

PLAUTUS MENAECHEMI

Argument

A Sicilian merchant died when one twin son
Was stolen from him; of the other one,
Who lived at home, his grandpa changed the name
From Sosicles that he'd be called the same
As his own twin – Menaechmus. This young buck,
When he'd attained his manhood, tried his luck
To find his brother, roaming far and near.
He came to Epidamnus: it was here
His twin had been brought up. Each citizen
Believed the stranger was his brother then –
His wife, his father-in-law and his girlfriend.
Both recognized each other in the end.

Prologue

First off, best wishes to you all – and me!
Plautus I bring to you, not bodily
But orally. Receive his words, I pray,
With kindly ears. Now turn those ears my way
And learn the argument – with words as few
As possible I'll lay it out for you.
A comedy-writer's rule has always been
To situate in Athens every scene
That things might seem more Greek; but as for me,
Except when it's proclaimed, each scene shall be 10
Nowhere. The argument is Grecian, though
Not Attic, but Sicilian. And so
That is its prelude; take delivery
Now of the plot - a very granary
(Not one or two pecks!). Thus you see that I'm
A generous man. Now, once upon a time
There lived at Syracuse an elderly
Merchant whose twin sons' similarity
Was such that none could tell one from the other –
Not she who suckled them, nor yet their mother. 20
Well, that at least is what I was told by
Someone who saw them. Don't suppose that I
Myself saw them. When seven years from birth

Had passed, their father goods of ample worth
 Conveyed aboard a ship; one twin he laid
 On board and sailed off to his place of trade,
 Which was Tarentum, while he left the other
 To sojourn still at home beside his mother.
 A festival was taking place when he
 Came to Tarentum. This festivity
 Attracted many folk, as is the way
 With festivals; the boy wandered away
 Among these folk. There was a merchant there
 From Epidamnus, who was bold to bear
 The boy back to that town. The father had
 A broken heart once he had lost the lad
 And died there after a few days. This news
 Their grandfather received in Syracuse –
 The stolen boy, the father's death – and he
 Then changed the name the other had. Just see
 How much he loved the stolen boy: the name
 He gave him was Menaechmus, just the same
 As that by which the stolen twin was known;
 That was his grandpa's name as well – I own
 That I recall the name more easily
 From having heard him vociferously
 Beset with claims. Lest you should later err
 I here forewarn you: both the brothers were
 Menaechmus. Now to Epidamnus I
 Must foot it so that I may clarify
 For you the situation perfectly.
 Let what I tell you now a warning be:
 If any of you would negotiate
 Within that town, freely bid me and state
 Your case – see you provide the capital
 For the transaction – without it you shall
 Gain nothing; *with* it you'll gain much, much more
 Nothing. I'll go back where I was before
 (With not one step!). That Epidamnian
 I mentioned some time back, the one who ran
 Off with the other twin, who'd fathered none
 (Well, just his wealth), adopted as his son
 This lad, gave him a dowried wife and made
 Him, by his death, his heir. For he had paid
 A visit to the country on a day
 Of heavy rain, not very far away
 From Epidamnus; when he undertook
 To ford a rapid stream, those rapids took
 His balance, sweeping him to Hell. His son

30

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Inherited his great wealth. Everyone, 70
There is his house! Now, on this very day
The Syracusan one will come this way
With his attendant, looking for his twin.
Here's Epidamnus, while this tale we spin;
It will, when we present another play,
Be some new town: folks move round in this way:
Sometimes a pimp, a youth, a king lives here,
Tramp, old man, beggar, poor man, cadger, seer...

Act I

[Enter Peniculus]

Peniculus:
The young men call me Brush because I clean
Away the table-scrap when I have been 80
A-feasting. I think men who shackles lay
On prisoners or slaves who run away
Are dreadful fools. If yet more misery
Is added, they've a greater spur to flee
And sin, poor devils. Their chains, come what may,
They will escape – either they wear away
The rings or smash the bolts. Derisory,
Those measures! He that you would genuinely
Keep from escaping should be bound with food
And drink. A board groaning with plenitude - 90
Just tie his snout to that! For if you deal
Out meat and drink unstintingly, then he'll
Never run off, though he commit a deed
That's hangable; such chains are all you need
To keep him. For these bonds of nourishment
Are very firm – the greater the extent
You stretch 'em out, the more they cling to you.
For I'm off to Menaechmus thither, who
Has been my master long. For willingly
I go so he may bind me. Truly, he 100
Not only feeds men but nurtures them, too,
And makes them live again; no doctor you
Will find that's better. That's the sort of swell
He is; he holds gigantic feasts as well,
Fit for Ceres, the dishes piled up high,
Such lovely courses, too; if you should spy

A morsel at the top, then you must stand
To get it. But I've not been in demand
For feasts for many a day; and indoors I
Am kept fast with my dear ones. All I buy 110
And eat, indeed, is very dear. And see
These dear ones I've piled up are leaving me.
I'll call on him. But now the door – look here! –
Is opening. I see the man appear.

I.ii

[Enter Menaechmus, followed to the doorway by his wife]

Menaechmus:
If you weren't mean and dim and fiery
And unconstrained, you'd see that what irks me
Would irk you also, and if you maintain
This attitude, I'll send you back again
To where you lived when single – as you'll be 120
Once more, for I'll divorce you certainly.
For every single time that I decide
To leave the house, you drag me back inside,
Cross-question me – “Where are you going, what
Are you about, what business have you got
In town, what do you seek, what are you taking?”
And then, when I return, still you are making
A fuss – “What did you do when you were out?”
A customs-officer – there is no doubt –
Is what I married. Yes, I must declare 130
All I have done both here and everywhere.
I pampered you too much; what I'll now do
I'll tell you. While I well provided you
With maids, food, coverlets, wool, jewelry,
Dresses of purple – you'd no paucity
Of anything – look out, if you are wise,
For trouble and don't keep your prying eyes
Upon your husband. [sotto voce] Lest your spying be
In vain I will reward your industry
By dining with a whore and then requesting
My presence somewhere.

Peniculus:
He feigns that he's besting 140

His wife but speaks to me; if it's elsewhere
He dines, it's not his wife but me, I swear,
He punishes.

Menaechmus

Hurray! My dressing-down
At last has sent her in. Where in the town
Are our adulterers? Why aren't they here
To shower me with presents and to cheer
My valiant fight? I took this dress away
From her to give my whore. See, that's the way –
To cheat a cunning jailor skilfully.
O such a lovely job, exemplary, 150
Neat, workmanlike. The bitch I have ransacked –
Myself, too – for this cloak is by my act [glancing at Erotium's house]
Off to perdition. Still, my enemy
Has lost this booty without injury
To my allies.

Peniculus:

Sir, is part of this plunder
To come my way?

Menaechmus:

Damn, I'm found out, by thunder!

Peniculus:

No, saved, sir, never fear.

Menaechmus:

Who is it?

Peniculus:

Me.

Menaechmus:

Ah, Timelessness, ah Opportunity!
Good day!

Peniculus:

Good day, sir.

Menaechmus:

What's up?

Peniculus:

Well, sir, I'm
Greeting my saviour.

Menaechmus:

At no timelier time
Could you have come but now. 160

Peniculus:

That's what I do.
I know by heart each part, I'm telling you,
Of timeliness.

Menaechmus:

Look, would you like to see
A splendid thing?

Peniculus:

Well, this confectionery –
Who cooked it? I shall know if he has been
Remiss by what's left.

Menaechmus:

Have you ever seen
An eagle snatching Catamite in the air
On a wall-painting or Venus the Fair
Grabbing Adonis?

Peniculus:

Often. I don't see,
However, how such art pertains to me.

Menaechmus:

Well, look at me. Don't I look like those two?

Peniculus:

What get-up's that?

Menaechmus:

Look, this I ask of you –
Call me a splendid chap. 170

Peniculus:

Where shall we dine?

Menaechmus:

Do what I say.

Peniculus:

Alright. You're quite divine!

Menaechmus:

Add something else.

Peniculus:

You're very jolly, too.

Menaechmus:

Go on, go on.

Peniculus:

No, that I will not do
Unless I know what good it does for me.
You're fighting with your wife – accordingly
I'm that more cautious.

Menaechmus:

Ah yes, but I know
A place she *doesn't* know, where we can go
And have a great time burning up the day.

Peniculus:

Oh, fair enough. I'll bide by what you say.
When shall I light the pyre? The day's half-dead
Down to its belly-button.

180

Menaechmus:

What you said
Just slows you down – you're interrupting me.

