

16 Aristophanes

SCENE: A street in Athens. In the background, the Akropolis; center, its gateway, the Propylaia. The time is early morning.* Lysistrata is discovered alone, pacing back and forth in furious impatience.

LYSISTRATA

Women!

Announce a debauch in honor of Bacchos, a spree for Pan, some footling fertility fieldday, and traffic stops—the streets are absolutely clogged with frantic females banging on tambourines. No urging for an orgy!

But *today*—there's not one woman here.

Enter Kleonike.

Correction: one. Here comes my next door neighbor.—Hello, Kleonike.*

KLEONIKE

Hello to *you*, Lysistrata.

—But what's the fuss? Don't look so barbarous, baby; knitted brows just aren't your style.

LYSISTRATA

It doesn't matter, Kleonike—I'm on fire right down to the bone. I'm positively ashamed to be a woman—a member of a sex which can't even live up to male slanders! To hear our husbands talk, we're *sly*: deceitful, always plotting, monsters of intrigue. . . .

KLEONIKE

Proudly.

That's us!

LYSISTRATA

And so we agreed to meet today and plot an intrigue that really deserves the name of monstrous . . .

Lysistrata and Kleonike 2F

Lysistrata 17

and WHERE are the women?

Slyly asleep at home—
they won't get up for anything!

KLEONIKE

Relax, honey.

They'll be here. You know a woman's way is hard—
mainly the way out of the house: fuss over hubby,
wake the maid up, put the baby down, bathe him,
feed him . . .

LYSISTRATA

Trivia. They have more fundamental business to engage in.

KLEONIKE

Incidentally, Lysistrata, just why are you calling this meeting? Nothing teeny, I trust?

LYSISTRATA

Immense.

KLEONIKE

Hmmm. And pressing?

LYSISTRATA

Unthinkably tense.

KLEONIKE

Then where IS everybody?

LYSISTRATA

Nothing like that. If it were, we'd already be in session. Seconding motions.

—No, *this* came to hand some time ago. I've spent my nights kneading it, mulling it, filing it down. . . .

KLEONIKE

Too bad. There can't be very much left.

LYSISTRATA

Only this:
the hope and salvation of Hellas lies with the WOMEN!

KLEONIKE

Lies with the women? Now *there's* a last resort.

LYSISTRATA

It lies with us to decide affairs of state
and foreign policy.

The Spartan Question: Peace
or Extirpation?

KLEONIKE

How fun!

I cast an Aye for Extirpation!

LYSISTRATA

The Utter Annihilation of every last Boiotian?

KLEONIKE

AYE!—I mean Nay. Clemency, please, for those
scrumptious eels.*

LYSISTRATA

And as for Athens . . . I'd rather not put
the thought into words. Just fill in the blanks, if you will.
—To the point: If we can meet and reach agreement
here and now with the girls from Thebes and the

Peloponnese,
we'll form an alliance and save the States of Greece!

KLEONIKE

Us? Be practical. Wisdom from women? There's nothing
cosmic about cosmetics—and Glamor is our only talent.
All we can do is *sit*, primped and painted,
made up and dressed up,

Getting carried away in spite of her argument.

ravishing in saffron wrappers,

peekaboo peignoirs, exquisite negligees, those chic,
expensive little slippers that come from the East . . .

LYSISTRATA

Exactly. You've hit it. I see our way to salvation
in just such ornamentation—in slippers and slips, rouge
and perfumes, negligees and décolletage. . . .

KLEONIKE

How so?

LYSISTRATA

So effectively that not one husband will take up his spear
against another . . .

KLEONIKE

Peachyl

I'll have that kimono

dyed . . .

LYSISTRATA

. . . or shoulder his shield . . .

KLEONIKE

. . . squeeze into that

daring negligee . . .

LYSISTRATA

. . . or unsheathe his sword!

KLEONIKE

. . . and buy those

slippers!

