

LYSISTRATA

SCENE 1

(Setting: Athens, Greece. 410 BC. The original production began with a Bacchanalia. As the audience entered, the actors were partying, drinking and being very sexually playful. After a while of this, a Spartan and an Athenian bumped into each other. This led to a wrestling match, turning gradually more violent, until drunken partyers fell over the two fighters, inadvertently breaking up their fight. Finally, the men staggered out, and the women collapsed in a drunken stupor, sprawled all over the stage and the theater. LYSISTRATA entered, stepping over the bodies of the unconscious, including CALONICE, who was just regaining consciousness.)

LYSISTRATA: Women! Invite them to a Bacchanalia, or a Pan-analia or an Aphrodite-analia, they come running, tambourines in hand, but now there's no one to be seen. Wait, there's one, my neighbor Calonice. Hello, my friend.

CALONICE: Good morning, Lysistrata. Don't be so down, my dear, it ruins your face when you knot up your brows like that.

LYSISTRATA: Oh, Calonice, I'm so upset that it feels like my heart's about to burst. Men think we are so shrewd and cunning...

CALONICE: They're right about that!

LYSISTRATA: But look around you. We were supposed to meet on important business, but instead all the women are lying around, sleeping.

CALONICE: They'll be here soon, my dear, don't worry. Most of the women are stuck inside, either taking care of their husbands, or waking up their servants, or putting their children to bed, or giving their babies a bath or some milk.

LYSISTRATA: The business that I want to talk about is much more important than all that.

CALONICE: What is it all about? Is it something big?

LYSISTRATA: Very big. Huge.

CALONICE: And hard, too?

LYSISTRATA: Yes, it's pretty hard.

CALONICE: By Zeus, you'd think everyone would be coming by now!

LYSISTRATA: No, no, no. It's nothing like that. If it were, I'm sure everyone would have been here long ago. No, this is about a plan that's been bouncing around in my mind during many sleepless nights.

CALONICE: You've been bouncing around all night? Sounds like a fun game.

LYSISTRATA: This game will lead the women to save all of Greece.

CALONICE: The women? That doesn't sound like a game we can win.

LYSISTRATA: It's a game we must win, for the sake of our country's future. Because, if we don't, Peloponnesia will be destroyed—

CALONICE: So what? Good riddance!

LYSISTRATA: And so will Thebes.

CALONICE: Thebes too? But they make such good eels there.

(LYSISTRATA leans in confidentially.)

LYSISTRATA: And, as for Athens—well, I won't say it, but you know what I mean. But all that can be avoided, if we women—not just the Athenians, but the Peloponnesians and the Thebans—join together.

CALONICE: What are we supposed to do? We don't have many options. All we can do is lie around in slinky gowns, all made up and perfumed, wearing pretty little shoes.

LYSISTRATA: But that's exactly what we can do. That's how we'll save Greece. By lying around in our slinky gowns, all made up and perfumed.

CALONICE: How will that save us?

LYSISTRATA: You'll see, soon enough the men will drop their spears...

CALONICE: I'd better buy some new perfume...

LYSISTRATA: ...and put down their shields...

CALONICE: ...and I'll buy a new gown, too, extra-slinky...

LYSISTRATA: ...and sheath their swords.

CALONICE: ...and I have the perfect shoes to go with it.

LYSISTRATA: So tell me, don't you think the women should have come?

CALONICE: They should have flown here!

LYSISTRATA: They're on Athenian time, always late. But I would have thought that at least the women from one of the islands would have been here.

CALONICE: Look! I see them coming now. And there's some more, over there. And—ugh, where are those women from?

LYSISTRATA: Anagryra, where everyone is smelly.

(MYRRHINA enters, followed by other women.)

MYRRHINA: Are we late, Lysistrata? Lysistrata? Why won't you answer me?

LYSISTRATA: If you can't be bothered to come on time for such important business, Myrrhina, why should I bother to answer you?

MYRRHINA: I couldn't find my girdle in the dark. But if the matter's so pressing, then by all means, tell us at once.

LYSISTRATA: Not yet. We're stilling waiting for the Thebans and the Peloponnesians.

CALONICE: Yes, good idea. Oh look, there's Lampito.
(LAMPITO enters with the THEBAN WOMAN and the CORINTHIAN WOMAN)

LYSISTRATA: Welcome Lampito, my dear! How are things in Sparta? You look wonderful. What a physique! You look like you could throttle a bull!