Peniculus:

If I say one thing without your decree,
Knock out my eye, Menaechmus.

Menaechmus:

Leave the door,
Come over here!

Peniculus:

Alright.

Menaechmus:

A little more.

Peniculus:
O.K.

Menaechmus:
Be bold and leave the lioness
Inside her lair.

Peniculus:
Well done, sir. It's my guess
That you would make a splendid charioteer.

Menaechmus:
How come?

Peniculus:
You're always looking back in fear
Of Madam catching up. 190

Menaechmus:
Did you say - ?

Peniculus:
Me?
I told you – only by your own decree
Will I say anything – unsay it, too.

Menaechmus:
If you should chance to smell something, could you
Identify the smell?

Peniculus:
Consult a seer.

Menaechmus:
Well, come now, test the dress that I have here.
What does it smell of? Drawing back?

Peniculus:
The dress
Of any woman one should only press
One's nose at near the top, for that spot there
Will taint it with an odour that, I swear, 200
Can't be washed out.

Menaechmus:

Smell there, then. Fussy man!

Peniculus:

With reason!

Menaechmus:

Well, then, answer if you can –
What does it smell of?

Peniculus:

Of a theft, a whore,
A meal.

Menaechmus:

That's right. I'll take this garment for
Erotium and I will order her
To make us both a meal.

Peniculus:

Great!

Menaechmus:

We'll not stir
From drinking till the morning.

Peniculus:

Well, that's great.
Your words make sense. Shall I knock?

Menaechmus:

Yes. No, wait.

Peniculus:

You've put the tankard back a mile or two.

Menaechmus:

Knock gently.

Peniculus:

Well, I do believe that you
Fear the door's made of Samian crockery.

210

Menaechmus:

Wait, wait, for heaven's sake. Look, it is she –
She's coming out. Look at her gorgeous frame –

It positively puts the sun to shame.

I.iii

[Enter Erotium]

Erotium:
Hello, darling Menaechmus!

Peniculus:
What about me?

Erotium:
You don't count.

Peniculus:
Well, that is the policy
In armies – they have extra men.

Menaechmus:
Today
I'd like a battle at your house.

Erotium:
O.K.

Menaechmus:
We'll both [indicating Peniculus] drink in this battle; who turns out
The better tankard-drinker in this bout 220
Shall be your army: for you shall decree
Which one you'll spend the night with. O chérie,
I hate my wife while I can look upon
Your body.

Erotium:
Meanwhile you can't help but don
Part of her wardrobe. What is this?

Menaechmus:
You're dressed,
My wife's undressed, my sweet one.

Erotium:

I'm impressed.

You top all of my lovers easily.

Peniculus: [aside] While she sees what she craves, cajolery
Is what a whore employs; because, in fact,
If you loved him, by now he would have lacked 230
A nose from all your kisses.

Menaechmus:

Take a hold
Of this, Peniculus. I shall make bold
To offer what I promised her.

Peniculus:

O.K.
But slip into that dress some other day
To dance.

Menaechmus:

To dance? Why, you're insane.

Peniculus:

Am I?

Or is it you? Alright, if you deny
To dance, remove it.

Menaechmus:

Very riskily
I stole this cloak. Undoubtedly
Hippolyta's girdle was by Hercules
Filched with less peril. [to Erotium] Take this present, please, 240
For you alone share all of my desires.

Erotium:

That is the spirit surely that inspires
True lovers.

Peniculus:

[aside] Well, at least those who are hot
To drown in beggary.

Menaechmus:

This cloak I got
My wife last year for thirty bucks.

Peniculus:

For sure
They're lost forever by that count.

Menaechmus:

Now you're
Aware of that I want you now to do?

Erotium:

I am, and I'll arrange it all for you.

Menaechmus:

Then see a meal's made ready for us three
And at the market buy some delicacy
Or two, pork kernels or some bacon-rind
Or half a hog's head – something of that kind;
Served well-done, they cause hungriness in me
Just like a kite's; chop, chop!

250

Erotium:

Assuredly.

Menaechmus:

The market, then! We'll soon be back, and then,
While things are cooking, we'll get drunk, we men.

Erotium:

Come when you like; all that you want I'll do.

Menaechmus:

Just hurry! Follow, man!

Peniculus:

I'll follow you
For sure, and I will watch you constantly.
If all of heaven's wealth were offered me,
I would not wish to misplace you today.

260

Erotium:

[shouting within] Fetch out my cook Cylindrus. Don't delay!

I.iv

[Enter Cylindrus]

Erotium:
Get you a basket and some money. There,
That's fifty cents.

Cylindrus:
Yes, ma'am.

Erotium:
Get us some fare,
Not too much nor too little: there'll be three.

Cylindrus:
What kind of people, madam, will they be?

Erotium:
Menaechmus and his man and I.

Cylindrus:
That's ten!
That man performs the duties of eight men.

Erotium:
I've told you of the guests; so now attend
To all my other orders.

Cylindrus:
Yes, ma'am. Send
For each to take his place; the meal's all set.

270

Erotium:
Come back directly.

Cylindrus:
That I will, you bet.

[Exeunt]

Act II

[Enter Menaechmus Sosicles and Messenio]

Menaechmus Sosicles:

There is no greater pleasure, to my mind,
Messenio, for sailors than to find
On the horizon some new distant land.

Messenio:

But greater still, when coming to that strand,
Is that you've found – to put it honestly –
That you have come back home. But here's my plea –
Why have we come to Epidamnus? Why?
Are we, just like the sea, to drift on by
Each island?

280

Menaechmus S.:

 We have travelled here, my friend,
To seek my twin.

Messenio:

 When will this seeking end?
Six years we've done this job – Istria, Spain,
Massilia, Illyria, then again
The entire Adriatic, the whole shore
Of Italy – exotic Greece, what's more.
Whatever the sea washes we've been there.
I do believe that if you'd had a care
To seek a needle, by now you'd have found it
If it existed. There's no way around it –
We seek the dead among the quick: by now,
If he were still alive, we would somehow
Have found him.

290

Menaechmus S.:

 Well, I'm looking for someone
To tell me that he knows he's dead; I'm done
When I have found that man. But otherwise
I'll keep on searching while I still have eyes.
I truly know how dear he is to me.

Messenio:

You seek a bulrush knot! Look, why don't we
Go home, unless we plan to write a book
That chronicles our travelling?

Menaechmus S.:

 Now look,

300

Do what you're told, eat what you get, beware
Of trouble and don't vex me – this affair
Will not proceed to suit you.

Messenio:

[aside] There, you see?
Those words just go to show my slavery.
He can't be more concise. I must speak out,
However. Do you hear? I have no doubt
That, when I check your cash, the funds we need
For travelling are not enough – indeed
They're good for summer only. I believe,
Unless we go back home, you'll surely grieve. 310
In Epidamnus live voluptuaries
And heavy drinkers and, as well as these,
There are con-men and sycophants. It's claimed
In Epidamnus harlots are more famed
For their allure than anywhere else. That's why
It's called what it is called – those who stop by
Will soon be damned.

Menaechmus S.:

I'll watch my back. Give me
My wallet.

Messenio:

Why?

Menaechmus S.:

You've roused anxiety
In me with what you said.

Messenio:

What do you fear?

Menaechmus S.:

That I, too, may be damned – by you, right here. 320
You love the ladies lots; my temperament,
Though, is choleric, I've an angry bent
That's rash; while I retain the cash, I'll be
On guard against any delinquency
On your part or my own exasperation.

Messenio:

Oh take it, keep it. [sarcastically]. Witness my elation!

[Enter Cylindrus]

Cylindrus:

Good grub, which fits my partiality.

I'll give them a good lunch. But look, I see

Menaechmus. Oh, my back! Before the door

The guests are here, milling about before

I've got the food in. Well, here goes – good day,

Menaechmus.

330

Menaechmus S.:

May the gods love you, I say,

Whoever you may be.

Cylindrus:

Whoever...? Who

Am I?

Menaechmus S.:

I've no idea.

Cylindrus:

What happened to

The other guests.

Menaechmus S.:

What guests?

Cylindrus:

Your man.

Menaechmus S.:

My what?

You're mad.

Messenio:

Did I not tell you what a lot

Of sycophants live here?

Menaechmus S.:

What man is he,

Young man?

Cylindrus:
Brush.

Menaechmus S.:
Safely in my knapsack. See!

Cylindrus:
I'm just back with provisions. You are here
Too early.

