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A Dual Language Edition
translated by Ian Johnston

Fænum
Publishing



ἈΡΙΣΤΟΦΑΝΟΥΣ ARISTOPHANES'

Ὄρνιθες *Birds*

A Dual Language Edition

Greek Text Edited (1907) by
F.W. Hall and W.M. Geldart

English Translation and Notes by
Ian Johnston

Edited by
Evan Hayes and Stephen Nimis

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Aristophanes' Birds: A Dual Language Edition
First Edition

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for Geoffrey (1974-1997)

οἷη περ φύλλων γενεὴ τοίη δὲ καὶ ἀνδρῶν.
φύλλα τὰ μὲν τ' ἄνεμος χαμάδις χέει, ἄλλα δέ θ' ὕλη
τηλεθόωσα φύει, ἔαρος δ' ἐπιγίγνεται ὄρη:
ὡς ἀνδρῶν γενεὴ ἢ μὲν φύει ἢ δ' ἀπολήγει.

Generations of men are like the leaves.

In winter, winds blow them down to earth,

but then, when spring season comes again,

the budding wood grows more. And so with men:

one generation grows, another dies away. (*Iliad* 6)

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EDITORS' NOTE

This book presents the Greek text of Aristophanes' *Birds* with a facing English translation. The Greek text is that of F.W. Hall and W.M. Geldart, (1907), from the Oxford Classical Texts series, which is in the public domain and available as a pdf. This text has also been digitized by the Perseus Project (perseus.tufts.edu). The English translation and accompanying notes are those of Ian Johnston of Vancouver Island University, Nanaimo, BC. This translation is available freely online (records.viu.ca/~johnstoi/). We have reset both texts, making a number of very minor corrections, and placed them on opposing pages. This facing-page format will be useful to those wishing to read the English translation while looking at the Greek version, or vice versa.

HISTORICAL NOTE

The Birds was first produced at the drama festival in 414 BC, where it won second prize. At this period, during the Peloponnesian War, Athens was very powerful and confident, having just launched the expedition to Sicily, fully expecting to triumph in that venture and in the larger war.

ῥΟΡΝΙΘΕΣ

BIRDS

ΤΑ ΤΟΥ ΔΡΑΜΑΤΟΣ ΠΡΟΣΩΠΑ

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ	ΕΠΙΣΚΟΠΟΣ
ἙΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ	ΨΗΦΙΣΜΑΤΟΠΩΛΗΣ
ΘΕΡΑΠΩΝ	ΑΓΓΕΛΟΣ Α
ΤΗΡΕΥΣ <i>ἔποψ</i>	ΑΓΓΕΛΟΣ Β
ΦΟΙΝΙΚΟΠΤΕΡΟΣ*	ΙΡΙΣ
ΤΑΩΣ*	ΚΗΡΥΞ Α
ἮΠΟΥ Β*	ΠΑΤΡΑΛΟΙΑΣ
ΚΑΤΩΦΑΓΑΣ <i>ὄρνις*</i>	ΚΙΝΗΣΙΑΣ <i>διθυραμβοποιός</i>
ΧΟΡΟΣ <i>ὀρνιθών</i>	ΣΥΚΟΦΑΝΤΗΣ
ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ <i>οἰκέτης*</i>	ΠΡΟΜΗΘΕΥΣ
ΜΑΝΟΔΩΡΟΣ <i>οἰκέτης*</i>	ΠΟΣΕΙΔΩΝ
ΠΡΟΚΝΗ*	ΗΡΑΚΛΗΣ
ΙΕΡΕΥΣ	ΤΡΙΒΑΛΛΟΣ
ΠΟΙΗΤΞΣ	ΒΑΣΙΛΕΙΑ*
ΧΡΗΣΜΟΛΟΓΟΣ	ΚΗΡΥΞ Β
ΜΕΤΩΝ <i>γεωμέτρης</i>	

* κωφὸν πρόσωπον

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

PISTHETAIROS <i>a middle-aged Athenian</i>	COMMISSIONER OF COLONIES <i>an Athenian official</i>
EUELPIDES <i>a middle-aged Athenian</i>	STATUTE SELLER <i>man who sells laws</i>
SERVANT-BIRD <i>a slave serving Tereus, once a man</i>	FIRST MESSENGER <i>a construction-worker bird</i>
TEREUS <i>a hoopoe bird, once a man</i>	SECOND MESSENGER <i>a soldier bird</i>
FLAMINGO*	IRIS <i>messenger goddess, daughter of Zeus</i>
PEACOCK*	FIRST HERALD <i>a bird</i>
A SECOND HOOPOE*	YOUNG MAN <i>young Athenian who wants to beat up his father</i>
GLUTTON-BIRD* <i>a fictitious species</i>	CINESIAS <i>a very bad dithyrambic poet and singer</i>
CHORUS LEADER	SYCOPHANT <i>a common informer</i>
CHORUS <i>of birds</i>	PROMETHEUS <i>the Titan</i>
XANTHIAS* <i>slave serving Pisthetairos</i>	POSEIDON <i>god of the sea, brother of Zeus</i>
MANODOROS* <i>slave serving Euelpides, also called MANES</i>	HERCULES <i>the legendary hero, now divine</i>
PROCNE* <i>a nightingale with a woman's body, consort of Tereus</i>	TRIBALLIAN GOD <i>an uncouth barbarian god</i>
PRIEST	PRINCESS* <i>a divine young lady</i>
POET	SECOND HERALD
ORACLE MONGER <i>a collector and interpreter of oracles</i>	
METON <i>a land surveyor</i>	

* silent character

Ὄρνιθες

ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

ὀρθὴν κελεύεις, ἦ τὸ δένδρον φαίνεται;

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

διαρραγείης· ἦδε δ' αὖ κρώζει πάλιν.

ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

τί ὦ πόνηρ' ἄνω κάτω πλανύττομεν;
ἀπολούμεθ' ἄλλως τὴν ὁδὸν προφορουμένω.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

τὸ δ' ἐμὲ κορώνη πειθόμενον τὸν ἄθλιον
ὁδοῦ περιελθεῖν στάδια πλείν ἢ χίλια. 5

ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

τὸ δ' ἐμὲ κολοιῶ πειθόμενον τὸν δύσμορον
ἀποσποδῆσαι τοὺς ὄνυχας τῶν δακτύλων.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἀλλ' οὐδ' ὅπου γῆς ἐσμὲν οἶδ' ἔγωγ' ἔτι.

ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

ἐντευθενὶ τὴν πατρίδ' ἂν ἐξεύροις σύ που; 10

Birds

SCENE: A rugged, treed wilderness area up in the rocky hills. Enter Pisthetairos and Euelpides, both very tired. They are clambering down from the rocky heights towards the level stage. Pisthetairos has a crow perched on his arm or shoulder, and Euelpides has a jackdaw. Both Pisthetairos and Euelpides are carrying packs on their back. They are followed by two slaves carrying more bags. The slaves stay well out of the way until they get involved in the action later on.

EUELPIDES [*speaking to the bird he is carrying*]

Are you telling us to keep going straight ahead?
Over there by that tree?

PISTHETAIROS

Blast this bird—
it's croaking for us to head back, go home.

EUELPIDES

Why are we wandering up and down like this?
You're such a fool—this endless weaving round
will kill us both.

PISTHETAIROS

I must be an idiot
to keep hiking on along these pathways,
a hundred miles at least, and just because
that's what this crow keeps telling me to do.

EUELPIDES

What about me? My poor toe nails are thrashed.
I've worn them out because I'm following
what this jackdaw says.

PISTHETAIROS [*looking around*]

I have no idea
where on earth we are.

EUELPIDES

You mean from here
you couldn't make it back to your place?

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

οὐδ' ἂν μὰ Δία γ' ἐντεῦθεν Ἐξηκεστίδης.

ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

οἶμοι.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

σὺ μὲν ὦ τᾶν τὴν ὁδὸν ταύτην ἴθι.

ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

ἦ δεινὰ νῶ δέδρακεν οὐκ τῶν ὀρνέων,
 ὁ πινακοπώλης φιλοκράτης μελαγχολῶν,
 ὅς τῶδ' ἔφασκε νῶν φράσειν τὸν Τηρέα 15
 τὸν ἔποφ' ὅς ὄρνις ἐγένετ' ἐκ τῶν ὀρνέων·
 κἀπέδοτο τὸν μὲν Θαρρελείδου τουτουὶ
 κολοιοῦν ὀβολοῦ, τηνδεδὶ τριωβόλου.
 τῶ δ' οὐκ ἄρ' ἦστην οὐδὲν ἄλλο πλὴν δάκνειν.
 καὶ νῦν τί κέχηνας; ἔσθ' ὅποι κατὰ τῶν πετρῶν 20
 ἡμᾶς ἔτ' ἄξεις. οὐ γάρ ἐστ' ἐνταῦθά τις
 ὁδός.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

οὐδὲ μὰ Δί' ἐνταῦθά γ' ἀτραπὸς οὐδαμοῦ.

ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

οὐδ' ἡ κορώνη τῆς ὁδοῦ τι λέγει πέρι;

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

οὐ ταῦτὰ κρώζει μὰ Δία νῦν τε καὶ τότε.

ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

τί δὴ λέγει περὶ τῆς ὁδοῦ; 25

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

τί δ' ἄλλο γ' ἢ
 βρῦκουσ' ἀπέδεσθαί φησί μου τοὺς δακτύλους;

PISTHETAIROS:

No way— not even Excecestides
 could manage that.¹

EUELPIDES

We're in a real mess.

PISTHETAIROS

Well, you could try going along that pathway.

[The two men start exploring different paths down to opposite sides of the stage]

EUELPIDES

We two were conned by that Philokrates,
 the crazy vendor in the marketplace
 who sells his birds on trays. He claimed these two
 would take us straight to Tereus the hoopoe,
 a man who years ago became a bird.²
 That's why we paid an obol for this one,
 this jackdaw, son of Tharreleides.³
 and three more for the crow. And then what?
 The two know nothing, except how to bite.

[The jackdaw with Euelpides begins to get excited about something. Euelpides talks to the bird]

What's got your attention now? In those rocks? [20]
 You want to take us there? There's no way through.

PISTHETAIROS [calling across the stage to Euelpides]

By god, the same thing over here, no road.

EUELPIDES

What's your crow saying about the pathway?

PISTHETAIROS

By god, it's not cawing what it did before.

EUELPIDES [shouting]

But what's it saying about the road?

PISTHETAIROS

Nothing—
 it's saying nothing, just keeps on croaking—
 something about biting my fingers off.

ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

οὐ δεινὸν οὖν δῆτ' ἐστὶν ἡμᾶς δεομένους
 ἐς κόρακας ἐλθεῖν καὶ παρεσκευασμένους
 ἔπειτα μὴ ἔξυρεῖν δύνασθαι τὴν ὁδόν;
 ἡμεῖς γάρ, ἄνδρες οἱ παρόντες ἐν λόγῳ, 30
 νόσον νοσοῦμεν τὴν ἐναντίαν Σάκα·
 ὁ μὲν γὰρ ὢν οὐκ ἀστὸς ἐσβιάζεται,
 ἡμεῖς δὲ φυλῆ καὶ γένει τιμώμενοι,
 ἀστοὶ μετ' ἀστών, οὐ σοβοῦντος οὐδενὸς
 ἀνεπτόμεσθ' ἐκ τῆς πατρίδος ἀμφοῖν ποδοῖν, 35
 αὐτὴν μὲν οὐ μισοῦντ' ἐκείνην τὴν πόλιν
 τὸ μὴ οὐ μεγάλην εἶναι φύσει κευδαίμονα
 καὶ πᾶσι κοινὴν ἐναποτεῖσαι χρήματα.
 οἱ μὲν γὰρ οὖν τέττιγες ἕνα μῆν' ἢ δύο
 ἐπὶ τῶν κραδῶν ἄδουσ', Ἀθηναῖοι δ' αἰὲ 40
 ἐπὶ τῶν δικῶν ἄδουσι πάντα τὸν βίον.
 διὰ ταῦτα τόνδε τὸν βάδον βαδίζομεν,
 κανοῦν δ' ἔχοντε καὶ χύτραν καὶ μυρρίνας
 πλανώμεθα ζητοῦντε τόπον ἀπράγμονα,
 ὅποι καθιδρυθέντε διαγενοίμεθ' ἄν. 45
 ὁ δὲ στόλος νῶν ἐστι παρὰ τὸν Τηρέα
 τὸν ἔποπα, παρ' ἐκείνου πυθέσθαι δεομένῳ,
 εἷ που τοιαύτην εἶδε πόλιν ἢ ἴπέπτετο.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

οὗτος.

ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

τί ἔστω;

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἢ κορώνη μοι πάλαι
 ἄνω τι φράζει.

ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

χῶ κολοῖδς οὕτοσὶ 50
 ἄνω κέχηγεν ὡσπερὲι δεικνύς τί μοι,
 κοῦκ ἔσθ' ὅπως οὐκ ἔστω ἐνταῦθ' ὄρνεα.
 εἰσόμεθα δ' αὐτίκ', ἦν ποιήσωμεν ψόφον.

EUELPIDES [addressing the audience]

Don't you think it's really odd the two of us,
 ready and eager to head off for the birds,⁴
 just can't find the way. You see, we're not well.
 All you men sitting there to hear our words, [30]
 we're ill with a disease, not like the one
 which Sacas suffers,⁵ no—the opposite.
 He's no true citizen, yet nonetheless
 he's pushing his way in by force, but we,
 both honoured members of our tribe and clan,⁶
 both citizens among you citizens,
 with no one trying to drive us from the city,
 have winged our way out of our native land
 on our two feet. We don't hate the city
 because we think it's not by nature great
 and truly prosperous—open to all,
 so they can spend their money paying fines.
 Cicadas chirp up in the trees a while,
 a month or two, but our Athenians [40]
 keep chirping over lawsuits all their lives.
 That's why right now we've set off on this trip,
 with all this stuff—basket, pot, and myrtle boughs.⁷
 We're looking for a nice relaxing spot,
 where we can settle down, live out our lives.
 We're heading for Tereus, that hoopoe bird—
 we'd like to know if in his flying around
 he's seen a city like the one we want.

PISTHETAIROS

Hey!

EUELPIDES

What?

PISTHETAIROS

My crow keeps cawing upwards—
 up there.

EUELPIDES

My jackdaw's looking up there, too, [50]
 as if it wants to show me something.
 There must be birds around these rocks. I know—
 let's make noise and then we'll see for sure.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἀλλ' οἶσθ' ὃ δρᾶσον; τῷ σκέλει θένε τὴν πέτραν.

ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

σὺ δὲ τῇ κεφαλῇ γ', ἕν' ἢ διπλάσιος ὁ ψόφος. 55

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

σὺ δ' οὖν λίθῳ κόψον λαβῶν.

ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

πάνυ γ', εἰ δοκεῖ.

παῖ παῖ.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

τί λέγεις οὗτος; τὸν ἔποπα παῖ καλεῖς;
οὐκ ἀντὶ τοῦ παιδός σ' ἐχρῆν ἔποποι καλεῖν;

ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

ἔποποι. ποιήσεις ἔτι με κόπτειν αὐθις αὖ.
ἔποποι. 60

ΘΕΡΑΠΩΝ

τίνες οὗτοι; τίς ὁ βοῶν τὸν δεσπότην;

ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

Ἄπολλον ἀποτρόπαιε τοῦ χασμήματος.

ΘΕΡΑΠΩΝ

οἴμοι τάλας ὀρνιθοθήρα τουτωί.

ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

οὕτως τι δεινὸν οὐδὲ κάλλιον λέγειν.

ΘΕΡΑΠΩΝ

ἀπολείσθον.

PISTHETAIROS

You know what you should do? Kick that outcrop.

EUELPIDES

Why not use your head? There'd be twice the noise.

[Pisthetairos and Euelpides start climbing back up the rocky outcrops towards a door in the middle of the rocks]

PISTHETAIROS

Pick up a stone and then knock on the door.

EUELPIDES

All right. Here I go.

[Euelpides knocks very loudly on the door and calls out]

Hey, boy . . . boy!

PISTHETAIROS

What are you saying? Why call the hoopoe “boy”?

Don't say that—you should call out

[giving a bird call]

“hoopoe-ho.”

EUELPIDES *[knocking on the door and calling again]*

Hoopoe-ho! . . . Should I knock again? . . . Hoopoe-ho!

SERVANT-BIRD *[inside]*

Who is it? Who's shouting for my master?

[60]

[The door opens and an actor-bird emerges. He has a huge beak which terrifies Euelpides and Pisthetairos. They fall back in fear, and the birds they have been carrying disappear]

EUELPIDES

My lord Apollo, save us! That gaping beak—

SERVANT-BIRD *[also frightened]*

Oh, oh, now we're in for it. You two men,
you're bird-catchers!

EUELPIDES

Don't act so weird!

Can't you say something nice?

SERVANT-BIRD *[trying to scare them off]*

You two men will die!

ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ
 ἀλλ' οὐκ ἐσμὲν ἀνθρώπων.

ΘΕΡΑΠΩΝ
 τί δαί;

ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ
 Ὑποδεδιῶς ἔγωγε Λιβυκὸν ὄρνεον. 65

ΘΕΡΑΠΩΝ
 οὐδὲν λέγεις.

ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ
 καὶ μὴν ἐροῦ τὰ πρὸς ποδῶν.

ΘΕΡΑΠΩΝ
 ὀδὶ δὲ δὴ τίς ἐστὶν ὄρνις; οὐκ ἐρεῖς;

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ
 Ἐπικεχρῶς ἔγωγε Φασιανικός.

ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ
 ἀτὰρ σὺ τί θηρίον ποτ' εἶ πρὸς τῶν θεῶν;

ΘΕΡΑΠΩΝ
 ὄρνις ἔγωγε δούλος.

ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ
 ἠττήθης τινὸς 70
 ἀλεκτρούνος;

ΘΕΡΑΠΩΝ
 οὐκ ἀλλ' ὅτε περ ὁ δεσπότης
 ἔποψ ἐγένετο, τότε γενέσθαι μ' ἠῤῥατο
 ὄρνιν, ἵν' ἀκόλουθον διάκονόν τ' ἔχη.

ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ
 δεῖται γὰρ ὄρνις καὶ διακόνου τινός;

ΘΕΡΑΠΩΝ
 οὐτός γ', αἶτ' οἶμαι πρότερον ἀνθρωπός ποτ' ὦν, 75
 τοτὲ μὲν ἐρᾶ φαγεῖν ἀφύας Φαληρικᾶς·
 τρέχω ἄφύας λαβῶν ἐγὼ τὸ τρύβλιον.

EUELPIDES
 But we're not men.

SERVANT-BIRD
 What? What are you, then?

EUELPIDES
 Well . . . I'm a chicken-shitter . . . a Libyan bird . . .

SERVANT-BIRD
 That's rubbish.

EUELPIDES
 No, it's not—I've just dropped my load—
 down both my legs. Take a look.

SERVANT-BIRD
 And this one here?
 What kind of bird is he?
[to Pisthetairos]
 Can you speak?

PISTHETAIROS
 Me? . . . a crapper-fowl . . . from Phasis.

EUELPIDES
 God knows what kind of animal you are!

SERVANT-BIRD
 I'm a servant bird.

EUELPIDES
 Beaten by some rooster 70
 in a cock fight? [70]

SERVANT-BIRD
 No. It was my master—
 when he became a hoopoe, well, I prayed
 that I could turn into a bird. That way
 he'd still have me to serve and wait on him.

EUELPIDES
 Does a bird need his own butler bird?

SERVANT-BIRD
He does—I think it's got something to do
 with the fact that earlier he was a man.
 So if he wants to taste some fish from Phalerum,
 I grab a plate and run off for sardines.

ἔτνους δ' ἐπιθυμεί, δεῖ τορύνης καὶ χύτρας·
τρέχω ἔπι τορύνην.

ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

τροχίλος ὄρνις οὐτοσί.
οἶσθ' οὖν ὁ δρᾶσον ᾧ τροχίλε; τὸν δεσπότην
ἡμῶν κάλεσον. 80

ΘΕΡΑΠΩΝ

ἀλλ' ἀρτίως νῆ τὸν Δία
εὔδει καταφαγῶν μύρτα καὶ σέρφους τινάς.

ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

ὅμως ἐπέγειρον αὐτόν.

ΘΕΡΑΠΩΝ

οἶδα μὲν σαφῶς
ὅτι ἀχθέσεται, σφῶν δ' αὐτὸν οὐνεκ' ἐπεγερωῶ.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

κακῶς σύ γ' ἀπόλοι', ὡς μ' ἀπέκτεινας δέει. 85

ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

οἴμοι κακοδαίμων χῶ κολοιός μοῖχεται
ὑπὸ τοῦ δέους.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ᾧ δειλότατον σὺ θηρίον,
δείσας ἀφήκας τὸν κολοιόν;

ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

εἰπέ μοι,
σὺ δὲ τὴν κορώνην οὐκ ἀφήκας καταπεσών;

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

μὰ Δί' οὐκ ἔγωγε.

ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

ποῦ γὰρ ἔστ'?

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἀπέπτετο. 90

If he wants soup, we need pot and ladle,
so I dash off for the spoon.

EUELPIDES

A runner bird—
that's what you are. Well, my little runner,
do you know what we'd like to have you do?
Go call your master for us. [80]

SERVANT-BIRD

But he's asleep—
for heaven's sake, his after-dinner snooze—
he's just had gnats and myrtle berries.

EUELPIDES

Wake him up anyway.

SERVANT-BIRD

I know for sure
he'll be annoyed, but I'll do it, just for you.

[Exit Servant-Bird back through the doors]

PISTHETAIROS

Damn that bird—he scared me half to death.

EUELPIDES

Bloody hell—he frightened off my bird!

PISTHETAIROS

You're such a coward—the worst there is.
Were you so scared you let that jackdaw go?

EUELPIDES

What about you? Didn't you collapse
and let your crow escape?

PISTHETAIROS

Not me, by god.

EUELPIDES

Where is it then?

PISTHETAIROS

It flew off on its own. [90]

ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

οὐκ ἄρ' ἀφήκας; ὠγάθ' ὡς ἀνδρείος εἶ.

ΤΗΡΕΥΣ

ἄνοιγε τὴν ὕλην, ἵν' ἐξέλθω ποτέ.

ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

ὦ Ἡράκλεις τουτὶ τί ποτ' ἐστὶ τὸ θηρίου;
τίς ἢ πτέρωσις; τίς ὁ τρόπος τῆς τριλοφίας;

ΤΗΡΕΥΣ

τίνες εἰσὶ μ' οἱ ζητοῦντες; 95

ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

οἱ δώδεκα θεοὶ
εἴξασιw ἐπιτρῦβαί σε.

ΤΗΡΕΥΣ

μῶν με σκώπτετον
ὀρῶντε τὴν πτέρωσιw; ἦν γὰρ ὦ ξένοι
ἄνθρωπος.

ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

οὐ σοῦ καταγελῶμεν.

ΤΗΡΕΥΣ

ἀλλὰ τοῦ;

ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

τὸ ράμφος ἡμῖν σου γέλοιοι φαίνεται.

ΤΗΡΕΥΣ

τοιαῦτα μέντοι Σοφοκλέης λυμαίνεται
ἐν ταῖς τραγωδίαισιw ἐμὲ τὸν Τηρέα. 100

ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

Τηρέωv γὰρ εἶ σύ; πότερον ὄρνις ἢ ταῶv;

ΤΗΡΕΥΣ

ὄρνις ἔγωγε.

ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

κᾶτά σοι ποῦ τὰ πτερά;

EUELPIDES

You didn't let go? What a valiant man!

TEREUS [*from inside, speaking in a grand style*]

Throw open this wood, so I may issue forth.

[*The doors open. Enter Tereus, a hoopoe bird, with feathers on his head and wings but none on his body. He struts and speaks with a ridiculously affected confidence. Euelpides and Pisthetairos are greatly amused at his appearance*]

EUELPIDES

O Hercules, what kind of beast is this?
What's that plumage? What sort of triple crest?

TEREUS

Who are the persons here who seek me out?

EUELPIDES

The twelve gods, it seems, have worked you over.⁸

TEREUS

Does seeing my feathers make you scoff at me?
Strangers, I was once upon a time a man.

EUELPIDES

It's not you we're laughing at.

TEREUS

Then what is it?

EUELPIDES

It's your beak—to us it looks quite funny.

TEREUS

It's how Sophocles distorts Tereus—
that's me—in his tragedies. [100]

EUELPIDES

You're Tereus?
Are you a peacock or a bird?⁹

TEREUS

I am a bird.

EUELPIDES

Then where are all your feathers?

ΤΗΡΕΥΣ
 ἐξερρήκε.
 ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ
 πότερον ὑπὸ νόσου τινός;
 ΤΗΡΕΥΣ
 οὐκ, ἀλλὰ τὸν χειμῶνα πάντα τῶρνεα
 πτερορρνεῖ τε καὶθις ἕτερα φύομεν.
 ἀλλ' εἴπατόν μοι σφὼ τίν' ἐστόν;
 ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ
 νῶ; βροτῶ.
 ΤΗΡΕΥΣ
 ποδαπὼ τὸ γένος;
 ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ
 ὅθεν αἱ τριήρεις αἱ καλάι.
 ΤΗΡΕΥΣ
 μῶν ἡλιαστά;
 ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ
 μᾶλλὰ θατέρου τρόπου,
 ἀπηλιαστά.
 ΤΗΡΕΥΣ
 σπείρεται γὰρ τοῦτ' ἐκεῖ
 τὸ σπέρμ';
 ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ
 ὀλίγον ζητῶν ἂν ἐξ ἀγροῦ λάβοις.
 ΤΗΡΕΥΣ
 πράγους δὲ δὴ τοῦ δεομένω δεῦρ' ἦλθετον;
 ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ
 σοὶ ξυγγενέσθαι βουλομένω.
 ΤΗΡΕΥΣ
 τίνος πέρι;

TEREUS
 They've fallen off.
 EUELPIDES
 Have you got some disease?
 TEREUS
 No, it's not that.
 In winter time all birds shed their feathers,
 then new ones grow again. But tell me this—
 who are the two of you?
 EUELPIDES
 Us? We're human beings.
 TEREUS
 From what race were you born?
 EUELPIDES
 Our origin?
 In Athens—which makes the finest warships.
 TEREUS
 Ah, so you're jury-men, are you?
 EUELPIDES
 No, no.
 We're different—we keep away from juries.
 TEREUS
 Does that seedling flourish in those parts? [110]
 EUELPIDES
 If you go searching in the countryside,
 you'll find a few.
 TEREUS
 So why have you come here?
 What do you need?
 EUELPIDES
 To talk to you.
 TEREUS
 What for?

ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

ὅτι πρῶτα μὲν ἦσθ' ἄνθρωπος ὥσπερ νῶ ποτέ,
 κάργυριον ὠφείλεις ὥσπερ νῶ ποτέ, 115
 κοῦκ ἀποδιδούς ἔχαιρες ὥσπερ νῶ ποτέ·
 εἶτ' ἀθίς ὀρνίθων μεταλλάξας φύσιν
 καὶ γῆν ἐπέπτου καὶ θάλατταν ἐν κύκλῳ,
 καὶ πάνθ' ὅσα περ ἄνθρωπος ὅσα τ' ὄρνις φρονεῖς·
 ταῦτ οὖν ἰκέται νῶ πρὸς σέ δεῦρ' ἀφίγμεθα, 120
 εἴ τινα πόλιν φράσειας ἡμῖν εὖερον
 ὥσπερ σισύραν ἐγκατακλιῆναι μαλθακῆν.

ΤΗΡΕΥΣ

ἔμειτα μείζω τῶν Κραναῶν ζητεῖς πόλιν;

ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

μείζω μὲν οὐδέν, προσφορωτέραν δὲ νῶν.

ΤΗΡΕΥΣ

ἀριστοκρατεῖσθαι δῆλος εἰ ζητῶν. 125

ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

ἔγώ;
 ἦκιστα· καὶ γὰρ τὸν Σκελίου βδελύττομαι.

ΤΗΡΕΥΣ

ποίαν τιν' οὖν ἦδιστ' ἂν οἰκοῖτ' ἂν πόλιν;

ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

ὅπου τὰ μέγιστα πράγματ' εἶη τοιάδε·
 ἐπὶ τὴν θύραν μου πρῶ τις ἐλθὼν τῶν φίλων
 λέγοι ταδί· 'πρὸς τοῦ Διὸς τοῦλυμπίου 130
 ὅπως παρέσει μοι καὶ σὺ καὶ τὰ παιδιά
 λουσάμενα πρῶ· μέλλω γὰρ ἐστιᾶν γάμους·
 καὶ μηδαμῶς ἄλλως ποιήσης· εἰ δὲ μή,
 μή μοι τότε γ' ἔλθης, ὅταν ἐγὼ πράττω κακῶς.'

ΤΗΡΕΥΣ

νῆ Δία τάλαιπῶρων γε πραγμάτων ἐρᾶς.
 τί δαὶ σύ; 135

EUELPIDES

Well, you were once a man, as we are now.
 You owed people money, as we do now.
 You loved to skip the debt, as we do now.
 Then you changed your nature, became a bird.
 You fly in circles over land and sea.
 You've learned whatever's known to birds and men.
 That's why we've come as suppliants to you, [120]
 to ask if you can tell us of some town,
 where life is sheepskin soft, where we can sleep.

TEREUS

Are you looking for a mighty city,
 more powerful than what Cranaus built?¹⁰

EUELPIDES

Not one more powerful, no. What we want
 is one which better suits the two of us.

TEREUS

You clearly want an aristocracy.

EUELPIDES

Me? No, not at all. The son of Scellias
 is someone I detest.¹¹

TEREUS

All right, then,
 What kind of city would you like to live in?

EUELPIDES

I'd like a city where my biggest problem
 would be something like this—in the morning
 a friend comes to my door and says to me,
 "In the name of Olympian Zeus, take a bath, [130]
 an early one, you and your children,
 then come to my place for the wedding feast
 I'm putting on. Don't disappoint me now.
 If you do, then don't come looking for me
 when my affairs get difficult for me."¹²

TEREUS

By heaven, you poor man, you do love trouble.
 What about you?

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

τοιούτων ἐρῶ καὶ γώ.

ΤΗΡΕΥΣ

τίνων;

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ὅπου ξυναντῶν μοι ταδί τις μέμψεται
 ὥσπερ ἀδικηθεὶς παιδὸς ὠραίου πατήρ·
 ‘καλῶς γέ μου τὸν υἱὸν ὦ Στιλβωνίδη
 εὐρών ἀπιόντ’ ἀπὸ γυμνασίου λελουμένον 140
 οὐκ ἔκυσας, οὐ προσεῖπας, οὐ προσηγάγους,
 οὐκ ὠρχιπέδισας, ὧν ἐμοὶ πατρικὸς φίλος.’

ΤΗΡΕΥΣ

ὦ δειλακρίων σὺ τῶν κακῶν οἴων ἐρᾶς.
 ἀτὰρ ἔστι γ’ ὅποιαν λέγετον εὐδαίμων πόλις
 παρὰ τὴν ἐρυθρὰν θάλατταν. 145

ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

οἴμοι μηδαμῶς
 ἡμῖν παρὰ τὴν θάλατταν, ἵν’ ἀνακύψεται
 κλητῆρ’ ἄγουσ’ ἔωθεν ἡ Σαλαμινία.
 Ἑλληνικὴν δὲ πόλιν ἔχεις ἡμῖν φράσαι;

ΤΗΡΕΥΣ

τί οὐ τὸν Ἡλείον Λέπρεον οἰκίζετον
 ἐλθόνθ’;

ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

ὅτι ἡ νῆ τοὺς θεοὺς ὅσ’ οὐκ ἰδῶν
 βδελύττομαι τὸν Λέπρεον ἀπὸ Μελανθίου. 150

ΤΗΡΕΥΣ

ἀλλ’ εἰσὶν ἕτεροι τῆς Λοκρίδος Ὀπούντιοι,
 ἵνα χρὴ κατοικεῖν.

ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

ἀλλ’ ἔγωγ’ Ὀπούντιος
 οὐκ ἂν γενοίμην ἐπὶ ταλάντῳ χρυσοῦ.

PISTHETAIROS

I’d like the same.

TEREUS

Like what?

PISTHETAIROS

To have the father of some handsome lad
 come up to me, as if I’d done him wrong,
 and tell me off with some complaint like this—
 “A fine thing there between you and my son, 140
 you old spark. You met him coming back
 from the gymnasium, after his bath—
 you didn’t kiss or greet him with a hug,
 or even try tickling his testicles—
 yet you’re a friend of mine, his father.”

TEREUS

How you yearn for problems, you unhappy man.
 There is a happy city by the sea,
 the Red Sea, just like the one you mention.¹³

EUELPIDES

No, no. Not by the sea! That’s not for us,
 not where that ship Salamia can show up
 with some man on board to serve a summons
 early in the morning.¹⁴ What about Greece?
 Can you tell us of some city there?

TEREUS

Why not go and settle down in Elis—
 in Lepreus?

EUELPIDES

In Lepreus? By the gods,
 I hate the place—although I’ve never seen it—
 it’s all Melanthius’ fault.¹⁵ 150

TEREUS

You could go
 to the Opuntians—they’re in Locris—
 you might settle there.

EUELPIDES

Be Opuntius—
 no way, not for a talent’s weight in gold.¹⁶

οὗτος δὲ δὴ τίς ἔσθ' ὁ μετ' ὀρνίθων βίος; 155
σὺ γὰρ οἶσθ' ἀκριβῶς.

ΤΗΡΕΥΣ

οὐκ ἄχαρις ἐς τὴν τριβήν·
οὐδ' πρῶτα μὲν δεῖ ζῆν ἄνευ βαλλαντίου.

ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

πολλήν γ' ἀφείλες τοῦ βίου κιβδηλίαν.

ΤΗΡΕΥΣ

νεμόμεσθα δ' ἐν κήποις τὰ λευκὰ σήσαμα 160
καὶ μύρτα καὶ μήκωνα καὶ σισύμβρια.

ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

ὕμεῖς μὲν ἄρα ζῆτε νυμφίων βίον.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

φεῦ φεῦ·
ἦ μέγ' ἐνορῶ βούλευμ' ἐν ὀρνίθων γένει,
καὶ δύναμιν ἦ γένοιτ' ἄν, εἰ πίθοισθέ μοι.

ΤΗΡΕΥΣ

τί σοι πιθώμεσθ';

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ὅ τι πίθησθε; πρῶτα μὲν 165
μὴ περιπέτεσθε πανταχῇ κεχηνότες·
ὡς τοῦτ' ἄτιμον τοῦργον ἐστίν. αὐτίκα
ἐκεῖ παρ' ἡμῖν τοὺς πετομένους ἦν ἔρη,
'τίς ὄρνις οὗτος;' ὁ Τελέας ἐρεῖ ταδί·
'ἄνθρωπος ὄρνις ἀστάθμητος πετόμενος,
ἀτέκμαρτος, οὐδὲν οὐδέποτ' ἐν ταύτῳ μένων.' 170

ΤΗΡΕΥΣ

νὴ τὸν Διόνυσον εἶ γε μωμᾶ ταυταγί.
τί ἂν οὖν ποιῶμεν;

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

οἰκίσσατε μίαν πόλιν.

ΤΗΡΕΥΣ

ποίαν δ' ἂν οἰκίσαιμεν ὄρνιθες πόλιν;

But what's it like here, living with the birds?
You must know it well.

TEREUS

It's not unpleasant.
First of all, you have to live without a purse.

EUELPIDES

So you're rid of one great source of fraud in life.

TEREUS

In the gardens we enjoy white sesame, 160
the myrtles, mint, and poppies.

EUELPIDES

So you live
just like newly-weds.

PISTHETAIROS

That's it! I've got it!
I see a great plan for this race of birds—
and power, too, if you'll trust what I say.

TEREUS

What do you want to get us all to do?

PISTHETAIROS

What should you be convinced to do? Well, first,
don't just fly about in all directions,
your beaks wide open—that makes you despised.
With us, you see, if you spoke of men
who always flit about and if you asked,
“Who's that Teleas” someone would respond,
“The man's a bird—he's unreliable,
flighty, vague, never stays in one place long.”¹⁷ 170

TEREUS

By Dionysus, that's a valid point—
the criticism's fair. What should we do?

PISTHETAIROS

Settle down together in one city.

TEREUS

What sort of city could we birds set up?

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἄληθες; ὦ σκαιότατον εἰρηκῶς ἔπος,
βλέψον κάτω.

175

ΤΗΡΕΥΣ

καὶ δὴ βλέπω.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

βλέπε νῦν ἄνω.

ΤΗΡΕΥΣ

βλέπω.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

περίαγε τὸν τράχηλον.

ΤΗΡΕΥΣ

νῆ Δία

ἀπολαύσομαί τί γ', εἰ διαστραφήσομαι.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

εἶδές τι;

ΤΗΡΕΥΣ

τὰς νεφέλας γε καὶ τὸν οὐρανόν.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

οὐχ οὗτος οὖν δήπου ἴσθιν ὀρνίθων πόλος;

ΤΗΡΕΥΣ

πόλος; τίνα τρόπον;

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ὥσπερ ἂν εἴποι τις τόπος. 180

ὅτι δὲ πολεῖται τοῦτο καὶ διέρχεται
ἅπαντα διὰ τούτου, καλεῖται νῦν πόλος.
ἦν δ' οἰκίσθητε τοῦτο καὶ φάρξθη ἅπαξ,
ἐκ τοῦ πόλου τούτου κεκλήσεται πόλις.
ὥστ' ἄρξετ' ἀνθρώπων μὲν ὥσπερ παρνόπων, 185
τοὺς δ' αὖ θεοὺς ἀπολεῖτε λιμῶ Μηλίῳ.

ΤΗΡΕΥΣ

πῶς;

PISTHETAIROS

Why ask that? What a stupid thing to say!
Look down.

TEREUS

All right.

PISTHETAIROS

Now look up.

TEREUS

I'm looking up.

