THE HAUNTED HOUSE

By Plautus

Translated by Palmer Bovie

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

THEOPROPIDES, a merchant of Rome

SOSTRATA, wife of Theopropides

GRUMIO, slave of Theopropides

TRANIO

SPHAERIO siblings, slaves of Theopropides

MESSENIO

CANTHARA

PHILOLACHES, son of Theopropides

PHILEMATIUM, a music-girl, mistress of Philolaches

SCAPHA, her attendant

CALLIDAMATES, a young Roman, friend of Philolaches

PHANISCUS

DROMO slaves of Callidamates

PINACIUM

DELPHIUM, mistress of Callidamates

DANISTA, a moneylender

SIMO, an aged Athenian, neighbor of Theopropides

ANTIPHILIA, wife of Simo

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The action takes place on a street in Rome before the houses of Theopropides and Simo.

ACT I

SCENE 1

*Enter, from the house of THEOPROPIDES, GRUMIO, pushing out TRANIO, SPHAERIO, MESSENIO and CANTHARA.*

GRUMIO: Get out of the kitchen, all of you; out of it, you dogs.

Who are you to be giving me your back talk amid the platters;

Out of the house, you wreckers of your master’s matters.

I’ll pay you back in the country with interest for sure.

Out of the pantry you stinkers, why hide in there?

TRANIO: What’s all this noise here in front of the house?

Think you’re out in the sticks? Lay off the town house you hick!

Be off into the fields; stop thrashing around.

Get away from the door. (Striking him.) There now, is *that* what you wanted?

GRUMIO *(running away)*: Ouch! That hurt! Why throw those punches at me?

TRANIO: Because you’re alive, that’s why.

GRUMIO: I must endure it. Only let the master return home;

Just let him come back home safe, the one you’re devouring

In his absence.

SPHAERIO: That’s illogical as well as unlikely, to speak of devouring

Someone who’s not there.

GRUMIO: Indeed, you town wit, do you throw the country in my teeth?

But I think I know why; in the back of your mind you’re aware

You’re headed straight for the mill, to slave away there.

Time’s almost up, old Tranio and your siblings.

You squander his property, corrupt my master's son,

Make purchase of mistresses, give them their freedom,

Feed parasites, feast yourselves sumptuously.

Were you thus instructed when the master left?

Do you suppose that this is the duty of good slaves,

To be ruining both the estate and the son of the master?

Through your management and your tutoring has that been done.

TRANIO: Why should you care about me or what my brothers do?

Potato head! Haven’t you got your cattle in the country for you to look to?

I choose to drink, to party, to go out with girls;

This I do at the peril of my own back, not yours.

GRUMIO: Then with what assurance he does talk! Faugh! (exhaling his breath at Messenio)

MESSENIO: But may Jupiter and all the deities confound you. You stink of garlic.

I.1

GRUMIO: What would you have to be done? All can’t smell of foreign perfumes.

You are fortunate; I unlucky. It must be endured.

Let my good fortune be awaiting me, your bad, yourself.

CANTHARA: You seem, Grumio, as though you envied us,

Because we enjoy ourselves and you are wretched.

It is quite our due. Why now are you staring at me, jailbird?

GRUMIO: That pen name will suit you sooner than me, that’s what I think.

TRANIO: “Sooner” who cares, when the present’s so particularly pleasant?

GRUMIO: Is **that** so? Here’s one thing **you** ought to know: the bad

Comes along much sooner than you wish it had.

TRANIO: Well, let’s not you be my bad news at present, you goose.

Messenio, you head down to the harbor

To find some nice fresh fish for our suppertime dish.

Canthara and Sphaerio, away with you, SHOO! *(All but Grumio exit.)*

GRUMIO *(to himself)*: Well they beat a hasty retreat.

Not to care one straw for what I've said!

O ye immortal gods, I’ll apply then, instead,

To your holy powers. Bring my master back home from abroad

As soon as you can, perhaps even sooner, while the lord

Still has a home and a farm to be lord of. Three years

He’s been gone and what’s left of his property here

Will last about three more months at the most.

I'm off to the country. Here comes our host,

The master's son, once by far the best

Of all young men, now as ruined as the rest. *(Exit.)*

I.1

SCENE 2

*Enter PHILOLACHES, from the house of Theopropides*.

PHILOLACHES *(to himself)*: Up until the time my military service was ended

I was as good as could be, while I still depended

On the power of my makers. I was worthy and wise.

But then I moved into the house of my natural guise

And I wrecked the builders’ work from the roof to the ground.

Laziness dropped in; this was my high wind, I found,

When it tore off my self-control and innate sense of shame.

It unroofed them, but I was the one most to blame

For not replacing those tiles. I put it off too long.

And soon enough, like the rain, love came along.

Drenching my body and seeping down into my chest

And soaking my heart through and through. Dispossessed.

Am I now of money and credit and reputation; all of them fled,

Like my good character and sense of honor; they’ve left me for dead.

All the best young men were once inspired

By me. And now, when I’ve virtually expired,

And dwindled down to nothing, I’ve learned to make sense

Of the truth by the simple exercise of my own intelligence.

*(He withdraws to right of stage.)*

SCENE 3

*Enter PHILEMATIUM and SCAPHA, with all the toiletries.*

PHILEMATIUM: Heavens! That lovely cold bath was marvelous.

I’ve never felt better inside and out, Scapha dear,

So clean and fresh.

SCAPHA: May the upshot of everything be unto you like a plenteous year's harvest.

PHILEMATIUM: But, what has a harvest got to do with my bathing?

SCAPHA: Not a bit more than your bathing has to do with a harvest, my dear.

PHILOLACHES *(aside)*: Lovely Love Herself! That’s my heavenly hurricane,

Who unroofed the top from the whole sphere of self-control

I’d been housed in. Exposed as I was and then doused

When love and desire rained down hard and flooded my heart,

I can never put the roof on again. The walls of my heart,

Are all soaking wet. My dwelling is falling apart.

PHILEMATIUM: Do look, my Scapha, there's a dear, whether this dress quite becomes me.

I wish to please Philolaches, that wonderful guy, the apple of my eye.

I.2&3

SCAPHA: Really, Philematium

You’re superbly presentable, you with your adorable ways,

Just because you’re so lovely. Men in love aren’t in love

With what their women wear but with what they find in there.

PHILOLACHES *(aside)*: Ye gods! That Scapha knows lovers inside out,

How they really feel, and just what they’re thinking about.

PHILEMATIUM: Now how’s this?

SCAPHA: How’s what?

PHILEMATIUM: Oh, please, take a look

And tell me now how you like this on me.

SCAPHA: Thanks to your good looks, it happens that whatever you put on becomes you.

PHILOLACHES *(aside)*: For these kind words, Scapha, you scamp,

I’ll see that you’re given a generous . . . something or other

Today. That is, it won’t be for free that you praise her who is dear to me.

SCAPHA: But I must say, heavens knows, I simply cannot imagine

How a clever, intelligent, worldly young woman like you

Can act like a stupid little silly.

PHILEMATIUM: Am I doing something wrong?

Do tell me, please, if I am.

SCAPHA: Heaven’s name, doing wrong!

Going wrong, that’s the way you’re headed, by setting your cap

For one man alone. You wait hand and foot upon him

And refuse to see all the other interested callers.

It’s playing the role of a wife, not using your wiles

As a woman of the world, to yield to one man alone.

PHILOLACHES *(aside)*: What’s that you say, you devil? I promised

You a gift, but you’ve lost it; you just tossed it away,

And I hereby declare that good deed undone.

PHILEMATIUM: Now, Scapha, no naughty advice.

SCAPHA: He’ll leave you stranded,

I warn you right now, when your youth and beauty are ended

And his pleasure palls at repetition. To think of the current condition

Of his friendship and generous behavior as lasting forever

Is to be monumentally dumb.

PHILEMATIUM: Well, I hope not.

SCAPHA: Reality consists for the most part of things unhoped for.

No less than you I once was loved and adored

By a person I exclusively chose for my master and lord.

When a few years went by and the hair on my head changed its color,

I was abandoned, left stranded. That’s your future with this fellow.