Menaechmus S.:
Youth, a word, please, in my ear. 340
How much do pigs fetch here for sacrifice?

Cylindrus:
Just twenty cents.

Menaechmus S.:
Here, if that is the price,
Take twenty cents and go get purified –
Undoubtedly you should be certified,
Whoever you may be, to bother me
Who've no idea of your identity.

Cylindrus:
But surely you can recollect my name?
I'm Cylindrus.

Menaechmus S.:
To me it's all the same
If you are Cylinder or Piston. Go
And hang yourself – for we two do not know 350
Each other. I don't *wish* to know you. Hence!

Cylindrus:
You're called Menaechmus, no?

Menaechmus S.:
Well, you talk sense
To call me that. But where did you know me?

Cylindrus:
Where did I know you? You, whose own chérie
Lives here – Erotium, my mistress.

Menaechmus S.:

Oh,
Not mine! And I don't know you.

Cylindrus:

You don't know
Who I am – who so often waited on you
Right there when you were drinking.

Messenio:

Out upon you!
There's nothing here to smash his head! Just fine!

Menaechmus S.:

You have been wont to service me with wine?
I've not seen Epidamnus till today.

360

Cylindrus:

Then you deny it?

Menaechmus S.:

Yes, that's what I say.

Cylindrus:

You don't live in that house?

Menaechmus S.:

A curse on them
Who do.

Cylindrus:

To curse oneself is to condemn
Oneself as mad. Look.

Menaechmus S.:

What?

Cylindrus:

Listen to me.
The cash you promised me – for certainly
You're mad to curse yourself – you now should take
And buy *yourself* a pig, for wisdom's sake.

Messenio:

He does go on – he's boring.

Menaechmus S.:

Has he
Gone off? You're right in what you said to me.

Messenio:

Watch out; I do believe that whore lives there,
Just as that madman said.

Menaechmus S.:

I wonder where
He knew my name from.

390

Messenio:

No wonder at all!
All harlots have this custom: they will call
Their artful slaves and maidservants and send
Them to the port and, if they apprehend
A foreign ship, they ask from whence it came
And after that they ask the owner's name
And then at once like glue to them they stick.
Once he's seduced, they send him home a sick
And broken man. Now in that harbour there
There stands a pirate ship – we should beware
Of this, I think.

400

Menaechmus S.:

You're right.

Messenio:

I'll know that's true
When you *really* take care.

Messenio:

Be quiet, do!
Keep still – the door just creaked: so let's behold
Who's coming out.

Messenio:

[of the knapsack] Meanwhile I cannot hold
This any longer. You who roam the sea,
Please keep your eyes on all this stuff for me.

[Enter Erotium]

Erotium: [to her maids]
Go, leave the door like that, not shut. Prepare
Within, get busy, look about, take care
To do what's to be done. The seats must be
Covered; lovers are lured by luxury. 410
A pretty setting means a loss of dough
For clients – to our gain! That fellow, though,
The cook said stood outside, where has he gone?
Oh, now I see him – I've relied upon
That man so much – he's very helpful. So
I let him lord it in my house. I'll go
And greet him. Darling boy, I do adore you.
Why stand there when the doors are open for you?
The house is yours – more than where you abide.
All's ready, as you ordered, and inside 420
We'll not delay. Your lunch is ready there;
So, when you like, get comfy and prepare
To feast.

Menaechmus S.:
Who is she talking to?

Erotium:
Why, you!

Menaechmus S.:
Whenever have I had one thing to do
With you?

Erotium:
Above all men, you I esteem
(As Venus has decided) and I deem
You not unworthy. You alone make me
A rich girl by your generosity.

Menaechmus S.:
She's mad – or drunk – so boldly to address
A stranger.

Messenio:
Well, I told you nothing less, 430
Did I not? These are falling leaves compared

To what would happen to us if we dared
To stay three days, for then whole trees would fall
On you. The whores are like that here: they all
Are silver temptresses. Allow me to
Address her. Woman! Yes, I'm calling you.

Erotium:
What is it?

Messenio:
Where've you known this gentleman?

Erotium:
Why, here, where he has long known me.

Messenio:
How can
That be? For never once, until today,
Has he set foot in Epidamnus.

Erotium:
Hey,
You're making fun! Menaechmus – there's a dear –
Go in. You'll find it pleasanter in here. 440

Menaechmus S.:
She calls me by my actual name, by thunder!
What in the world could it all mean, I wonder.

Messenio:
She's nosed your wallet.

Menaechmus S.:
O Messenio,
You warned me well. Take it. Now I shall know
If it's my wallet or myself that she
Adores.

Erotium:
Let's in and eat.

Menaechmus S.:
How graciously
She tempts me, but no thanks.

Erotium:

But, sweetheart, why
Did you tell me to cook it?

Menaechmus S.:

Cook it? I?

450

Erotium:

Yes, for you and your parasite.

Menaechmus S.:

My who?

Confound it, she's not sane, I'm telling you.

Erotium:

Yes, Brush.

Menaechmus S.:

What brush is that? Is it to clean
Your shoes with?

Erotium:

No, the parasite I mean!
He came with you some time back; you gave me
The dress you'd stolen from your wife.

Menaechmus S.:

Clearly
You're wrong. A dress I'd stolen from my wife?
Are you quite sane? [to Messenio] This woman, on my life,
Dreams like a horse – while standing up. Oh. why
Do you delight to mock me and deny
What you have done?

460

Menaechmus S.:

What is it that you say
I did and then denied it?

Erotium:

Just today
You gave me your wife's dress.

Menaechmus S.:

Oh no, I never!
I do not have a wife, nor have I ever.
Nor have I, since my birth, come here before.
I lunched on board and then I came ashore

And met you.

Erotium:

[aside] Look at that! I'm in despair!

Menaechmus S.:

A wooden, often buffeted affair,
As often nailed and pounded, stake to stake
Just like a furrier's furniture!

Erotium:

Don't make
Mock of me anymore and come with me,
My dear. 470

Menaechmus S.:

Some other man you hope to see,
Madam, not me.

Erotium:

I do not recognize
Menaechmus, standing here before my eyes? –
Moschus' son, born in Syracuse, they say,
Where at the first Agathocles held sway,
Then Phintia, then Liparus – although
He handed on the reins to Hiero,
Who rules now, when he died?

Menaechmus S.:

Woman, you're right.

Messenio:

Is she from there that she can here recite
Your history so pat? 480

Menaechmus:

I can't refuse
Her anymore, by God.

Messenio:

No! You will lose
All if you cross that threshold.

Menaechmus S.:

Quiet now!
Look, things are going well here. [aside] I will bow

To all the woman says, if I can screw
Some cheer from her. [aside to Erotium] Woman, I countered you
Just now on purpose – I'd a fearful hunch
That man would tell my wife about the lunch
And dress. When you are ready, in we go.

Erotium:
Will you wait for your parasite?

Menaechmus S.:
Hell, no. 490
I do not wait for him nor do I care
A fig for him. If he should come, don't dare
Admit him.

Erotium:
That I won't quite willingly.
Do you know what I'd have you do for me?

Menaechmus S.:
Just ask – I'll do it.

Erotium:
Well, that dress – would you
Find an embroiderer and have him do
Repair work and add some embellishment?

Menaechmus S.:
Good thinking, that. It'll look different
And she won't recognize it if she sees
You wearing it.

Erotium:
Well, take it with you, please, 500
When you depart.

Menaechmus. S:
By all means.

Erotium:
Let's go through.

Menaechmus S.:
I want a word with him [indicating Messenio]. I'll follow you.
Messenio, come here.

Messenio:

What's up this time?

Menaechmus S.:

Dance!

Messenio:

Why?

Menaechmus S.:

I have my reasons for it. I'm
Aware of what you'll call me.

Messenio:

Good!

Menaechmus S.:

The loot
Is mine. Such siegework! Off you go now, tout de
Suite. Take these fellows to an inn. When done,
Get back before the setting of the sun.

Messenio:

Sir, you don't know these whores.

Menaechmus S.:

Be quiet, do!
If I now act the fool, it won't hurt you,
But me! That girl's a silly fool. From what
I saw just now, such booty we have got! [exit]

510

Messenio:

Lord! Gone already? He is screwed indeed!
Those sailors in that pirate ship will lead
Us straight to Hell. Oh well, I cannot sway
My master – he has bought me to obey,
Not manage him. [to the sailors] Come on, that I may be
Back here in time, fulfilling his decree.

