

BLEPYROS So what did he say?

CHREMES Well, first he called you a shyster . . .

BLEPYROS Not you?

CHREMES Please don't interrupt.

BLEPYROS Just me?

CHREMES As Zeus is my judge.

BLEPYROS Just me?

CHREMES As Zeus is my judge . . .

Pointing to the audience.
just you and that mob out there.

BLEPYROS So what else is new?

CHREMES But woman, he claimed, is a far superior being, glutted with judgment, productive of profit in plenty . . . and buttoned on the hip. The yearly female festivals preserve unbreached security, but when you and I serve in the Senate, it's raining classified matter all over town.

BLEPYROS By Hermes, God of Liars, that's true.

CHREMES Then women, he said, are always lending each other something—dresses, accessories, cash, or cups; completely private loans, with never a witness around—and every item's returned, no hint of fraud. While most men tend, he claimed, to flitch from their friends.

BLEPYROS By Poseidon, God of Welshers, in front of ever so many witnesses, yet.

CHREMES According to him, the women don't lodge complaints, or prosecute suits, or plot to destroy democracy; instead, they bring boundless boons, and bounties, and whatever's good. He went on for a while, but that was his gist.

BLEPYROS And how did we vote?

CHREMES To entrust the city to women. By general agreement, that was the only scheme that Athens had missed.

BLEPYROS And that's the vote?

CHREMES The law.

BLEPYROS The women are now the executive branch?

CHREMES Correct.

BLEPYROS And all our civic duties . . . ?

CHREMES . . . are women's work.

BLEPYROS So court is not my job any more—it's my wife's?

CHREMES Support is not your job any more—it's your wife's.

BLEPYROS No more groaning myself awake at sunup?

CHREMES No more. From this day forward, leave that to the girls. Roll over in bed and exchange your groans for blissful farts.

BLEPYROS This could turn nasty. We're not as young as we were, and with women in the driver's seat . . . Suppose they put the pressure on and coerce us . . .

Start

CHREMES
Into what?

BLEPYROS
Coerce us into coition.

CHREMES
Screw them.

BLEPYROS
That's just

what I mean.

CHREMES
But what if we can't?

BLEPYROS
I suppose they'll cut off

our food. We'll die.

CHREMES
Then screw away for dear life.

BLEPYROS
Coition upon coercion. Degrading prospect.

CHREMES
Be firm. A man should be able to stand up under any disaster for his country's good: An ancient tradition declares that every idiot blunder we pass into law will sooner or later redound to Athens' profit.

—O Queen Athene, O
—in fact—all other Members of the Pantheon, please do let this rock redound in the proper fashion.
—I'm leaving. Goodbye, Blepuros.

BLEPYROS
Chremes, goodbye.

Chremes exits into House III, Blepuros into House I. A pause, and the Chorus enters left. They are still dressed as men.

END

FIRST KORYPHALIA
For-WARD, MARCH!

Did anyone notice a Man behind us?

SECOND KORYPHALIA
Rear-WARD, SEARCH! Secure yourselves; these narrow places are the favorite haunts of the base, unprincipled, sharp-eyed male. So, guard your rear. If enemy eyes should pierce our disguises, all I can say is that ours would be a sorry tale.

FIRST SEMICHORUS
Singing as they step forward firmly.

March in a masculine manner,
stride with a virile thud.
If a wiggle or sashay
gives our secret away,
we'll be lost to honor,
and our name'll be mud.

Singly as, their resolution breaking, they mill around.

—So close your cloaks. —And don't leave gaps.
—We can't afford the slightest lapse
in our vigilance. —Look left. —Look right.
—Both ways at once! —And keep wrapped up tight.
—If our cover slips, our victory
is canceled. —kaputt, —a catastrophe!

FIRST KORYPHALIA
Speaking, as she tries to rearrange them.

All right, but let's get moving. We've nearly come back safe and dry to the start of our March on Congress—journey's end. Look, there's the house of our newly elected Commander-in-Chief, the girl who conceived the scheme that is now the Law of the Land.

SECOND SEMICHORUS
Singing as they step off firmly again.

Press on ahead—don't loiter,
don't lag along in your beard.
If we're recognized this way
in the hard light of day,
our images will shatter
and our pitch'll be queered.

Singly as they mill around in panic.

—I can't go on in this disguise.
I'm changing. —But where? The walls have eyes.
—Well, this wall doesn't. —Where? —Over here.
—Someone keep a lookout. —I'm shedding this gear.
—A man any more I refuse to be.
—Oh, where is the girl I used to be?

The Chorus members cluster by House III and shed their disguises; their leaders try to maintain some order. The Second Koryphala looks off left.

SECOND KORYPHALIA
All right, but don't drag it out so. Look, here comes our Commander back from Congress, and she and her friends are already dressed like women again. Don't greet her half-changed; it might offend her. And strip your jaws of those awful beards, and strip them fast.