



PENTATONE

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Mark Adamo Lysistrata

ODYSSEY OPERA · GIL ROSE
BOSTON MODERN ORCHESTRA PROJECT





**Mark Adamo: Lysistrata
or, The Nude Goddess**

A tragicomedy for singers and orchestra, freely adapted from the play by Aristophanes

Music & libretto by **Mark Adamo**

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Total playing time Disc 1: 72. 01

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Total playing time Disc 2: 72. 21



Odyssey Opera
Boston Modern Orchestra Project
Gil Rose, conductor

Dramatis Personae

The Athenian Women

Xanthe, high lyric soprano
Lysia/Lysistrata, lirico-spinto soprano, beloved of Nico
Myrrhine, lyric mezzo-soprano, beloved of Kinesias,
younger friend of Lysia
Sappho, lyric mezzo-soprano
Kleonike, lyric mezzo-contralto,
leader of the Athenian Women's resistance

The Spartan Women

Charito, high lyric soprano
Dika, lyric soprano
Arete, lyric mezzo-soprano
Lampito, dramatic mezzo-contralto, wife of Leonidas

Maggie Finnegan
Anya Matanovič
Katherine Beck

Felicia Gavilanes
Lucy Schauer

Jamie-Rose Guarrine
Kristen Watson
Christina English
Alexis Peart

The Athenian Men

Nico/Nikias, lyric tenor, leader of the Athenian army
Meleagros, lyric tenor
Kinesias, lyric baritone, beloved of Myrrhine
Bion, baritone or bass-baritone
First Geezer, baritone or bass-baritone
Second Geezer, baritone or bass-baritone

The Spartan Men

Maron, lyric tenor
Alpheus
Philo, baritone or bass-baritone
Leonidas, lyric bass-baritone, leader of the Spartan army

The Olympians

The Furies: Tisiphone, high lyric soprano
Alecto, lyric soprano
Megaera, lyric mezzo-soprano
Aphrodite, high lyric soprano
Ares, lyric tenor, god of war

Dominic Armstrong
Fred C. VanNess, Jr.
John Moore
Nathan Halbur
Nathan Halbur
Nicholas Fahrenkrug

Fausto Miro
Neal Ferreira
Nicholas Fahrenkrug
Kevin Deas

Jamie-Rose Guarrine
Kristen Watson
Christina English
Maggie Finnegan
Neal Ferreira

The time is now. The place is ancient Greece. (Salute, Burt Shevelove.)

To John Corigliano



Anya Matanovič
© Arielle Doneson



Katherine Beck
© Gillian Riesen



Alexis Peart
© Todd Rosenberg



Christina English
© Allana Taranto



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A note on the opera

The Nude Goddess is not your mother's *Lysistrata*. It's not even the one by Aristophanes.

That iconic comedy, unveiled in 411 B.C.E., eyes the Women of Athens and Sparta, disgusted by an endless, pointless war, who barricade themselves in the Athenian treasury and swear a sanction on sex until their Men make peace. It's a delicious premise. It is not a plot. Our heroine concocts this strategy: she bullies her team into agreeing; the plan works; end of play. Nor are these complex characters. Lysistrata, Kleonike, Myrrhine: these are less persons than *personae*, masks of text through which their playwright declaims an impassioned political broadside. Twelve years into a failed imperialist incursion, Aristophanes felt no need to weigh a pro-war case, to squint at his Women's motives, to paint his Men as anything but blowhards and buffoons. Historically



understandable; but his certitudes flatten his play. I love *Lysistrata*'s strut and wit and nerve, its utopian yearnings, its magical locale—an Acropolis where, by dream-logic, a handful of couples can reconcile the love of the battlefield with the battlefield of love. But there's a reason *Lysistrata* most often materializes nowadays either as the carrot of sex with which we lure students to the classics, or as the megaphone of protest through which we assail the war *du jour*. The reason is that you cannot say anything sophisticated about war while ignoring the psychology of warriors. In 1999, I was awarded my second commission from Houston Grand Opera, and with it I wanted to make *Lysistrata* sing. But I couldn't see my way into the play. I put it aside.

And then I came back to it. I heard its music so strongly—hyperrhythmic, brilliantly colored, now sly and purring, now bursting with energy—that I knew I had to find, or create, the richer drama it demanded. I wondered: could one compose a *Lysistrata*

principally fascinated by the war between Men and Women—two radically different kinds of human beings damned by fate and desire to love without complete understanding? Could you make an opera that used the civic conflict to illuminate the erotic discord, not vice versa?

Perhaps. But *Lysistrata* remains one of the West's indispensable pacifist texts; and even in 1999 I knew I couldn't write this piece without engaging, however obliquely, the problem of war. Is aggression ever justified, in love or by law? What magnetizes *eros* and *thanatos*? I wanted to scour this opera clean of sexual cliché—I believe that vice and virtue, surrender and assault, beckon as seductively to Women as to Men, and "who's on top?" isn't necessarily the same question as "who's in control?" As with sex, so with war: I could no more recite a familiar rhetoric of the evils of war than I could blithely exult in bloodshed.





← This was all too interesting to resist. *Lysistrata* it was. I cut all but three scenes of the play, created new male characters, changed the war, omitted the choruses, and invented a wrangling romance between the Lysistrata figure (here, after the Latin, pronounced Ly-ZIS-tra-ta, but mostly called Lysia) and the Athenian leader Nico. The text of *Lysistrata*, or *The Nude Goddess* now imagines a woman who fakes political convictions to wreak on her lover an erotic revenge: only later must she ask herself, to whom does she belong, herself or her people? The opera's score sends its melodies searching through a labyrinth of mirrors; no sooner is a theme sung by one character, given one meaning, than it is assumed by someone else and inflected with quite another. A sinuous monologue of seduction speeds up, changes meter, reappears as a swaggering Soldiers' drill; a furious tantrum sheds its *fioritura* attitudinizing, melts into an aria of self-sacrifice. The libretto suggests, "Each of you will tell the truth; neither will agree."

The score aims to make that suggestion an audible process.

Lysistrata, or *The Nude Goddess* was originally scheduled for premiere at Houston Grand Opera in March 2002. Things change: an opera begun in peacetime to humanize a then-remote pacifist critique found itself, at its 2005 premiere, scaldingly topical. (Twenty-ish years later, wars in Iran and Ukraine, as well as South Korea's 4B movement, remind us that—while things change—plus ça change, &c.) No artwork can presume to resolve any political argument. But I would love to think *The Nude Goddess* could help, in some small way, to reframe such an argument—that hearing certain passions and positions voiced and embodied by closely imagined personalities might help clarify our thinking and heighten our sympathy for those with whom we disagree.

We all want peace, just as we all want love.
The question is, *love on whose terms?*

The question is as urgent for lovers as for leaders; and it is this question—I hope—that brightens the language, drives the rhythms, sharpens the comedy, and deepens the compassion of this new singing *Lysistrata*.

A note on this recording

I knew Gil Rose principally as the conductor of brilliantly interpreted and aurally sparkling recordings of the works of some of the most accomplished living American composers I know; so when Gil told me he wanted to stage this piece in concert in February 2025 as a prelude to making its first-ever professional recording, I was—to use the technical term—over the moon. We'd worked together once before, when Gil made (for this label!) the debut record of John Corigliano's second opera, *The Lord of Cries*, on which I'd collaborated as librettist and which was ultimately nominated for a GRAMMY as Best Opera Recording, so I already knew

the high standards of casting, playing, and engineering I could expect. And yet: the first time I heard this cast (recruited, in part, by the peerless Heather Buck, for whom a thousand thanks) supported by the instrumental wizards of the Boston Modern Orchestra Project, who play for Odyssey Opera—well, composers dream of moments like these. For all its glitter and ebullience, *Lysistrata* is, as you'll hear, a demanding opera; it simply doesn't come off unless you have a conductor, singers, and orchestra completely committed to its wide emotional range and its turn-on-a-dime musical athleticism. So when I heard, in the playbacks of our sessions, these artists making the show sound not just precise, not just expressive, but also easy... well, I am here to tell you how much effort it takes to sound this effortless. I'd encourage you to read every credit in this program book; every name listed herein is that of a hero.

Mark Adamo



Synopsis

Act I

Invocation

Suspended in time and space, three demi-goddesses, in music alternately regal, headlong, and unearthly, bid an imagined Athenian audience to “attend the story of a woman, a man and two armies at war” before vanishing into the heavens.



Prologos

On a street in Athens, Kleonike (Klee-o-NICK-e) leads a small knot of Women, toting signs, in a demonstration (“Peace Now!” I) against the seemingly endless Athenian war on Sparta. Two Geezers interrupt with what promises to be news from the front, but turns out to be mere announcements of new costs of the war’s persistence: more boycotts, more sanctions. Frustrated, Kleonike leads the Women in exasperated prayer (“Ares, Aphrodite.”) Myrrhine (MEER-i-nee),

newest of the protestors, asks Kleonike to explain the war’s origins: Kleonike, aided by Xanthe (ZON-thay) and Sappho (SAFF-o) retells the story of how both city-states long ago laid claim to the same fertile crescent (“It’s a Miracle!”) and have been fighting for it ever since, leaving Greece’s Women impoverished both emotionally and materially.

Scene One

Lysia (LIE-see-a), disturbed by the demonstrators, languidly urges them elsewhere: despite her friendship with Kleonike, and her nominal support of the cause, she “doesn’t march.” Nico (NEE-ko), general of the Athenians, strides on: Lysia tells Kleonike that she’s meeting him to discuss a possible détente. Kleonike remains unconvinced, but nonetheless leads the Women off (“Peace Now!” II.) Alone, Nico and Lysia, clearly lovers, approach each other hungrily. Lysia, however, abruptly turns away: her self-conscious preparations for seduction

(“Strategy is Everything”) hints that she has more on her mind than lovemaking. Tantalizing the inflamed Nico, she demands to know if, as promised, he has resigned his commission: when, doggedly, he explains again why he cannot, Lysia throws a tantrum (“You’re Not My Own.”) Nico, slyly taking her ultimatum at face value, regrets that Lysia’s anger doubtless makes her reluctant to accept his “surprise:” when Lysia, piqued, asks what that might be, Nico turns the gesture of blindfolding her into a pretext for ardent lovemaking (“My Lips, Like So.”) At the climax of their embrace, at which both lovers cry out to Eros to “unmake them all over again,” the flutes and drums of the army sound: Nico, abashed only for a moment, abruptly (but without malice) leaves an acutely unsatisfied Lysia again to take up arms for Athens. A furious Lysia fights her way free of the blindfold, and, struck by an idea, vows revenge.

Parados

Nico and his army prepare for battle with Sparta. Myrrhine, answering an unexpectedly inquisitive letter from Lysia, reveals that the Acropolis, the Athenian storehouse of money and weapons, is guarded only by “the Men the draft discarded.” Leonidas (Lee-oh-NEE-das), the Spartan general, drills his Men for pending combat, though at the moment he seems to have lost the Athenian trail. Kleonike’s daily protest is interrupted by another letter from Lysia, claiming that she’s “figured out a way to end the war,” and bidding Kleonike and her recruits to meet her at her home the next morning.

Scene Two

The yawning contingent of Athenian Women meet, at dawn, the suddenly politicized Lysia. Kleonike demands news of Lysia’s plan: before Lysia explains, she introduces the surprise guests of the gathering: Lampito, (LOMP-ee-to) wife of Leonidas, and a contingent of





Spartan Women ("I, Lampito") lured, like Kleonike, "by ze pwomise of peaze." (The Spartans' accents make them sound, to Athenian ears, both aristocratic and extraterrestrial.) Lysia's plan is to force the Men of both sides to call a truce by enforcing a "total, utter, sanction on sex." To the Women's appalled protest, Lysia points out that if they take the Acropolis as well, thus cutting off the Athenian war chest, they will deprive the Men of both the material and the emotional support they need to continue the fight. The Women refuse: Lysia assails their spinelessness: and Myrrhine, defending both her colleagues and herself, confesses how difficult it would be to refuse her lover Kinesias (Ki-NEE-zi-as), even for the sake of peace ("Peace: yes. Of course.") Lysia accuses Myrrhine of the very same self-absorption she herself displayed to Nico in the previous scene: Lampito, interrupting, settles the question by pledging the Spartans to the cause. Emboldened, Lysia nudges the Athenians into agreeing, and

exhorts all the Women to take the oath she's written for the occasion ("From This Day On" I.) A flourish of pipes and drums signals to Lysia that it's time to take the Acropolis: as most of the Women dash off to seize the fortress, Kleonike, suspicious of Lysia's abrupt change of heart, quizzes Lysia on her meeting with Nico; Lysia avoids her questions and ushers Kleonike off to join the others.