[Exeunt]

Act III

[Enter Peniculus]

Peniculus:

I'm over thirty and in all that time
I've not committed a more heinous crime 520
Than that I did today when I, immersed
Inside that public meeting, was accursed –
Menaechmus gave the slip to me, while I
Stood gaping there, and off then did he fly,
I guess, back to his mistress, nor did he
Care to take me. I wish to purgatory
They'd sent the man who first dreamed up that scheme
Of public meetings, for its only theme
Is busying busy men. They should have picked,
Surely, just *idle* men – they'd then inflict 530
A fine on them if they did not attend.
There are a lot of men who can depend
On just one meal a day. They have no post,
They're never invitees to dine nor host
A meal themselves. It's they who should appear
At public meetings, they who should, I fear,
Attend assemblies. If that were the case
I wouldn't now be screwed and have to face
The loss of lunch. For sure as I still see 540
The sun, I think he wished to victual me.
I'm off; I still have hopes to satisfy
Myself with leavings. But what's this I spy?
A garlanded Menaechmus coming out!
The table's cleared. I've got here just about
In time for home. I'll see what he is at
And afterward I'll go and have a chat.

III.ii

[ENTER Menaechmus Sosicles]

Menaechmus S.:

Keep calm! I'll bring it back to you today
In good time, neatly trimmed. [to himself] I'm sure you'll say
That it's not yours because it will appear
So different.

Peniculus:

Ha! Lunch is finished here, 550
The wine has been consumed and I'm shut out –
His parasite! – and now he goes about
To seek out an embroiderer. I vow
That I'll not be the man that I am now
If I do not avenge the injury
He did to me, by God – and splendidly.

Menaechmus S.:

O did you ever, you divinities,
In one day give such kindnesses as these
To one who hoped for less? I've dined, I've wined,
Made love and snatched this cloak which she shall find 560
Never again.

Peniculus:

Damn, in this hiding-place
I can't hear. Now that he has stuffed his face
Is it of me and of the part I played
He's on about?

Menaechmus S.:

She tells me that I made
A gift of this to her and that I took
It from my wife. Then, knowing she mistook,
Immediately I started to agree
With her as though there was acquaintancy
Between us. All she uttered I repeated.
In short, I've never in my life been treated 570
So well at less expense.

Peniculus:

I'll face this fellow.
Oh, I'm so aching for a fracas.

Menaechmus S.:

Hello!
Who's this?

Peniculus:

Look here, you're less than feather-light,
A villain and a scoundrel, full of spite,
A good-for-nothing trickster. What have I
Done to you that you leave me high and dry?
A while ago you snuck away from me

Off to the forum, made an obsequy
Out of the meal and left me out. How dare
You do it? I was just as much its heir
As you.

580

Menaechmus S.:

Young man, I ask you, what have you
To do with me that I am now run through
With curses from a stranger? Tit for tat! –
If that is what you want, I'll give you that.

Peniculus:

You gave it me already.

Menaechmus S.:

What's your name?

Peniculus:

You know it well, you joker. What's your game?

Menaechmus S.:

I'll tell you what – as far as I can say
I've never seen or known you till today.
And certainly, whoever you may be,
Just do the decent thing – don't bother me.

590

Peniculus:

Wake up, Menaechmus!

Menaechmus S.:

What? I *am* awake!

Peniculus:

Do you not know me?

Menaechmus S.:

No. I would not make
Denial if I did.

Peniculus:

Not recollect
Your parasite?

Menaechmus S.:

Your noggin, I suspect.
Is out of order.

Peniculus:

Answer – did not you
Steal from your wife that dress and give it to
Erotium this very day?

Menaechmus S.:

My wife?
I do not have a wife and, on my life,
I never gave it to Erotium
Nor stole it in the first place.

Peniculus:

Oh, come, come, 600
You're mad! I'm done for. Didn't I see it on you
When you came from that house?

Menaechmus S.:

My curse upon you!
Because you always chase the ladies, you
Think every other man is horny, too.
You saw me wearing it?

Peniculus:

I did, yes.

Menaechmus S.:

What?
Go off where you belong, you idiot!

Peniculus:

I'll tell your wife – there'll be no stopping me –
The whole thing, top to tail; this injury
Will fall back on itself and you will pay
For that repast [exit into the house].

Menaechmus S.:

What is this nonsense, eh? 610
Oh, blast it, I'm bamboozled more and more
By all I meet. Hello! A creaking door!

III.iii

[Enter maid]

Maid:
Erotium, Menaechmus, urgently
Entreats you take this bracelet, too, from me
And have the jeweller add an ounce of gold
And make it new.

Menaechmus S.:
I'll do what you've been told
To ask of me, so tell her that. I'll do
Whatever else that she may ask me, too.

Maid:
You know this bracelet?

Menaechmus S.:
No. The most I know
Is that it's gold.

Maid:
You stole it long ago,
You said, from your wife's chest. 620

Menaechmus S.:
No, that's a lie.

Maid:
You don't recall ?? Then give it back, say I.

Menaechmus S.:
Oh, wait. Now I remember. That's the one
I gave her.

Maid:
Yes, it is.

Menaechmus S.:
What has she done
With that armlet I gave her, too?

Maid:
No, no,
You never gave her armlets.

Menaechmus S.:

Right! That's so.

Just this.

Maid:

Then shall I tell her that you'll cope
With it?

Menaechmus S.:

Yes, yes, I'll do it and I hope
To bring both back together.

Maid:

Oh,, dear man,
Please get some earrings for me if you can
With fifty cent's worth, too, of gold, that I
May greet you happily when you drop by.

630

Menaechmus S.:

Alright, give me the gold. Myself will pay
For labour.

Maid:

No, provide the gold, I pray,
I'll pay you later.

Menaechmus S.:

No, give *me* the gold
And I will pay *you* later – but twofold

Maid:

I've none.

Menaechmus S.:

Give it to me, then, when you do.

Maid:

Sir, is there something I can do for you?

Menaechmus S.:

Just tell her I'll take care of everything –

[aside] That is, I'll sell them quick for what they'll bring. 640

[exit maid] Gone, has she? Yes, she's gone and shut the door.

Oh gods, assist me, love me, give me more.

But quick, while time and circumstance allow,

Let's leave these harlots' haunts, Menaechmus, now!

Pick up your feet and forward march. I'll throw
This wreath I'm wearing to my left side, so
If someone follows me, they'll think that I
Have gone in that direction. By and by
I'll find my servant, if I can, and tell
Him that the gods treat me so very well.

650

[Exit]

Act IV

[Enter Menaechmus's wife, followed by Peniculus]

Wife:

Shall I be made a fool of by that man
Who married me when every time he can
He takes all the belongings furtively
And gives them to his mistress?

Peniculus:

Quietly!

You'll surely catch him in the act. Come on!
Both drunk and garlanded that man has gone
To the embroiderer with the dress he took
From you. But that's the wreath he had on. Look!
Am I a liar, then? He went this way
If you would like to track his footsteps. Hey!
He's coming back – but minus cloak.

660

Wife:

Pray tell,

How shall I handle him?

Peniculus:

Just give him hell

The same as always. That is what I'd say.
Let's step aside – that way we can waylay...

[Enter Menaechmus]

Menaechmus:

What victims we are of that policy –
It's crazy, irksome – and it's plain to see
The best men are the greatest casualties.
They want a string of clients – whether these
Are good or bad is insignificant.
Their wealth, not virtue, is more relevant. 670
If one is poor yet decent, he is seen
As unavailing; if he's rich yet mean,
He's thought a catch. Clients with no regard
For law or fairness make it very hard
For patrons. They'll deny an honest debt,
They're all litigious, snatch all they can get,
They're crooked, pile up wealth through usury
Or perjury; their sole anxiety
Is their next lawsuit. When its day is set
For them, it's set for the patrons, too, you bet. 680
The people or the court or the aedile
Judge it. Why, just today, for quite a while,
A client made me anxious, stalled me so
That I could not do what I wished or go
To see my friends. All his atrocities –
And there was quite a multitude of these –
I pled before the aediles, formulated
Provisos that were hard and complicated.
I more or less put up my argument
As was required to get a settlement. 690
What did he do? He named a surety!
I never saw a man more patently
Stymied. Each one of his barbarities
Was sworn to by three witnesses – and these
Were very keen. God curse the man! My day
Is screwed up. Curse me, too – to ever lay
My eyes upon the forum. So divine
A day, now spoiled! I was prepared to dine,
My mistress surely waiting there for me.
As soon as I was able, hurriedly 700
I left the forum. She's cross, I believe,
With me. The dress I gave her will relieve
Her wrath – the one I pilfered from my wife
And gave her.

