. They just showed up yesterday. I was trying to be nice.

Philomathes: What a shame, that the only way you can make friends is by getting drunk with them. That's not what real friends are like. Did you completely forget what your father said? He warned us, you were there, not to hang around with people like that who will distract us from studying the humanities and drag us down with them. You're headed for trouble if you aren't careful. Their words sound sweet, but they'll lead you to ruin.

Acolastus: I can't just ignore them; they'll call me names.

Philomathes: Let them. Who cares? You can't trust them. They don't know right from wrong. You think they're good people, but they're not, believe me. They're really sick. They'll take you to somebody's house and cheat you. They say they'll do anything for you, but you can't trust a thing that comes out of their mouths. Their breath is honey, but they spit poison from their lips.

Acolastus: I don't think so. They seem nice and trustworthy to me.

Philomathes: Trustworthy? Are you crazy? These people tried to gut Acrates and kill him, didn't they? That's what I heard. You call that nice and trustworthy? They would have expelled you from school, if they could.

Acolastus: He's not dead. It was just a little scratch. And he was totally wasted, anyway.

Philomathes: What are you doing? As they say, "Trust no one, unless you've eaten 100 measures of salt with them⁷." You can hardly tell someone's true intentions. Snakes hide under flowers, and a rose covers up its thorns.

Acolastus: I can't be Timon. I can't be a hermit. Dad didn't say I couldn't make friends with good people. Am I supposed to turn down their favors⁸?

Philomathes: You want to be friends with thieves?

Acolastus: Why the hell do you care? How I spend my money is my own business.

Philomathes [*As Acolastus is exiting*]: It's not about the money! Stay away from them! [*To the audience*] I should really take my own advice.

THIRD CHORUS

[Last line *adhaerete*? Passive imperative with middle sense is unlikely, as is imperative infinitive.]

⁷ Lit. "You wouldn't recognize people today if you had eaten 100 measures of salt with them." Cf. early modern aphorism: "Nemini fidem, nisi cum quo modium salis absumpseris."

⁸ Benevolentia, rather than bevevolentia

ACT 4 SCENE 1

Euprositus: Is it true? We leave for two months and someone violates, oh my God, our daughter?

Eleutheria: That's right.

Euprositus: Who did it?

Eleutheria: Acolastus.

Euprositus: You can't trust anyone these days. Oh, what has the world come to? Criminals everywhere. My blood is boiling. I can't think straight! It's driving me mad. The next time I see that felon, I'll skewer him right between the ribs and I'll paint this road with his brains. What a man you are, Acolastus. A real hero you turned out to be, taking advantage of a defenseless girl, stealing her virginity. If you run into me, then I'll show you the anger you deserve.

Eleutheria: He did swear that he would marry her and take her home. [*Euprositus expresses doubt.*] Now, simmer down and calm yourself, dear. The way she looks, I think he likes it; he's a teenager. Modesty plus beauty always wins the day. Love, luck, and location spurred him on. Let's be friendly with the boy, use the gentle touch. It's what our daughter wants, and he's agreed to do the right thing. Let me talk to him. I know how to handle people. He'll agree with me and take her as a wife. [*Euprositus nods in agreement.*] Good, call a servant to fetch him.

Euprositus [*yelling inside the house*]: Dromo! [*Dromo enters.*] Go find Acolastus and bring him here as fast as you can. [*Dromo exits.*]