Scene Three

The Athenian army prepares for dinner as Nico quizzes his diffident general Kinesias about his conflicting obligations to the war and to Myrrhine ("War: sure. I know.") A suddenly-delivered scroll from Myrrhine relates the story of the apparent capture of the Athenian Women by "a horde of Spartan Women, playing Amazon:" inflamed at the thought of their Women as hostages, Nico and Kinesias gather the army and race to the Acropolis, only to find the Spartan army there as well. Lysia, Myrrhine, and



Lampito materialize on the Acropolis balcony ("It's a Miracle!" II) to announce the sexual sanction. Nonplussed, but only for a moment, Leonidas and Nico agree that the moment's urgent conflict is less between the cities as between the sexes: improvising a counterstrategy, they swear a sanction on peace until their Women "render unconditional surrender" ("From This Day On" II.)

Act II

Scene One

Weeks later, the painfully frustrated Soldiers of both sides, led by the increasingly impatient Maron and Kinesias, grumble (Soldiers March II/"Sex Now!") to the seemingly unruffled Leonidas and Nico. At length, though, Leonidas steals over to Nico's tent, and, in an unguarded moment, questions both the war and the mechanical, uncritical thinking that, more than their respective governments, seems to have drafted both

Men into it ("Too Late in the Day, Sir.") Nico angrily shrugs off the suggestion that his convictions are anything but genuine—the question, in fact, feels scathingly close to Lysia's accusation in their first scene ("Others order you, "Eat!" "Sleep!")—and Nico, singing both to Leonidas and to a remembered Lysia, insists that his duty is not to question his duty, but only to fulfill it (Nico's Credo) Leonidas, rebuffed, withdraws: Kinesias, his desire for Myrrhine sweeping all else before it, decides to steal away to the Acropolis.

Scene Two

Inside the Acropolis, the Women are faring no better: and Kleonike and Lysia have all they can do to contain their sexually hungry would-be deserters ("Overnight Pass.") Emboldened by these deserters, all the Women implore their leaders for relief ("Sex Now!" II) when Kinesias, in an anguish of desire, staggers up to the fortress. Lysia coaches Myrrhine on how to tantalize Kinesias to the point of

declaring peace, remembering only too well how Nico seduced her to surrender ("My Lips, Like So" II:) the Women, looking on, comment in vicarious counterpoint. Myrrhine weakens, turns to Lysia for moral support; and Lysia, sternly exhorting her to remember her duty to her city, unwittingly quotes Nico's Credo from the previous scene. Myrrhine, fighting heartbreak, stands firm: Kinesias, broken, limps back to camp, where the Soldiers, unmade, quote the Women's march to plead with their generals for a solution ("Ares, Aphrodite" II.) Nico, overwhelmed, agrees to go to Lysia.

Scene Three

On the balcony, Lysia and Kleonike wonder whom to cast as the Goddess Peace for an as-yet-undisclosed strategic display when Nico, appearing, insists on seeing Lysia. Their attraction to each other undimmed, Lysia and Nico each accuse the other of bad faith and short perspective before Nico, quoting Lysia's

tantrum music from Scene One, hints that he'd be willing to personally quit the army and return to her if Lysia agrees to call off the rebellion. Lysia vacillates just for a moment, then, delighted, agrees: the lovers mock the pacifists for a moment before they pledge, to their Act One love music, to meet at the Acropolis.

Lysia barely has the time to formulate how she'll break the news to her colleagues before a strangely composed Kleonike (has she overheard?) interrupts her, claiming that their comrades have an announcement. Lysia demurs, but the Women, in ceremonial array, insist on praising Lysia, in spiraling chorale, for the very courage and selflessness that she has, in fact, only been feigning. Confiding in her for the first time the losses—of brothers, sons, lovers—they've suffered in the war, the Women thank her for leadership and rename her Lysistrata (Lie-ZIS-traw-tuh), "She Who Brings Peace" ("Lysistrata.") When Kleonike asks



her what she wished to say, Lysia, utterly unmade, can only stammer: and now, here come the Athenian and Spartan Soldiers, united behind a triumphant Nico. Lysia, still wearing the crown of peace placed upon her by her grateful followers, now looks upon the man for whom she happily agreed to betray them: anguished, but resolved, she insists, to Nico's shock, that the Women—and she—are determined to stand firm. The Women cheer: the Men roar; then Lysia introduces Lampito, costumed as the heartbreakingly voluptuous Goddess of Peace, on whose body is drawn, in both convincing and arousing cartographic detail, a schematic of the island territories disputed in the war.

The Men, desperately inflamed, respond much as their ancestors must have ("It's a Miracle!" II); Kleonike, taking the lead, uses Lampito to tease the Men into accepting a negotiated settlement ("The Goddess Peace.") Prodded by Leonidas, Nico at last

relents, but coldly rejects Lysia's attempts to explain her change of mind: as the Crowd, joyful at last, leaves to prepare for a feast of reconciliation, Lysia, alone, sings a purified version of her Act One tantrum to explain to an absent Nico why she decided as she did ("I Am Not My Own.")

The Acropolis opens, revealing Lucullan feasting—but, as the evening stretches on and the drinking increases, the Crowd's newfound amity ("Evoe! Evoe!") begins to sour. At length, Leonidas and Kinesias, both drunk, reopen, with drawn knives, the land feud: unexpectedly, Nico, now in civilian clothes, come between them, and, to Leonidas's music of moderation, calms them down ("Too Late in the Day, Sir" II). But Kinesias and Leonidas are too enraged for reason; lunging at each other, they each take the other's life—and now it is their aggrieved and enraged widows, Myrrhine and Lampito, who begin the cries for war. As the Women and Men, sobered, polarize once again into hostile

camps, Kleonike, a final time, implores "Ares, Aphrodite, when will all this end?"—and this time, in a miracle, the god and goddess themselves, Ares and Aphrodite, descend to earth. In gestures both kind and cruel, they raise Kinesias and Leonidas back to life: but warn the Greeks that conflict is their lot, in love as in war, and so they must treasure the truces while they may ("Never Will It End.") As the god and goddess withdraw into the heavens, the reunited Lysia and Nico, haunted by the gods' message of unending conflict but determined to heed their advice, lead the Greeks in a last paean to love, life, and respite from crisis, all the sweeter because so brief (Finale Ultimo.)



Gil Rose

© Kevin Condon



Libretto

Disc 1

Overture

Invocation

*The stage of this theatre. The Furies—
Tisiphone, Alecto, and Megaera—descend
from the skies: divas ex machina. Hovering
elegantly above the ground, they welcome
us to the event:*

Furies *variously*

Attend, O citizens, low- or noble-born,
Matron or warrior, virgin or slave:
Player of harp or flute or trumpet,
Priestess, farmer, athlete, strumpet

*Alecto and Megaera look askance at
Tisiphone, who mentioned “strumpet.”
She affirms, irritably, that she meant what
she said:*

Tisiphone *“So what?”
Strumpet.*

*Thinking better of it, the Furies, a tre,
continue.*

Attend, Athens:
Attend, Athens:
Attend!

Attend the story of a woman, a man,
and two armies at war.
Each, powerful as a potentate, merciless
as a lion,
Cunning as a serpent, relentless as Orion,
Capable of using any means,
However cruel, sly, or perverse,
To conquer the enemy and even the score.

And the armies are even worse!

*Out of sight whisk the Furies: and now
we hear...*

Prologos

Women

Enough! Enough!
Peace now!
Not another day—
Peace now!
Decide: disband:
Divide the land:
Decamp without delay:
Enough!
Peace now!

*Daylight finds a street in Athens. Center,
a building: a staircase snakes up from
its front entrance to a second-floor
balcony. Enormous images of Ares, god
of war, and Aphrodite, goddess of love,
frame the stage. Kleonike—tough, warm,
motherly, committed—leads a small knot
of exasperated Women (Xanthe, Myrrhine,
and Sappho), toting signs, in what seems
to be a hopeless, endless streetside
demonstration.*

Kleonike
Enough!

Enough!
Peace now!
Not one
More

Night:
Peace now!
We beg: we plead:
Consent! Concede!
It's we who bear
the brunt:
Enough!

Xanthe *looking off*
Wait! Heed!

*Two baggy Geezers, dragging endless
scrolls, wheeze into view.*

Women

Enough!
Enough!
Peace now!
Peace now!
(Not)
One
More,
Not one more night:
Peace now!
We beg: we plead:
Consent! Concede!
It's we who bear the
brunt:
Enough!



Geezers *asthmatically*
News from the front!
News from the front!

*The Geezers heavily plod their way to
the Women.*

_____ 4 _____

Geezers

"Being a bulletin—
They cough.
from the Commonweal of Athens,
They wheeze.
as is our charge, reporting—" *They fart. Mortified:* Excuse us, ladies.
"Both for the historical record—
They belch.
and not excluding society at large—"

Women *exasperated*
Get to the point!

Geezers
"the latest, most recent successes
in the ongoing wars

with those poachers, those pikers,
those Spartan sons of whores—

Kleonike

Enough!

*She and Xanthe snatch the scrolls away.
Muttering, the Geezers slink off.*

Kleonike

Another boycott: on Boiotian eels!

Women

No!

Xanthe

No more Milesian leather until further notice!

Women

No!

Kleo & Xanthe

The war is now expected to continue—

All *despairing*
Indefinitely! *No!*

_____ 5 _____

Kleonike

Ares, Aphrodite: when will all this end?
Tell us, tell us:
Ares, Aphrodite: when will all this end?
Every day we shout in the streets,
Every night we writhe in our sheets,
O Divine Ones: whom do you defend?

Myrrhine

Ares, Aphrodite—when? When did this begin?
What befell us?
How did we get into this mighty,
Mighty mess we're in?

Kleonike *stopping the strophe*

I can tell you that.
Completely clear.
You're young. I'll show you.
Who'll volunteer?

*Sappho joins Xanthe at the head of the
crowd.*

You play the Spartan, dear.

Sappho *resentful*
I always play the Spartan.

_____ 6 _____

Kleonike

Imagine, then, seventy years ago, a day as
radiant as this one, an Athenian explorer
lands on a then-almost-deserted island...

_____ 7 _____

Xanthe *as the Athenian*

It's a miracle!
What a sight!
So warm, so green, so fertile,
Vine, and rose, and thistle,
Apple, plum, and pear;
Smell the breeze in the myrtle,
Hear the meadowlark whistle,
Blink in, drink in the bright clean air!
These ripe, these rolling hills
Could make a grown man groan;
So rich, so sweet a delta
Could melt a
Heart of stone...



**Kleonike**

By curious coincidence that same week,
a Spartan explorer of equally refined
sensibilities happens to land on this same
island...

Sappho

It's a miracle!

What a sight!
So warm, so green, so fertile,
Vine, and rose, and thistle,
Apple, plum, and...
Such a miracle!
Smell the breeze in the myrtle,
Hear the meadowlark whistle,
Blink in, drink in
the bright clean air!

So rich, so sweet a delta

Could melt a heart of stone:
It's at the gods' command
I claim this land, for

8

Xanthe

It's a miracle,
a miracle...
What a sight!
So warm...
Everywhere,
Apple, plum, and pear!
Smell!
Smell, and hear....
Close your eyes and
Blink in, drink in
the bright clean air!
What a sight!
So sweet...

Clearly,
It's at the gods' command
I claim this land, for



**Xanthe**

Athens'—

Sappho

Sparta's—

Xanthe

Athens'—

Sappho

Sparta's—

**Xanthe**

Athens'—

Both

Athens'/Sparta's
Athens'/Sparta's
Own...

*For the first time, they notice each other,
glare, brandish imaginary swords.*

9

Kleonike

Had these been women, we'd have sat
down, drunk a little wine, admired each
other's armor, talked about our children,
then mapped out the turf and divvied
it up. But... no. These were our leaders,
these were our founders, these were the
fathers of Athens' finest. Men! Guess what
happened instead?

Xanthe

Sacrilege!

Sappho

Sacrilege!

Xanthe

Trespass!

Sappho

Trespass!

Xanthe

Poacher!

Sappho

Poacher!

Xanthe

Jackass!

Sappho

Jackass!

Xanthe

Imperialist!

Sappho

Imperialist!

Xanthe

Terrorist!

Sappho

Terrorist!

*They glare at each other: the music spirals
to a climax:*

Both

WAR!

