

Aristophanes: Lysistrata

Trans. & Intro. Alan H.
Sommerstein

Penguin Books

Preface to *Lysistrata*

The Acharnians was an appeal for peace. *Peace*, produced four years later in 421 BC, was a celebration of peace: negotiations with Sparta were nearing completion, and the Peace of Nicias was concluded and sworn only a few days after the performance of the play. *Lysistrata* is the third and last of Aristophanes' 'peace plays' that we possess; it has much in common with the other two, but its spirit is different from either of them. It is a dream about peace, conceived at a time when Athens was going through the most desperate crisis she had known since the Persian War.

Late in 413 news had reached Athens of the total destruction of her expeditionary force in Sicily. At one blow the Athenians found themselves with virtually no navy and, it seemed, with virtually no hope. Spartan land forces had already occupied the strong point of Decelea in Attica; Spartan naval forces might at any moment choose to attack the Peiraeus; many of Athens' subject allies seized the opportunity of changing sides, and Persian provincial governors competed with each other for the honour of bringing back under the Great King's rule the Greeks of Asia Minor who had revolted from his grandfather Xerxes nearly seventy years before, now that the power of Athens, which had dominated and protected them for so long, seemed at last to be finally crumbling.

But, as so often before, swift Athenian action mitigated disaster while Spartan caution squandered the chance of victory. The feared stroke at the Athenian jugular never came, and meanwhile Athens was able to build a new navy, making use of the special reserve fund that had been set aside twenty years

before and kept in one of the temples on the Acropolis. In addition a special advisory board of ten *probouloi* was established, with the power to make policy proposals and convene the Council and Assembly; this represented, though only to a limited extent, a break with democratic principle as Athenians understood it, for unlike most magistrates (who were chosen by lot for one year) the *probouloi* were chosen by election and were apparently to hold office indefinitely. They were also a distinctly elderly group: of the two whose names we know, one (the poet Sophocles) was in his mid-eighties, while the other (Hagnon), once a close associate of Pericles, had played little part in public life since Pericles' death in 429. The senile and ineffective *probouloi* in our play may to some extent indicate the public image of this board early in the second (and last) year of its existence.

Lysistrata was produced early in 411, probably at the Lenaea. The new Athenian fleet, based at Samos, had been campaigning in the Aegean for a year, its successes and failures about equally balanced; on the other side there was frequent word of negotiations between Sparta and Persia, though these had not yet borne fruit in an actual alliance. Meanwhile the mercenary Alcibiades, now in exile both from Athens and from Sparta,¹ had come to the court of the Persian satrap Tissaphernes and was intriguing to secure his return to Athens by promising that he could bring Persia into the war on the Athenian side – though only at the price of far-reaching changes in the Athenian constitution. It may have been about the time of the Lenaea that a delegation from Samos, led by Peisander, came to Athens and began to spread this message among those whom they thought politically reliable – the beginning of a process that led, four or five months later, to the temporary overthrow of Athenian democracy. But even if this process had begun at the time when *Lysistrata* was produced, it does not appear that anything was publicly known about it. All that most Athenians could see was that the war was going on as usual and there seemed to be no way out of it – no way, that is, other than the unthinkable option of capitulation.

But comedy specializes in doing the impossible, and in *Lysistrata* fantasy supplies a way out. Even in fantasy, though,

it is recognized that Athens cannot end the war on her own: in the play, the women of *all* the warring states have to co-operate in forcing peace upon the men, because they all perceive (as Trygaeus, the hero of *Peace*, had perceived ten years before) that the war is bringing ruin to the whole Greek people and benefiting no one except the Persians – who, it is suggested in both plays, may take advantage of Greek weakness and exhaustion, not only to re-annex the Greek communities of Asia, but even to repeat Xerxes' attempt to bring Greece itself into their empire.