ACT 4 SCENE 2

Acolastus: O gods above, why do romances start with bliss but never have happy endings and leave everyone crying? But now I understand, miserable idiot that I am, why they call love a blind child. With him around, the most sensible people lose sight of what's wise, and act like stupid children. That's me, impulsive and clueless, a complete moron. I put myself in so much danger, not thinking ahead to where love can take a person. I willingly walked into a trap and I have no idea how to get out. I pressured a girl into having sex and now she's pregnant. I promised I'd do the right thing and marry her. But that's the problem. It's like nothing I've ever experienced before. I'm like a ship caught in a storm, winds blowing me this way and that. I don't know what's going to happen to me. Should I marry her? My father's the problem. When I left home, he told me to stay away from women. What's he going to say? [*In the voice of Eubulus*] "Did I send you here to defile women, or to study the humanities? How many times do I have to tell you to live a decent life? Don't you see Philomathes here? Is he sleeping around? Didn't he warn you not to waste your family fortune with nothing to show for it?" [*Back to his own voice, speaking to an audience member.*] Seriously, what am I supposed to say to my father? [*Reacting as if the audience member has told him to say nothing*] Don't tell him? No, piety, fairness, love, the law, faith, religion, they all make the case for Deleasthisa. Whether I like it or not, they impel me, drag me, force me, *they* will punish me if I don't do what's right. How can I resist them? I would deserve to have the earth eat me alive just like Amphiarus the Argive. My only other choice is to jump off a cliff, or cut myself open and free my soul. I'm caught in a maze, and I'd rather die than live this way. But if I have to live, no one is going to take her away. Poor girl, she trusted me, and now she's begging me to keep my word. I won't let her down, my mind's made up: I'll marry her. I must right my wrong. I need to talk to her father to make sure she knows that I'll follow through. [*He turns to enter the house. Euprositus enters in a rage, followed by his wife Eleutheria.*]

ACT 4 SCENE 3

Euprositus: You scum! [*Acolastus turns away from him.*] Look at me! My wife and I go out of town and you disrespect our family and ruin our reputation⁹? [*Euprositus moves to attack Acolastus, but Eleutheria restrains him.*] Let me go! [*To Acolastus*] I'm going to rip your hair out with my own two hands! I'll tear you apart like those Thracian women did to Orpheus! How dare you stain this house! Do you know what people will say? Don't just stand there! Have you no shame? Where is your decency? Talk to me, you hooligan!

Acolastus: I only have one thing to say: I admit it. I messed up. Mercy, please, I beg you.

Euprositus: Mercy? Are you kidding me? You deserve to be burned alive!

Acolastus: I'm not asking you to forgive me or condone what I did. I only want you to calm down long enough to hear me out. What's done is done. It can't be changed, but we can try to make the best of it. Beauty, youth, love, that's why I did it. You know what love can do. Not even Jupiter almighty can control it, or avoid Cupid's burning arrows. Let's face it: I took your daughter's honor. Give me a chance to return it. I'll marry her, and I swear to God, nothing but death will separate us, not as long as I'm alive. Out of all the other women in the world, she's the one I've chosen to spend my life with. So what are you so angry about? Can't you see we really love each other?

Euprositus: If you don't marry her, I'll take you to court and sue you.

Eleutheria: As you know, son, she's our one and only daughter, our pride and joy, and you are the one who took her innocence. If you don't marry her, her life will be over. She has a large dowry, and you'll never have to work another day in your life. I'm begging you, have mercy, don't desert us. I'm an old woman! [*She begins to cry.*]

Acolastus: Don't cry! As long as I have breath in my body, I will never desert you. Flowers will first grow in heaven and stars will shoot out of the earth before any misfortune or grave accident will take

⁹ Lit. "brand us with a mark of shame"

Deleasthisa from me, or me from her. But I need to go home and write to my father first, and tell him that I have your permission.

ACT 4 SCENE 4

Dan Iste: I'm an idiot. I never should have given Acrates all that money. Now his loan is overdue, and I can't find him anywhere. He's avoiding me. I'm sure of it. I saw him on the street the other day, and he just disappeared. If I run into him again today, I'll teach him some new words. That's the way things are today. If you don't go take back what's yours, you'll never see it again. And if they ever return any of it, they act like they're doing you a big favor. There's no such thing as honor anymore. It died and went to heaven, and instead immorality has come up from hell and possessed everyone. [*Seeing Acrates*] Speaking of which, look who it is, Acrates. I'll follow behind him, so he can't see me and hide. [*Jumping in front of Acrates*] Hello there. Where's my money?

Acrates: Money? What money?

Dan: My money.

Acrates: Oh, that money. How much was that again?

Dan: Twenty thousand.

Acrates: You loaned me that much? When?

Dan: You don't remember, scoundrel? I gave you ten you wasted gambling, and then ten more a week later for your little girlfriend, and for the doctor after you got stabbed at that party. And then the gift of crabs you got from the prostitute you slept with. And that was at least two months ago. Pay me what you owe, or I'll go to the dean.

