

LEON BATTISTA ALBERTI'S PHILODOXUS (c. 1424)  
AN ENGLISH TRANSLATION

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For most students of *Celestina*, the principal value of a translation of Alberti's *Philodoxus* is that it adds one more example to the small but growing number of humanistic comedies available in modern languages. For readers with a limited knowledge of Renaissance Latin, it provides at least an indirect acquaintance with a rare segment of the literary patrimony of the late fifteenth century and helps to restore balance to "the precarious state of our information about the theater that the authors of *Celestina* knew or might have known."<sup>1</sup> It allows such readers to judge for themselves the reliability of critical assessments made by Marcelino Menéndez y Pelayo, María Rosa Lida de Malkiel, and others who have studied *Philodoxus* as a possible source of inspiration for the authors of *Celestina*.

*Philodoxus* is, according to Lida de Malkiel (380), the humanistic comedy that is perhaps the most remote from *Celestina* in its emotional tone: it has a happy ending. It is also among the

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<sup>1</sup> María Rosa Lida de Malkiel, *La originalidad artística de La Celestina* (EUDEBA: Buenos Aires, 1970. 2nd ed.), 38n6. (Hereafter abbreviated MRL.)

examples of such works that stick closest to the Renaissance idea of Roman comedy (e.g., it preserves the unities) and are thus farthest from the non-classical freedom of the Spanish work. It stands at the other end of the spectrum from the contemporary *Comedia Poliscena*, which in the view of Menéndez-Pelayo and Lida de Malkiel is the closest to *Celestina* of these Renaissance dramatic productions. But its very differences from *Poliscena* and *Celestina* make it all the more valuable as an example of the surprising variety to be found in this lost genre.

Except among *celestinistas*, the humanistic comedy continues to lie in relative obscurity. Even after the appearance of *La originalidad artística de 'La Celestina'* in 1962, those few scholars who studied humanistic comedy tended to see it either as an unsuccessful imitation of Roman comedy, as a minor tributary of the modern drama, or--in the case of hispanists--mainly as a possible source of *Celestina*, not as a genre with significant literary merits. While Lida de Malkiel's object in reviewing the humanistic comedy was to assay its contribution to the creation of *Celestina*, her classical preparation and critical sensibility forced her, *de paso*, to give the genre its due. Those familiar with this book will recognize the extent to which the remarks that follow are based on her work.

It is deplorable that non-Hispanic students of the genre took so little notice of *La originalidad artística* when it appeared, because--at least in the three studies which are pertinent to this essay--their work is parochial and aesthetically short-sighted in areas where Lida de Malkiel's book might have provided a different vantage point from which to re-examine the subject. The fact that many of the greatest literary minds of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries read and wrote these plays should at the very least have suggested that there must be something in them that attracted such exceptionally intelligent men. Yet the researcher who consults these books will find little that is positive and much that is apologetic or negative. Antonio Stauble's careful and useful study (1968), for example, describes *Poliscena*, the most popular of all these comedies, as a work of small literary value, with psychologically ill-defined characters and disregard for the unity of time; the best that can be said for it is that,

in spite of its "uncertainties," it is a conscious imitation of Roman comedy.<sup>2</sup> Faint praise, indeed.

Alessandro Perosa's equally useful collection of seven humanistic comedies in Italian translation (not including *Poliscena* or *Philodoxus*) characterizes *Philodoxus*'s allegorical plot as *pesante*, though of a certain historical importance, while it mentions Alberti's antiquarian maintenance of the unities in positive terms.<sup>3</sup> Even Lucia Martinelli's preface to her meticulous edition of the text has little to suggest that the play is anything but a youthful and generally unsuccessful copy of Terence. She clearly perceives, however, the high seriousness of the underlying theme (*virtu vs. fortuna*: man's effort to control his destiny) and relates it to an important current of humanist thought.<sup>4</sup>

Stauble, at least, knew that the humanistic comedy had played some part in the genesis of *Celestina*,<sup>5</sup> while Perosa's book scarcely looks beyond the pieces written in Latin, and his historical survey concludes with the following dubious thesis: "with the appearance and spread of comedies and tragedies in the modern national languages (in Italy first, then in France, Germany, and England), the history of the humanistic comedy ends." (Perosa 51) Perosa is apparently unaware that poor Spain, lagging behind France, Germany, and England, had produced a world-class descendant of humanist comedy in *Celestina*, and that because of *Celestina*, Spanish literature contains an extraordinary family of works indirectly related to the *commedia umanistica* which culminates in the seventeenth

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<sup>2</sup> Antonio Stauble, *La commedia umanistica del quattrocento* (Florence: Inst. Nazionale de Studi sul Rinascimento: 1968), 13.

<sup>3</sup> Alessando Perosa, *Teatro umanistico* (Milan: Nuova Accademia, 1965), 22-23.

<sup>4</sup> Lucia Cesarini Martinelli, ed., "Leon Battista Alberti, *Philodoxeos fabula*," *Rinascimento* 17 (1977), "Introduzione," especially p. 113 and n3.

<sup>5</sup> Stauble notes that "individual comedias appear to have had a certain resonance in Spain": at least four appear in Spanish libraries, two were published by Spanish presses, and "above all, there exist analogies of situations, intentions, characters, and content" between some of the plays and *Celestina*. Stauble's information comes mainly from Casas Homs. See p. 247 and notes 1-3.

century with yet another masterpiece, Lope's autobiographical *acción en prosa*.

The authors of humanistic comedies were consciously reviving Roman comedy, certainly; but they made an effort, however tentative it may seem now, to surpass their models. As a group, their works display a new freedom of form, combining the archaic language of Roman comedy with medieval notions of drama and the humanists' love of satire; a wider range of characters (particularly the low-born types treated with sympathy) in an uncomplicated action; allusions to contemporary life; plots taken from *novelle* and other sources; and a tragic view of love that comes neither from Roman comedy nor the medieval elegiac comedy. The development of the implicit stage-direction, monologues by characters of low estate, an effort to make the aside seem more realistic, and in particular the "fluid and impressionistic" use of place and time, with a slower dramatic tempo, all contribute to the well-rounded characters and credible atmosphere of the works. (MRL 42)

An indirect proof of the novelty of the playlets is found in prefaces where authors reveal their awareness of the originality of their subjects and techniques (MRL 42). They often defend themselves against accusations of crudeness in plot and style--which suggests that other humanists found their works unacceptably original. Alberti displays the same artistic touchiness in the preface to the second version of his play, where he counters critical disapproval by trying to persuade his readers that the play is morally improving and that the unusual simplicity of the plot is an added delight.<sup>6</sup> The urge to do something new also shows in his combination of ancient elements with non-classical allegory (MRL 32 n. 6; 42). Alberti takes the hackneyed Graeco-Roman plot (a young

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<sup>6</sup> There are other similarities between the prefaces of *Philodoxus* and *Celestina*. The authors of many humanistic comedies claim, like Rojas, that they wrote their plays a youths or university students--a complaisant allusion, probably, to Terence's prologue to *Heauton timorumenos*. (MRL 13-15; 15 note 3). Alberti, for example, says that he wrote the first version of his play while a student of canon law at Bologna, before he was twenty. Alberti allowed his work, minus his name, to circulate among people who undoubtedly knew its true author, whatever he may later have said to the contrary, and he only laid claim to the piece when it had gained a certain popularity. Rojas, whose name appears first in an acrostic, shows a similar reluctance to reveal himself as author.

man loves a pretty girl and wins her, in spite of his blustering rival, with the help of clever servants) and makes it "mean" that Virtue, with the aid of Prudence and Industry, triumphs over Fortune and attains true Glory.

The humanistic comedy also surpasses the Roman comedy in the creation of servant-types (MRL 628n17), like Alberti's ex-slave Dynastes, the heroine's neighbor, who at first agrees to help the love-sick Philodoxus and then reveals the lover's plan to the rival suitor, Fortunius, who is the son of Dynastes' patroness. The ex-slave is one of two servants who interrupt the *tête-a-tête* between the lovers and cause Philodoxus to excoriate all slaves.

Servant women also constitute an important new dramatic group. They guide the heroine's actions: with virtue in *Philodoxus*, in pursuit of pleasure in certain others. They are not the *ancillae* of Roman comedy, who have nothing to do with the plot, but are remote descendants of the nurse of ancient tragedy. There is considerable variety among these female characters. In *Philodoxus* the example is Mnimia, the allegorical figure of memory, whose participation in the action is, according to Mrs. Malkiel, "embroiled and confused" (MRL 648).

However original in some aspects of his work, Alberti stands out among other humanistic playwrights for his conscious imitation of certain Roman dramatic practices, two in particular: locating all actions in a single street-scene; and reporting rather than showing actions important to the plot. Alberti's play is, in fact, the extreme example among the humanistic comedies with regard to unity of place. But Alberti uses the convention with considerable ingenuity, as when he has Philodoxus describe how he sneaked into Doxia's room, how she refused to speak to him unchaperoned and has told him to meet her outside. The interview then takes place in the doorway. Because Alberti was an important architect, he was one of the first humanists to understand the limitations that the Roman stage placed on its playwrights; but, as a good humanist, he took pride in observing the conventions (MRL 97, 113, 156 and n2). Another convention is the so-called unity of time, ignored in the humanistic comedies that scholars now find the most interestingly original, but carefully preserved by the classicalizing Alberti (MRL 186).

Alberti also adapts, in his two rival suitors, the Roman custom of pairing characters (MRL 277). And he takes as his protagonist another type inherited from the limited *dramatis personae* of ancient comedy, the feckless lover aided by servants (MRL 373)--the best of the "ineptly-drawn" characters (in Lida de Malkiel's opinion) in *Philodoxus*. The hero's friend reveals his origin, status, and qualities in the succinct style of characterization found in Roman comedy. Philodoxus himself and several other characters state that he is the plaything of conflicting passions, but in fact (in contrast with *Celestina*) this emotional turmoil does not show up in his actions or words. Following the pattern fixed by the conventions of Latin comedy, Philodoxus owes to his friend Phroneus the interview with his beloved Doxia and to Phroneus' wife the happy outcome and wedding. The failure of his own plan underlines his incapacity for action.

The scenes in which the protagonist seems most lifelike are those in which he reports his meeting with Doxia, who has refused to speak to him in private; he then practices what he is going to say to her; and when she arrives, the dialogue unrolls with passion on his part and with courteous dignity on the lady's part. When Doxia dismisses him, in order to protect her reputation, Philodoxus obeys respectfully. Later the hero reproaches himself--quite undeservedly--for his lack of eloquence (which introduces a note of humor), and he pronounces the words that he wishes he had said. The conflicting feelings, lover's verbosity, self-reproach, and leaving action to others are the best-drawn traits of the character of Philodoxus. They are present in the character of Calisto, but not necessarily because of the influence of Alberti's work, since except for the Philodoxus's passionate eloquence, these same traits are part of the type of the lover in the New Comedy (MRL 380, paraphrased).