That it was better to be at peace than at war, other things being equal, was a principle theoretically accepted by all Greeks; but other things, all too often, did not seem equal. It was not only that war sometimes appeared to be the only way to protect the honour or even the safety of a community: war also provided unequalled opportunities for the citizen to display courage, for the general to win prestige, for the politician to be able to claim that he had enhanced his city's glory and power. Women, it might be thought, were largely immune from these temptations. They did not fight, they did not compete for the prizes of politics, and whereas the worst that could happen to a man in war was a glorious death,² for a woman it could mean decades of misery as a bereaved wife or mother, or even the prospect of not having the chance to *become* a wife and mother in a society in which the unmarried woman had no role and no place.³ If women perceived this, and if they could unite across the boundaries of the warring states, could they not, would they not, take drastic steps to bring this madness to an end and impose a sensible compromise peace? In this play, this is exactly what they do.

We today find it easy to understand how it might be imagined that a concerted, solid sexual boycott on the part of women could force the men affected to abandon a policy to which these women objected; indeed from time to time one hears of such boycotts actually being threatened in this or that locality, and occasionally the threat is carried out. This would not be the mindset of Aristophanes' essentially male audience. For one thing, the plot requires us to assume that consensual marital sex

was the *only* kind of sex available to an Athenian male, or at least the only kind that would give him worthwhile satisfaction; well-known alternatives are simply ignored.⁴ For another, it also requires us to assume that women are, or can be persuaded to be, better able than men to endure sexual deprivation – and it was an article of faith with virtually all Greek males (and in comedy in particular, it was normally axiomatic) that the reverse was the case. That Lysistrata's scheme succeeds can thus be explained, in the average spectator's eyes, only by divine support. Aphrodite, the goddess of the sexual process, ensures that the men are quickly brought to the last stage of physical desperation, while the virgin Athena, goddess of the Acropolis where most of the action is set and also a major figure of Spartan cult, through her agent Lysistrata strengthens the women to endure abstinence for the time necessary for the scheme to succeed. Nor, indeed, do they rely on the sexual boycott alone: equally important, especially in the first half of the play, is the actual occupation of the Acropolis by the women, which deprives the male Athenian state of access to the money without which it cannot maintain or operate its navy.

Lysistrata (whose name means 'Liquidator of Armies') has a very close connection with Athena; so close that it has been suggested that by the end of the play the two are virtually identified.⁵ It has been pointed out that at this time the priestess of Athena Polias (Athena the City- or Acropolis-goddess) – the most important, and the most publicly visible, woman in Athens – bore the very similar name Lysimache ('Liquidator of Battles'), and that Lysistrata is actually made to say (line 554) that if she and her followers are successful they will be known throughout Greece as Lysimaches.⁶ It would be a little misleading to claim that the character of Lysistrata represents the priestess Lysimache in the sense, for example, in which the character Paphlagon in *The Knights* represents Cleon; what we can say is that Aristophanes has given her a similar name as part of a process of building a strong association between her, the Acropolis and Athena, with the aim of making the course and outcome of the play seem less like an insubordinate rebellion by women against the lawful authority of the male, and more like the righteous

effectuation of the will of her who was 'our Protectress ... Athens' own goddess'⁷ – but also, as she had shown in the Trojan and Persian wars,⁸ the protectress of Greece as a whole against enemies to the east.

But in the end, the play remains a dream. Its own script, indeed, admits as much, when the Chorus offer loans of money (at first misleadingly spoken of as if they were gifts) with the promise that, *if ever* peace comes, the loan need not be repaid (lines 1055–7). In the real world, the Athenian people were soon, for lack of any apparent alternative, accepting Peisander's promise of a Persian alliance (not knowing that neither he nor Alcibiades was in any position to deliver it, if they ever had been) on the understanding that it would involve 'some modification of the existing democratic system' – an expression which deserves a high place in any catalogue of political euphemisms. No one could have imagined then what the situation would be within another year: democracy first abolished and then restored; Alcibiades in command of the Athenian fleet; and the Spartans, after two heavy naval defeats, themselves offering terms of peace – and having them turned down.

NOTES

1. When serving as one of the commanders of the Sicilian expedition in 415, he had been arrested on charges of sacrilege, escaped, and defected to Sparta; in 412, however, he had to defect again when allegations were made (all too plausible in view of his long-standing reputation) of an affair between him and the wife of the Spartan king Agis.