PISTHETAIROS

Turn your head round to the side.

TEREUS

By Zeus,

this'll do me good, if I twist off my neck.

PISTHETAIROS

What do you see?

TEREUS

Clouds and sky.

PISTHETAIROS

Well, then,

isn't this a staging area for birds?

TEREUS

A staging area? How come it's that?

PISTHETAIROS

You might say it's a location for them —
there's lots of business here, but everything
keeps moving through this zone, so it's now called
a staging place. But if you settled here,
fortified it, and fenced it off with walls,
this staging area could become your state.
Then you'd rule all men as if they're locusts
and annihilate the gods with famine,
just like in Melos.¹⁸

[180]

TEREUS

How'd we manage that?

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἐν μέσῳ δῆπουθεν ἀήρ ἐστι γῆς.
 εἶθ' ὥσπερ ἡμεῖς, ἦν ἰέναι βουλόμεθα
 Πυθῶδε, Βοιωτοὺς δίοδον αἰτούμεθα,
 οὕτως, ὅταν θύσωσιν ἄνθρωποι θεοῖς,
 ἦν μὴ φόρον φέρωσιν οἱ ὑμῖν οἱ θεοί,
 διὰ τῆς πόλεως τῆς ἀλλοτρίας καὶ τοῦ χάους
 τῶν μηρίων τὴν κνῖσαν οὐ διαφρήσετε.

190

ΤΗΡΕΥΣ

ἰοὺ ἰοῦ·
 μὰ γῆν μὰ παγίδας μὰ νεφέλας μὰ δίκτυα,
 μὴ ἴγῳ νόημα κομψότερον ἤκουσά πω·
 ὥστ' ἂν κατοικίζοιμι μετὰ σοῦ τὴν πόλιν,
 εἰ ξυνδοκοίῃ τοῖσιν ἄλλοις ὀρνέοις.

195

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

τίς ἂν οὖν τὸ πρᾶγμ' αὐτοῖς διηγῆσαιτο;

ΤΗΡΕΥΣ

σύ.

ἐγὼ γὰρ αὐτοὺς βαρβάρους ὄντας πρὸ τοῦ
 ἐδίδαξα τὴν φωνήν, ξυνῶν πολὺν χρόνον.

200

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

πῶς δῆτ' ἂν αὐτοὺς ξυγκαλέσειας;

ΤΗΡΕΥΣ

ῥαδίως.

δευρὶ γὰρ ἐσβὰς αὐτίκα μάλ' ἐς τὴν λόχμην,
 ἔπειτ' ἀνεγείρας τὴν ἐμὴν ἀηδόνα,
 καλοῦμεν αὐτούς· οἱ δὲ νῶν τοῦ φθέγματος
 ἐάνπερ ἐπακούσωσι θεύσονται δρόμω.

205

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ὦ φίλτατ' ὀρνίθων σὺ μὴ νυν ἔσταθι·
 ἀλλ' ἀντιβολῶ σ' ἄγ' ὡς τάχιστ' ἐς τὴν λόχμην
 ἔσβαινε κἀνεγείρε τὴν ἀηδόνα.

ΤΗΡΕΥΣ

ἄγε σύννομέ μοι παῦσαι μὲν ὕπνου,
 λῦσον δὲ νόμους ἱερῶν ὕμνων,

210

PISTHETAIROS

Look, between earth and heaven there's the air.
 Now, with us, when we want to go to Delphi,
 we have to ask permission to pass through
 from the Boeotians. You should do the same.
 When men sacrifice, make gods pay you cash.
 If not, you don't grant them rights of passage.
 You'll stop the smell of roasting thigh bones
 moving through an empty space and city
 which don't belong to them.

[190]

TEREUS

Wow!!! Yippee!!

By earth, snares, traps, nets, what a marvellous scheme!
 I've never heard a neater plan! So now,
 with your help, I'm going to found a city,
 if other birds agree.

PISTHETAIROS

The other birds?

Who's going to lay this business out to them?

TEREUS

You can do it. I've taught them how to speak.
 Before I came, they could only twitter,
 but I've been with them here a long, long time.

[200]

PISTHETAIROS

How do you call to bring them all together?

TEREUS

Easy. I'll step inside my thicket here,
 and wake my nightingale. Then we'll both call.
 Once they hear our voices they'll come running.

PISTHETAIROS

O, you darling bird, now don't just stand there—
 not when I'm begging you to go right now,
 get in your thicket, wake your nightingale.

[Tereus goes back through the doors]¹⁹

TEREUS [singing]

Come my queen, don't sleep so long,
 pour forth the sound of sacred song—
 lament once more through lips divine

[210]

οὓς διὰ θείου στόματος θρηνεῖς
 τὸν ἐμὸν καὶ σὸν πολὺδακρυν Ἴτυν·
 ἐλελιζομένης δ' ἱεροῖς μέλεσιν
 γένυος ξουθῆς
 καθαρὰ χωρεῖ διὰ φυλλοκόμου 215
 μίλακος ἠχῶ πρὸς Διὸς ἔδρας,
 ἴν' ὁ χρυσοκόμας Φοῖβος ἀκούων
 τοῖς σοῖς ἐλέγοις ἀντιψάλλον
 ἐλεφαντόδετον φόρμιγγα θεῶν
 ἴστησι χορούς· διὰ δ' ἀθανάτων 220
 στομάτων χωρεῖ ξύμφωνος ὁμοῦ
 θεία μακάρων ὀλολυγή.

ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

ὦ Ζεῦ βασιλεῦ τοῦ φθέγματος τοῦρνηθίου·
 οἶον κατεμελίτωσε τὴν λόχημην ὄλην.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

οὗτος.

ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

τί ἔστιν;

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

οὐ σιωπήσει;

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

τί δαί; 225

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

οὔποψ μελωδεῖν αὐτὴν παρασκευάζεται.

ΤΗΡΕΥΣ

ἐποποῖ ποποποποποποποῖ,
 ἰὼ ἰὼ ἰτῶ ἰτῶ ἰτῶ ἰτῶ,
 ἴτω τις ὦδε τῶν ἐμῶν ὁμοπτέρων·

for Itys, your dead child and mine,
 the one we've cried for all this time.²⁰

Sing out your music's liquid trill
 in that vibrato voice—the thrill
 which echoes in those purest tones
 through leafy haunts of yew trees roams
 and rises up to Zeus' throne.

Apollo with the golden hair
 sits listening to your music there—
 and in response he plucks his string—
 his lyre of ivory then brings
 the gods themselves to dance and sing.

Then from gods' mouths in harmony [220]
 come sounds of sacred melody.

[A flute starts playing within, in imitation of the nightingale's song. The melody continues for a few moments]

ΕΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

By lord Zeus, that little birdie's got a voice!
 She pours her honey all through that thicket!

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

Hey!

ΕΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

What?

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

Shut up.

ΕΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

Why?

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

That hoopoe bird—

he's all set to sing another song.

ΤΕΡΕΥΣ [issuing a bird call to all the birds. His song or chant is accompanied by the flute indicating the nightingale's song]

Epo-popo-popo-popo-popoi,
 Io, io, ito, ito, ito, ito.

Come here to me,
 all you with feathers just like mine, [230]

ὅσοι τ' εὐσπόρους ἀγροίκων γύας 230
 νέμεσθε, φῦλα μυρία κριθοτράγων
 σπερμολόγων τε γένη
 ταχὺ πετόμενα, μαλθακὴν ἰέντα γῆρυν·
 ὅσα τ' ἐν ἄλοκι θαμὰ
 βῶλον ἀμφιτιττυβίζεθ' ὦδε λεπτόν 235
 ἠδομένα φωνᾶ·
 τιὸ τιὸ τιὸ τιὸ τιὸ τιὸ τιὸ τιό.
 ὅσα θ' ὑμῶν κατὰ κήπους ἐπὶ κισσοῦ
 κλάδεσι νομὸν ἔχει,
 τά τε κατ' ὄρεα τά τε κοτινοτράγα τά τε κομαροφάγα, 240
 ἀνύσατε πετόμενα πρὸς ἐμὰν αὐδάν·
 τριοτὸ τριοτὸ τοτοβρίξ·
 οἱ θ' ἐλείας παρ' αὐλῶνας ὄξυστόμους
 ἐπίδας κάπτεθ', ὅσα τ' εὐδρόσους γῆς τόπους 245
 ἔχετε λειμῶνά τ' ἐρόεντα Μαραθῶνος, ὄρνις
 πτερυγοποίκιλός τ' ἀτταγᾶς ἀτταγᾶς.
 ὦν τ' ἐπὶ πόντιον οἶδμα θαλάσσης 250
 φῦλα μετ' ἀλκυόνεσσι ποτῆται,
 δεῦρ' ἵτε πευσόμενοι τὰ νεώτερα,
 πάντα γὰρ ἐνθάδε φῦλ' ἀθροίζομεν
 οἰωνῶν ταναοδείρων.
 ἦκει γὰρ τις δριμὺς πρέσβυς 255
 καινὸς γνώμη
 καινῶν τ' ἔργων ἐγχειρητής.
 ἀλλ' ἵτ' ἐς λόγους ἅπαντα,

all you who live in country fields
 fresh-ploughed, still full of seed,
 and all you thousand tribes
 who munch on barley corn
 who gather up the grain,
 and fly at such a speed
 and utter your sweet cries,
 all you who in the furrows there
 twitter on the turned-up earth,
 and sweetly sing
 tio tio tio tio tio tio tio tio —

All those of you
 who like to scavenge food
 from garden ivy shoots, [240]
 all you in the hills up there
 who eat from olive and arbutus trees.
 come here as quickly as you can,
 fly here in answer to this call—
 trio-to trio-to toto-brix!

And every one of you
 in low-lying marshy ground
 who snap sharp-biting gnats,
 by regions of well-watered land,
 and lovely fields of Marathon,
 all you variously coloured birds,
 godwits and francolins—
 I'm calling you.

You flocks who fly across the seas [250]
 across the waves with halcyons
 come here to learn the news.
 We're all assembling here,
 all tribes of long-neck birds.
 A shrewd old man's arrived—
 he's here with a new plan,
 a man of enterprise,
 all set to improvise.
 So gather all of you
 to hear his words.

δεῦρο δεῦρο δεῦρο δεῦρο.

τοροτοροτοροτοροτίξ. 260

κικκαβαῦ κικκαβαῦ.

τοροτοροτοροτορολιλιλίξ.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ὄρας τιῶ ὄρνιθ;

ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

μὰ τὸν Ἀπόλλω ἴγώ μὲν οὐ·

καίτοι κέχηνά γ' ἐς τὸν οὐρανὸν βλέπων.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἄλλως ἄρ' οὐποῖς, ὡς ἔοικ', ἐς τὴν λόχμην 265

ἐσβὰς ἐπῶξε χαραδριὸν μιμούμενος.

ὍΡΝΙΣ ΤΙΣ

τοροτίξ τοροτίξ.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ὦγάθ' ἀλλ' εἷς οὐτοσί καὶ δὴ τις ὄρνιθ ἔρχεται.

ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

νὴ Δί' ὄρνιθ δῆτα. τίς ποτ' ἐστίν; οὐ δῆπου ταῶς;

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

οὗτος αὐτὸς νῶν φράσει· τίς ἐστὶν ὄρνιθ οὐτοσί; 270

[The final words gradually change from coherent speech into a bird call]

Come here, come here,

come here, come here.

Toro-toro toro-toro-tix

Kik-kabau, kik-kabau.

Toro-toro toro-toro li-li-lix

[260]

[Euelpides and Pisthetairos start looking up into the sky for birds]

PISTHETAIROS

Seen any birds lately?

EUELPIDES

No, by Apollo, I haven't—

even though I'm staring up into the sky,

not even blinking.

PISTHETAIROS

It seems to me

that hoopoe bird was just wasting time

hiding, like a curlew, in that thicket,

and screaming out his bird calls—

[imitating Tereus] po-poi po-poi

[There is an instant response to Pisthetairos' call from off stage, a loud bird call which really scares Pisthetairos and Euelpides]

BIRD [offstage]

Toro-tix, toro-tix.

PISTHETAIROS

Hey, my good man, here comes a bird.

[Enter a flamingo, very tall and flaming red-something Pisthetairos and Euelpides have never seen]

EUELPIDES

By Zeus,

that's a bird? What kind would you call that?

It couldn't be a peacock, could it?

[Tereus re-enters from the thicket]

PISTHETAIROS

Tereus here will tell us. Hey, my friend,

what's that bird there?

ΤΗΡΕΥΣ
 οὔτος οὐ τῶν ἡθάδων τῶνδ' ὦν ὀραῖθ' ὑμεῖς ἀεὶ,
 ἀλλὰ λιμναῖος.

ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ
 βαβαὶ καλὸς γε καὶ φοινικιοῦς.

ΤΗΡΕΥΣ
 εἰκότως γε· καὶ γὰρ ὄνομ' αὐτῶ' ὅτι φοινικόπτερος.

ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ
 οὔτος ὦ σέ τοι.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ
 τί βωστρεῖς;

ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ
 ἕτερος ὄρνις οὔτοςί.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ
 νῆ Δί' ἕτερος δῆτα χούτος ἕξεδρον χροῖαν ἔχων. 275
 τίς ποτ' ἔσθ' ὁ μουσόμαντις ἄτοπος ὄρνις ὀρειβάτης;

ΤΗΡΕΥΣ
 ὄνομα τούτῳ Μῆδος ἔστο.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ
 Μῆδος; ὦναξ Ἡράκλεις·
 εἶτα πῶς ἄνευ καμήλου Μῆδος ὦν εἰσέπτετο;

ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ
 ἕτερος αὖ λόφον κατειληφώς τις ὄρνις οὔτοςί.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ
 τί τὸ τέρας τουτί ποτ' ἐστίν; οὐ σὺ μόνος ἄρ' ἦσθ' ἔποψ,
 ἀλλὰ χούτος ἕτερος; 280

ΤΗΡΕΥΣ
 οὔτοςί μὲν ἔστι Φιλοκλέους
 ἐξ ἔποπος, ἐγὼ δὲ τούτου πάππος, ὥσπερ εἰ λέγοις
 Ἴππόνικος Καλλίου καὶ Ἴππονίκου Καλλίας.

TEREUS
 Not your everyday fowl—
 the kind you always see. She's a marsh bird. [270]

EUELPIDES
 My goodness, she's gorgeous—flaming red!

TEREUS
 Naturally, that's why she's called Flamingo.
[A second bird enters, a Peacock]

EUELPIDES *[to Pisthetairos]*
 Hey . . .

PISTHETAİROS
 What is it?

EUELPIDES
 Another bird's arrived.

PISTHETAİROS
 You're right. By god, this one looks really odd.
[To Tereus] Who's this bizarre bird-prophet of the Muse,
 this strutter from the hills?

TEREUS
 He's called the Mede.

PISTHETAİROS
 He's a Mede? By lord Hercules, how come
 a Mede flew here without his camel?

EUELPIDES
 Here's another one . . .
[The next bird enters, another Hoopoe]
 . . . what a crest of feathers!

PISTHETAİROS *[To Tereus]*
 What's this marvel? You're not the only hoopoe?
 This here's another one? [280]

TEREUS
 He's my grandson—
 son of Philocles the Hoopoe—it's like
 those names you pass along, when you call
 Hipponicus the son of Callias,
 and Callias son of Hipponicus.²¹

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

Καλλίας ἄρ' οὗτος οὔρνις ἐστίν· ὡς πετερορρυεῖ.

ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

ἄτε γὰρ ὦν γενναῖος ὑπὸ τε συκοφαντῶν τίλλεται, 285
αἶ τε θήλειαι προσεκτίλλουσι αὐτοῦ τὰ πτερά.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ὦ Πόσειδον ἕτερος αὐ τις βαπτὸς ὄρνις οὕτοσί.
τίς ὀνομάζεται ποθ' οὗτος;

ΤΗΡΕΥΣ

οὕτοσὶ κατωφαγᾶς.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἔστι γὰρ κατωφαγᾶς τις ἄλλος ἢ Κλεώνυμος;

ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

πῶς ἂν οὖν Κλεώνυμός γ' ὦν οὐκ ἀπέβαλε τὸν λόφον;

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἀλλὰ μέντοι τίς ποθ' ἢ λόφωσις ἢ τῶν ὀρνέων; 291
ἢ πὶ τὸν δίαυλον ἦλθον;

ΤΗΡΕΥΣ

ὥσπερ οἱ Κᾶρες μὲν οὖν
ἐπὶ λόφων οἰκοῦσι ὠγάθ' ἀσφαλείας οὔνεκα.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ὦ Πόσειδον οὐχ ὀρᾶς ὅσον συνείλεκται κακὸν
ὀρνέων;

ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

ὦναξ Ἄπολλον τοῦ νέφους. ἰὸν ἰού, 295
οὐδ' ἰδεῖν ἔτ' ἔσθ' ὑπ' αὐτῶν πετομένων τὴν εἴσοδον.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

So this bird is Callias. His feathers—
he seems to have lost quite a few.

ΤΗΡΕΥΣ

Yes, that's true—
being a well-off bird he's plucked by parasites,
and female creatures flock around him, too,
to yank his plumage out.

[Enter the Glutton-bird, an invented species, very fat and brightly coloured]

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

By Poseidon,
here's another bright young bird. What's it called?

ΤΗΡΕΥΣ

This one's the Glutton-bird.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

Another glutton?
Cleonymus is not the only one?²²

ΕΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

If this bird were like our Cleonymus, 290
wouldn't he have thrown away his crest?

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

Why do all the birds display such head crests?
Are they going to run a race in armour?

ΤΗΡΕΥΣ

No, my dear fellow, they live up on the crests,
because it's safer, like the Carians.²³

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ [looking offstage]

Holy Poseidon, do you see those birds!
What a fowl bunch of them—all flocking here!

ΕΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ [looking in the same direction]

Lord Apollo, there's a huge bird cloud! Wow!
So many feathered wings in there I can't see
a way through all those feathers to the wings.

[Enter the Chorus of Birds in a dense mass. Pisthetairos and Euelpides clamber up the rock to get a better look at them]

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

οὔτοσὶ πέρδιξ, ἐκεινοσί γε νῆ Δί' ἀτταγᾶς,
οὔτοσὶ δὲ πηνέλοψ, ἐκεινὴ δέ γ' ἀλκυών.

ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

τίς γάρ ἐσθ' οὔπισθεν αὐτῆς;

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ὅστις ἐστί; κειρύλος.

ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

κειρύλος γάρ ἐστιν ὄρνις;

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

οὐ γάρ ἐστι Σποργίλος; 300

χαύτηί γε γλαῦξ.

ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

τί φῆς; τίς γλαῦκ' Ἀθήναζ' ἤγαγεν;

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

κίττα, τρυγῶν, κορυδὸς, ἐλεᾶς,

ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

ὑποθυμῖς, περιστερὰ,

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

νέρτος, ἰέραξ, φάττα,

ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

κόκκυξ, ἐρυθρόπους,

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

κεβλήπυρις,

ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

πορφυρίς, κερχνῆς, κολυμβίς, ἀμπελίς, φήην,

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

δρούψι.

PISTHETAIROS

Hey, look at that—
it's a partridge, and that one over there,
by Zeus, a francolin—there's a widgeon—
and that's a halcyon!

EUELPIDES

What's the one behind her?

PISTHETAIROS

What is it? It's a spotted shaver.

EUELPIDES

Shaver?

You mean there's a bird that cuts our hair?

PISTHETAIROS

Why not?

After all, there's that barber in the city—
the one we all call Sparrow Sporgilos.²⁴
Here comes an owl.

[300]

EUELPIDES

Well, what about that?

Who brings owls to Athens?²⁵

PISTHETAIROS [*identifying birds in the crowd*]

. . . a turtle dove,
a jay, lark, sedge bird . . .

EUELPIDES

. . . finch, pigeon . . .

PISTHETAIROS

. . . falcon,

hawk, ring dove . . .

EUELPIDES

. . . cuckoo, red shank . . .

PISTHETAIROS

. . . fire-crest . . .

EUELPIDES

. . . porphyron, kestrel, dabchick, bunting,
vulture, and that one's there's a . . . [*he's stumped*]

PISTHETAIROS

. . . woodpecker!!

ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

ἰοὺ ἰοὺ τῶν ὀρνέων, ἰοὺ ἰοὺ τῶν κοιφίχων· 305
 οἶα πιπίζουσι καὶ τρέχουσι διακεκραγότες.
 ἄρ' ἀπειλοῦσίν γε νῶν; οἴμοι, κεχήνασίν γέ τοι
 καὶ βλέπουσιν ἐς σέ κάμέ.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

τοῦτο μὲν κάμοι δοκεῖ.

ΧΟΡΟΣ

ποποποποποποποποποποποποι ποῦ μ' ἄρ' ὅς 310
 ἐκάλεσε; τίνα τόπον ἄρα ποτὲ νέμεται;

ΤΗΡΕΥΣ

οὐτοσὶ πάλαι πάρεμι κοῦκ ἀποστατῶ φίλων.

ΧΟΡΟΣ

τί τί τί τί τί τί τί τί· τίνα λόγον ἄρα ποτὲ 315
 πρὸς ἐμέ φίλον ἔχων;

ΤΗΡΕΥΣ

κοινὸν ἀσφαλῆ δίκαιον ἦδὺν ὠφελήσιμον.
 ἄνδρε γὰρ λεπτῶ λογιστὰ δεῦρ' ἀφίχθον ὡς ἐμέ.

ΧΟΡΟΣ

ποῦ; πᾶ; πῶς φήσ;

ΤΗΡΕΥΣ

φήμ' ἀπ' ἀνθρώπων ἀφίχθαι δεῦρο πρεσβύτα δύο· 320
 ἦκετον δ' ἔχοντε πρέμνον πράγματος πελωρίου.

ΧΟΡΟΣ

ὦ μέγιστον ἐξαμαρτῶν ἐξ ὅτου ἄτράφην ἐγώ,
 πῶς λέγεις;

ΤΗΡΕΥΣ

μήπω φοβηθῆς τὸν λόγον.

ΧΟΡΟΣ

τί μ' ἠργάσω;

EUELPIDES

What a crowd of birds! A major flock of fowls!
 All that twitter as they prance around,
 those rival cries! . . . Oh, oh, what's going on?
 Are they a threat? They're looking straight at us—
 their beaks are open!

PISTHETAIROS

It looks that way to me.

CHORUS LEADER [*starting with a bird call*]

To-toto-to to-toto-to to-to. [310]
 Who's been calling me?
 Where's he keep his nest?

TEREUS

I'm the one. I've been waiting here a while.
 I've not left my bird friends in the lurch.

CHORUS LEADER

Ti-tit-ti ti-tit-ti ti-ti-ti-ti
 tell me as a friend what you have to say.

TEREUS

I have news for all of us—something safe,
 judicious, sweet, and profitable.
 Two men have just come here to visit me,
 two subtle thinkers . . .

CHORUS LEADER [*interrupting*]

What? What are you saying?

TEREUS

I'm telling you two old men have arrived— [320]
 they've come from lands where human beings live
 and bring the stalk of a stupendous plan.

CHORUS LEADER

You fool! This is the most disastrous thing
 since I was hatched. What are you telling us?

TEREUS

Don't be afraid of what I have to say.

CHORUS LEADER

What have you done to us?

ΤΗΡΕΥΣ

ἄνδρ' ἐδεξάμην ἐραστὰ τῆσδε τῆς ξυνουσίας.

ΧΟΡΟΣ

καὶ δέδρακας τοῦτο τοῦργον; 325

ΤΗΡΕΥΣ

καὶ δεδρακώς γ' ἤδομαι.

ΧΟΡΟΣ

κάστων ἤδη που παρ' ἡμῖν;

ΤΗΡΕΥΣ

εἰ παρ' ὑμῖν εἴμ' ἐγώ.

ΧΟΡΟΣ

ἔα ἔα,

προδεδόμεθ' ἀνόσιά τ' ἐπάθομεν·

ὅς γὰρ φίλος ἦν ὁμότροφά θ' ἡμῖν

ἐνέμετο πεδία παρ' ἡμῖν, 330

παρέβη μὲν θεσμοὺς ἀρχαίους,

παρέβη δ' ὄρκους ὀρνίθων·

ἐς δὲ δόλον ἐκάλεσε, παρέβαλέ τ' ἐμὲ παρὰ

γένος ἀνόσιον, ὅπερ ἐξότ' ἐγένετ' ἐπ' ἐμοὶ

πολέμιον ἐτράφη. 335

— ἀλλὰ πρὸς τοῦτον μὲν ἡμῖν ἔστιν ὕστερος λόγος·

τῷ δὲ πρεσβύτῳ δοκεῖ μοι τῷδε δοῦναι τὴν δίκην

διαφορηθῆναί θ' ὑφ' ἡμῶν.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ὡς ἀπωλόμεσθ' ἄρα.

ΤΕΡΕΥΣ

I've welcomed here
two men in love with our society.

CHORUS LEADER

You dared to do that?

ΤΕΡΕΥΣ

Yes, indeed, I did.
And I'm very pleased I did so.

CHORUS LEADER

These two men of yours,
are they among us now?

ΤΕΡΕΥΣ

Yes, as surely as I am.

CHORUS [*breaking into a song of indignation*]

Aiiii, aiiii

He's cheated us,
he's done us wrong,
That friend of ours,
who all along
has fed with us
in fields we share,
now breaks old laws
and doesn't care.

[330]

We swore a pact
of all the birds.
He's now trapped us
with deceitful words—
so power goes
to all our foes,
that wicked race
which since its birth
was raised for war
with us on earth.

CHORUS LEADER

We'll have some words with that one later.
These two old men should get their punishment—
I think we should give it now. Let's do it—
rip 'em to pieces, bit by bit.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

We're done for.

ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

αἴτιος μέντοι σὺ νῶν εἰ τῶν κακῶν τούτων μόνος.
ἐπὶ τί γάρ μ' ἐκέϊθεν ἦγες;

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἔν' ἀκολουθοίης ἐμοί. 340

ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

ἴνα μὲν οὖν κλάοιμι μεγάληα.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

τοῦτο μὲν ληρεῖς ἔχων
κάρτα· πῶς κλαύσει γάρ, ἦν ἅπαξ γε τῶφθαλμῶ ἴκκοπῆς;

ΧΟΡΟΣ

ὦ ἰώ,
ἔπαγ' ἔπιθ' ἐπίφερε πολέμιον
ὄρμᾶν φονίαν, πτέρυγά τε παντᾶ 345
ἐπίβαλε περί τε κύκλωσαι·
ὡς δεῖ τῶδ' οἰμώζειν ἄμφω
καὶ δοῦναι ρύγχει φορβάν.
οὔτε γὰρ ὄρος σκιερὸν οὔτε νέφος αἰθέριον
οὔτε πολὺν πέλαγος ἔστιν ὃ τι δέξεται 350
τῶδ' ἀποφυγόντε με.

— ἀλλὰ μὴ μέλλωμεν ἤδη τῶδε τίλλειν καὶ δάκνειν.
ποῦ ὅσθ' ὁ ταξίαρχος; ἐπαγέτω τὸ δεξιὸν κέρας.

ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

τοῦτ' ἐκεῖνο· ποῖ φύγω δύστηνος;

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

οὗτος οὐ μενεῖς;

ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

ἔν' ὑπὸ τούτων διαφορηθῶ; 355

EUELPIDES

It's all your fault—getting us into this mess.
Why'd you bring me here?

PISTHETAIROS

I wanted you to come. [340]

EUELPIDES

What? So I could weep myself to death?

PISTHETAIROS

Now, you're really talking nonsense—
how do you intend to weep, once these birds
poke out your eyes?

CHORUS [*advancing towards Pisthetairos and Euelpides*]

On, on . . .

let's move in to attack,
and launch a bloody rush,
come in from front and back,
and break 'em in the crush—
with wings on every side
they'll have no place to hide.

These two will start to howl,
when my beak starts to eat
and makes 'em food for fowl.
There's no well-shaded peak,
no cloud or salt-grey sea
where they can flee from me. [350]

CHORUS LEADER

Now let's bite and tear these two apart!
Where's the brigadier? Bring up the right wing!

[*The birds start to close in on Pisthetairos and Euelpides, covering up on the rocks*]

EUELPIDES

This is it! I'm done for. Where can I run?

PISTHETAIROS

Why aren't you staying put?

EUELPIDES

Here with you?
I don't want 'em to rip me into pieces.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

πῶς γὰρ ἂν τούτους δοκεῖς

ἐκφυγεῖν;

ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

οὐκ οἶδ' ὅπως ἄν.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἀλλ' ἐγὼ τοί σοι λέγω,

ὅτι μένοντε δεῖ μάχεσθαι λαμβάνειν τε τῶν χυτράων.

ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

τί δὲ χύτρα νῶ γ' ὠφελήσει;

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

γλαυῆ μὲν οὐ πρόσεισι νῶν.

ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

τοῖς δὲ γαμφώνυξι τοισδί;

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

τὸν ὀβελίσκον ἀρπάσας

εἶτα κατάπηξον πρὸ σαυτοῦ.

ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

τοῖσι δ' ὀφθαλμοῖσι τί; 360

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ὀξύβαφον ἐντευθενὶ προσδοῦ λαβῶν ἢ τρύβλιον.

ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

ὦ σοφώτατ', εὖ γ' ἀνηῦρες αὐτὸ καὶ στρατηγικῶς·
ὑπερακοντίζεις σύ γ' ἤδη Νικίαν ταῖς μηχαναῖς.

ΧΟΡΟΣ

ἐλελεεὺ χώρει κάθες τὸ ρύγχος· οὐ μέλλειν ἐχρῆν.

ἔλκε τίλλε παῖε δείρε, κόπτε πρῶτην τὴν χύτραν. 365

PISTHETAIROS

How do you intend to get away from them?

EUELPIDES

I haven't a clue.

PISTHETAIROS

Then I'll tell you how—

we have to stay right here and fight it out.

So put that cauldron down.

[Pisthetairos takes the cauldron from Euelpides and sets it down on the ground in front of them]

EUELPIDES

What good's a cauldron?

PISTHETAIROS

It'll keep the owls away from us.

EUELPIDES

What about the birds with claws?

PISTHETAIROS *[rummaging in the pack]*

Grab this spit—

stick it in the ground in front of you.

EUELPIDES

How do we protect our eyes? [360]

PISTHETAIROS *[producing a couple of tin bowls]*

An upturned bowl.

Set this on your head.

EUELPIDES: *[putting the tin bowl upside down on his head and holding up the pot, with the spit stuck in the ground]*

That's brilliant!

What a grand stroke of warlike strategy!

In military matters you're the best—

already smarter than that Nikias.²⁶*[Pisthetairos and Euelpides, with tin bowls on their heads, await the birds' charge—with Pisthetairos hiding behind Euelpides, who is holding up the big pot. Their two slaves cower behind them]*

CHORUS LEADER

El-el-el-eu . . . Charge!

Keep those beaks level—no holding back now!

Pull 'em, scratch 'em, hit 'em, rip their skins off!

Go smash that big pot first of all.

ΤΗΡΕΥΣ

εἰπέ μοι τί μέλλετ' ὦ πάντων κάκιστα θηρίων
ἀπολέσαι παθόντες οὐδὲν ἄνδρε καὶ διασπάσαι
τῆς ἐμῆς γυναικὸς ὄντε ξυγγενεὶ καὶ φυλέτα;

ΧΟΡΟΣ

φεισόμεσθα γάρ τι τῶνδε μάλλον ἡμεῖς ἢ λύκων;
ἢ τίνας τεισαίμεθ' ἄλλους τῶνδ' ἂν ἐχθίους ἔτι; 370

ΤΗΡΕΥΣ

εἰ δὲ τὴν φύσιν μὲν ἐχθροὶ τὸν δὲ νοῦν εἰσιν φίλοι,
καὶ διδάξοντές τι δεῦρ' ἤκουσιν ὑμᾶς χρήσιμον;

ΧΟΡΟΣ

πῶς δ' ἂν οἶδ' ἡμᾶς τι χρήσιμον διδάξειάν ποτε
ἢ φράσειαν, ὄντες ἐχθροὶ τοῖσι πάπποις τοῖς ἐμοῖς;

ΤΗΡΕΥΣ

ἀλλ' ἀπ' ἐχθρῶν δῆτα πολλὰ μανθάνουσιν οἱ σοφοί. 375
ἢ γὰρ εὐλάβεια σώζει πάντα. παρὰ μὲν οὖν φίλου
οὐ μάθοις ἂν τοῦθ', ὁ δ' ἐχθρὸς εὐθὺς ἐξηνάγκασεν.
αὐτίχ' αἱ πόλεις παρ' ἀνδρῶν γ' ἔμαθον ἐχθρῶν κοῦ φίλων
ἐκπονεῖν θ' ὑψηλὰ τεῖχη ναῦς τε κεκτῆσθαι μακράς·
τὸ δὲ μάθημα τοῦτο σώζει παιδᾶς οἶκον χρήματα. 380

ΧΟΡΟΣ

ἔστι μὲν λόγων ἀκοῦσαι πρῶτον, ὡς ἡμῖν δοκεῖ,
χρήσιμον· μάθοι γὰρ ἂν τις κάπὸ τῶν ἐχθρῶν σοφόν.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

οἶδε τῆς ὀργῆς χαλᾶν εἶξασιν. ἄναγ' ἐπὶ σκέλος.

[As the Chorus is about to start its charge, Tereus rushes in between the two men and the Chorus and tries to stop the Chorus Leader]

ΤΕΡΕΥΣ

Hold on, you wickedest of animals!
Tell me this: Why do you want to kill these men,
to tear them both to bits? They've done no wrong.
Besides, they're my wife's relatives, her clansmen.

ΧΟΡΟΣ ΛΗΔΕΡ

Why should we be more merciful to them
than we are to wolves? What other animals
are greater enemies of ours than them?
Have we got better targets for revenge? [370]

ΤΕΡΕΥΣ

Yes, by nature enemies—but what if
they've got good intentions? What if they've come
to teach you something really valuable?

ΧΟΡΟΣ ΛΗΔΕΡ

How could they ever teach us anything,
or tell us something useful—they're enemies,
our feathered forefathers' fierce foes.

ΤΕΡΕΥΣ

But folks with fine minds find from foemen
they can learn a lot. Caution saves us all.
We don't learn that from friends. But enemies
can force that truth upon us right away.
That's why cities learn, not from their allies,
but from enemies, how to build high walls,
assemble fleets of warships—in that way,
their knowledge saves their children, homes, and goods. [380]

ΧΟΡΟΣ ΛΗΔΕΡ

Well, here's what seems best to me—first of all,
let's hear what they have come to say. It's true—
our enemies can teach us something wise.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ [to Euelpides]

I think their anger's easing off. Let's retreat.

[Pisthetairos and Euelpides inch their way toward the doors, still bunched together, with Euelpides holding up the pot]

ΤΗΡΕΥΣ

καὶ δίκαιόν γ' ἐστὶ κάμοι δεῖ νέμειν ὑμᾶς χάριν.

ΧΟΡΟΣ

ἀλλὰ μὴν οὐδ' ἄλλο σοί πω πρᾶγμ' ἐνηντιώμεθα. 385

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

μᾶλλον εἰρήνην ἄγουσι νῆ Δί', ὥστε τὴν χύτραν
τῷ τε τρυβλίῳ καθίει
καὶ τὸ δόρυ χρή, τὸν ὀβελίσκον,
περιπατεῖν ἔχοντας ἡμᾶς
τῶν ὀπλων ἐντός, παρ' αὐτὴν 390
τὴν χύτραν ἄκραν ὀρώντας
ἐγγύς· ὡς οὐ φευκτέον νῶν.

ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

ἐτεδὸν ἦν δ' ἄρ' ἀποθάνωμεν,
κατορυχθησόμεσθα ποῦ γῆς;

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ὁ Κεραμεικὸς δέξεται νῶ. 395
δημοσίᾳ γὰρ ἵνα ταφῶμεν,
φήσομεν πρὸς τοὺς στρατηγούς
μαχομένῳ τοῖς πολεμίοισιν
ἀποθανεῖν ἐν Ὀρνεαῖς.

ΧΟΡΟΣ

ἄναγ' ἐς τάξιν πάλιν ἐς ταυτόν, 400
καὶ τὸν θυμὸν κατάθου κύψας
παρὰ τὴν ὀργὴν ὥσπερ ὀπλίτης·
κἀναπυθώμεθα τούσδε τίνες ποτὲ
καὶ πόθεν ἔμολον
ἐπὶ τίνα τ' ἐπίνοιαν. 405
ἰὼ ἔποψι σέ τοι καλῶ.

ΤΗΡΕΥΣ

καλεῖς δὲ τοῦ κλύειν θέλων;

ΤΕΡΕΥΣ [*to the Chorus Leader*]

It's only fair—and you do owe me a favour,
out of gratitude.

CHORUS LEADER

In other things,
before today, we've never stood against you.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

They're acting now more peacefully to us—
so put that pot and bowl down on the ground.
But we'd better hang onto the spit, our spear.
We'll use it on patrol inside our camp [390]
right by this cauldron here. Keep your eyes peeled—
don't even think of flight.

[*Euelpides puts down the cauldron, removes his tin-plate helmet, and marches with the spear back and forth by the cauldron, on guard*]

ΕΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

What happens if we're killed? Where on earth
will we be buried?

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

In Kerameikos—
where the potters live—they'll bury both of us.
We'll get it done and have the public pay—
I'll tell the generals we died in battle,
fighting with the troops at Orneai.²⁷

CHORUS LEADER

Fall back into the ranks you held before. [400]
Bend over, and like well-armed soldier boys,
put your spirit and your anger down.
We'll look into who these two men may be,
where they come from, what their intentions are.

[*The Chorus of Birds breaks up and retreats*]

Hey, Hoopoe bird, I'm calling you!

ΤΕΡΕΥΣ

You called?
What would you like to hear?

