The Brothers Menaechmus OR The Twin Menaechmi by Plautus “Fooling around with my mistress scene”

**3 MEN**

Messenio – MESS-EN-E-OH Peniculus – PEN-ICK-YOU-LUSS (mentioned character)

Menaechmus – MEN-ECK-MUSS Erotium – E-ROT-E-UM (mentioned character)

Cylindrus – SILL-IN-DRUSS

*(From the exit nearer the harbour enters the boy from Syracuse-MENAECHMUS II-accompanied by his slave*

*MESSENIO. As chance [i.e. the playwright] would have it, the twin is also wearing the exact same outfit as his*

*long-lost brother. Several sailor types carry their luggage)*

MENAECHMUS II. Oh, joy, no greater joy, my dear Messenio, than for a sailor when he's on the deep to see

dry land.

MESSENIO. It's greater still, if I may speak my mind, to see and then arrive at some dry land that's home.

But tell me, please-why have we come to Epidamnus? Why have we circled every island like the sea?

MENAECHMUS II. *[pointedly, melodramatically].* We are in search of my beloved long-lost twin.

MESSENIO. But will there ever be a limit to this searching? It's six entire years since we began this job.

Through Istria, Iberia, Illyria, the Adriatic, up and down, exotic Greece, and all Italian towns. Wherever sea

went, we went! I frankly think if you were searching for a needle,

You would have found it long ago, if it existed. We seek and search among the living for a dead man. We

would have found him long ago if he were living.

MENAECHMUS II. But therefore I search on till I can prove the fact; if someone says he knows for sure my

brother's dead, I'll stop my search and never try an instant further. But otherwise, I'll never quit while I'm

alive, for I alone can feel how much he means to me.

MESSENIO. You seek a pin in haystacks. Let's go home- unless we're doing this to write a travel book.

MENAECHMU$ II [losing his temper]. Obey your orders, eat what's served you, keep from mischief! And don't

annoy me. Do things my way.

MESSENIO. Yessir, yessir. I get the word. The word is simple: I'm a slave. Concise communication, couldn't be

much clearer. *[A chastened pause, then back to harping at his master]* But still and all, I just can't keep from

saying this: Menaechmus, when I inspect our purse, it seems we're travelling for summer-very, very light. By

Hercules, unless you go home right away, while you- search on still finding no kin ... you'll be 'bro-kin'.

Now here's the race of'men you'll find in Epidamnus: The greatest libertines, the greatest drinkers too,

The most bamboozlers and charming flatterers live in this city. And as for wanton women, well- nowhere in

the world, I'm told, are they more dazzling. Because of this, they call the city Epidamnus, for no one leaves

unscathed, 'undamaged', as it were."

MENAECHMUS II. Oh, I'll have to watch for that. Give me the purse.

MESSENIO. What for?

MENAECHMUS II. Because your words make me afraid of you.

MESSENIO. Of me?

MENAECHMUS II. That you might cause ... “Epidamnation” for me. You love the ladies quite a lot, Messenio.

And I'm a temperamental man, extremely wild. If I can hold the cash, it's best for both of us. Then you can do

no wrong, and I can't yell at you.

MESSENIO. *[giving the purse]* Take it, sir, and guard it; you'll be doing me a favour.

*(Re-enter cook CYLINDRUS, his basket full of goodies)*

CYLINDRUS. I've shopped quite well, and just the sort of things I like. I know I'll serve a lovely dinner to the

Diners. But look-l see Menaechmus. Now my back is dead! The dinner guests are strolling right outside our door before I even finish shopping. Well, I'll speak. *[Going up to MENAECHMUS II)* Menaechmus, sir ...

MENAECHMUS II. God love you-God knows who you are.

CYLlNDRUS. *[thinks it's a joke]* Who am l? Did you really say you don't know me?

MENAECHMUS II. By Hercules, I don't.

CYLINDRUS. Where are the other guests?

MENAECHMUS II. What kind of other guests?

CYLINDRUS. Your parasite, that is.

MENAECHMUS . My parasite? [To MESSENIO] The man is simply raving mad.

MESSENIO. I told you there were great bamboozlers in this town.

MENAECHMUS II [to CYLINDRUS, playing it cool]. Which parasite of mine do you intend, young man?

CYLINDRUS. The Sponge.

MENAECHMUS II. *[iocular, points to luggage]* Indeed, my sponge is here inside my bag.

