

Domina, Senex, Hysterium, Hero

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. I was just standing here 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 *(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

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to accompany us. But, alas, the sight of anyone in good health fills my mother with rage. *(SENEX re-enters carrying a 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. *(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! *(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' house.)* Here! Come away from there. You must never know what goes on in that house.

HERO. But I do know.

HYSTERIUM. You do? *(HERO nods.)* Isn't it amazing? Well, I can't stand here talking. *(Goes to SENEX'S house, picks something from a column, stamps it out, grimaces, enters house, calling.)* Pseudolus!

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