ΧΟΡΟΣ
 τίνες ποθ' οἶδε καὶ πόθεν;

ΤΗΡΕΥΣ
 ξείνω σοφῆς ἀφ' Ἑλλάδος.

ΧΟΡΟΣ
 τύχη δὲ ποία κομίζει
 ποτ' αὐτῶ πρὸς ὄρνιθας
 ἐλθεῖν; 410

ΤΗΡΕΥΣ
 ἔρωσ
 βίου διαίτης τε καὶ
 σοῦ ξυνοικεῖν τέ σοι
 καὶ ξυνεῖναι τὸ πᾶν. 415

ΧΟΡΟΣ
 τί φῆς;
 λέγουσι δὴ τίνας λόγους;

ΤΗΡΕΥΣ
 ἄπιστα καὶ πέρα κλύειν.

ΧΟΡΟΣ
 ὄρα τι κέρδος ἐνθάδ' ἄξιον
 μονῆς, ὅτω πέποιθ'
 ἐμοὶ ξυνῶν
 κρατεῖν ἂν ἢ τὸν ἐχθρὸν ἢ
 φίλοισιν ὠφελεῖν ἔχειν; 420

ΤΗΡΕΥΣ
 λέγει μέγαν τι' ὄλβον οὔτε
 λεκτὸν οὔτε πιστόν· ὡς
 σὰ γὰρ τὰ πάντα ταῦτα καὶ
 τὸ τῆδε καὶ τὸ κείσε καὶ
 τὸ δεῦρο προσβιβᾶ λέγων. 425

ΧΟΡΟΣ
 πότερα μαινόμενος;

CHORUS LEADER
 These two men—
 where do they come from and who are they?

TEREUS
 These strangers are from Greece, font of wisdom.

CHORUS LEADER
 What accident or words
 now brings them to the birds? [410]

TEREUS
 The two men love your life,
 adore the way you live—
 they want to share with you
 in all there is to give.

CHORUS LEADER
 What's that you just said?
 What plan is in their head?

TEREUS
 Things you'd never think about—
 you'll be amazed—just hear him out.

CHORUS LEADER
 He thinks it's good that he
 should stay and live with me?
 Is he trusting in some plan
 to help his fellow man
 or thump his enemy? [420]

TEREUS
 He talks of happiness
 too great for thought or words
 He claims this emptiness—
 all space—is for the birds—
 here, there, and everywhere.
 You'll be convinced, I swear.

CHORUS LEADER
 Is he crazy in the head?

ΤΗΡΕΥΣ
ἄφατον ὡς φρόνιμος.

ΧΟΡΟΣ
ἓν σοφόν τι φρενί;

ΤΗΡΕΥΣ
πυκνότατον κίναδος, 430
σόφισμα κύρμα τρῖμμα παιπάλημ' ὄλον.

ΧΟΡΟΣ
λέγειν λέγειν κέλευέ μοι.
κλύων γὰρ ὦν σύ μοι λέγεις
λόγων ἀνεπτέρωμαι.

ΤΗΡΕΥΣ
ἄγε δὴ σὺ καὶ σὺ τὴν πανοπλίαν μὲν πάλιν 435
ταύτην λαβόντε κρεμάσατον τύχᾳγαθῇ
ἔς τὸν ἱπνὸν εἴσω πλησίον τοῦπιστάτου·
σὺ δὲ τούσδ' ἐφ' οἴσπερ τοῖς λόγοις συνέλεξ' ἐγὼ
φράσον, δίδαξον.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ
μὰ τὸν Ἀπόλλω ἴγῳ μὲν οὔ,
ἦν μὴ διάθωνταί γ' οἶδε διαθήκην ἐμοὶ 440
ἦνπερ ὁ πίθηκος τῇ γυναικὶ διέθετο,
ὁ μαχαιροποιός, μήτε δάκνειν τούτους ἐμέ
μήτ' ὀρχίπεδ' ἔλκειν μήτ' ὀρύττειν—

ΧΟΡΟΣ
οὔτι που
τόν—; οὐδαμῶς.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ
οὔκ, ἀλλὰ τῶφθαλμῶ λέγω.

ΧΟΡΟΣ
διατίθεται ἴγῳ.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ
κατόμοσόν νυν ταῦτά μοι.

ΤΕΡΕΥΣ
He is shrewder than I said.

CHORUS LEADER
A brilliant thinking box?

ΤΕΡΕΥΣ
The subtlest, sharpest fox—
he's been around a lot
knows every scheme and plot. [430]

CHORUS LEADER
Ask him to speak to us, to tell us all.
As I listen now to what you're telling me,
it makes me feel like flying—taking off!

ΤΕΡΕΥΣ [*to the two slaves*]
Take their suits of armour in the house—
hang the stuff up in the kitchen there,
beside the cooking stool—may it bring good luck!
[turning to Pisthetairos]
Now you. Lay out your plans—explain to them
the reason why I called them all together.
[Pisthetairos is struggling with the servants, refusing to give up his armour]

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ
No. By Apollo, I won't do it—
not unless they swear a pact with me
just like one that monkey Panaitios, [440]
who makes our knives, had his wife swear to him—
not to bite or pull my balls or poke me.

CHORUS LEADER
You mean up your . . .

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ
No, not there. I mean the eyes.

CHORUS LEADER
Oh, I'll agree to *that*.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ
Then swear an oath on it.

ΧΟΡΟΣ

ὄμνυμ' ἐπὶ τούτοις, πᾶσι νικᾶν τοῖς κριταῖς
καὶ τοῖς θεαταῖς πᾶσιν. 445

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἔσται ταυταγί.

ΧΟΡΟΣ

εἰ δὲ παραβαίην, ἐνὶ κριτῇ νικᾶν μόνον.
ἀκούετε λεῷ· τοὺς ὀπλίτας νυνμενὶ
ἀνελομένους θῶπλ' ἀπιέναι πάλιν οὔκαδε,
σκοπεῖν δ' ὅ τι ἂν προγράψωμεν ἐν τοῖς πινακίοις. 450

— δολερὸν μὲν αἰὲ κατὰ πάντα δὴ τρόπον
πέφυκεν ἄνθρωπος· σὺ δ' ὅμως λέγε μοι.
τάχα γὰρ τύχοις ἂν
χρηστὸν ἐξειπὼν ὅ τι μοι παρορᾶς, ἢ
δύναμίν τινα μεῖζω 455
παραλειπομένην ὑπ' ἐμῆς φρενὸς ἀξυνέτου·
σὺ δὲ τοῦθ' οὐρᾶς λέγ' ἐς κοινόν.
ὁ γὰρ ἂν σὺ τύχῃς μοι
ἀγαθὸν πορίσας, τοῦτο κοινὸν ἔσται.

— ἀλλ' ἐφ' ὅτωπερ πράγματι τὴν σὴν ἦκεις γνώμην
ἀναπέισας, 460
λέγε θαρρήσας· ὡς τὰς σπονδὰς οὐ μὴ πρότεροι
παραβῶμεν.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

καὶ μὴν ὄργῳ νῆ τὸν Δία καὶ προπεφύραται λόγος εἰς μοι,
ὄν διαμάττειν οὐ κωλύει· φέρε παῖ στέφανον· καταχεῖσθαι
κατὰ χειρὸς ὕδωρ φερέτω ταχύ τις.

ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

δειπνήσειν μέλλομεν; ἢ τί;

CHORUS LEADER

I swear on this condition—that I get
all the judges' and spectators' votes and win.²⁸

PISTHETAIROS

Oh, you'll win!

CHORUS LEADER

And if I break the oath
then let me win by just a single vote.
Listen all of you! The armed infantry
can now pick up their weapons and go home.
Keep an eye out for any bulletins
we put up on our notice boards. [450]

CHORUS [*singing*]

Man's by nature's born to lie.
But state your case. Give it a try.
There's a chance you have observed
some useful things inside this bird,
some greater power I possess,
which my dull brain has never guessed.
So tell all here just what you see.
If there's a benefit to me,
we'll share in it communally.

CHORUS LEADER

Tell us the business that's brings you here. [460]
Persuade us of your views. So speak right up.
No need to be afraid—we've made a pact—
we won't be the ones who break it first.

PISTHETAIROS [*aside to Euelpides*]

By god, I'm full of words, bursting to speak.
I've worked my speech like well-mixed flour—
like kneading dough. There's nothing stopping me.
[*giving instructions to the two slaves*]
You, lad, fetch me a speaker's wreath—and, you,
bring water here, so I can wash my hands.

[*The two slaves go into the house and return with a wreath and some water*]

EUELPIDES [*whispering to Pisthetairos*]

You mean it's time for dinner? What's going on?

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

μὰ Δί' ἀλλὰ λέγειν ζητῶ τι πάλαι μέγα καὶ λαρινὸν ἔπος τι,
ὄ το τὴν τούτων θραύσει ψυχὴν· οὕτως ὑμῶν ὑπεραλωῶ,
οἴτινες ὄντες πρότερον βασιλῆς — 467

ΧΟΡΟΣ

ἡμεῖς βασιλῆς; τίνας;

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ὑμεῖς
πάντων ὀπὸς' ἔστιν, ἐμοῦ πρῶτον, τουδί, καὶ τοῦ Διὸς
αὐτοῦ,
ἀρχαιότεροι πρότεροί τε Κρόνου καὶ Τιτάνων ἐγένεσθε,
καὶ γῆς.

ΧΟΡΟΣ

καὶ γῆς;

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

νῆ τὸν Ἄπόλλω.

ΧΟΡΟΣ

τουτὶ μὰ Δί' οὐκ ἐπετύσμην.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἀμαθὴς γὰρ ἔφυς κοῦ πολυπράγμων, οὐδ' Αἴσωπον
πεπάτηκας, 471
ὃς ἔφασκε λέγων κορυδὸν πάντων πρῶτην ὄρνιθα γενέσθαι,
προτέραν τῆς γῆς, κάπειτα νόσω τὸν πατέρ' αὐτῆς
ἀποθνήσκειν·
γῆν δ' οὐκ εἶναι, τὸν δὲ προκείσθαι πεμπταῖον· τὴν δ'
ἀποροῦσαν 474
ὑπ' ἀμηχανίας τὸν πατέρ' αὐτῆς ἐν τῇ κεφαλῇ κατορύξει.

ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

ὁ πατὴρ ἄρα τῆς κορυδοῦ νυνὶ κείται τεθνεώς Κεφαλήσιν.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

For a long time now I've been keen, by god,
to give them a stupendous speech — overstuffed —
something to shake their tiny birdy souls.

[*Pisthetairos, with the wreath on his head, now turns to the birds and begins his formal oration*]

I'm so sorry for you all, who once were kings . . .

CHORUS LEADER

Kings? Us? What of?

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

You were kings indeed,
you ruled over everything there is —
over him and me, first of all, and then
over Zeus himself. You see, your ancestry
goes back before old Kronos and the Titans,
way back before even Earth herself!²⁹

CHORUS LEADER

Before the Earth?

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

Yes, by Apollo.

CHORUS LEADER

Well, that's something I never knew before!

[470]

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

That's because you're naturally uninformed —
you lack resourcefulness. You've not read Aesop.
His story tells us that the lark was born
before the other birds, before the Earth.
Her father then grew sick and died. For five days
he lay there unburied — there was no Earth.
Not knowing what to do, at last the lark,
at her wits' end, set him in her own head.

ΕΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

So now, the father of the lark lies dead
in a headland plot.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

οὔκουν δῆτ' εἰ πρότεροι μὲν γῆς πρότεροι δὲ θεῶν ἐγένοντο,
ὡς πρεσβυτάτων αὐτῶν ὄντων ὀρθῶς ἐσθ' ἡ βασιλεία;

ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

νῆ τὸν Ἀπόλλω· πάνυ τοίνυν χρὴ ρύγχος βόσκειν σε τὸ
λοιπόν· 479
οὐκ ἀποδώσει ταχέως ὁ Ζεὺς τὸ σκῆπτρον τῷ δρυκολάπτῃ.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ὡς δ' οὐχὶ θεοὶ τοίνυν ἦρχον τῶν ἀνθρώπων τὸ παλαιόν,
ἀλλ' ὄρνιθες, καὶ βασίλευον, πόλλ' ἐστὶ τεκμήρια τούτων.
αὐτίκα δ' ὑμῖν πρῶτ' ἐπιδείξω τὸν ἀλεκτρύον', ὡς ἐτυράννει
ἦρχέ τε Περσῶν πρῶτον πάντων Δαρείου καὶ Μεγαβάζου,
ὥστε καλεῖται Περσικὸς ὄρνις ἀπὸ τῆς ἀρχῆς ἔτ' ἐκείνης.

ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

διὰ ταῦτ' ἄρ' ἔχων καὶ νῦν ὥσπερ βασιλεὺς ὁ μέγας
διαβάσκει 486
ἐπὶ τῆς κεφαλῆς τὴν κυρβασίαν τῶν ὀρνίθων μόνος ὀρθῆν.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

οὔτω δ' ἴσχυσέ τε καὶ μέγας ἦν τότε καὶ πολὺς, ὥστ' ἔτι
καὶ νῦν
ὑπὸ τῆς ρώμης τῆς τότε ἐκείνης, ὅπότε μόνον ὄρθριον ἄσῃ,
ἀναπηδῶσι πάντες ἐπ' ἔργον χαλκῆς κεραμῆς σκυλοδέψαι
σκυτῆς βαλανῆς ἀλφισταμοιβοὶ τορνευτολυρασπιδοπηγοί·
οἱ δὲ βαδίζουσ' ὑποδησάμενοι νύκτωρ.

ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

ἔμὲ τοῦτό γ' ἐρώτα.
χλαῖναν γὰρ ἀπώλεσ' ὁ μοχθηρὸς Φρυγίων ἐρίων διὰ
τοῦτον.

PISTHETAIROS

So if they were born
before the Earth, before the gods, well then,
as the eldest, don't they get the right to rule?

EUELPIDES

By Apollo, yes they do.
[addressing the audience]

So you out there,
look ahead and sprout yourselves a beak—
in good time Zeus will hand his sceptre back
to the birds who peck his sacred oaks. [480]

PISTHETAIROS

Way back then it wasn't gods who ruled.
They didn't govern men. No. It was the birds.
There's lots of proof for this. I'll mention here
example number one—the fighting cock—
first lord and king of all those Persians,
well before the time of human kings—
those Dariuses and Megabazuses.
Because he was their king, the cock's still called
the Persian Bird.

EUELPIDES

That's why to this very day
the cock's the only bird to strut about
like some great Persian king, and on his head
he wears his crown erect.

PISTHETAIROS

He was so great,
so mighty and so strong, that even now,
thanks to his power then, when he sings out
his early morning song, all men leap up
to head for work—blacksmiths, potters, tanners,
men who deal in corn or supervise the baths, [490]
or make our shields or fabricate our lyres—
they all lace on their shoes and set off in the dark.

EUELPIDES

I can vouch for that! I had some bad luck,
thanks to that cock—I lost my cloak to thieves,
a soft and warm one, too, of Phrygian wool.

ἐς δεκάτην γάρ ποτε παιδαρίου κληθεῖς ὑπέπινον ἐν ἄστει,
 κᾶρτι καθηῦδον, καὶ πρὶν δειπνεῖν τοὺς ἄλλους οὗτος ἄρ'
 ἦσεν· 495
 κὰγὼ νομίσας ὄρθρον ἐχώρουν Ἄλμιουντάδε, κᾶρτι
 προκύπτω
 ἔξω τείχους καὶ λωποδύτης παίει ῥοπάλω με τὸ νῶτον·
 κὰγὼ πίπτω μέλλω τε βοᾶν, ὁ δ' ἀπέβλισε θοιμάτιόν μου.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἰκτίνος δ' οὖν τῶν Ἑλλήνων ἦρχεν τότε κάβασιλευεν.

ΧΟΡΟΣ

τῶν Ἑλλήνων; 500

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

καὶ κατέδειξέν γ' οὗτος πρῶτος βασιλεύων
 προκυλινδεῖσθαι τοῖς ἰκτίνοις.

ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

νῆ τὸν Διόνυσον, ἐγὼ γοῦν
 ἐκυλινδούμην ἰκτίνον ἰδῶν· κᾶθ' ὑπτίος ὦν ἀναχάσκων
 ὀβολὸν κατεβρόχθισα· κᾶτα κενὸν τὸν θύλακον οἴκαδ'
 ἀφείλκων.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

Αἰγύπτου δ' αὖ καὶ Φοινίκης πάσης κόκκυξ βασιλεὺς ἦν·
 χῶπόθ' ὁ κόκκυξ εἶποι 'κόκκυξ,' τότε ἂν οἱ Φοίνικες
 ἅπαντες 505
 τοὺς πυροὺς ἂν καὶ τὰς κριθὰς ἐν τοῖς πεδίοις ἐθέριζον.

ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

τοῦτ' ἄρ' ἐκεῖν' ἦν τοῦπος ἀληθῶς· 'κόκκυψιλωοὶ πεδίονδε.'

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἦρχον δ' οὕτω σφόδρα τὴν ἀρχήν, ὥστ' εἴ τις καὶ βασιλεύει
 ἐν ταῖς πόλεσιν τῶν Ἑλλήνων Ἀγαμέμνων ἢ Μενέλαος,

I'd been invited to a festive do,
 where some child was going to get his name,
 right here in the city. I'd had some drinks—
 and those drinks, well, they made me fall asleep.
 Before the other guests began to eat,
 that bird lets rip his cock-a-doodle-doo!
 I thought it was the early morning call.
 So I run off for Halimus³⁰—but then,
 just outside the city walls, I get mugged,
 some coat thief hits me square across the back—
 he used a cudgel! When I fall down there,
 about to cry for help, he steals my cloak!

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

To resume—way back then the Kite was king.
 He ruled the Greeks.

CHORUS LEADER

King of the Greeks!!

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

That's right.
 As king he was the first to show us how
 to grovel on the ground before a kite. [500]

ΕΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

By Dionysus, I once saw a kite
 and rolled along the ground, then, on my back,
 my mouth wide open, gulped an obol down.
 I had to trudge home with an empty sack.³¹

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

Take Egypt and Phoenicia—they were ruled
 by Cuckoo kings. And when they cried "Cuckooooo!!"
 all those Phoenicians harvested their crop—
 the wheat and barley in their fields.

ΕΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

That's why
 if someone's cock is ploughing your wife's field,
 we call you "Cuckoo!"—you're being fooled!³²

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

The kingship of the birds was then so strong
 that in the cities of the Greeks a king—
 an Agamemnon, say, or Menelaus—

ἐπὶ τῶν σκήπτρων ἐκάθητ' ὄρνις μετέχων ὅ τι
δωροδοκοίη. 510

ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

τουτὶ τοίνυν οὐκ ἤδη ἴγώ· καὶ δῆτά μ' ἐλάμβανε θαῦμα,
ὀπότε' ἐξέλθοι Πρίαμός τις ἔχων ὄρνιν ἐν τοῖσι τραγωδοῖς,
ὁ δ' ἄρ' εἰστήκει τὸν Λυσικράτη τηρῶν ὅ τι δωροδοκοίη.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ὁ δὲ δεινότατόν γ' ἐστὶν ἀπάντων, ὁ Ζεὺς γὰρ ὁ νῦν
βασιλεύων
αἰετὸν ὄρνιν ἔστηκεν ἔχων ἐπὶ τῆς κεφαλῆς βασιλεὺς ἄν,
ἡ δ' αὖ θυγάτηρ γλαῦχ', ὁ δ' Ἀπόλλων ὡσπερ θεράπων
ἰέρακα. 516

ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

νῆ τὴν Δήμητρ' εὖ ταῦτα λέγεις· τίνας οὐνεκα ταῦτ' ἄρ'
ἔχουσιν;

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἴν' ὅταν θύων τις ἔπειτ' αὐτοῖς ἐς τὴν χεῖρ', ὡς νόμος ἐστίν,
τὰ σπλάγχνα διδῶ, τοῦ Διὸς αὐτοὶ πρότεροι τὰ σπλάγχνα
λάβωσιν.

ὦμυ τ' οὐδεὶς τότ' ἂν ἀνθρώπων θεόν, ἀλλ' ὄρνιθας
ἄπαντες· 520

Λάμπων δ' ὄμνυσ' ἔτι καὶ νυνὶ τὸν χῆν', ὅταν ἐξαπατᾷ τι.
οὕτως ὑμᾶς πάντες πρότερον μεγάλους ἀγίους τ' ἐνόμιζον,

νῦν δ' ἀνδράποδ' ἡλιθίους Μανᾶς·
ὡσπερ δ' ἤδη τοὺς μαινομένους
βάλλουσ' ὑμᾶς, κὰν τοῖς ἱεροῖς 525

πᾶς τις ἐφ' ὑμῖν ὄρνιθευτῆς
ἴστησι βρόχους παγίδας ράβδους
ἔρκη νεφέλας δίκτυα πηκτάς·
εἶτα λαβόντες πωλοῦσ' ἀθρόους·
οἱ δ' ὠνοῦνται βλιμάζοντες· 530

κοῦδ' οἶν, εἴπερ ταῦτα δοκεῖ δρᾶν,
ὀπτησάμενοι παρέθενθ' ὑμᾶς,
ἀλλ' ἐπικνώσω τυρὸν ἔλαιον
σίλφιον ὄξος καὶ τρίφαντες

had a bird perched on his regal sceptre.
And it got its own share of all the gifts
the king received. [510]

EUELPIDES

Now, that I didn't know.

I always get amazed in tragedies
when some king Priam comes on with a bird.
I guess it stands on guard there, keeping watch
to see what presents Lysicrates gets.³³

PISTHETAIROS

Here's the weirdest proof of all—lord Zeus
who now commands the sky, because he's king,
carries an eagle on his head. There's more—
his daughter has an owl, and Apollo,
like a servant, has a hawk.

EUELPIDES

That's right,

by Demeter! What's the reason for those birds?

PISTHETAIROS

So when someone makes a sacrifice
and then, in accordance with tradition,
puts the guts into god's hands, the birds
can seize those entrails well before Zeus can.
Back then no man would swear upon the gods—
they swore their oaths on birds. And even now, [520]
our Lampon seals his promises "By Goose,"
when he intends to cheat.³⁴ In days gone by,
all men considered you like that—as great
and sacred beings. Now they all think of you
as slaves and fools and useless layabouts.
They throw stones at you, as if you're mad.
And every hunter in the temples there
sets up his traps—all those nooses, gins,
limed sticks and snares, fine mesh and hunting nets,
and cages, too. Then once they've got you trapped,
they sell you by the bunch. Those who come to buy
poke and prod your flesh. If you seem good to eat, [530]
they don't simply roast you by yourself—no!
They grate on cheese, mix oil and silphium

κατάχυσμ' ἕτερον γλυκὸν καὶ λιπαρόν, 535
 κᾶπειτα κατεσκεδάσαν θερμὸν
 τοῦτο καθ' ὑμῶν
 αὐτῶν ὥσπερ κενεβρείων.

ΧΟΡΟΣ

πολὺ δὴ πολὺ δὴ χαλεπωτάτους λόγους
 ἤνεγκας ἀνθρωφ'. ὡς ἐδάκρυσά γ' ἐμῶν 540
 πατέρων κάκην, οἷ
 τάσδε τὰς τιμὰς προγόνων παραδόντων
 ἐπ' ἐμοῦ κατέλυσαν.
 σὺ δέ μοι κατὰ δαίμονα καὶ τινα συντυχίαν
 ἀγαθὴν ἤκεις ἐμοὶ σωτήρ. 545
 ἀναθεὶς γὰρ ἐγὼ σοι
 τὰ νεοττία κάμαυτὸν οἰκήσω.

— ἀλλ' ὅ τι χρὴ δρᾶν, σὺ δίδασκε παρών· ὡς ζῆν οὐκ ἄξιον
 ἡμῶν,
 εἰ μὴ κοιμούμεθα παντὶ τρόπῳ τὴν ἡμετέραν βασιλείαν.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

καὶ δὴ τοίνυν πρῶτα διδάσκω μίαν ὀρνίθων πόλιν εἶναι, 550
 κᾶπειτα τὸν ἀέρα πάντα κύκλω καὶ πᾶν τουτὶ τὸ μεταξὺ
 περιτειχίζειν μεγάλαις πλίνθοις ὀπταῖς ὥσπερ Βαβυλῶνα.

ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

ὦ Κεβρίονη καὶ Πορφυρίων ὡς σμερδαλέον τὸ πόλισμα.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

κᾶπειτ' ἦν τοῦτ' ἐπανεστήκη, τὴν ἀρχὴν τὸν Δι' ἀπαιτεῖν·
 κᾶν μὲν μὴ φῆ μηδ' ἐθελήσῃ μηδ' εὐθύς γνωσιμαχίση, 555
 ἱερὸν πόλεμον πρωῦδᾶν αὐτῷ, καὶ τοῖσι θεοῖσιν ἀπειπεῖν

with vinegar—and then whip up a sauce,
 oily and sweet, which they pour on you hot,
 as if you were a chunk of carrion meat.

CHORUS

This human speaks
 of our great pain
 our fathers' sins [540]
 we mourn again—
 born into rule,
 they threw away
 what they received,
 their fathers' sway.

But now you've come—
 fine stroke of fate—
 to save our cause.
 Here let me state
 I'll trust myself
 and all my chicks
 to help promote
 your politics.

CHORUS LEADER

You need to stick around to tell us all
 what we should do. Our lives won't be worth living
 unless by using every scheme there is
 we get back what's ours—our sovereignty.

PISTHETAIROS

Then the first point I'd advise you of is this: [550]
 there should be one single city of the birds.
 Next, you should encircle the entire air,
 all this space between the earth and heaven,
 with a huge wall of baked brick—like Babylon.

EUELPIDES

O Kebriones and Porphyrion!
 What a mighty place! How well fortified!³⁵

PISTHETAIROS

When you've completed that, demand from Zeus
 he give you back your rule. If he says no,
 he doesn't want to and won't sign on at once,
 you then declare a holy war on him.

διὰ τῆς χώρας τῆς ὑμετέρας ἐστυκόσι μὴ διαφουτᾶν,
 ὡσπερ πρότερον μοιχεύσοντες τὰς Ἀλκμήνας κατέβαινον
 καὶ τὰς Ἀλόπας καὶ τὰς Σεμέλας· ἦνπερ δ' ἐπίωσ',
 ἐπιβάλλειν 559
 σφραγίδ' αὐτοῖς ἐπὶ τὴν ψωλήν, ἵνα μὴ βινῶσ' ἔτ' ἐκείνας.
 τοῖς δ' ἀνθρώποις ὄρνιν ἕτερον πέμψαι κήρυκα κελεύω,
 ὡς ὀρνίθων βασιλευόντων θύειν ὄρνισι τὸ λοιπόν,
 κᾶπειτα θεοῖς ὕστερον αὐθις· προσνείμασθαι δὲ πρεπόντως
 τοῖσι θεοῖσιν τῶν ὀρνίθων ὅς ἂν ἀρμόττη καθ' ἕκαστον·
 ἦν Ἀφροδίτῃ θύῃ, πυροὺς ὄρνιθι φαληρίδι θύειν· 565
 ἦν δὲ Ποσειδῶνί τις οἶν θύῃ, νήττη πυροὺς καθαγίζειν·
 ἦν δ' Ἡρακλείῃ θύῃ τι, λάρω ναστοὺς θύειν μελιτοῦντας·
 κἂν Διὶ θύῃ βασιλεῖ κριόν, βασιλεύς ἐστ' ὀρχίλος ὄρνις,
 ᾧ προτέρω δεῖ τοῦ Διὸς αὐτοῦ σέρφον ἐνόρχην σφαγιάζειν.

ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

ἦσθην σέρφω σφαγιαζομένω. βροντάτω νῦν ὁ μέγας
 Ζάν. 570

ΧΟΡΟΣ

καὶ πῶς ἡμᾶς νομοῦσι θεοὺς ἀνθρωποὶ κοῦχλὶ κολοιοῦς,
 οἱ πετόμεσθα πτέρυγας τ' ἔχομεν;

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ληρεῖς· καὶ νῆ Δί' ὃ γ' Ἑρμῆς
 πέτεται θεὸς ὦν πτέρυγας τε φορεῖ, κἄλλοι γε θεοὶ πάνυ
 πολλοί.
 αὐτίκα Νίκη πέτεται πτερύγῳ χρυσαῖν καὶ νῆ Δί' Ἑρῶς
 γε·
 Ἥρην δέ γ' Ὀμηρὸς ἔφασκ' ἰκέλην εἶναι τρήρωνι
 πελεΐῃ. 575

Tell those gods they can't come through your space
 with cocks erect, the way they used to do,
 rushing down to screw another woman—
 like Alkmene, Semele, or Alope.³⁶
 For if you ever catch them coming down
 you'll stamp your seal right on their swollen pricks— [560]
 they won't be fucking women any more.
 And I'd advise you send another bird
 as herald down to human beings to say
 that since the birds from now on will be kings,
 they have to offer sacrifice to them.
 The offerings to the gods take second place.
 Then each of the gods must be closely matched
 with an appropriate bird. So if a man
 is offering Athena holy sacrifice,
 he must first give the Coot some barley corn.
 If sacrificing sheep to god Poseidon,
 let him bring toasted wheat grains to the Duck.
 And anyone who's going to sacrifice
 to Hercules must give the Cormorant
 some honey cakes. A ram for Zeus the king?
 Then first, because the Wren is king of birds,
 ahead of Zeus himself, his sacrifice
 requires the worshipper to execute
 an uncastrated gnat.

EUELPIDES

I like that bit about
 the slaughtered gnat. Now thunder on, great Zan.³⁷ [570]

CHORUS LEADER

But how will humans think of us as gods
 and not just jackdaws flying around on wings?

PISTHETAIROS

A foolish question. Hermes is a god,
 and he has wings and flies—so do others,
 all sorts of them. There's Victory, for one,
 with wings of gold. And Eros is the same.
 Then there's Iris—just like a timorous dove,
 that's what Homer says.

ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

ὁ Ζεὺς δ' ἡμῖν οὐ βροντήσας πέμψει πτερόεντα κεραυνόν;

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἦν δ' οὖν ὑμᾶς μὲν ὑπ' ἀγνοίας εἶναι νομίσωσι τὸ μηδέν,
τούτους δὲ θεοὺς τοὺς ἐν Ὀλύμπῳ τότε χρὴ στρούθων
νέφος ἄρθεν
καὶ σπερμολόγων ἐκ τῶν ἀγρῶν τὸ σπέρμ' αὐτῶν
ἀνακάψαι
κάπειτ' αὐτοῖς ἢ Δημήτηρ πυροὺς πεινώσι μετρείτω. 580

ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

οὐκ ἐθελήσει μὰ Δί', ἀλλ' ὄψει προφάσεις αὐτήν
παρέχουσιν.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

οἱ δ' αὖ κόρακες τῶν ζευγαρίων, οἷσιν τὴν γῆν καταροῦσιν,
καὶ τῶν προβάτων τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς ἐκκοψάντων ἐπὶ πείρα·
εἶθ' ὁ γ' Ἀπόλλων ἰατρός γ' ὢν ἰάσθω· μισθοφορεῖ δέ.

ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

μὴ πρὶν γ' ἂν ἐγὼ τῷ βοιδαρίῳ τῶμ' ἄποδῶμαι. 585

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἦν δ' ἡγῶνται σὲ θεὸν σὲ βίον σὲ δὲ γῆν σὲ Κρόνον σὲ
Ποσειδῶ,
ἀγάθ' αὐτοῖσιν πάντα παρέσται.

ΧΟΡΟΣ

λέγε δὴ μοι τῶν ἀγαθῶν ἔν.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

πρῶτα μὲν αὐτῶν τὰς οἰνάνθας οἱ πάρνοπες οὐ κατέδονται,
ἀλλὰ γλαυκῶν λόχος εἰς αὐτοὺς καὶ κερχνηδῶν ἐπιτρίψει.
εἶθ' οἱ κνίπες καὶ ψήγες αἰεὶ τὰς συκάς οὐ κατέδονται, 590
ἀλλ' ἀναλέξει πάντας καθαρῶς αὐτοὺς ἀγέλη μία κιχλῶν.

EUELPIDES

But what if Zeus
lets his thunder peal, then fires down on us
his lightning bolt—that's got wings as well.

PISTHETAIROS [*ignoring Euelpides*]

Now, if men in their stupidity
think nothing of you and keep worshipping
Olympian gods, then a large cloud of birds,
of rooks and sparrows, must attack their farms,
devouring all the seed. And as they starve,
let Demeter then dole out grain to them. [580]

EUELPIDES

She won't be willing to do that, by Zeus.
She'll make excuses—as you'll see.

PISTHETAIROS

Then as a test,
the ravens can peck out their livestock's eyes,
the ones that pull the ploughs to work the land,
and other creatures, too. Let Apollo
make them better—he's the god of healing.
That's why he gets paid.

EUELPIDES

But you can't do this
'til I've sold my two little oxen first.

PISTHETAIROS

But if they think of you as god, as life,
as Earth, as Kronos and Poseidon, too,
then all good things will come to them.

CHORUS LEADER

Tell me
what these good things are.

PISTHETAIROS

Well, for starters,
locusts won't eat the blossoms on their vines.
The owls and kestrels in just one platoon
will rid them of those pests. Mites and gall wasps
won't devour the figs. One troop of thrushes
will eradicate them one and all. [590]

ΧΟΡΟΣ

πλουτεῖν δὲ πόθεν δώσομεν αὐτοῖς; καὶ γὰρ τούτου σφόδρ'
ἐρώσιν.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

τὰ μέταλλ' αὐτοῖς μαντευομένοις οὔτοι δώσουσι τὰ χρηστά,
τάς τ' ἐμπορίας τὰς κερδαλέας πρὸς τὸν μάντιν κατεροῦσιν,
ὥστ' ἀπολείται τῶν ναυκλήρων οὐδεῖς. 595

ΧΟΡΟΣ

πῶς οὐκ ἀπολείται;

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

προερεῖ τις αἰεὶ τῶν ὀρνίθων μαντευομένῳ περὶ τοῦ πλοῦ·
'νυνὶ μὴ πλεῖ, χειμῶν ἔσται' 'νυνὶ πλεῖ, κέρδος ἐπέσται.'

ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

γαῦλον κτῶμαι καὶ ναυκληρῶ, κοῦκ ἂν μείναμι παρ' ὑμῖν.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

τοὺς θησαυρούς τ' αὐτοῖς δείξουσ' οὓς οἱ πρότεροι κατέθεντο
τῶν ἀργυρίων· οὔτοι γὰρ ἴσασι λέγουσι δέ τοι τάδε
πάντες, 600
'οὐδεὶς οἶδεν τὸν θησαυρὸν τὸν ἐμὸν πλὴν εἴ τις ἄρ' ὄρνις.'

ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

πωλῶ γαῦλον, κτῶμαι σμυνύην, καὶ τὰς ὑδρίας ἀνορύττω.

ΧΟΡΟΣ

πῶς δ' ὑγιείαν δώσουσ' αὐτοῖς, οὔσαν παρὰ τοῖσι θεοῖσιν;

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἦν εὖ πράττωσ', οὐχ ὑγιεία μεγάλη τοῦτ' ἐστί;

ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

σάφ' ἴσθι,

ὡς ἄνθρωπός γε κακῶς πράττων ἀτεχνῶς οὐδεὶς
ὑγιαίνει. 605

CHORUS LEADER

But how will we make people wealthy?
That's what they mostly want.

PISTHETAİROS

When people come
petitioning your shrines, the birds can show
the mining sites that pay. They'll tell the priest
the profitable routes for trade. That way
no captain of a ship will be wiped out.

CHORUS LEADER

Why won't those captains come to grief?

PISTHETAİROS

They'll always ask the birds about the trip.
Their seer will say, "A storm is on the way.
Don't sail just yet" or "Now's the time to sail—
you'll turn a tidy profit."

EUELPIDES

Hey, that's for me—
I'll buy a merchant ship and take command.
I won't be staying with you.

PISTHETAİROS

Birds can show men
the silver treasures of their ancestors,
buried in the ground so long ago.
For birds know where these are. Men always say, [600]
"No one knows where my treasure lies, no one,
except perhaps some bird."

EUELPIDES

I'll sell my boat.
I'll buy a spade and dig up tons of gold.

CHORUS LEADER

How will we provide for human health?
Such things dwell with the gods.

PISTHETAİROS

If they're doing well,
is that not giving them good health?

EUELPIDES

You're right.
A man whose business isn't very sound
is never medically well.

ΧΟΡΟΣ

πῶς δ' ἐς γῆράς ποτ' ἀφίξονται; καὶ γὰρ τοῦτ' ἔστ' ἐν
Ὀλύμπῳ·
ἢ παιδάρι' ὄντ' ἀποθνήσκειν δεῖ;

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

μὰ Δί' ἀλλὰ τριακόσι' αὐτοῖς
ἔτι προσθήσουσ' ὄριθες ἔτη.

ΤΗΡΕΥΣ

παρὰ τοῦ;

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

παρ' ὅτου; παρ' ἑαυτῶν.
οὐκ οἶσθ' ὅτι πέντ' ἀνδρῶν γενεὰς ζῶει λακέρυζα κορώνη;

ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

αἰβοὶ πολλῶ κρείττους οὔτοι τοῦ Διὸς ἡμῖν βασιλεύειν.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

οὐ γὰρ πολλῶ; 611
πρῶτον μὲν γ' οὐχὶ νεὼς ἡμᾶς
οἰκοδομεῖν δεῖ λιθίνους αὐτοῖς,
οὐδὲ θυρῶσαι χρυσαῖσι θύραις,
ἀλλ' ὑπὸ θάμνοις καὶ πρηνιδίοις 615
οἰκήσουσιν. τοῖς δ' αὖ σεμνοῖς
τῶν ὀρνίθων δένδρον ἐλάας
ὁ νεὼς ἔσται· κούκ ἐς Δελφοὺς
οὐδ' εἰς Ἄμμων' ἐλθόντες ἐκεῖ
θύσομεν, ἀλλ' ἐν ταῖσιν κομάροις 620
καὶ τοῖς κοτῖνοις στάντες ἔχοντες
κριθὰς πυροὺς εὐξόμεθ' αὐτοῖς
ἀνατείνοντες τὰ χεῖρ' ἀγαθῶν
διδόναι τι μέρος· καὶ ταῦθ' ἡμῖν
παραχρήμ' ἔσται 625
πυροὺς ὀλίγους προβαλοῦσιν.