2. We hear very little in antiquity about that all too familiar product of modern war, the disabled survivor; given the primitive state of medicine and especially of hygiene, it is likely that few of the seriously wounded would come home alive.

3. The plight of the unmarried forms the climax of Lysistrata's argument in the *agon* (lines 591–7). Similarly, when the orator Lysias catalogues the crimes of the Thirty (the junta who ruled Athens in 404/3), the culminating atrocity is not that they put over a thousand citizens to death without any proper trial, but that they 'prevented

many men's daughters from being given in marriage' (*Lysias, Against Erastosthenes* 2.1).

4. Elsewhere, for example, both in comedy and other texts, it is routinely assumed that a man's female slaves will be sexually available to him; in *Lysistrata* there is almost complete silence about the very existence of female slaves, even to the extent that when Cinesias comes on stage with a baby, he has a *male* slave to look after it.

5. It is striking that in the hymn sung in lines 1279–90, in which the Graces, Artemis, Apollo, Dionysus, Zeus and Hera are invited to join the dance, and credit is given to Aphrodite for bringing the peace, no mention is made of Athena, who in the play as a whole has been far more prominent than any other divinity. Is this because Athena is already present – as Lysistrata – and is, indeed, herself singing the hymn?

6. There had been a similar play on the priestess's name in *Peace* (line 992).

7. *The Clouds*, lines 601–2.

8. We now think of the former as 'mythical' and the latter as 'historical'; but for an Athenian both alike were part of his city's glorious past, and the Persian War had come to share space on public monuments and in official oratory (e.g. at state funerals) with the Trojan War, the Amazons' invasion of Attica, and other episodes of the heroic age.

Characters

LYSISTRATA
CALONICE
MYRRHINE } *Athenian women*

LAMPITO, a Spartan woman
CHORUS OF OLD MEN

CHORUS OF OLD WOMEN (including their leader
STRATYLLIS)

MAGISTRATE, one of the ten probouloi
THREE OLD WOMEN from the group which has seized
the Acropolis

FOUR YOUNG WOMEN from the group which has
taken Lysistrata's oath

CINESIAS, husband to Myrrhine
BABY, son of Cinesias and Myrrhine

A SPARTAN HERALD

A SPARTAN PEACE DELEGATE

TWO ATHENIAN PEACE DELEGATES

Silent Characters

ATHENIAN WOMEN, young and old

SPARTAN WOMEN

ISMENIA, a Theban woman

A CORINTHIAN WOMAN

SCYTHAENA, servant to Lysistrata

TWO SLAVES attending the Magistrate

FOUR SCYTHIAN POLICEMEN

MANES, slave to Cinesias

ATHENIAN AND SPARTAN PEACE DELEGATES
 SERVANTS *attending the Spartan delegates*
 RECONCILIATION
 DOORKEEPER

SCENE: *At first, in front of the houses of Lysistrata and Calonice, somewhere in Athens; later the background building will be reidentified as the west front of the Acropolis. It is early morning.*

[LYSISTRATA comes out of her house. She looks right and left, with increasing impatience, to see if anyone is coming.]

LYSISTRATA [*annoyed*]: Just think if it had been a Bacchic celebration they'd been asked to attend – or something in honour of Pan or Aphrodite! You wouldn't have been able to move for all the tambourines.¹ But as it is – not a woman here! [CALONICE's door opens and she comes out to join LYSISTRATA.] No, here's my neighbour coming out, at any rate. Good morning, Calonice.

CALONICE: Same to you, Lysistrata. What's bothering you, dear? Don't screw up your face like that. Knitted brows really don't suit you.

LYSISTRATA: Sorry, Calonice, but I'm furious. I'm really disappointed in womankind. All our husbands think we're such clever villains –

CALONICE: Well, aren't we?

LYSISTRATA: And now look – I've called a meeting to discuss a very major matter, and they're all still fast asleep!