Kleonike

So, all these years later, behold our lives!
Virgins, matrons, widows, wives:
Sighing, dreaming,
Crying, screaming:

10

w/Women

Ares, Aphrodite: when will all this end?
Tell us, tell us:
Ares, Aphrodite: when will all this end?
Every day we shout in the streets,
Every night we writhe in our sheets,
O Divine Ones; whom do you defend?

Ares, Aphrodite: hear us, hear us as we plead:
Heed us, heed us:
Ares, Aphrodite: heed us, in our hour of need.

Sappho

Planting-time, they promise a truce:





Xanthe

Harvest-time, another excuse.

Myrrhine & Kleonike

Meantime, we could die of disuse.

All

Zeus!

Won't you intercede?

Xanthe & Myrrhine

Bereft of our own,

Myrrhine & Kleonike

we're

Kleonike & Sappho

left alone,

Xanthe & Sappho

Braced

Myrrhine & Kleonike

for that there's no one to embrace us:

Xanthe & Sappho

From hand-in-hand

Myrrhine & Sappho

to back-handedly

Xanthe & Kleonike

abandoned,

Xanthe & Myrrhine

Only chaste

Kleonike & Sappho

because there's no one to chase us.

Xanthe & Kleonike

Remember conjugal passions?

Myrrhine & Sappho

Now, only rhetoric and rations,

Xanthe & Myrrhine

Patri-

Kleonike & Sappho

-otic,

Xanthe & Myrrhine

Patri-

Kleonike & Sappho

-archal noise.

All

Crackpots!

Make them take back their boycotts,

And bring us back, bring us back,

Bring us back, bring us back,

Bring us back our boys!

Ares, Aphrodite: when?

Kleonike

When?

All

When will all this end?

Won't you tell us?

Ares, Aphrodite: when?

Kleonike

Now?

All

When will you descend?

Sappho

How much more imploring the gods?

Myrrhine

How much more ignoring the odds?

All

How much more grieving

the war will never cease?

Myrrhine

O, Divine Ones,

Xanthe

O, Divine Ones,

Kleonike

Believe us,

Sappho

Relieve us,



**Kleonike**

Don't wait
a moment more:
Enough!

All

Restore our

Kleonike

Peace....

Now...

Peace....

Now...

Peace....

Now...

Peace now!
PEACE NOW!

The Others

Wait no more:

Enough!

The Others

Peace now!

Peace!

Peace now!

Peace!

Peace now!

Peace!

Peace now!

Peace!

Peace now!

Peace!

Peace now!

Peace!

Peace now!

PEACE NOW!

Act I**Scene 1**

*Over the Athenian Women's final cry,
a languid, velvety voice is heard from the
balcony above the street...*

Voice luxuriantly

Kleo...

*The Women recognize the voice, and
pointedly ignore it.*

Voice

Darling Kleo...

Kleonike

Don't start with me, Lysia...

Voice

Kleo...

*On the balcony appears Lysia: smart,
glamorous, and, just now, a little patronizing.*

Lysia

Kleonike; bosom friend;
You know how I adore you,
And what great respect I have for your, um—

Gestures, fluidly

Kleonike

Mission?

Lysia

Pastime. But—
(*parodying the demonstrators*)
"Enough! Enough!"
Gods above, enough already.
You woke up half the neighborhood
Last time.

Kleonike *outraged*

Lysia!

Lysia *unperturbed*

We neighbors, too, could do with a little
Peace, Now.

Kleonike *brittle*

You find our convictions too loud?

Lysia

Don't be arch.
You know, I'm abandoned, too!
a feeble show of solidarity
"Bereft of my own,
I'm left alone,
Only chaste because there's no one to
chase me..."
(*The Women remain stony.*)
This is one tough crowd.
Look: sorry.
I don't march.

Nico *entering*

Lysia!

Lysia *delighted*

Nico!

Women *avidly*

A man!



Kleonike *to Women*
Shh!

Nico
Where are you, Lysia?

Lysia *aside*
Angel...

*The Women have whirled to notice
a strapping young general with a gleam in
his eye.*

Kleonike *damning, to Lysia*
Consorting with the enemy!
You're beyond the pale.

Nico *affable*
Madam, I'm Athenian.

Kleonike
Save it. You're male.
(*challenging*) What news of peace?

Nico as if by rote, stentorian
"Victory is the only—"

Kleonike *joining him*
"True peace." That's what I thought.
Gods!
Would you know your own name
if you hadn't been taught?

(*to Lysia, reproachful*)
My dearest friend.
How you disappoint me.

Women *to Nico, purring*
Were you born with those shoulders?

Kleonike *to Women, acidic*
Please.

Lysia *loftily*
I'll have you know,
Kleo,
as you stand there, hyperventilating,
that Ni—that the General and I *also* want
the very same

(*"What's the word?"*)
detente
for which you are so LOUDLY agitating.
That is why he's come. I swear.

Nico *slyly, to Lysia*
I'm at your command.

Lysia *sultrily*
I'll be firm, but fair.

Kleonike
I don't buy it.
(*glibly*) Sorry: I don't buy it.

Lysia
But, to talk about a peace,
First we'll need a little peace and quiet.
Can't you do your demonstrating—
elsewhere?

Kleonike
We have to talk, you and I.

Lysia
Your timing is inopportune.
First we have to talk, he and I.
(*conciliatory, promising*) I'll speak to you
soon.

Kleonike *after a beat*
Come on, sisters!
Back in line.

Women *outrageously coy*
Honored to meet you, General!

Nico
The pleasure's all mine.

*The Women giggle. Kleonike, to bring them
back into line, restarts the chant:*

————— 13 —————
Kleonike *domineering*
Enough! Enough!
Peace Now!
This way, ladies...

**Women**

Aww...

Kleonike

Not another day—
Peace now!
(with Women)
Enough! Enough!
Peace Now!
Not another night—
Peace—



Kleonike *one last time*
Don't disappoint me...

Lysia *exasperated*
I won't disappoint you!

Kleonike & Women

Enough! Enough!
Enough! Enough!
Peace Now!

They march off.

38

14

Nico

Madam...

Lysia

General...

Slowly, sinuously, she makes her way downstairs.

Lysia

Nico...

*(Is this a silken version of the war music—
"Imperialist! Terrorist!" from the Prologos?)*

Nico *with increasing hunger*
Lysia, virgin...

Lysia *with increasing hunger*
Demon, satyr...

Nico
Siren, hellion...

Lysia
Stallion, tempter...

Nico

Tigress, lover...

Lysia *abruptly*
Wait.

*She darts into the house. He turns
downstage, tantalized. Behind him, the
building opens, and we see Lysia's lair,
a lavish bower of oil lamps, gauze, and
animal skins. Lysia checks her "weapons."*

15

Lysia

Wine:
(tastes it) Sweet. Check.
Ointment:
 rubs a bit between her fingers Mild. Check.
Linen:
(sniffs it) Fragrant. Check.
Lamps:
(lights one) Usable. Check.
(hurries to mirror) Perfume:
(sniffs her wrist) Discreet. Check.
Hair:
(tousles it) Wild. Check.

Breasts:
(adjusts neckline) Flagrant. Check.
Dress:
(loosens it) Losable. Check.

(to audience)
Strategy is everything:
Read your Pericles.
Make your plan,
And you can
Bring your man to his knees.
Think through each potential,
Practice and prepare,
Strategy is ev'rything,
Strategy's essential,
Strategy is ev'rything
In love and—

Nico *impatiently*
Lysia!

Lysia *silently*
Be right there!

Ready at last, she lets him in.



39



41



and another and another
and another and another
and another and another—
I'll die in here!

No, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no,
Farewell, then.
You're not, you're not, you're not my own.
I loved you more than sky or sea,
But clearly, we aren't meant to be.
You're promised to something, but not to me—
They've *reassigned* you.
Farewell, then.
No, no, farewell, then.
Farewell, farewell, farewell, farewell, goodbye.
(*so nobly*)
I forgive you.
And close the door behind you.

18
Nico
Are you quite through?

Lysia
Are you still here?

Nico
I've clearly disappointed you.
I guess you won't be wanting my surprise.

Lysia
Surprise?

Nico *equally theatrically*
Farewell, Lysia.
My love, my own.

Lysia
What surprise?
You had a surprise?

Nico
I'm sorry our love had to end like this:

Lysia *commanding*
Nico.

Nico *willfully oblivious*
The number of wonderful things I'll miss—

Lysia
Tell me, Nico.

Nico
I'll always remember your smile, your kiss—

Lysia
NOW!

Nico
Your giggle, your glow—

Lysia
Tell me the surprise:
Then go.

Nico
First you close your eyes.
Like so.

He blindfolds her.

Lysia *uneasy*
What are you doing?

Nico *seducing her*
Shhh.
Now... now... imagine...

19
My lips: like so...
Like this,
Where your hair falls,
So fragrantly...

My fingers, so...
Like this,
Where your pulse beats,
So flagrantly...

Your wrists, slim like the wild rose,
Your throat, like alabaster...
Do I dream? Do I imagine it?
Or when I kiss you:
Just behind your ear,
Here, and here, and here—
Does that pulse beat faster?
Does your pulse beat faster?

Lysia *struggling for composure*
Take your poetry and go.

Nico
No.
Shhh,



Now, still: imagine:
My hands, like so...

Like this,

Sliding down, and in:

Thin fire:

You throb for me.

Lysia

This is not fair, Nico...

Nico

My lips, like so,

Like this... and this... and this...

Barely, just barely, brush your skin,

Like a lyre:

You sob for me.

Lysia *faintly*

Brag, brag, brag...

Nico

Your shiver, silver in lamplight glow

You blush, but not from shame:

I lay you down under flares of heaven,

And hold you,

And claim you,
And work you like hot metal over flame...

w/Lysia

And Eros will break us all over again,

Aching, we shudder,

We quiver, we cry:

Let Eros unmake us all, all over again,

Eros, the conqueror,

Sly and invincible,

Eros, Eros, whom none can deny...

Nico *insistent*

Give me, Lysia...

Lysia *capitulating*

My sweet, my bitter, my blessed, my cursed...

Nico

Give me, Lysia...

Lysia

My tamer, my torture, my nectar, my thirst...

Nico

My virgin...

**Lysia**

Your virgin, my demon...

Nico

Your demon, my siren...

Lysia

Your siren, my satyr...

Nico

Your satyr, my tigress...

**Lysia**

Your tigress, my tempter...

Nico

Your tempter,

Lysia & Nico

My lover...

Nico *climactically*

Ah!

Lysia

I am your lover...
Come to me, Nico...

*Distantly, the war call—horns and drums—
sounds. Nico hears it, starts.*

Lysia *nearing ecstasy*
Nico, oh Nico...

Nico

Well...

Lysia

Now, yes, please now, Nico...
(noticing his distraction)
Nico... Nico... What?

Nico

Well...
You see...
It's like this.
Forgive me.
I have to go.

— 20 —

Lysia

WHAT?

Nico

I have to go.
I have to train.
You hear that drumming?

*She struggles with the blindfold as—briskly,
amiably, as if that entire rhapsodic scene
never happened—he puts himself together.
Time to work!*

We're planning a raid: Spartan terrain.
Three more days, come midnight, we'll
Have found out their Achilles' heel, and
Wham! Bam! Thank you, ma'am!
They'll never see it coming.

Lysia *outraged*
Nico!

Nico *utterly without malice*
I'm sorry, Lysia.
The time just flies!

Lysia

I can't believe you—

Nico

But: "Victory is the only peace."

Lysia

... low, lecherous—

Nico

So, on behalf of all of Greece,

Lysia

... heartless, treacherous—

Nico

I thank you for such sweet release—

Lysia *screams.*

Nico *wistfully*
I hate goodbyes.
Farewell, then: farewell, then;
I'll write you—





He's gone. Lysia finally frees herself of the blindfold. She's alone, and beside herself.

Lysia

IS THIS YOUR SURPRISE?

She paces. The drums of the Soldiers are still audible.

————— 21 —————

Enough. Enough.

No more.

Not another night—

(Shouts)

Oh, STOP THAT DRUMMING!

"Planning a raid—"

(Something occurs to her...)

"Achilles heel—"

"They'll never see it coming..."

(resolved)

"Treachery!"

"Trespass!"

Traitor!

Jackass!

(relenting)

Lover...

48



(remembering)

Liar!

(relentless)

WAR!

————— 22 —————

Parados

The camp, in the country outside Athens, of the Athenian army: Nico, Meleagros, Kinesias, and Bion. Nico leads his Soldiers in an oddly familiar drill...

Nico

Loins...

Girt?

Athenians

Check!

Nico

Swords...

Clean?

Athenians

Check!

Nico

Spears...

Ready?

Athenians

Check!

Nico

Shields...