ΧΟΡΟΣ

ὦ φίλτατ' ἐμοὶ πολὺ πρεσβυτῶν ἐξ ἐχθίστου μεταπίπτων,
οὐκ ἔστιν ὅπως ἂν ἐγὼ ποθ' ἐκὼν τῆς σῆς γνώμης ἔτ'
ἀφείμην.

CHORUS LEADER

All right,
but how will they get old? That's something, too,
Olympian gods bestow. Must they die young?

PISTHETAIROS

No, no, by god. The birds will add on years,
three hundred more.

CHORUS LEADER

And where will those come from?

PISTHETAIROS

From the birds' supply. You know the saying,
"Five human lifetimes lives the cawing crow."³⁸

EUELPIDES

My word, these birds are much more qualified
to govern us than Zeus. [610]

PISTHETAIROS

Far better qualified!
First, we don't have to build them holy shrines,
made out of stone, or put up golden doors
to decorate their sanctuaries. They live
beneath the bushes and young growing trees.
As for the prouder birds, an olive grove
will be their temple. When we sacrifice,
no need to go to Ammon or to Delphi —
we'll just stand among arbutus trees [620]
or oleasters with an offering —
barley grains or wheat — uttering our prayers,
our arms outstretched, so from them we receive
our share of benefits. And these we'll gain
by throwing them a few handfuls of grain.

CHORUS LEADER

Old man, how much you've been transformed for me —
From my worst enemy into my friend,
my dearest friend. These strategies of yours —
I'll not abandon them, not willingly.

— ἐπαυχήσας δὲ τοῖσι σοῖς λόγοις
 ἐπηπέλιγα καὶ κατώμοσα, 630
 ἦν σὺ παρ' ἐμὲ θέμενος
 ὁμόφρονας λόγους δικαίους
 ἀδόλους ὀσίους
 ἐπὶ θεοὺς ἴης, ἐμοὶ
 φρονῶν ξυνωδά, μὴ πολὺν χρόνον 635
 θεοὺς ἔτι σκῆπτρα τὰμὰ τρήσειν.

— ἀλλ' ὅσα μὲν δεῖ ῥώμη πράττειν, ἐπὶ ταῦτα τεταξόμεθ' ἡμεῖς·
 ὅσα δὲ γνώμη δεῖ βουλευεῖν, ἐπὶ σοὶ τάδε πάντ' ἀνάκειται.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

καὶ μὴν μὰ τὸν Δί' οὐχὶ νυστάζειν ἔτι
 ὥρα ἴσθιν ἡμῖν οὐδὲ μελλονικιᾶν, 640
 ἀλλ' ὡς τάχιστα δεῖ τι δρᾶν·

ΤΗΡΕΥΣ

πρῶτον δέ γε
 εἰσέλθετ' ἐς νεοττιάν γε τὴν ἐμὴν
 καὶ τὰμὰ κάρφη καὶ τὰ παρόντα φρύγανα,
 καὶ τοῦνομ' ἡμῖν φράσατον.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἀλλὰ ῥάδιον.
 ἐμοὶ μὲν ὄνομα Πισθέταιρος.

ΤΗΡΕΥΣ

τωδεδι;

ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

Εὐελπίδης Κριῶθεν.

ΤΗΡΕΥΣ

ἀλλὰ χαίρετον 645
 ἄμφω.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ καὶ ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

δεχόμεθα.

ΤΗΡΕΥΣ

δεῦρο τοίνυν εἴσιτον.

CHORUS

The words you've said make us rejoice—
 and so we'll swear with just one voice
 an oath that if you stand with me— [630]
 our thoughts and aims in unity—
 honest, pious, just, sincere,
 to go against the gods up there,
 if we're both singing the same song
 the gods won't have my sceptre long.

CHORUS LEADER

Whatever can be done with force alone
 we're ready to take on— what requires brains
 or thinking through, all that stuff's up to you.

PISTHETAIROS

That's right, by Zeus. No time for dozing now,
 or entertaining doubts, like Nikias.³⁹ [640]
 No— let's get up and at it fast.

TEREUS

But first, you must come in this nest of mine,
 these sticks and twigs assembled here. So now,
 both of you, tell us your names.

PISTHETAIROS

That's easy.

My name's Pisthetairos.

TEREUS

And this man here?

EUELPIDES

I'm Euelpides, from Crioia.

TEREUS

Welcome both of you!

PISTHETAIROS and EUELPIDES

Thanks very much.

TEREUS

Won't you come in?

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἴωμεν· εἰσηγοῦ σὺ λαβὼν ἡμᾶς.

ΤΗΡΕΥΣ

ἴθι.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἀτὰρ τὸ δεῖνα, δεῦρ' ἐπανάκρουσαι πάλιν.
φέρ' ἴδω, φράσον νῶν, πῶς ἐγώ τε χούτοσσι
ξυνησόμεθ' ὑμῖν πετομένοις οὐ πετομένω;

650

ΤΗΡΕΥΣ

καλῶς.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ὄρα νυν, ὡς ἐν Αἰσώπου λόγοις
ἐστὶν λεγόμενον δὴ τι, τὴν ἀλώπεχ', ὡς
φλαύρως ἐκοινώνησεν αἰετῶ ποτέ.

ΤΗΡΕΥΣ

μηδὲν φοβηθῆς· ἔστι γάρ τι ρίζιον,
ὃ διατραγόντ' ἔσσεσθον ἐπτερωμένω.

655

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

οὔτω μὲν εἰσώμεν. ἄγε δὴ Ξανθία
καὶ Μανόδωρε λαμβάνετε τὰ στρώματα.

ΧΟΡΟΣ

οὗτος σὲ καλῶ, σὲ λέγω.

ΤΗΡΕΥΣ

τί καλεῖς;

ΧΟΡΟΣ

τούτους μὲν ἄγων μετὰ σαντοῦ
ἀρίστισον εἶ· τὴν δ' ἠδυμελῆ ξύμφωνον ἀηδόνα Μούσαις
κατάλειψ' ἡμῖν δεῦρ' ἐκβιβάσας, ἵνα παίσωμεν μετ' ἐκείνης.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

Let's go. But you go first—
show us the way.

ΤΕΡΕΥΣ

Come on, then.

[Tereus enters his house]

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ [holding back, calling into the house]

But . . . it's strange . . .

Come back a minute.

[Tereus reappears at the door]

Look, tell us both
how me and him can share the place with you
when you can fly but we're not able to.

[650]

ΤΕΡΕΥΣ

I don't see any problem there.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

Maybe,

but in Aesop's fables there's a story told
about some fox who hung around an eagle,
with unfortunate results.

ΤΕΡΕΥΣ

Don't be afraid.
We have a little root you nibble on—
and then you'll grow some wings.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

All right then,
let's go. [To the slaves] Manodorus, Xanthias,
bring in our mattresses.

CHORUS LEADER [to Tereus]

Hold on a second—

I'm calling you.

ΤΕΡΕΥΣ

Why are you calling me?

CHORUS LEADER

Take those two men in—give 'em a good meal.
But bring your tuneful nightingale out here,
who with the Muses sings such charming songs—
leave her with us so we can play together.

[660]

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ὦ τοῦτο μεντοι νῆ Δί' αὐτοῖσιν πιθοῦ·
ἐκβίβασον ἐκ τοῦ βουτόμου τούρνιθιον. 661

ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

ἐκβίβασον αὐτοῦ πρὸς θεῶν αὐτήν, ἵνα
καὶ νῶ θεασώμεσθα τὴν ἀηδόνα.

ΤΗΡΕΥΣ

ἀλλ' εἰ δοκεῖ σφῶν, ταῦτα χρὴ δρᾶν. ἡ Πρόκνη 665
ἐκβαίνει καὶ σαυτὴν ἐπιδείκνυ τοῖς ξένοις.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ὦ Ζεῦ πολυτίμηθ' ὡς καλὸν τούρνιθιον,
ὡς δ' ἀπαλόν, ὡς δὲ λευκόν.

ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

ἀρά γ' οἶσθ' ὅτι
ἐγὼ διαμηρίζοιμ' ἂν αὐτήν ἠδέως;

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ὅσον δ' ἔχει τὸν χρυσόν, ὥσπερ παρθένος. 670

ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

ἐγὼ μὲν αὐτήν κἂν φιλήσαι μοι δοκῶ.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἀλλ' ὦ κακόδαιμον ρύγχος ὀβελίσκου ἔχει.

ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

ἀλλ' ὥσπερ ὦδον νῆ Δί' ἀπολέψαντα χρὴ
ἀπὸ τῆς κεφαλῆς τὸ λέμμα κᾶθ' οὕτω φιλεῖν.

ΤΗΡΕΥΣ

ἴωμεν. 675

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἡγοῦ δὴ σὺ νῶν τύχ' ἀγαθῆ.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

Yes, by god—agree to their request.
Bring out your little birdie in the reeds.

ΕΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

For gods' sake, bring her out, so we can see
this lovely nightingale of yours.

ΤΕΡΕΥΣ

If that's what you both want, it must be done.
[calling inside]
Come here, Procne. Our guests are calling you.

[Enter Procne from the house. She has a nightingale's head and wings but the body of a young woman. She is wearing gold jewellery]

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

Holy Zeus, that's one gorgeous little bird!
What a tender chick!

ΕΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

How I'd love to help that birdie
spread her legs, if you catch my drift.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

Look at that—
all the gold she's wearing—just like a girl. [670]

ΕΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

What I'd like to do right now is kiss her.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

You idiot—look at that beak she's got,
a pair of skewers.

ΕΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

All right, by god,
we'll treat her like an egg—peel off the shell,
take it clean off her head, and then we'll kiss her.

ΤΕΡΕΥΣ

Let's get inside.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

You lead us in—good luck to all!

[Pisthetairos, Euelpides, Tereus, Xanthias, and Manodorus enter the house]

ΧΟΡΟΣ

ὦ φίλη, ὦ ξουθή,
 ὦ φίλτατον ὀρνέων
 πάντων, ξύννομε τῶν ἐμῶν
 ὕμνων, ξύντροφ' ἀηδοί,
 ἦλθες ἦλθες ὤφθης, 680
 ἠδὲν φθόγγον ἐμοὶ φέρουσ'.
 ἀλλ' ὦ καλλιβόαν κρέκουσ'
 αὐλὸν φθέγμασιν ἡρινοῖς,
 ἄρχου τῶν ἀναπαίστων.

— ἄγε δὴ φύσιν ἄνδρες ἀμαυρόβιοι, φύλλων γενεᾷ
 προσόμοιοι, 685
 ὀλιγοδρανέες, πλάσματα πηλοῦ, σκιοειδέα φύλ' ἀμενηνά,
 ἀπτῆνες ἐφημέριοι ταλαοὶ βροτοὶ ἄνδρες εἰκελόνηροι,
 προσέχετε τὸν νοῦν τοῖς ἀθανάτοις ἡμῖν τοῖς αἰὲν ἐοῦσιν,
 τοῖς αἰθερίοις τοῖσιν ἀγήρωις τοῖς ἄφθιτα μηδομένοισιν,
 ἵν' ἀκούσαντες πάντα παρ' ἡμῶν ὀρθῶς περὶ τῶν
 μετεώρων. 690
 φύσιν οἰωνῶν γένεσιν τε θεῶν ποταμῶν τ' Ἐρέβους τε
 Χάους τε
 εἰδότες ὀρθῶς, Προδίκῳ παρ' ἐμοῦ κλάειν εἵπητε τὸ λοιπόν.
 Χάος ἦν καὶ Νύξ Ἐρεβός τε μέλαν πρῶτον καὶ Τάρταρος
 εὐρύς,
 γῆ δ' οὐδ' ἀήρ οὐδ' οὐρανὸς ἦν· Ἐρέβους δ' ἐν ἀπέιροσι
 κόλποις
 τίκτει πρῶτιστον ὑπνέμιον Νύξ ἢ μελανόπτερος
 ὤόν, 695
 ἐξ οὗ περιτελλομέναις ὥραις ἔβλασεν Ἔρως ὁ ποθεινός,
 στίλβων νῶτον περυγίου χρυσαῖν, εἰκὼς ἀνεμώκεσι δίναις.
 οὗτος δὲ Χάει περόεντι μιγείσιν νυχίῳ κατὰ Τάρταρον εὐρὸν
 ἐνεόττευσεν γένος ἡμέτερον, καὶ πρῶτον ἀνήγαγεν ἐς φῶς.
 πρότερον δ' οὐκ ἦν γένος ἀθανάτων, πρὶν Ἐρως ξυνέμιξεν
 ἅπαντα· 700

CHORUS [*singing to Procne*]

Ah, my tawny throated love,
 of all the birds that fly above
 you're dearest to my heart
 your sweet melodious voice
 in my song plays its part —
 my lovely Nightingale,
 you've come, [680]
 you've come.
 And now you're here with me.
 Pour forth your melody.
 Pipe out the lovely sounds of spring,
 a prelude to my rhythmic speech
 in every melody you sing.

[*Procne plays on the flute for a few moments as the Chorus Leader prepares to address the audience directly. He steps forward getting close to the spectators*]

CHORUS LEADER

Come now, you men out there, who live such dark, sad lives —
 you're frail, just like a race of leaves — you're shaped from clay,
 you tribes of insubstantial shadows without wings,
 you creatures of a day, unhappy mortal men,
 you figures from a dream, now turn your minds to us,
 the eternal, deathless, air-borne, ageless birds,
 whose wisdom never dies, so you may hear from us
 the truth about celestial things, about the birds — [690]
 how they sprang into being, how the gods arose,
 how rivers, Chaos, and dark Erebus were formed⁴⁰ —
 about all this you'll learn the truth. And so from me
 tell Prodicus in future to depart.⁴¹ At the start,
 there was Chaos, and Night, and pitch-black Erebus,
 and spacious Tartarus. There was no earth, no heaven,
 no atmosphere. Then in the wide womb of Erebus,
 that boundless space, black-winged Night, first creature born,
 made pregnant by the wind, once laid an egg. It hatched,
 when seasons came around, and out of it sprang Love —
 the source of all desire, on his back the glitter
 of his golden wings, just like the swirling whirlwind.
 In broad Tartarus, Love had sex with murky Chaos.
 From them our race was born — our first glimpse of the light.
 Before that there was no immortal race at all,
 not before Love mixed all things up. But once they'd bred [700]

ξυμμικνυμένων δ' ἑτέρων ἑτέροις γένετ' οὐρανὸς ὠκεανὸς τε
καὶ γῆ πάντων τε θεῶν μακάρων γένος ἄφθιτον. ὦδε μὲν
ἔσμεν

πολὺ πρεσβύτατοι πάντων μακάρων. ἡμεῖς δ' ὡς ἔσμεν

Ἔρωτος

πολλοῖς δῆλον· πετόμεσθ' αὖτε γὰρ καὶ τοῖσι ἐρῶσι
σύνεσμεν·

πολλοὺς δὲ καλοὺς ἀπομωμοκότας παῖδας πρὸς τέρμασιν
ὥρας 705

διὰ τὴν ἰσχὺν τὴν ἡμετέραν διεμήρισαν ἄνδρες ἐρασταί,
ὁ μὲν ὄρνυγα δοὺς ὁ δὲ πορφυρίων' ὁ δὲ χῆν' ὁ δὲ Περσικὸν
ὄρνυ.

πάντα δὲ θνητοῖς ἐστὶν ἀφ' ἡμῶν τῶν ὀρνίθων τὰ μέγιστα.
πρῶτα μὲν ὥρας φαίνομεν ἡμεῖς ἦρος χειμῶνος ὀπώρας·
σπείρειν μὲν, ὅταν γέρανος κρώζουσ' ἐς τὴν Λιβύην

μεταχωρῆ. 710

καὶ πηδάλιον τότε ναυκλήρω φράζει κρεμάσαντι καθεύδειν,
εἶτα δ' Ὀρέστη χλαῖναν ὑφαίνειν, ἵνα μὴ ῥιγῶν ἀποδύῃ.

ἰκτίνος δ' αὖ μετὰ ταῦτα φανείς ἑτέραν ὥραν ἀποφαίνει,
ἠνίκα πεκτεῖν ὥρα προβάτων πόκον ἠρινόν· εἶτα χελιδῶν,
ὅτε χρὴ χλαῖναν πωλεῖν ἤδη καὶ ληδάριον τι πρίασθαι. 715

ἔσμεν δ' ὑμῖν Ἄμμων Δελφοὶ Δωδώνη Φοῖβος Ἀπόλλων.
ἐλθόντες γὰρ πρῶτον ἐπ' ὄρνυς οὕτω πρὸς ἅπαντα τρέπεσθε,
πρὸς τ' ἐμπορίαν, καὶ πρὸς βιότου κτήσιν, καὶ πρὸς γάμον
ἀνδρός.

ὄρνυ τε νομίζετε πάνθ' ὅσα περ περὶ μαντείας διακρίνει·

φήμη γ' ὑμῖν ὄρνυς ἐστί, πταρμόν τ' ὄρνυθα καλεῖτε, 720

ξύμβολον ὄρνυ, φωνὴν ὄρνυ, θεράποντ' ὄρνυ, ὄνον ὄρνυ.
ἄρ' οὐ φανερώς ἡμεῖς ὑμῖν ἔσμεν μαντεῖος Ἀπόλλων;

— ἦν οὖν ἡμᾶς νομίσητε θεούς,
ἔξετε χρῆσθαι μάντεσι Μούσαις
αὔραις ὥραις χειμῶνι θέρει 725
μετρίῳ πνίγει· κοῦκ ἀποδράντες
καθεδούμεθ' ἄνω σεμνυόμενοι
παρὰ ταῖς νεφέλαις ὥσπερ χῶ Ζεὺς·

and blended in with one another, Heaven was born,
Ocean and Earth—and all that clan of deathless gods.

Thus, we're by far the oldest of all blessed ones,
for we are born from Love. There's lots of proof for this.

We fly around the place, assisting those in love—
the handsome lads who swear they'll never bend for sex,

but who, as their young charms come to an end, agree
to let male lovers bugger them, thanks to the birds,

our power as gifts—one man gives a porphyrion,
another man a quail, a third one gives a goose,

and yet another offers up a Persian Fowl.⁴²
All mortals' greatest benefits come from us birds.

The first is this: we make the season known—springtime,
winter, autumn—it's time to sow, as soon as Crane

migrates to Lybia with all that noise. He tells
the master mariner to hang his rudder up

and go to sleep awhile. He tells Orestes, too,
to weave himself a winter cloak, so he won't freeze

when he sets out again to rip off people's clothes.⁴³
Then after that the Kite appears, to let you know

another season's here—it's time to shear the sheep.
Then Swallow comes. Now you should sell your winter cloak

and get yourself a light one. So we're your Ammon,
Delphi and Dodona—we're your Apollo, too.⁴⁴

See how, in all your business, you first look to birds—
when you trade, buy goods, or when a man gets married.

Whatever you think matters in a prophecy,
you label that a bird—to you, Rumour's a bird;

you say a sneeze or a chance meeting is a bird,
a sound's a bird, a servant's a bird—and so's an ass.

It's clear you look on us as your Apollo.

CHORUS

So you ought to make gods of your birds,
your muses prophetic, whose words

all year round you've got,
unless it's too hot.

Your questions will always be heard.

And we won't run away to a cloud
and sit there like Zeus, who's so proud—

we're ready to give,
hang out where you live,

and be there for you in the crowd.

- ἀλλὰ παρόντες δώσομεν ὑμῖν
αὐτοῖς, παισίν, παιδῶν παισίν, 730
πλουθυγίαν
εὐδαιμονίαν βίον εἰρήνην
νεότητα γέλωτα χοροὺς θαλίαις
γάλα τ' ὀρνίθων. ὥστε παρέσται
κοπιᾶν ὑμῖν ὑπὸ τῶν ἀγαθῶν 735
οὕτω πλουτήσετε πάντες.
- Μοῦσα λοχμαία,
τιὸ τιὸ τιὸ τιὸ τιὸ τιοτίγξ,
ποικίλη, μεθ' ἧς ἐγὼ
νάπαισι καὶ κορυφαῖς ἐν ὀρείαις, 740
τιὸ τιὸ τιὸ τιοτίγξ,
ἰζόμενος μελίας ἐπὶ φυλλοκόμου,
τιὸ τιὸ τιὸ τιοτίγξ,
δι' ἐμῆς γέννος ξουθῆς μελέων
Πανὶ νόμους ἱεροὺς ἀναφαίνω 745
σεμνά τε μητρὶ χορεύματ' ὀρεία,
τοτοτοτοτοτοτοτοτοτίγξ,
ἔνθεν ὡστερεὶ μέλιττα
Φρύνιχος ἀμβροσίων μελέων ἀπεβόσκετο καρπὸν αἰεὶ
φέρων γλυκεῖαν ᾠδάν. 750
τιὸ τιὸ τιὸ τιοτίγξ.
- εἰ μετ' ὀρνίθων τις ὑμῶν ᾧ θεαταὶ βούλεται
διαπλέκειν ζῶν ἡδέως τὸ λοιπὸν, ὡς ἡμᾶς ἴτω.
ὅσα γάρ ἐστιν ἐνθάδ' αἰσχρὰ τῷ νόμῳ κρατούμενα, 755
ταῦτα πάντ' ἐστὶν παρ' ἡμῖν τοῖσι ὄρνισιν καλά.
εἰ γὰρ ἐνθάδ' ἐστὶν αἰσχρὸν τὸν πατέρα τύπτειν νόμῳ,
τοῦτ' ἐκεῖ καλὸν παρ' ἡμῖν ἐστίν, ἢν τις τῷ πατρὶ
προσδραμῶν εἶπη πατάξας, 'αἶρε πλήκτρον, εἰ μαχεῖ.'
εἰ δὲ τυγχάνει τις ὑμῶν δραπέτης ἐστιγμένος, 760
ἄτταγᾶς οὗτος παρ' ἡμῖν ποικίλος κεκλήσεται.
εἰ δὲ τυγχάνει τις ὧν Φρυγὸς μηδὲν ἦττον Σπινθάρου,
φρυγίλος ὄρνις ἐνθάδ' ἔσται, τοῦ Φιλήμονος γένους.
εἰ δὲ δοῦλός ἐστι καὶ Κάρ ὡσπερ Ἐξηκεστιδῆς,

CHORUS LEADER

Yes, to you, your children, and their children, too, [730]
we'll grant wealth and health, good life, and happiness,
peace, youth, laughter, dances, festivals of song—
and birds' milk, too—so much, you'll find yourself worn out
with our fine gifts—yes, that's how rich you'll be.

CHORUS

O woodland Muse
Tio-tio-tio-tiotinx
my muse of varied artful song
on trees and from high mountain peaks [740]
tio-tio-tio-tiotinx
to your notes I sing along
in my leafy ash tree seat.
tio-tio-tio-tiotinx
From my tawny throat I fling
my sacred melodies to Pan.
In holy dance I chant and sing
our mother from the mountain land.
Toto-toto-toto-toto-toto-totinx
Here Phrynichus would always sip [750]
ambrosial nectar from our tone
to make sweet music of his own.
tio-tio-tio-tiotinx.

CHORUS LEADER

If there's someone out there in the audience
who'd like to spend his future life among the birds
enjoying himself, he should come to us. Here, you see,
whatever is considered shameful by your laws,
is all just fine among us birds. Consider this—
if your tradition says one shouldn't beat one's dad,
up here with us it's all right if some young bird
goes at his father, hits him, cries, "You wanna fight?
Then put up your spur!" If out there among you all [760]
there is, by chance, a tattooed slave who's run away,
we'll call him a spotted francolin. Or else,
if someone happens to be Phrygian, as pure
as Spintharos, he'll be a Philemon-bred finch.
If he's like Execestides, a Carian slave,

φυσάτω πάππους παρ' ἡμῖν, καὶ φανοῦνται φράτερες. 765
 εἰ δ' ὁ Πεισίου προδοῦναι τοῖς ἀτίμοις τὰς πύλας
 βούλεται, πέρδιξ γενέσθω, τοῦ πατρὸς νεοττίον·
 ὡς παρ' ἡμῖν οὐδὲν αἰσχρὸν ἔστιν ἐκπερδικίσαι.

— τοιάδε κύκνοι,
 τιὸ τιὸ τιὰ τιὸ τιὸ τιοτίγξ, 770
 συμμιγῇ βοῆν ὁμοῦ
 πτεροῖς κρέκοντες ἴακχον Ἀπόλλω,
 τιὸ τιὸ τιὸ τιοτίγξ,
 ὄχθω ἐφεζόμενοι παρ' Ἐβρον ποταμόν,
 τιὸ τιὸ τιὸ τιοτίγξ, 775
 διὰ δ' αἰθέριον νέφος ἦλθε βοά·
 πτήξε δὲ φύλά τε ποικίλα θηρῶν,
 κύματά τ' ἔσβεσε νήνεμος αἴθρη,
 τοτοτοτοτοτοτοτοτοτοτίγξ·
 πᾶς δ' ἐπεκτύπησ' Ὀλυμπος· 780
 εἶλε δὲ θάμβος ἄνακτας· Ὀλυμπιάδες δὲ μέλος Χάριτες
 Μοῦσαι τ' ἐπωλόλυξαν.
 τιὸ τιὸ τιὸ τιοτίγξ.

— οὐδέν ἐστ' ἄμεινον οὐδ' ἦδιον ἢ φύσαι πτερά. 785
 αὐτίχ' ὑμῶν τῶν θεατῶν εἴ τις ἦν ὑπόπτερος,
 εἶτα πεινῶν τοῖς χοροῖσι τῶν τραγωδῶν ἤχθετο,

let him act the Cuckoo—steal his kin from us—
 some group of citizens will claim him soon enough.
 And if the son of Peisias still has in mind
 betraying our city gates to worthless men,
 let him become his father's little partridge cock—
 for us there's nothing wrong with crafty partridge stock.

CHORUS

Tio-tio-tio-tio-tinx-
 That's how the swans
 [770] massed in a crowd
 with rustling wings
 once raised aloud
 Apollo's hymn.

Tio-tio-tio-tio-tinx
 They sat in rows
 on river banks
 where Hebros flows.
 Tio-tio-tio-tio-tinx
 Their song then rose
 through cloud and air—
 it cast its spell
 on mottled tribes
 of wild beasts there—
 the silent sky
 calmed down the sea.
 Toto-toto-toto-toto-totinx.

Olympus rang—
 [780] amazement seized
 its lords and kings.
 Then Muses there
 and Graces, too,
 voiced their response—
 Olympus sang.
 Tio-tio-tio-tio-tiotinx.

CHORUS LEADER

There's nothing sweeter or better than growing wings.
 If any of you members of the audience
 had wings, well, if you were feeling bored or hungry
 with these tragic choruses, you could fly away,

ἐκπτόμενος ἂν οὔτος ἠρίστησεν ἐλθῶν οἴκαδε,
 κᾶτ' ἂν ἐμπλησθεὶς ἐφ' ἡμᾶς αὐθις αὐ κατέπτετο.
 εἴ τε Πατροκλείδης τις ὑμῶν τυγχάνει χεζήτιῶν, 790
 οὐκ ἂν ἐξίδισεν ἐς θοιμάτιον, ἀλλ' ἀνέπτετο,
 κάποπαρδῶν κἀναπνεύσας αὐθις αὐ κατέπτετο·
 εἴ τε μοιχεύων τις ὑμῶν ἐστιν ὅστις τυγχάνει,
 κᾶθ' ὄρᾳ τὸν ἄνδρα τῆς γυναικὸς ἐν βουλευτικῶ,
 οὔτος ἂν πάλιν παρ' ὑμῶν πτερυγίσας ἀνέπτετο, 795
 εἶτα βνήσας ἐκεῖθεν αὐθις αὐ κατέπτετο.
 ἄρ' ὑπόπτερον γενέσθαι παντός ἐστιν ἄξιον;
 ὡς Διαιτρέφης γε πτυναῖα μόνον ἔχων πτερὰ
 ἠρέθη φύλαρχος, εἶθ' ἵππαρχος, εἶτ' ἐξ οὐδενὸς
 μεγάλα πράττει κἀστὶ νυνὶ ξουθὸς ἵππαλεκτρῶν. 800

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ταυτὶ τοιαυτὶ· μὰ Δί' ἐγὼ μὲν πρᾶγμα πω
 γελοιότερον οὐκ εἶδον οὐδεπώποτε.

ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

ἐπὶ τῷ γελᾶς;

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἐπὶ τοῖσι σοῖς ὠκυπτέροις.
 οἶσθ' ᾧ μάλιστ' ἔοικας ἐπτερωμένος;
 εἰς εὐτέλειαν χηνὶ συγγεγραμμένῳ. 805

ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

σὺ δὲ κοφίχῳ γε σκάφιον ἀποτετιλμένῳ.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ταυτὶ μὲν ἠκάσμεσθα κατὰ τὸν Αἰσχύλον·
 τὰδ' οὐχ ὑπ' ἄλλων ἀλλὰ τοῖς αὐτῶν πτεροῖς.

ΧΟΡΟΣ

ἄγε δὴ τί χρὴ δρᾶν;

go home for dinner, and then, once you'd had enough,
 fly back to us again. Or if, by any chance,
 a Patrocleides sits out there among you all, [790]
 dying to shit, he wouldn't have to risk a fart
 in his own pants—he could fly off and let 'er rip,
 take a deep breath, and fly back down again.
 If it should be the case that one of you out there
 is having an affair, and you observe her husband
 sitting here, in seats reserved for Council men,
 well, once again, you could fly off and fuck the wife,
 then fly back from her place and take your seat once more.
 Don't you see how having wings to fly beats everything?
 Just look at Diitrephes—the only wings he had
 were handles on his flasks of wine, but nonetheless,
 they chose him to lead a squad of cavalry,
 then for a full command, so now, from being nobody,
 he carries out our great affairs—he's now become [800]
 a tawny civic horse-cock.⁴⁵

[Enter Pisthetairos and Euelpides from Tereus' house. They now have wings on and feathers on their heads instead of hair]

PISTHETAIROS

Well, that's that. By Zeus,
 I've never seen a more ridiculous sight!

EUELPIDES

What are you laughing at?

PISTHETAIROS

At your feathers.
 Have you any idea what you look like—
 what you most resemble with those feathers on?
 A goose painted by some cheap artiste!

EUELPIDES

And you look like a blackbird—one whose hair
 has just been cut using a barber's bowl.

PISTHETAIROS

People will use us as metaphors—
 as Aeschlyus would say, "We're shot by feathers
 not from someone else but of our very own."

CHORUS LEADER

All right, then. What do we now need to do?

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

πρῶτον ὄνομα τῇ πόλει
θέσθαι τι μέγα καὶ κλεινόν, εἶτα τοῖς θεοῖς
θῦσαι μετὰ τοῦτο. 810

ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

ταῦτα κάμοι συνδοκεῖ.

ΧΟΡΟΣ

φέρ' ἴδω, τί δ' ἡμῖν τοῦνομ' ἔσται τῇ πόλει;

ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

βούλεσθε τὸ μέγα τοῦτο τοῦκ Λακεδαίμονος
Σπάρτην ὄνομα καλῶμεν αὐτήν;

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

Ἡράκλεις·

Σπάρτην γὰρ ἂν θείμην ἐγὼ τῆμῃ πόλει;
οὐδ' ἂν χαμεύνη πάνυ γε κειρίαν γ' ἔχων. 815

ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

τί δητ' ὄνομ' αὐτῇ θησόμεσθ';

ΧΟΡΟΣ

ἐντευθενὶ

ἐκ τῶν νεφελῶν καὶ τῶν μετεώρων χωρίων
χαῦνόν τι πάνυ.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

βούλει Νεφελοκοκκυγίαν;

ΧΟΡΟΣ

ιοὺ ἰού·
καλόν γ' ἀτεχνῶς σὺ καὶ μέγ' ἠῦρες τοῦνομα. 820

ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

ἄρ' ἐστὶν αὐτηγὶ Νεφελοκοκκυγία,
ἵνα καὶ τὰ Θεογένους τὰ πολλὰ χρήματα
τά τ' Αἰσχίνου γ' ἅπαντα;

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

καὶ λῶστον μὲν οὖν
τὸ Φλέγρας πεδίων, ἵν' οἱ θεοὶ τοὺς γηγενεῖς
ἀλαζονευόμενοι καθυπερηκόντισαν. 825

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

First, we have to name our city, something
fine and grand. Then after that we sacrifice
an offering to the gods. [810]

ΕΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

That's my view, too.

ΧΟΡΟΣ LEADER

So what name shall we give our city?

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

Well, do you want to use that mighty name
from Lacedaimon— shall we call it Sparta?

ΕΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

By Hercules, would I use that name Sparta
for my city? No. I wouldn't even try
esparto grass to make my bed, not if
I could use cords of linen.⁴⁶

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

All right then, what name
shall we provide?

ΧΟΡΟΣ LEADER

Some name from around here—
to do with clouds, with high places full of air,
something really extra grand.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

Well, then,
how do you like this: Cloudcuckooland?

ΧΟΡΟΣ LEADER

Yes! That's good! You've come up with a name
that's really wonderful— it's great! [820]

ΕΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

Hang on,
is this Cloudcuckooland the very spot
where Theogenes keeps lots of money,
and Aeschines hides all his assets?⁴⁷

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

It's even more than that— it's Phlegra Plain,
the place where gods beat up on all the giants
in a bragging match.⁴⁸

ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

λιπαρὸν τὸ χρῆμα τῆς πόλεως. τίς δαὶ θεὸς
πολιοῦχος ἔσται; τῷ ξανοῦμεν τὸν πέπλον;

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

τί δ' οὐκ Ἀθηναίαν ἐώμεν Πολιάδα;

ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

καὶ πῶς ἂν ἔτι γένοιτ' ἂν εὐτακτος πόλις,
ὅπου θεὸς γυνὴ γεγонуῖα πανοπλίαν
ἔστηκ' ἔχουσα, Κλεισθένης δὲ κερκίδα;

830

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

τίς δαὶ καθέξει τῆς πόλεως τὸ Πελαργικόν;

ΧΟΡΟΣ

ὄρνις ἀφ' ἡμῶν τοῦ γένους τοῦ Περσικοῦ,
ὅσπερ λέγεται δεινότατος εἶναι πανταχοῦ
Ἄρεως νεοττός.

835

ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

ὦ νεοττὲ δέσποτα·

ὡς δ' ὁ θεὸς ἐπιτήδειος οἰκεῖν ἐπὶ πετρῶν.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἄγε νυν σὺ μὲν βιάδιζε πρὸς τὸν ἀέρα
καὶ τοῖσι τειχίζουσι παραδιακόνει,
χάλικας παραφόρει, πηλὸν ἀποδὺς ὄργανον,
λεκάνην ἀνένεγκε, κατὰπεσ' ἀπὸ τῆς κλίμακος,
φύλακας κατὰστησαι, τὸ πῦρ ἔγκρυπτ' αἰεί,
κωδωνοφορῶν περίτρεχε καὶ κάθευδ' ἐκεῖ·
κήρυκα δὲ πέμψιον τὸν μὲν ἐς θεοὺς ἄνω,
ἕτερον δ' ἄνωθεν ἂν παρ' ἀνθρώπους κάτω,
κάκειθεν αὐθις παρ' ἐμέ.

840

845

ἘΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ

σὺ δέ γ' αὐτοῦ μένων

οἴμωζε παρ' ἐμ'.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἴθ' ὠγάθ' οἱ πέμπω σ' ἐγώ.

οὐδὲν γὰρ ἄνευ σοῦ τῶνδ' ἂ λέγω πεπράξεται.

EUELPIDES

This fine metropolis!

O what a glittering thing this city is!
Now who should be the city's guardian god?
Who gets to wear the sacred robes we weave?

PISTHETAIROS

Why not let Athena do the guarding?

EUELPIDES

But how can we have a finely ordered state
where a female goddess stands there fully armed,
while Cleisthenes still fondles weaving shuttles.⁴⁹

[830]

PISTHETAIROS

Well, who will hold our city's strong Storkade?

CHORUS LEADER

A bird among us of a Persian breed—
it's said to be the fiercest anywhere
of all the war god's chicks.

EUELPIDES

Some princely cocks?

They're just the gods to live among the rocks!

PISTHETAIROS [to Euelpides]

Come now, you must move up into the air,
and help the ones who're building up the wall—
hoist rubble for 'em, strip and mix the mortar,
haul up the hod, and then fall off the ladder.
Put guards in place, and keep all fires concealed.
Make your inspection rounds holding the bell.⁵⁰
Go to sleep up there. Then send out heralds—
one to gods above, one down to men below.
And then come back from there to me.

[840]

EUELPIDES

And you?

You'll stay here? Well, to hell with you . . .

PISTHETAIROS

Hey, my friend,
you should go where I send you—without you
none of that work I mentioned will get done.

ἐγὼ δ' ἵνα θύσω τοῖσι καινοῖσιν θεοῖς,
 τὸν ἱερέα πέμψοντα τὴν πομπὴν καλῶ.
 παῖ παῖ, τὸ κανοῦν αἵρεσθε καὶ τὴν χέρνιβα. 850

ΧΟΡΟΣ

ὁμορροθῶ, συνθέλω,
 συμπαραινέσας ἔχω
 προσόδια μεγάλα σεμνὰ προσιέναι θεοῖσιν,
 ἅμα δὲ προσέτι χάριτος ἔνεκα προβάτιόν τι θύειν. 855
 ἴτω ἴτω δὲ Πυθιάς βοὰ θεῶ,
 συναδέτω δὲ Χαίρις ὠδάν.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

παῦσαι σὺ φυσῶν. Ἡράκλεις τουτὶ τί ἦν;
 τουτὶ μὰ Δί' ἐγὼ πολλὰ δὴ καὶ δειν' ἰδῶν 860
 οὔπω κόρακ' εἶδον ἐμπεφορβειωμένον.
 ἱερεῦ σὸν ἔργον, θῦε τοῖς καινοῖς θεοῖς.

