

Start ↓

A shocked pause.

Now, there's a gaffe that could be grim:  
Correction, please: we'll vote for him.  
*They move off toward the left, followed by the Second Semichorus, whose members have cast themselves as men from the countryside.\**

SECOND SEMICHORUS

Let's shove these townies out of the way.  
This order's preposterous:  
No johnny-come-latelies who vote for pay  
can crowd ahead of us.

When we drew one obol,  
it was too much trouble  
for them to attend;  
they'd chin with a friend  
in the market, and let  
the rest of us sweat  
out the vote. But these days,  
since the recent raise,  
they clog the queue,  
and we can't get through.

In the golden days of Myrónidés,  
Athens had better men.  
Nobody dreamed of demanding fees  
for being a citizen.

For statesmanship  
the reward was a sip  
of wine, plus a few  
ripe olives, say two  
small onions, a dried-  
out crust . . . supplied  
at your own expense.  
But that's long since:

Now Congress is commerce, and politics  
pays just as well as hauling bricks.

*They follow the First Semichorus off left.  
A pause, and the door of House II opens. Pheidolos  
appears, in misery. He wears a skimpy woman's  
shift and gaudy house slippers a number of  
sizes too small, and walks cramped.*

**PHEIDOLOS\***  
What the hell is happening here? It's nearly  
sunup, and where's my wife? Disappeared without trace.  
She's gone, my clogs are gone, my cloak is gone  
and me . . . ooooh god, I gotta go. For the last  
three hundred years I've been lying in bed, expanding,  
trying to find some clothes so I could answer  
the hammering at my back door. But Peristalsis won't wait.  
I had to settle for this slip of my wife's, and scuff  
her Persian mules on over my toes.

*He looks around.*

Oh, hell.  
Damn built-up area. Where's a suitable spot  
to shit?

But it's still dark out. Who's to see?  
Any old spot'll suit me.

*He squats, center stage. The door to House I  
opens, and old Bleepyros appears, in the same  
agony and a different costume. He wears a saffron-  
colored shrug over his shoulders, and wobbles  
precariously along in Praxagora's wedgies.*

**BLEPYROS**  
Goddamnit, QWWW!

I ought to be taken out and flayed alive  
for getting married at my age. Don't know what  
my wife sneaked out to do, but it's nothing healthy.  
Still, on we go. My bowels can't wait on her.

*As yet unnoticed by Pheidolos, he stumbles to center  
stage and squats, facing the other way. They  
remain there, back to back, for a moment,  
then Pheidolos turns.*

**PHEIDOLOS**  
Who's this? My next-door neighbor Bleepyros?

**BLEPYROS**  
God, yes.

The very same.

**PHEIDOLOS**  
What's all that yellow on your shoulders?  
Don't tell me Kinesias missed the head again?\*

**BLEPYROS**  
How's that? Oh, no. This thing's my wife's. Her shrug.  
I had to put something on to come out. She usually  
wears it.

PHEIDOLOS  
Where's your cloak?

BLEPYROS  
I couldn't say.  
I looked all through the covers for it. No luck.

PHEIDOLOS  
You didn't ask your wife where it was?

BLEPYROS  
I didn't;  
no wife in there to ask. She must have bored  
her way out while I was asleep. It doesn't augur  
well for the future. She's up to something. Something  
radical.

PHEIDOLOS  
Damn it, that's just what happened to me.  
My better half took the cloak right off me and left.  
Not that I minded that, but she lifted my clogs  
as well. At least, I couldn't find them. I'm shoeless.

BLEPYROS  
Well, what do you know? So'm I. My go-to-meeting shoes  
are gone; the ones I always wear to Congress.  
But I had to go, so I wormed her wedgies on  
and wobbled out here. It was either that or let it  
fly in the nice clean sheets.

PHEIDOLOS  
But what could it be?  
Did one of her girlfriends ask her over to breakfast?

BLEPYROS  
I'm sure that's it. No hanky-panky from her.  
My wife's no whore.

As far as I know.  
PHEIDOLOS  
*Rising and gazing down at Bleepyros, who  
remains squatting.*

You must  
be squeezing out a hawser, instead of shit.  
It's time for me to get to Congress. Provided  
I locate that cloak. My only one.

BLEPYROS

I'm going  
to Congress, too, if I ever finish here.  
I ate an unripe plum, and it's jammed the passage.  
My food's cut off.

PHEIDLOS

And pressing your rear. A late  
dispatch from the front.\*

BLEPYROS

You said it; a steady build-up,  
restricting freedom of movement.

*Phaidolos exits into House II.*

So what do I do?

Is there no way out? The stoppage is only starting;  
what's next? Presuming I keep on eating, where  
do I fit the shit? Some green plumber's plugged  
my fixtures, and no relief in sight.

*To the audience.*

—Pardon.

Can some one fetch a physician?

(But what physician?

It's rather a narrow specialty.)

Is there a practicing  
homosexual here who's free at the moment? Maybe  
Amynon?

(But he won't come. It's not his end  
of the business.)

Antisthenes! That's who I want. A man  
who grunts like that can feel what constipation means;  
he's always making an ass of himself.

*Pause for a reply which does not come.*

No luck?

*Exit*

*Still squatting, he raises his arms toward heaven.*

—Goddess of childbirth, grant my labor some issue  
quickly, before I split. Oh, render me corkless  
before they stick me under the bed as a comic  
prop. My mother didn't raise her boy  
to be emptied by hand.

*A minor explosion, coinciding with the entrance,  
left, of Chremes, who starts to cross to House III,  
but stops when he sees Blepuros.*

CHREMES

Can you be taking a crap?