I.3

PHILOLACHES *(aside)*: I can hardly keep my fingers from flying at that vixen’s eyes.

PHILEMATIUM: I am of opinion that I ought to accommodate this man alone.

It was he who set me free, after all, to have for his own.

PHILOLACHES *(aside)*: Gods, what a woman! Intelligent and modest and charming.

Hercules, no joke; for her I’m glad to go broke!

SCAPHA: But his money is practically gone: the lavish dinner parties

And drinking bouts lasting all day and most of the night

Show how little he knows about how to put money aside.

The pile of provisions in the larder is flat as a pancake.

PHILOLACHES *(aside)*: By Hercules I’ll prove how closefisted I can be,

Beginning right now with you: your ration of food and drink

For the next ten days at our house will be cut down to none.

PHILEMATIUM: If you choose to say anything good about Philolaches

You’ll be listened to gladly. If you keep lacing into him, though,

By Castor, your nasty remarks will get you a beating.

PHILOLACHES *(aside)*: Hooray for the house of Pollux!

Do see, how, from her very heart's core, she loves me!

Oh, I'm a fortunate man; I've liberated in her a patron

To plead my cause for me.

SCAPHA: I see that all other men come to nothing for you

When compared to Philolaches. And I don’t want a beating for my pains

So I’ll be the cheerful chorus to your lovelorn refrains.

PHILEMATIUM: Will you hand me the mirror and my jewelry box, Scapha?

I want to look my best when my favorite person comes home.

SCAPHA: What need of a mirror have you, when any mirror would prize,

Above anything else, a chance to gaze into your eyes?

PHILOLACHES *(aside)*: Those fair words, Scapha, I assure you won’t go unrewarded.

I'll today give something from my savings to you.

PHILEMATIUM: Do you think I ought to be perfumed with unguents as well?

SCAPHA: A woman smells best when she smells of nothing at all.

PHILOLACHES *(aside)*: How very cleverly she does understand everything!

There's nothing more knowing than this knowing woman!

Too long have I withheld my hand.

*(Coming forward.)*

What are you about here?

PHILEMATIUM: I'm decking myself out to please you.

PHILOLACHES: You are dressed enough.

*(To Scapha)*: Go you hence indoors, and take away this finery. (Scapha goes into the house.)

*(To Philematium)*: But, my delight, my Philematium, I have a mind to regale together with you.

I.3

PHILEMATIUM *(pointing to a couch on the stage)*: Come, take your place, then.

PHILOLACHES: Oh look, someone’s coming there.

Isn’t that my friend bearing down on us, with his girl?

Yes, it’s Callidamates, with his girl friend to boot.

So here come our comrades-in-arms for a share in the loot.

SCENE 4

*Enter CALLIDAMATES, at a distance, inebriated, and DELPHIUM, followed by PINACIUM.*

CALLIDAMATES *(to Pinacium)*: I want you to come for me in good time

To the house of Philolaches; listen you well then! Those are your orders. *(Exit Pinacuim.)*

*(to Delphium)*: For from the place where I was, thence did I betake myself off;

So confoundedly tired was I there with the entertainment and the discourse.

Now I'll go to Philolaches to have a bout;

There he'll receive us with jovial feelings and handsomely.

Do I seem to you to be fairly drenched, my bubsy?

DELPHIUM: You ought always to live pursuing this course of life.

CALLIDAMATES: Should you like, then, for me to hug you, and you me?

DELPHIUM: If you've a mind to do so, of course.

CALLIDAMATES: You are a charming one. *(He stumbles.)*

Do hold me up, there's a dear.

DELPHIUM *(holding him by the arm)*: Whoops, you nearly gave me the slip. Take care

You don't fall. Stand up.

CALLIDAMATES: O when the iris of my eye is smiling!

I'm your buzzing bee, my honey. *(Weaving and buzzing.)*

DELPHIUM *(still holding him up)*:

Look out! You’ll be stretching out here on the street

Before we make it to the rather more strategic retreat

Prepared for us at Philolaches’ headquarters. Don’t shilly, Calli.

CALLIDAMATES: I can’t wait to recline in comfort somewhere.

Feel like declining and falling right here

By this wall. I’m all in. A sleep.

Lemme go. Drop right here in a heap.

DELPHIUM: All right. Look out, BELOW! *(She lets go.)*

I.3&4

CALLIDAMATES *(grabs her arm as he starts to fall)*:

Oh no, you don’t; not without what I’m holding

Here in my hands, I’m not folding.

United we falls, divided we stands.

DELPHIUM: If you do fall, you won’t unless I fall down too.

CALLIDAMATES: Well, some pasherby will pick us both up later on.

DELPHIUM: This man is most mashed.

CALLIDAMATES: Whom? M-m-me? M-m-mashed, you shaid?

DELPHIUM: There now give me your hand. I don’t want you smashing

Your head on anything hard.

CALLIDAMATES: There you are.

DELPHIUM: Ready now, all together.

CALLIDAMATES: Say, where am I headed?

DELPHIUM: You mean you don’t know?

CALLIDAMATES: Oh yes, it just came back to me:

I’m going home to have a drink.

DELPHIUM: No, no. To this house over here.

PHILOLACHES *(to Philematium)*: Won't you let me go to greet them, my life?

He’s my very best friend in the world.

I'll return right away. *(Goes forward toward the door.)*

PHILEMATIUM: That "right away" has already lasted too long for me.

CALLIDAMATES *(going to the door and knocking)*: Is there anyone here?

PHILOLACHES *(coming from behind)*: Yes, anyone is.

CALLIDAMATES *(turning around)*: Bravo! Philolaches,

Good day to you, most friendly to me of all men.

PHILOLACHES: May the gods bless you. Come right here and join us

Where have you been?

CALLIDAMATES: Where a man can get mashed first clash.

PHILEMATIUM: Come sit beside us here, Delphium, dear.

CALLIDAMATES *(pointing to Delphium)*: Give her something to drink. I shall go to sleep directly.

*(Nods and goes to sleep.)*

PHILOLACHES: There’s nothing very new or different about his condition.

DELPHIUM: What shall I do with him now, Philematium, dear?

PHILEMATIUM: Let him alone just as he is. I.4

ACT II

SCENE 1

*Enter MESSENIO, looks about and runs across the stage.*

*Enter SPHAERIO and CANTHARA. Messenio sees them and approaches. He whispers to them.*

CANTHARA: Our hopes are gone!

SPHAERIO: Salvation herself can’t save us!

Enter TRANIO and approaches the group.

MESSENIO: At the harbor I clamped my eyes

On the mightiest mountain of monstrous misery imaginable.

The master is back home from abroad.

TRANIO: Jupiter almighty, his eagle eye fixed on Philolaches,

The master’s son, and on me, is putting every ounce of effort into annihilating us.

PHILOLACHES *(to Philematium)*: Here come the provisions; see, here's Messenio;

He's come back from the harbor.

TRANIO *(running)*: Philolaches!

PHILOLACHES: What's up?

TRANIO: You and I.

PHILOLACHES: You and I what?

TRANIO: We’re up, that’s what. We’re done for!

PHILOLACHES: Why so?

TRANIO: Your parents are coming.

PHILOLACHES: What is it I hear?

TRANIO: We’ve been swept away. Your parents are coming, I say.

PHILOLACHES: Where are they?

TRANIO: They’re down at the harbor right now.

PHILOLACHES: Who says so? Who saw them?

MESSENIO: I saw them myself, I tell you.

PHILOLACHES *(to Canthara)*: Woe unto me! What am I to do?

II.1

CANTHARA: Why do you ask me? You’re the one who’s supposed to be in charge.

PHILOLACHES *(to Messenio)*: Did you see him?

MESSENIO: I, my own self, I tell you.

PHILOLACHES: For certain?

MESSENIO: For certain, I tell you.

PHILOLACHES: I'm undone, if you are telling the truth.

MESSENIO: What good could it be to me if I told a lie?

PHILOLACHES: What shall I do now?

TRANIO *(pointing to the furniture)*: Order all these things to be removed from here. *(Messenio and*

*Canthara remove the table and exit.)*

*(Pointing)*: Who's that asleep there?

PHILOLACHES: Callidamates.