Acrates: Try it and I'll throw you facedown in this mud. How dare you confront me in public? I already told you, didn't I, that I wrote my father. Once I get the money from him, I'll pay you. [*Acrates begins to leave.*]

Dan [*Blocking Acrates*]: Where do you think you're going? You've got some nerve. You make me never want to loan money again. [*Dan exits.*]

Acrates [*to himself*]: What do I do now? Make up some story to get the money from my father and pay off this debt? I know, I'll say I was sick for most of the term with yellow fever and I spent my money on that. But what if my father finds out about the prostitutes, [*As he exits, increasingly distressed*] and the gambling, and the day drinking. He's gonna be pissed.

ACT 4 SCENE 5

[*Back in the students' home town*]

Eubulus [*as he enters, holding a letter from Acolastus*]: Where's Philostorgus? I need to talk to him. [*Philostorgus enters.*] Ah, there he is, coming outside.

Philostorgus: Hello. I was just looking for you.

Eubulus: Me too.

Philostorgus: What's with the long face?

Eubulus [*holding up the letter*]: This is a letter from my son Acolastus. Apparently he knocked up the daughter of someone named Euprositus, who says they have to get married according to the law. What am I going to do now? Somebody shoot me, please. I wish he had never been born. Look at all the trouble he's caused me. Acolastus, Acolastus, didn't I tell you time and again not to hang out with those sorts of

people? Or let yourself be ensnared by women and their wiles? This is exactly what I was afraid would happen. I'm sorry to say I was right. And here's the irony: the sons who are never indulged or given any money, those are the ones who are good and obedient. But fathers like me, who let them do whatever they want, our sons turn out to be total degenerates. I'll tell you what the problem is: it's money and privilege. That's what is corrupting young people today. I hope I die before I ever see that abomination of an idiot son again. If I lay eyes on him again, he's dead meat. What about your son? Have you heard from him lately?

Philostorgus: Not a word, except he's been sick for a while. He also asked me to send him some money, quite a bit, for medical bills. So you're not going to let your son get married?

Eubulus: Not a chance. I'd kill him with my own hands first. Anything but give that degenerate my blessing.

Philostorgus: What are you going to do then?

Eubulus: You have to ask? First thing tomorrow, I'm heading out to see him. You coming with me? You can if you want.

Philostorgus: Good idea. Go home and get everything ready we'll need for the journey.

ACT 5 SCENE 1

Acolastus: I took a mythology class, and learned that there's this goddess named Ate. She deceived Zeus, and I wish she hadn't. He took her by the hair and threw her out of heaven, and told her never to come back. Now she runs around down here on earth causing problems and the worst

catastrophes. She's the source of all my problems. Both fathers, Deleasthisa's and mine, are after me, making all sorts of barbaric¹⁰ threats; one wants me to marry her, the other doesn't. Here a rock, there a hard place, where should I turn to get out of this mess? I'm surrounded by troubles on all sides. If God doesn't rescue me from all these problems, I'm gonna lose my mind. And now I hear my father's in town. Now I'm gonna get it. He's going to rip me apart. What am I going to do? // I know, I'll throw myself at the mercy of the Litai, Jupiter's daughters, the regrets who follow Ate. I'll kneel before them and beg them in humble prayer that they save me from these calamities, I who began to love under an unlucky star. [*Kneeling in prayer*] Litai, Litai, use your powers to save this miserable soul. I come to you for help and advice. Hurry, please! If you don't give me help, I'm totally dead. If I had known I would have so many troubles and problems because of this, I never would have gotten my wretched self involved. Blessed is he who can stay far away from the ties that bind and devote himself to the liberal arts. If only I could turn back time, I would never have let myself get caught up in this mess. It's true what they say, women are a curse, the good ones and the bad ones. People praise Penelope's purity, but she's the reason all those suitors died, the ones her husband killed. Helen brought hell to all of Asia. That's the way Deleasthisa got me into so much trouble. // I guess I'll go to my dad and see how mad he is. I don't think this is going to go well. Wait, isn't that *her* father coming this way? [*Acolastus exits.*]

ACT 5 SCENE 2

[*Euprositus and Eleutheria enter.*]

Euprositus: Didn't you just say that Acolastus was going to be here?

Eleutheria: I don't think so.