Alberti improves what Mrs. Malkiel calls Plautus's "oratorical dialogues" (longer, more rhetorical speeches punctuated by brief replies, which tend to slow the action in the ancient plays) by carefully suiting the dialogue to the situation and making it dynamic rather than static. An example in *Philodoxus* is scene XIII, in which Phroneus reveals himself to his wife. The dialogue is almost philosophical in tone, with aphoristic lines on human dissatisfaction and an aside on the folly of women. From Terence, Alberti takes the short, rapid-fire dialogue (MRL 116) and the combination of longer speeches with brief replies, used to narrate unrepresented actions--as

in this same scene (MRL 113). Lida de Malkiel, who contradicts Menéndez-Pelayo on this point, believes that *Philodoxus* is among the humanistic comedies that influenced the authors of *Celestina* in their own dialogue-writing (MRL 108-110). *Philodoxus* also has good examples of the Terentian monologue used to clarify the plot; to describe a person or social class; to moralize; and to express a lover's anxiety--all present in *Celestina* (MRL 130n12).

*Celestina*-scholars began to show an interest in Alberti around 1900, when an important group of historians of European drama that includes Wilhelm Creizenach, Ireneo Sanesi, and Menéndez-Pelayo began to see points of contact between the *Tragicomedia* and humanistic comedies. Menéndez-Pelayo, in his *Orígenes de la novela*, reviews the available literature and rejects the possible influence of all the known humanistic comedies except *Poliscena*, attributed to Leonardo Bruni d'Arezzo. Nevertheless, he devotes several pages (III, 322-325 in the 1961 edition of his *Obras completas*) to Alberti's *Philodoxus* because it was circulating in Spain around the time Rojas was writing and was, as far as anyone then knew, the only such work printed in Spain: printed in Salamanca, in fact, where Rojas had been a student.<sup>7</sup> In 1501, a professor of poetry at Salamanca named Quirós, edited it.<sup>8</sup> But Menéndez y Pelayo concludes that if, as

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<sup>7</sup> Mrs. Malkiel reports two other plays printed in 1502 and discusses the question of possible unknown pre-*Celestina* plays, pp. 37-38 and note 6.

<sup>8</sup> Quirós's dedication, reproduced by Menéndez y Pelayo, reads as follows:

From the Bachalarius Quirós to his teacher Alfonso Ticio [Tizón ?], holder of degrees, professor of grammar at the University of Salamanca:

When some days ago, dear teacher, I showed the play *Philodoxus*, which Battista Alberti, a man of singular wit, composed with great elegance and charm, to some of my pupils (to whom I teach Virgil at public lectures and for some of whom I explicate Juvenal's satires and Lucan's *Pharsalia* in private), they immediately began to urge me not to permit such a beautiful work--one that is unknown to everyone here--to lie hidden among us any longer. But I thought I should refuse their zealous requests, blameless though they were, as long as I had to comply with you, who had committed it to my safekeeping. And so, with your guidance and command, I have undertaken the printing of the comedy--which I believe will give it both dignity and authority.

If I sense that my effort in this affair has pleased you, perhaps I shall do greater things with you; and I will judge that by one thing in particular: if you will

Quirós says, the play was unknown at Salamanca until its publication in 1501, then Rojas could not have seen it. In any case, the great scholar eliminates it as a direct source and judges it languid and tedious, "though of impeccable morality."

Alberti's general influence, in spite of Menéndez y Pelayo's haughty dismissal, is still an open question. The first version of his play circulated quickly. There is correspondence between *il Panormita*--the future biographer of Alfonso of Naples--and *il Toscanella* which proves that as early as 1426 the work of "Lepidus" (Alberti's *nom de plume*) had found favor with the most advanced humanists. It retained a limited popularity for more than a century, as the survival of twenty-one manuscripts and two imprints proves. It was the only humanistic comedy reprinted in Italy in the sixteenth century (at Lucca by Aldo Manuzio, 1588), when others had completely disappeared from circulation and even from the memory of scholars interested in the history of the drama. (Martinelli 111, 116-118; Stauble 241)

*Celestinistas* have long had an interest in *Philodoxus* for another reason. It inspired the plot and allegory of the *Comedia Eufrósina*, one of many imitations of *Celestina*. Written between 1542 and 1543 by Jorge Ferreira de Vasconcellos, the *Comedia Eufrósina* impressed both Lope de Vega, whose *Dorotea* is probably indebted to it (Lope alludes to it in his preface),<sup>9</sup> and Quevedo, who contributed a preface to the early seventeenth-century translation. In the eighteenth century, when it was re-issued by the royal librarian Blas Nasarre, Gregorio Mayáns classed it with *Celestina* as one of the two best hispanic

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strive to make me aware that I have become exceedingly popular among the students themselves because of your recommendation. . . . Your devoted pupil [etc.].

<sup>9</sup> Edwin S. Morby, ed., *La Dorotea* (Madrid, 1958). In 1632 Lope published his famous *acción en prosa*, with a preface by himself, in which he mentions as models of modern drama *Celestina* and *Eufrósina*. Morby, however, doubts that the Portuguese work has any appreciable effect on Lope.(48n4)



comedies (MRL 59).<sup>10</sup> Thus indirectly the *Philodoxus* has had an effect in Spanish letters that it seems not to have had anywhere else.

The translation which follows is based on the critical edition prepared by Martinelli and published in *Rinascimento* 17, 111-234 (Menéndez y Pelayo and Lida de Malkiel used a version printed by A. Bonucci in 1843 in the *Opere vulgari*). Dottoressa Lucia Guzzi and I prepared our version under the watchful eye of our Classics colleague, Terence O. Tunberg, to whom we express our gratitude, and whom we absolve from any errors we may have made in our version. We have tried to strike a balance between the racy-sounding and the rhetorical, while staying as close to the Latin as possible, since one of our objectives was to provide a guide for students who want to use it as an aid to the study of the Latin text. Page numbers in Martinelli's text are indicated in brackets. We have also made a few explanatory additions to the text and have added stage directions--all in square brackets--to assist the reader in imagining the scenic possibilities. *Lege feliciter*.

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<sup>10</sup> *Comedia Eufrosina*, (ed. E. Asensio, Madrid, 1951) Mrs. Malkiel refers constantly to the *Comedia Eufrosina*, which she considers one of the two best imitations of *Celestina* (397)--the other being Lope's *Dorotea*--because of its skilful use of dramatic motivation, coherence of plot (257), convincingly life-like characters (462) and emotional development (464), clever dialogue, and original variations on traditional protagonist- and servant-types. Vasconcellos' contributions to the genre include the use of erudition and literary topics as an independent element (398) and the division of the go-between's functions among four mediators (574).

The *Comedia Eufrosina* is the story of the aristocratic young lady whose mother is dead and whose father is absent. Zelótipo, a poor gentleman, falls in love with her and persuades his cousin Silvia, who is Eufrosina's lady-in-waiting and companion, to act as his go-between. By piquing Eufrosina's curiosity and vanity, Silvia succeeds in bringing the lovers together. When they discover that Eufrosina's father is planning to wed her to another, the lovers marry in secret, and after the predictable upheaval when the father discovers the marriage, the two lovers are allowed to live happily ever after.

#### THE ALLEGORY?

Mrs. Malkiel describes the Portuguese play as "conversations bound together by an action" (242-3) and as a *comedia de costumbres* (463). It reappeared in 1631, in a Castilian version by Fernando de Ballesteros y Saavedra, with a preface by Quevedo.

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**PHILODOXUS**  
A Play by Leon Battista Alberti

To the illustrious lord Lionello d'Este:

It has been the custom of many to dedicate their writings to princes and illustrious men because they are anxious either to win their good will or to add thereby a certain authority to their own works. But neither of these reasons spurred me to offer this play of mine to you, most illustrious prince. For since I am a very close friend of your brother Meliadusius, an extremely kind man and one who has always encouraged me greatly, I was not so foolish as to believe that you would be moved more by my plays than by the opinion and good will of your devoted brother; nor was I so influenced by the desire for praise that I preferred to use some other thing as an intermediary to you rather than Meliadusius himself, by whom I am well regarded; because I never approved the practice of those who wish to be honored through the favor of others rather than for their own talent (though my own talent is not so great that your authority will not be very helpful, if it does come to my aid!). Nevertheless, it was more important to me, though many friends begged me for this play, to choose you alone, whom I judged the most deserving of my gift. And so I hope that this play will not be displeasing to you and that you will daily perceive that I have sent it to you more as an expression of affection--because I greatly admire you for your virtues--than for the purpose of gaining favor. So read it, and know that I am your devoted servant. Farewell.

A Commentary on PHILODOXUS, a play by Leone Baptista Alberti

This play concerns morals; for it teaches that the studious and industrious man no less than the rich and fortunate can achieve glory: hence the title of the play, PHILODOXUS, because *philo* means "I love" and *doxa* means "glory."

PHEMIA, [145] which Latin-speakers translate as "fame," with the closest word, is Doxa's sister. We pretend that both are Roman ladies, because all the histories testify that Rome was the home of glory.

PHRONEUS, the friend of the suitor, we can call wise and prudent; because whoever is desirous of glory must be not imprudent but clever indeed in managing his affairs. Both men are Athenians, because Athens was the inventor and student of the fine arts and higher learning.

Next, ARGOS and MINERVA, the parents of the young man Philodoxus: one of whom we interpret as prudence and the other as study and industry.

To TYCHIA (whom we call *fortuna*: fickle, and a faithful spouse to no man), since she delights in characters of this sort, we have given an adopted son [FORTUNIUS], a rash young man, born to THRASO and AUTADIA. For Thraso is audacious and pompous, and Autadia means insolence and arrogance.

DYNASTES is [Tychia's, that is,] Fortuna's slave. We call him *dynastes*, tyranny or power, because power is especially subject to fortune.

APHTHONUS,<sup>11</sup> Doxa's neighbor, a freedman of Tychia's, stands for riches and wealth, which provide the easiest means for attaining glory. Furthermore, I wanted him to be a freedman and to enter Doxa's house by trickery, because this plainly teaches that wealth is obtained by calculation, that it is hard to obtain at first try, but afterwards offers itself easily, and that it is unfaithful and has learned to flee from harsh possessors quickly. It says that DOXA<sup>12</sup> wants to speak to her suitor openly and publicly; which shows that true glory, with fame as companion, likes crowds and hates solitude.

CHRONOS is time.

And ALETHIA his daughter is called *veritas*, truth, among Latin-speakers; she is present and sees everything in the uproar [, during which] Doxa had climbed to the roof-top. So it turns out for those who, not by study and the help of industriousness but by a certain rash boldness and even audacity, seek that which is worthy of glory; for with the help of fortune, such people acquire fame, but not true glory.