LAMPITO: Yes, me can throttle bull! Me do gymnastics, make lots of muscles!

(CALONICE peers down her top.)

CALONICE: Wow! Look at those boobs!

LAMPITO: Now me feel like sacrificial cow.

LYSISTRATA: And who's your young friend?

LAMPITO: Is fancy Theban lady.

LYSISTRATA: Thebes! The city of eels and perfectly trimmed gardens.

(CALONICE peers up her dress.)

CALONICE: I see that's not all you trim, in Thebes.

LYSISTRATA: And who's your other friend?

LAMPITO: Is pretty Corinthian.

(CALONICE slaps the butt of the CORINTHIAN WOMAN.)

CALONICE: Yes, she's genuine Corinthian.

LAMPITO: But why you call all us women here?

LYSISTRATA: I will explain.

THEBAN: Yes, tell us why.

CORINTHIAN: What is this important business?

LYSISTRATA: I'll tell you. But answer me one question first.

CORINTHIAN: Ask it.

LYSISTRATA: Don't you miss your husbands, the fathers of your babies? I would be willing to bet that every one of you has a husband who's away at war right now.

CALONICE: That's true. Mine's been in Thrace for the last five months, keeping his eye out for traitors.

MYRRHINA: And mine's been in Pylos for the last seven months.

LAMPITO: Mine is going to war again as soon as coming back home.

LYSISTRATA: And there aren't even any spare lovers around for us, while they're gone! I used to use those toys from Miletus as a substitute, but now we're at war with them, too! So don't you think we need to find a way to stop the fighting?

CALONICE: Yes we do, even if it means selling my best clothes—I can use the money to get drunk and celebrate afterwards!

MYRRHINA: You could cut me up and serve me like a flounder if it would help.

LAMPITO: Me climb to top of big mountain for peace!

LYSISTRATA: Good! Then I'll tell you my secret plan. My sisters, if we really mean to make the men make peace, there's only one way, we must promise not to...

CORINTHIAN: Promise not to what? Please tell us!

LYSISTRATA: But will you do it?

THEBAN: We will, even if it kills us.

LYSISTRATA: This is our promise: No more fucking!. Hey! What's wrong? Where are you going? Why are you biting your lips and shaking your heads? Why are you turning so pale? Will you do it or won't you? What's your answer?

CALONICE: Forget it. Let the war go on.

CORINTHIAN: Yes, I agree, let the war go on.

LYSISTRATA: And what do you say, my pretty little flounder, who just agreed to be served up as dinner for peace.

MYRRHINA: Anything but that. I'll walk through fire if need be, but fucking—there's nothing like it, darling.

LYSISTRATA: And what do you say?

THEBAN: I agree with her; I'd rather walk through fire.

LYSISTRATA: Oh, women, women! Are we nothing but a frail sex? No wonder such tragedies are written about us, always the same, we make love and then get rid of the baby. Are we nothing more? Will you support me at least, Lampito?

(LAMPITO thinks hard.)

LAMPITO: Not fucking is difficult, is true. Is nice to have man in bed. But war is more difficult. So if no fucking for no war then yes, no fucking, I say.

LYSISTRATA: Oh my dear, dear, true friend, you are the only real woman here!

CALONICE: But if we don't—oh, I can't even say it—will that really help us achieve peace?

LYSISTRATA: Of course it will. If we sit around in sexy see-through clothing, then walk by them naked, letting them see our clean-shaven pussies, they'll get a such a hard-on that they'll be dying to screw us. And when we don't let them—believe me, they'll declare peace soon enough.

LAMPITO: Is like story of Meneleus and Helen of Troy. When he saw her boobs, he say no kill her.

THEBAN: But what if they leave us?

LYSISTRATA: That won't get them much sex, will it?

CALONICE: What if they try to drag us into bed?

LYSISTRATA: Hold on to the doorway.

CORINTHIAN: What if they try to take us by force?

LYSISTRATA: Don't let them enjoy it. Besides, no husband wants to force his wife, there's no pleasure in that. They'll give up that game soon enough.

MYRRHINA: Very well. If you insist on it, that's what we will do.

LAMPITO: We Spartans will do this thing and make our husbands do peace, no lies this time. But Athenians

have foolish democracy, so always mob rules. How will you make men do peace?

LYSISTRATA: Don't worry, we have our ways too.

