LYSISTRATA “I know how to end war” SCENE

(2 WOMEN)

LYSISTRATA (Liss-iss-traw-tuh)

CALONICE (callow-nigh-see)

Lysistrata stands alone waiting for the ladies she has called to the meeting to arrive.

LYSISTRATA

If they were trysting for a Bacchanal,

A feast of Pan or Colias or Genetyllis,

The tambourines would block the rowdy streets,

But now there's not a woman to be seen

Except--ah, yes--this neighbour of mine yonder.

Enter CALONICE.

Good day Calonice.

CALONICE

Good day Lysistrata.

But what has vexed you so? Tell me, child.

What are these black looks for? It doesn't suit you

To knit your eyebrows up glumly like that.

LYSISTRATA

Calonice, it's more than I can bear,

I am hot all over with blushes for our sex.

Men say we're slippery rogues--

CALONICE

And aren't they right?

LYSISTRATA

Yet summoned on the most tremendous business

For deliberation, still they snuggle in bed.

CALONICE

My dear, they'll come. It's hard for women, you know,

To get away. There's so much to do;

Husbands to be patted and put in good tempers:

Servants to be poked at: children washed

Or soothed with lullabies or fed with mouthfuls of pap.

LYSISTRATA

But I tell you, here's a far more weighty object.

CALONICE

What is it all about, dear Lysistrata,

That you've called the women hither in a troop?

What kind of an object is it?

LYSISTRATA

A tremendous thing!

CALONICE

And long?

LYSISTRATA

Indeed, it may be very lengthy.

CALONICE

Then why aren't they here?

LYSISTRATA

No man's connected with it;

If that was the case, they'd soon come fluttering along.

No, no. It concerns an object I've felt over

And turned this way and that for sleepless nights.

CALONICE

It must be fine to stand such long attention.

LYSISTRATA

So fine it comes to this--Greece saved by Woman!

CALONICE

By Woman? Wretched thing, I'm sorry for it.

LYSISTRATA

Our country's fate is henceforth in our hands:

To destroy the Peloponnesians root and branch--

CALONICE

What could be nobler!

LYSISTRATA

Wipe out the Boeotians--

CALONICE

Not utterly. Have mercy on the eels!

[Footnote: The Boeotian eels were highly esteemed delicacies in Athens.]

LYSISTRATA

But with regard to Athens, note I'm careful

Not to say any of these nasty things;

Still, thought is free.... But if the women join us

From Peloponnesus and Boeotia, then

Hand in hand we'll rescue Greece.

CALONICE

How could we do

Such a big wise deed? We women who dwell

Quietly adorning ourselves in a back-room

With gowns of lucid gold and gawdy yards

Of stately silk and dainty little slippers....

LYSISTRATA

These are the very armaments of the rescue.

These crocus-gowns, this outlay of the best myrrh,

Slippers, cosmetics dusting beauty, and robes

With rippling creases of light.

CALONICE

Yes, but how?

LYSISTRATA

No man will lift a lance against another--

CALONICE

I'll run to have my tunic dyed crocus.

LYSISTRATA

Or take a shield--

CALONICE

I'll get a stately gown.

LYSISTRATA

Or unscabbard a sword--

CALONICE

Let me buy a pair of slipper.

LYSISTRATA

Now, tell me, are the women right to lag?

CALONICE

They should have turned birds, they should have grown

wings and flown here!

LYSISTRATA

My friend, you'll see that they are true Athenians:

Always too late. Why, there's not a woman

From the shoreward demes arrived, not one from Salamis.

CALONICE

I know for certain they awoke at dawn,

And got their husbands up if not their boat sails.

LYSISTRATA

And I'd have staked my life the Acharnian dames

Would be here first, yet they haven't come either!

CALONICE

Well anyhow there is Theagenes' wife

We can expect--she consulted Hecate.

But look, here are some at last!