TRANIO: Arouse him, Delphium.

DELPHIUM *(yelling in his ear)*: Callidamates! Callidamates! Awake!

CALLIDAMATES *(raising himself a little)*: I am awake; hand me a drink.

DELPHIUM: Awake; the parents of Philolaches have arrived from abroad.

CALLIDAMATES: Goodbye father.

PHILOLACHES: It’s hello to him. I’m the one you can kiss goodbye. I’m a dead man.

CALLIDAMATES: The dead talking? How’s that possible?

DELPHIUM: Come on for heaven’s sake, get up! His parents are coming.

CALLIDAMATES: Your parents come? Bid them go back again.

What business have they to come back here so soon?

PHILOLACHES: What will I do? My parents coming here to catch me.

The house full of partiers. What’s the use

Of digging a well when you’re dying of thirst?

That’s how much chance I see for my own survival

Now that I’m faced with my parents’ arrival.

*(Canthara and Messenio enter and go to pick up the couch.)*

CANTHARA *(pointing at Callidamates)*: Look! he has laid his head down

And gone to sleep again. Revive him.

DELPHIUM *(shaking him)*: Will you awake now? *(Sphaerio carries Callidamates off into the house.)*

PHILOLACHES: I'm undone!

II.1

TRANIO: Be of good courage; I'll cleverly find a remedy for this alarm.

PHILOLACHES: I'm utterly ruined!

TRANIO: Shhhh! I’m thinking of a scheme.

Is it all right with you if I manage to make

Your parents, when they come, not only to **not** enter the house

But to run away as far as they can? *(Philolaches nods.)* Now all of you get inside

And clear this stuff, but fast.

*(Canthara and Messenio carry out the couch.)*

PHILOLACHES: Where am I to be?

TRANIO: Where you like it best, right next to her. *(Points to Philematium.)*

DELPHIUM: Don’t you think we ought to get away from here?

TRANIO: No further than that, Delphium. *(Indicates a tiny distance with this thumb and forefinger.)*

Keep the party going inside the house

Just as if this slight rearrangement had never occurred.

PHILOLACHES: I'm soaking wet with sweat, just thinking how hot

Those cool words of his will turn out to be for me.

TRANIO: Can’t you be still and do as I tell you?

PHILOLACHES: Yes I can.

TRANIO: Now Philematium and Delphium, you go in first please.

DELPHIUM: We'll both be obedient to you. *(They go into the house.)*

TRANIO *(to Philolaches)*: Now, you pay attention to what I want you to do.  
First of all, cause the house to be shut up at once.

Don't let a soul make the slightest sound inside, not a whisper.

PHILOLACHES: Count on me.

TRANIO: And let no one answer when the old gentleman knocks at the door.

PHILOLACHES: Anything else?

TRANIO: Order the front door key of the house

To be brought to me here. I'll lock the house up from outside.

PHILOLACHES: To your safekeeping I entrust myself and my hopes. *(He goes into the house.)*

II.1

TRANIO *(Strolling about looking confident)*:

A feather of a difference it makes if a man

Is in charge of, or in the charge of another,

If he isn’t daring at heart.

Anyone at all, the best or the worst,

Can easily hatch a plot in a burst

Of inspiration and get things off to a bad start fast.

But the mark of a man of genius is seen

When he steers the complicated mess

On through its mischievous confusion

To a calm and innocent conclusion.

And suffers no punishment, not even deep embarrassment.

SPHAERIO *(enters)*: All’s ready, so I was sent. *(Hands Tranio the key.)*

TRANIO: Of course, the key.

SPHAERIO: Himself says please sir, please to ask

You to frighten his parents somehow, so they doesn’t come in

And catch him.

TRANIO: The old man won’t even dare look in the house.

They’ll take to their heels in an absolute panic.

That’s how I mean to manage it.

*(Sphaerio exits and Tranio locks the door and moves to the side of the stage.)*

TRANIO: Now let the old master appear. I’ll dive over here,

Away from the house and take up my station, so when

They come in soon and head for their home destination

I can make them the comic heroes of this situation.

SCENE 2

*Enter THEOPROPIDES and SOSTRATA.*

THEOPROPIDES: Neptune, We owe you a great debt of thanks

For letting us out of your clutches at least long enough

To come back home still alive.

TRANIO *(aside)*: Neptune, you’ve made an awful mistake,

Letting an opportunity like that slip through your fingers.

SOSTRATA: Never again will we venture as much as a foot from the shore.

THEOPROPIDES: After three years we’re finally home from Egypt.

SOSTRATA: Eagerly awaited, no doubt, by all in the household.

II.1&2

TRANIO *(aside)*: The messenger bringing news of your death would enjoy

A more enthusiastic welcome at the hands of your family.

THEOPROPIDES *(looking at the door)*: But what means this?

Is the door shut in the daytime? I'll knock. *(Knocks at the door.)*

Hallo, there! Is anyone going to open this door for me?

TRANIO *(coming forward, and speaking aloud)*: What person is it that has come so near to our house?

THEOPROPIDES: Surely this is my servant Tranio.

TRANIO: O Theopropides, my master; Sostrata;

I'm glad that you've arrived in safety. Have you been well all along?

THEOPROPIDES: All along, as you see.

TRANIO: That's very good.

THEOPROPIDES: What about yourselves? Are you all mad?

TRANIO: Why so?

THEOPROPIDES: Strolling around in the street, and not a soul in the house

Looking after things, no one to open the doors,

No one to answer my knock. I almost knocked a hole

In those doors with my pounding.

TRANIO: You mean, you touched them?

THEOPROPIDES: Yes, I've almost broken down the door.

TRANIO: I can’t tell you how horrible this thing is

You’ve done, master, how disastrous.

THEOPROPIDES: What horrible thing?

TRANIO: Take to flight, I beseech you, and get away from the house. Fly in

This direction, fly closer to me.

SOSTRATA: What is this business?

TRANIO: By all that's holy, you've been the death--

SOSTRATA: Death of whom?

TRANIO: Of all your family.

THEOPROPIDES: May the gods and goddesses confound you with that omen.

TRANIO: I don’t think you can do anything to make up for this.

SOSTRATA: Why not? Or are you just trying to change the subject? II.2

TRANIO: Just stay over here, keep well away from the house.

THEOPROPIDES: In the name of the gods, will you kindly explain

What’s going on?

TRANIO: Because it is now seven months that not a person has set foot

Within this house, from the day we all moved out.

THEOPROPIDES: Tell me, why so?

TRANIO: Just look around, whether there's any person to overhear what we’re saying.

THEOPROPIDES *(looking around)*: All's quite safe.

TRANIO: Look around once more.

SOSTRATA *(looking around)*: There's nobody; now then, speak out.

TRANIO: The house has been the site of a capital offense.

SOSTRATA: I don't understand you.

TRANIO: A murder was committed, long ago, of ancient date.

THEOPROPIDES: Of ancient date?

TRANIO: The host in the house killed his guest with his own bare hands.

The same guy, I’m sure, who sold you the house.

THEOPROPIDES: Murdered him, did he?

TRANIO: And robbed the guest of his gold, and buried the body

There in the house, on the spot.

THEOPROPIDES: What made you begin to suspect it?

TRANIO: I'll tell you; listen. One day, when your son had dined away from home,

After he returned home from dining

We all went to bed, and fell asleep.

Suddenly he let out a bloodcurdling cry of fear.

SOSTRATA: What person? My son?

TRANIO: Shh! Hold your peace. Just listen.

He said that a dead man came to him in his sleep--

THEOPROPIDES: In his dreams, then, you mean?

TRANIO: Just so. But only listen.

He said the dead man had spoken to him.

II.2

THEOPROPIDES: What, in his sleep?

TRANIO: It would have been surprising if he had told him awake,

Him who had been murdered sixty years ago.

So the dead man said to your son in his sleep;

“I am a guest in this house from across the sea.

The dwelling has been duly given and granted to me.

Orcus, king of the dead, has had to refuse

Me passage across Acheron to the land of the dead

Because I died prematurely. I was foully deceived

When I trusted my host, who killed me here in my bed.

This house is hexed, and you will be next.”