ἸΕΡΕΥΣ

δράσω τάδ'. ἀλλὰ ποῦ ἔστιν ὁ τὸ κανοῦν ἔχων;
 εὔχεσθε τῇ Ἑστίᾳ τῇ ὀρνιθείῳ καὶ τῷ ἰκτίνῳ τῷ ἐστιούχῳ
 καὶ ὄρνισιν Ὀλυμπίοις καὶ Ὀλυμπήσιπᾶσι καὶ πάσησιν—

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ὦ Σουνιέρακε χαῖρ' ἄναξ Πελαργικέ.

We need a sacrifice to these new gods.
 I'll call a priest to organize the show.

[*Euelpides exits. Pisthetairos calls to the slaves through the doors of Tereus' house*]

You, boy, pick up the basket, and you,
 my lad, grab up the holy water. [850]

[*Pisthetairos enters the house. As the Chorus sings, the slaves emerge and prepare for the sacrifice. The Chorus is accompanied by a raven playing the pipes*]

CHORUS

I think it's good and I agree,
 your notions here are fine with me,
 a great big march with dancing throngs
 and to the gods send holy songs,
 and then their benefits to keep
 we'll sacrifice a baby sheep—
 let go our cry, the Pythian shout,
 while Chaeris plays our chorus out.

[*The Raven plays erratically on the pipe. Pisthetairos comes out of the house. He brings a priest with him, who is leading a small scrawny goat for the sacrifice*]

PISTHETAIROS [to the Raven]

Stop blowing all that noise! By Hercules,
 what's this? I've seen some strange things, heaven knows, [860]
 but never this—a raven with a pipe
 shoved up his nose. Come on, priest, work your spell,
 and sacrifice to these new gods as well.

PRIEST

I'll do it. But where's the basket-bearing boy?

[*The slave appears with the basket*]

Let us now pray to Hestia of the birds,⁵¹
 and to the Kite that watches o'er the hearth,
 to all Olympian birds and birdesses . . .

PISTHETAIROS [to himself]

O Hawk of Sunium, all hail to you,
 Lord of the Sea . . .

ΤΕΡΕΥΣ

καὶ κύκνω Πυθίῳ καὶ Δηλίῳ καὶ Λητοῖ Ὀρτυγομήτρα καὶ
Ἄρτέμυδι Ἀκαλανθίδι—

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

οὐκέτι Κολαινὶς ἀλλ' Ἀκαλανθὶς Ἄρτεμις.

ΤΕΡΕΥΣ

καὶ φρυνγίλῳ Σαβαζίῳ καὶ στρουθῷ μεγάλη μητρὶ θεῶν καὶ
ἀνθρώπων—

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

δέσποινα Κυβέλη, στρουῖθε, μητέρα Κλεοκρίτου.

ΤΕΡΕΥΣ

διδόναι Νεφελοκοκκυγιεῦσιν ὑγίειαν καὶ σωτηρίαν αὐτοῖσι
καὶ Χίοισι—

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

Χίοισιν ἦσθην πανταχοῦ προσκειμένους. 880

ΤΕΡΕΥΣ

καὶ ἦρωσιν ὄρνισι καὶ ἠρώων παισὶ, πορφυρίωνι καὶ
πελεκᾶντι καὶ πελεκίνῳ καὶ φλέξιδι καὶ τέτρακικαὶ ταῶνι
καὶ ἐλεᾶ καὶ βασκᾶ καὶ ἐλασᾶ καὶ ἐρωδιῷ καὶ καταρράκτη
καὶ μελαγκορύφῳ καὶ αἰγιθάλλῳ—

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

παῦ' ἐς κόρακας, παῦσαι καλῶν. ἰοὺ ἰοῦ,
ἐπὶ ποῖον ᾧ κακόδαιμον ἱερεῖον καλεῖς 890
ἀλαιέτους καὶ γῦπας; οὐχ ὄρας ὅτι
ἰκτίνος εἷς ἂν τοῦτό γ' οἴχοιθ' ἀρπάσας;
ἄπελθ' ἀφ' ἡμῶν καὶ σὺ καὶ τὰ στέμματα·
ἐγὼ γὰρ αὐτὸς τουτογὶ θύσω μόνος.

PRIEST

And to the Pythian Swan of Delos—
let's pray to Leto, mother of the quail
to Artemis the Goldfinch . . . [870]

PISTHETAIROS

Ha! No more goddess
of Colaenis now, but goldfinch Artemis . . .

PRIEST

. . . to Sabazdios, Phrygian frigate bird,
to the great ostrich mother of the gods
and of all men . . .

PISTHETAIROS

. . . to Cybele, our ostrich queen,
mother of Cleocritos⁵² . . .

PRIEST

. . . may they give
to all Cloudcuckooites security,
good health, as well—and to the Chians, too.⁵³

PISTHETAIROS

I do like that—the way those Chians
always get tacked on everywhere— [880]

PRIEST

. . . to Hero birds, and to their chicks,
to Porphyryons and Pelicans,
both white and grey, to Raptor-birds and Pheasants,
Peacocks and Warblers . . .

[The Priest starts to get carried away]

. . . Ospreys and Teals
Hérons and Gannets, Terns, small Tits, big Tits, and . . .

PISTHETAIROS [interrupting]

Hold on, dammit—stop calling all these birds.
You idiot! In what sort of sacrifice
does one call for ospreys and for vultures? [890]
Don't you see—one kite could snatch this goat,
then carry it away? Get out of here,
you and your garlands, too. I'll do it myself—
I'll offer up this beast all on my own.

ΧΟΡΟΣ

εἶτ' αὐθις αὖ τάρρα σοι
 δεῖ με δεύτερον μέλος
 χέρνιβι θεοσεβῆς ὅσιον ἐπιβοᾶν, καλεῖν δὲ
 μάκαρας, ἕνα τινὰ μόνον, εἴπερ ἱκανὸν ἔξειτ' ὄψιον. 900
 τὰ γὰρ παρόντα θύματ' οὐδὲν ἄλλο πλὴν
 γένειόν ἐστι καὶ κέρατα.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

θύοντες εὐζώμεσθα τοῖς πτερίνοις θεοῖς.

ΠΟΙΗΤΗΣ

Νεφελοκοκκυγίαν τὰν εὐδαίμονα
 κλῆσον ὦ Μοῦσα τεαῖς ἐν ὕμνων ἀοιδαῖς. 905

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

τουτὶ τὸ πρᾶγμα ποδαπόν; εἰπέ μοι τίς εἶ;

ΠΟΙΗΤΗΣ

ἐγὼ μελιγλώσσω ἐπέων ἰεῖς ἀοιδὰν
 Μουσάων θεράπων ὀτρηρός,
 κατὰ τὸν Ὅμηρον. 910

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἔπειτα δῆτα δούλος ὦν κόμην ἔχεις;

ΠΟΙΗΤΗΣ

οὐκ, ἀλλὰ πάντες ἐσμὲν οἱ διδάσκαλοι
 Μουσάων θεράποντες ὀτρηροί,
 κατὰ τὸν Ὅμηρον.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

οὐκ ἐτὸς ὀτρηρὸν καὶ τὸ ληδάριον ἔχεις.
 ἀτὰρ ὦ ποιητὰ κατὰ τί δεῦρ' ἀνεφθάρης; 915

ΠΟΙΗΤΗΣ

μέλη πεποίηκ' ἐς τὰς Νεφελοκοκκυγίας
 τὰς ὑμετέρας κύκλιά τε πολλὰ καὶ καλὰ
 καὶ παρθένεια καὶ κατὰ τὰ Σιμωνίδου.

[Pisthetairos pushes the Priest away. Exit Priest]

CHORUS

Now once again I have to sing
 a song to purify you all,
 a holy sacred melody.
 The Blessed Ones I have to call—
 but if you're in a mood to eat
 we just need one and not a score
 for here our sacrificial meat [900]
 is horns and hair, and nothing more.

PISTHETAIROS

Let us pray while we make sacrifice
 to our feathery gods . . . [raises his eyes to sky and shuts his eyes]

[A poet suddenly bursts on the scene reciting his verses as he enters]

POET [reciting]

O Muse, in your songs sing the renown
 of Cloudcuckooland—this happy town . . .

PISTHETAIROS

Where'd this thing come from? Tell me— who are you?

POET

Me? I'm a sweet tongued warbler of the words—
 a nimble servant of the Muse, as Homer says. [910]

PISTHETAIROS

You're a slave and wear your hair that long?

POET

No, but all poets of dramatic songs
 are nimble servants of the Muse, as Homer says.

PISTHETAIROS

No doubt that's why your nimble cloak's so thin.
 But, oh poet, why has thou come hither?

POET

I've been making up all sorts of splendid songs
 to celebrate your fine Cloudcuckoolands—
 dithyrambs and virgin songs and other tunes
 after the style of that Simonides.⁵⁴

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ
ταυτὶ σὺ πότε ἐποίησας; ἀπὸ ποίου χρόνου; 920

ΠΟΙΗΤΗΣ
πάλαι παλαι δὴ τήνδ' ἐγὼ κλήζω πόλιν.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ
οὐκ ἄρτι θύω τὴν δεκάτην ταύτης ἐγώ,
καὶ τοῦνομ' ὥσπερ παιδίῳ νῦν δὴ θέμην;

ΠΟΙΗΤΗΣ
ἀλλὰ τις ὠκεῖα Μουσάων φάτις
οἶάπερ ἵππων ἀμαρναγὰ. 925
σὺ δὲ πάτερ κτίστορ Αἴτνας,
ζαθέων ἱερῶν ὁμώνυμε,
δὸς ἐμὶν ὅ τι περ
τεῶ κεφαλᾷ θέλης
πρόφρων δόμεν ἐμὶν τεῖν. 930

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ
τουτὶ παρέξει τὸ κακὸν ἡμῖν πράγματα,
εἰ μὴ τι τούτῳ δόντες ἀποφευξοῦμεθα.
οὔτος, σὺ μέντοι σπολάδα καὶ χιτῶν' ἔχεις,
ἀπόδυθι καὶ δὸς τῷ ποιητῇ τῷ σοφῷ.
ἔχε τὴν σπολάδα· πάντως δέ μοι ῥιγῶν δοκεῖς. 935

ΠΟΙΗΤΗΣ
τόδε μὲν οὐκ ἀέκουσα φίλα
Μοῦσα δῶρον δέχεται·
τὸ δὲ τεῶ φρενὶ μάθε Πινδάρειον ἔπος—

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ
ἄνθρωπος ἡμῶν οὐκ ἀπαλλαχθήσεται. 940

ΠΟΙΗΤΗΣ
νομάδεσσι γὰρ ἐν Σκύθαις
ἀλάται Στράτων,
ὃς ὑφαντοδόνατον ἔσθος οὐ πέπαται·
ἀκλεῆς δ' ἔβα σπολὰς ἄνευ χιτῶνος.
ξύνες ὅ τοι λέγω. 945

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ
When did you compose these tunes? Some time ago? [920]

POET
O long long ago—yes, I've been singing
the glory of this town for years.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ
Look here—
I've just been making sacrifice today—
the day our city gets its name. What's more,
it's only now, as with a new-born child,
I've given it that name.

POET
Ah yes, but Muses' words are swift indeed—
like twinkling hooves on rapid steeds.
So thou, oh father, first of Aetna's kings,
whose name means lots of holy things,
present me something from thy grace
whate'er you wish, just nod your face.⁵⁵ [930]

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ
This fellow here is going to give us trouble—
unless we can escape by giving something.

[Calling one of the slaves]

You there with the tunic and the jerkin on.
Strip off the leather jerkin. Give it up
to this master poet. Take this jerkin.
You look as if you're really freezing cold.

POET
The darling Muse accepts the gift
and not unwillingly—
But now your wit should get a lift
from Pindar's words which . . .

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ
This fellow's never going to go away! [940]

POET [making up a quotation]
“Out there amid nomadic Scythians,
he wanders from the host in all his shame,
he who has no woven garment shuttle-made—
a jerkin on, but no tunic to his name.”
I speak so you can understand.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ξυνῆχ' ὅτι βούλει τὸν χιτωνίσκον λαβεῖν.
ἀπόδουθι· δεῖ γὰρ τὸν ποιητὴν ὠφελεῖν.
ἄπελθε τουτονὶ λαβών.

ΠΟΙΗΤΗΣ

ἀπέρχομαι,
κὰς τὴν πόλιν γ' ἐλθὼν ποιήσω τοιαδί·
ἔκλῃσον ὦ χρυσόθρονε τὰν τρομερὰν κρυερὰν· 950
νιφόβολα πεδία πολύπορά τ' ἤλυθον ἀλαλάν·

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

νῆ τὸν Δί' ἀλλ' ἤδη πέφευγας ταυταγὶ
τὰ κρυερά τουτὶ τὸν χιτωνίσκον λαβών. 955
τουτὶ μὰ Δί' ἐγὼ τὸ κακὸν οὐδέποτ' ἤλπισα,
οὕτω ταχέως τοῦτον πεπύσθαι τὴν πόλιν.
αὔθις σὺ περιχώρει λαβών τὴν χέρνιβα.
εὐφημία ἔστω.

ΧΡΗΣΜΟΛΟΓΟΣ

μὴ κατάρξῃ τοῦ τράγου.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

σὺ δ' εἶ τίς; 960

ΧΡΗΣΜΟΛΟΓΟΣ

ὅστις; χρησμολόγος.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

οἴμωζέ νυν.

ΧΡΗΣΜΟΛΟΓΟΣ

ὦ δαιμόνιε τὰ θεῖα μὴ φαύλως φέρε·
ὡς ἔστι Βάκιδος χρησμὸς ἀντικρυς λέγων
ἐς τὰς Νεφελοκοκκυγίας.

PISTHETAIROS

Yes, I get it—you want the tunic, too.
[To the slave] Take it off. We must assist our poets.
Take it and get out.

POET

I'm on my way—
But as I go I'll still make songs like these
in honour of your city—
“O thou sitting on a golden throne, [950]
sing to celebrate that shivering, quivering land.
I walked its snow-swept fruitful plains . . .”

[At this point Pisthetairos has had enough. He grabs the poet and throws him into the wings]

POET [as he exits]

Aaaaiiii!

PISTHETAIROS [calling after him]

Well, by Zeus, at least you've now put behind
the cold, since you've got that little tunic on!
God knows, that's a problem I'd not thought about—
he learned about our city here so fast.
[resuming the sacrifice] Come, boy, pick up the holy water
and walk around again. Let everyone
observe a sacred holy silence now . . .

[Enter an Oracle Monger, quickly interrupting the ceremony. He is carrying a scroll]

ORACLE MONGER

Don't sacrifice that goat!

PISTHETAIROS

What? Who are you?

ORACLE MONGER

Who am I? I'm an oracular interpreter.

PISTHETAIROS

To hell with you! [960]

ORACLE MONGER

Now, now, my dear good man,
don't disparage things divine. You should know
there's an oracle of Bacis which speaks
of your Cloudcuckooland—it's pertinent.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

κῦπειτα πῶς

ταῦτ' οὐκ ἐχρησμολόγεις σὺ πρὶν ἐμέ τήν πόλιν
τήνδ' οἰκίσαι;

965

ΧΡΗΣΜΟΛΟΓΟΣ

τὸ θεῖον ἐνεπόδιζέ με.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἀλλ' οὐδὲν οἶόν ἐστ' ἀκοῦσαι τῶν ἐπῶν.

ΧΡΗΣΜΟΛΟΓΟΣ

ἀλλ' ὅταν οἰκήσωσι λύκοι πολιαί τε κορώναι
ἐν ταῦτῳ τὸ μεταξὺ Κορίνθου καὶ Σικυῶνος, —

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

τί οὖν προσήκει δῆτ' ἐμοὶ Κορινθίων;

ΧΡΗΣΜΟΛΟΓΟΣ

ἤνιξαιθ' ὁ Βάκις τοῦτο πρὸς τὸν ἀέρα.
πρῶτον Πανδώρα θῦσαι λευκότριχα κριόν·
ὃς δέ κ' ἐμῶν ἐπέων ἔλθη πρῶτιστα προφήτης,
τῷ δόμεν ἱμάτιον καθαρὸν καὶ καινὰ πέδιλα —

970

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἔνεστι καὶ τὰ πέδιλα;

ΧΡΗΣΜΟΛΟΓΟΣ

λαβὲ τὸ βιβλίον.

καὶ φιάλην δοῦναι, καὶ σπλάγχνων χεῖρ' ἐπιπλήσαι. 975

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

καὶ σπλάγχνα διδόν' ἔνεστι;

ΧΡΗΣΜΟΛΟΓΟΣ

λαβὲ τὸ βιβλίον.

κὰν μὲν θέσπια κοῦρε ποιῆς ταῦθ' ὡς ἐπιτέλλω,
αἰετὸς ἐν νεφέλῃσι γενήσεται· αἱ δέ κε μὴ δῶς,
οὐκ ἔσει οὐ τρυγῶν οὐδ' αἰετὸς οὐ δρυκολάπτῃς.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

καὶ ταῦτ' ἔνεστ' ἐνταῦθα;

980

PISTHETAIROS

Then how come you didn't talk to me
about this prophecy some time before
I set my city here?

ORACLE MONGER

I could not do that —
powers divine held me in check.

PISTHETAIROS

Well, I guess
there's nothing wrong in listening to it now.

ORACLE MONGER [*unrolling the scroll and reading from it*]

“Once grey crows and wolves shall live together
in that space between Corinth and Sicyon . . .”

PISTHETAIROS

What my connection to Corinthians?

ORACLE MONGER

Its Bacis' cryptic way of saying “air.”
“First sacrifice to Pandora a white-fleeced ram.
Whoever first comes to prophesy my words,
let him receive a brand new cloak and sandals.”

[970]

PISTHETAIROS

Are sandals in there, too?

ORACLE MONGER [*showing the scroll*]

Consult the book.

“Give him the bowl, fill his hands full with offal . . .”

PISTHETAIROS

The entrails? Does it say that in there?

ORACLE MONGER

Consult the book. “Inspired youth,
if thou dost complete what here I do command,
thou shalt become an eagle in the clouds — if not,
if thou will not give them me, you'll ne'er become
an eagle, or a turtle dove, or woodpecker.”

PISTHETAIROS

That's all in there, as well?

ΧΡΗΣΜΟΛΟΓΟΣ

λαβὲ τὸ βιβλίον.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

οὐδὲν ἄρ' ὁμοίος ἐσθ' ὁ χρησμὸς τουτωί,
 ὃν ἐγὼ παρὰ τὰπόλλωνος ἐξεγραψάμην·
 αὐτὰρ ἐπὴν ἄκλητος ἰὼν ἄνθρωπος ἀλαζῶν
 λυπῆ θύοντας καὶ σπλαγχνεύειν ἐπιθυμῆ,
 δὴ τότε χρῆ τύπτειν αὐτὸν πλευρῶν τὸ μεταξὺ — 985

ΧΡΗΣΜΟΛΟΓΟΣ

οὐδὲν λέγειν οἶμαί σε.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

λαβὲ τὸ βιβλίον.
 καὶ φείδου μηδὲν μηδ' αἰετοῦ ἐν νεφέλῃσιν,
 μήτ' ἦν Λάμπων ἢ μήτ' ἦν ὁ μέγας Διοπίθης.

ΧΡΗΣΜΟΛΟΓΟΣ

καὶ ταῦτ' ἔνεστ' ἐνταῦθα;

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

λαβὲ τὸ βιβλίον.
 οὐκ εἶ θύραζ'; ἐς κόρακας.

ΧΡΗΣΜΟΛΟΓΟΣ

οἶμοι δειλῖος. 990

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

οὐκ οὐκ ἐτέρωσε χρησμολογήσεις ἐκτρέχων;

ΜΕΤΩΝ

ἦκω παρ' ὑμᾶς—

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἕτερον αὖ τουτὶ κακόν.
 τί δ' αὖ σὺν δράσων; τίς δ' ἰδέα βουλευματος;
 τίς ἢ ἴπνιοια, τίς ὁ κόθορνος τῆς ὁδοῦ;

ORACLE MONGER

Consult the book. [980]

PISTHETAIROS [*pulling out a sheet of paper from under his tunic*]

Your oracle is not at all like this one—
 Apollo's very words. I them wrote down.
 "When an impostor comes without an invitation—
 a cheating rogue—and pesters men at sacrifice,
 so keen is he to taste the inner parts, well then,
 he must be beaten hard between the ribs . . ."

ORACLE MONGER

I don't think you're reading that.

PISTHETAIROS

Consult the book.

"Do not spare him, even if he's way up there,
 an eagle in the clouds, or if he's Lampon
 or great Diopeithes in the flesh."⁵⁶

ORACLE MONGER

That's not in there, is it?

PISTHETAIROS

Consult the book.

Now, get out! To hell with you . . .

{Pisthetairos beats the Oracle Monger off stage, hitting him with the scroll}

ORACLE MONGER

Oooh . . . poor me! [*Exit*] [990]

PISTHETAIROS

Run off and do your soothsaying somewhere else!

[Enter Meton, carrying various surveying instruments, and wearing soft leather buskin boots]⁵⁷

METON

I have come here among you all . . .

PISTHETAIROS

Here's more trouble.

And what have *you* come here to do? Your scheme—
 what's it look like? What do you have in mind?
 Why hike up here in buskin?

ΜΕΤΩΝ

γεωμετρήσαι βούλομαι τὸν ἀέρα
ὑμῖν διελεῖν τε κατὰ γύας. 995

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

πρὸς τῶν θεῶν
σὺ δ' εἰ τίς ἀνδρῶν;

ΜΕΤΩΝ

ὅστις εἴμ' ἐγώ; Μέτων,
ὃν οἶδεν Ἑλλάς χῶ Κολωνός.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

εἰπέ μοι,
ταυτὶ δέ σοι τί ἔστι;

ΜΕΤΩΝ

κανόνες ἀέρος.
αὐτίκα γὰρ ἀήρ ἐστι τὴν ιδέαν ὅλος 1000
κατὰ πνιγέα μάλιστα. προσθεῖς οὖν ἐγὼ
τὸν κανόν', ἄνωθεν τουτονὶ τὸν καμπύλον
ἐνθεῖς διαβήτην—μανθάνεις;

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

οὐ μανθάνω.

ΜΕΤΩΝ

ὀρθῶ μετρήσω κανόνι προστιθείς, ἵνα
ὁ κύκλος γένηται σοι τετράγωνος κὰν μέσῳ 1005
ἀγορά, φέρουσαι δ' ὦσιν εἰς αὐτὴν ὁδοὶ
ὀρθαὶ πρὸς αὐτὸ τὸ μέσον, ὥσπερ δ' ἀστέρος
αὐτοῦ κυκλοτεροῦς ὄντος ὀρθαὶ πανταχῇ
ἀκτῖνες ἀπολάμπωσιν.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἄνθρωπος Θαλῆς.

Μέτων— 1010

ΜΕΤΩΝ

τί ἔστιν;

ΜΕΤΩΝ

I intend
to measure out the air for you—dividing it
in surveyed lots.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

For heaven's sake,
who are you?

ΜΕΤΩΝ [*shocked*]

Who am I? I'm Meton—
famous throughout Greece and Colonus.⁵⁸

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

What are these things you've got?

ΜΕΤΩΝ

Rods to measure air.
You see, the air is, in its totality, [1000]
shaped like a domed pot cover . . . Thus . . . and so,
from up above I'll lay my ruler . . . it bends . . . thus . . .
set my compass inside there . . . You see?

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

I don't get it.

ΜΕΤΩΝ

With this straight ruler here
I measure this, so that your circle here
becomes a square—and right in the middle there
we have a market place, with straight highways
proceeding to the centre, like a star,
which, although circular, shines forth straight beams
in all directions . . . Thus . . .

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

This man's a Thales⁵⁹

Now, Meton . . .

ΜΕΤΩΝ

What?

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

οἶσθ' ὅτι φιλῶ σ' ἐγώ,
κάμοι πιθόμενος ὑπαποκίνει τῆς ὁδοῦ.

ΜΕΤΩΝ

τί δ' ἐστὶ δεινόν;

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ὥσπερ ἐν Λακεδαίμονι
ξενηλατοῦνται καὶ κεκίνηται τινες·
πληγαὶ συχναὶ κατ' ἄστυ.

ΜΕΤΩΝ

μῶν στασιάζετε;

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

μὰ τὸν Δί' οὐ δῆτ'.

1015

ΜΕΤΩΝ

ἀλλὰ πῶς;

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ὁμοθυμαδὸν
σποδεῖν ἅπαντας τοὺς ἀλαζόνας δοκεῖ.

ΜΕΤΩΝ

ὑπάγοιμί τ᾽ ἄν.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

νῆ Δί' ὡς οὐκ οἶδ' ἂν εἰ
φθαίης ἄν· ἐπικείται γὰρ ἐγγυς αὐταί.

ΜΕΤΩΝ

οἷμοι κακοδαίμων.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

οὐκ ἔλεγον ἐγὼ πάλαι;
οὐκ ἀναμετρήσεις σαυτὸν ἀπιῶν ἀλλαχῆ;

1020

ἘΠΙΣΚΟΠΟΣ

ποῦ πρόξενοι;

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

τίς ὁ Σαρδανάπαλλος οὐτοσί;

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

You know I love you—
so do as I say and head out of town.

[1010]

ΜΕΤΩΝ

Am I in peril?

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

It's like in Sparta—
they're kicking strangers out—lots of trouble—
plenty of beatings on the way through town.

ΜΕΤΩΝ

You mean a revolution?

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

God no, not that.

ΜΕΤΩΝ

Then what?

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

They've reached a firm decision—
it was unanimous—to punch out every quack.

ΜΕΤΩΝ

I think I'd best be off.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

You should, by god,
although you may not be in time—the blows
are coming thick and fast . . .

[Pisthetairos starts hitting Meton]

ΜΕΤΩΝ [running off]

O dear me . . . I'm in a pickle.

[Exit Meton. Pisthetairos yells after him]

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

Didn't I say that some time ago?
Go somewhere else and do your measuring!

[1020]

[Enter an Athenian Commissioner. He is carrying voting urns. He is dressed in an extravagantly official costume]⁶⁰

ΚΟΜΜΙΣΙΟΝ

Where are your honorary governors?

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

Who is this man—a Sardanapallos?⁶¹

ἘΠΙΣΚΟΠΟΣ

ἐπίσκοπος ἦκω δεῦρο τῷ κνύμῳ λαχῶν
ἐς τὰς Νεφελοκοκκυγίας.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἐπίσκοπος;

ἔπεμψε δὲ τίς σε δεῦρο;

ἘΠΙΣΚΟΠΟΣ

φαῦλον βιβλίον

Τελέου.

1025

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

τί; βούλει δῆτα τὸν μισθὸν λαβῶν
μὴ πράγματ' ἔχειν ἀλλ' ἀπιέναι;

ἘΠΙΣΚΟΠΟΣ

νῆ τοὺς θεούς.

ἐκκλησιάσαι δ' οὖν ἐδεόμην οἴκοι μένων.
ἔστιν γὰρ ἂν δι' ἐμοῦ πέπρακται Φαρνάκη.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἄπιθι λαβῶν· ἔστιν δ' ὁ μισθὸς οὕτοσί.

ἘΠΙΣΚΟΠΟΣ

τουτὶ τί ἦν;

1030

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἐκκλησία περὶ Φαρνάκου.

ἘΠΙΣΚΟΠΟΣ

μαρτύρομαι τυπτόμενος ὦν ἐπίσκοπος.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

οὐκ ἀποσοβήσεις; οὐκ ἀποίσεις τῷ κάδῳ;
οὐ δεινά; καὶ πέμπουσιν ἤδη ὑπισκόπους
ἐς τὴν πόλιν, πρὶν καὶ τεθύσθαι τοῖς θεοῖς;

COMMISSIONER

I have come here to Cloudcuckooland
as your Commissioner—I was picked by lot.

PISTHETAIROS

As Commissioner? Who sent you here?

COMMISSIONER

Some dreadful paper from that Teleas.⁶²

PISTHETAIROS

How'd you like to receive your salary
and leave, without doing anything?

COMMISSIONER

By god,
that would be nice. I should be staying at home
for the assembly. I've been doing some work
on Pharnakes' behalf.⁶³

PISTHETAIROS

Then take your fee
and go. Here's what you get . . . [*strikes him*]

COMMISSIONER

What was that?

PISTHETAIROS

A motion on behalf of Pharnakes.

[1030]

[*Pisthetairos strikes him again*]

COMMISSIONER

I call on witnesses—he's hitting me—
He can't do that—I'm a Commissioner!

[*Exit the Commissioner, on the run. Pisthetairos chases him*]

PISTHETAIROS

Piss off! And take your voting urns with you!
Don't you find it weird? Already they've sent out
Commissioners to oversee the city,
before we've made the gods a sacrifice.

[*Enter a Statute-Seller reading from a long scroll*]

ΨΗΦΙΣΜΑΤΟΠΩΛΗΣ

ἐὰν δ' ὁ Νεφελοκοκκυγιεὺς τὸν Ἀθηναῖον ἀδικῆ — 1035

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

τουτὶ τί ἔστω αὖ κακὸν τὸ βιβλίον;

ΨΗΦΙΣΜΑΤΟΠΩΛΗΣ

ψηφισματοπώλης εἰμὶ καὶ νόμους νέους
ἤκω παρ' ὑμᾶς δεῦρο πωλήσω.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

τὸ τί;

ΨΗΦΙΣΜΑΤΟΠΩΛΗΣ

χρηῆσθαι Νεφελοκοκκυγιᾶς τοῖσδε τοῖς μέτροισι καὶ
σταθμοῖσι καὶ ψηφίσμασι καθάπερ Ὀλοφύξιοι. 1040

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

σὺ δέ γ' οἷσπερ ὠτοτύξιοι χρήσει τάχα.

ΨΗΦΙΣΜΑΤΟΠΩΛΗΣ

οὗτος τί πάσχεις;

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

οὐκ ἀποίσεις τοὺς νόμους;
πικροὺς ἐγὼ σοι τήμερον δείξω νόμους. 1045

ἘΠΙΣΚΟΠΟΣ

καλοῦμαι Πισθέταιρον ὕβρεως ἐς τὸν Μουνιχιῶνα μῆνα.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἄληθες οὗτος; ἔτι γὰρ ἐνταῦθ' ἦσθα σὺ;

ΨΗΦΙΣΜΑΤΟΠΩΛΗΣ

ἐὰν δέ τις ἐξελαύνῃ τοὺς ἄρχοντας καὶ μὴ δέχεται κατὰ
τὴν στήλην — 1050

STATUTE SELLER

“If a resident of Cloudcuckooland
should wrong a citizen of Athens . . .”

PISTHETAIROS

Here come scrolls again — what's the trouble now?

STATUTE SELLER

I'm a statute seller — and I've come here
to sell you brand-new laws.

PISTHETAIROS

What laws?

STATUTE SELLER

Like this —

“Residents of Cloudcuckooland must use
the same weights and measures and currency
as those in Olophyxia.”⁶⁴ [1040]

PISTHETAIROS [*kicking him in the bum*]

Soon enough

you'll use them on your ass, you Fix-your-Holean!!

STATUTE SELLER

What's up with you?

PISTHETAIROS

Take your laws and shove off!
Today I'll give you laws you really feel!

[*Statute Seller runs off. The Commissioner enters from the other side, behind Pisthetairos*]

COMMISSIONER [*reading from a paper*]

“I summon Pisthetairos to appear in court
in April on a charge of official outrage . . .”

PISTHETAIROS [*turning*]

Really? You again! Why are you still here?

[*Pisthetairos chases the Commissioner off again. The Statute Seller then re-appears on the other side, also reading from a paper*]

STATUTE SELLER

“If anyone chases off court officers
and won't receive them as the law decrees . . .” [1050]

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

οἴμοι κακοδαίμων, καὶ σὺ γὰρ ἐνταῦθ' ἦσθ' ἔτι;

ἘΠΙΣΚΟΠΟΣ

ἀπολῶ σε καὶ γράφω σε μυρίας δραχμάς.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἐγὼ δὲ σοῦ γε τὰ κάδω διασκεδῶ.

ΨΗΦΙΣΜΑΤΟΠΩΛΗΣ

μέμνησ' ὅτε τῆς στήλης κατετίλας ἐσπέρας;

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

αἰβοῦ· λαβέτω τις αὐτόν. οὗτος οὐ μενεῖς;

1055

ἀπίωμεν ἡμεῖς ὡς τάχιστ' ἐντευθενὶ

θύσοντες εἴσω τοῖς θεοῖσι τὸν τράγον.

ΧΟΡΟΣ

ἤδη ἴμοι τῶ παντόπτα

καὶ παντάρχα θνητοὶ πάντες

θύσουσ' εὐκταίαις εὐχαῖς.

1060

πᾶσαν μὲν γὰρ γᾶν ὀπτεύω,

σώζω δ' εὐθαλείς καρποὺς

κτείνων παμφύλων γένναν

θηρῶν, ἃ πάντ' ἐν γαίᾳ

ἐκ κάλυκος ἀὔξανόμενον γένυσι παμφάγοις

1065

δένδρεσί τ' ἐφημένα καρπὸν ἀποβόσκειται·

κτείνω δ' οἱ κήπους εὐώδεις

φθείρουσιν λύμαις ἐχθίσταις,

έρπετά τε καὶ δάκετα πάνθ' ὅσαπερ

ἔστω ὑπ' ἐμᾶς πτέρυγος ἐν φοναῖς ὄλλυται.

1070

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ [turning]

This is getting really bad—you still here?

[Pisthetairos chases off the Statute Seller. The Commissioner re-appears on the other side of the stage]

COMMISSIONER

I'll ruin you! I'll take you to court—
ten thousand drachmas you'll . . .

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ: [turning and chasing the Commissioner off stage]

And I'll throw out those voting urns of yours!

STATUTE SELLER [reappearing]

Have you any memory of those evenings
when you used to shit on public pillars
where our laws are carved?

[The Statute Seller turns his back on Pisthetairos, lifts up his tunic, and farts at him]

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ [reacting to the smell]

Oh god! Someone grab him.

[The slaves try to catch the Statute Seller but he runs off. Pisthetairos calls after him]

Not going to stick around?

[to slaves] Let's get out of here—and fast. Go inside.

We'll sacrifice the goat to the gods in there.

[Pisthetairos and the slaves to inside the house]

CHORUS

All mortal men commencing on this day
at every shrine will sacrifice to me,
from now on offering me the prayers they say, [1060]
for I control them all and everything I see.
I watch the entire world, and I protect
the growing crops, for I have power to kill
the progeny of all the world's insects,
whose all-devouring jaws would eat their fill
of what bursts out from seeds on ground below,
or fruit above for those who lodge in trees.
I kill the ones who, as the greatest foe,
in sweet-smelling gardens cause great injuries
All living beasts that bite and crawl
are killed—my wings destroy them all. [1070]

— τῆδε μέντοι θῆμέρα μάλιστ' ἐπαναγορεύεται,
 ἦν ἀποκτείνει τις ὑμῶν Διαγόραν τὸν Μήλιον,
 λαμβάνειν τάλαντον, ἦν τε τῶν τυράννων τίς τινα
 τῶν τεθνηκότων ἀποκτείνει, τάλαντον λαμβάνειν. 1075
 βουλόμεσθ' οὖν νυν ἀνειπεῖν ταῦτ' ἀχίμεις ἐνθάδε.
 ἦν ἀποκτείνει τις ὑμῶν Φιλοκράτη τὸν Στρούθιον,
 λήψεται τάλαντον, ἦν δὲ ζῶντά γ' ἀγάγη, τέτταρα,
 ὅτι συνείρων τοὺς σπίνους πωλεῖ καθ' ἑπτὰ τοῦβολοῦ,
 εἶτα φυσῶν τὰς κίχλας δείκνυσι καὶ λυμαίνεται, 1080
 τοῖς τε κοψίχοισιν ἐς τὰς ῥίνας ἐγγεῖ τὰ πτερά,
 τὰς περιστεράς θ' ὁμοίως ξυλλαβῶν εἶρξας ἔχει,
 καπαναγκάζει παλεύειν δεδεμένας ἐν δικτύῳ.
 ταῦτα βουλόμεσθ' ἀνειπεῖν· κεί τις ὄρνιθας τρέφει
 εἰργμένους ὑμῶν ἐν αὐλῇ, φράζομεν μεθίεναι. 1085
 ἦν δὲ μὴ πίθησθε, συλληφθέντες ὑπὸ τῶν ὀρνέων
 αὐθις ὑμεῖς αὖ παρ' ἡμῖν δεδεμένοι παλεύσετε.

