

Aristophanes. *Lysistrata*. Unknown Translator. New York: Dover Publications, 1994.

Aristophanes (446?-386? B.C.) wrote forty Athenian comedies, of which eleven survive. His comedic slanders angered Athenian leaders. His powers of ridicule and satire were feared. Plato believed that Aristophanes's popular denigration of Socrates in *The Clouds* contributed to the death sentence that ended Socrates's life.

Lysistrata complains bawdily to Calonice of the perpetual absence at war of Greek men. Lysistrata calls a council of Greek female thought leaders. Lysistrata proposes a way to end Greek warring altogether. 1) The young women shall refuse sex to their men in protest, and 2) the older women shall seize the war funds at the Acropolis temple of Athene. If a husband rapes his wife, she need only refuse him her participation and joy. They swear themselves to this task over a bowl of Thracian wine, undiluted. All take an oath.

The old men's chorus regales the retaking of the Acropolis from the failed expedition of Cleomenes. The chorus attempts to burn the old women from the citadel. The old women fill their buckets, and douse the fires. The two choruses exchange insults.

The magistrate enters. The old men's chorus solicits, but the magistrate notes that it is the men who have coddled the women, making them bold. The magistrate seeks to arrest Lysistrata, but the women resist by arms. The magistrate then interrogates Lysistrata as to the cause of her actions. She says that if the treasury is seized, no more war. That is the women's first principle: no more war. The women will save the men from war, whether they like it or not. Men say war is their business. Women now interject themselves into that question. The magistrate counters that women have no part in war. Lysistrata counters that the women bear the sons who die in wars, and that women languish through their fruitful years childless for lack of men. The old women drench the magistrate with their buckets. The two choruses exchange insults and threats once again. Each strips naked to torment the other.

Several days later, the women begin abandoning the cause, so much do they miss sex. They make excuses to leave, which Lysistrata condemns. Lysistrata repeats the words of the oracle, encouraging perseverance and unity. The old men's chorus tells the story of Melanion, who hated women and fled to the wilds to evade them. The old women's chorus recounts Timon, who was powerful with men, but kindly toward women.

A man approaches, Myrrhine's husband Cinesias. Lysistrata sets Myrrhine to seducing, then denying, Cinesias. Myrrhine insists on sacking to lie upon, then a mattress, then a pillow, then a blanket, then perfume, then different perfume. When Cinesias quibbles about making peace, Myrrhine runs off.

A herald arrives, stricken with erect penis. The Spartan women are also denying their spouses. The magistrate and herald agree to conclude a peace. The women's chorus consoles the men's, and offers a single kiss. The men complain that one cannot live with women, or without them.

The Spartan envoys arrive, all stricken with erections. The Athenians agree to negotiate peace. Lysistrata will be their mediator. Lysistrata reminds them of her wisdom. She castigates all present for their warring with one another, and ignoring of the barbarians at the borders. She reminds them of the assistance each has, in the past, rendered to the other. The Spartans and Athenians agree abruptly, and speak peace also for their allies. Lysistrata invites all to the Acropolis for a feast, after which each man will go home with his wife.

A slave and busybody observe the departing envoys, noting their drunkenness and affability. All peace envoys should be drunk. Lysistrata enjoins all not to make the same mistakes again. Choruses of Athenians and Spartans extol one another.