Ye gods, it would take a year to describe all the manifestations

This dead man demonstrated: we were almost delirious

At what he said and did, this guest his host

Mysteriously murdered and monstered into a ghost.

*(A muffled noise is heard from inside the house)*

THEOPROPIDES: What was that?

TRANIO *(to ghost)*: **He** was the one

Who rattled the door, not **me**. It was **he** who knocked!

THEOPROPIDES: The dead are coming to take me to Acheron alive!

TRANIO *(aside)*: I'm undone! Those creeps inside will wreck my plot.

SOSTRATA: What are you talking about to yourself? *(Goes near the door.)*

TRANIO: Back away from the door. By Hercules, fly, take to your heels.

SOSTRATA: Fly where? Fly yourself, as well.

TRANIO: I’ve nothing to fear. I’ve made my peace with the dead.

A VOICE *(from within)*: Hallo! Tranio.

TRANIO *(in a low voice, near the door)*: You won't be calling me, if you are wise.

*(Aloud, as if speaking to the apparition)*: 'Tis not **I** that's guilty; **I** did not knock at the door.

THEOPROPIDES: What is it that's wrong?

TRANIO: Oh! Was it you that called me? I thought it was this dead man

Because you had knocked at the door.

But are you still standing there, and not following instructions?

THEOPROPIDES: What are we to do?

TRANIO: Take care not to look back. Fly; cover up your head!

THEOPROPIDES: Why don't you fly? II.2

TRANIO: I am at peace with the dead.

THEOPROPIDES: I recollect. Why then were you so dreadfully alarmed just now?

TRANIO: Have no care for me, I tell you; I'll see to myself.

But go on as you started, take to your heels

As fast as you can. And pray to Hercules for help.

THEOPROPIDES: Hercules, I do invoke thee!

TRANIO: Me too, Hercules! Grant me with all your might *(Theopropides and Sostrata run off.)*

The power to make these old ones prey to their fright.

And in the name of the immortal gods, I think I can say

I’ve cooked up a pot of trouble today!

*(Exits)*

II.2

ACT III

SCENE 1

*Enter DANISTA, at the end of the stage.*

DANISTA *(to himself)*: I never knew any year worse than this one for lending out money.

From morning until night, I spend my time in the Forum;

I cannot lend out even a coin of silver to anyone.

*(Enter TRANIO and SPHAERIO.)*

SPHAERIO: Now we’re clearly undone in an everlasting way!

Here’s the moneylender who loaned us the cash at interest

We bought the girl and staged our parties by means of.

TRANIO: We’re caught in the act if I can’t come up with a plan

To keep our masters from knowing. I’ll intercept them.

*(Enter THEOPROPIDES and SOSTRATA.)*

SPHAERIO: But here are the masters come back again too soon!

TRANIO: I’m afraid they’ve heard something more than I saw fit to tell them.

Go and intercept them.

*(Sphaerio moves toward Theopropides and Sostrata.)*

TRANIO *(aside)*: However it all turns out, I plan to proceed

To continue to confuse things as chaotically as I can:  
That looks like what they demand.

SPHAERIO: Where have you been?

THEOPROPIDES: I met that person from whom I bought this house.

SPHAERIO: And told him, of course, about what Tranio had said to you?

THEOPROPIDES: Every word.

SPHAERIO *(aside)*: Woe to us all! My scheme is undone!

THEOPROPIDES: What’s that you’re saying to yourself?

SPHAERIO: Who? Me? Oh, nothing.

THEOPROPIDES: I told him everything in its order, I tell you.

SPHAERIO: And he confessed to the ghost of the guest?

THEOPROPIDES: Why no; he utterly denies it. III.1

SPHAERIO: Does he deny it?

THEOPROPIDES: You ask me again? I should tell you if he had confessed.

What do you think I should do?

SPHAERIO: I? Think? Do? You should sue!

But insist on an honest judge who will believe Tranio. That way you’ll win the case

As easily and neatly as a fox can pilfer a pear.

DANISTA *(to himself)*: Ah, Philolaches’ man, Tranio. And they haven’t paid a thing

On their loan, either principal or interest.

*(Goes towards TRANIO, who steps forward to meet him.)*

THEOPROPIDES *(to Tranio)*: Whither are you taking yourself?

TRANIO: I'm going no whither.

*(Aside)*: For sure, I am a wretch, a rascal, one born with all the gods my foes!   
He'll now be accosting me in the master's presence.

Assuredly, I am a wretched man; they’ll give me the business both ways.

But I'll make haste and intercept him. *(Moves towards Danista.)*

DANISTA *(aside)*: Ah, he's heading my way.

I'm in luck. There’s a slight whiff of cash in the air.

TRANIO *(aside)*: He’s in a good mood. Wait till he comes to his senses.

*(To Danista)*: Ah, greetings, Silverdespiser. I **trust** you are well.

DANISTA: Greetings! What about the money?

TRANIO: Be off with you, will you, you brute.

Directly you come, you commence the attack against me.

DANISTA: You’re empty-handed.

TRANIO: And you’re a mind reader.

DANISTA: But why don't you put an end to this funny business?

TRANIO: Tell me, then, what it is you want.

DANISTA: Where is Philolaches?

TRANIO: You couldn’t have come at a better time than you did.

DANISTA: How's that?

TRANIO *(taking him aside)*: Step this way.

III.1

DANISTA *(loudly)*: How about the interest payment that’s coming to me?

TRANIO: I know that you have a good voice; you don't have to shout.

DANISTA: I’ll clamor like a commercial.

TRANIO: Oh, be nice to me now.

DANISTA: How can I be nice to you?

TRANIO: Go on back home.

DANISTA: Leave now?

TRANIO: Come back around noon.

DANISTA: Will the interest be paid then?

TRANIO: It will be paid. Be off.

DANISTA: Why should I wear myself out and waste time going home

And coming back again? I’ll just hang around here until noon.

TRANIO: Why no; be off home. On my word, be off.

DANISTA: Just for that I’ll call your master. **PHILOLA. . .**

TRANIO *(interrupting)*: Good voice there. Feel better, now that you’re shouting?

DANISTA: I’m only asking for what is mine.

If I'm a bother to you, hand over the cash. I’ll go.

And you can be rid of all these question and answers by redeeming one word.

TRANIO: What word is that?  
  
DANISTA: Pay up.

TRANIO: That’s two words at least.

DANISTA: Well, it’s one **thing**, like principal and interest.

I want the interest that’s due on the whole amount.

TRANIO: Interest here, interest there, interest everywhere.

An interesting subject to our speaker, apparently; it’s all

He’s interested in discussing. Personally, I find it disgusting.

Get thee behind me, thou loud percentage of a beast.

You’re rude and unattractive.

DANISTA: Sticks and stones

May bruise my bones, but tones can’t touch my loans.

III.1

THEOPROPIDES *(calling out to TRANIO, from a distance)*: What’s going on?

TRANIO *(to Theopropides)*: I'll be there just now.

*(To Danista)*: Look now; his father has arrived from abroad, not long since;

He'll pay you both, interest and principal;

So you don't try to take us for more.

See whether he puts you off.

DANISTA: I suppose I should take what I can get.

THEOPROPIDES *(to Tranio, going toward him)*: What’s going on?

TRANIO: What is it you mean?

THEOPROPIDES: Who is that?

And what is he after? Why is he shouting the name

Of my son and starting this brawl with you? Do you owe him some money?

TRANIO *(to Theopropides)*: I beg of you, do order the money to be thrown in his face.

THEOPROPIDES: I, order it?

TRANIO: Order the fellow's face to be pelted with money.

DANISTA *(coming nearer)*: I could very well put up with a pelting of money.

THEOPROPIDES: What is this cash debt that Philolaches owes?

SPHAERIO: Oh, a trifle.

SOSTRATA: How big a trifle?

SPHAERIO: One thousand bucks.

SOSTRATA: What’s your definition of a trifle?

SPHAERIO: A lot less than a lot.

THEOPROPIDES: I heard from him that there was interest owing on the money as well.

TRANIO: Eleven hundred is due to him. Say that you'll pay it, that he may be off.

THEOPROPIDES: I, say that I'll pay it?