— εὐδαίμων φύλον πτηνῶν
 οἰωνῶν, οἳ χειμῶνος μὲν
 χλαίνας οὐκ ἀμπισχνοῦνται· 1090
 οὐδ' αὖ θερμῇ πνίγους ἡμᾶς
 ἀκτὶς τηλαυγῆς θάλπει·
 ἀλλ' ἀνθηρῶν λειμῶνων
 φύλλων τ' ἐν κόλποις ναίω,
 ἠνίκ' ἂν ὁ θεσπέσιος ὄξυ μέλος ἀχέτας 1095
 θάλπεσι μεσημβρινοῖς ἠλιομανῆς βοᾷ.
 χειμάζω δ' ἐν κοίλοις ἄντροις
 νύμφαισι οὐρείαις ξυμπαίζων·

CHORUS LEADER

This public notice has been proclaimed today:
 the man who kills Diagoras the Melian
 will receive one talent—and if one of you
 assassinates some tyrant long since dead and gone,
 he, too, will get one talent. So now, the birds, as well,
 wish to make the same announcement here. Anyone
 who kills Philocrates the Sparrowman will get
 one talent—and if he brings him in alive,
 he'll get four.⁶⁵ That man strings finches up together,
 then sells 'em—a single obol gets you seven.
 He injures thrushes by inflating them with air [1080]
 then puts them on display. And he stuff feathers
 up the blackbird's nose. He captures pigeons, too,
 keeps them locked up, and forces them to work for him,
 tied up as decoy birds, underneath his nets.
 We wish to make this known to you. If anyone
 is keeping birds in cages in your courtyards,
 we tell you, "Let them go." If you don't obey,
 you, in your turn, will be arrested by the birds,
 tied up and forced to work as decoys where we live.

CHORUS

O happy tribes
 of feathered birds—
 we never need
 a winter cloak. [1090]
 In summer days
 the sun's far rays
 don't injure us.
 I live at ease
 among the leaves
 in flowery fields.
 In love with sun
 cicadas sing
 through noonday heat
 their sharp-toned song
 divinely sweet.
 In winter caves
 and hollow spots
 I play all day
 with mountain nymphs.

ἡρινά τε βοσκόμεθα παρθένια
λευκότροφα μύρτα Χαρίτων τε κηπεύματα. 1100

— τοῖς κριταῖς εἰπεῖν τι βουλόμεσθα τῆς νίκης πέρι,
ὄσ' ἀγάθ', ἣν κρίνωσιν ἡμᾶς, πᾶσιν αὐτοῖς δώσομεν,
ὥστε κρείττω δῶρα πολλῶ τῶν Ἀλεξάνδρου λαβεῖν.
πρῶτα μὲν γὰρ οὐ μάλιστα πᾶς κριτῆς ἐφίεται, 1105
γλαῦκες ὑμᾶς οὐποτ' ἐπιλέψουσι Λαυρειωτικά·
ἀλλ' ἐνοικήσουσιν ἔνδον, ἔν τε τοῖς βαλλαντίοις
ἐννεοττεύσουσι κακλέψουσι μικρὰ κέρματα.
εἶτα πρὸς τούτοισιν ὥσπερ ἐν ἱεροῖς οἰκήσετε·
τὰς γὰρ ὑμῶν οἰκίας ἐρέψομεν πρὸς αἰετόν· 1110
κἂν λαχόντες ἀρχίδιον εἶθ' ἀρπάσαι βούλησθέ τι,
ὄξιν ἱερακίσκον ἐς τὰς χεῖρας ὑμῖν δώσομεν.
ἦν δέ που δειπνήτε, πρηγορεῶνας ὑμῖν πέμψομεν.
ἦν δέ μὴ κρίνητε, χαλκεύεσθε μνηίσκους φορεῖν
ὥσπερ ἀνδριάντες· ὡς ὑμῶν ὅς ἂν μὴ μῆν' ἔχη, 1115
ὅταν ἔχητε χλανίδα λευκὴν, τότε μάλισθ' οὕτω δίκην
δώσεθ' ἡμῖν, πᾶσι τοῖς ὄρνισι κατατιλώμενοι.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

τὰ μὲν ἱέρ' ἡμῖν ἐστιν ὠρνίθες καλά·
ἀλλ' ὡς ἀπὸ τοῦ τείχους πάρεστιν ἄγγελος
οὐδεὶς, ὅτου πευσόμεθα τὰκεῖ πράγματα. 1120
ἀλλ' οὐτοσὶ τρέχει τις Ἀλφειὸν πνέων.

ἌΓΓΕΛΟΣ Α

ποῦ ποῦ 'στι, ποῦ ποῦ ποῦ 'στι, ποῦ ποῦ ποῦ 'στι ποῦ,
ποῦ Πισθέταιρός ἐστιν ἄρχων;

In spring we eat
white myrtle buds,
our virgin treat,
in garden places
of the Graces. [1100]

CHORUS LEADER

We want to speak to all the judges here
about our victory—the splendid things
we'll give them if their verdict goes our way—
how they'll get much lovelier gifts than those
which Alexander got.⁶⁶ And first of all,
what every judge is really keen to have,
some owls of Laureium who'll never leave.⁶⁷
They'll nest inside your homes, hatch in your purse,
and always breed small silver change. And then,
as well as this, you'll live in temple-homes.
The birds will make your roof tops eagle-style, [1110]
with pediments.⁶⁸ If you hold some office,
a minor post, and wish to get rich quick,
we'll set a sharp-beaked falcon in your hands.
And if you need to eat, then we'll dispatch
a bird's crop, where it keep its stored-up food.
If you don't vote for us, you should prepare
some little metal plates to guard your head.
You'll need to wear them, just like statues do.
For those of you without that head plate on,
when you dress up in fine white brand-new clothes,
the birds will crap on as a punishment.

[Enter Pisthetairos from the house]

PISTHETAIROS

You birds, we've made a splendid sacrifice.
But why is there still no messenger
arriving from the walls to bring us news [1120]
of what's going on up there? Ah, here comes one,
panting as if he'd run across that stream
at Elis where Olympian athletes race.

[Enter First Messenger, out of breath]

FIRST MESSENGER [be doubles up and can hardly speak]

Where is . . . Where is he . . . where . . . where is . . .
where . . . where . . . where . . . our governor Pisthetairos?

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

οὔτοσί.

ἌΓΓΕΛΟΣ Α

ἔξφοκοδόμηταί σοι τὸ τεῖχος.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

εὖ λέγεις.

ἌΓΓΕΛΟΣ Α

κάλλιστον ἔργον καὶ μεγαλοπρεπέστατον
 ὥστ' ἂν ἐπάνω μὲν Προξενίδης ὁ Κομπασεὺς
 καὶ Θεογένης ἐναντίω δὺ' ἄρματα,
 ἵππων ὑπόντων μέγεθος ὅσον ὁ δούριος,
 ὑπὸ τοῦ πλάτους ἂν παρελασαίτην.

1125

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

Ἡράκλεις.

ἌΓΓΕΛΟΣ Α

τὸ δὲ μῆκός ἐστι, καὶ γὰρ ἐμέτρησ' αὐτ' ἐγώ,
 ἑκατοντορόγιον.

1130

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ὦ Πόσειδον τοῦ μάκρους.
 τίνας ὠκοδόμησαν αὐτὸ τηλικουτονί;

ἌΓΓΕΛΟΣ Α

ὄρνιθες, οὐδεὶς ἄλλος, οὐκ Αἰγύπτιος
 πλιθοφόρος, οὐ λιθουργός, οὐ τέκτων παρῆν,
 ἀλλ' αὐτόχειρες, ὥστε θαυμάζειν ἐμέ.
 ἐκ μὲν γε Λιβύης ἦκον ὡς τρισμύρια
 γέρανοι θεμελίους καταπεπωκῦαι λίθους.
 τούτους δ' ἐτύκιζον αἱ κρέκες τοῖς ρύγχεσιν.
 ἕτεροι δ' ἐπλιθοφόρουν πελαργοὶ μύριοι·
 ὕδωρ δ' ἐφόρουν κάτωθεν ἐς τὸν ἀέρα
 οἱ χαραδριοὶ καὶ τᾶλλα ποτόμι' ὄρνεα.

1135

1140

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἐπηλοφόρουν δ' αὐτοῖσι τίνας;

PISTHETAIROS

I'm here.

FIRST MESSENGER

The building of your wall . . . it's done.

PISTHETAIROS

That's great news.

FIRST MESSENGER

The result—the best there is . . .
 the most magnificent . . . so wide across . . .
 that Proxenides of Braggadocio
 and Theogenes could drive two chariots
 in opposite directions past each other
 along the top, with giant horses yoked,
 bigger than that wooden horse at Troy.

PISTHETAIROS [*genuinely surprised*]

By Hercules!

FIRST MESSENGER

I measured it myself—
 its height—around six hundred feet.

[1130]

PISTHETAIROS

Wow!

By Poseidon, that's some height! Who built the wall
 as high as that?

FIRST MESSENGER

The birds—nobody else.
 No Egyptian bore the bricks—no mason,
 no carpenter was there. They worked by hand—
 I was amazed. Thirty thousand cranes flew in
 from Lybia—they brought foundation stones
 they'd swallowed down. The corn crakes chipped away
 to form the proper shapes. Ten thousand storks
 brought bricks. Lapwings and other river birds
 fetched water up into the air from down below.

[1140]

PISTHETAIROS

Who hauled the mortar up there for them?

ἌΓΓΕΛΟΣ Α

ἔρωδιοὶ

λεκάναισι.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

τὸν δὲ πηλὸν ἐνεβάλλοντο πῶς;

ἌΓΓΕΛΟΣ Α

τοῦτ' ὠγάθ' ἐξηύρητο καὶ σοφώτατα·
οἱ χῆνες ὑποτύπτοντες ὥσπερ ταῖς ἄμαις
ἐς τὰς λεκάνας ἐνέβαλλον αὐτοῖς τοῖν ποδοῖν.

1145

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

τί δῆτα πόδες ἂν οὐκ ἂν ἐργασαίαιτο;

ἌΓΓΕΛΟΣ Α

καὶ νῆ Δί' αἰ νῆτταί γε περιεζωσμένοι
ἐπλωθοφόρου· ἄνω δὲ τὸν ὑπαγωγέα
ἐπέτοντ' ἔχουσαι κατόπιω †ὥσπερ παιδία
τὸν πηλὸν ἐν τοῖς στόμασιν† αἰ χελιδόνες.

1150

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

τί δῆτα μισθωτοὺς ἂν ἔτι μισθοῖτό τις;
φέρ' ἴδω, τί δαί; τὰ ξύλινα τοῦ τείχους τίνες
ἀπηργάσαντ';

ἌΓΓΕΛΟΣ Α

ὄρνιθες ἦσαν τέκτονες
σοφώτατοι πελεκᾶντες, οἱ τοῖς ρύγχεσιν
ἀπεπελέκησαν τὰς πύλας· ἦν δ' ὁ κτύπος
αὐτῶν πελεκῶντων ὥσπερ ἐν ναυπηγίῳ.
καὶ νῦν ἅπαντ' ἐκεῖνα πεπύλωται πύλαις
καὶ βεβαλάνωται καὶ φυλάττεται κύκλω,
ἐφοδεύεται, κωδωνοφορεῖται, πανταχῆ,
φυλακαὶ καθεστήκασιν καὶ φρυκτωρία
ἐν τοῖσι πύργοις. ἀλλ' ἐγὼ μὲν ἀποτρέχων
ἀπονύβομαι· σὺ δ' αὐτὸς ἤδη τᾶλλα δρᾶ.

1155

1160

ΧΟΡΟΣ

οὗτος τί ποιεῖς; ἄρα θαυμάζεις ὅτι
οὕτω τὸ τείχος ἐκτετείχισται ταχύ;

1165

FIRST MESSENGER

Herons—

they carried hods.

PISTHETAIROS

How'd they load those hods?

FIRST MESSENGER

My dear man, that was the cleverest thing of all.
Geese shoved their feet into the muck and slid them,
just like shovels, then flicked it in the hods.

PISTHETAIROS

Is there anything we can't do with our feet?

FIRST MESSENGER

Then, by god, the ducks, with slings attached
around their waists, set up the bricks. Behind them
flew the swallows, like young apprentice boys,
with trowels—they carried mortar in their mouths.

[1150]

PISTHETAIROS

Why should we hire wage labour any more?
Go on—who finished off the woodwork on the wall?

FIRST MESSENGER

The most skilled craftsmen-birds of all of 'em—
woodpeckers. They pecked away to make the gates—
the noise those peckers made—an arsenal!
Now the whole thing has gates. They're bolted shut
and guarded on all sides. Sentries make rounds,
patrolling with their bells, and everywhere
troops are in position, with signal fires
on every tower. But I must go now—
I need to wash. You'll have to do the rest.

[1160]

[Exit First Messenger]

CHORUS LEADER

What's up with you? Aren't you astonished
to hear the wall's been finished up so fast?

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

νῆ τοὺς θεοὺς ἔγωγε· καὶ γὰρ ἄξιον
ἴσα γὰρ ἀληθῶς φαίνεται μοι ψεύδεσιν.
ἀλλ' ὄδε φύλαξ γὰρ τῶν ἐκεῖθεν ἄγγελος
ἐσθεὶ πρὸς ἡμᾶς δεῦρο πυρρίχην βλέπων.

ἌΓΓΕΛΟΣ Β

ιοὺς ἰού, ἰοὺς ἰού, ἰοὺς ἰού.

1170

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

τί τὸ πρᾶγμα τουτί;

ἌΓΓΕΛΟΣ Β

δεινότατα πεπόνθαμεν.

τῶν γὰρ θεῶν τις ἄρτι τῶν παρὰ τοῦ Διὸς
διὰ τῶν πυλῶν εἰσέπτειτ' ἐς τὸν ἀέρα,
λαθῶν κολοιοὺς φύλακας ἡμεροσκόπους.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ὦ δεινὸν ἔργον καὶ σκέτλιον εἰργασμένος.
τίς τῶν θεῶν;

1175

ἌΓΓΕΛΟΣ Β

οὐκ ἴσμεν· ὅτι δ' εἶχε πτερὰ,
τοῦτ' ἴσμεν.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

οὐκ οὐκ δὴτα περιπόλους ἐχρήν
πέμψαι κατ' αὐτὸν εὐθύς;

ἌΓΓΕΛΟΣ Β

ἀλλ' ἐπέμψαμεν

τρισμυρίους ἰεράκας ἵπποτοξότας,
χωρεῖ δὲ πᾶς τις ὄνυχας ἡγκυλωμένος,
κερχνῆς τριόρχης γνῆς κύμινδιδι αἰετός·
ρύμη τε καὶ πτεροῖσι καὶ ροιζήμασιν
αἰθῆρ δονεῖται τοῦ θεοῦ ζητουμένου·
κάστ' οὐ μακρὰν ἄπωθεν, ἀλλ' ἐνταῦθά που
ἦδη ἴσθιν.

1180

1185

PISTHETAIROS

Yes, by gods, I am. It is amazing!
To me it sounds just like some made-up lie.
But here comes a guard from there—he'll bring news
to us down here of what's going on up top.
His face looks like a dancing warrior's.

[Enter the Second Messenger in a great panic and out of breath]

SECOND MESSENGER

Hey . . . hey . . . Help . . . hey you . . . help!

[1170]

PISTHETAIROS

What's going on?

SECOND MESSENGER

We suffered something really bad . . .
one of the gods from Zeus has just got through,
flown past the gates into the air, slipping by
the jackdaw sentinels on daytime watch.

PISTHETAIROS

That's bad! A bold and dangerous action.
Which god was it?

SECOND MESSENGER

We're not sure. He had wings—
we do know that.

PISTHETAIROS

You should have sent patrols
of frontier guards out after him without delay.

SECOND MESSENGER

We did dispatch the mounted archers—
thirty thousand falcons, all moving out
with talons curved and ready—kestrels, buzzards,
vultures, eagles, owls—the air vibrating
with the beat and rustle of their wings,
as they search out that god. He's not far off—
in fact, he's here somewhere already.

[1180]

[Exit Second Messenger]

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

οὔκουν σφενδόνας δεῖ λαμβάνειν
καὶ τόξα; χῶρει δεῦρο πᾶς ὑπηρέτης·
τόξευε παῖε, σφενδόνην τίς μοι δότω.

ΧΟΡΟΣ

πόλεμος αἴρεται, πόλεμος οὐ φατὸς
πρὸς ἐμὲ καὶ θεούς. ἀλλὰ φύλαττε πᾶς 1190
ἀέρα περιπέφελον, ὃν ἔρεβος ἐτέκετο,
μή σε λάθῃ θεῶν τις ταύτῃ περῶν· 1195
. . . ἄθρει δὲ πᾶς κύκλω σκοπῶν,
ὡς ἐγγὺς ἦδη δαίμονος πεδαρσίου
δίης περωτὸς φθόγγος ἐξακούεται.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

αὕτη σύ, ποῖ ποῖ ποῖ πέτει; μέν' ἤσυχος,
ἔχ' ἀτρέμας· αὐτοῦ στήθ' ἐπίσχεσ τοῦ δρόμου. 1200
τίς εἶ; ποδαπή; λέγειν ἐχρήν ὀπόθεν πότ' εἶ.

ἼΡΙΣ

παρὰ τῶν θεῶν ἔγωγε τῶν Ὀλυμπίων.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ὄνομα δέ σο. τί ἐστι; πλοῖον ἢ κυνῆ;

ἼΡΙΣ

Ἴρις ταχεία.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

Πάραλος ἢ Σαλαμινία;

ἼΡΙΣ

τί δὲ τοῦτο; 1205

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ταυτηνί τις οὐ συλλήψεται
ἀναπτόμενος τρίορχος;

ἼΡΙΣ

ἐμὲ συλλήψεται;
τί ποτ' ἐστὶ τουτὶ τὸ κακόν;

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

We'll have to get our sling-shots out—and bows.
All you orderlies come here! Fire away!
Strike out! Someone fetch a sling for me!

[Xanthias and Manodorus enter with slings and bows. The group huddles together with weapons ready]

CHORUS [in grand epic style]

And now the combat starts, a strife beyond all words,
me and the gods at war. Let everyone beware, [1190]
protect the cloud-enclosing air, which Erebus
gave birth to long ago. Make sure no god slips through
without our catching sight of him. Maintain your watch
on every side—already I can hear close by
the sound of beating wings from some god in the sky.

[Enter Iris, in long billowing dress and with a pair of wings. She descends from above, suspended by a cable and hovering in mid-air flapping her wings]

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

Hey, you—just where do you think you're flying?
Keep still. Stay where you are. Don't move. Stop running. [1200]
Who are you? Where you from? You've got to tell me.
Where'd you come from?

ΙΡΙΣ

I'm from the Olympian gods.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

You got a name? You look like a ship up there—
the Salaminia or the Paralos.⁶⁹

ΙΡΙΣ

I'm fast Iris.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

Fast as in a boat or fast as in a bitch?

ΙΡΙΣ

What is all this?

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

Is there a buzzard here
who'll fly up there to arrest this woman?

ΙΡΙΣ

Arrest me? Why are you saying such rubbish?

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

οὐμώξει μακρά.

ἼΡΙΣ

ἄτοπόν γε τουτὶ πρᾶγμα.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

κατὰ ποίας πύλας
εἰσῆλθες ἐς τὸ τεῖχος ᾧ μαρωτάτη;

ἼΡΙΣ

οὐκ οἶδα μὰ Δί' ἔγωγε κατὰ ποίας πύλας. 1210

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἤκουσας αὐτῆς οἶον εἰρωνεύεται;
πρὸς τοὺς κολουάρχας προσῆλθες; οὐ λέγεις;
σφραγίδ' ἔχεις παρὰ τῶν πελαργῶν;

ἼΡΙΣ

τί τὸ κακόν.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

οὐκ ἔλαβες;

ἼΡΙΣ

ὑγιαίνεις μέν;

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

οὐδὲ σύμβολον
ἐπέβαλεν ὀρνίθαρχος οὐδεὶς σοι παρών; 1215

ἼΡΙΣ

μὰ Δί' οὐκ ἔμοιγ' ἐπέβαλεν οὐδεὶς ᾧ μέλε.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

κάπειτα δῆθ' οὕτω σιωπῇ διαπέτει
διὰ τῆς πόλεως τῆς ἀλλοτρίας καὶ τοῦ χάους;

ἼΡΙΣ

ποία γὰρ ἄλλη χρὴ πέτεσθαι τοὺς θεούς;

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

οὐκ οἶδα μὰ Δί' ἔγωγε· τῆδε μὲν γὰρ οὐ.
ἀδικεῖς δὲ καὶ νῦν. ἄρά γ' οἶσθα τοῦθ' ὅτι 1220PISTHETAIROS [*making an attempt to hit Iris by swinging his sling*]
You're going to be very sorry about this.

IRIS

This whole affair is most unusual.

PISTHETAIROS

Listen, you silly old fool, what gates
did you pass through to get by the wall?

IRIS

What gates?

By god, I don't have the least idea. [1210]

PISTHETAIROS

Listen to her—how she feigns ignorance!
Did you go past the jackdaw generals?
You won't answer that? Well then, where's your pass,
the one the storks give out?

IRIS

What's wrong with you?

PISTHETAIROS

You don't have one, do you?

IRIS

Have you lost your wits?

PISTHETAIROS

Didn't some captain of the birds up there
stick a pass on you?

IRIS

By god no, no one up there
made a pass or shoved his stick at me, you wretch.

PISTHETAIROS

So you just fly in here, without a word,
going through empty space and through a city
which don't belong to you?

IRIS

What other route
are gods supposed to fly?

PISTHETAIROS

I've no idea.

But, by god, not this way. It's not legal. [1220]
Right now you're in breach of law. Do you know,

δικαιότατ' ἂν ληφθεῖσα πασῶν Ἰρίδων
ἀπέθανες, εἰ τῆς ἀξίας ἐτύγχανες;

ἸΡΙΣ

ἀλλ' ἀθάνατός εἰμ'.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἀλλ' ὅμως ἂν ἀπέθανες.
δεινότατα γάρ τοι πεισόμεσθ', ἐμοὶ δοκεῖ, 1225
εἰ τῶν μὲν ἄλλων ἄρχομεν, ὑμεῖς δ' οἱ θεοὶ
ἀκολαστανεῖτε, κοῦδέπω γνώσεσθ' ὅτι
ἀκροατέον ὑμῖν ἐν μέρει τῶν κρειπτόνων.
φράσον δέ τοί μοι τῶ πτέρυγε ποῖ ναυστολεῖς;

ἸΡΙΣ

ἐγώ; πρὸς ἀνθρώπους πέτομαι παρὰ τοῦ πατρὸς 1230
φράσουσα θύειν τοῖς Ὀλυμπίοις θεοῖς
μηλοσφαγεῖν τε βουθύτοις ἐπ' ἐσχάραις
κνισᾶν τ' ἀγυιάς.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

τί σὺ λέγεις; ποίοις θεοῖς;

ἸΡΙΣ

ποίοισιν; ἡμῖν τοῖς ἐν οὐρανῶ θεοῖς.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

θεοὶ γὰρ ὑμεῖς; 1235

ἸΡΙΣ

τίς γάρ ἐστ' ἄλλος θεός;

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ὄρνιθες ἀνθρώποισι νῦν εἰσιν θεοί,
οἷς θυτέον αὐτούς, ἀλλὰ μὰ Δί' οὐ τῷ Δί.

ἸΡΙΣ

ὦ μῶρε μῶρε μὴ θεῶν κίνει φρένας
δεινάς, ὅπως μὴ σου γένος πανώλεθρον
Διὸς μακέλλη πᾶν ἀναστρέψῃ Δίκη, 1240
λιγνὺς δὲ σῶμα καὶ δόμων περιπτυχὰς
καταιθαλώσῃ σου Δικυμνίαις βολαῖς.

of all the Irises there are around,
if you got what you most deserve, you'd be
the one most justly seized and sent to die.

IRIS

But I'm immortal.

PISTHETAIROS

In spite of that,
you would have died. For it's obvious to me
that we'd be suffering the greatest injury,
if, while we rule all other things, you gods
do just what you like and won't recognize
how you must, in your turn, attend upon
those more powerful than you. So tell me,
where are you sailing on those wings of yours?

IRIS

Me? I'm flying to men from father Zeus, 1230
instructing them to sacrifice some sheep
to the Olympian gods on sacred hearths—
and fill their streets with smells of offerings.

PISTHETAIROS

Who are you talking about? Which gods?

IRIS

Which gods? Why us of course—the gods in heaven.

PISTHETAIROS

And you're the gods?

IRIS

Are there any other deities?

PISTHETAIROS

The birds are now men's gods—and to the birds
men must now sacrifice and not, by god, to Zeus.

IRIS [*in the grand tragic style*]

Thou fool, thou fool, stir not the awesome minds of gods,
lest Justice with the mighty mattock of great Zeus 1240
destroy your race completely—and smoke-filled flames
from Licymnian lightning bolts burn into ash
your body and your home . . .

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἄκουσον αὐτῆ· παῦε τῶν παφλασμάτων
 ἔχ' ἀτρέμα. φέρ' ἴδω, πότερα Λυδὸν ἢ Φρύγα
 ταυτὶ λέγουσα μορμολύττεσθαι δοκεῖς; 1245
 ἄρ' οἶσθ' ὅτι Ζεὺς εἴ με λυπήσει πέρα,
 μέλαθρα μὲν αὐτοῦ καὶ δόμους Ἀμφίονος
 καταθαλώσω πυρφόροισιν αἰετοῖς;
 πέμψω δὲ πορφυρίωνας ἐς τὸν οὐρανὸν
 ὄρνις ἐπ' αὐτὸν παρδαλᾶς ἐνημμένους 1250
 πλείων ἑξακοσίουσ τὸν ἀριθμόν. καὶ δὴ ποτε
 εἰς Πορφυρίων αὐτῶ παρέσχε πράγματα.
 σὺ δ' εἴ με λυπήσεις τι, τῆς διακόνου
 πρώτης ἀνατείνας τὼ σκέλει διαμηριῶ
 τὴν Ἴριω αὐτήν, ὥστε θαυμάζειν ὅπως 1255
 οὕτω γέρων ὦν στύομαι τριέμβολον.

ἼΡΙΣ

διαρραγείης ὦ μέλ' αὐτοῖς ῥήμασιν.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

οὐκ ἀποσοβήσεις; οὐ ταχέως; εὐράξ πατάξ.

ἼΡΙΣ

ἦ μὴν σε παύσει τῆς ὕβρεως οὐμὸς πατήρ.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

οἴμοι τάλας. οὐκ οὐν ἐτέρωσε πετομένη
 καταθαλώσεις τῶν νεωτέρων τινά; 1260

ΧΟΡΟΣ

ἀποκεκλήκαμεν διογενεῖς θεοὺς
 μηκέτι τὴν ἐμὴν διαπερᾶν πόλιν,
 μηδέ γέ τιν' ἱερόθυτον ἀνὰ δάπεδον ἔτι 1265
 τῆδε βροτῶν θεοῖσι πέμπειν καπνόν.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

δεινόν γε τὸν κήρυκα τὸν παρὰ τοὺς βροτοὺς
 οἰχόμενον, εἰ μηδέποτε νοστήσει πάλιν. 1270

PISTHETAIROS [interrupting]

Listen, woman — stop your spluttering.
 Just keep still. Do you think you're scaring off
 some Lydian or Phrygian with such threats?
 You should know this — if Zeus keeps on annoying me,
 I'll burn his home and halls of Amphion,
 reduce them all to ash with fire eagles.
 I'll send more than six hundred birds — porphyryons
 all dressed in leopard skins, up there to heaven, 1250
 to war on him. Once a single porphyryon
 caused him distress enough.⁷⁰ And as for you,
 if you keep trying to piss me off, well then,
 I'll deal with Zeus' servant Iris first —
 I'll fuck your knickers off — you'd be surprised
 how hard an old man's prick like mine can be —
 it's strong enough to ram your hull three times.

IRIS

Blast you, you wretch, and your obscenities!

PISTHETAIROS

Go way! Get a move on! Shoo!

[Iris begins to move up and away]

IRIS

My father
 won't stand for insolence like this — he'll stop you!

PISTHETAIROS

Just go away, you silly fool! Fly off 1210
 and burn someone to ashes somewhere else.

[Exit Iris]

CHORUS

On Zeus' family of gods we've shut our door —
 they'll not be passing through my city any more.
 Nor will men down below in future time invoke
 the gods by sending them their sacrificial smoke.

PISTHETAIROS

Something's wrong. That messenger we sent,
 the one that went to human beings, what if
 he never gets back here again? 1270

ΚΗΡΥΞ Α

ὦ Πισθέταιρ' ὦ μακάρι' ὦ σοφώτατε,
ὦ κλεινότατ' ὦ σοφώτατ' ὦ γλαφυρώτατε,
ὦ τρισμακάρι' ὦ κατακέλευσον.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

τί σὺ λέγεις;

ΚΗΡΥΞ Α

στεφάνω σε χρυσῶ τῶδε σοφίας οὔνεκα
στεφανοῦσι καὶ τιμῶσιν οἱ πάντες λεῷ. 1275

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

δέχομαι. τί δ' οὕτως οἱ λεῷ τιμῶσί με;

ΚΗΡΥΞ Α

ὦ κλεινοτάτην αἰθέριον οἰκίσας πόλιν,
οὐκ οἶσθ' ὅσην τιμὴν παρ' ἀνθρώποις φέρει,
ὅσους τ' ἔρασταὺς τῆσδε τῆς χώρας ἔχεις.
πρὶν μὲν γὰρ οἰκίσαι σε τήνδε τὴν πόλιν, 1280
ἐλακωνομάνουν ἅπαντες ἄνθρωποι τότε,
ἐκόμων ἐπεινῶν ἐρρύπων ἐσωκράτου
σκυτάλι' ἐφόρου, νυνὶ δ' ὑποστρέψαντες αὖ
ὀρνιθομανοῦσι, πάντα δ' ὑπὸ τῆς ἡδονῆς
ποιοῦσιν ἅπερ ὀρνιθες ἐκμμούμενοι 1285
πρῶτον μὲν εὐθὺς πάντες ἐξ εὐνῆς ἅμα
ἐπέτονθ' ἔωθεν ὥσπερ ἡμεῖς ἐπὶ νομόν·
κάπειτ' ἂν ἅμα κατήραν ἐς τὰ βιβλία·
εἶτ' ἀπενέμοντ' ἐνταῦθα τὰ ψηφίσματα.
ὠρνιθομάνουν δ' οὕτω περιφανῶς ὥστε καὶ 1290
πολλοῖσιν ὀρνίθων ὀνόματ' ἦν κείμενα.
πέρδιξ μὲν εἰς κάπηλος ὠνομάζετο
χωλός, Μενίππων δ' ἦν χελιδὼν τοῦνομα,
Ὀπουντία δ' ὀφθαλμὸν οὐκ ἔχων κόραξ,
κορυδὸς Φιλοκλέει, χηναλώπηξ Θεογένει, 1295
ἰβίς Λυκούργω, Χαιρεφῶντι νυκτερίς,
Συρακοσίω δὲ κίττα· Μειδίας δ' ἐκεῖ

[Enter First Herald, a bird, carrying a golden crown]

FIRST HERALD

O Pisthetairos, you blessed one,
wisest and most celebrated of all men . . .
the cleverest and happiest . . . trebly blest . . .
[He's run out of adjectives] . . . Speak something to me . . .

PISTHETAİROS

What are you saying?

FIRST HERALD [offering Pisthetairos the golden crown]

All people, in honour of your wisdom,
crown you with this golden diadem.

PISTHETAİROS [putting on the crown]

I accept.

But why do people honour me so much?

FIRST HERALD

O you founder of this most famous town,
this city in the sky, do you not know
how much respect you have among all men,
how many men there are who love this place?
Before you built your city in the air, 1280
all men were mad for Sparta—with long hair,
they went around half starved and never washed,
like Socrates—and carrying knobbed sticks.
But now they've all completely changed—these days
they're crazy for the birds. For sheer delight
they imitate the birds in everything.
Early in the day when they've just got up,
like us, they all flock to feed together,
but on their laws, browsing legal leaflets,
nibbling their fill of all decrees. So mad
have they become for birds that many men 1290
have had the names of birds assigned to them.
One lame tradesman now is called the Partridge.
And Melanippus' name is changed to Swallow,⁷¹
Opuntius the Raven with One Eye.
Philocles becomes the Lark, and Sheldrake
is now Teagenes' name. Lycurgus
has become the Ibis, Chaerephon the Bat,
Syracosius the Jay, and Meidias

ὄρτυξ ἐκαλείτο· καὶ γὰρ ἦκειν ὄρτυγι
 ὑπὸ στυφοκόπου τὴν κεφαλὴν πεπληγμένω.
 ἦδον δ' ὑπὸ φιλορυνθίας πάντες μέλη,
 1300 ὅπου χελιδὼν ἦν τις ἐμπεποιημένη
 ἢ πηνέλοψ ἢ χήν τις ἢ περιστερὰ
 ἢ πτέρυγες, ἢ πτεροῦ τι καὶ σμικρὸν προσῆν.
 τοιαῦτα μὲν τάκειθεν. ἐν δέ σοι λέγω·
 ἦξουσ' ἐκέιθεν δεῦρο πλεῖν ἢ μύριοι
 1305 πτερῶν δεόμενοι καὶ τρόπων γαμψωνύχων·
 ὥστε πτερῶν σοι τοῖς ἐποίκοις δεῖ ποθέν.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

οὐκ ἄρα μὰ Δί' ἡμῖν ἔτ' ἔργον ἐστάναι.
 ἀλλ' ὡς τάχιστα σὺ μὲν ἰὼν τὰς ἀρρίχους
 καὶ τοὺς κοφίνους ἅπαντας ἐμπύμπλη πτερῶν·
 1310 Μανῆς δὲ φερέτω μοι θύραζε τὰ πτερά·
 ἐγὼ δ' ἐκείνων τοὺς προσιόντας δέξομαι.

ΧΟΡΟΣ

ταχὺ δὴ πολυάνορα τάνδε πόλιν
 καλεῖ τις ἀνθρώπων.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

τύχη μόνον προσείη.
 1315

ΧΟΡΟΣ

κατέχουσι δ' ἔρωτες ἐμᾶς πόλεως.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

θάπτον φέρειν κελεύω.

ΧΟΡΟΣ

τί γὰρ οὐκ ἐν ταύτῃ
 καλὸν ἀνδρὶ μετοικεῖν;
 Σοφία Πόθος Ἀμβροσία Χάριτες
 1320 τό τε τῆς ἀγανόφρονος Ἡσυχίας
 εὐήμερον πρόσωπον.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ὡς βλακικῶς διακονεῖς·
 οὐ θάπτον ἐγκονήσεις;

is now named the Quail—he looks like one
 right after the quail flicker's tapped its head.⁷²
 They're so in love with birds they all sing songs
 [1300] with lines about a swallow or a duck,
 or goose, some kind of pigeon, or just wings,
 even about some tiny bits of feather.
 That what's going on down there. I tell you,
 more than ten thousand men are coming here,
 demanding wings and talons in their lives.
 You've got to find a way to get some wings
 for your new colonists and settlers.

[Exit First Herald]

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

All right, by god, this is no time for us
 to just stand around. [To a slave] You, get inside there—
 fill all the crates and baskets up with feathers.
 [1310] Get on with it as fast as possible.
 Let Manes haul the wings out here to me.⁷³
 I'll welcome those who come from down below.

[Xanthias and Manodoros go inside the house and start bringing out baskets of feathers]

ΧΟΡΟΣ

Our city soon will have a reputation
 for a large and swelling population.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

Just let our luck hold out!

ΧΟΡΟΣ

Our city here inspires so much love . . .

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ [to Manodoros, who is bringing out a basket]

I'm telling you you've got to bring it fast!

ΧΟΡΟΣ

For what do we not have here up above
 which any men require in their places?
 Desire, Wisdom, and eternal Graces—
 we've got them all and what is still the best—
 the happy face of gentle peaceful Rest.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ [to Manes who is taking his time bringing out more baskets]

God, you're a lazy slave—move it! Faster!

ΧΟΡΟΣ

φερέτω κάλαθον ταχύ τις πτερύγων,
 σὺ δ' αὖθις ἐξόρμα —
 τύπτων γε τοῦτον ὠδί.
 πάνυ γὰρ βραδύς ἐστί τις ὡσπερ ὄνος.

1325

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

Μανῆς γὰρ ἐστί δειλός.

ΧΟΡΟΣ

σὺ δὲ τὰ πτερὰ πρῶτον
 διάθες τάδε κόσμω,
 τά τε μουσίχ' ὁμοῦ τά τε μαντικά καὶ
 τὰ θαλάττι'. ἔπειτα δ' ὅπως φρονίμως
 πρὸς ἄνδρ' ὀρώων πτερώσεις.

1330

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

οὐ τοι μὰ τὰς κερχνηῆδας ἔτι σοῦ σχήσομαι,
 οὕτως ὀρώων σε δειλὸν ὄντα καὶ βραδύν.

1335

ΠΑΤΡΑΛΟΙΑΣ

γενοίμαν αἰετὸς ὑψιπέτας,
 ὡς ἀμποταθείην ὑπὲρ ἀτρυγέτου
 γλαυκᾶς ἐπ' οἶδμα λίμνας.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἔοικεν οὐ ψευδαγγελήσειν ἄγγελος.
 ἄδων γὰρ ὅδε τις αἰετοὺς προσέρχεται.

1340

ΠΑΤΡΑΛΟΙΑΣ

αἰβοῖ
 οὐκ ἔστιν οὐδὲν τοῦ πέτεσθαι γλυκύτερον·
 ὀρنيθομανῶ γὰρ καὶ πέτομαι καὶ βούλομαι
 οἰκεῖν μεθ' ὑμῶν ἀπιθυμῶ τῶν νόμων.

1345

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ποιῶν νόμων; πολλοὶ γὰρ ὀρνίθων νόμοι.

CHORUS

Let him bring the wings in baskets on the go —
 then once more run at him — give him a blow.
 The lad is like a donkey — he's that slow.

PISTHETAIROS [*frantically sorting feathers*]

Yes, that Manes is a useless slave.

CHORUS

Now first of all you need to sort
 these wings all out for each cohort — [1330]
 musical wings and wings of seers,
 wings for the sea. You must be clear —
 you need to look at all such things
 when you give every man his wings.

[*Manes comes out with a basket, again moving very slowly*]

PISTHETAIROS [*going at Manes and grabbing him*]

By the kestrels, I can't stop grabbing you —
 when I see how miserably slow you are.