¹⁰ Likely an allusion to Ovid, as the Getae were the barbarians who resided in the Black Sea region around Ovid during his relegation

Euprositus: This is what I was afraid of. He's run away. Or he's moved. I'm beginning to think he's intentionally avoiding us. He never comes around anymore like he used to.

Eleutheria: Don't worry, he's a good boy. A humanities major, even. He won't do anything like that. I'm sure of it. Maybe he'd like to have dinner with us?

Euprositus: That's right, go make it. I'll head down to the market for a little while and see if there's any news. We're in an information age, after all.

[They both exit.]

ACT 5 SCENE 3

[Eubulus chases Acolastus onto the stage. Philostorgus follows Eubulus.]

Eubulus: Where do you think you're going, boy? I'm your father. I'm going to show you what a father can do. You think you can get away with seducing some girl, and then marry her without my permission, you miscreant?

Acolastus: Father, give me a break. *[Eubulus raises his hand to slap Acolastus.]* Please, dad!

Philostorgus *[grabbing Eubulus' hand]*: You're better than this!

Eubulus *[pulling his hand away]*: Let go of me.

Philostorgus *[stepping between Eubulus and Acolastus]*: You're going to kill your own son?

Eubulus: That's the plan.

Philostorgus: Oh, calm down.

Acolastus: You call this being a father?

Eubulus: And you call that being a son?

Acolastus: I'm done for.

Philostorgus: For heaven's sake, Eubulus, you're not going to kill this boy in front of me. I mean, really, have you forgotten what it means to be a father?

Eubulus: I have not forgotten what it means to be a father. Look at him, that smug face! He's forgotten I'm his father. He should obey me! You've known him all his life, always disobedient, turning his back on me. Now, against my will, he's going to marry some whore. We'll never hear the end of it! The moron doesn't even see the danger that lies ahead for him. When a father can't pawn his daughter off on anyone, he baits a lover, and as soon as they've slept together, he forces them to get married. [*To Acolastus*] If you were already married, this would not be an issue. [*Acolastus shrugs.*] [*To Philostorgus*] See, see, he has no shame at all! [*To Acolastus*] Go get Euprositus and bring him here. Now we'll see if he has any legal case for forcing you to marry a girl who is so generous with her virtue.

[*Acolastus exits.*]

Eubulus (*cont.*): She probably tempted him with food and drink to make him fall head over heels for her and now he's hopelessly in love. There's no saving him.

Philostorgus: Where's your humanity? He's going to marry her whether you like it or not.

Eubulus: If yelling at him doesn't work, what's coaxing going to do?

[*Acolastus leads Euprositus and Eleutheria on stage.*]

Eubulus (*cont.*): But unless my eyes deceive me, I see them coming now.

ACT 5 SCENE 4

Euprositus: Let me get this straight: your father is so angry that he won't let you marry my daughter, the girl, as you well know, you compromised.

Acolastus: That's right, and if Acrates' father Philostorgus hadn't intervened, he'd have killed me, too. My own father! [*Seeing Eubulus and Philostorgus*] But there they are. They're waiting for us. Come on, let's talk to them.

Euprositus [*Pointing at Philostorgus*]: Is that your father? The guy who's holding out his hand?

Acolastus [*Pointing at Eubulus*]: No, the one stroking his beard with his hand, that's him, looking worried and staring at the ground.

Euprositus [*Moving toward Eubulus*]: I'm gonna have a word with him. [*Holding out his hand to Eubulus*] Hello, nice to meet you.

Philostorgus [*Stepping between them and taking Euprositus' hand*]: Nice to meet you, too.

Eubulus [*Pushing Philostorgus aside*]: So you're the man who wants to force my son to marry your daughter? By what right? What law?

Euprositus: The laws of this land that protect a girl, that if anyone compromises her, he marries her, or else. [*He draws his finger across his neck.*] If your boy won't do it, I'll take him to court.

Eubulus: That's very convenient. It opens the door to all sorts of deviant behavior. So anyone can trap unsuspecting young men like fish and make them marry their spinster daughters by claiming they were compromised? Let's call it what it is: pimping. What's next? Head out of town and do it again? It's your job to watch over your daughters and stop them from hanging around young men.