Peniculus:

So – what do you say?

Wife:

On my life,

I wed a wicked man.

Peniculus:

And has he said

Enough?

Wife:

He has.

Peniculus:

With some sense in my head

I'd leave for greener pastures.

Wife:

No, wait here.

They're sure not green for him now. [to Menaechmus] You'll pay dear
For stealing it.

Peniculus:

Take that!

Wife:

Was it your view

That you'd not be unmasked?

Menaechmus:

What is it you

710

Are saying, dear?

Wife:

What? Are you asking me?

Menaechmus:

Should I ask him, then? [he tries to fondle her]

Wife:

No cajolery!

Peniculus:

Keep at him!

Menaechmus:

Why this rage?

Wife:

You ought to know.

Peniculus:

He does. He's feigning. Bastard!

Menaechmus:

What's up?

Wife:

Oh!

A dress.

Menaechmus:

A dress?

Wife:

Someone –

Peniculus:

Are you afraid?

Menaechmus:

No, no. Of what?

Wife:

Of this! 'Cos it has made

A wimp of you. No feasting on the sly.

Keep at him!

Menaechmus:

Shut up!

Peniculus:

No, I won't, say I.

Look there, he shakes his head to silence me.

Menaechmus:

No, no, I don't. You're wrong there totally.

And I'm not winking either.

720

Peniculus:

On my life,

Denying what he saw.

Menaechmus:

 No, honest, wife,
I swear by all that's holy – will that do? –
I didn't shake my head at him.

Peniculus:

 That's true,
She says. Back to the point!

Menaechmus:

 What point?

Peniculus:

 The dress
And the embroiderer. Come on, confess.

Menaechmus:

What dress?

Peniculus:

 She has forgotten everything.
I'll rest.

Wife:

 Oh God, I'm such a wretched thing!

Menaechmus:

Why? Tell me. Has a servant been amiss?
Do they talk back? Tell me. They'll pay for this.

730

Wife:

Nonsense!

Menaechmus:

 I'm never happy when you're sad.

Wife:

Nonsense!

Menaechmus:

 It's at some servant that you're mad?

Wife:

Nonsense!

Menaechmus:

But surely not at me?

Wife:

Now then,

That's sense.

Menaechmus:

I've done no wrong.

Wife:

We're back again

To nonsense.

Menaechmus:

Just what's wrong with you, my dear?

Peniculus:

This splendid chap's soft-soaping you, I fear.

Menaechmus:

Stop bugging me. Was I addressing you? [tries to caress her]

Wife:

Hands off!

Peniculus:

Take that! Go off to luncheon, do!

Leave me behind. Go, keep on mocking me

Out here, drunk, with a garland.

Menaechmus:

Honestly,

740

I've had no lunch and haven't been inside

The house all day.

Peniculus:

That true?

Menaechmus:

Yes, I abide

By what I said.

Peniculus:

Lord, the effrontery!

Just now before the house did I not see

You with a flowery wreath? You claimed my head
Was out of whack. “I don’t know you,” you said.
“I’m from abroad.”

Menaechmus:

We parted company
Some time before this and now finally
I'm getting home.

Peniculus:

I know you. You had no
Idea I'd wreak my vengeance on you. So, 750
I've told her everything.

Menaechmus:

What have you said?

Peniculus:

I don't know. Why don't *you* ask her instead?

Menaechmus:

What is it, wife? What story has he told?
Why are you silent? Come on now, unfold
The tale.

Wife:

As if you didn't know just fine!

Menaechmus:

I'd not ask if I did know.

Peniculus:

O the swine,
To feign like that! You cannot run and hide;
She knows the whole thing perfectly inside
And out. I told her all.

Menaechmus:

What does this mean?

Wife:

You're shameless and it's clear you are not keen
To own up. Listen closely. You'll soon see
Why I'm so cross and what he said to me.

Wife:

A dress was stolen from the house.

Menaechmus:

A dress?

From me?

Peniculus:

Oh, see the villain's wickedness.

He'd love to trick you. Not from you – from her.

If it were stolen from you, then it were

Now lost.

Menaechmus:

I've got nothing to do with you.

What's that you say?

Wife:

We've lost a dress.

Menaechmus:

Then who

Took it?

Wife:

The man who took it is the one

Who knows that.

Menaechmus:

Well, who is the man?

Wife:

Someone

770

Who's called Menaechmus.

Menaechmus:

Oh, such trickery!

Who is he?

Wife:

You.

Menaechmus:

Me?

Wife:

Yes.

Menaechmus:

Who charges me?

Wife:

I do.

Peniculus:

And me, too. You took it away
To give Erotium, your whore.

Menaechmus:

You say

That I did this?

Wife:

You, you, I say.

Menaechmus:

You'd bring

An owl in here to say to everything
"You, you"? We're tired of saying it, me and her.

Menaechmus:

I did not give it her – I lent it.

Wife:

Sir,

I never lent your clothes to anyone.
A woman lends a woman's clothes – that's done
Rightly – a man a man's. So bring it here.

780

Menaechmus:

I will.

Wife:

You'll serve yourself that way, it's clear.
Until you bring it back, you'll not pass through
That door. I'm going home.

Peniculus:

What will you do

For me for helping you?

Wife:

I'll give you aid

When *you* lose something.

Peniculus:

That debt won't be paid
Ever – I've nothing I can lose where I
Abide. So damn you both. Now I must hie
Back to the forum; in this family
My credit's clearly dropped.

Menaechmus:

My wife thinks she 790
Has troubled me by barring me access.
As if I had no other place no less -
Nay, more – where I can go! I must endure
Her anger; but Erotium, I'm sure,
Won't keep me out, because she's fond of me.
I'll go and beg that she'll restore to me
The dress I gave her, and another one
I'll give her. Hello! Is there anyone
To guard the door? Well, open it and come
Out here and, someone, call Erotium. 800

IV.iii

Erotium: [from within]
Who wants me?

Menaechmus:

One more his own enemy
Than yours, dear.

[Enter Erotium]

Erotium:

My Menaechmus, my chérie,
Why stand there? Come on in.

Menaechmus:

But wait. Do you
Know why I'm here?

Erotium:

Yes, so that we can screw.

Menaechmus:

No, no. I need the dress that you obtained
From me. I beg you, please. My wife has gained
All knowledge of the business, top to toe.
I'll buy another twice as costly, though –
Just name your preference.

Erotium:

I gave it you

A while ago to have it taken to
The embroiderer – the bracelet, too, to take
Off to the jeweller that he might make
It over.

810

Menaechmus:

Did you? You'll find that's not true.
A little while ago I gave it you
And went off to the forum. Back I've come.
I've not seen you since then, Erotium.

Erotium:

I see what you are up to – cheating me.

Menaechmus:

No, that's not why I ask for it. You see,
My wife found out –

Erotium:

Look, I did not implore

You for it. No, it was a present. You're
Now asking for it back. Alright, OK,
Just take the thing, go, carry it away,
Put the thing on – or let your wife do so –
Or lock it in a coffer. Never, though –
Don't fool yourself – shall you come here again.
You've treated me – a friend – with great disdain.
You'll not string me along, unless with money,
Ever again. Go find another honey
To make a fool of.

820

Meanechmus:

Come now, honestly,

Calm down. Wait! Come back! No? Do it for me,
I beg of you. She's shut the door and vanished
Inside. There's no-one who has been more banished

830

Than I. I'm not believed by anyone.
I'll go and ask my friends what's to be done.

[Exit]

Act V

[Enter Menaechmus Sosicles]

Menaechmus S.:
Oh what a fool to give Messenio
My wallet! He's immersed himself, I know,
In some alehouse

[Enter Menaechmus's wife]

Wife:
I'll just go out and see
If my Menaechmus soon will be with me.
Oh there he is! I'm saved! He has the dress.

Menaechmus S.:
I wonder where he is – though I can guess. 840

Wife:
I'll go and treat him fittingly. Look here,
Have you no shame, you monster, to appear
Before me with that garment?

Menaechmus S.:
What's the matter,
Woman? Why so cross?

Wife:
None of your patter!
No, not one word, you swine!

Menaechmus S.:
What did I do
To earn such punishment?

Wife:

Oh how can you
Ask that? You're shameless!

Menaechmus S.:

Are you not aware,
Ma'am, why the ancient Greeks would all declare
Hecuba was a bitch?

Wife:

No.