[*Manes twists loose and runs back into the house. A young man enters singing*]

YOUNG MAN [*singing*]

Oh, I wish I could an eagle be
 soaring high above the barren sea,
 the grey-blue ocean swell so free.

PISTHETAIROS

It looks like our messenger told us the truth —
 here comes someone singing that eagle-song.

YOUNG MAN

Damn it — there's nothing in the world as sweet
 as flying . . .

PISTHETAIROS

You've come to get some wings from us, I guess.⁷⁴

YOUNG MAN

Yes, I'm in love with all your birdy ways —
 I want to live with you and fly. Besides,
 I think your laws are really keen.

PISTHETAIROS

What laws? The birds have many laws.

ΠΑΤΡΑΛΟΙΑΣ

πάντων· μάλιστα δ' ὅτι καλὸν νομίζεται
τὸν πατέρα τοῖς ὄρνισιν ἄγχειν καὶ δάκνειν.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

καὶ νῆ Δί' ἀνδρείον γε πάννυ νομιζομεν,
ὅς ἂν πεπλήγη τὸν πατέρα νεοττὸς ὦν. 1350

ΠΑΤΡΑΛΟΙΑΣ

διὰ ταῦτα μέντοι δεῦρ' ἀνοικισθεῖς ἐγὼ
ἄγχειν ἐπιθυμῶ τὸν πατέρα καὶ πάντ' ἔχειν.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἀλλ' ἔστιν ἡμῖν τοῖσιν ὄρνισιν νόμος
παλαιὸς ἐν ταῖς τῶν πελαργῶν κύρβεσιν·
ἐπὴν ὁ πατήρ ὁ πελαργὸς ἐκπετησίμους 1355
πάντας ποιήσῃ τοὺς πελαργιδέας τρέφων,
δεῖ τοὺς νεοττοὺς τὸν πατέρα πάλιν τρέφειν.

ΠΑΤΡΑΛΟΙΑΣ

ἀπέλαυσά τ' ἄρα νῆ Δί' ἐλθὼν ἐνθαδί,
εἵπερ γέ μοι καὶ τὸν πατέρα βοοσκητέον.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

οὐδέν γ'. ἐπειδήπερ γὰρ ἦλθες ὦ μέλε 1360
εὐνοῦς, περῶσω σ' ὥσπερ ὄρνιν ὀρφανόν.
σοὶ δ' ὦ νεανίσκ' οὐ κακῶς ὑποθήσομαι,
ἀλλ' οἰάπερ αὐτὸς ἔμαθον ὅτε παῖς ἦ. σὺ γὰρ
τὸν μὲν πατέρα μὴ τύπτει· ταυτηνδὶ λαβῶν
τὴν πτέρυγα καὶ τουτὶ τὸ πλῆκτρον θάτέρα, 1365
νομίσας ἀλεκτρυόνος ἔχειν τονδὶ λόφον,
φρούρει στρατεύου μισθοφορῶν σαυτὸν τρέφε,
τὸν πατέρ' ἕα ζῆν· ἀλλ' ἐπειδὴ μάχιμος εἶ,
ἔς τὰ πὶ Θράκης ἀποπέτου κάκεῖ μάχου.

ΠΑΤΡΑΛΟΙΑΣ

νῆ τὸν Διόνυσον εὖ γέ μοι δοκεῖς λέγειν, 1370
καὶ πείσομαί σοι.

YOUNG MAN

All of them—but I really like that one
which says it's all right for a younger bird
to beat up his old man and strangle him.

PISTHETAIROS

Yes, by god, we think it very manly
when a bird, while still a chick, beats up his dad. [1350]

YOUNG MAN

That's why I want to re-locate up here—
I'd love to choke my father, get all his stuff.

PISTHETAIROS

But there's an ancient law among the birds—
inscribed in stone on tablets of the storks,
“When father stork has raised up all his young,
when they are set to fly out of the nest,
then young storks must, in their turn, care for him.”

YOUNG MAN

So coming here has been no use, by god,
if I've now got to feed my father, too.

PISTHETAIROS

No, no. My dear young man, since you came here [1360]
in all good faith, I'll fix you up with wings
just like an orphan bird.⁷⁵ And I'll give you
some fresh advice—something I learned myself
when I was just a lad. Don't thump your dad.

[Pisthetairos starts dressing the boy as a bird as he says the following lines]

Take this wing here, and in your other hand
hold this spur tight. Think of this crest on top
as from a fighting cock. Then stand your guard,
go on a march, live on a soldier's pay—
and let your father live. You like to fight,
so fly away to territories in Thrace,
and do your fighting there.

YOUNG MAN

By Dionysus,
I think the advice you give is good. [1370]
I'll do just what you say.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

νοῦν ἄρ' ἔξεις νῆ Δία.

ΚΙΝΗΣΙΑΣ

ἀναπέτομαι δὴ πρὸς Ὀλυμπον πετεύγεσσι κούφαις·
πέτομαι δ' ὁδὸν ἄλλοτ' ἐπ' ἄλλαν μελέων—

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

τουτὶ τὸ πρᾶγμα φορτίου δέεται πετρῶν. 1375

ΚΙΝΗΣΙΑΣ

ἀφόβω φρενὶ σώματί τε νέαν ἐφέπων—

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἀσπαζόμεσθα φιλύρινον Κινησίαν.
τί δεῦρο πόδα σὺ κυλλὸν ἀνὰ κύκλον κυκλεῖς;

ΚΙΝΗΣΙΑΣ

ὄρνις γενέσθαι βούλομαι λιγύφθογγος ἀηδῶν. 1380

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

παῦσαι μελωδῶν, ἀλλ' ὅ τι λέγεις εἰπέ μοι.

ΚΙΝΗΣΙΑΣ

ὑπὸ σοῦ περωθεῖς βούλομαι μετάρσιος
ἀναπτόμενος ἐκ τῶν νεφελῶν καινὰς λαβεῖν
ἀεροδονήτους καὶ νιφοβόλους ἀναβολάς. 1385

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἐκ τῶν νεφελῶν γὰρ ἂν τις ἀναβολὰς λάβοι;

ΚΙΝΗΣΙΑΣ

κρέματα μὲν οὖν ἐντεῦθεν ἡμῶν ἡ τέχνη.
τῶν διθυράμβων γὰρ τὰ λαμπρὰ γίγνεται
ἀέρια καὶ σκότιά γε καὶ κυνανυγέα
καὶ περοδόνητα· σὺ δὲ κλύων εἴσει τάχα. 1390

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

οὐ δῆτ' ἔγωγε.

PISTHETAIROS

And now, by Zeus,
you're talking sense.

[Exit Young Man. Enter Cinesias, singing and dancing very badly]⁷⁶

CINESIAS [singing]

To Olympus on high
with my wings I will fly—
On this song's path I'll soar
and then sing a few more . . .

PISTHETAIROS

This creature needs a whole pile of wings!

CINESIAS [singing]

For my body and mind
know not fear, so I'll find . . .

PISTHETAIROS

Cinesias, welcome. Let me now greet
a man as thin as bark on linden trees!
Why have you come whirling here on such lame feet?

CINESIAS

A bird—that's what I long to be,
a clear-voice nightingale—that's me. [1380]

PISTHETAIROS

Stop singing—just tell me what you want to say.

CINESIAS

I want you to give me wings then float up,
flying high into the clouds where I can pluck
wind-whirling preludes swept with snow.

PISTHETAIROS

You want to get your preludes from the clouds?

CINESIAS

But all our skill depends upon the clouds.
Our brilliant dithyrambs are made of air—
of mist and gleaming murk and wispy wings.
You'll soon see that—once you've heard a few. [1390]

PISTHETAIROS

No, no—I won't.

ΚΙΝΗΣΙΑΣ

νῆ τὸν Ἡρακλέα σύ γε.
ἅπαντα γὰρ δέειμί σοι τὸν ἀέρα.

εἶδωλα πετεινῶν
αἰθεροδρόμων
οἰωνῶν ταναοδείρων—

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ὠόπ.

1395

ΚΙΝΗΣΙΑΣ

τὸν ἀλάδρομον ἀλάμενος
ἄμ' ἀνεμων πνοαῖσι βαίην.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

νῆ τὸν Δί' ἢ ἴγώ σου καταπαύσω τὰς πνοάς.

ΚΙΝΗΣΙΑΣ

τοτὲ μὲν νοτίαν στείχων πρὸς ὁδόν,
τοτὲ δ' αὖ βορέα σῶμα πελάζων
ἀλίμενον αἰθέρος αὔλακα τέμνων.
χαριέντά γ' ὦ πρεσβῦτ' ἔσοφίσω καὶ σοφά.

1400

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

οὐ γὰρ σὺ χαίρεις πτεροδόνητος γενόμενος;

ΚΙΝΗΣΙΑΣ

ταυτὶ πεποίηκας τὸν κυκλιοδιδάσκαλον,
ὃς ταῖσι φυλαῖς περιμάχητός εἰμι' αἰεῖ;

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

βούλει διδάσκειν καὶ παρ' ἡμῖν οὖν μένων
Λεωτροφίδη χορὸν πετομένων ὀρνέων
Κεκροπίδα φυλήν;

1405

ΚΙΝΗΣΙΑΣ

καταγελαῖς μου, δῆλος εἶ.
ἀλλ' οὖν ἔγωγ' οὐ παύσομαι, τοῦτ' ἴσθ' ὅτι,
πρὶν ἂν πτερωθεῖς διαδράμω τὸν ἀέρα.

CINESIAS

Yes, by Hercules, you will.
For you I'll run through all the airs . . . [*starts singing*]

O you images of birds,
who extend your wings,
who tread upon the air,
you long-necked birds . . .

PISTHETAIROS [*trying to interrupt*]

All right. Enough!

CINESIAS [*ignoring Pisthetairos, continuing to sing another song*]

Soaring upward as I roam.
I wander floating on the breeze . . .

PISTHETAIROS [*looking in one of the baskets of wings*]

By heaven, I'll stop these blasting winds of yours!

[*Pisthetairos takes a pair of wings and starts poking Cinesias around the stage with them, tickling him*]

CINESIAS [*dodging away from Pisthetairos, giggling, and continuing to sing*]

First I head along the highway going down south,
but then my body turns towards the windy north,
as I slice airy furrows where no harbour lies . . . [1400]

[*Cinesias has to stop singing because Pisthetairos is tickling him too much with the wings. He stops running off and singing. He's somewhat out of breath*]

Old man, that's a clever trick—pleasant, too—
but really clever.

PISTHETAIROS

You mean you don't enjoy
being whisked with wings?

CINESIAS

Is that the way you treat
the man who trains the cyclic choruses—
the one whom tribes of men still fight to have?⁷⁷

PISTHETAIROS

Would you like to stick around this place
to train a chorus here for Leotrophides,⁷⁸
made up of flying birds—the swallow tribe?

CINESIAS

You're making fun of me—that's obvious.
But I won't stop here until I get some wings
and I can run through all the airs.

ΣΥΚΟΦΑΝΤΗΣ

ὄρνιθες τίνες οὐδὲν ἔχοντες πτεροποίκιλοι,
τανυσίπτερε ποικίλα χελιδοῖ;

1410

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

τουτὶ τὸ κακὸν οὐ φαῦλον ἐξεργήγορεν.
ὄδ' αὖ μινυρίζων δευρό τις προσέρχεται.

ΣΥΚΟΦΑΝΤΗΣ

τανυσίπτερε ποικίλα μάλ' αἰθις.

1415

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἐς θοιμάτιον τὸ σκόλιον ἄδειν μοι δοκεῖ,
δεῖσθαι δ' ἔοικεν οὐκ ὀλίγων χελιδόνων.

ΣΥΚΟΦΑΝΤΗΣ

τίς ὁ πτερῶν δεῦρ' ἐστὶ τοὺς ἀφικνουμένους;

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ὄδι πάρεστιν· ἀλλ' ὅτου δεῖ χρῆ λέγειν.

ΣΥΚΟΦΑΝΤΗΣ

πτερῶν πτερῶν δεῖ· μὴ πύθη τὸ δεύτερον.

1420

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

μῶν εὐθὺ Πελλήνης πέτεσθαι διανοεῖ;

ΣΥΚΟΦΑΝΤΗΣ

μὰ Δι' ἀλλὰ κλητήρ εἰμι νησιωτικὸς
καὶ συκοφάντης—

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ὦ μακάριε τῆς τέχνης.

ΣΥΚΟΦΑΝΤΗΣ

καὶ πραγματοδίφης. εἶτα δέομαι πτερὰ λαβῶν
κύκλω περισοβεῖν τὰς πόλεις καλούμενος.

1425

[Exit Cinesias. Enter a Sycophant, singing to himself]

SYCOPHANT [singing]

Who are these birds with mottled wing? [1410]
They don't appear to own a thing—
O dappled swallow with extended wing . . .

PISTHETAIROS

This is no minor problem we've stirred up—
here comes one more person singing to himself.

SYCOPHANT [singing]

O long and dappled wings, I call once more . . .

PISTHETAIROS

It seems to me his song's about his cloak—
he needs a lot of swallows to bring in the spring.⁷⁹

SYCOPHANT

Where's the man who's handing out the wings
to all who travel here?

PISTHETAIROS

He's standing here.
But you should tell me what you need.

SYCOPHANT

Wings, wings.
I need wings. Don't ask me that again. [1420]

PISTHETAIROS

Do you intend to fly off right away,
heading for Pellene?

SYCOPHANT

No, not at all.
I'm a summons server for the islands—
an informer, too . . .

PISTHETAIROS

You're a lucky man
to have such a fine profession.

SYCOPHANT

. . . and I hunt around
to dig up law suits. That's why I need wings,
to roam around delivering summonses
in allied states.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ὑπὸ πτερύγων τι προσκαλεῖ σοφώτερον;

ΣΥΚΟΦΑΝΤΗΣ

μὰ Δί' ἀλλ' ἴν' οἱ λησταί τε μὴ λυπῶσί με,
μετὰ τῶν γεράνων τ' ἐκεῖθεν ἀναχωρῶ πάλιν,
ἀνθ' ἔρματος πολλὰς καταπεπωκῶς δίκας.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

τουτὶ γὰρ ἐργάζει σὺ τοῦργον; εἶπέ μοι, 1430
νεανίας ὦν συκοφαντεῖς τοὺς ξένους;

ΣΥΚΟΦΑΝΤΗΣ

τί γὰρ πάθω; σκάπτειν γὰρ οὐκ ἐπίσταμαι.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἀλλ' ἔστιν ἕτερα νῆ Δί' ἔργα σώφρονα,
ἀφ' ὧν διαζῆν ἄνδρα χρῆν τοσοντονὶ
ἐκ τοῦ δικαίου μᾶλλον ἢ δικορραφεῖν. 1435

ΣΥΚΟΦΑΝΤΗΣ

ὦ δαιμόνιε μὴ νουθέτει μ' ἀλλὰ πτέρου.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

νῦν τοι λέγων πτερῶ σε.

ΣΥΚΟΦΑΝΤΗΣ

καὶ πῶς ἂν λόγοις
ἄνδρα πτερώσειας σύ;

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

πάντες τοῖς λόγοις
ἀναπτεροῦνται.

ΣΥΚΟΦΑΝΤΗΣ

πάντες;

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

οὐκ ἀκήκοας,
ὅταν λέγωσι οἱ πατέρες ἐκάστοτε 1440
τοῖς μειρακίοις ἐν τοῖσι κουρείοις ταδί;
'δεινῶς γέ μου τὸ μειράκιον Διειτρέφης
λέγων ἀνεπτέρωκεν ὥσθ' ἵππηλατεῖν.'

PISTHETAIROS

If you're equipped with wings,
will that make you more skilled in serving men?

SYCOPHANT

No. But I'd escape being hurt by pirates.
And then I could return home with the cranes,
once I've swallowed many law suits down
to serve as ballast.⁸⁰

PISTHETAIROS

Is that what you do for work? [1430]
Tell me this—you're a strong young lad and yet
don't you slander strangers for a living?

SYCOPHANT

What can I do? I never learned to dig.

PISTHETAIROS

But, by god, there are other decent jobs,
where a young man like you can earn his way,
more honest trades than launching still more law suits.

SYCOPHANT

My good man, don't keep lecturing me like this.
Give me some wings.

PISTHETAIROS

I'm giving you some wings—
I'm doing it as I talk to you right now.

SYCOPHANT

How can you put wings on men with words?

PISTHETAIROS

With words all men can give themselves their wings.

SYCOPHANT

All men?

PISTHETAIROS

Have you never heard in barber shops
how fathers always talk of their young sons— [1440]
"It's dreadful the way that Diitrephes' speech
has given my young lad ambitious wings,
so now he wants to race his chariot."

ὁ δέ τις τὸν αὐτοῦ φησιν ἐπὶ τραγωδία
ἀνεπτερώσθαι καὶ πεποτησθαι τὰς φρένας. 1445

ΣΥΚΟΦΑΝΤΗΣ

λόγοισί τ' ἄρα καὶ πτεροῦνται;

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

φήμ' ἐγώ.

ὑπὸ γὰρ λόγων ὁ νοῦς τε μετεωρίζεται
ἐπαίρεται τ' ἄνθρωπος. οὕτω καὶ σ' ἐγὼ
ἀναπτερώσας βούλομαι χρηστοῖς λόγοις
τρέψαι πρὸς ἔργον νόμιμον. 1450

ΣΥΚΟΦΑΝΤΗΣ

ἀλλ' οὐ βούλομαι.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

τί δαὶ ποιήσεις;

ΣΥΚΟΦΑΝΤΗΣ

τὸ γένος οὐ καταισχνῶ.

παππῶος ὁ βίος συκοφαντεῖν ἐστί μοι.
ἀλλὰ πτέρου με ταχέσι καὶ κούφοις πτεροῖς
ἰέρακος ἢ κερχνηδος, ὡς ἂν τοὺς ξένους
καλεσάμενος κᾶτ' ἐγκεκληκῶς ἐνθαδὶ
κατ' αὐτὸ πέτωμαι πάλιν ἐκεῖσε. 1455

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

μανθάνω.

ὡδὶ λέγεις· ὅπως ἂν ὠφλήκη δίκην
ἐνθάδε πρὶν ἤκειν ὁ ξένος.

ΣΥΚΟΦΑΝΤΗΣ

πάνυ μανθάνεις.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

κᾶπειθ' ὁ μὲν πλεῖ δεῦρο, σὺ δ' ἐκεῖσ' αὐτὸ πέτει
ἀρπασόμενος τὰ χρήματ' αὐτοῦ.

ΣΥΚΟΦΑΝΤΗΣ

πάντ' ἔχεις. 1460

βέμβικος οὐδὲν διαφέρειν δεῖ.

Another says “That boy of mine has wings
and flutters over tragedies.”

SYCOPHANT

So with words
they're really given wings?

PISTHETAIROS

That what I said.

With words our minds are raised—a man can soar.
That's how I want to give you wings—with words,
with useful words, so you can change your life
and get a lawful occupation.

SYCOPHANT

But I don't want to.

[1450]

PISTHETAIROS

What will you do?

SYCOPHANT

I'll not disgrace my folks.

Informing—that's my family's profession.
So give me now some light, fast falcon's wings—
or kestrel's—then I can serve my papers
on those foreigners, lay the charges here,
and fly back there again.

PISTHETAIROS

Ah, I get it—

what you're saying is that the case is judged
before the stranger gets here.

SYCOPHANT

That's right.

You understand exactly what I do.

PISTHETAIROS

And then, while he's travelling here by ship,
you fly out there to seize his property.

SYCOPHANT

You've said it all. I've got to whip around
just like a whirling top.

[1460]

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

μανθάνω

βέμβικα· καὶ μὴν ἔστι μοι νῆ τὸν Δία
κάλλιστα Κορκυραῖα τοιαυτὶ πτερά.

ΣΥΚΟΦΑΝΤΗΣ

οἷμοι τάλας μάστιγ' ἔχεις.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

πτερῶ μὲν οὖν,

οἰσί σε ποιήσω τήμερον βεμβικιᾶν. 1465

ΣΥΚΟΦΑΝΤΗΣ

οἷμοι τάλας.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

οὐ πτερυγιεῖς ἐντευθενί;

οὐκ ἀπολιβάξεις ὦ κάκιστ' ἀπολούμενος;
πικρὰν τάχ' ὄψει στρεψοδικοπανουργίαν.
ἀπίωμεν ἡμεῖς ξυλλαβόντες τὰ πτερά.

ΧΟΡΟΣ

πολλὰ δὴ καὶ καινὰ καὶ θαυμάστ' 1470

ἐπεπτόμεσθα καὶ

δεινὰ πράγματ' εἶδομεν.

ἔστι γὰρ δένδρον πεφυκὸς

ἔκτοπόν τι Καρδίας ἀ-

πτωτέρω Κλεώνυμος, 1475

χρήσιμον μὲν οὐδέν, ἄλλως

δὲ δειλὸν καὶ μέγα.

τοῦτο τοῦ μὲν ἦρος ἀεὶ

βλαστάνει καὶ συκοφαντεῖ,

τοῦ δὲ χειμῶνος πάλιν τὰς 1480

ἀσπίδας φυλλορροεῖ.

PISTHETAIROS

I understand—

a whirling top. Well, here, by god, I've got
the finest wings. They're from Corcyra . . . here!

[Pisthetairos produces a whip from the basket and begins hitting the Sycophant, who dodges around to evade the blows]

SYCOPHANT

Ouch! That's a whip you've got!

PISTHETAIROS

No—a pair of wings.

With them I'll make you spin around all day!

SYCOPHANT

Ow! Help! That hurts!

PISTHETAIROS

Wing your way from here!

Get lost—I want rid of you, you rascal!

I'll show you legal tricks and twists—sharp ones, too!

[Pisthetairos beats the Sycophant off stage. Enter Xanthias and Manodorus from the house]

Let's gather up these wings and go inside.

[Pisthetairos and the two slaves carry the baskets of wings back into the house]

CHORUS

When we fly

[1470]

we often spy

strange amazing spots—

in those flights

peculiar sights.

There's a tree grows far from us
simply called Cleonymos,
a useless tree, without a heart—
immense, and vile in every part.
It always blooms in early spring,
bursting forth with everything
that launches legal quarrelling.
and then in winter time it yields
a shedding foliage of shields.

[1480]

ἔστι δ' αὖ χώρα πρὸς αὐτῷ
 τῷ σκότῳ πόρρω τις ἐν
 τῇ λύχνων ἐρημίᾳ,
 ἔνθα τοῖς ἥρωσιν ἄνθρωποι
 ξυναριστῶσι καὶ ξύνεισι
 πλὴν τῆς ἐσπέρας.
 τηνικαῦτα δ' οὐκέτ' ἦν
 ἀσφαλὲς ξυντυγχάνειν.
 εἰ γὰρ ἐντύχοι τις ἦρῶ
 τῶν βροτῶν νύκτωρ Ὀρέστη,
 γυμνὸς ἦν πληγείς ὑπ' αὐτοῦ
 πάντα τὰπιδέξια.

1485

1490

ΠΡΟΜΗΘΕΥΣ

οἴμοι τάλας, ὁ Ζεὺς ὅπως μὴ μ' ὄψεται.
 ποῦ Πισθέταιρός ἐστ';

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἔα τουτὶ τί ἦν;
 τίς ὁ συγκαλυμμός;

1495

ΠΡΟΜΗΘΕΥΣ

τῶν θεῶν ὄρας τινα
 ἐμοῦ κατόπιον ἐνταῦθα;

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

μὰ Δί' ἐγὼ μὲν οὔ.
 τίς δ' εἶ σύ;

ΠΡΟΜΗΘΕΥΣ

πηνίκα' ἐστὶν ἄρα τῆς ἡμέρας;

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ὀπηνίκα; σμικρόν τι μετὰ μεσημβρίαν.
 ἀλλὰ σὺ τίς εἶ;

ΠΡΟΜΗΘΕΥΣ

βουλυτὸς ἢ περαιτέρω;

1500

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

οἴμ' ὡς βδελύττομαί σε.

There's a land
 ringed by the dark,
 a gloomy wilderness,
 where Heroes meet
 and with men eat.

Men live with heroes in that place,
 except at dusk—then it's not safe
 for the two of them to meet.

Men who in the night time greet
 the great Orestes are stripped bare
 he strikes at them and leaves them there.
 And so without their clothes they bide—
 paralysed on their right side.⁸¹

[1490]

[Enter Prometheus, muffling his face in a long scarf and holding an unopened umbrella]

PROMETHEUS

Oh, dear, dear, dear. I pray Zeus doesn't see me.
 Where's Pisthetairos?

[Pisthetairos enters from the house carrying a chamber pot. He is surprised to see the new arrival]

PISTHETAIROS

Who's this? Why so muffled?

PROMETHEUS

Do you see any god who's trailed me here?

PISTHETAIROS

No, by Zeus, I don't. But who are you?

PROMETHEUS

What time of day is it?

PISTHETAIROS

What time of day?
 A little after noon. But who are you?

PROMETHEUS

Quitting time or later?

[1500]

PISTHETAIROS

You're pissing me off . . .

ΠΡΟΜΗΘΕΥΣ

τί γὰρ ὁ Ζεὺς ποιεῖ;
ἀπαιθριάζει τὰς νεφέλας ἢ ξυννέφει;

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

οὔμωζε μεγάλ'.

ΠΡΟΜΗΘΕΥΣ

οὔτω μὲν ἐκκεκαλύψομαι.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ὦ φίλε Προμηθεῦ.

ΠΡΟΜΗΘΕΥΣ

παῦε παῦε, μὴ βόα.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

τί γὰρ ἔστι;

1505

ΠΡΟΜΗΘΕΥΣ

σίγα, μὴ κάλει μου τοῦνομα·
ἀπὸ γάρ μ' ὀλεῖς, εἴ μ' ἐνθάδ' ὁ Ζεὺς ὄψεται.
ἀλλ' ἵνα φράσω σοι πάντα τᾶνω πράγματα,
τουτὶ λαβῶν μου τὸ σκιάδειον ὑπέρεχε
ἄνωθεν, ὡς ἂν μὴ μ' ὀρῶσιν οἱ θεοί.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ιοὺν ἰού·
εἶ γ' ἐπενόησας αὐτὸ καὶ προμηθικῶς.
ὑπόδυθι ταχὺ δὴ κᾶτα θαρρήσας λέγε.

1510

ΠΡΟΜΗΘΕΥΣ

ἄκουε δὴ νυν.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ὡς ἀκούοντος λέγε.

ΠΡΟΜΗΘΕΥΣ

ἀπόλωλεν ὁ Ζεὺς.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

πηνὶκ' ἄττ' ἀπόλετο;

PROMETHEUS

What's Zeus up to? What about the clouds—
is he scattering 'em—or bringing 'em together?

PISTHETAIROS

You're a total fool!

PROMETHEUS

All right—then I'll unwrap.

[Prometheus takes off the muffler concealing his face]

PISTHETAIROS

Prometheus, my friend!

PROMETHEUS

Hey, quiet. Don't shout.

PISTHETAIROS

What's the matter?

PROMETHEUS

Shhh . . . don't shout my name.

I'm done for if Zeus can see I'm here.
But I'll tell you what's going on up there,
if you take this umbrella. Hold it up,
above our heads—that way no god can see.

PISTHETAIROS

Ah ha! Now that's a smart precaution—
that's forethought, just like Prometheus!
Come under here—make it fast—all right, now,
you can talk without a worry.

[1510]

[Pisthetairos and Prometheus huddle together under the umbrella]

PROMETHEUS

Then listen.

PISTHETAIROS

I'm listening—speak up.

PROMETHEUS

Zeus is done for.

PISTHETAIROS

And when was he done in?

ΠΡΟΜΗΘΕΥΣ

ἔξ οὐπερ ὑμεῖς ᾠκίσατε τὸν ἀέρα. 1515
 θύει γὰρ οὐδείς οὐδὲν ἀνθρώπων ἔτι
 θεοῖσιν, οὐδὲ κνῖσα μηρίων ἀπο
 ἀνήλθεν ὡς ἡμᾶς ἀπ' ἐκείνου τοῦ χρόνου,
 ἀλλ' ὡσπερὶ Θεσμοφορίοις νηστεύομεν 1520
 ἄνευ θνητῶν· οἱ δὲ βάρβαροι θεοὶ
 πεινῶντες ὡσπερ Ἴλλυριοὶ κεκριγότες
 ἐπιστρατεύσειν φάσ' ἄνωθεν τῷ Δί,
 εἰ μὴ παρέξει τὰμπόρι' ἀνεωγμένα,
 ἵν' εἰσάγοιτο σπλάγχνα κατατετμημένα.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

εἰσὶν γὰρ ἕτεροι βάρβαροι θεοὶ τινες 1525
 ἄνωθεν ὑμῶν;

ΠΡΟΜΗΘΕΥΣ

οὐ γὰρ εἰσι βάρβαροι,
 ὅθεν ὁ πατρῴος ἐστίν Ἐξηκεστίδης;

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ὄνομα δὲ τούτοις τοῖς θεοῖς τοῖς βαρβάροις
 τί ἔστιν;

ΠΡΟΜΗΘΕΥΣ

ὅ τι ἔστιν; Τριβαλλοί.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

μανθάνω.
 ἐντεῦθεν ἄρα τοῦπιτριβεῖης ἐγένετο; 1530

ΠΡΟΜΗΘΕΥΣ

μάλιστα πάντων. ἐν δέ σοι λέγω σαφές·
 ἤξουσι πρέσβεις δεῦρο περὶ διαλλαγῶν
 παρὰ τοῦ Διὸς καὶ τῶν Τριβαλλῶν τῶν ἄνω·
 ὑμεῖς δὲ μὴ σπένδεσθ', εἰ μὴ παραδιδῶ
 τὸ σκῆπτρον ὁ Ζεὺς τοῖσιν ὄρνισιν πάλιν, 1535
 καὶ τὴν Βασιλείαν σοι γυναικ' ἔχειν διδῶ.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

τίς ἐστὶν ἡ Βασιλεία;

PROMETHEUS

It happened
 once you colonized the air. From that point on,
 no human being has made a sacrifice
 to any god, not once—and since that time
 no savoury smells from roasting thigh bones
 have risen up to us from down below.
 So now, without our offerings, we must fast,
 as if it's time for Thesmophoria.⁸²
 The barbarian gods are starving—so now
 they scream out like Illyrians and say
 their armies will march down attacking Zeus,
 unless he moves to get the ports re-opened,
 to make sliced entrails once again available.

[1520]

PISTHETAIROS

You mean other gods, barbarian ones,
 are there above you?

PROMETHEUS

Barbarian deities? Of course.
 That's where Execestides derives
 all his ancestral family gods.

PISTHETAIROS

What's the name of these barbarian gods?

PROMETHEUS

The name? They're called Triballians.⁸³

PISTHETAIROS

I see—that must be where we get our phrase
 they've got me “by the balls.”

[1530]

PROMETHEUS

You got that right.
 Now let me tell you something to the point—
 ambassadors are coming here to settle this,
 from Zeus and those Triballians up there.
 But don't agree to peace unless great Zeus
 gives back his sceptre to the birds again,
 and gives the Princess to you as your wife.

PISTHETAIROS

Whose this Princess?

ΠΡΟΜΗΘΕΥΣ

καλλίστη κόρη,
ἤπερ ταμειύει τὸν κεραυνὸν τοῦ Διὸς
καὶ ἅλλ' ἀπαξάπαντα, τὴν εὐβουλίαν
τὴν εὐνομίαν τὴν σωφροσύνην τὰ νεώρια, 1540
τὴν λοιδορίαν τὸν κωλακρέτην τὰ τριώβολα.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἅπαντά γ' ἄρ' αὐτῷ ταμειύει;

ΠΡΟΜΗΘΕΥΣ

φήμ' ἐγώ.
ἦν γ' ἦν σὺ παρ' ἐκείνου παραλάβῃς, πάντ' ἔχεις.
τούτων ἔνεκα δεῦρ' ἦλθον, ἵνα φράσαιμί σοι.
αἰέ ποτ' ἀνθρώποις γὰρ εὖνους εἶμ' ἐγώ. 1545

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

μόνον θεῶν γὰρ διὰ σ' ἀπανθρακίζομεν.

ΠΡΟΜΗΘΕΥΣ

μισῶ δ' ἅπαντας τοὺς θεούς, ὡς οἶσθα σύ.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

νῆ τὸν Δί' αἰέ δῆτα θεομοσῆς ἔφυς.

ΠΡΟΜΗΘΕΥΣ

Τίμων καθάρως. ἀλλ' ὡς ἂν ἀποτρέχω πάλιν,
φέρε τὸ σκιάδειον, ἵνα με κἂν ὁ Ζεὺς ἴδῃ 1550
ἄνωθεν, ἀκολουθεῖν δοκῶ κανηφόρῳ.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

καὶ τὸν δίφρον γε διφροφόρει τονδὶ λαβῶν.

ΧΟΡΟΣ

πρὸς δὲ τοῖς Σκιάποσιν λί-
μνη τις ἔστ' ἄλουτος οὐ
ψυχαγωγεῖ Σωκράτης· 1555

PROMETHEUS

The loveliest of girls—
she's the one in charge of Zeus' thunderbolt
and all his assets—wise advice, good laws,
sound common sense, dockyards, slanderous talk— [1540]
his paymistress who hands three obols out
to jury men . . .

PISTHETAIROS

So in Zeus' name,
she's the one in charge of everything?

PROMETHEUS

That's right.
If you get her from Zeus, you've got it all.
That's why I came here to tell you this.
I've always been a friend of human beings.

PISTHETAIROS

Yes, of all the gods it's thanks to you
that we can fry up fish.⁸⁴

PROMETHEUS

I hate all gods—
but you know that.

PISTHETAIROS

You've always hated them.
Heaven knows—it's something natural to you.

PROMETHEUS

I'm Timon through and through.⁸⁵ Time to get back.
So let me have the parasol. That way,
if Zeus does catch sight of me from there, [1550]
he'll think I'm following some basket girl.

PISTHETAIROS

Take the piss pot, too—then you can act
as if you're the one who's carrying the stool.

[Prometheus leaves with the umbrella and the pot. Pisthetairos goes back into the house]

CHORUS

By that tribe of men with such huge feet
they use them for a shade retreat,
there's stands a lake where Socrates,
deceives men's souls, that unwashed tease.

ἔνθα καὶ Πείσανδρος ἦλθε
 δεόμενος ψυχὴν ἰδεῖν ἢ
 ζῶντ' ἐκείνον προὔλιπε,
 σφάγι' ἔχων κάμηλον ἀ-
 μνόν τι, ἧς λαίμους τεμῶν ὄσ-
 περ ποθ' οὐδυσεὺς ἀπῆλθε,
 κᾶτ' ἀνῆλθ' αὐτῶ κάτωθεν
 πρὸς τὸ λαῖτμα τῆς καμήλου
 Χαιρεφῶν ἢ νυκτερίς.

ΠΟΣΕΙΔΩΝ

τὸ μὲν πόλισμα τῆς Νεφελοκοκκυγίας
 ὄραν τοδὶ πάρεστιν, οἱ πρεσβεύομεν.
 οὗτος τί δρᾷς; ἐπ' ἀριστερ' οὕτως ἀμπέχει;
 οὐ μεταβαλεῖς θοιμάτιον ὧδ' ἐπιδέξια;
 τί ὦ κακόδαιμον; Λαισποδίας εἶ τὴν φύσιν;
 ὦ δημοκρατία ποῖ προβιβᾷς ἡμᾶς ποτε,
 εἰ τουτονί γ' ἐχειροτόνησαν οἱ θεοί;
 ἔξεις ἀτρέμας; οἴμωζε· πολὺ γὰρ δὴ σ' ἐγὼ
 ἑώρακα πάντων βαρβαρώτατον θεῶν.
 ἄγε δὴ τί δρῶμεν Ἡράκλεις;

ἩΡΑΚΛΗΣ

ἀκήκοας

ἐμοῦ γ' ὅτι τὸν ἄνθρωπον ἄγχειν βούλομαι,
 ὅστις ποτ' ἔσθ' ὁ τοὺς θεοὺς ἀποτειχίσας.

ΠΟΣΕΙΔΩΝ

ἀλλ' ὦγάθ' ἡρήμεσθα περὶ διαλλαγῶν
 πρέσβεις.

ἩΡΑΚΛΗΣ

διπλασίως μᾶλλον ἄγχειν μοι δοκεῖ.

Peisander went there to find out
 the spirit his life had been without.
 A big young camel he did slay,
 then, like Odysseus, snuck away. [1560]
 By camel's blood to that place drawn,
 up pops a Bat—it's Chaerephon!⁸⁶

[Enter Poseidon, Hercules, and the Triballian god]

POSEIDON

Here it is—Cloudcuckooland—in plain view,
 city we've come to as ambassadors.

[Poseidon inspects the clothing on the Triballian god]

What *are* you doing? Why drape your cloak that way,
 from right to left? It's got to be re-slung
 the other way—like this.

[The Triballian tries to reshape his cloak but gets in a mess]

You fumbling idiot—
 a born Laespodias, that's what you are!⁸⁷
 O democracy! Where are you taking us,
 when gods vote in a clumsy oaf like this? [1570]

[Poseidon continues to fuss over the Triballian's appearance]

Keep your hands still! Oh, to hell with you!
 You're the most uncivilized of all the gods
 I've ever seen. All right, Hercules,
 what do we do?

HERCULES

You've heard what I propose.
 I'd like to wring his neck—whoever he is
 who set up this blockade against the gods.

POSEIDON

But you forget, my friend, that we've been sent
 as envoys to negotiate down here.

HERCULES

That just makes me want to throttle him
 twice as much as I wanted to before.

