

(HE kisses hem of her cape)

DOMINA

Have you prepared my potions?

HYSTERIUM

(Holds up small bag)

Yes, madam. In addition to your usual potions, I have included one for tantrums and one for queasiness.

DOMINA

Thank you, Hysterium—slave of slaves.

HYSTERIUM

I live to grovel.

(HE kisses her hem. DOMINA calls to HERO on balcony of SENEX's house)

DOMINA

Hero, come kiss your mother goodbye.

HERO

Yes, mother.

(Exits into SENEX's house. SLAVES re-enter, carrying baggage)

DOMINA

Slaves, take that baggage and go before us, you clumsies!

PROTEANS

(As THEY scurry off)

Yes, Yes, clumsies, yes

DOMINA

Senex! Come away from that house of shame!

SENEX

(Crossing to her)

I was just standing there saying, "Shame, shame, shame!"

DOMINA

Hysterium!

HYSTERIUM

Yes, madam?

DOMINA

Where is Pseudolus?

HYSTERIUM

Where is he indeed! I have not seen him since he dressed Hero this morning.

DOMINA

Tell him that while we are gone, he is to watch over Hero. He is to keep him cheerful, well-fed, and far from the opposite sex.

SENEX

My dear, the boy has to learn sometime.

DOMINA

And when that time comes, *you* shall tell him...

SENEX

Yes, dear.

DOMINA

...what little you know. Now, go and fetch the gift we bring my mother.

SENEX

Yes, dear.

(HE exits into his house, as HERO enters from it)

HERO

Good morning, father.

DOMINA

Ah, Hero. Your father and I are off to visit my mother in the country. What a joy it would be were you to accompany us. But, alas, the sight of anyone in good health fills my mother with rage.

(SENEX re-enters carrying bust of DOMINA)

Ah, there I am. Do you think it will please my mother?

HYSTERIUM

Oh, yes, madam. The craftsmanship is superb.

DOMINA

And the resemblance?

HYSTERIUM

Frightening.

DOMINA

The time of farewell is at hand. Hysterium, slave-in-chief, here are my husband's final instructions.

(SENEX opens his mouth to speak, SHE continues.)

In his absence, his entire household is in your spotless care. Your word shall be absolute, your authority unquestioned.

SENEX

And furthermore—

DOMINA

We are on our way!

SENEX

(Mutters)

We are on our way.

DOMINA

Farewell, beloved son. Farewell, thoughtful Hysterium. Senex, come along! And carry my bust with pride.

(SHE exits. A beat, and then her voice is heard)

Senex!

SENEX

Yes, dear.

(To audience)

A lesson for you all. Never fall in love during a total eclipse!

(HE exits)

HYSTERIUM

(To audience)

Well, to work, to work! Now that I am completely in charge, I am going to be a very busy slave.

(Sees HERO, who has drifted toward LYCUS's house)

Here! Come away from there. You must never know what goes on in that house.

HERO

But I do know.