Alethia's guardian is MNIMIA, that is, study and memory, and she is Phroneus's wife. For if study ceases, memory rejects the things that are most valuable for knowledge. Hence before Doxa is joined to her suitor, memory is restored by study. Finally, Doxa is given to her suitor as a legitimate wife, when petulant Tychia begs for the kidnapped girl to be given to her son--which Time does not grant freely but yet does not refuse.

There are also many other things full of wit which I omit for the sake of brevity.

[146] And so my play, as I have shown, has material that is not without elegance and that any man of learning who is not envious will not despise, though it was written by a young man no older than twenty; for it has that

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<sup>11</sup> Name Aphthonus replaced by Ditonus in later version.

<sup>12</sup> Doxa replaced by Doxia in later version.

eloquence that up until now all those educated in Latin literature approved and even believed to be the work of some ancient writer, with the result that no one read it without great wonder, many committed it to memory, and not a few consumed a great deal of effort in copying it over and over.

This is a good place for me to explain how it is that they do not know that this play is mine.

After my father Lorenzo Alberti died, while I was studying canon law at Bologna, I tried to make such progress in that discipline that I would be dearer to my family and an ornament to our house. There were among my relatives some who cruelly and vehemently envied my reputation, which was growing and beginning to flower (so to speak), persons whom--though I daily experienced them to be unjust and too harsh--nevertheless I could not hate or not love, for I believed that they could do as they pleased regarding me. I therefore bore their cruelty towards me in a spirit that was not hostile and was more mindful of their service and kindness than of wrongs, until I myself began to understand plainly that all of my efforts to win the favor and good will of my relatives were ineffectual and useless. For that reason, while in that sorrow because of my troubles and the unkindness of those to whom all good men wished me to be dearest, I wrote this play, to console myself. A certain acquaintance who is very attached to me stole it, unpolished and absolutely rough, and in secret copied it very rapidly in a few hours. For which reason it happens that, because of this person's haste, many errors were added to my own mistakes in writing. Nevertheless, against my wishes he made his copy public, where it has of course been rendered entirely corrupt by the ignorance of the copyists; and everybody interpreted, according to his own judgment, things in it that had been copied carelessly. Nor were there lacking some who, aware of my sense of humor though not admirers of it, when they suspected that it was my play, for that reason inserted numerous obscenities. And so this play of my youth, unfinished and full of errors, was held in esteem so long as people were unaware that it was by me; and no one was held to be a connoisseur of the comic poets to whom PHILODOXUS was not familiar.

When I realized that the play was winning applause and was being sought by scholars everywhere [147] because it was thought to be an ancient work, I persuaded--with a little lie--those who kept asking me where I had gotten it that it was taken from a very ancient codex. They all assented easily, because it was redolent both of the comic style of speech and of a certain primitive quality, and it was not hard to believe that I, a young man occupied with writings of the popes, would shrink from any praise for [secular] eloquence. Add to this the fact that at the time, no one believed that talents of this sort were flourishing. Nevertheless, so that I would not have wasted my midnight oil, I added a prologue in which I wanted my education and age and all the rest of these things about me made known, so

that if it should ever suit me, I could claim what is clearly mine--which I have done.

Finally, the play circulated for ten years, until I graduated from pontifical studies, provided with a gold ring and a hood. But since I have returned to these studies of philosophy, this play has become more polished and decent with my corrections. Now that I have claimed my legitimate rights over it, however, envy has made it less pleasing, and there are few who do not censure what everybody once wanted, even though it was obscene and crude. What times we live in! And if there are some who long ago highly praised and now reprehend my wit and eloquence, they are either censuring their original judgment or declaring how envious and fickle they are by nature. If they have harmed me, I have punished the barbs of their envy; if they have not been able to harm me, I can consider them inconsequential, since because of their dishonesty, good men esteem rather than despise me.

Now, however, you learned men, who put your effort into cultivating virtue and not into placing obstacles in the path of others, if it is your duty to encourage talents of this sort and not the lazy and idle, I beg and entreat you, I call upon you to stand up for your faith and the most holy religion of literature! Defend your friend, Leone Baptista Alberti, of all men the most devoted to scholars; defend me, I say, from the slanders of the envious, so that when leisure allows, strengthened by good hope and your approval, I may for many years with tranquil spirit and divine inspiration write other, more important works of this sort, with which you will be amused and because of which you will be able to love me all the more. Farewell!

The End.

[148] The Prologue to the play PHILODOXUS, by the comic poet Lepidus.

Read it and enjoy!

LEPIDUS [*tipsy and incoherent*]: Not much time has gone by since I had a drink--I don't know if I drank too much, but you'll be able to tell how far I have exceeded the limits of drinking if I speak gibberish here before you: now listen and decide. I come here to request from you, to beg from you, with entreaties, this one small favor: to be understood, not to be insulted at the end, if contrary to your expectation of me I've set myself up in the business of writing plays--which I'll take as well worth the effort--as it will be--if I perceive it's possible to get this favor from you because of your

benevolence-- and I'll distribute the play that I have here until it gets into the hands of the public.

In fact, if find that *this* play is familiar to you, perhaps I'll discipline my mind to produce the rest of them. Now accept it from the ki-kind-kindness of your heart and make allowances because of my youth and entreaties here before you--let me beg you. Because I don't desire, I don't seek to be held in esteem because I wrote--rather unskillfully--this play in the twentieth life of my year; but I hope you'll not consider me empty-headed or think that I've lived out my years with no sense of responsibility whatsoever.

[149] Now will you grant me this favor? I see that you will. So you want the play from me. By Hercules, it's a nice little play. It has people who are in love, who deceive, who arrange celebrations. I am giving you the facts: [*waving the manuscript about*] this is the play; this play is called PHILODOXUS. What are you staring at? What are you waiting for? That's the name of the play. Oh, now I see! You want to know more about *me*. I'll tell you: I am a demented wit and an ignorant sage. You already know my name, Lepidus--"charming." Ha ha, and you are charming too! So here is the play.

[151] Plot summary: Philodoxus, an Athenian youth, is madly in love with Doxia, a Roman citizen; and he has a companion, Phroneus, attached to him with exceptional loyalty and singular friendship, with whom he takes counsel. Phroneus, for the sake of his friend, makes an effort to win the good will of Ditonus, a freedman who is a neighbor of the beloved girl. This man promises that he will never fail in their affairs. But meanwhile, Fortunius, an insolent young man, also a citizen, at the persuasion of Dynastes, begins to lust after this same Doxia; but he is driven away by a very clever trick of Phroneus, until the lover Philodoxus ingratiates himself with the women with a long speech. Finally, the young man Fortunius, scorned, enters the house by force and kidnaps Phemia, Doxia's sister. At length, after Mnimia, Doxia's guardian, finds her husband Phroneus, she and Tychia, the mother of Fortunius, humbly beg Chronos, the captain of the guards, to resolve everything. Thereupon, Fortunius keeps the kidnapped girl, and Philodoxus marries his beloved Doxia.

Here begins the play PHILODOXUS by Leone Battista Alberti. Read it and enjoy!

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[*A street in Rome, with three doors: in the center, an elegant one, with columns, leading to Doxia's house; to the left, a half-ruined door to Ditonus' house, next to which is a statue of Pluto; and to the right, a third door leading to Climarchus the barber's establishment.*]

## [Scene I] PHRONEUS

I'm very grateful to the gods because they allow me to enjoy my life freely and do as I wish. How much happier I am than the man who sent me here. [153] I'm not afflicted by any care, as he is by all cares, which he's probably reviewing mentally now, as he often does: "That's what I ought to have done . . ." "Had I done that . . ." "I started all right . . ." He's probably saying something like this: "Surely this will happen . . ." "I wouldn't want . . ." "I *would* want . . ." "I forbid it!" "May the gods make it come out all right!"

I'm truly grateful to the gods because I live as I wish, which is the first gift of freedom. Nevertheless, I'm gravely concerned about him, because I see how madly he loves, how he fears, how he's on tenterhooks. What is this torture, that pushes and tears and agitates man's soul? I've tried, by Hercules, to eradicate this great fury from his sick mind. No use! This evil has already put down too many roots. But oh god! What kind of marvel is this, that a man is a perfect enemy to himself because he loves someone else? These torments with which the lover afflicts himself are beyond doubt greater than those that come from enemies. The soul of the lover is never free of sad care and anxiety. So I often debate with myself--quite rightly--about which madness is greater, the one with which Mars agitates us or the one with which Venus infects us. On either side it seems to me to be a forceful and ambiguous argument. But it's clear that this friend of mine is becoming madder day by day because of love.

And how carefully, with what forethought he ordered me to arrange this business! This is what he said: "You know I love you: do you know the street where I spend and consume all my effort, my time, my wretched self? Go there, and if you see anything or anyone passing by, spy on them. There--straight ahead, on the left, almost next to the house of my beloved--there is a door, half ruined and rotten from rain, where the statue of Pluto is set up. That building will be very useful to me, if you insinuate us into friendship with the man who lives there.

You should meet the man: be a friend to a friend, and give life to my life, so to speak. Beyond this, I'm not warning you about anything or giving you orders: you're wise and discreet. So that you recognize the man, pay attention: he is dark, has a beard and long hair, limps, and has bleary eyes."

That's what he said. Then I myself left, and came here again [155] and again. Twice I've rushed about through all the wine taverns, and I haven't found the man anywhere. So I'll hide here, tired as I am, in case he returns. [*He sits down wearily.*] But who's that speaking as he comes this way? Why, it's he himself.

## [Scene II] DITONUS, PHRONEUS

DIT. [*To himself.*] Now it has turned out just as I persuaded myself it was going to do. The harder I work to satisfy my creditors, the closer I come to being sold into slavery again. They are certainly a hard lot of men. What do you think they're going to do to *others* if they can, when they cheat *themselves* of their own pleasure and destroy their own sustenance? And it's not enough for them that by my effort I provided all those things which have to do with domestic matters and costs; they still want to return me to slavery!

I admit that I'm blind; I admit that I'm lame: but not to such an extent that I can't see or run away when it's necessary. [*He sees Phroneus, who is paying no attention to him. Ditonus is terrified and cowers.*]

But who is this man sitting here? Could it be one of them sent to catch me, wretch that I am? [*Addressing Phroneus timidly.*] Who are you, and why are you here? Do you hear? What are you doing? I tell you this: any injury done to me, a freedman, is done to a person who remembers and avenges everything. Do you hear? I am Ditonus; I was Tychia's servant; but now on account of her favor and because I deserve well of her, since I do everything according to her will and command, she has set me free. Didn't you hear? I'm now a free man and more free than you, a free man; because in her I have both a patron of freedom and a refuge against injuries, so that you may not touch me in a harmful way. I'm telling you this so that you will watch out for yourself and not be over-confident in your rash behavior.