Tight?

Athenians

Check!

Nico

Mind...

Alert?

Athenians

Check!

Nico

Senses...

Keen?

49

**Athenians**

Check!

NicoNerves...
Steady?**Athenians**

Check!

Nico

Ready to...?

Athenians

FIGHT! Check!

Nico & SoldiersDeath! Death!
Death to Sparta!

 23

Lysia's balcony, as she reads a scroll.
LysiaLysia: I'm so surprised!
But: to address your question:*Myrrhine appears neaby, writing the scroll
that Lysia reads.***Myrrhine & Lysia**

The Acropolis is only barely guarded.

Lysia triumphantly

So I surmised!

MyrrhineConsidering the treasury, I think it's
ill-advised
to guard it with the men the draft
discarded.
But there it is.
Now: why the quiz?**Lysia**

Eureka!

 24

*Further outside Athens, with the Spartan
army—Maron, Alpheus, and Philo—led by
the lupine, charismatic Leonidas.*
Leonidas to his troopsPrepare to conquer Athens' men!
We're closing in behind them.
Tomorrow, if not sooner, we'll
Have found out their Achilles' heel, and
Wham! Bam! Thank you, Ma'am:
They'll never see us coming.
(Once we find them...)
Meanwhile...
Mind...
Alert?**Spartans**

Check!

LeonidasSenses...
Keen?**Spartans**

Check!

LeonidasNerves...
Steady?**Spartans**

Check!

Leonidas

Ready to...?

Spartans

FIGHT! Check!

Leonidas & SpartansDeath! Death!
Death to Athens!

 25

*Kleonike and her cohorts, marching in
another part of Athens.*
Kleonike & WomenEnough! Enough!
Peace now!
Not another night—
Peace now!
We'll wait no more:
We hate this war!
It's time to take control:



Myrrhine, remembering, hands Kleo something.

Myrrhine

Kleo! Kleo!
Scroll!

26

Lysia reading

"Kleonike; bosom friend;
(*Lysia, on her balcony, drafting the scroll*)
I've had an inspiration!"



Kleonike & Lysia

I've figured out a way to end the war.

Women

As if she cares.

Kleonike

Shhh.

Lysia

It's too involved for further explanation.
Trust me:
Bring your girls tomorrow, say, at four—

52

Women appalled

In the morning?

Lysia unperturbed

In the morning.

Kleonike resigned

In the morning.

All Women

"Your friend, and fellow citizen,"

Lysia

Lysia.

27

*Now, at once, we see everyone, as the
Women march, the Armies drill, Kinesias
and Philo take over Nico's and Leonidas's
drill cues, and Lysia, Nico, and Leonidas
soliloquize:*

Lysia, Nico, Leonidas

Strategy is everything:
Read your Pericles.

Make your plan, and you can...

...bring your man to his knees.

Think through each potential,

...think it through some more...

Strategy is everything...

Strategy's essential...

Strategy is everything...

Women

Enough! Enough!
Peace now!

Not another day:

Peace now!

Our faith's

All gone:

This can't

Go on!

Not another night,
another day:

Not another fight,
another fray:

Lead the right way!

Kinesias, Philo

Loins... Girt?

All Soldiers

Check!

Kinesias, Philo

Swords... Clean?

All Soldiers

Check!

Kinesias, Philo

Spears... Ready?

All Soldiers

Check!

Kinesias, Philo

Shields... Tight?

All Soldiers

Check!

Kinesias, Philo

Mind... Alert?

All Soldiers

Check!

Kinesias, Philo

Senses... Keen?

All Soldiers

Check!

Kinesias, Philo

Nerves... Steady?

All Soldiers

Check!



53



All

In love
And...

Lysia

War...

Women

Peace now!

Nico & Leonidas

Ready... FIGHT!

Armies

Check!

Women

Peace now!

Nico & Leonidas

Ready... FIGHT!

Armie

Check!

Lysia

War...

Women

Peace now!

Nico & Leonidas

Ready... FIGHT!

Armies

Check!

Women

Peace now!

Nico & Leonidas

Ready... FIGHT!

Armies

Check!

Lysia

War...

Women

Peace now!

Nico & Leonidas

Ready... FIGHT!

Armies

Check!

Women

Peace now!

Nico & Leonidas

Ready... FIGHT!

Armies

Check!

Women

Peace—

Men

War—

All

Ready,
Now!





—28—

Scene 2

Before Lysia's house. Dawn. A rumpled Kleonike and a dishevelled Myrrhine lead in the yawning Athenian Women.

Women yawning unintelligibly
Enuff! Enuff!
Peeshe nhhhow!
Nah another—

Kleonike crystalline
Verse. I'll call the police.

Women
Aren't we surly.

Kleonike through gritted teeth
In case you haven't noticed, you geese,
It's very,
Very,
(screaming to audience)
EARLY!
Ares, Aphrodite! I'm still half-blind.

Myrrhine innocently
Whom are you talking to?

Kleonike considers explaining; then (how would she?) thinks better of it.

Kleonike
Never mind.

Lysia appears, in rather-too-chic activist garb.

Lysia
Kleo! Wake up, will you?

Myrrhine awed
You even did your make-up?
(disgusted)
I could kill you.

Kleonike
Lysia: we took the bait.
And made it here—

w/Women acid
At dawn—

56

—31—

Lampito grandly
I, Lampito, vife to Leonidaz,
Zpeaking faw Zparta's daughtawz and vivez,
Gweet you, O noblezt Athenianz.

(Alas: to the Athenians, Lampito's Spartan accent—rendering, as it does, her s's z's, her r's w's, and her w's v's—makes her sound both aristocratic and extraterrestrial.)

Kleo hissing, to Women
Laugh, and I'll blacken your eye.

Lampito
As you zay yaw vimmen need uz
Ve, at minah wizk to ouwah lives

w/Spartan Women raptly, as her Women hum
(But conzidewable inconvenienze,)
Have come heah, loohed by ze pwomize
of peaze,
For all—all ze states ov Gweeze.
Who among you is Lyzia?

Lysia
That would be I.

Kleonike
Very interested in your proposed solution:
So, without further de—

Lysia
Sisters—wait—
Before you all go on—
Behold, and greet our allies in revolution!

—30—
Music of near-savage glamour announces the entrance of Lampito, the imperious wife of Leonidas, and a contingent of Spartan Women: Charito, Dika and Arete.

confidentially, to Kleonike
That would be their general's wife.
Lampito's her name.

Kleonike incredulous
You asked the Spartan Women?
And they came?

Lysia preening, airily
Of course they came.
Still disappointed?

57

**Lampito & Spartans**

Zay vhat you pwopose.

Athenian Women *merrily*

Yez, Lysia, zay vhat you pwopose.

32

Lysia

I shall, noble Lampito: but:

First, a simple query,

Open to the floor:

How many of you have

Husbands,
Brothers,
Lovers,
Others,

Fighting, away at the war?

All Women *ruefully*

I.— I.— I.— I.—

I.— I.— I.— I.

Lysia

Thank you, gentle sisters:

You confirm my theory.

Just one question more, equally short.

If I have a scheme to end the war,

Who of you, here, can lend her support?

All Women *trilling, thrilled*

I.— I.— I.— I.—

I.— I.— I.— I.

Lysia

You're *sure* you can?

Women *eagerly*

Of course we can.

We'll risk our necks.

Lysia

Then here's the plan.

It's not complex.

All the Women cluster around Lysia.

33

We, sisters, can unilaterally end this

preposterous

and painful and protracted conflict:

By... a total...

Women *taking the bait*

Total...

Lysia

Utter...

Women

Utter...

Lysia

Sanction...

Women

Sanction...

Lysia

You'll do it?

Women *impatiently*

We're nervous wrecks! Tell us!

Lysia

Total...

Women

Total...

Lysia

Sanction...

Women

Sanction... on? On?

Lysia

SEX!

Who's with me?

A beat.

Women *aghast*

Aiyiyi.— Aiyiyi.— Aiyiyi.— Aiyiyi.—

Aiyiyi.— Aiyiyi.— Aiyiyi.— Aiyiyi.

The cluster of Women dissolves.

Lysia *preening*

I know. I know! It's too exquisite.

Why has no one thought of this before?





(noticing the Women backing away)

Well?

What?

Speak!

What is it?

Women

Gee:

Interesting!

No.

On, on, on with the war!

On, on, on with the war!

What a thing to throw at us!

Kleonike & Lampito

Women, be still.

Kleonike

Look: Lysia. Call me obtuse.

But, how would a ban on—you know—

Lysia

Coitus.

Women

Of which we already get virtually nil—

Kleonike

—Bring about a truce?

What did I miss?

Lysia hands Myrrhine a scroll.

Lysia

Myrrhine: read this.

Myrrhine

It's my letter.

34

reading, rapidly

"Lysia—I'm-so-surprised-but-to-address-
your question-the-Acropolis-is-only-barely-
guarded-considering-the-treasury—"

Lysia

Stop. Again:

Myrrhine *going on*

"Considering the—



w/Lysia & Kleonike

treasury—"

Lysia

The gold, the armor, the timber, the rest,

Kleonike *realizing*

The entire Athenian war chest—*Oh.*

Myrrhine *continuing*

"Considering the Treasury, I think it ill-advised

w/Athenian Women

"...to guard it with the men the draft *discarded.*"

Myrrhine

But so 't'would seem—"

Lysia

Look: here's the scheme.

35

We seize the Acropolis:

Barricade each door.

Behind those walls, we're unassailable.



Then, we let our armies know
That as long as they're at war,
Their women:
 Their virgins, their sirens,
Their *women* are,
Therefore,
Unavailable.

Xanthe

What about the prostitutes?
They're rarely radical.



Arete *saltily, to Lysia*
Zistahs, ve're viz you!
Ve're due faw a zabbatical.

Charito & Dika *aghast*
Mother?

Lysia

Well? Well?

Women

So... int'resting!

Women

No.
On, on, on with the war!
On, on, on with the war!

Lysia *damning*

So suddenly the sisterhood dissolves!
Nice: so nice!
"Enough! Enough! Peace Now!"—sure,
As long as it involves no sacrifice—

Myrrhine

Lysia, it isn't that.
It isn't that at all.

Lysia

What is it, then?
And be precise.

Myrrhine pauses a little before she answers.

36

Myrrhine

Peace: yes! Of course: but,
There's this man.

Lysia *acidly*

Oh, *Kinesias*, right!

Myrrhine

Abandon him?
I'm not so sure I can.
Here, this way that you
Show me seems clear.
But to see him would
Throw me, I fear.
I'd kiss him—
You know me: I'd veer.
Have to say it...

Peace, yes, of course:
It haunts our dreams.
For peace, we'd go to—
 Well: *almost*

All extremes.
Yes, let an accord be sealed,
Throw down sword and shield,
Make hawk yield to dove.
Don't delay it...
Peace, yes, of course:
But, Lysia—
What of love?

37

Lysia *inordinately scornful*
Love?

Oh, yes, love!
"Kine, oh Kine,
Come to me, Kine,
Kine, I'm hot, I'm inflamed!
My tempter, my torture—"
Aren't you ashamed?

Myrrhine *weakly*
No.

Lysia *whom is she mocking here?*
What more, what else can matter but
 your love?
Let mountains crash, let heaven burn;
Only let Myrrhine's man return!
No war, nothing! Nothing can matter but
 your love:
Let our sons and lovers meet early graves,
Let our friends and sisters stay wartime
 slaves,
Let all of Greece sink beneath the waves,
As long as Myrrhine has whom she craves!
Is this how a strong Greek woman behaves?





Kleonike *to Lysia*

You're a little rough—

Lysia *unheeding, relentless*

Is this how we behave?

(*to Myrrhine*)

Myrrhine?

Kleonike

Lysia—

Lampito *suddenly*

Enough!

38

passionately inspired

I, Lampito, wife to Leonidaz,

Zpeaking faw Zparta' daughtaws and vives,

Am ztwuck by vhat we're finding,

Ztwuck by yaw pluck and intwepidity.

Athenian Women

By our vhat?

Kleonike

Lack of fear.

Athenian Women

Oh.

Lampito

Ve agwee!

Ve szhall follow vheah you lead uz,

Infwame ouah men vizin an inch of zeir lives,

Zen gweet zeir wizhidity

Viz total fwizhidity

Until ouah men announze a peaze,

For all—all ze states ov Gweeze.

w/Spartans, reverently

Gweeze. Gweeze.

39

Lysia

Kleo? Athenians? What do you say?

Athenian Women *sighing*

Well: hell.

Take it away.

Lysia

Let us swear an oath to make it binding.