CALONICE: Don't worry, darling, they'll come. It's not so easy for a wife to get out of the house, you know. They'll all be hanging round their husbands, waking up the servants, putting the baby to sleep or washing and feeding it –

20 LYSISTRATA: But dammit, there are more important things than that!

CALONICE: Tell me, Lysistrata dear, what is this thing that you've called us women together to talk about? Is it a big thing?

LYSISTRATA: A very big thing.

CALONICE: Big and meaty,² you mean?

LYSISTRATA: Very big and very meaty.

CALONICE: Then why on earth aren't they here?

25 LYSISTRATA: That's not what I meant – otherwise they certainly *would* have arrived promptly! No, it's an idea that I've been thinking over and tossing about through many sleepless nights.

CALONICE: Something pretty flimsy, then, surely, if it's so easy to toss about?

30 LYSISTRATA: Flimsy? Why, Calonice, we women have the salvation of all Greece in our hands.

CALONICE: In *our* hands? Then Greece hasn't much hope!

LYSISTRATA: The whole future of the country³ rests with us.

Either the Peloponnesians are all going to be wiped out –

CALONICE: Good idea, by Zeus!

35 LYSISTRATA: – and the Boeotians totally destroyed –

CALONICE: Not all of them, please! Do spare the eels.⁴

LYSISTRATA: – and Athens – well, I won't say it, but you know what it is that I'm not saying. But if all the women join together – not just us, but the Peloponnesians and Boeotians as well – then united we can save Greece.

40 CALONICE: But how can women achieve anything so grand or noble? What do we ever do but sit at home looking pretty, wearing saffron gowns and make-up and Cimmeric shifts and giant slippers?⁵

LYSISTRATA: But don't you see, that's exactly what I mean to use to save Greece – those saffron gowns and scents and giant slippers and rouges and see-through shifts.

CALONICE: How are you going to do that?

50 LYSISTRATA: I am going to bring it about that no man, for at least a generation, will raise a spear against another –

CALONICE: I'm going to get a gown dyed saffron, by the Holy Twain!⁶

LYSISTRATA: – nor take a shield in his hand –

CALONICE: I'll put on a see-through right away!

LYSISTRATA: – or even an icky little sword.

CALONICE: I'm going to buy a pair of giant slippers!

LYSISTRATA: *Now* do you think the women ought to have been here by now?

55 CALONICE: By Zeus, yes – they ought to have taken wing and flown here!

LYSISTRATA: No such luck, old girl; they are Athenian, after all, and can always be relied on to be late.⁷ We haven't even had anyone yet from the Paralia, or any of the Salaminians.⁸

60 CALONICE: Well, I'm sure *they'll* have been *riding over* since the early hours!

LYSISTRATA: And the ones I was most expecting and counting on being here first – the Acharnians⁹ – they haven't come either.

CALONICE: Well, I'm sure that Theogenes' wife at least will have been putting on all sail to get here.¹⁰ [*Pointing offstage*]

But look, here come some of them now.

LYSISTRATA [*looking in the opposite direction*]: Yes, and here are some more.

[MYRRHINE and several other women arrive, some from the left, others from the right. CALONICE recoils from one group as if from a loathsome smell.]

CALONICE: Ugh, where are this lot from?

LYSISTRATA: Stinking Trefois!¹¹

CALONICE: That's why I thought I'd bumped into one!

MYRRHINE [*who has taken a little time to get her breath back*]:

We're not late, are we, Lysistrata? [*There is no reply.*] Well?

Why aren't you saying anything?

LYSISTRATA: Myrrhine, I'm not best pleased with someone who arrives this late when such an important matter is to be discussed.

MYRRHINE: I'm sorry, I had trouble finding my waistband in the dark. If it's that important, don't wait for the rest, tell us about it now.

75 LYSISTRATA: No, let's wait just a moment. The Boeotian and Peloponnesian women should be here any time now.

MYRRHINE: You're right. Ah, here comes Lampito!

[Enter LAMPITO, accompanied by ISMENIA the Theban and a CORINTHIAN WOMAN, and followed by several other SPARTAN WOMEN. All their garments are slit at the side.]