[157] PHRON. [*Absorbed with his own problems.*] Oh god, what a job he's given me. I hope--no less than I fear--that the affair will turn out as he wants.

DIT. [*Continuing his tirade.*] But by Hercules you people are not acting like good men when you're so cruel to me. I try to win the good will of everyone, especially of you. Surely I don't deserve this from you for my efforts, when I'm trying to do the impossible. You're hard men; with you, cooperation doesn't win your approval; it destroys it.

PHRON. [*Suddenly addresses Ditonus.*] You! Come here!

DIT. Me? Don't touch me or grab me! I'll consider it assault and battery.

PHRON. Come here, I say!

DIT. I don't want to, I say. Hey, are you laying hands on me? Help, people! Bring help! Come running! Bring help quickly! Let me go, I say; don't hold me!



PHRON. Why are you so upset?

DIT. Why don't you people stop these repeated outrages and stop making me afraid and suspicious?

PHRON. Listen for a second. I want you to know that I'm a person who's fond of you . . .

DIT. Why do you do it? What did I do to you, to make you humiliate me so and try to harm poor me?

PHRON. I tell you that I'm very fond of you, just like the people who particularly love you.

DIT. I don't have anybody that I can really trust. I know all about people's habits because of my age and experience. They cultivate friendships in order to receive benefits or because they expect them from the friendship, as if they were the fruits of the earth: favors are bought with words, and favors are sold for gifts. It not right for you to be friendly to a person you're planning to trick.

PHRON. Ah my dear man, if you'll allow me, I want to be a source of honor and profit for you, as much as possible. It won't do to be afraid of everything you're uncertain about, and it's not useful always [158] to be in fear of things that happen all the time. Because it often occurs that what you did yesterday often and easily, today you can scarcely do a few times. With this right hand, I pledge you my loyalty, which I want to be the firm and perpetual bond of our friendship--the gods and your honesty being my witnesses.

DIT. Who are you? Do you know me?

PHRON. You're Ditonus, a very close friend of friends of friends. So give me an opportunity, I humbly beg, to speak a few words with you.

DIT. Speak.

PHRON. I have always heard that one should approach friendly and virtuous men, who are important because of their character and intelligence, with simple and open friendship. So I'm speaking frankly, because I've always heard that you are trustworthy and honest. A young man loves this neighbor of yours. She, in my opinion, doesn't take it ill. She shows herself attractively dressed and with some frequency. In other matters, I assume that she does what lovers do. He, because he loves her a great deal, or because he has to be careful about his reputation, would like to make use of your house, so that away from the public and from gossip, he can constantly feast

his eyes on her. For this reason alone, I offer and put at your disposal him, his property, and myself, so that we may be of service to you, as you deserve. In exchange for this simple thing, you'll have assured yourself the firm and perpetual right to generous and ready friendship, and you'll obtain from it no small benefit and protection. Because as a result of our effort and diligence, we have--thanks to the gods--several obliging and intimate friends whom we've proven to be extremely helpful to us in favorable and unfavorable circumstances, and who spare neither their wealth nor, if necessary, their lives for us and for those who favor us. In the future, there will be no reason for you to worry about those creditors who are unfriendly to you. And don't hesitate to make use of your friendship with us in this affair.

Sometimes the best things are granted by the fates; sometimes they're forced upon mortals; sometimes [161] they're merely indicated. We pursue--why, I don't know--with too much effort and too eagerly those things which are indicated; we refuse, with all our power (so to speak) those things that are thrust upon us.

Believe me: this kindness of yours will be extremely pleasing to a worthy man, who'll be very friendly to you from now on. I want to speak frankly. He's not a Roman citizen but an Athenian from a very good family; his parents are Argos and Minerva. He came here to gain experience by observing numerous affairs, but not to dedicate himself to business to such an extent as to make himself unworthy of his parents. But when he saw *her*--I don't know by what bad luck--he fell in love at first sight.

DIT. Isn't he the one I've often seen in our street with his head covered with a white Greek cloak? Haven't I seen him with you?

PHRON. He's the one.

DIT. And good natured, by Hercules.

PHRON. And virtuous.

DIT. May the gods prosper him as I desire, and you as you both wish, for you deserve their favor and my cooperation.

PHRON. Oh my good man, give me your hand! We weren't wrong about you, by Pollux. Let him to come to you so that you may get to know him and so that he may show you his gratitude for such a great service.

DIT. I wish I could do greater things. Tell him to consider me, my house, and whatever I can do, as his own. But isn't it time to eat? Will you have dinner with me?

PHRON. I'm always with you in spirit, but I'll be elsewhere in body, at your service. And now farewell.

[*Exeunt.*]

[163] [Scene III] DYNASTES, a slave; FORTUNIUS

DYN. That's the way the situation is. When you've seen her, you'll have to agree.

FORT. Is she beautiful?

DYN. Of such beauty and character that it's not possible to add anything or want anything more, since I think she's more beautiful than Venus--or at least a lot like her: graceful head, charming face, cheerful appearance, a modest gait, and finally her disposition, movement, words, and gestures are of the same sort that you praise in a Roman matron and citizen.

FORT. I very much want to see her in person.

DYN. I'll see to it, and I'm making arrangements for it at this very moment.

FORT. How's that?

DYN. Because she lives in this splendid house, next door, as you see.

FORT. And how will I be able to . . . , from where will I speak to her?

DYN. I want you to know this: everything must be done quickly and properly. Behave so that she first sees a man who's not immodest or dirty or insolent; then let her become familiar with both your appearance and your habits, so that at first she sees you willingly and then eagerly; next, speak, talk to her. The value of these last favors from those who're in love depends on how they're perceived, and even if someone thinks they're of no importance, still it's not proper to ask for them from an unknown person. But first, we'll arrange for you to see her.

FORT. I want you to know this about me, because I am resolved: I'm not a person who can ever be induced to waste effort and money in vain, loitering in these porticoes.

DYN. Now you're acting like a philosopher!

FORT. Well what do you expect? How could I tolerate the rule of a woman?

DYN. Then you don't know what love is, young man. Loves takes away all pride from the spirit and makes one humble.

FORT. Do you think I don't know that those who are determined to keep love's misery in their heart--as I see many do--are in deepest sadness, so that they become willing slaves, though they are free? It's a man's duty to detest all silly women; we're in their favor only so long as our gifts pay for it: [165] so that she finally deigns to look at us--and that very grudgingly--after we've sated her with wine and entertainment. A very bad sort of creature!

DYN. What you've said is beside the point, because we have a place from which you can safely watch and converse whenever you wish.

FORT. Well, that would be exciting.

DYN. I know a man who was formerly a slave with me; now he is my best friend, and I can easily obtain from him whatever favors I ask, even if they're big ones. You see that statue by the door? He owns that house. I'll call on him; I'll say that from his garden, I want . . . Well, I'll say *something*.

FORT. I'll go with you.

DYN. Certainly not. Because I want him to flatter you and beg you to take him into your favor.

FORT. What a clever mind! So?

DYN. So get going. I'll go in now, when the doors open.

FORT. Excellent. [*Exit*]

DYN. [*Sees Philodoxus and Phroneus approaching*] Oh-oh, who is this? Why are the doors opening? But I'm an old friend: they're always open to me. I'll go in. Hello in there!

[*Exit*]

#### [Scene IV] PHILODOXUS, PHRONEUS

PHIL. My journey is like a triumphal procession, and this whole way is full of joy. I can hardly contain myself. I greet everything I see, as if I wanted everything to share my joy. Hail, excellent household gods! Hail, even if you're unfair to me, because you're allowed to see and hear this divine girl so often. Hail heavenly gods, and you, illustrious father of the gods! [167] I'm grateful to you. And my brother, don't you exult at such great joy? I'll repay this great kindness from you with enormous favors--and I hope they're

worthy of you and are what you want. Didn't you say that it's certain that I can hear her from there?

PHRON. I said that you can hear and see her when time and place permit.

PHIL. Oh god! If I could see and hear her all the time, I would always regard you as the most fortunate of men.

PHRON. Please be quiet!

PHIL. I must do what my heart tells me! I'm going to let it expand and frolic a little while, for joy.

*[Enter Ditonus and Dynastes, from Ditonus' house]*

PHRON. Hush, hush, I say! I think I see some arrogant hanger-on entering and leaving my friend's house.

PHIL. Hah, that's the man!

PHRON. Get behind this corner or the column, so they won't see us. We'll listen to what plans they're making.

PHIL. Ah me, how I fear that it will go badly for our affairs.

PHRON. Hush.

PHIL. O ye gods, ye gods! Take Fortunius away!

PHRON. Silence.

[Scene V] DITONUS, DYNASTES, FORTUNIUS,  
PHILODOXUS, PHRONEUS

DIT. Where is he?

DYN. He'll be here any minute. It's good for friends to meet together like this, so that with a generous spirit they can both consult and help each other, as we're doing among ourselves: you can receive no better advice. But here he is. *[Enter Fortunius]* Greetings! You're just in time.

FORT. Greetings to you both.

[169] DYN. *[Aside to Ditonus]* If you knew how much this man wants you to count him among your close friends, you'd certainly be friendly to him.

FORT. May the gods love you well.

DYN. [*To Fortunius*] I have described your parents, character, virtues, honesty, and all the rest of your affairs as well as I could.

FORT. May the gods love you well!

DIT. He has told me all about you; but if you don't mind, please tell me who your real parents were.

FORT. Thraso and Aphthadia.

PHIL. [*Hidden behind column, to Phroneus*] I'm a dead man! It's he! It's Fortunius, Tychia's adopted son. Ditonus was formerly her slave; so now my opportunity to make use of this house will be snatched away. I'm dead!

DIT. As I was looking at you a little while ago, I finally recognized you. Greetings! Do you still remember how I used to carry you, when you were very small, from your father's house to ours?

FORT. Hundreds of times.

DIT. What a sly little boy you were! You were always pulling hard on my beard and hair.

DYN. [*To Fortunius*] He always loved you the best. How charmingly he used to praise you.

FORT. Ha ha ha.

DIT. Now pay attention. Previously, I had never watched my neighbor closely, because I'm not often at home, and I have quite a lot of business with which to occupy myself (may the gods ruin everything for those moneylenders who are plotting with such great cunning to return me to wretched slavery); but recently as I was returning home to eat, some man approached me and asked me to let him use my house, for the very same purpose.

I promised to help. He went away to fetch the friend on whose account he had asked for this favor.

DYN. Who was the friend?

DIT. An Athenian whose parents are Argos and Minerva.

DYN. I have seen him.

