

Side 1: Athenian Chorus Leaders (female and female side traditionally)

LYSISTRATA

(An affluent neighborhood in Athens. Lysistrata is pacing back and forth, muttering irritably to herself. The Athenian Chorus Leaders run on and address the audience.)

ATHENIAN CHORUS LEADER 1

O.K. So, we're like, the chorus, and we're going to have to figure out how to tell you this whole story in, what?

ATHENIAN CHORUS LEADER 2

Forty-five minutes.

ATHENIAN CHORUS LEADER 1

Forty-five minutes? I thought we had the place for an hour and a half.

ATHENIAN CHORUS LEADER 2

I don't know, there's this dance party of something they have to fit in. It's a whole, you know, event...

ATHENIAN CHORUS LEADER 1

Allrighty then. O.K., just the high points.

So. Let's see. It's 411. A very bad year to be an Athenian.

ATHENIAN CHORUS LEADER 2

Totally sucks.

ATHENIAN CHORUS LEADER 1

We've been at war with Sparta for how many years?

ATHENIAN CHORUS LEADER 2

It's this crazy-ass Peloponnesian War you may have heard about.

ATHENIAN CHORUS LEADER 1

We started it, basically because we could, you know, 'cause we were the big cheese after the Persian wars.

ATHENIAN CHORUS LEADER 2

Of course regular people never wanted to go to war in the first place.

ATHENIAN CHORUS LEADER 1

Why would they?

ATHENIAN CHORUS LEADER 2

But the politicians just told them to shut up—said no one was interested in hearing all that nonsense about you know, peace.

ATHENIAN CHORUS LEADER 1

Yeah, peace. What a silly idea.

ATHENIAN CHORUS LEADER 2

How naive...

ATHENIAN CHORUS LEADER 1

Right. Plus, the big boys kept saying it would all be over in a few months.

ATHENIAN CHORUS LEADER 2

Ha! Twenty years go by. Our treasury is bankrupt—

ATHENIAN CHORUS LEADER 1

--'cause all our ships keep getting sunk--

ATHENIAN CHORUS LEADER 2

--right, and now Athens is surrounded by the Spartan army.

ATHENIAN CHORUS LEADER 1

Assassination plots here, right wing conspiracies there--

ATHENIAN CHORUS LEADER 2

--it's a disaster--

ATHENIAN CHORUS LEADER 1

--Our little democracy's just been hanging on by her fingernails.

ATHENIAN CHORUS LEADER 2

Meanwhile, the war grinds on.

ATHENIAN CHORUS LEADER 1

Plus every two minutes one of our generals decides to charge off and invade someplace else.

ATHENIAN CHORUS LEADER 2

Sicily was the last one.

ATHENIAN CHORUS LEADER 1

What a great idea that was.

ATHENIAN CHORUS LEADER 2

How many thousands of Athenians died?

ATHENIAN CHORUS LEADER 1

They kicked our butts.

(Pause. They indulge in a moment of depression.)

ATHENIAN CHORUS LEADER 2

Well, look on the bright side.

ATHENIAN CHORUS LEADER 1

Huh?

ATHENIAN CHORUS LEADER 2

It's nothing less than a miracle when you think about it. You know how Greeks can never agree about anything? Well, there's total consensus on one thing now.

ATHENIAN CHORUS LEADER 1

(Seeing where she's going with this) Yup, you got a point.

ATHENIAN CHORUS LEADER 2

Everyone--and I mean EVERYONE--/hates our guts!

ATHENIAN CHORUS LEADER 1

They hate our guts! It's true! Spartans and Thracians are talking to each other for the first time in centuries. Of course they're basically talking about what assholes we are but still...

ATHENIAN CHORUS LEADER 2

It's an accomplishment. (Looks at her watch) OO! We've got to get this show on the road!

ATHENIAN CHORUS LEADER 1

Anyway, that's Lysistrata.

ATHENIAN CHORUS LEADER 2

That's who the play is named after.

ATHENIAN CHORUS LEADER 1

You'll see why later. She's upset. Not only because it's 411 and it's sucky to be an Athenian, but also because she called a conference for all the important women of Greece.

ATHENIAN CHORUS LEADER 2

--It was scheduled for dawn--

ATHENIAN CHORUS LEADER 1

--Today.

ATHENIAN CHORUS LEADER 2

--Right here. And nobody's shown up.

ATHENIAN CHORUS LEADER 1

Yet.

ATHENIAN CHORUS LEADER 2

Not even us.

(They realize they shouldn't be on stage and run off.)

Side 2: Lysistrata (female side traditionally)

LYSISTRATA

(Pacing back and forth, furious.)