Lampito steps forward, ready to swear.

Lysia looks around.

Who'll volunteer?

Myrrhine *strongly*

Lysia. Here.

Lysia *gently*

Good for you.

40

like a priestess

O Mistress Persuasion,

Accept our oblation,

Grant our petition,

Favor our mission, we pray...

She hands Myrrhine and Lampito scrolls.

They unroll them. They're enormous.

Lysia

I've written a little text for the occasion.

Lampito & Myrrhine

"From this day on:"

Lampito

"I deny all wightz of entwy,

To husband, lovah, zoljah, or zentwy,"

Myrrhine

"To any man or adolescent

Even tinily tumescent—"

Dika *wistfully*

That would be my husband.

Women *sympathetically*

Tsk. Darling.

Lysia *bringing them back*

From this, from this day on...

Lampito

"Ve agwee to co-conspire,

Myrrhine

"To master each clause of the laws of desire,

Lampito

"To wouse my espoused until most—

**Myrrhine**

"Most of him bends to our will."

Myrrhine & Lampito

"Let him shout till he's hoarse,
Let him sue for divorce,
Let him cry from the depths of his soul:
Let him threaten abuse:
Let him try to seduce you..."

*Lysia breaks in; Lampito & Myrrhine flip
through the seemingly endless scroll...*

Lysia *intensely, to Nico's love music*
"Let him shiver, silver in lamplight glow,
Let him blush, though not from shame:
Let him lay you down
under flares of heaven—"

Lampito *to Myrrhine*
Zhall we zkip to ze end?

Lysia *furiously, as if alone*
It'll still be no use:

Kleonike *observing, to herself*
I get it, my friend.

Lysia
You're still, you're *still* in control!

*Lampito and Myrrhine, by mutual
agreement, skip to the end of the scroll.*

Lysia & Women
"From this, from this, from this, from this
day on,
I deploy my self-possession
As a not-so-secret weapon Both of passion
and aggression;
I deny myself release
To enforce a state of peace
For Athens, for Sparta,
For all the states of Greece."
We swear this, then:

Women *wavering*
Oh, Lysia, please...

Lysia
We swear this, then:

Women
We're down on our Peloponnese...

Lysia
We swear,

Women
Gods!

Lysia
We swear, we swear, we swear, we swear!
(an edict)
Swear.

Women *sighing*
Amen.

Lysia *chanting, as before*
O Mistress Persuasion,
Accept our oblation,

Women *wistfully*
Ah...ah, men!

Lysia
Grant our petition,

Women *resolved*
Amen.

Lysia
Favor our mission, we cry...

Arete *sotto voce*
Aiyiyi.

*Distantly, a war fanfare (different from the
men's) sounds.*

Lysia
That's our signal to take the Acropolis.
Myrrhine, seize the day!
I'll meet you at the battlement.

Lampito *to Myrrhine*
You wead zo beautifully, my dear.
Zpartans! Away!
And zuch a... beguiling agzent.

**Myrrhine & Women**

Enough! Enough!
Peace Now!

Lysia

Shhhh!

Myrrhine & Women

Enough! Enough!
whispering
Peace Now!

Lysia *disingenuously*

Nico? Fine.

Kleonike *skeptically*

Fine?

Lysia *insistent*

Fine!

Kleonike *shrugging*

Fine.

Lysia *considering telling her...*

Look, Kleo:
It's like this—
(... *but changing her mind*)
There's no time now:
We have to go!

Lysia *brightly*

My dearest friend,
Still disappointed?

Kleonike *measured*

Hardly disappointed: still...
(*shrewdly*)
Lysia. How did it go with Nico?

Scene 3

*The Athenian camp. Meleagros, Bion, and
Kinesias prepare for... dinner.*

Soldiers *variously*

Spoons... gleaming? Check!
Drill... complete? Check!
Stew... steaming? Check!
Ready, ready, ready, to... EAT!
(*prayerfully*)
Eat. Eat. Check.

*Bion and Meleagros tramp off, but Kinesias,
lagging behind, approaches Nico, in his
tent, studying a map.*

Nico

Kinesias? What troubles you??

Kinesias

War: sure. I know:
(*Myrrhine's theme*)
But: there's Myrrhine.

Nico *warmly*

Yes, Myrrhine...

Kinesias

Since half a year ago:
Always: "Myrrhine, Kine."
Days, in the field,
I'm never braver:
I don't yield, I don't waver:
Still, I've concealed—

Nico *correcting his thought*
—revealed—

Both

—how I/you crave her.

Kinesias *caught out: ruefully*

Don't I show it...
War, sure, I know:
So: count me in.
They tell you: fight!
You fight, and you
Fight to win.
Gods: grant us strength and skill,



Guide and bless each kill—
That familiar song.

Kinesias

Don't we know it...

*Does Nico sense impiety in that last
remark? Stoutly, then, to reassure his
general:*

War, sure, amen:
But, General...
How long?

Nico

She still hasn't written.

Kinesias

A week. Almost two.
She claims I neglect her.

Nico

You fight to protect her.

Kinesias

True.
That's not how she sees it, though.

Nico

They never do.

w/Kinesias

They never do.

————— 44 —————
Meleagros runs on to hand Kinesias a scroll...

Myrrhine *materializing*

Kine: oh, Kine...

*... and, as he reads, Myrrhine and all
Women except Lysia appear on the
Acropolis balcony, enacting the Spartan
Women's "capture" of the Athenians.*

Myrrhine & Women

Disaster! Past midnight we were
Wakened without warning
By a horde of Spartan Women, playing
Amazon:

Imagine our horror!
At that hour of the morning—
Why, we barely had the time to put
pajamas on.
We fled to the Acropolis
From which they tried to topple us,
And did, alas, succeed.
We beg: we plead:
We're trapped: we're treed!
We're desperately in need:
Help! Best, Myrrhine.

They vanish from view.

————— 45 —————

Kinesias *"she signs it how?"
"Best?"*

Nico, Kinesias *alternately*
Lysia! Myrrhine! Kidnappers! Hostages!
Capture! Torture... WAR! Soldiers!

*They race off to gather the army... and in a
flash, we are at the gates of the shuttered
Acropolis. Both Nico's and Leonidas's men
march on, glare, and intimidate each other
with almost simian grunts...*

Athenians

Huh!

Spartans

HUH!

*... &c., until, from within, they hear the
Women cry...*

Women

WAIT!

————— 46 —————
*The Acropolis opens, and the Women,
stunningly appointed, blaze into view.*

All Men *as in the Prologos*

It's a miracle!
What a sight!

Leonidas

Lampito?

Nico *disbelieving*

Lysia?



47

Lysia & Women

We, gentlemen, are unilaterally ending this preposterously protracted and painful conflict... by a... total...

Men *taking the bait*

... Total...

Lysia & Women

Utter...

Men

... Utter...

Lysia & Women

Sanction...

Men

... Sanction...

Nico

This is ridiculous, Lysia—

Lysia & Women *unheeding*

Total...

Men

... Total...

Lysia & Women

Sanction...

Men

... Sanction... on? On?

Lysia & Women

Sex.

Men *variously*

Aiyiyi!

Lysia & Women

We've seized the Acropolis:

Locked down every door.

Behind these walls, we're unassailable.

So, fight: fight forever! But,

As long as you're at war,

Your women,

Your virgins, your sirens,

Your women are—sorry!

Unavailable.

Nico *outraged*

Lysia!

Lysia *coldly formal*

General?

Nico *storming near*

What is this, Lysia?

Lysia *quailing: nervously*

Kleo, speak for me.

48

Nico and Kleonike argue as Lysia, torn between her loyalty to Kleonike, her desire for Nico, and her appreciation for both of their stances, wavers...

Nico

What are you doing?

Kleonike

Saving Greece.

(quoting him)

"Victory is the only peace."

Nico *to Lysia*

You don't believe in this!

Kleonike

Really. Do you?

Or do you only do what they train you to do?

Lysia *to herself, out of rhythm*

... Stallion...

(as they bicker)

... satyr...

Nico *exasperated*

The making of policy isn't my role!

Kleonike

Precisely the reason we're taking control.

Lysia *to herself*

... Golden...

... demon...

Nico

... The delta is ours!

**Kleonike**

Yes, so we assume.
But were we there first?

Nico

Yes!

Kleonike

According to whom?

Nico *insinuatingly*

Lysia...

Lysia *weakening*

Nico...

Kleonike *sternly*

Lysia...

Lysia *wearily*

I know...

Nico *pressuring*

Lysia, Lysia...

Kleonike *pressuring*

Lysia, Lysia...

Lysia *at wits' end*

Gods!

Nico & Kleonike *accidentally in unison*

Don't disappoint me...

*Nico & Kleonike glare at each other. Lysia
waver (but, of the two of them, only
Kleonike has not disappointed her...)*

Lysia

Well...

You see...

It's like this...

(deliciously)

Forgive me.

(squarely)

I stand with Kleo.

Men *livid*

Ares, Aphrodite, this is absurd!

Leonidas *interrupting*

General Nikias!

A word?

Myrrhine *inadvertantly*

You have no accent.

Leonidas *"so what?"*

Neither do you.

49

General: Is it not so
That men wield all authority
In peace, and war?

Women

Oh?

Kleonike *scoffing*

Ho!

Nico *"so what?"*

So?

Leonidas

So:

Now it seems, our major foe
Is this sorry sorority
Who challenge that authority.
Dare we let this go?

Men

Hell, no!

Leonidas

Apropos:

(like the Geezers)

Let us determine both for Sparta and Athens,
As is our charge, resolving
Both for the historical record
and not excluding society at large...

All Men

Get to the point!

Leonidas

See if we can rise to the occasion.

50

From this day on,
We deny all possibility
We'd even *pretend* we're suspending hostility,



Nico *catching on*
Until these Women tender
Unconditional surrender.

Lysia *appalled*
This can't be!

Women *annoyed*
Looks like it *can* be.
Is there a Plan B?

Leonidas & Nico
From this, from this day on,

Bion & Philo
We unite in *brief* alliance,

Meleagros & Maron
Just for the justice of wresting compliance,

All Men
Of quelling every hellion
Who rebels in this rebellion.
Let her shout till she's hoarse,
Let her sue for divorce,

Let her suffer as never before:
Let her rage till infinity,
Let her threaten virginity—

Kleonike
Oh, try it! *Try it!* Time is on our side.
And time is a formidable ally.
A week without your women,
you'll be fit to be tied:
Every woman knows that men are ruled
by their *phall!*

Leonidas
Dare we let this go?

Men
Hell, no!

Lysia *"be reasonable!"*
Nico!

Nico *curt*
I tried. I tried.
You've chosen your side.

All *variously*
WAR! WAR! WAR! WAR!
WAR! WAR! WAR! WAR!

Enraged, the Men and Women shout at each other...

All
From this, from this, from this, from this day on,
I deploy my self-possession
As a not-so-secret weapon both of passion
and aggression,
Enduring any losses,
To show them who the boss is:
We swear this then,
We swear this, then,
We swear, we swear, we swear,
we swear, we swear:
From this day on, on, on, on:
From this, from this day on!

FINALE ACT I





Disc 2

Act II

1

Scene 1

Weeks later: outside the Acropolis: dusk. The armies have pitched camp side by side. Far (audience) left, Nico, in his tent: far right, Leonidas, in his. Kinesias leads the Athenians in drill: Maron, a Spartan lieutenant, leads the Spartans. Both armies are icily respectful of each other's area. None are happy: most are painfully erect: the sex war is taking its toll. Kinesias and Maron pointedly aim the drill at their respective superiors, who pretend—sort of—not to hear.

Soldiers

Check!

Kinesias

Hopes... sinking?

Soldiers

Check!

Maron

Form... slackening?

Soldiers

Check!

Kinesias

Plight... risible?

Maron and Spartans stare. Kinesias (like Tisiphone in the Invocation) glares back.

Kinesias aggressive

Risible.

Soldiers "Whatever..."

Check!

Maron

Vimmen... vinning?

Soldiers

Check!

Kinesias

Men... drinking?

Soldiers

Check!

Maron

Mood... blackening?

Soldiers

Check!

Kinesias

Strain... visible?

Soldiers noting their crotches

Check!

Under the drill the remaining four Soldiers—Meleagros, Alpheus, Bion, and Philo—between yelled drill responses, mutter, sotto voce (in their respective accents) to themselves...

Soldiers

Enough!

Enough!

Sex now! CHECK!

CHECK! Not another night—

Sex now! CHECK! CHECK!

We rant:

We writhe:

CHECK! We can't

Be blithe. CHECK!

Not another night...

... without sleep—CHECK!