DIT. Afterwards, I went up to the tower, and through the little opening I saw her in the upper dining-room earnestly playing a harp and singing verses in praise of Hercules and the gods. By Pollux, to me she seemed more beautiful than Venus. But to return to the subject: I'm fond of you two. I'd be unwilling, if he should return ...

DYN. I understand. You're speaking cautiously.

FORT. Surely we're not afraid of people who have nothing but their lives, which they possess only because they haven't been crucified yet: . . .

PHIL. May the gods enrich you with evil! You've done your duty, then you babble words--as befits you, who own nothing but that stinking, wicked tongue, which grows worse day by day.

PHRON. Quiet! They are whispering their plans in his ear.

FORT. . . . I am certainly not afraid of them.

DIT. [*To Dynastes*] Did you understand?

DYN. Beautiful!

FORT. [*To Ditonus*] What did you say?

DYN. He said that he wants them filled with promises and saturated with hope, and then thrown out.

PHIL. I'm doomed! There's no room for hope left for us. [173] It's like that trite proverb: "Hope lives with perfect faith secure: When faith is broken, hope can't endure."

PHRON. And it's trite because "What's is ground to dust, Its taste hath lost." Hush! Keep your chin up! "Every journey has its end."

PHIL. Woe is me!

PHRON. Silence. I have a bright idea. Ha ha he! Oh gods, what I am about to do! [*Phroneus begins to smear mud on his face*]

PHIL. What are you doing? Why are you acting like a madman? Why are you fouling yourself with such filthy mud? May the gods be my witnesses: you are raving.

PHRON. [*To himself*] Aha, what next? Ah, my cloak! [*Phroneus wraps his cloak around his leg*]

PHIL. Hey, you crazy man, why are you wrapping your leg?

PHRON. Just be quiet and see! [*Phroneus starts toward Ditonus's door*] If you see that you can do so, come quickly.

PHIL. Where are you going?

[Scene VI] PHRONEUS, DYNASTES, FORTUNIUS,  
DITONUS, PHILODOXUS

PHRON. [*Approaching the group*] Woe is me!

DYN. Who is weeping here?

FORT. What do you want, you drunkard?

PHRON. [*Aside*] That's just the kind of help I expected you to give. [*He collapses*]

FORT. How drunk he is! He's so drunk he can't stand up.

PHRON. O heavens, O gods! I'm begging for help. Oh, woe is me.

DIT. Get up. Don't cry.

DYN. What's wrong with you?

PHRON. I'm about to take my last breath.

DIT. Go on, speak: what is it?

PHRON. I'll explain. I was looking for Philodoxus; but as I am approaching--oh, I hurt all over from the blow!

[175] PHIL. [*Still concealed.*] I wonder what his wits will invent now?

DYN. Who hit you?

PHRON. I'll tell you. Since the ambassadors from Africa had successfully concluded their business and were passing though the Forum with great pomp, I stopped to watch the parade, which you would have called a triumphal procession. There were trumpets, chariots, horses, lions, panthers, and--in short--remarkable and innumerable things, which it's certainly worth the effort to see. Meanwhile, a boy was severely punishing an unruly horse with a stick and spurs. I don't know how he managed it; I certainly know this: my leg is almost broken.



FORT. And what were the ambassadors like?

PHRON. Dreadful!

DYN. From Africa?

FORT. And there are panthers?

PHRON. I hope they have a permanent pain in the heart like this one!

FORT. Panthers? Oh how I wish I could've seen them!

PHRON. I wish I hadn't seen them this way, believe me! If you go quickly, you can see them too. But I paid for the pleasure of watching them: my being there cost me a lot!

DYN. [*Fortunius tugs at Dynastes*] Where are you taking me? Where are you going in such a hurry?

FORT. To the panthers, horses, trumpets--to the panthers!

DYN. I'll bow to your wishes, even in a more important thing. Go on ahead, I'll follow.

FORT. [*To Phroneus*] Which way should we go?

PHRON. Straight down this street, straight toward the Forum. They're filling the air with shouting and uproar, so that you can hear from far away.

[177] FORT. Follow the panthers! [*Exeunt Fortunius and Dynastes*]

DIT. [*To Phroneus*] Your case touches me deeply, by Hercules. [*Feeling Phroneus for injuries.*]

PHRON. Ah, how cruelly you mistreat me! I'm done for! My whole side will never be sound again, truly.

DIT. Don't you believe it! Cheer up! Why, here in this barber shop is Climarcus, a singular doctor in his practice with cattle and all quadrupeds--and with humans.

PHRON. A friend of yours?

DIT. The best. [*Approaching Climarcus's door*]

PHRON. [*Motioning to Philodoxus and speaking in a loud whisper*] Why are you standing there? Am I not talking to you?

PHIL. Are you calling me?

PHRON. Yes, you, by Pollux!

DIT. To whom are you speaking?

PHRON. [*Aside to Philodoxus, who is hesitant*] Go on in!

DIT. Did you speak to me?

PHRON. Yes. Why don't you go to the doctor? Go in, woe is me!

DIT. Why should go in? [*Aside*] This man's mind is wandering because of pain, no doubt.

PHRON. Oh, bring the doctor.

[*Philodoxus enters Doxia's house*]

DIT. Who entered that house?

PHRON. I beg you to call him.

DIT. Who went into this building? I heard him when he reached the door.

PHRON. Kind sir, please come here. Why don't you go?

DIT. Who, I say, entered here? Oh, if I take up this walking-stick . . . !  
[*Philodoxus peeks out*] Aha, I see you!

PHRON. But there's no one there. Don't you feel sorry for me? You see what pain I'm in. Please go!

DIT. Very well, but if I thought . . .

PHRON. Listen: lend me your stick.

DIT. What for? You sit down instead.

[179] PHRON. Thank the gods, I will not be utterly miserable. So lead me while the injury is still warm; I don't want to stay here alone getting colder.  
[*Exeunt*]

## [Scene VII] PHILODOXUS, DOXIA, PHIMIA

[A short time later. Philodoxus emerges from Doxia's house]

PHIL. [Alone] A great deed is not done without brains and courage. I was amazed at Phroneus's crazy antics, when he disguised himself with mud and acting.

May the gods make this convenient arrangement permanent for me! May the gods favor similar deeds! Oh gods, how the affair is succeeding according to my wishes! I went into the house: I'm listening, feeling my way, approaching, observing, turning back. Meanwhile, I seem to hear Doxia's voice--which it was. I go to her, I beg her favor, then I speak. She says it's not proper to be there in a lonely, out-of-the-way place, and she orders me to come to her front door, if I want something, and that she will be there. But what will I say, wretch that I am? Where will I begin my speech? And what if I said this: "I love you, I am burning, I am dying. You see it, and I don't know why you allow it. Where is your pity, where is your mercy, where is that distinguished spirit worthy of this beauty of yours?" Or what if I said, "If ever to me ..." [Enter Doxia and Phimia] But here she is! Oh me, my mind is tormented by joy, by care, by fear!

DOXIA. Stay, sister, while I speak; please stay. I don't want this man, who may have honorable feelings toward me, to be in danger on my account. I want to do this small favor for him; because to alleviate a lover's greatest care, when you do nothing to harm your reputation, never brings dishonor, in my opinion. So stay here, sister. But here he is. I see that he is really even more in love than I previously thought. Philodoxus, may the gods love you!

PHIL. And may the gods make you love me, as is right--me, who wants you, more than himself, to enjoy all the best! May the gods make you love me, since I desire it and seek it with generous respect and honorable intentions.

[181] DOX. May the gods preserve me for the sake of my reputation, as I have always desired and striven. Tell me: what is it that you want of me? Speak.

PHIL. You know that I've loved you for a long time, but perhaps you don't know with what a solicitous and what an unwavering spirit mind I've felt affection for you--as is the case. For, as you've been able to see perfectly, I've always been very careful of your reputation, and unless I'm mistaken, on that account perhaps, I've merited--many times--this great favor from you: that you grant as a gift to me, your wretched lover, the words by which you revive this life of mine, which has already been poured out in sighs and tears, and restore to life my runaway heart, which is scorched by care: all of them indeed have long since submitted to your power. There is no reason for

me to ask for these things, if it is not suitable or pleasant to do them. But oh, if only I could thank you for this great favor! If only I could beg from you such a great kindness--if anything is due to me for my pure affection for you! If only you could take pity on my life, since it is decreed by my fate that I should be yours! And if only you would you prefer me alive (since perhaps I can be of some little service to you) instead of destroyed by your cruelty, so to speak; which will contribute neither to your praise nor to any sort of benefits whatsoever.

DOX. I've seen and I know that you love me, and I accept it with a grateful spirit; nor do I now judge that anything evil has entered your heart through my fault.

PHIL. I agree, and for that reason you're deserving of the greatest praise and meritorious merit. And I would not have wanted to say these things, if they are disagreeable to you. But if out of your pity and extraordinary kindness--as is proper in a noble spirit--it is permitted for me to ask you for this, I beg you for the opportunity and means to see you frequently.

PHIM. I don't know why this is innate in you lovers, that what is too much is never enough.

PHIL. I'm not asking for what is too much, and I wouldn't want what is enough, if it didn't suit you; nor have I asked of you anything hard to do, though important [183] and pleasing to me. Nor do I want anything else but that you share my pleasure and company with a spirit neither harsh nor gloomy. Let me walk with you, let me see you: this means my happiness; this means my life. I wanted you to know what I had on my mind.

PHIM. You have spoken beautifully, but you would be doing us a favor if you left.

PHIL. Why?

PHIM. Because it would be good for our reputation.

PHIL. If this is what you command: for as you well know, I have always had regard for your reputation, out of spirit and zeal.

PHIM. Then go, because I see someone coming this way.

PHIL. Farewell. And you, farewell, and keep me in your memory.  
[*Exeunt the women*]

## [Scene VIII] PHILODOXUS

PHIL. Indeed it is often said, and not without reason, that when people are in love and first come together to speak, because they exchange souls, they immediately forget how to speak; and in fact I have just now experienced it myself. Because at first when I wanted to express something in words, whatever soul I had leaped into her heart, so that I--poor wretch--was almost oblivious to myself and my words. I should have said the finest words, pleading words, words of praise, that would have stirred up and fostered not quarreling and hate but benevolence and love. This is what I should have said: "As love is often a pleasure for others, so for me not the fact that I am in love but that I am in love with you--because I love most passionately--is my pleasure and happiness. For you are charming, you are beautiful, and outstanding for your character and every virtue, and [185] exceptionally singular in other things. But since I see myself stuck in such great unhappiness on account of love, to the point that I sometimes feel pity for my own miserable life, I wanted to ask this favor of you. Night and day do their duty to me in a perverse way: for you are always present before my eyes, always in my mind, always rooted in this breast of mine. I might want many things for my own sake, yet I do not desire far more, in order not to harm your reputation. I am not my own, I am yours, Doxia, I am yours; so I beg you to take what is yours and keep what is yours for ever."