TRANIO: Do say so.

THEOPROPIDES: What, I?

TRANIO: You yourself. Do only say so. Do be guided by me. Do promise.

Come now, I say; I beg of you. III.1

THEOPROPIDES: Answer me; what has been done with this money?

TRANIO: It's safe. An investment.

SOSTRATA: Pay it yourselves then, if it's safe.

SPHAERIO: Your son has bought a house.

SOSTRATA: A house?

TRANIO: A house.

THEOPROPIDES: Bravo! Philolaches is taking after his father!

A house, say you?

TRANIO: When this house turned out to be haunted,

As I told you, he went out and bought another at a bargain.

THEOPROPIDES: Bought a house, did he?

TRANIO: A house. And you can imagine

What a property, too!

THEOPROPIDES: I don’t quite see how I can.

SPHAERIO: Wow, what a place.

SOSTRATA: What kind of place?

TRANIO: Don’t ask.

SOSTRATA: Why not?

SPHAERIO: A phenomenal buy. A marvelous place!

THEOPROPIDES: Sounds like a good deal. How much then did it cost?

TRANIO: Two talents. Me plus you, three thousand bills.

But he paid down the earnest money, or one thousand bills.

Do I make myself clear?

THEOPROPIDES: Excellently done, by my son!

DANISTA *(touching Tranio)*: Gentlemen, it’s noon.

TRANIO: Pay this guy, to stop his puking.

THEOPROPIDES *(to Danista)*: Young man, transact the business with me.

DANISTA: I'm to ask it of you, you mean? III.1

THEOPROPIDES: Come for it tomorrow.

DANISTA: I'll go and suffer no sorrow if I’m going to get it tomorrow.

*(Danista exits.)*

THEOPROPIDES: Where is this house located? The one my son bought.

TRANIO *(aside)*: Just see that, now! We’re undone!

SPHAERIO *(to Tranio)*: I’ve come up with it! Next door neighbor!

Why not call that the house his son has acquired?

THEOPROPIDES: Are you going to tell me that which I ask you?

TRANIO: Whatever the gods dictate, that am I determined to say.

SOSTRATA: Well, call it to mind, then.

TRANIO: Your son has bought the house of this next door neighbor of yours.

SOSTRATA: He bought it from Syrus the Syrian?

SPHAERIO: Syrus sold sixteen months ago to Simo.

Simo sold some time since.

THEOPROPIDES: A good buy?

TRANIO: If you make the loan good, a very good buy, if you won’t,

It’s goodbye to us.

SOSTRATA: I should like to look over this house;

Rap on the door and call someone out Tranio.

SPHAERIO *(to Tranio)*: We’re in for some hard knocks, I’m dashed if I know

What to say at this point.

TRANIO: The waves are washing us back

All over again, and dashing us up on the same rocks.

Oh brother, away! Our siblings we need,

Our torch must pass, so our masters they’ll lead.

*(Sphaerio exits.)*

THEOPROPIDES: What’s holding you up?

TRANIO *(aside)*: You are, you pirate. I’m stranded.

I can’t figure out what to do. I’m caught barehanded.

THEOPROPIDES: Go ask at the door for someone to show us around.

Come on, get a move on.

III.1

TRANIO *(going to the door of Simo's house)*: Hallo there, you!

*(Turning around)*: But there are ladies here; we must first see whether they are willing or unwilling.

THEOPROPIDES: You say what's good and proper; just make inquiry, and ask.

We'll wait here outside until you come out.

TRANIO *(aside)*: May all the gods and goddesses utterly confound you, old couple!

In such a fashion are you thwarting my artful plans in every way.

*(Enter Messenio and Canthara. With Tranio they huddle and whisper.)*

TRANIO *(exiting)*: Masters, my brother and sister will make the inquiries inside.

CANTHARA: Look, the owners of the house are coming out; yes! It’s Simo and Antiphilia.

MESSENIO: Let’s duck over here for moment and plan what to say,

And then prime Simo for the part he should play!

SCENE 2

*Enter SIMO and ANTIPHILIA from their house.*

MESSENIO: May the Gods, Simo, send on you many blessings!

SIMO: Save you, Messenio!

MESSENIO: How fare you?

SIMO: Not amiss. What are you about?

MESSENIO: Talking with a very worthy man.

ANTIPHILIA: You act in a friendly way, in speaking well of him.

CANTHARA: It certainly is his due.

SIMO: But, before me a good slave does not stand.

ANTIPHILIA: I say, now, how much longer…

CANTHARA: What’s that you say you say?

ANTIPHILIA: Do you think you can keep on like this?

MESSENIO: What’s that you say you say?

SIMO: You know quite well what we’re talking about.

Life is short and you’re succeeding in making it sweet. III.1&2

ANTIPHILIA: You people are living a merry life, just as befits you:

On wine, good cheer, nice dainty fish, you enjoy life.

CANTHARA: That is the life we used to be living till now.

At this point our pleasures have positively petered out and pancaked.

SIMO: How so?

MESSENIO: We’re torn down, Simo, down to the ground!

SIMO: Nonsense boy! Everything has gone just right

For you all so far.

CANTHARA: I won’t deny those words.

We’ve lived the way we wanted and lapped up the luxury.

But, Simo, now the wind has dropped and left

Our ship becalmed.

ANTIPHILIA: How so this woe?

MESSENIO: I will inform you. The master came home today from abroad.

SIMO: In that case, the whip will be stretched for you;

Then to the place where iron fetters clink.

CANTHARA and MESSENIO: Now, by our knees, we implore you;

Don't give information to our master.

SIMO: Don't you fear; he shall know nothing from us.

MESSENIO: Now, as to this about which our old couple has sent me.

ANTIPHILIA: First answer me this that I ask you.

As yet, have they discovered anything of these matters?

SIMO: Have they censured their son at all?

MESSENIO: He is as calm as the calm weather is wont to be.

Now he has requested me most earnestly to beg this of you,

That he be allowed to come and look at your house.

SIMO: It's not for sale.

CANTHARA: Yes indeed; but the old couple wishes to build a woman's apartment

Here in their own house, baths too, and a piazza, and a porch.

SIMO: So? What has he been dreaming of?

III.2

MESSENIO: I can tell you. They want their son to marry a wife

As soon as it can be arranged. And that’s the reason

They want a new women’s wing. Some architect told him,

He says, that your house was a gem of model construction.

So they now want to use your place as a model for theirs,

And particularly want the advantages of your design.

ANTIPHILIA: Indeed, they are really choosing a plan

From a piece of poor workmanship.

CANTHARA: Still, they wish to look over it.

SIMO: They may look over it, if they like. If there is anything

That takes their fancy, let them build on a wing.

MESSENIO: Shall we go and call them then?

SIMO: Go and call, you’re vocal enough.

*(Canthara and Messenio walk towards Theopropides and Sostara talking to each other.)*

MESSENIO: These two old couples we’ve busily

Saddled with bags, our bundle of tricks.

CANTHARA: Ha! Each one is now carrying out **their** share of our plan.

What fun to get them to work for us.

MESSENIO: Ahem! Theopropides!

THEOPROPIDES (coming forward): Harumph? Who’s that calling me by name?

MESSENIO: A slave who serves his master in the most amazing manner.

SOSTRATA: So, why did you stay there so long?

MESSENIO: The old man wasn’t free, so we waited around.

THEOPROPIDES: Up to your old tricks. Taking an olive break, I bet.

CANTHARA: To blow and swallow at the same moment isn't easy to be done;

We couldn't be there and here at the same time, could we?

THEOPROPIDES: And what now?

CANTHARA: Come and look, and inspect it at your own pleasure.

MESSENIO *(as they advance)*: Look, the old couple themselves.

Waiting in front of the door for you, downcast

Because they’ve sold the house.

SOSTRATA: What’s that to us? III.2

MESSENIO: He begs me to persuade Philolaches to sell it back.

THEOPROPIDES: I should say not.

Every man must now mow his own field. If we’d bought the house

At an unfair price, we’d have no right to return it.

Money in hand is better than beating around the bush.

The quality of mercy should not be strained

To apply to money matters.