Menaechmus S.:

Because she
Would do what you do now: she constantly
Would pile abuse on everyone in sight. 850
So they began to call her bitch – quite right
As well.

Wife:

I cannot take this constant strife!
I'd rather be a widow all my life
Than take your shamelessness.

Menaechmus S.:

What do I care
If your home life is possible to bear
Or if you leave your spouse? Is it the way
In Epidamnus here to spend the day
In telling passing strangers guff?

Wife:

What guff?
I tell you, I can't take it. That's enough! 860
I'll get me a divorce rather than bear
Your goings-on.

Menaechmus S.:

Do so for all I care,
As long as Jove rules in the sky.

Wife:

Wait, though.
You told just a little while ago
You didn't steal this garment, and yet here
It is before my eyes. For shame!

Menaechmus S.;

I fear

You're bold and wicked. What effrontery
To say I stole it - it was given me
By another dame to have it made anew.

Wife:

I'll call my father, then, and tell him you
Have done me wrong. [calling] Deceo, go and find
My father. Bring him here. Just tell him, mind,
It's urgent. I will expose your flagrancy.

870

Menaechmus S.:

You're mad! What flagrancy?

Wife:

You stole from me –

Your wife! – that dress and jewelry, then you
Took them to give your whore. Is that not true –
That “guff”?

Menaechmus S.:

I beg you, ma'am, are you aware
Of any drug that I may take to bear
That rage of yours? If so, then show it me.
Who you believe I am's a mystery.
If I knew Porthaon, p'raps I once knew
You, too.

880

Wife:

You may make fun of me, but you
Will not make fun of him [pointing to her father] who comes this way,
My father. Look there! Do you know him, eh?

Menaechmus S.:

Yes, just as I knew Calchas. Saw him, too,
Upon the very day that I saw you!

Wife:

Not know my father?

Menaechmus S.:

Nor *his* father!

Wife:

Shame!
The nonsense he spouts out – it's all the same.

V.ii

[Enter Menaechmus's father-in-law]

Father:

As quickly as my age and need allow
I'll come along. It's never easy now, 890
That's sure. I've lost my nimbleness, I'm cramped
By years, I'm portly and my strength's decamped.
O age is harsh, a worthless piece of freight,
And when it comes it brings a heavy weight;
And if I were to specify the lot,
A long tale it would be. But what has got
Me worried is: why does my daughter long
To have me see her suddenly. What's wrong
She will not say. I'd hazard, though, a guess –
I reckon she's had some unpleasantness 900
With her Menaechmus - that's the common thing
With women who are desperate to bring
Their husbands into bondage. They're demanding
Because they are well-dowried. Notwithstanding,
The men are often guilty, too. But there
Is just so much a woman ought to bear.
No daughter ever calls her dad unless
There's cause for grievance or some wickedness
Has been committed. Soon enough I'll know
Whatever it is. I see her coming, though, 1000
Out of the house – her husband, too. How grieved
He looks! Well, it is just as I believed.
I'll have a word with her.

Wife:

I'll meet him now.
My greetings to you, my dear father. How
Are you? In perfect health, I hope.

Father:

I, too,
Hope you're the same. I hope all's well with you.
You called me. Why this animosity?

Why does Menaechmus stand apart from me
With angry looks You've been, before I came,
At loggerheads, you two. Now, who's to blame?
Be brief.

1010

Wife:

I've done no wrong, since you demand it.
I'll tell you that first off.. But I can't stand it –
I can't live here. Take me away.

Father:

Tut! Tut!

What is the problem?

Wife:

I am made the butt
Of ridicule.

Father:

By whom?

Wife:

This wretched thing
You gave me as a husband.

Father:

Squabbling!
How often have I said, "Don't come to me
And try to use me like some referee."?

Wife:

How can I not?

Father:

You ask me?

Wife:

Please.

Father:

How often
Have I told you explicitly to soften
Your dealings with your husband so that you
Don't spy on where he goes, what he may do,
What he's about?

1020

Wife:

Yes, but he screws his strumpet
Right here next door – his little bit of crumpet.

Father:

Wise man! To pay the diligence that you
Have shown, he'll screw her more.

Wife:

He drinks there, too.

Father:

And, tell me kindly, will he drink less there
Or any other place that he may care
To drink because of you? What villainy!
You might as well demand of him that he
Spurn dinner invitations or neglect
To entertain at home. Do you expect
Your husbands to be slaves? Would you command
Them to do housework? Or would you demand
They sit among the maids and card wool?

1030

Wife:

Sir,

It seems you're here to be the barrister
For him, not me. Although retained by me,
You speak for him.

Father:

If some delinquency
I find in him, I shall be more severe
With him than I've been with you, never fear.
Since he equips you well with jewelry
And clothes, however, and with servantry
Aplenty, have some sense, girl.

1040

Wife:

But his theft
Of those fine things have left me quite bereft.
He takes them to his strumpets secretly.

Father:

He does wrong if he does that; equally
You are the sinner, if he's in the clear,
To blame the man.

Wife:

But, father, just look here –
The dress and bracelet that he gave his lover
He's bringing back – I caught him!

Father:

I'll discover
The truth from him at once. I'll go and speak
With him. Menaechmus, I am keen to seek
To know your quarrel. What is eating you?
Why does she stand apart, enraged? O do
Enlighten me. 1050

Menaechmus S.:

Whoever you may be,
Old man, I call the gods to witness me –

Father:

Whatever is it that you're on about?

Menaechmus S.:

I've done no wrong to her – she puts it out
That I purloined her dress and took away -

Wife:

He swears to that?

Menaechmus S.:

To all the gods I pray
To blight me if I ever stepped in there –
Her house. 1060

Father:

You're mad to utter such a prayer
Or say that you have never been inside
Your house. Yes, raving mad!

Menaechmus S.:

So I reside
Right there, you say, old man?

Father:

Do you refute it?

Menaechmus S.:

Truly!

Father:

Untruly, man! Or did you boot it
And move elsewhere last night?

Wife:

For mercy's sake,
Where and wherefore?

Father:

Good lord, I couldn't make
The slightest guess.

Wife:

Cannot you not see that he
Is mocking you?

Father:

Menaechmus, honestly, 1070
Enough's enough. Stick to the point now, do!

Menaechmus S.:

I ask you, what have I to do with you?
Where are you from? Who are you? Do I owe
You *anything* – or her, who treats me so
Improperly?

Wife:

You see his eyes? They're green!
His brow and temples, too. Look at the sheen
That glitters in those eyes!

Menaechmus S.:

[aside] So I'm insane,
They think? What better plan, then, than to feign
Insanity and frighten them away?

Wife:

See how he gapes and stretches! Father, pray, 1080
What should I do?

Father:

My child, come here to me,
As far away from him as you can be.

Menaechmus S.:

O Bromius! O Bacchus! Ho! Now whither
Do you call me to hunt with you? But thither
I cannot go from here, although I hear
Your voice, because that rabid bitch I fear,
Upon my left is keeping watch on me.
And *there's* a bald goat who so frequently
Has borne false witness and brought many a man
To ruin.

Father:
Curse you!

Menaechmus S.:
The Olympian 1090
Apollo from his oracle commands
That I burn out her eyes with blazing brands.

Wifr:
Father, I'm dead! He's threatening to burn
My eyes out.

Father:
Daughter!

Wife:
Whither shall we turn?

Father:
Let's call the servants. I will go and find
Those who can turf him out and safely bind
Him back at home before he can distress
Us further.

Menaechmus S.:
[aside[Now I am really stuck. Unless
I come up with another plan, they'll take
Me to their house. [to them] Apollo, you will make 1100
Me use my fists unless she leaves my sight
And trundles off to purgatory. Alright,
Apollo, I'll obey your wishes.

Father:
Flee
Back to your house as quickly as can be
Before he beats you up.

Wife:

I'm off, but please,
Father, keep watching him lest he, too, flees.
How horrible to hear him!

Menaechmus S.:

Famously
I got her out, Apollo; now to see
Tithonus, beastly, whiskered, doddering,
Who claims he's Cygnus' son; you're ordering
That all his limbs and bones and joints I break
With his own staff.

1110

Father:

You'll make a big mistake
If you touch or come near me.

Menaechmus S.:

I'll obey.
I'll take a two-edged axe and hack away
At the old man and carve him up piecemeal.

Father:

I must be on my guard. The fear I feel
Is great that he might do me injury
As he has threatened.