This is not a vow...

... a man can keep—CHECK!

Must we resort to sheep?

CHECK! CHECK!

Enough!

Kinesias & Maron

Hopes... waning?

Spirits... sagging?

Tension... heightening?

Will... eroding?

Men?

Women gaining?

Men... flagging?

Crotches... tightening?

Loins... imploding?



*Kinesias and the Athenians have circled
Nico: the Spartans, Leonidas.*

All Soldiers *a plea*

Sex now! Sex now! Sex now!
Sex now! Sex now! Sex now!

Leonidas *reproving*
Spartans.

Nico *scathing*
Athenians, this is absurd!

Leonidas
General Nikias:
A word?

*Leonidas speaks quietly, thoughtfully, with
none of the braggadocio of the last scene.
Kinesias, unobserved, sneaks nearby to
overhear.*

Leonidas
I'm not reflective.
That's not my role:

Not my breed.
Give me the rules, give me the tools,
give me the goal—
And I'm effective.
I do quite well:
I succeed.
Only I've rarely had perspective on the
whole:
And, hell—
Isn't that what we need?

Nico
I don't take your point, sir—

Leonidas
Too late in the day, sir:
Too late for mere obedience.
We need another way out of this war.
Too late for delay, sir:
Too late for cold expedience.
If we're to be great soldiers,
We cannot be "good soldiers" anymore.

Won't it always be what it's always been
If we always do what we've always done?

Blindly we continue what others have begun:
Blood and bone and sinew: father, brother, son.
Even if I win, you win, still,
What will we have won?
What will we have won?

What more can I say, sir?
What more?
Time to ask the question.
Too late in the day, sir:
And here is my suggestion:
As we tremble on the brink,
Determined not to blink,
Shall we do that thing we've rarely done
before—
Think?

Nico
"Think." Think?
(with frosty courtesy)
But I know what you think, sir.
I can tell.
(icily)
All my responses? Faked. Feigned.
All my convictions? Tricked. Trained.

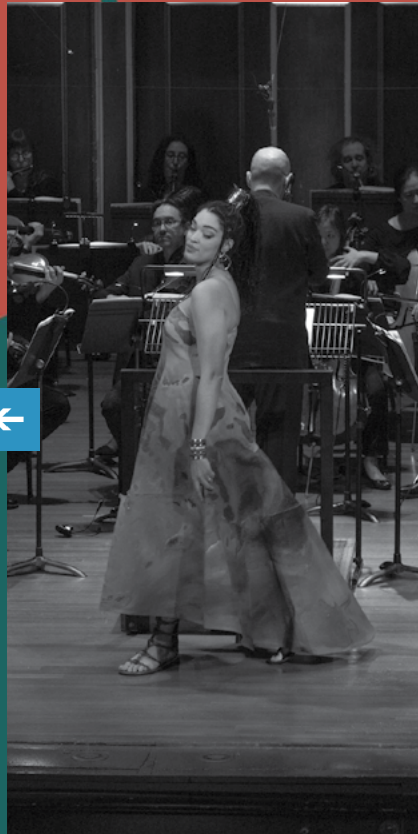
All I believe in? Plainly explained—
Now I know who I am!

Leonidas *mollifying*
General—

Nico *increasingly enraged*
Others order me: Eat! Sleep!
Others say, Rabbit: watch me leap!
Look like a ram, act like a sheep—
Barely a sheep: a lamb!
Hear this, General:
____ 4 _____
Hear this well.
I know: I've always known
What every soldier understands.
In war,
His heart is not his own.
His hands are not his hands.

*Light finds Lysia, distant, but present:
it's she to whom Nico really sings*

You know: you've always known, haven't you?
We have a mission to fulfill.



Therefore,
Our loves are not our own:
Our will is not our will.

Athens gives me borders.
Land and labor,
Lover, neighbor—
Athens gives me everything.
And, Athens, in return:
Athens gives me orders.
I obey them:
I do not weigh them.
I do not cry,
Nor question why—
Why would I?
None of my
Concern.
Not for me to learn...

Lysia fades from view.

Only mine to know, as I know—

Leonidas *challenging*
Know, or just believe?

Nico *dogged, vehement*
Not believe, not believe: I know:
I know my city tells me true.
Therefore,
(indicating the Acropolis)
When we regain our own,
And we retain our own,
We
Will
Still
Kill
You.

Nico gestures him away.

5

Nico
Officer.

Leonidas
Officer.

*Disappointed, Leonidas trudges back to
camp. Nico stony but haunted, stares
straight ahead. The Soldiers have since
drifted off to sleep; all except Kinesias.*

Nico *in a frenzy of self-doubt*
"Others order me: Eat! Sleep!
Others say, Rabbit: watch me leap!
Look like a ram, act like a sheep—"

*The Soldiers, still asleep, half-hear Nico's
last word.*

Soldiers *bleating lustfully*
Baa! Baa!

Kinesias *making a decision*
Enough. Enough.
Myrrhine, now.

He sneaks away.

Philo *to his tentmate*
May I zpoon you?

6

Scene 2

*As Kinesias vanishes, and the sleeping
armies fade from view, moonlight finds
Lysia, as a rather aggressive night watch*





(wo)man, on the balcony of the Acropolis. Suddenly Charito appears, draped in a sheepskin, complete with false head.

Charito *responding, eagerly*
Baa! Baa!

Lysia *furiously*
Citizen: citizen! Back inside!

Kleonike pops her head out from where she's keeping watch.

Kleo & Lysia

"Try it! TRY IT!" A hundred days, we've tried. And time, it seems, is nobody's ally. Pointless to deny it: we're *all* fit to be tied: We're losing our nerve. Let me show you, shall I? Observe.

Lysia ducks out of sight as Dika appears on the balcony; looks quickly around her, then slinks down the staircase. She's just about to dash away, when Lysia interrupts.

7
Lysia *coolly*
Citizen: such haste! Such urgency!

Dika *crisply*
Overnight pazz, Commander, pwease:
It's an emerzheny!

Lysia
And what, pray tell, exerts such pull?

Dika *improvising*
My vool.

Lysia
Your vool?

Dika
My vool!

Kleonike *shrugging*
Her vool.

Dika
My best Milesian wool.
It's absolutely pwize.
And ze *moths* vill just devouah—

Lysia & Kleo *wisely*
Oh, *moths*! Ouch.

Dika
I knew you'd zymphathize.
I only need an houah:
Just enough to, you know,
Zpwlead it on ze couch.

She tries to sneak past Kleonike, who hauls her back by the arm.

Kleonike
Nice try.
A crisis, this is not.
You'll stay here.

Dika *tearfully*
Must I let my piecevork rot?

Kleonike
So it would appear.

w/Lysia
Inside.

Dika slinks upstairs, just as Xanthe bursts into view.

Lysia & Kleo *to audience*
Coincidence?

Lysia *again, coolly*
Citizen: such haste! Such urgency!

Xanthe *in a panic*
Overnight pass, Commander, please:
It's an emergency!

Lysia
Relax.

Xanthe
Relax?
How can I relax?
It's my *flax*.

Lysia
Your flax?

**Xanthe**

My flax!
I forgot to pluck my flax!

Kleonike *sagely, to audience*
She suffers from unplucked flax.

Xanthe

My flax. You see,
It's totally in flower,
And those awful gluey seeds—



Lysia & Kleo *nodding*
Those seeds! Yuck.

Xanthe

I knew that you'd agree.
So, give me just an hour:
The only thing it needs is,
One fast pluck.
A bientot!

She tries to sneak past Kleonike, who hauls her back by the hair.

Lysia

Ah... No.
Get back in there!
Show some spine.

Xanthe *desperately*
Don't you see my flax needs care!

Lysia *bellowing*
SO DOES MINE!

Kleonike
Get in line.

w/Lysia
Inside.

Mewling, Xanthe slumps indoors, just as Arete—with a conspicuously swollen belly—staggers into view, praying loudly.

Lysia & Kleo *to audience*
Sing along! You know this part—
Surely by now, by heart!

Lysia *as before*
Citizen: such haste! Such urgency!

w/Kleo & Arete
Overnight pass, Commander, please (pwease:)
It's an emergency (emerzhenzy)!

Arete *in a panic*
I'm due: any moment! Out of my vay!

Lysia & Kleo
You weren't pregnant yesterday.

Arete
I know: it's a miwacle!

Lysia *to Kleonike* *dryly*
Hey, it's a miwacle.

Kleonike
Oy vey.

Arete
When Zeus ze Mighty beckoned—
How could I wesist his powah?
It vas like ze myth of Leda and ze svans—

Lysia *correcting, irritably*
Svan. One svan. Look it up.

Arete
I'll break vater any zecond!
I'll give birth vizin the hough—

Lysia
Not unless your baby's made of bronze.

Lysia knocks on Arete's belly, which clangs loudly.

Arete *inspired, improvising*
I'm going to have a boy!

Kleonike & Lysia
Oy.

Suddenly, the other Women boil out of the Acropolis, all—except Sappho—besieging Lysia and Kleonike with ad lib pleas and cries: It's been three months! How can you expect us to go on like this? We're going mad! I can't sleep, I'm feverish, I've been





in tears for weeks: It's not working, Lysia: we're human beings, it's brutal what you're demanding we go through: you have to have mercy on us, war, peace, we're dying either way, I can't endure it... ceding, after a moment's music, to:

Women

Enough! Enough!

Sex now!

Not another night—

Sex now!

We're fretting: we're itchy:

We're getting ever-so-slightly bitchy—

Sappho *serenely*

Actually, I'm getting a lot of poetry written.

Women

Well, bully for you, Sappho!

Enough; enough; enough; enough;

Enough, enough, enough—

Myrrhine *spying someone*

Wait!

8

Lysia & Kleonike rush to join her as Kinesias, in conspicuous erection and considerable pain, staggers into view.

Kinesias *his Act One aria*

Days, in the field,

I'm never braver:

Myrrhine *dreamily*

Oh, Kine...

Kinesias

I don't yield,

I don't waver;

Still, I've concealed—

Myrrhine & Lysia

—revealed—

Kinesias

how I crave her.

(ruefully noting his erection)

Don't I show it...

9

Lysia

That's your husband?

Myrrhine

Every inch.

Lysia

Now, Myrrhine: mustn't flinch.

Myrrhine *snapping out of it*

Mustn't flinch.

Lysia

Steel your will.

First, though: drill.

Perfume... discreet?

Myrrhine *sniffs her wrist*

Check.

Lysia

Hair... wild?

Myrrhine *tousles it*

Check.

Lysia

Breasts... flagrant?

Myrrhine *adjusts neckline*

Check.

Dress... losable?

Myrrhine *loosens it*

Check.

(still wistfully)

Kine, oh Kine...

Lysia

Tease him, taunt him, kiss, caress:

Anything but acquiesce.

Let our oath remain your guide.

Kleonike

Everyone else—

Women

We (Ve) know: inside!

The Women scurry into the Acropolis and out of sight.

Lysia & Kleo

Don't disappoint us...

**Myrrhine**

I won't disappoint you...

Kinesias

Days, in the field, I—

Lysia *joining in, caustically*

Blah, blah, blah...

You serenade her. How dear.

Just as mine did.

However, no man enters here,

Except blinded.

*She produces the blindfold—the same one
Nico used on her.*

Kinesias

Blinded? You jest.

Lysia

Only cloth: don't fuss.

This isn't *Oedipus*.

(She blindfolds him.)

Myrrhine: Myrrhine! Guest!

10

*Lysia withdraws a short distance. At her and
Kleonike's silent urging, Myrrhine walks slowly
down the stairs and approaches Kinesias.*

Myrrhine

Kine.

Kinesias

Myrrhine! You're here!

He struggles with the blindfold.

Myrrhine

No, keep it on: it's the rule.

Kinesias

Well, it's cruel.

Myrrhine

Persevere.

Is there news of a truce?

Kinesias

Of a truce? Um—yes!

Myrrhine

"Um—yes?" Swear to Zeus?

Kinesias

Swear to Zeus? More or less.

Myrrhine

Another excuse!

Kinesias

I guess, but—

Myrrhine! I'm going through hell!

Myrrhine

Surely you know I miss you as well!

Everything we'd do,

How I'd feel,

How I'd melt when you'd find me...

Kinesias

Hard to keep in view:

Was it real,

What we felt, then?

Myrrhine

Remember...

Kinesias

Remind me.

Spurred by Lysia, Myrrhine sets to work.

Kinesias

What are you doing?

Myrrhine

Shhh...

Now; now... remember...

11

My lips, like so...

Like this,

Where your pulse beats,

So heatedly...