CANTHARA: Stop dragging your feet

And dragging in those famous quotations. Keep up with us.

SOSTRATA: Coming slave, coming.

MESSENIO: Simo and Antiphilia, I present my masters, Theopropides and Sostrata.

SIMO: Theopropides and Sostrata! Welcome home from so long a time overseas!

THEOPROPIDES: May the gods bless you.

ANTIPHILIA: Your slaves were telling us

You’d like to look around our house.

THEOPROPIDES: If it’s not too much trouble.

SIMO: No trouble at all. Enter!

Just walk around as if you owned the place.

THEOPROPIDES *(apart to Messenio)*: "As if--?"

MESSENIO: Now don’t rub it in. Can’t you see how sick

He feels about your buying the place? It’s written

All over his face.

THEOPROPIDES: I can read it.

MESSENIO: Then don't make a show

Of being content with the bargain, or terribly cheerful.

THEOPROPIDES: I quite understand. I think you've given good advice,

And that it shows a humane disposition

On your part, my lad.

ANTIPHILIA: Won't you go in? Look over it at your leisure; make yourself at home.

SOSTRATA: Thanks so much. You’re being terribly kind.

CANTHARA *(pointing)*: See the front entrance here,

And the walk it affords along the gallery;

Isn’t that lovely?

III.2

SOSTRATA: Absolutely, a marvelous feature!

CANTHARA *(Pointing slyly at Theopropides, Sostrata, Simo and Antiphilia)*: And cast your eyes

Over these four great big uprights –

Aren’t they terrifically thick?

MESSENIO: And dense . . . and wooden?

THEOPROPIDES: I’ve never laid eyes on such beautiful blocks of timber.

SIMO: And they cost me a pretty price, by the gods, originally.

MESSENIO *(aside, to Theopropides)*: Did you hear that “originally”? He can hardly contain his tears.

SIMO *(coming forward)*: Now, at length, it's worth your while to move further on.

THEOPROPIDES: Yes, of course, how true. We'll just walk on in.

ANTIPHILIA: We’d gladly take you around ourselves,

But we’re expected at the Forum on a matter of business.

SOSTRATA: You've acted obligingly. Good speed to you! *(Exit Simo and Antiphilia.)*

MESSENIO: Follow me this way then.

THEOPROPIDES: We’ll be unshakable from your tracks.

*(They go into the house.)*

III.2

ACT IV

SCENE 1

*Enter PHANISCUS.*

PHANISCUS: The master, I maintain,

Reacts in the way his servants most want him to:

If they’re good, he behaves,

If they act wicked, he turns into a fiend.

I’ve come on the errand to escort my master home.

In his whole bunch of slaves, there’s only me

With enough get-up-and-go to meet him here.

Tomorrow when the master comes to see

What’s happened, they’ll be whipped with cowhide gear.

In short, I value my back more than theirs.

They can do wholesale business in cowhides, who cares?

I’d rather see all the leather used up on their rears

Than do any business myself in whips and tears.

*(Enter PINACIUM and DROMO.)*

PINACIUM: Hey you, stop this instant.

DROMO: Wait up now, Phaniscus!

PHANISCUS *(not turning around)*: Don't be annoying to me.

PINACIUM: Well, watch Phaniscus

Whisk us away, with a sweep of his tail, oh joy!

DROMO: Hold it! Wait for us parasite boy!

PHANISCUS: Parasite am I?

DROMO: That’s right, dusty: anyone

Can lead you around as long as it ends in dinner.

PHANISCUS: It’s my own business if I happen to like to eat

What difference does it make to you?

PINACIUM: Oh, aren’t we tough!

And the master simply dotes on us.

PHANISCUS *(rubbing his eyes)*: Ow! my eyes are watering.

PINACIUM: I wonder why?

PHANISCUS: The general effect of gas

Created when you’re in range. IV.1

PINACIUM: You’re jokes are as current

As counterfeit money.

PHANISCUS: Oh, come on with me, you pessimists, go in and call

Callidamates and tell him we’re here.

DROMO: All right, we’ll go up and pound on the door.

PINACIUM: Hey there! Anyone at home in there to protect these doors

From assault and battery? Somebody, open the door!

DROMO: Well, not a soul to venture outdoors;

Understandably, since they’re all out cold

Inside; but all the more reason not to be too bold:

Some one of these grumpy grouches might slouch out

With a hangover and clout me right on the snout.

SCENE 2

*Enter MESSENIO, CANTHARA, THEOPROPIDES and SOSTRATA, from the house of Simo.*

MESSENIO: Look like a good buy to you?

THEOPROPIDES: I’m utterly delighted!

CANTHARA: You don’t think it’s too expensive?

SOSTRATA: If I’ve ever seen a house

Thrown away, it’s this one.

MESSENIO: And so, you do like it?

THEOPROPIDES: Like it?

We love it.

SOSTRATA: Our money is well invested in a house like this

At a price like that.

CANTHARA: And thanks to Tranio for insisting,

And urging your son on to drive a good hard bargain –

MESSENIO: He forced him to borrow the cash needed at interest

To make the down payment.

THEOPROPIDES: Tranio certainly saved the ship.

And now we owe how much more?

CANTHARA: Two thousand. IV.1&2

THEOPROPIDES: He shall have it today.

SOSTRATA: Now, off to the country with you

And tell our son we’ve arrived.

MESSENIO: Just as you say ma’am.

THEOPROPIDES: Tell him to come right back to town with you.

MESSENIO: Yes, sir!

CANTHARA *(to Messenio)*: We’ll go around back and call a meeting

Of our brothers, reporting the situation all quiet,

Then bring the son to this destination. Isn’t this a riot?

*(Messenio and Canthara exit.)*

PHANISCUS: Strange, I don't hear the usual sounds emanating

From the party in progress, the girl on the flute.

DROMO: Or anyone else, doing anything at all, in fact.

SOSTRATA: What in the world’s going on? Why are those men

Hanging around our door? What can they want?

Why are they looking in?

PINACIUM: I’ll try pounding.

Hallo there, unlock the door! Hallo, Tranio! Open up!

THEOPROPIDES *(advancing)*: What kind of comedy is this?

PHANISCUS: Hey, you in there!

Come and open up! We’re here

To pick up our master, Callidamates.

THEOPROPIDES: Hey you boys! What do you think you’re doing?

What’s your business here?

PHANISCUS: The explanation

Is simple: our master is in there partying.

SOSTRATA: Your master is in there partying?

PIANCIUM: We explained all that to you.

THEOPROPIDES: You're carrying the joke too far. PHANISCUS: We've come to pick him up.

THEOPROPIDES: Pick whom up?

IV.2

DROMO: Not whom, him, the master; how many times

Do we have to tell you whom?

SOSTRATA: Now listen boys,

No one lives there. I’m sure you mean well, but….

PHANISCUS: Young Philolaches doesn’t dwell in that domicile?

THEOPROPIDES: He used to, but he moved out long ago.  
  
PINACIUM *(aside)*: I’m afraid the old jar's cracked.

DROMO: You’re quite wrong, Pop.  
  
THEOPROPIDES: Don’t call me Pop.

PHANISCUS: Unless he moved out yesterday,

I know for certain that he's living here.

SOSTRATA: For six months now, no one has lived in this house.

PINACIUM/PHANISCUS/DROMO: WAKE UP!

SOSTRATA: Whom? Me?

PINACIUM: Yes’m, You’m.

THEOPROPIDES *(to Pinacium)*: Don't you be impertinent. Let me speak to the boy.

*(to Phaniscus)*: No one’s living there.

PHANISCUS: Oh yes, someone is, and yesterday, and the day before,

And so forth: every day since his parents left.

And they haven’t let three days in a row go by

Without a party.

SOSTRATA: And who was in charge?

DROMO: Philolaches.

THEOPROPIDES: Philolaches who?

PHANISCUS: The son of Theopropides.

THEOPROPIDES *(To Sostrata)*: Oof! We’re done for if what they say is true.

But I must insist on persisting in investigating.

*(To Phaniscus)*: Philolaches formed the habit, you say, of holding

Wild parties with your master, right here?

PINACIUM: Yes, right in that house. IV.2

SOSTRATA: Obviously, you’re at the wrong house.