Menaechmus S.:

You are loading me
With orders, Lord Apollo: I must needs
Get hold of some untamed, ferocious steeds,
Then up into a chariot I must bound
And bring this aged lion to the ground,
This smelly, hairy, toothless thing. I stand
Upon the chariot, the reins in hand,
The whip as well. On, steeds! O let the ring
Of hoofbeats sound out loud as on you zing.

1120

Father:

You threaten me with yoked steeds?

Menaechmus S.:

Phoebus, see,
You order me to charge this man and be
His killer. Who now grabs my hair and shies
Me from the chariot? He nullifies

1130

Apollo's words.

Father:

What horrors we have had!
Heavens above, the fellow has gone mad,
Yet he was healthy only recently.
To have so harsh a fit so suddenly!
I'll nip away as quickly as I can
To see if I can find a medical man.

[Exit]

V.iii

Menaechmus S.:

For God's sake, are they gone? They strong-armed me,
Though I am sane, to feign insanity.
I'd better board a ship while I still may
In safety [to audience] If the old man comes this way, 1140
Don't tell him where I bolted, will you now?

[Enter father-in-law]

Father:

I sat for hours. How my bum aches! Ow!
My eyes, too, from that watching, give me pain –
The doctor's absence forced me to remain
Till he came from his calls. Well, finally
The bore got rid of all his patients. He
Tells me that Aesculapius' leg had snapped
And he had set it; furthermore, he'd wrapped
Apollo's arm in splints. Well, have I brought 1150
A doctor or a mason? What a thought!
O now I see the doctor coming here.
Slow as an ant! Oy, notch it up a gear!

V.iv

[Enter a doctor]

Doctor:
Tell me, old man, the nature of the fit?
Is he bewitched or mad? Come on, submit
The facts. Did he succumb to lethargy
Or dropsy?

Father:
Look, it's *your* job to tell *me*
What ails him and to cure him. That is why
I brought you.

Doctor:
Easy! I declare that I
Shall do so.

Father:
In the most attentive way
I want him nursed.

Doctor:
Six hundred times a day – 1160
No, more! – I'll sigh. That shows how much I'll care
For him.

Father:
Here comes the man. Let's watch him there.

V.v

[Enter Menaechmus]

Menaechmus:
What a perverse and adverse day for me!
All that I thought I did in secrecy
My parasite has blazoned to the world.
That Ulysses of mine has simply hurled
In my direction fear and infamy
And brewed a ton of misery for me,
His master. As I live, I'll have his guts
For garters – *his* guts? No, I must be nuts! 1170
They're mine – *my* cash, *my* table have supplied
The man with life. Well now, I'll have his hide.

The whore, too, acted true to form (as they
Are wont to do). I ask her if I may
Take to my wife the dress – she says that she
Gave it to me. I live in misery!

Father:
Do you hear what he says?

Doctor:
I heard him say
He's wretched.

Father:
Well, I'll go to him. Good-day,
Menaechmus. Why do you expose your arm?
Do you not know that it could cause you harm
With your complaint? 1180

Menaechmus:
Get lost.

Father:
See anything?

Doctor:
I do. A load of hellebore won't bring
Him back to sanity. Menaechmus, pray...

Menaechmus:
What is it?

Doctor:
Please reply to what I say:
Do you drink white or black wine?

Menaechmus:
Go to Hell.

Doctor:
The early signs of madness, I can tell.

Menaechmus:
You ask me that? Why don't you ask instead
Whether the bread I eat is rosy-red,
Blood-red or saffron-yellow. Do I chew
Scaled birds or feathered fish?

What, me?

Father:

Yes. Raving!

Menaechmus:

What?

Father:

 You said you'd pulverize
Me from a chariot. Before my eyes.
You did all this. You're guilty.

Menaechmus:

 As for you,
I know you stole from Jupiter's statue
A sacred wreath and for this were confined;
Then, when you were released, you were assigned
Into the stocks and whipped, and then you slew
Your father, then you sold your mother, too.
A good response, you think, for a sane man
To answer your abuse?

1210

Father:

 Quick as you can,
Do what you must, whatever it may be.
He's mad.

Doctor:

 You know the perfect strategy?
Take him to my house.

Father:

 Really?

Doctor:

 Just the thing.
When he's brought there, I'll cure his babbling.

1220

Father:

Do as you will.

Doctor:

[to Menaechmus] For twenty days you'll sup
On hellebore.

[Enter Messenio]

Messenio:

I'm such a worthy servant, one who cares
 For all his master's business and affairs
 And in his absence work industriously –
 Why, maybe even better than when he
 Is present. Perspicacious men should more
 Contemplate on their backs and legs before
 Their gullets and their bellies and reflect
 On what all lazy, useless men collect
 As bounty from their masters: castigation,
 Confinement, mill-work, weariness, starvation; 1250
 Such badness scares me; and accordingly
 I vow that good, not bad, is what I'll be.
 I can more easily endure a chiding,
 But, for myself, I cannot bear a hiding;
 I'd much prefer to eat than to supply
 The meal, and so my master's orders I
 Obey coolly and well; it pays off, too.
 Let others do what they think they must do
 For benefit; I'll be what I *should* be –
 I'll keep a sense of fear, act blamelessly 1260
 So as to be my master's helper here
 And everywhere. So I've not much to fear.
 He'll soon reward me. The criterion
 For all my toil will lay some ease upon
 My back, I think. Now, as he ordered me,
 I took the bags and slaves to a hostelry
 And here I am to meet him. I'll knock now
 To let him know I'm here and from the slough
 Of ruin lead him. But heaven forfend
 That I'm too late to see the battle end. 1270

Father:

By all the gods, be wise and take good care
 To heed my words both past and present. There,
 Take that man to the doctor's, unless you

Have no regard at all to what I'd do
To both your legs and flanks. Listen, don't care
A jot for all his threats. Are you still there?
Why do you hesitate? You should be gone
By now, you and your load. I'm going on
To see the doctor. I'll be there to see
To things when you arrive.

Menaechmus:

O misery!

1280

What's going on? Why are these fellows hot
To fall upon me? What do you want? What
Is it you're after? Why are you circling me?
Where are you taking me? For charity,
O Epidamnians, please tell me. O!
I'm done for! Help me, people! Let me go!

Messenio:

O god, what's this! O villainous, I say!
I see my master being borne away.

Menaechmus:

Does no-one dare to help me?

Messenio:

Master, I

1290

Will valiantly save you. I defy
This foul and rash deed. In the light of day
And in a time of peace to snatch away
A freeborn visitor, the man I serve,
Out in the open street! The very nerve!
Release him now!

Menaechmus:

Whoever you may be,
Stand by me and don't let them injure me.

Messenio:

With all my heart. I will not let you die –
Rather myself! Go on, take out his eye –
That man who's grabbed your shoulder – while I seel
These fellows' faces, master, with all speed
And plant my fists there. Let him go. This day
You'll dearly pay for carrying him away.

1300

Menaechmus:

I've got this fellow by the eye.

Messenio:

That said,
Now leave the socket showing in his head.
Rogues! Robbers! Bandits!

Slaves:

Murder! Let us be!

Messenio:

Let go then.

Menaechmus:

Why do you lay hands on me?
Go, rake them with your nails.

Messenio:

Go on, clear out!
Go to the devil! [with a final kick] There – a parting clout!
A prize for being last to leave! Pell-mell
I took his measure – relished it as well

1310

Menaechmus:

Whoever you may be, God bless you, youth,
For coming to my aid just now. In truth,
Without you I would not have seen tonight.

Messenio:

Well, master, manumit me – do what's right.

Menaechmus:

Free you?

Messenio:

Master, I saved your life! Yes!

Menaechmus:

What?

You're wrong, youth.

Messenio:

What? I'm wrong?

Menaechmus:

By Jove, I'm not

Your master.

Messenio:

Oh come on!

Menaechmus:

No, it's the truth:

My servant's never done what you did, youth,
Today.

Messenio:

Well, in that case let me go free.

Menaechmus:

Alright, sir, then you have your liberty.
Go where you want.

1320

Messenio:

You mean it?

Menaechmus:

Yes, I do,

If I have any power over you.

Messenio:

Hail, patron. "Since you're free, Messenio,
I wish you joy." I trust your word. But go
On with your orders as you did before.
I'll live with you – when you go through your door
I'll go with you.

Menaechmus:

[aside] Oh no, you won't, you know!

Messenio:

I'll leave you now because I have to go
Off to the inn to bring the bags and cash.
Inside the bags I've put the travelling stash,
And there the wallet's duly sealed. I'll bring
Them back to you.