But why don't I stop acting the fool? What if these people who are coming this way heard me? They are near and perhaps they heard and saw everything. In short, I've become too careless since I fell in love. Because I dread everything, I fear nothing, and though everything makes me suspicious, yet it happens that I always act negligent and careless. Love alone encourages this strange apathy. I'm unsure what other things I should do now. But I must reject idleness; therefore I'll set everything aside and find Phroneus, my fabricator of frauds, so that I can tell him these things, in order that he may safely accomplish, with advice and effort, what the situation requires. [*Enter Ditonus and Dynastes.*] But what are these slaves muttering about? I want to listen to them secretly from here. [*He conceals himself*]

[187] [Scene IX] DITONUS, a freedman,  
DYNASTES, a slave

DIT. This is what I think: you're a legate who deserves this province because, since you're a veteran go-between of lovers, all of women's habits are clearly known to you, so that if they blame or object, you'll refute them on the spot.

DYN. I, on the other hand, believe that this province has been delegated to you by right, both because you're far more forceful in speaking and because, as her neighbor, you can do things much more discreetly.

DIT. Do you think so?

DYN. I think so.

DIT. That is your decision?

DYN. That's it.

DIT. May the gods favor it. And how shall I begin?

DYN. With tales and women's chit-chat: ask about the goose or about the rooster; or ask for cucumber seeds--or some such thing.

DIT. Do you know what I was thinking? That I should buy some food before I start talking. Because the words come out more fitting and much richer, and--in case you don't know--I've interrupted today's dinner more than a hundred times! I can't think straight when I stand here starving.

DYN. For the sake of friends, people who are true friends often endure and permit many things that are not in their own interest.

DIT. You're talking nonsense. I know myself well. I want you to be aware of this: in an orator, there is nothing more detestable than to speak jejeunely--that is, with your stomach upset. Why, the wine goblets themselves pour out a full and easy speech.

DYN. Good, beautiful, fine! But it's well not to waste what [189] is now left of the best time for our worthy effort. It's shameful idleness to lose the desired opportunity through negligence. Get going! I'll be there after you, and if you go off course, I'll set you straight, as if I were at the rudder.

DIT. So: *I go into the house, you follow.* But a little wine ...

DYN. As you wish.

DIT. *You go first; I will follow.*

[*Exeunt*]

[Scene X] PHILODOXUS, PHRONEUS

PHIL. Slavery is never noble, and freedom is never despicable-- which is why people say that Loyalty is [freeborn and] divine and dwells in the

highest heaven; because you'll never find any loyalty in slaves, who are certainly the lowest class among mortals. But how utterly dull-witted and slow I am, since I foresaw all this by conjecture and suspected that these men were undermining all of my affairs; but I have done nothing to shore up my business! It was certainly necessary to say [to the women] that these slaves have bad reputations and to persuade them not to listen to anything or believe anything or answer anything: it's disreputable not to loathe people who are disreputable. And these things needed to be said: because [the servants] know how deeply I am in love. I didn't hide it--woe is me! And it never occurred to me in time that I should warn those women. But what is it with love? Our wits grow dull when they need to be wise; and no man is more clever than a lover when it is of no benefit. And isn't this the greatest torment in love? That we never realize that we've made a mistake by loving until there is nothing left but to suffer and kill ourselves with bitterest reproaches? And so the inexperienced lover continually makes mistakes, the experienced one continually suffers.

*[Enter Phroneus.]*

PHRON. I'll go see what our Philodoxus is doing. But here he is in front of the house. Hey, my good man, did it go well with the diplomatic mission?

PHIL. Hmm. You're here. So-so.

PHRON. Why didn't it go perfectly.

PHIL. Because the "diplomats" and revellers arrived at the same time--damn them!

PHRON. How so?

[191] PHIL. Well, while I was talking here in front of this house, Ditonus and another slave appeared and interrupted our conversation. The girls left. I drew aside and listened. Then the men argued like this: "Why don't you, because you are her neighbor ... you should start with womanish chit-chat ..." So I gather that that playboy Fortunius, who, if I live ...

PHRON. Now listen a minute. I myself was at Climarcus the doctor's; and while I was there, [Fortunius] Thrasis shows up again, makes threats because I played tricks on him, then summons Ditonus. They make plans; they decide: "Say it as I said it, with my words ... and then say this ..." Fortunius said these things to Ditonus, but I couldn't catch anything else of what they said. I at once began to concentrate on them with my eyes and mind, and I followed them at a distance, concealing myself, as they were hurrying in this direction.

PHIL. So, what do you think?

PHRON. I think . . . This is what I think: that they think that we think that they think the wrong thing.

*[Phroneus sits and crosses his legs. Enter Fortunius]*

[Scene XI] FORTUNIUS, PHRONEUS, PHILODOXUS

FORT. Really, I see nothing particularly excellent given to mortals by the gods other than this: that for good things to happen, if you want something, you must seek it from yourself.

All the gods love me well when my mother loves me. I am a god, since I lack nothing: I have everything [193] that the gods have except immortality. I have pleasure, and I do as I wish; I'm in the prime of life and strength, and I'm not the last among the first in charming good-looks. Money, good will, honors, and all that a man can want—I have them. Furthermore, there are a great many people here who extol me with praises, for whom I could do favors, and who always strive to heap up and accumulate as much as possible for my use and pleasure. If this life lasts forever, I am Apollo!

I had neither seen nor known about, nor was I looking for anything in this neighborhood; but on their own, they're offering everything that's excellent. In addition, they're begging me to accept, as a gift offered to me, a not inconsiderable benefit. So I've decided to go along with them. I'll go and meet Doxia very nicely. As soon as I enter the house, I'll order, "Bring the bench," and when she finally comes, I'll stand up for a moment; I'll say, "Hello. How are you? I'll treat you well, I'll hug you, I'll cover you with love-bites." This is the way all suitors should act, because a woman who is badly treated loves well. These are the gifts and pledges of love, which though they cause suffering nevertheless bring the loved one back into memory and keep him there.

PHRON. *[Aside]* Oh, you foolish man! Even if what you say is true, how you rave, totally out of your head!

PHIL. *[Aside to Phroneus]* Ha ha ha. How true.

FORT. But who's laughing here? So then, by Hercules, I'm a joke to you? I'll turn it to weeping if I catch you!

PHIL. I ask for your favor and kind words.

[193] FORT. And why are you here? Are you watching me? And you: you're here, too? Don't let me see you here from now on.

PHIL. *[With mock terror]* Oh, what a severe, harsh command.



FORT. That's my command.

PHRON. And it will certainly be obeyed--if you'll close your eyes!

FORT. And you lend your support to these jokes, too? If you annoy me, you jail-bird ...

PHRON. My, what arrogance!

FORT. ... if you annoy me, I'll see to it that you get that leg of yours out of your lap and fly into the Tiber--and go straight to hell!

PHRON. And I swear this: you'll never make me run, unless I'm chasing you, and I won't look lame, if I don't want to--and not without the greatest harm to you.

FORT. O Jupiter! Why am I not in my usual rage? And you will be powerless, Jupiter, to prevent me from killing this man today! But what am I doing, fool that I am? It is not proper for a soldier to squabble with a camp-drudge. So I'll be on my way to visit to these people. [*At Ditonus' door*] Is anybody at home? Hey, Ditonus! Where is that gang of drunkards? There's no one here, but I'll go in.

[*Exit*]

[197] [Sc. XII] MNIMIA, PHRONEUS, PHILODOXUS, ALITHIA

[*Enter Mnimia and Alithia*]

MNI. Oh, I can scarcely speak from fright, not only because of other matters but also especially because of this young woman; for in the uproar, she was in danger. O immortal gods! Did anyone ever see or hear such a thing anywhere? By Hercules, it is amazing and incredible for someone to love a girl he's never seen and to be so affected by something he knows nothing about!

PHRON. I'll approach, so that I may inquire: Why are you distressed, madam?

MNI. Because you behave so cruelly towards this household.

PHIL. Why so? Nothing is less true.

MNI. Because you heard the great commotion, because you didn't bring help at once, because you stood back and watched.

PHIL. What commotion? Please explain.

MNI. [*Sobbing*] [Fortunius] Thrasis came ...

PHIL. I'm afraid ...

MNI. ... he broke in ...

PHIL. Oh!

MNI. ... he entered ...

PHIL. Bad!

MNI. ... he carried off ...

[199] PHIL. Oh what an unlucky wretch I am!

MNI. I don't know what I'm saying, I'm not in my right mind, and I haven't the strength to speak.

PHIL. Go on, please, tell me.

MNI. I'll speak, but let me catch my breath for a moment.

PHIL. O bitterest day! Did that monster kidnap Doxia, and did he dare even to look at her impudently, while I am still alive?

MNI. Not Doxia!

PHIL. Well, explain it quickly, whatever it is, so that we're not too late if it's necessary to do something.

MNI. But brief accounts do not describe a great misfortune properly.

PHRON. This is double torture, because you're bringing news that is sad *and* drawn-out. Please speak.

MNI. I am speaking. Doxia, Doxia's sister Phimia, Alithia (this girl), and I were in the garden looking at flowers and watching the busy bees, for recreation; and this old man, a neighbor, out of his little garden next door, which is fenced off from Doxia's by trellis-work, keeps talking to us: "What's going on?" he says. "Will one never be allowed to be free of business? It's good occasionally to turn the mind from work to harmless pleasures, which is what I am doing. When time and place permit, I act silly in everything, with all my energy and effort; because I consider it to be the duty of prudent men to be wise around philosophers and jolly around wine-cups; for whoever wants to be serious in all places and at all times, and to look grave,

restrained, and gloomy, [201] is always foolish, in my opinion. But because I know how to behave in both situations, no one rejects me in serious matters, and all admit me in amusing ones.

For that reason, Fortunius Thrasis, the handsomest young man of all, the most generous of all, has urgently commanded me to come to a sumptuous dinner that he has arranged today at his house, at which if I am not mistaken, I will act as *maitre-d'hotel*, or *chef de cuisine*, or ruler of the wine-jug. O gods! first, what cups I shall drain; then, when I have quite driven thirst away, what amusing gestures I will make before everyone. O [Fortunius] Thrasis, O youth worthy to be a general, with such great generosity; I shall sing the praises of you whom everyone loves. May I perish if the only thing you lack for perfect happiness is a wife equal to your character and nobility. Fortunate are you who will be his wife, who will marry this handsome, good-looking young man! I earnestly desire, dear Doxia, for him to be your husband, and I'll work to see that he doesn't refuse you."