80 LYSISTRATA: Welcome, Lampito, my beloved Spartan friend! Sweetheart, how absolutely ravishing you look! Such beautiful colour, such rippling muscles! Why, I bet you could throttle a bull.

LAMPITO: So I cuid, I'm thinking, by the Twa Gods.¹² I'm in training – practise heel-to-bum jumps regularly. [She takes a two-footed jump, touching both buttocks with her heels and landing on her feet.]

CALONICE¹³ [feeling Lampito's breasts]: A very nice pair you've got here, too.

LAMPITO [indignantly]: I'd thank ye not tae feel me over as if ye were just about tae sacrifice me.¹⁴

85 LYSISTRATA [pointing to Ismenia]: Where does this other girl come from?

LAMPITO: By the Twa Gods, this is the Boeotian representative that's come tae ye.

MYRRHINE [looking inside her dress]: Yes, she represents Boeotia very well, with those fine broad lowlands!

CALONICE [same business]: And with all the herbage so carefully plucked, too!

90 LYSISTRATA: And this other one?

LAMPITO: A lass of noble line, by the Twa Gods, a Corinthian. CALONICE [pointing to the Corinthian's well-padded belly and buttocks]: She certainly has noble lines here and here!

LAMPITO: Now who's the convener of this women's gathering?

LYSISTRATA: I am.

95 LAMPITO: Then tell us what ye seek of us.

MYRRHINE: Yes, dear, do tell us just what this important business is.

LYSISTRATA: I will tell you. But before I do, I want to ask you just one little question.

MYRRHINE: By all means.

LYSISTRATA: The fathers of your children – don't you miss them when they're away at the war? I know that not one of you has a husband at home.¹⁵

CALONICE: Mine, my dear, has been away for five months, on the Thracian Coast, keeping an eye on our general¹⁶ there.

MYRRHINE: And mine has been at Pylos for a full seven months.¹⁷

105 LAMPITO: And as for my mon, if he ever does turrrn up at home, straight awa' he's fitted his shield on his arm and flown off agin.

CALONICE: Why, there isn't even anyone now to have an affair with – not even the ghost of one. Since the Milesians betrayed us, I haven't even seen one of those six-inch leather jobs which used to help us out when all else failed.

LYSISTRATA: Well then, if I found a way to do it, would you be prepared to join with me in putting a stop to the war?

CALONICE: By the Holy Twain, I would – even if I had to pawn this cloak of mine and drink up¹⁸ the money before the end of the day!

115 MYRRHINE: And so would I – even if I had to cut myself in two, like a flatfish,¹⁹ and give half of myself for the cause!

LAMPITO: And I too, if I had to climb tae the top of Mount Taygetum,²⁰ so I cuid see the prospect of peace from the summit.

LYSISTRATA: Then I will tell you my plan: there's no point in keeping it back. Women, if we want to force the men to make peace, we must renounce – [She hesitates.]

MYRRHINE: Renounce what? Go on.

LYSISTRATA: Then you'll do it?

MYRRHINE: At the cost of our lives, if need be. [All indicate enthusiastic agreement.]

LYSISTRATA: Very well then. We must renounce – sex. [Strong murmurs of disapproval, gestures of dissent, etc. Several of the company seem on the point of leaving.] Why are you turning away from me? Where are you going? What does all this pursing of lips and tossing of heads mean? You're all going pale – I can see tears! Will you do it or won't you? Answer me!

CALONICE: I won't do it. Just let the war go on.

130 MYRRHINE: Nor will I. Just let the war go on.

LYSISTRATA: Excuse me, Mrs Flatfish, weren't you offering to cut yourself in half a moment ago?

135 MYRRHINE: That, or walk through fire, or anything else you want – but renounce sex, never! Lysistrata, darling, there's just nothing like it!

LYSISTRATA [*to Calonice*]: How about you?

CALONICE: I'd rather walk through fire too!