Do you remember?

Kinesias

Zeus, do I remember!

Myrrhine

My fingers, so...

Like this,

Where your breath stops;

Repeatedly...

**Kinesias**

Ah, Myrrhine...

Myrrhine *stroking his chest*
Here, furred like the wild boar,
(stroking his chin)
Yet here, beardless as a child...
Do I dream? Do I imagine it?
Or when I touch you:
Just behind your ear,
Here, and here, and here—
Does that drive you wild?
Do I drive you wild?

Kinesias

Gods, you're great!

Myrrhine *suddenly nerveless*
Wait.
(to Lysia, sotto voce)
Lysia, I love him so!

Lysia

Oh, Myrrhine,
(tender, but driving)
And yet; you know...

(Nico's aria)

You know: you've always known
What every woman understands.
In war,
Her heart is not her own.
Her hands are not her hands.

Myrrhine *yielding*
Oh. Right.

Lysia *gentler*
Go.

Kinesias *bellowing*
Myrrhine!

Lysia
Fight!

Myrrhine *resuming*
Now: now; remember...

*As Myrrhine vacillates and Lysia coaches,
the rest of the Women steal back onto the
balcony to observe and give scores, as if
they were watching an erotic Olympics.*



**Myrrhine**

My hands, like so...
Like this,
Sliding down and in:
Thin fire:
You throb for me.
Do you remember?

My lips, like so...
Like this...
and this...
And this...

Kinesias *suffering*
Good gods...

Myrrhine

Barely
Just barely, brush
your skin,
Like a lyre:
You sob for me...

Kinesias *anguished*
I sob for you... please!

Women

Good form!
He's warm

That's great!
Give it an 8?

Rhythm...
Stay with him...

Clean attack!

Lysia

Remember,
You have a mission to fulfill.

Less!
Yes.

Myrrhine *wavering*
Um: I'll be back.

*She runs to Lysia again, who stops her
before she speaks.*

Lysia

Myrrhine,
Athens gives you borders.
Land and labor,
Lover, neighbor—
Athens gives you everything.
And, Athens, for her part:
Athens gives you orders.
Comrade, sister—
Will you resist her?
Will you deny her?
Will you follow your desire,
Or your heart?
(*relentlessly*)
Who owns your heart?



**Myrrhine** *doggedly*

How we'd shiver...

Silver in lamplight glow,

How we'd blush, but,

not from shame:

You'd lay me down in

a thousand flowers,

And hold me,

And claim me,

And work me like

Hot metal over flame...

Kinesias

... Shiver...

... Blush, but,

I'd lay you down in

a thousand flowers,

And work you like

Hot metal over flame...

Women*Quel technique!*

Leave him weak.

Grand finale: slow...

Will he rally? No...

Go!

One for the seraglio!

Kinesias *inflamed*

Give me, Myrrhine...

Myrrhine

My sweet, my bitter, my blessed, my cursed...

Kinesias

Give me, Myrrhine...

Myrrhine

My tamer, my torture, my nectar, my thirst...

Kinesias

My virgin...

Myrrhine

Your virgin, my demon...

Kinesias

Your demon, my siren...

Myrrhine

Your siren, my stallion...

Kinesias

Your stallion, my Iris...

Myrrhine

My Eros...

Kinesias

My Hera...

Myrrhine

My Zeus...

(suddenly backing away)

Now: about that truce.

Kinesias *deflated*

What did you say?

Myrrhine

Is there news of a truce?

KinesiasYou *leave* me this way?**Myrrhine**

Is there news of a truce?

Kinesias

A truce. Oh, yes.

Myrrhine

"Oh, yes?" And so?

Kinesias

I guess; well, no.

Oh, Myrrhine—

Myrrhine *anguished*

No, Kine—





(her Act One aria)

“War! War!” they bray,
And, clearly, they decide!
Is war the only way?
Or, merely,
The only way they’ve tried?
Yes, still I long for your touch,
Just as strongly, just as much
As I’ve longed before,
Still, I say it:
Love, yes, of course:
But, Kine—
We need peace more.
Forgive me.
Goodbye.
Goodbye, Kine.

Women

Strategy is everything...
Perfect score!

12

*Kinesias staggers off as Myrrhine, weeping,
flees past Kleonike and Lysia into the
Acropolis. The Acropolis fades: light finds
the Athenian and Spartan camps,*

*where the Soldiers are besieging Nico and
Leonidas.*

Soldiers

Maybe we’re weak,
Weak as a crone.
Hard to deny it,
Try as we may.
But if we are weak,
Are we alone?
No, we don’t buy it—
No pluckin’ way!
And go ask the squad;
Goatherd or god,
Haven’t our bod-
les have minds of their own?
And, rather than groan,
If they could speak,
Mightn’t they, mightn’t they say...

(sweetly, plaintively)

Ares, Aphrodite: when will all this end?
Tell us, tell us:
Ares, Aphrodite: when will all this end?
How much more imploring the gods,

How much more ignoring the odds,
How much more grieving the war will never
cease?
O, Divine Ones,
Believe us,
Relieve us,
Wait no more...

Nico

ENOUGH!
(in a cold fury)
I will go to Lysia.

13

Scene 3

*On the balcony of the Acropolis. Lysia and
Kleonike.*

Kleonike *ticking them off*

Well, Dika’s far too shy—
Blink at her, she’ll melt—
Xanthe’s got that bad right eye,
And Charito’s too svelte—

Lysia

Lampito?

Kleonike *“great idea!”*

Lampito? Dare we presume?

Lysia *shrugging*

There’s very little to it. Only the costume.
Ah!

*She looks over the balcony, and gasps to
see Nico approaching the Acropolis.*

Nico

Lysia!

Lysia

Nico!

Nico

Where are you, Lysia?

Lysia *aside*

Angel...

**Kleonike**

Say the word, he's gone.

Lysia

Don't be absurd.

(insouciant)

I'll be fine.

Kleonike *dubious*

Fine?

Lysia *insistent*

Fine!

Kleonike *shrugging*

Fine.

Lysia *conciliatory*

Go on.

Kleonike withdraws inside the Acropolis.

Lysia descends the stairs.

————— 14 —————

Nico

Madam...

Lysia

General...

They pause: then, in a sudden simultaneous outburst—

Lysia & Nico *in unison*

How long will you continue
this preposterous campaign?

They pause.

Nico

Go on.

Lysia

No, you go on.

Lysia & Nico *again in unison*

We, none of us can win, you

Know, it's utterly insane—

(They pause again: then barrel on—)

You do not respect

what we're fighting for,

You won't be the least bit objective—

You're simply prolonging a miserable war,
You won't take a broader perspective—

They trail off.

Well, *this* isn't very productive...

Nico

Then here's a suggestion

You might find constructive.

————— 15 —————

(like Lysia in Act One)

If I quit—

Will you resign?

Lysia

What?

Nico

If I quit—

Will you resign?

Lysia

You toy with me...

Nico *Lysia's tantrum music*

What more, what else can matter but our love?

Right?

Let mountains crash, let heaven burn—

w/Lysia

Do you how I've waited for your return?

Lysia

You toy with me...

Nico

Disband your women.

Lysia

How?

Nico *shrugging*

Be blunt.

Once you tender your surrender,

I'll directly leave the front.

Lysia

If I quit—



**Nico**

If you quit: if you resign.
Leave them to their hobby!

Lysia

It is an ugly march.

w/Nico *mockingly*

"Enough! Enough! Peace now!"
Please...

Nico

Please...

Lysia mulls.

Lysia

Bring them in an hour.

w/Nico

We'll meet beneath the arch.
I'll/You'll leave the war to other men,
And then...and then...then
Eros will break us all over again,
Aching, we'll shudder,

We'll quiver, we'll cry:

Let Eros unmake us all, all over again,
Eros, the conqueror,
Sly and invincible,
Eros, Eros, whom none can deny...
Soon...

Forever...

Like this...

Lysia *simply*

I love you.
(earnestly, as he doesn't respond)
I won't disappoint you...

Nico

I have to go.

*He leaves. Does he seem guilty, ambivalent
about something? If so, he shakes it off.*

Nico *doggedly*

Victory is the only...

*He is gone. Kleonike, strangely composed
(has she overheard?) appears.*

Kleonike *measured*

It's my happy duty to convey to you:
Our sisters have a thing they need to say
to you.

Lysia

I have something to say to them, too—

Kleonike

Shhh.

16

*The Acropolis yawns open, revealing the
Women in ceremonial array. Myrrhine steps
forward, bearing a crown of olive.*

Myrrhine

I come to you in shame.

Lysia

Shame?

Myrrhine

Shame.
You're the only woman here
worthy of the name.

You were pledged to Athens:

I, to appetite.

I knew what I wanted:

You knew, you knew what was right.

*She ties a long strip of cloth—rather like
Nico's blindfold in Act One—to Lysia's
crown, and withdraws. Dika, Xanthe, and
Arete step forward.*

Dika, Xanthe & Arete

So, we come to you chagrined.

Lysia *faintly*

Sisters, no—

Dika, Xanthe & Arete *insistent*

Yes: chagrined.

You're the only woman here
truly disciplined.

Witness our excuses:

(variously)

Baby, flax, and wool!

We were pledged to passion:

You were, you were pledged to principle.

**All Women**

You brought to us a vision,
You taught us to endure,
Regardless, regardless of the cost:
A vision as inspired
As its origins were pure:
For you have never lost what we have lost...

*One by one, the Women, as if making gifts
of them, bring forth their own long strips
of cloth and affix them to Lysia's crown.
Kleonike's eyes never leave Lysia.*

**Lampito**

Lykon: eldest son.
Tall in your certainty,
You woke in us the woe that none can
speak.
Evøe.

Women

Evøe.

Sappho

Phormion: handsomest of sailors.

Struck on the deathwatch of Orion.
Held now in the arms of the waves.
Evøe.

Women

Evøe.

Charito

Simonides: brother, and twin.
Ah, the melody of your walking!
Ah, the torch-flare of your smile!
Evøe.

Women

Evøe.

Kleonike

Apelles: husband, father.
Now, under ev'ry stone,
A scorpion, to pierce and burn the heart.
Evøe.

Women

Evøe.

Half The Women

Teleas...

All Women

Evøe.

Half The Women

Nermos...

All Women

Evøe.

Half The Women

Alkman...

All Women

Evøe.

Half The Women

Bakis...

All Women

Evøe.

Thinker, healer, neighbor, leader,

Lover...

My lover...

All Women

Families, shattered in a flash,
Husbands, never to return:
Widows, now, who yesterday were wives:
(an echo of Lysia's tantrum music)
It feels like hearing mountains crash,
It feels like seeing heaven burn:
Gods, what else can matter but their lives?
All of our lives?
(warmly, generously)
So, we come to you in praise...

Lysia *almost hysterical*

I'm not worthy!

Women

... where to start?

Myrrhine *shyly*

Had you not been there, with Kine,
I could not have done my part.



**Women**

Long live your example—
Longer live your fame!
We glorify you, Lysia,
We glorify, we glorify your name...

Kleonike *an echo of the vow*
From this day on,
For all of Greece,
Let all men honor you,

w/Women

And call you, call you
Lysistrata,
We crown you Lysistrata—
She who brings peace.

*As the Women retain the ends of their
memorial cloths, Myrrhine crowns
Lysia with the wreath, making of her
a kind of Maypole of remembrance.*





Women *in reverent coda*
O Mistress Persuasion,
Bless this occasion,
Honor our savior,
Grant her your favor, we pray...

Kleonike *the coup de grace*
Lysia: what did you wish to say?

Lysistrata *faintly*
I... I...
Aiyiyi.

————— 17 —————
Abruptly, the Soldiers' war music sounds.
The Women start.

Kleo & Lampito
What on earth is that?

Lysistrata *absently*
The armies, on the march.
I asked them both to meet us in an hour at
the arch.

Kleonike *pointedly*
To surrender?

Lysistrata *measured*
There will be a surrender, yes.

Myrrhine
They're announcing their surrender?

Charito
Why could you not tell us?

All
Glorious, victorious day!

Dika
Lysia, I'd kizz you—
But Zappho would get jealous.

Lysistrata *wanly*
The too-possessive poetess: already a cliché...

Kleonike
Close the gates!
Prepare the goddess!
Victory awaits!

*The Women flee within and slam the
Acropolis shut. Nico & Leonidas lead both
Armies on, led by their desperately erect
phalli. Lysistrata, crowned, reappears.*

Lysistrata *unrolling a scroll*
"Being a bulletin from the women's
Coalition, as is our charge, reporting
both for the historical record..."
(before they interrupt her)
I know: I know. "Get to the point..."