We immediately began to wonder at the man. Then he said, "[Fortunius] Thrasis, are you here? Why, you have arranged a wedding feast. So that a bride will not be lacking, I beg you to take Doxia as your wife." We, shocked by such words, immediately said, "Goodby. We have to think about it." And we fled into the house. They at once knocked down the trellises and pursued us, who were frightened and anxious. They break down the doors, burst in, rush about. We are separated: Doxia had fled to the roof of the building; I was hiding and listening to all the noise from afar. Alithia, you, who were in the middle of it all and saw it, tell how the rest of the things happened.

[203] ALITH. What else? When they had grabbed Phimia, they left.

PHRON. What a wicked deed!

PHIL. Are the rest of you all right?

MNI. Fine, if this business about Phimia were not so serious; but ...

PHIL. Ye gods! What shamelessness, what madness, what injustice in those men! How I hope you get your just deserts, you wicked man!

MNI. And so these things have been done, as you see. Let's go, young lady, so we can inform her father about this affair: that the crime was committed in this house.

PHIL. You, Phroneus, will accompany these ladies. I'll go to the forum to bring the old man back home, if I see him.

[Exit]

## [Scene XIII] MNIMIA, ALITHIA, PHRONEUS

MNI. Well, what the fates give us, we must endure. What can mortals do if the gods are unwilling?

ALITH. Shall we go home, then?

MNI. That's what we're doing. [*She looks intently at Phroneus*] But woe is me, how many things of this sort now come back to my mind, so that in frustration I finally choose the very thing I don't want, partly, and do want, partly.

PHRON. This is the lot of mankind, to want and not to want. But wanting or not wanting what is appropriate is truly the way of wise men. Not wanting what you should want, or wanting what you can't have, is the way of those who believe in, and are interested in, themselves alone. The wicked always smell of their crimes, and crime always betrays itself, so that it gets the punishment it deserves. This one will not escape the gods unpunished.

MNI. I don't doubt it will be so, as you say. But beside that, I blame my own folly--and my husband's, too: I was divorced from him [205] at Athens almost three years ago, because I refused his request of me for certain rings and gold tokens, the result of his labor, which he had given me for safekeeping. I did as almost all of us women who are foolish do, especially if we are beautiful. I was stubborn, and I took delight in my husband's vainly demanding from me, with entreaties and cajoling, what I should have handed over willingly; the result of which is that the next day he left in a fury. If I had not been cruel to him, I would undoubtedly be leading a life neither commonplace nor indigent, and I would certainly not be wandering. But these things came back to my memory, because my husband had the very same name, Phroneus.

PHRON. What kind of life have you sought in this city since you divorced your husband in that way?

MNI. Well, I have always tried to lead an upright life with decent people, to the extent of my ability. I had heard that my husband had come here to Rome. And what could I do, left alone? So I came here--in vain--so that, having laid aside my pride, I might live with my husband, to whom I am indebted and whom I love; but since I have not found him anywhere, I entered the service of Alithia's father, whose name is Chronos.

PHRON. I know him: decrepit, gray, severe; and he is the head of the watchmen, if I remember correctly.

MNI. The same. He has this daughter whom he loves devotedly; he entrusted her to me to guide and watch over. Then those matrons who take great delight in this young lady's disposition and wit became friends with her family through my effort; consequently they meet very often, and they eventually make me a party to everything; I make use of each family as if I were a member, and they trust me and obey me.

PHRON. Tell me, please, what your name is.

MNI. Mnimia.

PHRON. And you, Mnimia, preferred to lose the rings rather than return them to your husband?

MNI. Poor, unwise me! I wasn't denying then that I would give them back, and I haven't lost them; but I was acting rather insanely, in the way women do.

PHRON. So you finally lost the rings *and* your husband?

MNI. If I had my husband, as I have the rings, I would esteem the rings of greater value than I did before. I have waited long enough looking for him; I have done my duty; perhaps I will give them to this young woman as a gift, since I have delayed long enough.

[207] PHRON. [*Aside*] This is what I really think the "duty" of women is: to struggle, with jealousy and obstinacy, against those who love them, and to hate all men whom they have found to be good-natured and indulgent. [*Aloud*] But I want to hear this from you: do you have the rings and gold tokens?

MNI. I have them; I am holding on to them and keeping them.

PHRON. But are they all safe?

MNI. So that nothing will be missing.

PHRON. Give me your hand! There is nothing that I want more.

MNI. Ah, my husband, stop. I recognize these fingers, these rings. But how unlike what you used to be, how unsightly!

PHRON. Probably because, as they say, new habits bring new faces. But you, who used to look hard and obstinate, how gentle you now look. I rejoice, by Pollux, and it is wonderful that we have found each other. Come here, so that I can embrace you.

MNI. I rejoice. And let there be a sacrifice to the gods for such a great favor. Have you been quite well, dear husband?

PHRON. Quite.

MNI. What is between you and that young man?

PHRON. Genuine, sincere good will; generous and continuous familiarity; firm and honest friendship.

MNI. And why were you two lurking over there?

PHRON. You are asking what I want you to know. He loves this Doxia of yours passionately, and, if it is acceptable to each party, there is nothing that I approve of more than that there should be a marriage between these two: for he is a noble young man, learned, prudent, and as you see, outstanding in looks and disposition.

MNI. He deserves to be loved, certainly. I knew all that.

PHRON. What? Does Doxia love him?

MNI. You will find no woman so gloomy and cold that she rejects a handsome lover.

PHRON. What if you encourage it?

MNI. I can do some good, certainly.

PHRON. I beg you, if you have any influence with these women, that you try with all your effort and skill to arrange a marriage.

[209] MNI. Goodby, dear husband. I'll do as you wish. I'll go and leave this girl at home. Then I'll immediately go visit Doxia; I'll try by persuasion and entreaties to conduct the affair according to your wish, and I believe that I can promise you a good outcome.

*[Exeunt Mnimia and Alithia]*

PHRON. I'll go find Philodoxus. But first I'll wash off this filth and mud in this alley and clean myself up.

[Scene XIV] PHRONEUS, CHRONOS, PHILODOXUS

PHRON. O immortal gods! How powerful, how efficient is absence at severing all time-tested relationships. If it could be arranged that a person should have neither conversation with himself nor keep company with

himself in anything for a certain time, I believe that he would like himself very little or not at all.

[*Enter Chronos and Philodoxus*]

CHRON. I heard, I say, and I understand everything. Henceforth, my task will be to do those things that apparently must be done according to law. The judge must first satisfy the law, not man.

PHIL. But I think it must be attended to immediately, so that the criminals won't try some new disturbance.

CHRON. Perhaps you have persuaded yourself, because you see me so heavy and slow and, as they say, *kaput*, that I am unable to run. You are wrong if you think so. For many have discovered that I, at my age, have the ability to run. But it almost always turns out that what we do in good time comes late for those who are too anxious; and those to whom the same matter will be annoying accuse us of having done it too quickly.

See how while we did something else we have now arrived? But I am exhausted. I have to sit down here for a while.

PHIL. That's fine. But here is Phroneus in this very same street, arranging the folds of his clothing; I will approach and bring him back here.

[Scene XV] PHRONEUS, PHILODOXUS

PHRON. Do I see Philodoxus? It's he. Do I see the old man? It's he. I will hurry so that I can fill Philodoxus with joy, partly mine and partly his. Unless I am mistaken, Mnimia will arrange things just as we want.

PHIL. No doubt this bad business is starting up again. I'll hurry to inquire. [211] Well? Have those thugs tried to do anything violent against Doxia again? Go on, tell whatever bad news you are bringing.

PHRON. Calm down. I'm bringing you very good news.

PHIL. By Hercules, that's more than I hoped for. Doxia's misfortune today has affected me that way: it's made me terrified of everything, everywhere.

PHRON. To change the subject: where did you find the young lady's father so quickly?

PHIL. He was on his way to his house. By the gods, I've never seen a slower man.

PHRON. He's worn out by old age and full of years.

PHIL. Nevertheless, he says he's strong enough to run, but he moves as if he has to count every one of the stones with his feet. But what do you know that will make me happy, after you've calmed my fear?

PHRON. Do you remember how often I've explored with you both my adventures and my foolish mistakes, how I was driven by such a slight offense to divorce my wife? How often I used to say "if only she were here"? Do you remember?

PHIL. Of course.

PHRON. I've found her!

PHIL. Oh? Where? Is she all right?

PHRON. She's fine; and she's has the rings and all the gold tokens safe and sound, and--for which you can be even more pleased--she is the guardian of this young lady Alithia, the daughter of this old gentlemen.

PHIL. Is she the same woman I left you with when I went away just now? The reddish-haired, quarrelsome one, with a harsh expression, bulging eyes, sharp nose, pointed chin--the scrawny one? Golly, Phroneus, you have found a beautiful wife.

PHRON. Well, she has a good character, if she's no beauty. And it's not easy to explain how comforting it is to have an ugly wife: her husband is the only man she doesn't hate, because nobody loves an ugly woman, and she frees a jealous husband from suspicions.

PHIL. Didn't you recognize her at first? What were you afraid of, that I would burst out laughing in front of her?

PHRON. Let's skip all of that. This is what will fill you with happiness: my wife has taken up the business about Doxia. With Mnimia as go-between, you'll get Doxia for a wife, I hope.

PHIL. Oh, most beautiful Mnimia! Oh, wife most worthy to be loved by you!

PHRON. And now let's go meet the old man, who is coming toward us.

*[Chronos has risen and shuffles toward them]*



## [213] [Scene XVI] CHRONOS, PHRONEUS, PHILODOXUS

CHRON. Nobody commiserates or grieves for any misfortunes of his friends as long as he does for his own. The young man who just now fetched me seemed to be tortured by this single care; yet here he comes with his expression changed suddenly, excited about some sort of good news. My heart almost fails me, because I am in suspense over my daughter, even though I suspect nothing of this sort of the chaste girl.

PHRON. We greet you, Chronos.

CHR. And you: were you there when these things occurred?

PHRON. This man and I have just heard everything from the women who were there--Mnimia and Alithia--whom I took to your house.

CHR. Is my daughter all right?

PHRON. As I say, she's safe at your house.

CHR. I'm delighted. But what vile, low man dared to cause such a commotion?

PHRON. I don't know, really; but it's clear that Fortunius, Tychia's son, broke into the house by force and abused the household with violence and insults.

CHR. [*To an attendant*] You go as bailiff and bring that man to me immediately. And you, Phroneus, bring all the women who are in this house out here in public. It's reasonable to inquire into a capital offence here publicly. Meanwhile, I'll go into this tavern in order to write down the supplies we need. I'll be back in a moment.

PHRON. I'm on my way.