LAMPITO: Is impossible. Athenians too rich from war. While they rich, Athenians no want peace.

LYSISTRATA: That's where the second part of my plan takes effect. This very morning, a group of Athenian women is going to go up to the Acropolis. They will pretend that they are bringing a sacrifice to the temple, but when they get there they will seize the Acropolis and all the wealth found there.

LAMPITO: Is good plan! No gold, no war!

LYSISTRATA: Come now, Lampito, let's make an oath to make it all official.

LAMPITO: Yes, say oath, and we repeat.

LYSISTRATA: Gladly. All right, everyone, don't just stand around gaping. Get me a big shield and some entrails.

MYRRHINA: What are we going to swear on?

LYSISTRATA: In Aeschylus, they always sacrifice a sheep and throw its entrails on a shield.

MYRRHINA: Should we really swear for peace over a shield?

LYSISTRATA: Then what's a good oath for us women?

CORINTHIAN Maybe we should kill a gray mare, and use those entrails.

LYSISTRATA: Where would we get a gray mare?

THEBAN: Well then, what are we going to swear on?

CALONICE: Listen, what we need is a jug of Thasian wine and a giant cup to pour it in. And this will be our oath: We will solemnly swear—not to put a drop of water in our wine.

LAMPITO: Is good oath!

LYSISTRATA: Then bring me a cup and a jug of wine.

(Some women exit and return with a jug and a huge cup.)

CALONICE: What a great cup! It's going to be fun to empty it!

LYSISTRATA: Put down the cup, and lay your hands upon the sacrifice. Oh mighty Goddess, Sweet Persuasion, and you...Giant Cup, who has given us such joy through the years, hear our plea, and accept our sacrifice, for our great cause!

(LYSISTRATA pours the wine into the cup.)

CALONICE: Oh, the blood doth flow from this wonderful beast!

LAMPITO: And smells good too!

THEBAN: May I swear first?

CORINTHIAN: No, by Aphrodite, not unless you draw the first lot.

LYSISTRATA: We will all swear at once. Put your hands on the cup, everyone, and repeat after me.

(They all put their hands on the cup.)

I will not go near my husband or my lover.

ALL: I will not go near my husband or my lover.

LYSISTRATA: Speak up—No matter how big a hard-on he has.

ALL: No matter how big a hard-on he has.

CALONICE: Oh, Lysistrata, I can't take it.

LYSISTRATA: I will be completely celibate,

ALL: I will be completely celibate,

LYSISTRATA: And wear nothing but seductive clothing,

ALL: And wear nothing but seductive clothing,

LYSISTRATA: And get my husband as horny as possible.

ALL: And get my husband as horny as possible.

LYSISTRATA: But I will never willingly give in to him,

ALL: But I will never willingly give in to him,

LYSISTRATA: No matter how he pressures me.

ALL: No matter how he pressures me.

LYSISTRATA: And if he tries to force me,

ALL: And if he tries to force me,

LYSTRATA: I will not do the thing where I put my legs up over his head.

ALL: I will not do the thing where I put my legs up over his head.

LYSISTRATA: Nor will I pretend to be a lioness he has caught in the forest.

ALL: Nor will I pretend to be a lioness he has caught in the forest.

LYSISTRATA: If I keep my oath, let my cup be filled with nothing but wine.

ALL: If I keep my oath, let my cup be filled with nothing but wine.

LYSISTRATA: And if I break it, let it be filled with nothing but water.

ALL: And if I break it, let it be filled with nothing but water.

LYSISTRATA: Do you all solemnly swear this oath?

ALL: We do.

LYSISTRATA: Good. Then I'll drink this wine to finalize it.

(She drinks.)

CALONICE: Leave a little for us, dear. We're supposed to share this, I thought.

(They pass the cup around and everyone drinks. Some noise is heard offstage.)

LAMPITO: Is much noise! What means noise?

LYSISTRATA: It's what I said. The women have seized the Acropolis. Hurry back to Sparta, Lampito, and spread the word there, but you'd better leave a few of your friends to prove your good will. We'll go up to the Acropolis now and help the women hold the gates.

CALONICE: Won't the men be coming soon to take it back?

MYRRHINA: Let them come! They can't scare us with their threats or fire. We will only open the gates when our conditions are met!

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LYSISTRATA: By Aphrodite, that's the spirit. We'll show
them that women are a strong and wily sex.