PHANISCUS: I know where I ought to go, and the place to which I was to come.

Here liveth Philolaches whose father iseth Theopropides;

And lefteth to go overseath on busineth, so Philolaches

Setteth free a lovely young lady on the premiseth.

THEOPROPIDES: Philolaches, say you?

DROMO: That’s the very exact same person, and the pretty young woman

Who is now about his closest relation, that is Philematium.

SOSTRATA: You say that a girl was purchased for Philolaches?

PINACIUM: We do say so.

THEOPROPIDES: He bought her freedom, you say?

DROMO: We do say so.

SOSTRATA: And that after his parents had departed hence abroad,

He has been partying here continually with your master?

PHANISCUS: We do say so.

THEOPROPIDES: And what do you say about this: he bought

The house next door?

PHANISCUS: No, I don't say.

THEOPROPIDES: And he paid money down to the owner?

PINACIUM: No, I don’t say.

THEOPROPIDES: It’s absolute ruin!

DROMO: What the young man has done

In fact is ruin his parents.

SOSTRATA: How true a tune

You’re singing now!

THEOPROPIDES: I must say, I feel sorry for the man whose ruin

You’re describing so definitively.

IV.2

PHANISCUS: And of course there’s that slave,

Tranio’s his name, an absolute fiend of a spender,

A sieve with money. He could spend Hercules’ whole hoard

Overnight, if he had it. Heavens, how I sympathize

With Philolaches’ parents! When they find out what’s happened

Searing sorrow will scorch their hearts and reduce them

To cardiac cinders.

THEOPROPIDES: If, indeed, this is the truth.

DROMO: What have we to gain, by telling a lie? *(Knocks again at the door.)*

Hallo! Is anyone coming to open the door?

PINACIUM: Don’t pound

Anymore. There’s nobody home.

PHANISCUS: He's gone elsewhere to carouse.

Now then, let's begone. *(They move as if going.)*

THEOPROPIDES: Why are you leaving?

PHANISCUS: Freedom is a good thick cloak

For **your** back, sir, and you have that to wear.

But **I** am only a slave, with a master to fear

And to care for, and so of course I crave his protection.

If I’m slack, it will be the whip for my back section.

*(Exit PHANISCUS, PINACIUM and DROMO.)*

SCENE 3

SOSTRATA: This is the finish of us. Why even discuss it?

THEOPROPIDES: From what I hear, I would say I did not depart

On a trip to Egypt.

Where I am now I don’t really know for sure,

But I’ll find out, perhaps, for here comes the man *(Enter SIMO and ANTIPHILIA.)*

My son bought the house from. Ah, hello, how goes it?

SIMO: “It” goes back home from the Forum.

THEOPROPIDES: Has anything new been going on at the Forum today?

SIMO: Why are you thus idling about, inquiring after the news?

THEOPROPIDES: Because we’ve just arrived from abroad.

ANTIPHILIA: We’re engaged out to dine: or we would invite you.

SOSTRATA: Oh, but we weren’t expecting you to. IV.2&3

ANTIPHILIA: But, tomorrow, let’s see…yes, we’ll be free to come to your house.

SOSTRATA: Actually, we weren’t planning on that either.

THEOPROPIDES: Do you have a minute?

There’s something I wanted to ask you about.

SIMO: By all means.

THEOPROPIDES: So far as I know, you received from Philolaches

A payment of money?

SIMO: So far as I know,

I never received a cent.

SOSTRATA: From Tranio, then?

ANTIPHILIA: From **him**? We have received even less, a more negative nothing.

THEOPROPIDES: And this was a down payment?

SIMO: What are you dreaming about?

THEOPROPIDES: Me? You’re the dreamer, to think you can hoodwink us

And nullify the deal by claiming to know nothing of it.

SIMO: What deal?

THEOPROPIDES: The transaction our son completed with you

While we were away.

SIMO: You think I would conclude business with him while you were away!

What for pray, and on what day?

THEOPROPIDES: I owe you a sum of silver.

SIMO: Not to me, indeed, upon my faith;

But still, if you do owe me that, you can hand it right over.

THEOPROPIDES: Well, I don’t deny it. I owe and will pay you this money.

ANTIPHILIA: Now wait just a minute. I’ve got a few things to ask you.

What is this about money your son and the slave

Supposedly paid out to us? And this big transaction

Supposedly sealed and signed while you were away?

SOSTRATA: Tranio says they paid half the sum in advance

As a binder, to you, when you sold your house to him.

SIMO: To whom? Philolaches? But we still live there,

As you saw for yourselves. And we don’t intend to move out. IV.3

THEOPROPIDES: But the money….

SIMO: Don’t be funny. Not a ghost of a shadow of a cent

Has passed between me and Philolaches. How could it?

Our house was never for sale.

SOSTRATA: He didn’t buy it?

ANTIPHILIA: Either that or we didn’t sell it. You take your choice.

THEOPROPIDES: But the money that’s owed to the banker….

SIMO: What does your son need **two** houses for?

THEOPROPIDES: Well this one is haunted,

So they moved out, six months ago.

ANTIPHILIA: Oh, they’ve been moving

All right. They’ve been moving along pretty fast ever since

You first left for Egypt. They’ve been host to some lively ghosts

If you ask me. Nobody ever seems to sleep in there,

It sounds like a wake to me. They didn’t move out,

But they sure moved around, and moved in a gaggle of girls.

THEOPROPIDES: Ah me! I'm ruined outright! I haven’t a thing to say!

SOSTRATA: Neighbors, we’re undone, ruined quite!

SIMO: Has Tranio perhaps

Created some kind of catastrophe?

THEOPROPIDES: Just complete chaos,

That’s all, and he and his crew have made ridiculous fools today

Of you and me.

SIMO: You mean the joke’s on us?

THEOPROPIDES: More or less – less on you, more on us. I see it now,

They’ve made an absolute fool of me today,

And as far as I can see into the future.

Now look, would you help me plan some means of revenge?

SIMO: What would you like me to do?

THEOPROPIDES: Come along with me.

SIMO: I’m coming.

THEOPROPIDES: Lend me a couple of slaves, with whips.

SIMO: Take them from my supply, I’ve plenty of both. IV.3

THEOPROPIDES: And while we plan the revenge I mean to have

I’ll give you more examples of the way

That crew made a fool of me today.

IV.3

ACT V

SCENE 1

*Enter TRANIO.*

TRANIO *(to himself)*: I did what any intelligent person would do,

In my situation so fraught with peril and confusion.

Create even more confusion, surely that’s the solution!

Keep it all moving around and around. I’ll be found

Out, of course, the old couple can hardly be kept from knowing

Much longer, but I can still hope to get to them first,

And head them off and make some sort of a deal.

I haven’t any time to waste. But listen, the door

Of the neighbor’s house is rattling, yes they’re coming this way

I’ll hide in this corner and hear what they have to say.

*(Goes aside, out of sight of Theopropides.)*

SCENE 2

*Enter THEOPROPIDES and SOSTRATA, from Simo's house.*

THEOPROPIDES *(in the doorway, speaking to Simo's slaves)*:

You men, stand back inside the doorway; be ready

When I call, to jump out and slap him in chains.

We’ll wait in front of the house for our funny man.

His skin will feel even funnier by the end of the day.

TRANIO *(aside)*: The cat’s out of the bag. I’d better see what there is

I can do about it now.

SOSTRATA: Now you want to be subtle in getting him into the net.

When he shows up, don’t let him see the hook,

Just the bait, while we reel in the line. Let’s pretend we don’t know

Anything about what’s going on.

TRANIO *(aside)*: O cunning mortal!

No one in Rome is any wiser than you.

It’s hard enough to take advantage of you as it is.

Now watch me approach them and proceed to get their attention.

SOSTRATA: I do wish the fish would show his head.

TRANIO *(aside)*: The catcher

Is looking for me awry, and I’m standing by. *(Comes forward.)*

THEOPROPIDES: Oh there, good old Tranio! What's the news?

TRANIO: The country people are coming from the . . . uh . . . country.

Philolaches will soon be here. V.1&2

THEOPROPIDES: Well, you’ve arrived

In the nick of time for me. Good gods, that neighbor

Of ours has his cheek, wise guy.