1330

Menaechmus:

[interested] Well then, get bustling.

Messenio:

I'll bring them back intact. Wait here for me. [exit]

Menaechmus:

Perplexing things took place perplexingly
Round here today: I'm not myself, folks say;
I'm shut out; he who rescued me today
And goes to fetch me money says that he
Serves me, and I just gave him liberty.
He says he'll bring me cash - a wallet, too;
If he does this, I'll tell him to skidoo 1340
So he can revel in his liberty
And, when he has regained his sanity,
Not ask me for his money. I am mad
According to the doctor and my dad-
In-law. All this is such a wonderment
To me. It's like a dream that I've been sent.
I'll ask my angry mistress now if she
Will let me take that garment home with me.

[Exit]

V.viii

[Enter Menaechmus Sosicles and Messenio]

Menaechmus:

How could you have the brass neck, you disgrace,
To say we met today in any place 1350
Since I told you to meet me here?

Messenio:

But, sir,
Before this house I was your saviour –
Four men abducted you. To your rescue
I came. For man or god to succour you
You yelled. I ran and saved you – quite a fight! –
And since I rescued you in their despite
You manumitted me. Then, when I said,
“I'm off to fetch the bags and cash,” ahead
You rushed to meet me so as to deny
What you had done.

Menaechmus S.:

I gave you freedom? I?

1360

Messenio:
You did.

Menaechmus S.:
Most certainly I'd rather be
A slave myself than ever set you free.

V.ix

[Enter Menaechmus]

Menaechmus:
[to those within] Swear all you like, it won't make it more true
That on this very day I took from you
The dress and bracelet, sluts!

Messenio:
What's this I see?

Menaechmus S.:
What?

Messenio:
Look! Your glass!

Menaechmus S.:
What do you mean? Tell me!

Messenio:
Your very spit and image.

Menaechmus S.:
By God, you're
Quite right, he's not unlike me, to be sure,
Now I survey myself.

Messenio:
Young man, good day.
Whoever you are, you saved me.

Messenio:

If I may,
Good sir, what is your name? Would you tell me?

Menaechmus:
For what you did, I've no reluctance
To tell you what you ask of me. My name,
Sir, is Menaechmus.

Menaechmus S.:
Heavens, mine's the same.

Menaechmus.:
I'm Syracusan, a Sicilian.

Menaechmus S.:
Me, too.

Menaechmus.:
What?

Menaechmus S.:
That's the simple truth.

Messenio:
This man
I know: he is my master. I instead
Thought it was him. [to Menaechmus] I misinterpreted
You, sir, for him. I caused him problems, too.
[to Menaechmus Sosicles] If I said something silly, sir, to you 1380
Unwittingly, forgive me.

Menaechmus S.:
Seems to me
That what you say is raving lunacy.
Don't you remember docking here today
With me?

Messenio:
Of course, you're right in what you say.
You are my master. [to Menaechmus] Find another man.
[to Menaechmus Sosicles] Hello to you. [to Menaechmus] Goodbye to you. I can
Now say *this* is Menaechmus.

Menaechmus:
No, that's me.

More like you. Waterdrops or milkdrops can
Look no more like each other, count on me,
Than you are like this gentleman or he
Like you; and then his country and his father
He recollects are yours, too. We should rather
Approach and question him.

Menaechmus S.:

Thank you. That's grand!

I beg you, keep on with your helping hand;
If you find he's my brother, you'll be free.

1410

Messenio:

I hope so.

Menaechmus S.:

So do I.

Messenio:

[to Menaechmus] Do pardon me.

You said, I think, Menaechmus is your name?

Menaechmus:

I did indeed.

Messenio:

Well, this man's name's the same.

And you were born in Syracuse? He, too.

You said a man called Moschus fathered you?

He says the same. Now you can both help me –

And help yourselves as well.

Menaechmus:

I will agree

To anything that you desire in view

Of all your help. I'll minister to you,

Although a free man, just as if you'd bought

And paid for me.

1420

Messenio:

It's such a lovely thought –

That you have found your twin. Born in one day!

One father and one mother!

Menaechmus:

What you say

Is very strange. O that you could prove true
What you have vowed.

Messenio:
I can. Now, both of you,
Reply to what I ask.

Menaechmus:
Then ask away,
Just when you like. I'll answer; I will say
All that I know.

Messenio:
Your name's Menaechmus?

Menaechmus:
Yes.

Messenio:
[[to Menaechmus Sosicles] Yours, too?

Menaechmus S.:
It is, sir, yes.

Messenio:
[to Menaechmus] And you confess 1430
That Moschus was your father?

Menaechmus:
Yes.

Menaechmus:
Mine, too.

Messenio:
[to Menaechmus] You're Syracusan?

Menaechmus:
Yes, I am.

Messenio:
[to Menaechmus Sosicles] And you?

Menaechmus S.:
Of course.

Messenio:

So far, so good. But I want more.
Back in your native land now, I implore,
What is the first thing you recall?

Menaechmus:

When we –
My dad and I – set out across the sea
Straight to Tarentum, where he had some trade,
And from my father through the crowd I strayed
And was abducted.

Menaechmus:

God!

Messenio:

Be quiet, do!
What are you bawling for? [to Menaechmus] How old were you 1440
When that occurred?

Menaechmus:

Just seventeen, for then
My baby teeth were falling out, since when
I have not seen my father.

Messenio:

Honestly?
How many sons had he?

Menaechmus:

My memory
Says two.

Messenio:

Who was the elder?

Menaechmus:

Look, we two
Were of an age.

Messenio:

How's that?

Menaechmus:

I'm telling you,

We two were twins.

Menaechmus S.:
I'm blessed!

Messenio:
I tell you, chum,
If you cut in once more, I shall be mum.

Menaechmus S.:
I'll hold my peace.

Messenio:
Were you both named the same?

Menaechmus:
Oh no, I'm called Menaechmus – that's my name. 1450
But Sosicles was *his* name.

Menaechmus S.:
That's the proof
We need. I can no longer hold aloof,
I need a hug! Brother, I'm Sosicles!

Messenio:
And yet...Menaechmus?

Menaechmus S.:
After the obsequies
Of Moschus were announced to us, my name
My uncle changed to yours – now they're the same.

Menaechmus:
It's true, I'm sure. But I must ask you who –

Menaechmus S.:
What?

Menaechmus:
- was our mother.

Menaechmus S.:
Teuximarcha.

Menaechmus:
True!

To see you after all these years!

Menaechmus S.:

My brother!

One weary misery after another
To find you once again! O ecstasy!

1460

Messenio:

That's why the wench confused you both when she
Called you to lunch.

Menaechmus:

Well, truly I must own
I bade them fix a lunch, though unbeknown
To my wife; some time ago I stole her dress
And gave it to the wench.

Menaechmus S.:

It is my guess,
Brother, that it's this dress I'm holding now.

Menaechmus:

It is. It ended up with you? But how?

Menaechmus S.:

The wench took me to lunch, informing me
I'd given it her. I dined quite splendidly,
And drank well, too, enjoyed the girl and went
Off with the dress and bracelet.

1470

Menaechmus:

Excellent!
I had some fun by proxy! When you dined,
She took you for myself.

Messenio:

Sir, you don't mind
My freedom? Which you ordered?

Menaechmus:

His request
Is very just and sound. Make your bequest
For my sake, bro.

Menaechmus S.:

[to Messenio] Be free.

Menaechmus:

Messenio,
Congratulations.

Messenio:

I require, though,
More patronage if I am to be free
For good.

Menaechmus S.:

It's turned out satisfactorily,
Brother, for us – let's go to Syracuse,
The two of us.

1480

Menaechmus:

Brother, I can't refuse.
I'll auction off my goods. Meanwhile let's go
Inside the house.

Menaechmus S.:

Yes, let's.

Messenio:

Sirs, do you know
What I would ask of you?

Menaechmus:

What?

Messenio:

Let me be
The auctioneer.

Menaechmus:

Done.

Messenio:

Well do you want me
To advertise it now?

Menaechmus:

In one week, say.

Messenio:

[bawling out] There'll be an auction one week from today

Before noon for Menaechmus. Servants, land,
Furniture, houses, household chattels and –
Well, everything! It's all for sale! Just say
Whatever is the price you want to pay.
In ready money! There's also a wife
If anybody wants her [to spectators] On my life,
I don't think he'll get more than fifty thou.
Farewell, give us a loud ovation now.

1490

[Exeunt omnes]