[The wall of the house now moves off to reveal Pisthetairos and the slaves
 getting dinner ready. They are preparing birds to cook in the oven]

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

τὴν τυρόκηστίν τις δότω· φέρε σίλφιον·
 τυρόν φερέτω τις· πυρπόλει τοὺς ἀνθρακας. 1580

ΠΟΣΕΙΔΩΝ

τὸν ἄνδρα χαίρειν οἱ θεοὶ κελεύομεν
 τρεῖς ὄντες ἡμεῖς.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἀλλ' ἐπικνῶ τὸ σίλφιον.

ἩΡΑΚΛΗΣ

τὰ δὲ κρέα τοῦ ταῦτ' ἐστίν;

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ὄρνιθές τινες
 ἐπανιστάμενοι τοῖς δημοτικοῖσιν ὀρνέοις
 ἔδοξαν ἀδικεῖν. 1585

ἩΡΑΚΛΗΣ

εἶτα δῆτα σίλφιον
 εἴπικνῆς πρότερον αὐτοῖσιν;

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ὦ χαῖρ' Ἡράκλεις.
 τί ἔστι;

ΠΟΣΕΙΔΩΝ

π्रेसβεύοντες ἡμεῖς ἤκομεν
 παρὰ τῶν θεῶν περὶ πολέμου καταλλαγῆς.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἔλαιον οὐκ ἔνεστιν ἐν τῇ ληκύθῳ.

ἩΡΑΚΛΗΣ

καὶ μὴν τά γ' ὀρνίθεια λιπάρ' εἶναι πρέπει. 1590

ΠΟΣΕΙΔΩΝ

ἡμεῖς τε γὰρ πολεμοῦντες οὐ κερδαίνομεν,
 ὑμεῖς τ' ἂν ἡμῖν τοῖς θεοῖς ὄντες φίλοι
 ὄμβριον ὕδωρ ἂν εἴχετ' ἐν τοῖς τέλμασι,
 ἀλκονιδας τ' ἂν ἦγεθ' ἡμέρας αἰεί.
 τούτων περὶ πάντων αὐτοκράτορες ἤκομεν. 1595

PISTHETAIROS

The grater for the cheese—can someone get it?
 And bring the silphium. Hand me the cheese.
 Now, fire up the coals. [1580]

POSEIDON

Greetings, mortal.
 We three are gods, and we salute you!

PISTHETAIROS

But I'm grating silphium right now.

HERCULES

What kind of meat is this?

PISTHETAIROS

The meat's from birds—
 they've been tried and sentenced for rebellion,
 rising up against the fowl democracy.

HERCULES

Is that why you're shredding silphium
 all over them before doing something else?

PISTHETAIROS [*looking up and recognizing Hercules*]

Well, hello there, Hercules. What's up?

POSEIDON

We've come as envoys sent down from the gods
 to negotiate the terms for peace.

PISTHETAIROS [*to one of the slaves*]

There's no oil left in the jug.

HERCULES

And bird meat
 should be glistening with lots of oil. [1590]

POSEIDON

We gods get no advantage from this war.
 If you and yours were friendly to the gods,
 you'd have water from the rain in all your ponds—
 halcyon days would be here all the time.
 We've come with total powers in such things.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἀλλ' οὔτε πρότερον πώποθ' ἡμεῖς ἤρξαμεν
πολέμου πρὸς ὑμᾶς, νῦν τ' ἐθέλομεν, εἰ δοκεῖ,
ἐάν τι δίκαιον ἀλλὰ νῦν ἐθέλητε δρᾶν,
σπονδὰς ποιῆσθαι. τὰ δὲ δίκαι' ἐστὶν ταδί,
τὸ σκῆπτρον ἡμῖν τοῖσις ὄρνισιν πάλιν
τὸν Δί' ἀποδοῦναι· κἂν διαλλαττώμεθα
ἐπὶ τοῖσδε, τοὺς πρέσβεις ἐπ' ἄριστον καλῶ.

1600

ἩΡΑΚΛΗΣ

ἐμοὶ μὲν ἀπόχρη ταῦτα καὶ ψηφίζομαι.

ΠΟΣΕΙΔΩΝ

τί ὦ κακόδαιμον; ἡλίθιος καὶ γάστρις εἶ.
ἀποστερεῖς τὸν πατέρα τῆς τυραννίδος;

1605

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἄληθες; οὐ γὰρ μείζον ὑμεῖς οἱ θεοὶ
ἰσχύσετ', ἣν ὄρνιθες ἄρξωσιν κάτω;
νῦν μὲν γ' ὑπὸ ταῖς νεφέλαισις ἐγκεκρυμμένοι
κύψαντες ἐπιπορκοῦσιν ὑμᾶς οἱ βροτοί·
ἐὰν δὲ τοὺς ὄρνις ἔχητε συμμάχους,
ὅταν ὀμνύῃ τις τὸν κόρακα καὶ τὸν Δία,
ὁ κόραξ παρελθὼν τούπιπορκοῦντος λάθρα
προσπτόμενος ἐκκόψει τὸν ὀφθαλμὸν θενῶν.

1610

ΠΟΣΕΙΔΩΝ

νῆ τὸν Ποσειδῶ ταῦτά γέ τοι καλῶς λέγεις.

ἩΡΑΚΛΗΣ

κάμοι δοκεῖ.

1615

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

τί δαὶ σὺ φῆς;

ΤΡΙΒΑΛΛΟΣ

ναβαισατρεῦ.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ὄρᾱς; ἐπαιεῖ χοῦτος. ἕτερόν νυν ἔτι
ἀκούσαθ' ὅσον ὑμᾶς ἀγαθὸν ποιήσομεν.
ἐὰν τις ἀνθρώπων ἱερεῖόν τῶν θεῶν

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ΠΙΣΤΗΤΑΙΡΟΣ

From the start we didn't launch a war on you —
and we're ready to talk peace, if that's your wish,
provided you're prepared to do what's right.
And here's what's right: Zeus gives his sceptre back
to us — I mean the birds — once more. And then,
if we can settle this on these conditions,
I'll invite the envoys to have lunch with me.

HERCULES [*salivating over the prepared bird*]

That's just fine with me! I vote we say . . .

POSEIDON [*interrupting*]

What's that you fool! Idiotic glutton!
You want give away your father's power?

[1600]

ΠΙΣΤΗΤΑΙΡΟΣ

Is that what you think? Look, if birds here
rule everything down there, won't you gods above
be even stronger? Now underneath the clouds
men can bend down and swear false oaths to you.
But once the birds and you become allies,
if any man should swear by Raven and by Zeus
and then perjure himself, Raven would come by,
swoop down upon the man before he sees him,
peck at his eye and pluck it out.

[1610]

POSEIDON

By Poseidon,
what you're saying makes good sense!

HERCULES

Sounds good to me.

ΠΙΣΤΗΤΑΙΡΟΣ [*to the Triballian god*]

What do you say?

TRIBALLIAN [*speaking foreign gibberish*]

Nab aist roo.

ΠΙΣΤΗΤΑΙΡΟΣ

You hear what he said? He agrees with you.
Now listen up — here's yet another benefit
you'll get from us. If any man once vows

173

εὐξάμενος εἶτα διασοφίζηται λέγων,
 ‘μενετοὶ θεοί,’ καὶ μάποδιδῶ μισητία,
 ἀναπράξομεν καὶ ταῦτα. 1620

ΠΟΣΕΙΔΩΝ

φέρ' ἴδω τῷ τρόπῳ;

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ὅταν διαριθμῶν ἀργυρίδιον τύχη
 ἄνθρωπος οὗτος, ἢ καθῆται λούμενος,
 καταπτόμενος ἰκτῖνος ἀρπάσας λάθρα
 προβάτωι δυοῖν τιμὴν ἀνοίσει τῷ θεῷ. 1625

ἩΡΑΚΛΗΣ

τὸ σκῆπτρον ἀποδοῦναι πάλιν ψηφίζομαι
 τούτοις ἐγώ.

ΠΟΣΕΙΔΩΝ

καὶ τὸν Τριβαλλόν νυν ἐροῦ.

ἩΡΑΚΛΗΣ

ὁ Τριβαλλός, οἰμώζειν δοκεῖ σοι;

ΤΡΙΒΑΛΛΟΣ

σαυνάκα
 βακταρικροῦσα.

ἩΡΑΚΛΗΣ

φησί μ' εὖ λέγειν πάνν.

ΠΟΣΕΙΔΩΝ

εἶ τοι δοκεῖ σφῶν ταῦτα, κάμοι συνδοκεῖ. 1630

ἩΡΑΚΛΗΣ

οὗτος, δοκεῖ δρᾶν ταῦτα τοῦ σκῆπτρου πέρι.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

καὶ νῆ Δί' ἕτερόν γ' ἐστὶν οὗ μνήσθην ἐγώ.
 τὴν μὲν γὰρ Ἥραν παραδίδωμι τῷ Δί,
 τὴν δὲ Βασιλείαν τὴν κόρην γυναικ' ἐμοὶ
 ἐκδοτέον ἐστίν. 1635

to one of the gods he'll sacrifice a beast,
 then tries to talk his way out of doing it
 by splitting hairs and, acting on his greed,
 holds back his vow, saying "Gods are patient,"
 we'll make him pay for that as well. [1620]

POSEIDON

How?

Tell us how you'd do that.

PISTHETAIROS

Well, at some point,
 when that man is counting up his wealth
 or sitting in his bath, some kite will fly down,
 while he's not paying attention, grab his cash,
 the value of two sheep, and carry that
 up to the god.

HERCULES

He gets my vote again —
 I say we give the sceptre back to them.

POSEIDON

All right — ask the Triballian.

HERCULES [*threateningly*]

Hey, you —

Triballian — want me to smack you round?

TRIBALLIAN [*afraid*]

Oo smacka skeen dat steek?

HERCULES

He says it's fine —
 he agrees with me.

POSEIDON

Well, if it's what you want,
 then it's all right with me. [1630]

HERCULES [*to Pisthetairos*]

Hey, we're ready to agree to terms
 about the sceptre.

PISTHETAIROS

By god, there's one more thing —
 I've just remembered. I'll let Zeus keep Hera,
 but he must give me that young girl Princess.
 She's to be my wife.

ΠΟΣΕΙΔΩΝ

σὺ διαλλαγῶν ἐρᾶς.
ἀπίωμεν οἴκαδ' αὐθις.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ὀλίγον μοι μέλει.
μάγειρε τὸ κατάχυσμα χρῆ ποιεῖν γλυκύ.

ἩΡΑΚΛΗΣ

ὦ δαιμόνι' ἀνθρώπων Πόσειδον ποῖ φέρει;
ἡμεῖς περὶ γυναικὸς μᾶς πολεμήσομεν;

ΠΟΣΕΙΔΩΝ

τί δαὶ ποιῶμεν;

1640

ἩΡΑΚΛΗΣ

ὄ τι; διαλλαττώμεθα.

ΠΟΣΕΙΔΩΝ

τί δ' ὦζύρ'; οὐκ οἶσθ' ἐξαπατῶμενος πάλαι;
βλάπτεις δέ τοι σὺ σαυτόν. ἦν γὰρ ἀποθάνη
ὁ Ζεὺς παραδοὺς τούτοις τὴν τυραννίδα,
πένης ἔσει σύ. σοῦ γὰρ ἅπαντα γίγνεται
τὰ χρήμαθ', ὅσ' ἂν ὁ Ζεὺς ἀποθνήσκων καταλίπη. 1645

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

οἴμοι τάλας οἶόν σε περισοφίζεται.
δεῦρ' ὡς ἔμ' ἀποχώρησον, ἵνα τί σοι φράσω.
διαβάλλεται σ' ὁ θεῖος ὦ πόνηρε σύ.
τῶν γὰρ πατρῶων οὐδ' ἀκαρῆ μέτεστί σοι
κατὰ τοὺς νόμους· νόθος γὰρ εἶ κοῦ γνήσιος. 1650

ἩΡΑΚΛΗΣ

ἐγὼ νόθος; τί λέγεις;

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

σὺ μέντοι νῆ Δία
ὦν γε ξένης γυναικός. ἦ πῶς ἂν ποτε
ἐπικληρον εἶναι τὴν Ἀθηναίαν δοκεῖς,
οὐσαν θυγατέρ', ὄντων ἀδελφῶν γησιῶν;

POSEIDON

Then you don't want
a real negotiation. Come on, let's go back home.

PISTHETAIROS

That's up to you. Hey, cook, watch that gravy.
Make sure you make it sweet!

HERCULES

Hey, Poseidon,
my dear fellow, where you going? Come on,
are we going to war about a woman?

POSEIDON

What should we do?

HERCULES

Do? Settle this matter.

POSEIDON

What? You fool! Don't you see what he's doing,
how all this time he's been deceiving you?
You're ruining yourself, you know. If Zeus dies,
after giving all his sovereignty to birds,
you'll have nothing. Right now you're his heir—
you get whatever's left when Zeus departs.

PISTHETAIROS [*to Hercules*]

Oh dear, dear—how he's trying to play with you.
Come on over here—let me tell you something.

[*Pisthetairos and Hercules talk apart from the others*]

You uncle's putting one over on you,
you poor fool—because, according to the law,
you don't get the smallest piece of property
from your father's goods. You're illegitimate—
you're a bastard. [1650]

HERCULES

A bastard? What do you mean?

PISTHETAIROS

I mean just what I say. Now, your mother—
she was an alien woman. And Athena—
do you think a daughter could inherit
if she's got legal brothers?

ἩΡΑΚΛΗΣ
τί δ' ἦν ὁ πατήρ ἐμοὶ διδῶ τὰ χρήματα
νοθεῖ' ἀποθνήσκων; 1655

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ
ὁ νόμος αὐτὸν οὐκ ἐᾷ.
οὗτος ὁ Ποσειδῶν πρῶτος, ὃς ἐπαίρει σε νῦν,
ἀνθέξεται σου τῶν πατρῶων χρημάτων
φάσκων ἀδελφὸς αὐτὸς εἶναι γνήσιος.
ἐρῶ δὲ δὴ καὶ τὸν Σόλωνός σοι νόμον· 1660
'νόθῳ δὲ μὴ εἶναι ἀγχιστεῖαν παίδων ὄντων
γνησίω. ἐὰν δὲ παῖδες μὴ ᾧσι γνήσιοι, τοῖς
ἐγγυτάτῳ γένους μετεῖναι τῶν χρημάτων.' 1665

ἩΡΑΚΛΗΣ
ἐμοὶ δ' ἄρ' οὐδὲν τῶν πατρῶων χρημάτων
μέτεστιν;

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ
οὐ μέντοι μὰ Δία. λέξον δέ μοι,
ἤδη σ' ὁ πατήρ εἰσήγαγ' ἐς τοὺς φράτερας;

ἩΡΑΚΛΗΣ
οὐ δῆτ' ἐμέ γε. καὶ δῆτ' ἐθαύμαζον πάλαι. 1670

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ
τί δῆτ' ἄνω κέχηνας αἴκειαν βλέπων;
ἀλλ' ἦν μεθ' ἡμῶν ἦς, καταστήσας σ' ἐγὼ
τύραννον ὀρνίθων παρέξω σοι γάλα.

ἩΡΑΚΛΗΣ
δίκαί' ἐμοίγε καὶ πάλαι δοκεῖς λέγειν
περὶ τῆς κόρης, κᾶγωγε παραδίδωμί σοι. 1675

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ
τί δαι σὺ φῆς;

ΠΟΣΕΙΔΩΝ
τᾶναντία ψηφίζομαι.

HERCULES [*very puzzled*]
But once he dies,
couldn't my dad leave me all his property
as a bastard's share?

PISTHETAIROS
The law won't let him.
The first one to claim your father's property
will be Poseidon here, who's raised your hopes.
He'll claim he's your father's legal brother.
I'll read you what Solon's laws dictate — [1660]

[*Pisthetairos pulls a piece of paper out and reads*]

"If there are lawful children, then a bastard
has no rights as a close blood relative.
If there are no lawful children, the goods
go to the nearest next of kin."

HERCULES
What!
I don't get anything from daddy's stuff?

PISTHETAIROS
Not a thing, by god. So tell me this —
has your father introduced you to his kin group yet?⁸⁸

HERCULES
No, not me. As a matter of fact,
I've been wondering about that for some time.

PISTHETAIROS
Well, don't just stare up there, mouth wide open,
planning an assault. Join up with us instead.
I'll make you a king and give you bird's milk.

HERCULES
I've always thought you're right in what you say
about the girl. I'd hand her over to you.

PISTHETAIROS [*to Poseidon*]
What do you say?

POSEIDON
I vote no.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἐν τῷ Τριβαλλῷ πᾶν τὸ πρᾶγμα. τί σὺ λέγεις;

ΤΡΙΒΑΛΛΟΣ

καλάνι κόραυνα καὶ μεγάλα βασιλιναῦ
ὄρνιτο παραδίδωμι.

ἩΡΑΚΛΗΣ

παραδοῦναι λέγει.

ΠΟΣΕΙΔΩΝ

μὰ τὸν Δι' οὐχ οὗτός γε παραδοῦναι λέγει, 1680
εἰ μὴ † βαδίζειν † ὥσπερ αἱ χελιδόσιν λέγει.

ἩΡΑΚΛΗΣ

οὐκοῦν παραδοῦναι ταῖς χελιδόσιν λέγει.

ΠΟΣΕΙΔΩΝ

σφῶ νῦν διαλλάττεσθε καὶ ξυμβαίνετε·
ἐγὼ δ', ἐπειδὴ σφῶν δοκεῖ, σιγήσομαι.

ἩΡΑΚΛΗΣ

ἡμῖν ἂ λέγεις σὺ πάντα συγχωρεῖν δοκεῖ. 1685
ἀλλ' ἴθι μεθ' ἡμῶν αὐτὸς ἐς τὸν οὐρανόν,
ἵνα τὴν Βασίλειαν καὶ τὰ πάντ' ἐκεῖ λάβῃς.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἐς καιρὸν ἄρα κατεκόπησαν οὐτοῦ
ἐς τοὺς γάμους.

ἩΡΑΚΛΗΣ

βούλεσθε δῆτ' ἐγὼ τέως
ὀπτῶ τὰ κρέα ταυτὶ μένων; ὑμεῖς δ' ἴτε. 1690

ΠΟΣΕΙΔΩΝ

ὀπτᾶς τὰ κρέα; πολλήν γε τενθείαν λέγεις.
οὐκ εἰ μεθ' ἡμῶν;

ἩΡΑΚΛΗΣ

εἶ γε μέντ' ἀν διετέθην.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἀλλὰ γαμικὴν χλανίδα δότω τις δευρό μοι.

PISTHETAIROS

So now,
it's up to the Triballian here. What you say?

TRIBALLIAN

De geer! geeve over greet souvrin bridies.

HERCULES

There! He says to hand her over.

POSEIDON

No by god! [1680]
he never said to give her up—no way.
He's just babbling like a swallow.

HERCULES

So he said hand her over to the swallows!

POSEIDON

You two work it out—agree on peace terms.
Since you're both for it, I'll say nothing more.

HERCULES

We ready now to give you all you ask.
So come along with us in person—
up to heaven—there you can get your Princess,
and all those other things as well.

PISTHETAIROS [*pointing to the cooking he's been preparing*]

So these birds were slaughtered in good time
before the wedding feast.

HERCULES

If you want to,
I could stay here and roast the meat. You go. [1690]

POSEIDON

Roast the meat? You mean you'd wolf it down,
you glutton. Come on with us. Let's go.

HERCULES [*reluctantly leaving*]

I'd have enjoyed eating that.

PISTHETAIROS [*calling to his slaves*]

Hey, you—
one of you bring me out some wedding clothes!

ΧΟΡΟΣ

ἔστι δ' ἐν Φαναίσι πρὸς τῇ
 Κλειψύδρα πανοῦργον ἐγ- 1695
 γλωπτογαστόρων γένος,
 οἱ θερίζουσίν τε καὶ σπείρουσι
 καὶ τρυγῶσι ταῖς γλώτταισι
 συκάζουσί τε·
 βάρβαροι δ' εἰσὶν γένος, 1700
 Γοργαίαι τε καὶ Φίλιπποι.
 κάπὸ τῶν ἐγγλωπτογαστόρων
 ἐκείνων τῶν Φιλίππων
 πανταχοῦ τῆς Ἀττικῆς ἢ
 γλώττα χωρὶς τέμνεται. 1705

ἌΓΓΕΛΟΣ Β

ὦ πάντ' ἀγαθὰ πράττοντες, ὦ μείζω λόγου,
 ὦ τρισμακάριον πτηνὸν ὀρνίθων γένος,
 δέχεσθε τὸν τύραννον ὀλβίοις δόμοις.
 προσέρχεται γὰρ οἷς οὔτε παμφαῆς 1710
 ἀστῆρ ἰδεῖν ἔλαμψε χρυσαυγεί δόμῳ,
 οὔθ' ἡλίου τηλαυγῆς ἀκτίνων σέλας
 τοιοῦτον ἐξέλαμψεν, οἷον ἔρχεται
 ἔχων γυναικὸς κάλλος οὐ φατὸν λέγειν,
 πάλλων κεραυνόν, πτεροφόρον Διὸς βέλος·
 ὀσμὴ δ' ἀωνόμαστος ἐς βάθος κύκλου 1715
 χωρεῖ, καλὸν θέαμα· θυμιαμάτων δ'
 αὔραι διαψαίρουσι πλεκτάνην καπνοῦ.
 ὀδὶ δὲ καυτός ἐστιν. ἀλλὰ χρὴ θεᾶς
 Μούσης ἀνοίγειν ἱερὸν εὐφημον στόμα.

ΧΟΡΟΣ

ἄναγε δῖεχε πάραγε πάρεχε. 1720
 περιπέτεσθε
 τὸν μάκαρα μάκαρι σὺν τύχῃ.
 ὦ φεῦ φεῦ τῆς ὥρας τοῦ κάλλους.
 ὦ μακαριστὸν σὺ γάμον τῆδε πόλει γημᾶς. 1725

CHORUS

In lands of Litigation there's a place —
 it's right beside the water clock —
 where that villainous and thieving race
 of tongue-and-belly men all flock.
 They use their tongues to sow and reap,
 to harvest grapes and figs en masse.
 A crude barbarian tribe, a heap [1700]
 of Philipsees and Gorgias.
 From these horse-loving sycophants,
 who use their tongues to cram their gut,
 through all of Attica's expanse
 in sacrifice the tongue's first cut.⁸⁹

[Enter Second Herald]

SECOND HERALD

You here who've done fine things, more wonderful
 than I can say, you thrice-blessed race with wings,
 you birds, welcome now your king on his return,
 as he comes back among these wealthy halls.
 Here he approaches — you'll never see a star
 so bright in any gleaming home of gold. [1710]
 No — not even the far-reaching rays of sun
 have ever shone as splendidly as he,
 the man who brings with him his lovely wife,
 too beautiful for words, and brandishing
 the winged thunderbolt from Zeus. Sweet smells
 are rising up, high into heaven's vault,
 a glorious spectacle, and wisps of smoke
 from burning incense are blown far and wide.
 Here he is in person. Let the sacred Muse
 open her lips in a triumphal holy song.

[Enter Pisthetairos and his bride Princess]

CHORUS

Back off, break up, make room — [1720]
 And wing your way around the man
 so blessed with blissful fortune.
 Oh, oh — such beauty and such youth!
 What a blessing for this city of the birds
 is this fine marriage you have made.

μεγάλοι μεγάλοι κατέχουσι τύχαι
γένος ὀρνίθων
διὰ τόνδε τὸν ἄνδρ'. ἀλλ' ὑμεναίοις
καὶ νυμφιδίοισι δέχεσθ' ᾠδαῖς
αὐτὸν καὶ τὴν Βασίλειαν. 1730

Ἥρα ποτ' Ὀλυμπία
τῶν ἡλιβάτων θρόνων
ἄρχοντα θεοῖς μέγαν
Μοῖραι ξυνεκοίμισαν
ἐν τοιῶδ' ὑμεναίῳ. 1735
Ἵμῆν ᾦ Ὑμέναι' ᾦ,
Ἵμῆν ᾦ Ὑμέναι' ᾦ.

ὁ δ' ἀμφιθαλῆς Ἔρως
χρυσόπτερος ἠγίας
ἠῦθνε παλιτόνους,
Ζηνὸς πάροχος γάμων 1740
τῆς τ' εὐδαίμονος Ἥρας.
Ἵμῆν ᾦ Ὑμέναι' ᾦ,
Ἵμῆν ᾦ Ὑμέναι' ᾦ.

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἐχάρην ὕμνοις, ἐχάρην ᾠδαῖς·
ἄγαμαι δὲ λόγων.

ΧΟΡΟΣ

ἄγε νῦν αὐτοῦ καὶ τὰς χθονίας 1745
κλήσατε βροντὰς τὰς τε πυρώδεις
Διὸς ἀστεροπὰς
δεινὸν τ' ἀργῆτα κεραυνόν.

ᾦ μέγα χρύσειον ἀστεροπῆς φάος,
ᾦ Διὸς ἄμβροτον ἔγχος πυρφόρον, 1750
ᾦ χθόνιαι βαρναχέες
ὄμβροφόροι θ' ἅμα βρονταί,
αἷς ὄδε νῦν χθόνα σείει.
διὰ σὲ τὰ πάντα κρατήσας
καὶ πάρεδρον Βασίλειαν ἔχει Διός.
Ἵμῆν ᾦ Ὑμέναι' ᾦ.

A great good fortune now attends us,
the race of birds—such mighty bliss,
thanks to this man. So welcome back
with nuptial chants and wedding songs
our man himself and his Princess.

Olympian Hera and great Zeus
who rules the gods on lofty thrones
the Fates once joined with wedding songs.
O Hymen, Hymenaeus⁹⁰

And rich young Eros in his golden wings
held tight the reins as charioteer
at Zeus' wedding to the happy Hera.

O Hymen, Hymenaeus,
O Hymen, Hymenaeus.

ΠΙΣΤΗΤΑΙΡΟΣ

Your chants fill me with great delight,
as do you songs. And I just love your words.

CHORUS

Come now, celebrate in song
earth-shattering thunder, Zeus' lightning fire—
which now belong to him—
that dreaded bolt white lightning, too.
Oh, that great golden blaze of lightning,
that immortal fiery spear of Zeus,
and groaning thunders bringing rain— [1750]
with you this man now rattles Earth.
And everything that Zeus once had,
he's got it all—and that includes
our Princess, who once sat by Zeus' throne.
O Hymen, Hymenaeus!

ΠΙΣΘΕΤΑΙΡΟΣ

ἔπεσθε νῦν γάμοισιν ὦ
 φύλα πάντα συννόμων
 πτεροφόρ' ἐπὶ δάπεδον Διὸς
 καὶ λέχος γαμήλιον.
 ὄρεξον ὦ μάκαιρα σὴν
 χεῖρα καὶ πτερῶν ἐμῶν
 λαβοῦσα συγχόρευσον· αἴρων
 δὲ κουφιῶ σ' ἐγώ.

1755

1760

ΧΟΡΟΣ

ἀλαλαλαὶ ἢ παιῶν,
 τήνελλα καλλίνικος, ὦ
 δαιμόνων ὑπέρτατε.

1765

PISTHETAIROS

Now all you feathered tribes of friends,
 come follow me on this my wedding flight.
 Let's wing our way up there to Zeus' house
 and to our wedding bed. Reach out your hand,
 my blissful love, and take hold of my wing— [1760]
 then dance with me. I'll lift and carry you.

[Pisthetairos and Princess lead the procession off the stage]

CHORUS

Alalalalai—
 Raise triumphal cries of joy,
 sing out the noble victor's song—
 the mightiest and highest of all gods!

[The procession exits singing and dancing, accompanying Pisthetairos and his bride up to Heaven]

NOTES

- 1 *Execestides*: An Athenian descended from Carian slaves and therefore not entitled to be a citizen. The point here is that he must have been extremely skilful to get to Athens, given where he started, and even he couldn't navigate his way back to Athens in this terrain.
- 2 *Tereus*: the name of a mythological king of Thrace who married Procne and raped her sister Philomela. The sisters killed his son and fed Tereus the flesh for dinner. All three were changed into birds: Tereus into a hoopoe, Procne into a nightingale, and Philomela into a swallow.
- 3 *Tharraleides*: the reference here seems to be to a well-known member of the audience, perhaps celebrated for his small size and loud voice.
- 4 *birds*: the Greek expression is "to the Ravens," meaning "go to hell."
- 5 *Sacas*: a name for Acestor, a foreign-born tragic dramatist.
- 6 *tribe and clan*: the political units of Athenian civic life.
- 7 *basket, pot, and myrtle boughs*: these materials were necessary to conduct the sacrifices at the founding of a new city.
- 8 *twelve gods*: the major Olympian deities, headed by Zeus.
- 9 Most Athenians knew very little about peacocks.
- 10 *Cranaus*: reference to a mythological king who founded Athens or a word derived from *kranaos*, meaning rugged, a word often applied to Athens.
- 11 *son of Scellias*: the reference is to a man called Aristocrates, an important politician-soldier in Athens.
- 12 *difficult for me*: this is a utopian fantasy because the neighbour is suggesting that, as a punishment, his friend Euelpides would not have to help him if he gets in financial trouble, even though he's invited him to an important family celebration.
- 13 *Red Sea*: a general term for any sea by the southern coasts of Asia.
- 14 *summons*: Athenian citizens could be legally summoned home for trial. Salamia was an official ship often used for such voyages.

- 15 *Melanthius' fault*: the reference is to an Athenian tragic dramatist who had a very bad skin condition (making him look as if he had leprosy).
- 16 *Opuntius*: a widely disliked Athenian informer. A talent's weight is just under 30 kilograms.
- 17 *Teleus*: Athenian politician with a reputation for being unpredictable.
- 18 *Melos*: the Athenians committed a horrible atrocity during the Peloponnesian War, starving the population of Melos and then executing all male citizens.
- 19 In some productions of *The Birds* the set design permits the audience to see inside Tereus' quarters, so that the singer of the songs which follow remains visible to the audience. Alternatively, Tereus could move out onto a rocky balcony to deliver his song. It seems dramatically very weak to have him deliver these lyrics out of sight of the audience.
- 20 *Itys*: son of Tereus and Procne, killed by his mother, who served him up as dinner, in revenge for Tereus' rape and mutilation of her sister.
- 21 *Hipponicus*: this passage refers to the Greek custom of naming children after their grandfathers. Philocles was a tragic dramatist. Callias, his son, was a notorious spendthrift who squandered his family inheritance on a debauched lifestyle.
- 22 *Cleonymus*: an Athenian politician well known for his eating habits and his size. He also reputedly once threw his shield away in battle and ran off.
- 23 *safer*: Písthetairos refers to a race in which the runners wore helmets with plumes (crests), but Tereus misunderstands and talks about mountain crests where the birds live. Caria is in Asia Minor.
- 24 *shaver*: the Greek bird *kerulos* was a mythological species. The passage here plays on the similarity of the verb *keirein* meaning to cut hair.
- 25 *Athens*: to bring owls to Athens is an expression for something totally unnecessary (like bringing coals to Newcastle).
- 26 *Nikias*: Athenian general famous for his tactical skill.
- 27 *Orneai*: a siege in which some Athenians took part. There were no casualties.
- 28 *wim*: a reference to the fact that *The Birds* is competing in a drama festival.

- 29 *Earth*: Kronos was the father of Zeus; the Titans were the sons of Kronos. Earth was the original mother goddess.
- 30 *Halimus*: a community on the coast near Athens.
- 31 *kite*: an old Greek custom of saluting the kite as the bird announcing the arrival of spring by rolling on the ground. This speech refers to the habit of carrying small coins in the mouth. Having eaten his money, he can't buy the food he set out to purchase.
- 32 These lines are an attempt to deal with an totally obscure sexual pun in the Greek.
- 33 *Lysicrates gets*: a reference to a corrupt Athenian politician.
- 34 *Lampon*: a well known soothsayer in Athens. "By Goose" is a euphemistic way of swearing "By Zeus."
- 35 *Kebriones* and *Porphyrion* were two Giants who fought against the Olympian gods.
- 36 These women all had sexual encounters with gods. Alkmene and Zeus produced Hercules; Semele and Zeus produced Dionysus; and Alope and Poseidon produced Hippothoon.
- 37 *Zan*: an archaic and contemptuous name for Zeus.
- 38 *crow*: in legend and folk lore the life span of the crow was enormous.
- 39 *Nikias*: Athenian general, famous for his hesitation about tactics.
- 40 *Erebus*: the primeval darkness.
- 41 *Prodicus*: a reference to a well known philosopher who offered a materialistic explanation for the origin of the gods.
- 42 These lines refer to the custom of giving one's lover a bird as a present.
- 43 *Orestes*: the reference is to a well-known thief of other people's clothing.
- 44 In other words, we're all the oracles you need. Ammon, Delphi, and Dodona are shrines famous for prophecy. Apollo is the god of prophecy.
- 45 *Diitrephes*: prominent Athenian politician and general. A horse-cock is a mythological animal with the front of a horse and the rear of a cock.
- 46 Poor people used esparto grass to make rope chords to hold up the mattress. Rich folks used linen. The pun here is obviously on Sparta/

- esparto. Euelpides won't have anything to do with Sparta or anything that sounds like it.
- 47 *Theogenes and Aeschines*: two Athenian business men who constantly boasted they were richer than they were.
- 48 the *giants* were the monstrous children of Uranus; the gods are the Olympians, headed by Zeus. The point here is that Cloudcuckooland is so great, it's a place for divine boasting, not just the sort of thing rich Athenians might brag about.
- 49 *Cleisthenes*: a well-known homosexual in Athens, often satirized by Aristophanes.
- 50 The officer inspecting the sentries regularly rang a small bell to indicate that all was well.
- 51 *Hestia*: traditional goddess of the hearth.
- 52 *Cleocritus*: a very ugly Athenian who was often compared to an ostrich.
- 53 The *Chians* were staunch allies of Athens in the Peloponnesian War.
- 54 *Simonides*: well-known lyric poet of the previous generation.
- 55 These lines are a jumble of allusions to well known poems. The founder of Aetna is Heiron, ruler of Syracuse, whose name is the same as the word for "of holy things." In Homer a nod of the head signifies divine assent.
- 56 *Lampon and Diopieithes* were well-known soothsayers in Athens.
- 57 *Meton* was a famous astronomer and engineer.
- 58 *Colonus*: a district of Athens.
- 59 *Thales*: very famous astronomer and thinker from distant past. Thales is often considered the founder of philosophy.
- 60 *Commissioner*: an official who was sent out to supervise and report on a new colony.
- 61 *Sardanapallos* was the last king of Assyria, famous in legend for his extravagant lifestyle and appearance.
- 62 *Teleas*, an Athenian politician, would have proposed sending the Commissioner out.

- 63 *Pharnakes* was an important Persian official. Dealing with him would be considered treasonous in some quarters.
- 64 A small town in the remote north east of Greece (by Mount Athos).
- 65 At the drama festival formal public announcements like this were part of the script. Diagoras was a notorious atheist who had fled Athens. The reward for killing old tyrants was part of a ritual pronouncement to protect democracy.
- 66 *Alexander*: another name for Paris of Troy.
- 67 The owls of Laureium are coins. The owl was stamped on Athenian coins, and Laureium was the site of the silver mines.
- 68 Greek temples commonly had triangular pediments known as "eagles."
- 69 Pisthetairus compares Iris to a ship because her dressing is billowing like a sail. The two names he gives are the two main flag ships of the Athenian fleet.
- 70 *Porphyryion* was the name of one of the giants who went to war against Zeus.
- 71 The lines following refer to a number of political figures in Athens.
- 72 This reference is to a very popular betting game in which a quail was placed inside a circle and tapped on the head to see if it would back off or stand its ground.
- 73 Manes is probably another name for Manodoros, since there are only two slaves in the play.
- 74 I follow Sommerstein's useful suggestion and add this line here to make sense of the lines which follow.
- 75 At the festival for tragic drama, the war orphans were paraded around in special armour given to them by the state.
- 76 *Cinesias* was a well-known and frequently satirized poet in Athens. He was extremely thin and evidently suffered very badly from diarrhea.
- 77 The tribes were the political divisions in Athenian life. The dithyrambic competitions were organized by tribes, each one wanting the services of the best poets.

Aristophanes

- 78 *Leotrophides* was another Athenian famous for being extremely thin (like Cinesias).
- 79 The point here seems to be that the Sycophant's cloak is so thin and worn that he's singing for warm weather, when he won't need it.
- 80 Cranes reputedly swallowed stones to serve as ballast on their flights.
- 81 These lines refer to the notion that meeting up with ghosts of heroes is all right during the day but harmful at night. There is also another reference here to the thief Orestes (mentioned earlier by the Chorus Leader) who beats people and steals their clothes.
- 82 *Thesmophoria*: an important religious festival in Greece, during which there was a period of fasting.
- 83 *Triballians*: the name of a barbarian tribe in Thrace, north of Greece. The Tiballian god who enters with Poseidon and Hercules a few lines later on cannot speak Greek, so his lines are incomprehensible gibberish.
- 84 *Prometheus* stole fire from heaven and gave it to human beings.
- 85 *Timon* was a legendary Athenian who hated his fellow citizens.
- 86 *Peisander*: an Athenian with a reputation for corruption and cowardice. Chaerephon was well known as an associate of Socrates.
- 87 *Laespodias*: Athenian politician who dressed oddly to conceal his misshapen legs.
- 88 A kin group (*phrateres*) was a group of citizens who shared a common ancestor.
- 89 These lines attack the Sophists who earned their living by teaching rhetoric. Gorgias was a famous sophist and Philip was his pupil and disciple. They are called horse-loving either to suggest extravagant ambitions or their non-Athenian tribal origins. In sacrificing an animal, the Athenians cut out the tongue first. The suggestion seems to be that that's what the speaker would like to do with the Sophists.
- 90 A customary salute to the gods of marriage.