[*Exeunt omnes; enter Tychia*]

## [Scene XVII] TYCHIA

TY. How pleasant in every life is affability, especially to those with whom you live, and how valuable for those who know how to make use of this same virtue. Everybody, known and unknown, hates an unpleasant person, and there is nobody who does not love a good-natured, indulgent person. One can learn this from me, because I treat my son with courtesy and kindness. Whatever he does, he tells me, of his own free will. Whatever he does that is good, I openly approve and assist; when he tries to do or to allow something bad, I immediately oppose the improper action, when it

appears, with reason and moderation. Thus I restrain and repress future ills. For a great evil [215] has small beginnings; if you take them away, you remove everything. Trained in these habits, my son just now came to me, weeping, and said, "Mother, I have sinned; I have kidnapped a woman who is a citizen. I admit that I have acted foolishly. You must look to our affairs and reputation and safety." I was pained, and I castigated him verbally for many things, but the time seemed riper for other things than to be wasted in scolding. Therefore I have decided to go to Doxia, and I will refuse no conditions, provided I allay the ill-will; then I will look into reforming my son.

*[Chronos returns, speaking to Calilogus--"beautiful speaker"--his secretary, unseen off-stage]*

But here is the old man. Now I will not be able to do anything that I had intended. I must change my plan.

[Scene XVIII] CHRONOS, TYCHIA, PHRONEUS

CHR. A different reason moves me, Calilogus, to think that it should be written this way; but I praise your wit and cleverness. Bring me those reports, so that I may re-read them, because it is the greatest negligence not to reexamine what you have written before you seal it.

TYCH. *[Aside]* Woe is me, what plan shall I follow? I think I must approach this man and find out what he is planning to do to us, so that I may quickly placate him, if he is becoming more angry. And besides, my case is not entirely bad or out of the ordinary. Who doesn't know that you must overlook and tolerate many things in every age? It is proper for the young to love and play, for grown men to be greedy for gain and plunder, for old men to be frugal and slow. In fact, if there's anything I am sorry about in this business, it's only this: that he did it without consulting me. For although I want those I love and those I admit among my intimate friends to be high-spirited and bold, still I would have preferred for Fortunius to satisfy his love a different way--by gifts and deception--rather than by kidnapping. But I will meet the old man, and then I will decide what to do as the occasion demands. *[Aloud]* Greetings, Chronos, what do you need here with so many documents?

CHR. Ha! As if you didn't know, or as if these things occurred against you will. Was it proper to do such things to a free-born woman, who is a citizen?

TYCH. Permit me to explain, please.

CHR. People permit you too many things, Tychia. Kidnapping! Scandalous high-living! And with your approval! Explain yourself!

TYCH. I have found out what was done here, I admit, and if they had been carried out with my knowledge, I would confess them openly. But I don't see that anything has occurred for which I should fear an upright, fair judge: for if Phimia is free-born, she has freely chosen for herself a free-born husband.

[Enter Phroneus]

[217] PHRON. I've come back. I delivered the message. Doxia is getting dressed to come out.

CHR. [To Tychia] You're very wicked. By Pollux, you're a--woman! Was it proper for there to be such an irregular wedding-ceremony? Breaking in, disturbing the peace, carrying off by force and violence? Did I not command that wicked man to be found? Will you flout me like this?

TYCH. I'll do what you command.

CHRON. I command it.

TYCH. [To Phroneus] Say, my good man, do you know my son?

PHRON. I have seen him.

TYCH. Do you know my house?

PHRON. I'd be more certain if you would show me.

TYCH. Well, pay attention. Go straight down this street to the tax collectors' house, then turn left until you come to the bakery, then go up to the square. There on the right, in full view, you will see a shield hanging by the door-posts, as usual, on which these words are inscribed in gold letters: Nisi iam forte, "By Any Chance." That's our house. Call my son. Did you understand?

PHRON. I didn't listen, and I'd never find it. Send one of your servants.

[Exit Phroneus]

TYCH. May the gods destroy you! [To "Flying-feet," perhaps Mercury, her servant] You, Volipeda, run, order Fortunius to come here immediately. What are you waiting for? [So that Chronos cannot hear] But when you come back, say that you didn't find him anywhere.

[Scene XIX] MNIMIA, CHRONOS, ALITHIA, TYCHIA

[Enter *Mnimia and Alithia*]

MNI. Come with me, Alithia, so that we can carry out my husband's commands. It will be to your benefit. By Pollux, how I'd like to do something useful for that modest young man about his love-affair. Let's call on Doxia. First, we'll calm her mind, which is now agitated. Why? Because this one case will help what we have started, so that hereafter no one will dare to harm two people, bride and groom, with one injury. The audacity of lustful men is directed at unmarried women and widows. But why do I see our old gentleman here? I shall go there. Hello, Chronos.

CHRON. Where is my daughter?

MNI. There she is. Come here, Alithia.

ALITH. Hello, father.

[219] CHRON. Did these things happen as people say? The doors broken open, someone kidnapped by force?

ALITH. Yes, father.

CHRON. By Jupiter, what a detestable crime.

TYCH. [*To Mnimia*] My dear, let us entreat the old gentleman. Chronos, listen, I implore you.

CHRON. Why should I listen to you?

TYCH. Not because it is lawful for us who are guilty to speak to you, but because it is right for a kind, humane man like you to listen.

CHRON. Speak.

TYCH. If I did not understand that all these things that you are preparing, dear Chronos, are directed at seeing justice done for those to whom the injury was apparently done, I might fear your severity toward my son. But since you yourself know that these things were done both by a young person and also by one who is suffering from passionate love, and that they were done to that woman, who may be suffering all these things willingly from the man she loves: will it not be inconsistent with your justice, if you do not pardon him for this one offense, partly out of regard for us, partly out of your own kindness? Let me implore you. Imagine that it is happening to you; pretend that something bad has happened to your daughter: you will

understand how perversely all their children's evil deeds reflect on the parents. What do you say, Chronos? And you, Mnimia, I beg you, persuade him. Go on!

MNI. Stop poking me in the ribs, dear Chronos. Show your customary gentle humanity; let her entreat you.

CHRON. What do you want done?

TYCH. I'd like for you to do this favor for me, the mother; and if you do it, you will be doing something that is at the same time just and agreeable to all of these people.

MNI. Dear Chronos, say yes, I beg you.

CHRON. What is it?

TYCH. I want Phimia to be my son's wife.

CHRON. Provided she doesn't refuse it.

TYCH. May the gods love you, may the gods preserve you always! I'll go home and bring my son to the wedding.

[221] CHRON. I don't reject this plan concerning Phimia, as long as the ill-fame of the kidnapping is blotted out by a legal marriage. [*Exit Tychia*] What else shall we do here, then? I will go back to the forum in order to dismiss these messengers with the documents. You, Mnimia, take care of the young lady entrusted to you.

[*Enter Phroneus, Philodoxus, Doxia*]

[Scene XX] PHILODOXUS, PHRONEUS, MNIMIA,  
CHRONOS, DOXIA [, ALITHIA]

PHIL. Phroneus, if because of my singular regard for you I have ever deserved to be able to ask or expect anything from you, I now beg you to offer, as you always do, not only everything you owe me but everything you can do for the sake of your best friend. I commend, I entrust myself to your care.

PHRON. Oh, you're too kind.

PHIL. Not at all. But because I desire so strongly, I love so passionately, for that reason I am begging earnestly.

MNI. My dear man, cheer up!

CHRON. What are you all talking about over there? Do you disapprove of what we did about Phimia?

MNI. Not at all. I'm speaking to my newly rediscovered husband.

CHRON. This man is your husband?

MNI. My very own.

CHRON. I'm delighted. And what is it that you are discussing? If I can be of any service, you'll tell me?

MNI. I'll tell you, with pleasure. This young man is an Athenian. I knew his parents, upright and important people in our city. He would like, with my help and yours, for Doxia to become his new wife. She, if I guess correctly, does not reject the idea altogether. I believe that if you undertake this, with our persuasion we can arrange for each to be satisfied according to his expectation and desire.

CHRON. And is the dowry suitable?

MNI. She brings enough of a dowry of this sort: she is a modest, compliant woman.

[223] PHIL. I don't care about the dowry.

CHRON. So why don't we do this now, Mnimia?

*[Enter Doxia]*

MNI. Excellent. But here is Doxia.

DOX. Phroneus, in a hurry, with Chronos' words, commanded me to leave my house.

MNI. Here Doxia, come here to us, my precious. Do you know what Chronos has done about Phimia while you were absent? He has decided that it is better for her, under the circumstances, to be called "wife" in Fortunius' house than to be called a ruined woman in your house. For that reason he has betrothed her to Fortunius, who asked for her hand. What do you say?

DOX. Since the matter has gone so far that it is not possible to expect anything better, I consider it to be prudent to choose the lesser of the evils.

MNI. Not without reason am I often profoundly amazed at your prudence and extremely kind nature, not only because of other reasons but also especially because at your house in these affairs that require action, you had little need either of our entreaties or of lengthy persuasion, because you knew how much care and diligence we take for the protection of your advantages and honor.

Now, I have explained how Philodoxus feels about you, what he is asking for. I consulted the old gentleman; he approves the idea; for which reason he sent for you so that you could inform us how you feel about a wedding.

DOX. I know that you are both endowed with such virtue that I may safely believe you and do as you wish. I will accept--and I will reject--a husband and everything else according to your wish and decision, as long as I understand that it is pleasing and acceptable to you. It is your duty to find a place for me.

PHIL. [*Aside*] Oh, worthy of praise and worthy to be loved, with this eloquence and wonderful modesty. But I fear that this old gentleman may fail to persuade her.

CHRON. I want you to know that I do not totally approve that a young woman--certainly not one with such beauty and at this age--should remain at home too long. If such a thing often happens because there is nobody suitable for a girl to marry or because fathers want to invest their substance in more aristocratic families, nevertheless, I disapprove of your doing so, because you are alone (which, certainly, is not devoid of sinister suspicion) and because all the other things that often delay the arranging of marriages are completely absent: for neither the dowry nor relatives nor his character provide any excuse for you reasonably to refuse the marriage. Since this man asks for no dowry, you see what kind of husband you are going to have.

MNI. By Hercules, you have beautifully told how the matter stands, Chronos. [*To Philodoxus and Doxia.*] And the more I think about it, the more I believe that [225] a marriage between you is auspicious and lucky. In short, it is necessary for you to marry, and I want the wedding to take place. There's no time like the present. Give me your hand, and you, your hand. Do you take this man for your husband? Do you take this woman for your wife? Do you wish it?

PHIL. I do.

MNI. And do you wish it? Doxia nodded, so she agrees.

DOX. I do.

CHRON. Well done!

PHIL. Immortal gods, I am grateful to you because you have been far more favorable to me than I dared to hope. Oh, how happy I am!

MNI. Do you see how much pleasure a criminal's offense sometimes brings to good people?

PHIL. I am exulting with happiness. Applaud, spectators, for this my good fortune. [*He looks fondly at Doxia.*] Applaud! And you, trumpeter, play the wedding march. We will follow. Farewell.

THE END