140 LYSISTRATA: I didn't realize that we women were such a total lot of nymphos. The tragic poets are right about us after all: shag, calve and dispose of, that's the way we live.²¹ My Spartan friend, will you join me? Even if it's just the two of us, we might yet succeed.

LAMPITO: Weel, by the Twa Gods, it's a sair thing for a woman tae sleep alone without the Big Red One for company – but still I'll say aye, for we must have peace.

145 LYSISTRATA [*embracing her*]: Oh, Lampito darling, you're the only real woman²² here!

MYRRHINE: But look, suppose we did renounce – what you said – which may heaven forbid – but if we did, how would that help to end the war?

150 LYSISTRATA: How? Well, just imagine. We're at home, beautifully made up, and we walk around the house wearing sheer lawn shifts and nothing else; the men are all horny and can't wait to leap on us; and we keep our distance and refuse to come to them – then they'll make peace soon enough, you'll see.

155 LAMPITO: Didn't Menelaus drop his sword, I'm thinking, when he got but a wee glimpse of Helen's twa wee apples?²³

MYRRHINE: But look, what if they just ignore us?

LYSISTRATA: In the words of Phererates²⁴ – you can always fall back on a dead dog.²⁵

160 MYRRHINE: Those imitation things are sheer crap. Anyway, what if they take us and drag us into the bedroom by force?

LYSISTRATA: Cling to the door.

MYRRHINE: And if they beat us, what then?²⁶

LYSISTRATA: Just make yourself frigid. There's no pleasure in

it if they have to use force. Make life a misery for them, and they'll give up trying soon enough. No man is ever going to get satisfaction if the woman doesn't choose that he should.

MYRRHINE: Well – if you both really think it's a good idea – then we agree. [*The others indicate assent.*]

LAMPITO: Guid, then we'll see that our men mak peace and keep it faithfully. But this Athenian riff-raff [*indicating the audience*] – how will ye ever induce *them* tae see sense?

LYSISTRATA: We will, you'll see.

LAMPITO: Not sae lang as their warships have feet²⁷ and they have that bottomless fund o' money in Athena's temple.

175 LYSISTRATA: Oh, don't think we haven't thought about that! We're going to occupy the Acropolis today. While we take care of our side of things, all the older women have been instructed to seize the Acropolis under pretence of going to make sacrifices.

LAMPITO: A guid notion; it sounds as if it will work.

180 LYSISTRATA: Well then, Lampito, why don't we well and truly confirm the whole thing now by taking an oath?

LAMPITO: Pit the aith to us and we'll swear.

LYSISTRATA: Well spoken. [*Calling into the house*] Scythæna! [*A SLAVE-GIRL comes outside; she is carrying a large round wine-bowl. She stares open-eyed about her.*] What are you staring at? Put that shield face down in front of us. [*The SLAVE-GIRL lays the bowl on the ground.*]²⁸ Now someone give me the limbs of the sacrificial victim.

MYRRHINE: Lysistrata, what sort of oath is this you're giving us to take?

LYSISTRATA: Why, the one that Aeschylus talks about somewhere²⁹ – filling a shield with sheep's blood.

190 MYRRHINE: But Lysistrata, you can't take a peace oath over a shield!

LYSISTRATA: What do you suggest, then?

MYRRHINE: Suppose we got a white stallion³⁰ and cut it up?

LYSISTRATA: White stallion indeed!

MYRRHINE: Well, how *are* we going to take the oath, then?

CALONICE: I've got an idea, if you like. Stand a large black cup

on the ground, pour in the blood of some Thasos grapes, and swear – to put no water in the cup.

LAMPITO: Och aye, that's the kind of aith I like!

LYSISTRATA [*to Scythæna*]: A cup and a wine-jar from inside, please.

[SCYTHÆNA takes her bowl inside and returns with a cup and jar, both of enormous size. The women crowd around.]

200 MYRRHINE: My dears, isn't it a whopper?

CALONICE [*picking up the cup*]: Cheers you up even to touch it!