TRANIO: Because why?

THEOPROPIDES: He denies that he’s had any dealings with you.

TRANIO: Denies it?

THEOPROPIDES: And declares that you never gave him a single cent.

TRANIO: Oh come on, you’re joking! I can’t believe he says that.

THEOPROPIDES: Why not?

TRANIO: I know, you’re just having a joke on me.

I can’t quite believe he’d say anything like that.

SOSTRATA: Well, he does say precisely that, meaning no,

And denies that he sold his house to Philolaches.

TRANIO: And also denies he was given the money?

THEOPROPIDES: He’s willing to affirm under oath, if I want him to,

That he did not sell his house, that he never received any money.

TRANIO: When we bought it, and paid the cash down?

SOSTRATA: That’s just what we told him.

TRANIO: And what did he say?

THEOPRPIDES: He offered to hand his slaves over to me

For questioning under torture.

TRANIO: He’s faking; he won’t.

SOSTRATA: He really does offer them.

TRANIO: Well then, summon him to trial.

THEOPROPIDES: Wait a bit; I'll make trial as **I** fancy. I'm determined on it.

TRANIO: Bring the fellow here to me.

THEOPROPIDES: But first I want to put his slaves on the rack.

TRANIO: By all means. Meanwhile, I’ll take a seat on this altar.

SOSTRATA: Oh no. Why do that? V.2

TRANIO: You don’t understand;

To keep the slaves from having this as a refuge

When they come out to be questioned. I’ll preside over things.

To make sure the investigation proceeds properly.

THEOPROPIDES: Oh come off it! I mean climb down from the altar.

TRANIO: En Oh.

THEOPROPIDES: Come on now; don't take possession of the altar.

TRANIO: Why not?

THEOPROPIDES: Because that’s what I want them to do,

Take refuge there. So let them. It’ll be clear evidence

Before any judge, and a means of getting him fined.

TRANIO: Why confuse the issue? You just don’t know

How involved these matters are when you take them to court.

SOSTRATA: Come down from there, over here to me.

There’s something I need to consult you about.

TRANIO: I dispense advice very well from a sitting position. I seem to know more

When I’m seated. From the holy seats of the gods, after all,

The counsels are all the more binding.

SOSTRATA: Don’t fool around.

Come down. Just look at me. You have nothing to fear,

You see.

THEOPROPIDES: I'm undone!

TRANIO: Is something bothering you?

THEOPRPIDES: No, nothing but you.

TRANIO: Poor little defenseless me?

THEOPROPIDES: I’ve finally gotten to the bottom

Of your clever frantic antics. I’ve dug down deep

And gotten to the root of the trouble.

TRANIO: Well, in that case I shan’t arise from my heavenly seat

This day at all, except with a promise of safety.

THEOPROPIDES: Get up! I’ll have some dry kindling brought out here

And a roaring fire started up underneath your bottom.

TRANIO: But look, here comes your son’s best friend and companion,

That charming Callidamates. See what you can do

With me in his presence, a man who’s loyal and true. V.2

SCENE 3

*Enter CALLIDAMATES, at a distance.*

CALLIDAMATES: I buried myself in sleep – *(stretches and yawns)* that was a good deep one –

And slept off the effects of the wine. I’m feeling fine.

Now Philolaches has told me how his parents have come

Back home from abroad and how the slaves had their fun

Misleading the new arrivals, or leading them on,

Or leading them away anyway, from the true situation.

He has asked me to make a diplomatic approach

And plead his case and make peace with his parents.

Ah there they are, just the two I was looking for.

*(Approaches*): Greetings, Theopropides, Sostrata! I’m glad you are back

And looking so well. Have dinner with me this evening.

Please do accept.

THEOPROPIDES: Good day, Callidamates.

And thanks all the same for inviting us to dinner.

I’m sorry we must decline.

CALLIDAMATES: Oh please, do come.

TRANIO: Say you will. Or shall I go in your place?

SOSTRATA: You knothead, are you laughing at us still?

TRANIO: What, because I say that I'll go to dinner for you?

THEOPROPIDES: You won’t. I’ll have you carried to the cross:

That’s where you ought to be hanging out.

CALLIDAMATES: And tell me, blockhead, what’s gotten into you,

To make you take refuge on the top of the altar?

TRANIO: The new arrivals scared the wits out of me.

Advise me what to do. For you are here

And, like a judge, can listen to both sides.

So let us try the case.

THEOPROPIDES: I say that you

Have led my son astray.

TRANIO: But, now hear me:

I admit he misbehaved while you were away

And bought his mistress’ freedom with money borrowed

From a moneylender, and the money is all used up.

I’ll say that loud and clear. But is it **mis**-

Behavior, I ask you? Or is it standard conduct,

When the sons of all great families act that way?

V.3

CALLIDAMATES: Now let me rule on that point. Dislodge yourself,

Tranio. I'll sit up there and preside over things.

TRANIO: It’s a trap! No, Callidamates, you must first

Assure me I won’t be grabbed the moment I leave

My perch of immunity. Then you can have my place.

THEOPROPIDES: Back to the argument: I don’t hold it against you,

My son’s misbehavior, half as much as the means,

(Or is it extremes?) you’ve gone to in making a fool

Out of us and making me look like a dope.

TRANIO: 'Twas cleverly done, and I rejoice that it was done.

These are things a man of your age should know.

CALLIDAMATES: Quiet, there on the altar!

It’s my turn to say a few words. Listen for a change.

SOSTRATA: Hear, Hear!

CALLIDAMATES: First of all, you know that I’m a very good friend

Of your son. He’s come to me – he’s ashamed, you see,

To show his face or let himself in your sight

Because he knows that you know what he has done.

So I appeal to you – please pardon the boy

For his childish foolishness. He’s your son after all.

And I was as bad as he was:

I joined in it all. We’re both completely at fault.

As for the money, the principal, the interest, the cash

He used up, the girl he bought, every bit he spent,

I will have it paid back and the expenses all made good

From my own funds and my friends’, not yours.

THEOPROPIDES: No more effective

A speaker than you could present this case before me.

I’m no longer angry at him, nor do I bear

Any kind of grudge.

SOSTRATA: Let him follow his heart and love.

If he’s genuinely sorry he’s wasted all this money,

That’s punishment enough for me.

CALLIDAMATES: He’s abjectly sorry.

TRANIO: In the spirit of that indulgence, what fate is in store

For me?

THEOPROPIDES: The lash, you slab of mud, and then…

SOSTRATA: Stringing up, for further flaying and jabbing.

TRANIO: Even if I’m genuinely sorry? V.3

THEOPROPIDES: As I live and breathe,

You’ll choke and die.

CALLIDAMATES: Why not make a clean slate

Of all your pardons, and forgive Tranio his sins,

For my sake?

THEOPROPIDES: I would gladly grant your request

For anything else, **except** that I refrain

From cracking down on this nut, to prove to him

He’s not so tough as he’s cracked up to be.

CALLIDAMATES: Come now, do let him off.

SOSTRATA: **Let him off!**

Look at him grinning! Nonchalant, couldn’t care less.

CALLIDAMATES: If you had any sense, Tranio, you’d leave off acting

So fresh and let things subside.

THEOPROPIDES: You can leave off asking

Any sort of favor for him. I’ll make him subside

With a tattoo of bright body blows bounced off his backside.

CALLIDAMATES: Come now, let yourselves be persuaded by me.

SOSTRATA: We don’t want you to persuade us.

CALLIDAMATES: Oh, please give in.

THEOPROPIDES: I tell you, we don’t want you to talk us into it.

CALLIDAMATES: It’s no good your not wanting me to when I want to!

Forgive Tranio his sins, just this once, for my sake.

TRANIO: Why be so reluctant? As if tomorrow

I won’t cause you just as much trouble as I’m doing today!

Then you can take revenge on me for both times.

CALLIDAMATES: Do let me convince you…

THEOPROPIDES: Oh, all right then you fiend, go free!

But thanks to **him**, not **me**!

ALL: Spectators, our play is over, and in this cause

We ask you now for handfuls of applause!

V.3