Euprositus: That's a lot to ask of anyone. Now I'm supposed to watch over all these guys¹¹ *and* my daughter who cannot watch over herself?

Eubulus: You idiot.

Euprositus: What did you say?

Eubulus: I said my son is not going to marry your daughter.

Euprositus: Why not?

Eubulus: Because he's not old enough. He's not twenty-five yet. He's still legally my dependent. He can't do anything on his own, least of all get married, not without parental consent. You're not going to stick my boy with your daughter. You can't, as long as he's my son and lives under my roof.

Euprositus: So you're saying I'm supposed to pay for what your son did to my family? Not a chance. I'd rather spend everything I've got on lawyers than let your son get away with this. And you know what they can do. If they can take a bad case and win, with a good case like mine, you stand no chance. Come on, what would you do if it were your daughter who was compromised?

Eubulus: I'm not saying what he did was okay, but why did she let him in? What's wrong with her? Why didn't she turn him away? Who's more at fault here, him or her? Young men are like hunting dogs. Once they see prey, they track it and hold it in their jaws.¹²

Euprositus: Why didn't Lucretia fight back? She was the paragon of virtue. As if helpless girls are a match for any man. If your family has no sense of justice, I'll drag you all to court and make him marry her. And if he refuses, he'll pay the price with his head. That's the law where we come from.

¹¹ †suum†

¹² Possible Lucretius Book 1.402-409 reference to the hunting dog metaphor.

Philostorgus: Eubulus, I think you're being unreasonable. What he's asking for is fair. These laws exist to protect unmarried girls from being attacked by sinful men who try to take advantage of them. Besides, you have no case. Her father is a model citizen, has no outstanding warrants, *and* he's rich. The girl, besides the fact she's pretty, has been modest all her life. Everyone says so. [*Looking at Acolastus*] And they call what he did an unspeakable crime, worthy of any punishment they give him. Besides that, love, fairness, religion, all of them argue for their marriage. Love especially, but if you try to keep them apart, your son's life is over, and so is his salvation, unless he understands the real danger he's in. And what about fairness? What's fair is for the person who made the mess to clean it up. And finally religion warns us, when we make an oath, it's a holy promise, a bond not to be broken.

Acolastus: Dad, do you want me to live in total misery? Don't take me from her.

Eubulus: Keep her, fine, enjoy your lives together.

Acolastus: Dad, I'm begging you.

Eubulus: Go ahead, marry her.

Acolastus: What a great dad you are! I'm gonna give you a hug.

Eubulus: [*Pushing Acolastus aside*] About the dowry, Euprositus...

Euprositus: Fifty gold pieces?

Eubulus: Okay. Let's go inside. We can figure out the details there, if there are any. [*Gesturing offstage*] After you.

Euprositus: Follow me, both of you.

Philostorgus: I'll be there in a moment. I need to visit my son first. He has debts I need to pay.

Euprositus: [*Turing to Eubulus*] Follow me.

Eubulus: Right behind you.

[*All but Acolastus exit.*]

ACT 5 SCENE 5

Acolastus: I'm about to burst with joy. I really dodged one there. From here on out, it's all fair skies and smooth sailing. [*He looks offstage and sees Acrates coming.*] But look who's there! Acrates! The very person I wanted to see most of all. Now I can tell him all my good news.

[*Acrates enters. They greet each other.*]

Acolastus (cont.): You're all smiles? What's up? Why are you so happy?

Acrates: Everything's worked out perfectly for me. I'm overjoyed, I can't help but smile. I was looking for the boys so we could party all night. While we've got the money, [*yelling offstage*] thanks Dad, [*pulling Acolastus aside*] let's spend it all. Tomorrow, we'll be poor again...¹³

Acolastus: Your dad bought what you said in your letter?

Acrates: Every word. The fever, the doctor, all of it. I've even got money left over. What's up with you?

Acolastus: Deleasthisa and I are getting married. They're preparing the wedding right now. I'm home free. Dad was angry at first, but now he and Euprositus are best friends; they're practically in love.

¹³ We have compressed the beginning of this scene for dramatic reasons.

Let's go in and get this party started! [*To the audience*] What are you waiting for? I'm getting married.

The play's over. Get out of here! And leave a good review!