I hate women! Everything men say about us is true! Women are late to everything! Sometimes they don't even show up! Totally unreliable! Impossible! WHERE IS EVERYONE? This is just so embarrassing. Here I call a meeting of all women from every city in Greece--PAN HELLENIC WOMEN'S CONFERENCE TO DISCUSS THE MOST IMPORTANT ISSUES OF THE DAY--and who shows up? Nobody. That's political consciousness for you. I hate women!

(Calonice, her neighbor, appears)

CALONICE

What are you bitching about?

LYSISTRATA

I call this huge historic meeting and nobody shows up.

CALONICE

Well, it's dawn, for Goodness' sake. Who throws a party at dawn?

LYSISTRATA

It's not a party, it's a, it's a...IT'S THE BIRTH OF A NEW ERA! CIVILIZATION WILL BE REDEFINED THIS MORNING! I invited every important woman in Greece!

CALONICE

Gee, and me in my bathrobe. How embarrassing.

So where's the food? These thousands of women are going to come from the four corners of the earth, and after all that trouble they get, what? Not even a handful of raisins? What kind of hostess are you?

LYSISTRATA

I'M NOT A HOSTESS! I'M A POLITICAL LEADER! THIS ISN'T ABOUT CHIPS AND DIP! THIS IS ABOUT THE FUTURE OF OUR COUNTRY!

Oo, oo, oo! Look! Women! I knew it! I knew it! They're coming! It's Myrrhine from Anagyra, Ismenia from Boetia...Dipsas from Corinth. Oh, and Lampito with some Spartan women! I'M A GENIUS!

Side 3: Magistrate and Lysistrata (male and female side traditionally)

LYSISTRATA (Entering cheerfully)

What seems to be the matter?

MAGISTRATE

So you're the ringleader, are you?

LYSISTRATA

I like to think so.

MAGISTRATE

The little lady we have to thank for all this mayhem.

LYSISTRATA

You're welcome. It was really a pleasure. And much easier than I could ever have imagined. If I'd known all it took was a modicum of intelligence and determination I'd have shut up this slaughterhouse long ago.

MAGISTRATE

Slaughterhouse?

LYSISTRATA

Slaughterhouse, treasury, what's the difference? It's all men can ever think to do with money--fund their wars. There's a truly criminal lack of imagination in evidence.

MAGISTRATE

I suppose you with your housewife's knowledge of money could do better?

LYSISTRATA

Housewives know a thing or two you exalted politicians seem to forget. For instance, we spend our money on our children too, but we hand them meals and books while you hand them swords and daggers. It's the same money. Just different principles.

MAGISTRATE

This is such a typical emotional gambit. But then that's all you females can resort to.

LYSISTRATA

Perhaps you're right. Perhaps we do feel it more.

After all we're the ones who live in fear day after day, or shuttered in our houses of mourning, listening to the lost echoes of our loved ones who've died in your wars.

MAGISTRATE

I can't expect you to understand what we are defending or the higher principles at stake. Your sphere is too narrow to appreciate what we do for you.

Side 4: Magistrate and Spartan Envoy (male and male side traditionally)

SPARTAN DELEGATE

Well, they're certainly killing us.

(Magistrate comes on in a similar condition.)

MAGISTRATE

Is this the Spartan delegation?

SPARTAN ENVOY

(To his men) Stand at attention!

MAGISTRATE

No need to salute, soldier.

SPARTAN ENVOY

Can't help it, sir.

MAGISTRATE

I see, so the situation on your end is just as tense as it has been here.

SPARTAN DELEGATE

Pretty thick. There's been a general uprising across Greece.

SPARTAN ENVOY

We've all been on high alert for weeks now.

MAGISTRATE

As have we. It's this damn Lysistrata making everything so tough for all of us. But I didn't realize your people were also up against it.

SPARTAN DELEGATE

It's been very hard for all of us. That bitch Lampito's convinced all the women to shut down relations. There has been great suffering on all fronts.

MAGISTRATE

The damage these women have done to male morale has been just appalling. We've been very hard-pressed.

SPARTAN ENVOY

Indeed. Luckily, we've been able to maintain a firm resolve.

MAGISTRATE

As have we. We stand resolute.

SPARTAN ENVOY

It requires an iron self discipline.

MAGISTRATE

Yes. And stiff determination.

SPARTAN DELEGATE

Absolutely.

(Small pause.)

MAGISTRATE

Have we done enough dick jokes?

SPARTAN ENVOY

I think we have, your Excellency.

MAGISTRATE

All right, then let's get Lysistrata out here so we can wrap things up.