LYSISTRATA: Put the cup down [*CALONICE does so*] and take hold of the sacrificial victim.³¹ [*She holds up the jar; all the women lay a hand on it.*] O mighty Goddess of Persuasion, and thou, O Lady of the Loving Cup, accept this sacrifice and look with favour on womankind. [*She pours wine from the jar into the cup.*]

205 MYRRHINE: What lovely dark blood! And how well it flows!³²

LAMPITO: And how sweet it smells forby, by Castor!

CALONICE [*trying to push Myrrhine and Lampito aside*]: Let me take the oath first!

MYRRHINE: Not unless you draw the first lot, you don't!

210 LYSISTRATA: Lampito and all of you, take hold of the cup. [*All do so.*] One of you repeat the oath after me, and then at the end everyone will confirm that they share in it. I will not allow either lover or husband –

MYRRHINE: I will not allow either lover or husband –

LYSISTRATA: – to approach me in a state of erection.

[MYRRHINE hesitates.] Go on!

215 MYRRHINE: – to approach me in – a state of – erection – help, Lysistrata, my knees are giving way! [*She nearly faints, but recovers herself.*]

LYSISTRATA: And I will live at home in unsullied chastity –

MYRRHINE: And I will live at home in unsullied chastity –

LYSISTRATA: – wearing my saffron gown and my sexiest make-up –

220 MYRRHINE: – wearing my saffron gown and my sexiest make-up –

LYSISTRATA: – to inflame my husband's ardour.

MYRRHINE: – to inflame my husband's ardour.

LYSISTRATA: But I will never willingly yield myself to him.

MYRRHINE: But I will never willingly yield myself to him.

LYSISTRATA: And should he rape me by force against my will – 225

MYRRHINE: And should he rape me by force against my will –

LYSISTRATA: – I will submit passively and will not thrust back.

MYRRHINE: – I will submit passively and will not thrust back.

LYSISTRATA: I will not raise my slippers towards the ceiling.

MYRRHINE: I will not raise my slippers towards the ceiling.

230 LYSISTRATA: I will not adopt the lioness-or-a-cheese-grater position.³³

MYRRHINE: I will not adopt the lioness-or-a-cheese-grater position.

LYSISTRATA: If I abide by this oath, may I drink from this cup.

MYRRHINE: If I abide by this oath, may I drink from this cup.

LYSISTRATA: But if I break it, may the cup be filled with water. 235

MYRRHINE: But if I break it, may the cup be filled with water.

LYSISTRATA [*to the others*]: Do you all join in swearing this oath?

ALL: We do.

LYSISTRATA: Now the sacrifice must be wholly consumed.³⁴

[*She is about to drink from the cup.*]

CALONICE [*interposing*]: Not all of it, my friend – let's share it, as friends should.

[*Before LYSISTRATA can drink from the cup and pass it round, a shout of triumph is heard backstage.*]

LAMPITO: What was that?

240

LYSISTRATA: What I said we were going to do. The Citadel of Athena is now in the women's hands.³⁵ Well then, Lampito, you'd better go and see to your side of the business at home, but your friends will have to stay here with us as hostages. [LAMPITO departs; ISMENIA, the CORINTHIAN and the other SPARTAN WOMEN remain.] Now we'll go up on to the Acropolis, join the others, and make sure the doors are barred.

245

MYRRHINE: Won't the men be coming soon to try and take the place back?

LYSISTRATA: Let them; they won't bother me. They can threaten

MYRRHINE: No, by Aphrodite, they won't. We must show that it's not for nothing that people say 'Damn and blast, but there's no getting the better of a woman!'

[All the WOMEN retire into the Acropolis, and the doors are closed. After a short interval there appear, from the wings, the CHORUS OF OLD MEN. They are advancing slowly and with difficulty, each carrying two olive-wood logs, a vine-torch and a pot containing live coals.]

MEN'S LEADER:

Keep moving, Drac
Aches with the v

u shoulder
olive-wood!

MEN:

Incred:

260

1

270

With on.
Have fo.
And first in th
Strands Lycon.
wife!³⁸

MEN'S LEADER:

What, shall they mock us from the sacred height
Whence we dislodged the great Cleomenes?³⁹