————— 18 —————
*She ignores her scroll, and takes a deep
breath, as if about to hurl herself over a cliff.*

I've heard it said—by the finest minds in
Greece—
That: Victory is the only true peace.
Forgive me, then, if I seem
contradictory,
When I say: Peace, peace, peace, peace,
Peace is the only true victory.
This I offer for your contemplation.

She pauses. Murmurs from the crowd.
The Men look daggers at Nico.

Nico
Commander—

Lysistrata *recklessly*
If you came for surrender, you couldn't be
wronger.

*Furor. The Men roar: from within the
fortress, the Women cheer.*

Lysistrata
We've lasted this long, we can last much
longer.
Strong as you men are, your women are
stronger:
Still that's not to say,
We're not prepared to offer you
Solutions to this desperate situation.
Behold: the Goddess Peace!



19

Lysistrata signals to Kleonike. Another burst of music, and the Acropolis opens wide. Inside, we see the Women in gorgeous display. At their center is Lampito, on whose resplendently nude body is drawn in convincing cartographic detail a schematic of the island territories disputed in the war.

Lampito

I, Lampito, wife to Leonidas,
Acting for all ouah daughtawz and vives,
Appeah heah, guized as the Goddezz of
Peaze,

Women

A.K.A...

Lampito

Or, all—all ze states uv Gweezel!

All Men *rapt, like the Prologos*

It's a miracle!
What a sight!
Those ripe, these rolling hills
Could make a grown man groan:

It's at the gods' command
That I claim this land
For

Athenians *variously*
Athens'—

Spartans *variously*
Sparta's—

All Men

Own...

Lysistrata

Wrong. Kleo?

20

*Kleonike takes up a long wand that she will
use as a pointer, as the Men pant at the
preening Lampito.*

Kleonike *elegantly*

Think of this land as a beautiful goddess
Who's always ready to play.
Never too modest to open her bodice to
Any who come her way.

All Men

Come, come my way!

Kleonike

Sweet , but immoral: you'd constantly
quarrel—
As wife, she'd be almost unbearable.
But,
(using the pointer)
These ripe, these rolling hills
That make a grown man groan—
(to the Men)
Groan for me?

The Men groan in agony.

Could so deluxe a delta—
Not melt a
Heart of stone?
(commanding)
Groan...

The Men groan even more intensely.

Couldn't she be, shouldn't she be

Judiciously—deliciously—
Shareable?

Men

Enough! Enough!
(charging Lampito)
This piece now!

Lysistrata

Negotiate a settlement, the peaceful life
is ours.
Admit it, men: the logic's unassailable.
Of course, if you prefer it,
we'll withdraw to our towers—

w/Women

Once again—so sorry!—unavailable—

*The Men besiege their leaders. Leonidas
silences his men, approaches Nico.*

21

Leonidas

Too late in the day, sir:
Too late for mere resistance...



*Nico remains mute. The Men protest.
Leonidas presses on.*

Leonidas

Too late in the day, sir:
Too late for sheer persistence...

The Men protest again. Kinesias draws near.

Kinesias *imploring*

General... we plead...



Nico *pointedly*
"Lysistrata..."
We concede.

*General rejoicing. Nico remains immobile.
Lysistrata's eyes never leave him.*

Kleonike

Go, bathe, dress, shave,
get handsome for your wives,
Be back within the hour,
Get ready for the feasting of our lives!

112

*Joyously reunited, the Couples exit.
Leonidas approaches Lampito.*

Leonidas *aroused, in Spartan*

Muzzer was wight about you.

*He carries her off. Lysistrata and Nico are
alone.*

Nico *coolly*

I'm sorry our love had to end like this,

Lysistrata

Nico—

Nico

The number of wonderful things I'll miss,

Lysistrata *intensely*

Listen, Nico—

Nico

I'll always remember your smile, your kiss,
Your giggle, your glow—

Lysistrata

Please let me explain—

Nico

No.
(enraged, because unmanned)
Baaa!

22

*He is gone. A devastated Lysistrata
addresses the statues of the gods.*

Lysistrata *feigning aplomb*

Ares, Aphrodite,
For any other victory
I'd sing you panegyric,
I'd praise you for our plan!
But Ares, Aphrodite,
While, yes, this is a victory
I find it rather Pyrrhic:
To win the battle,
To win the war,
But lose the man...
(wistfully)
Nico, oh Nico...
(resigned)
No. No.

23

*Her tantrum music from Act One returns,
transfigured into an aria of self-sacrifice.*

Lysistrata

I am not my own.
I love you more than wind or sky,
But I am not my own.
Not any more.
For others name me now,
And others claim me now,
I answer other prayers—
I would be yours:
I should be yours:
I must be theirs.

For I am not my own.
I love you more than star or sea,
But we are not our own.
Not like before.
For now I know too much,
And now I owe too much.
I wanted only you,
But when they turn to me...
They turn to me.
What shall I do?
What shall I do?



113



Do I pretend nothing can matter but our love?
Let mountains crash, let heaven burn,
Only let our love stay

soaring on the air and wild?

But, when I hear mountains crash,
And when I see heaven burn—
Shall I chortle? Shall I chatter?
Am I a child?

No: a child can love.

And a child can cry.
But a child is her own.

And I:
I...

I love you more than earth or breath,
More than birth, more than death,
More than ever I knew:
But you are not my own.
Nothing, nothing to do.
How strange, at last, to find
It's I "they've" reassigned...
No other way.
See; I obey!
Goodbye.

(as Myrrhine said)
Forgive me.
Goodbye.
Goodbye, Nico.

24

The Acropolis bursts open, revealing Lucullan feasting. Lysistrata makes her way inside past the exultant Women (including Lampito, no longer dressed as Peace) hanging onto the arms of their Men, who hang on to their Women—and their wine cups. They toast promiscuously. The Men are now dressed in civilian costume (though some still carry short knives at their waists) and are visibly relieved of sexual distress.

All Greeks

To peace! To Greece! To love divine!
Not least, to feasting! And to wine—
Evoe! Evoe! Evoe! Evoe!

Kinesias and Leonidas burst through the crowd, drunk, arguing, amiably at first, with the equally tipsy Myrrhine and Lampito on their respective arms.

Kinesias

But we have the valley.

Leonidas

No, we have the valley—

Lampito laughing

Boring, Leo—
(waving)
Hi, Kleo!

Leonidas

—We have the valley—
We gave you the range.

Kinesias honestly confused

Was that the exchange?
No, I don't think—

Myrrhine floridly

Boy, boys!
Another drink!

They vanish, laughing, into the crowd.



**Greeks**

To peace! To sweet relief from crisis!
To Eros, and to Dionysus—
Evoe! Evoe! Evoe! Evoe! Evoe...

*Kinesias, Myrrhine, Lampito and Leonidas
reappear, a little more drunk, a little less
amiable...*

Kinesias *a little dogged*

We have the valley.
We gave you the butte.

Leonidas *still jolly*

We'd never accept such a substitute!

Kinesias

I'm sorry.

Leonidas *crisp*

I'm sorry.
That wasn't the trade.

Myrrhine & Lampito

Gentlemen, really—

Kinesias *equally crisp*

It was, I'm afraid.

Leonidas

There, you're right:
You *should* be afraid.

Kinesias

Meaning?

Lampito

He didn't mean anything by it.
Did you? *Did* you?

Myrrhine

Kine—

Kinesias

Myrrhine—

Both Men *to their wives*

Quiet.

The Crowd obscures them from view.

Greeks *rowdily*

To sun, to sea, to air, to soil,
To olive tree, to olive oil—

Evoe! Evoe! Evoe! Evoe!
Evoe! Evoe! Evoe! Evoe—Ah!

*They scream as Kinesias and Leonidas
burst into view, now clearly enraged, knives
drawn, shouting the Prologos insults, as
Myrrhine and Lampito look on in terror.
Lysistrata and Kleonike, hearing the
commotion, rush down to them.*

Kinesias

Sacrilege!

Leonidas

Sacrilege!

Kinesias

Trespass!

Leonidas

Trespass!

Kinesias

Poacher!

Leonidas

Poacher!

Kinesias

Jackass!

Leonidas

Jackass!

Kinesias

Imperialist!

Leonidas

Imperialist!

Kinesias

Terrorist!

Leonidas

Terrorist!



Nico *offstage*
Enough!

Both Men stop. Nico, now dressed as well in civilian clothes, strides onstage.

Nico *Leonidas's aria*
Won't it always be what it's always been
If we always do what we've always done?
Blindly we continue what others have begun:
Blood and bone and sinew: father, brother, son.
Even if we win, you win, still,
What will we have won?
What will we have won?

He looks at Lysistrata. She meets his eye.

Lysistrata
Nico: are you sincere?

Nico
I am.

Lysistrata
 Lover...

Nico
Leader...

Lysistrata *her ultimate praise*
 Ram...

Kinesias and Leonidas mull Nico's thoughts.

Kinesias & Leonidas
It seems to me I've heard that song before.

They mull. They look at each other.
Will they reconcile?

Kinesias & Leonidas
And yet,
Somehow,
It doesn't matter now—

*They lunge at each other with their knives,
and—horror—both fall down dead. Myrrhine
and Lampito scream, rush to their husbands'
sides. When they rise, slowly, each wife looks
at each other with eyes of ice, and begins
whispering...*

Myrrhine & Lampito
War...

Lysistrata & Kleonike
No!

Myrrhine & Lampito
War...

Lysistrata & Kleonike
Are you mad?

*The Women and Men, sobered, building
to fury, polarize, withdraw into hostile
camps: united as spouses but divided as
Greeks. Lysistrata, Nico and Kleonike plead
for reason, ad lib, but are helpless to stop
the momentum. The war chant builds
inexorably...*

Athenians & Spartans
War... war... war... war...

Kleonike
Ares, Aphrodite, when will all this end?

Voices
Enough!

*The light turns unearthly. The Crowd,
surprised into terrified silence, gazes
heavenward, whence descend Ares, god of
war, and Aphrodite, goddess of love.*
_____ 25 _____

Ares & Aphrodite
Attend, O citizens, low- or noble-born,
Matron or warrior, virgin or slave:
Player of harp or flute or trumpet,
Priestess, farmer, athlete, strumpet—

Arete
Here, oh lord...

Dika & Charito *mortified*
Mother...

Ares & Aphrodite
Attend, Athens:
Attend, Sparta:
Attend!





26

(simply, kindly, cruelly)

Never will it end.

Never will it end.

Time to time, it may suspend,

But never will it end.

Man will vie with woman,

Struggle for control,

Each of you will see your part, but—

Neither see it whole.

Hear this: learn this: take to heart:

Why pretend?

Never will it end.

Never will it end.

Man will vie with woman,

Friend with enemy:

Each of you will tell the truth, but—

Neither will agree.

Of course, there can be love.

But, to truly love:

There is nothing more demanding.

Do you long to love?

Are you strong enough to love

Without demanding

Perfect understanding?

For never will it end.

Never will it cease.

Time to time there may be peace—

There never will be peace.

Brother vie with brother,

Woman, vie with man,

So and on and ever,

So since time began.

Attend, Athens! Attend, Sparta!

Attend, Women, men!

Careful: don't rush to make

The same mistake again.

*They gesture to the dead Kinesias and Leonidas, who return, blinking, to life; then withdraw into the heavens. Lampito and Myrrhine rush to Kinesias and Leonidas, who look warily at each other.***Leonidas & Kinesias**

So, keep the valley, already.

27

*The Greeks, shaken, look to Lysistrata, who pauses for an eternity.***Lysistrata** *decisively*

To life. To peace.

*Lampito joins her.***Lysistrata & Lampito**

To love divine.

*Lampito and Leonidas join them.***All Four**

To Greece: to feasting; and to wine.

*All join them.***All Greeks**

To life: to brief relief from crisis;

To Eros, and to Dionysus.

To family, to home, to farms,
To loving Women's loving arms,
To deep and dreamless sleep,
Evoe!*The orchestra repeats Ares' and Aphrodite's theme of unending conflict. The Greeks choose to ignore it.***Greeks**

Evoe!

*The orchestra insists. The Greeks insist.
The light fades.***Greeks** *a prayer in the dark*

Evoe! Evoe! Evoe! Evoe! Evoe! Evoe!

Evoe! Evoe! Evoe! Evoe! Evoe! Evoe!

EVOE!

FINALE ULTIMO



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PRODUCTION TEAM

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Recording Engineer **Antonio Oliart & Téa Mottolese**

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ARTWORK

Liner notes **Mark Adamo**

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PENTATONE TEAM

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THE OPERA

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