

Erronius, Hysterium

(HYSTERIUM runs into SENEX'S house. PROTEANS, dressed as SAILORS, enter with bags, drop them, as ERRONIUS enters behind them.)

START

ERRONIUS. Bring up the baggage. Fetch the rest from the harbor. (SAILORS exit.) Ah, home at last! After years of searching for my long lost children. (HYSTERIUM enters from SENEX'S house, carrying plucked chicken, reacts in horror.) How good it is to see this street once more. These tired old eyes fill with tears at the sight of the little they see. (Bumps into HYSTERIUM.) Pardon me, young woman, I was just . . . that is . . . I mean to say . . . Ah, lovely baby. (Pats chicken.) About the age of my children when they were stolen by pirates.—(Going to his house.) Well, at least I have the comfort of my lonely house.

(HYSTERIUM rushes to door of ERRONIUS' house.)

HYSTERIUM. Sir!

ERRONIUS. And who are you?

HYSTERIUM. Hysterium, sir, servant to Senex.

ERRONIUS. (To pillar.) Yes, of course. I should have known you anywhere. (SENEX is heard singing from inside house a bit of "Everybody Ought To Have a Maid.") What was that?

HYSTERIUM. I didn't hear anything.

(SENEX sings a bit more.)

HYSTERIUM. I didn't hear that either.

ERRONIUS. You did not hear that eerie sound?

HYSTERIUM. Eerie?

ERRONIUS. Eerie, as if haunted.

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HYSTERIUM. (To himself.) Eerie, as if haunted? (To ERRONIUS.) Sir, what I am about to tell you is eerie. . . . Your house is . . . is haunted.

ERRONIUS. Haunted?

HYSTERIUM. As haunted as the day is long!

(PSEUDOLUS enters, stirring the potion, listens.)

ERRONIUS. Impossible! My house haunted, you say? Strange.

HYSTERIUM. But true. Perhaps you ought to stay with relatives . . . distant relatives.

ERRONIUS. Yes! No! Fetch me a soothsayer.

HYSTERIUM. A soothsayer?

ERRONIUS. Yes, I must have him search my house immediately.

(PSEUDOLUS puts cloth over his head, runs to ERRONIUS, chants ghoulishly.)

PSEUDOLUS. You are in need of a soothsayer?

ERRONIUS. How did you know?

PSEUDOLUS. I'd be a fine soothsayer if I didn't!

ERRONIUS. There is a spirit in my . . .

PSEUDOLUS. Silence! I am about to say the sooth! Wait! (Chants incoherently.) I see it. I see everything. (HYSTERIUM steps behind ERRONIUS, pantomimes distance.) You have been abroad.

ERRONIUS. Yes, yes.

PSEUDOLUS. For . . . (Looks at HYSTERIUM, who flashes his ten fingers twice.) . . . twenty years! (ERRONIUS nods vigorously. HYSTERIUM shades his eyes with one hand.) You have been searching . . . for . . . (HYSTERIUM