CYLINDRUS. Menaechmus, you've arrived too early for the dinner. Look, I've just returned from shopping.

MENAECHMUS II. Please, young man, what kind of prices do you pay for sacred pigs, the sacrificial kind?

CYLINDRUS. Not much.

MENAECHMUS II. Then take this coin, and sacrifice to purify your mind at my expense. Because I'm quite

convinced you're absolutely raving mad to bother me, an unknown man who doesn't know you.

CYLINDRUS. You don't recall my name? Cylindrus, Sir, Cylindrus!

MENAECHMUS II. Cylindrical or Cubical, just go away. Not only don't I know you, I don't want to know you.

CYLINDRUS. Your name's Menaechmus, sir, correct?

MENAECHMUS II. As far as I know. You're sane enough to call me by my rightful name. But tell me how you

know me.

CYLINDRUS. How I know you? ... Sir-*[Discreetly, but pointedly]* You have a mistress ... she owns me ... Erotium?

MENAECHMUS II. By Hercules, I haven't-and I don't know you.

CYLINDRUS. You don't know me, a man who many countless times refilled your bowl when you were at our

house?

MESSENIO. Bad luck! I haven't got a single thing to break the fellow's skull with.

*[To CYLlNDRUS]* Refilled the bowl? The bowl of one who till this day had never been in Epidamnus?

CYLINDRUS. *[to MENAECHMUS II]* You deny it?

MENAECHMUS II. By Hercules, I do.

CYLINDRUS. *[points across stage]* And I suppose that house is not your house?

MENAECHMUS II. God damn the people living there!

CYLlNDRUS. *[to audience]* Why, he's the raving lunatic-he cursed himself! Menaechmus.

MENAECHMUS II. Yes, what is it?

CYLlNDRUS. Do take my advice, and use that coin you promised me a while ago, and since, by Hercules, you're

certainly not sane, I mean, Menaechmus, since you just now cursed yourself, go sacrifice that sacred pig to

cure yourself.

MENAECHMUS II. By Hercules, you talk a lot-and you annoyme.

CYLINDRUS. *[embarrassed, to audience]* He acts this way a lot with me-he jokes around. He can be very funny

If his wife is gone. *[To MENAECHMUS]* But now, what do you say?

MENAECHMUS II. To what?

CYLINDRUS. *[showing basket]* Is this enough? I think I've shopped for three of you. Do I need more for you,

your parasite, your girl?

MENAECHMUS II. What girls? What girls? What parasites are you discussing?

MESSENIO. *[to CYLINDRUS)* And what madness has caused you to be such a nuisance?

CYLlNDRUS. *[to MESSENIO]* What do you want now? I don't know you. I'm chatting with a man I know.

MESSENIO. *[to CYLlNDRUS*] By Pollux, it's for sure you're not exactly sane.

CYLINDRUS. *[abandons the discussion]* Well then, I guess I'll stew these up. No more delay. Now don't you

wander off too far from here. *[bowing to MENAECHMUS]* Your humble servant.

MENAECHMUS II. *[half aside]* If you were, I'd crucify you!

CYLINDRUS. Oh, take a cross yourself-cross over and come on whilst I apply Vulcanic arts to all the party's

Parts. I'll go inside and tell Erotium you're here. Then she'll convince you you'll be comfier inside. *[Exit)*

MENAECHMUS II. *[stage whisper to MESSENIO]* Well-has he gone?

MESSENIO. He has.

MENAECHMUS II. Those weren't lies you told. There's truth in every word of yours.

MESSENIO. *[his shrewd conclusion]* Here's what I think: I think the woman living here's some sort of slut.

That's what I gathered from that maniac who left.

MENAECHMUS II. And yet I wonder how that fellow knew my name.

MESSENIO. Well, I don't wonder. Wanton women have this way: They send their servants or their maids to

port to see if some new foreign ship's arrived in port to ask around, 'Where are they from? What are their

names? Right afterward, they fasten on you hard and fast. They tease you, then they squeeze you dry and

send you home. Right now, I'd say a pirate ship is in this port and I would say we'd better both beware of it.

MENAECHMUS II. By Hercules, you warn me well.

MESSENIO. I'll know I have if you stay well aware and show I've warned you well.

MENAECHMUS II. Be quiet for a minute now; the door just creaked. Let's see who comes out now.

MESSENIO. I'll put the luggage down. *[To the sailors]*. Me hearties, if you please, please guard this stuff for us.