

GODS WHO AINT

A PLAY

by Doros ALASTOS

3, Canston Road
N. 6.

GODS WHO AINT

with

Apologies to Aristophanes:

- Contemporary play; happens also to be ancient and vice-versa. It has no theme, no moral. Only an attitude which buzzes round the stubbornly obtrusive horns of a dilemma which remains unresolved - .

"What is man? What is he not?" asks Pindar. "The dream of a shadow is man." Civilisation?

"Civilisation", answers Yeats "is hooped together, brought under rule, under the semblance of peace by manifold illusions."

Man is, of course, something more than a shadow and a lot more than the dream of a shadow; civilisation is mostly unruly ~~because of its manifold illusions~~ and hardly ever at peace. But for the purpose of this play men are shadows hooped together and try hard to materialise... ~~and~~ ^{to} unhoop themselves.

CHARACTERS IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE.

MAN

KARPOUIS

TRYGEOS

Voice

WOMAN

DANCERS (two pairs).

THREE SPARTANS

BEEBLE

HERMES

HARMODIOS

DYANE

DEMONSTRATORS (4).

POLEMOS

STAMOLCHEV Evgeny

STOKENVILLE Algermon

FREHONEAU Jean (Marshal)

FORELORN, Siv Arthur.

[Some of the above characters are the same in ^{different} ~~the~~ guises, and others are interchangeable.]

ACT I.

SCENE I.

[It is dark. We can hardly make out the stage
stage. Darkness. ~~To begin with we don't see this stage~~
because of the darkness. ~~What it symbolises may be anything:~~
It may be a mountain-top or the big
intestine of submarine. Anything. Shaft of weak light reveals
a figure. We make it out gradually. He is a man. He talks.
We haven't got to listen to him or even see him. In fact
we can eliminate him for he is ~~both~~ extraneous ^{at that same time} and unnecessary.
What he says and does - if he does anything at
all - ~~has~~ ^{has} no bearing on what follows. But he is an
obstinate ^{apparition} ~~apparition~~ out of nowhere to nowhere; he insists on making
an appearance. We shall meet him again.]

MAN. They call me llingos - ~~I'm~~ a pedestrian troubadour, ^{I'm} a bit
mad. Mad like the rest ^{of you} ~~only~~ ^{you} don't know it. I like to
confide in you. I don't see you but I like you. You're not
mad; how can you be, I don't see you ^{and you are here} ~~I want to tell~~
you ^{something} ~~what this is about~~. But I can't. I don't know ^{what this} ~~between~~
^{is about} ~~you and me~~ ^{Between} I don't think that the ^{author} ~~knows~~ either. A lot of
mumbo-jumbo. ^{where is he?} ~~He~~ tells us... to ~~my~~ face: 'You are nothing.
- he refers to us as nothing. 'You are just like ~~the~~ steam
~~whistles~~ from hot soup on ^{a cold} ~~the~~ morning. Nothing more. You ~~take~~ ^{become}

a wispy form. All of you ~~solid like the others~~. ~~Take~~ form. But you are not real. He shrieks when he says that. 'You are unreal; automata conceived to kick and yell. I don't want you that way' - he shouts at us, tears us up, ~~and~~ screws us into a ball and ^{throws us} in ~~to~~ the fire. 'You are caged, hamstrung, stunted, twisted - he becomes eloquent when he ^{is} telling us off - by the rigid laws of drama'. But we ~~are~~ ^{go} ~~not~~. Back we come, again. He makes us suffer ~~just~~ to engage your attention. But you cannot ^{suffer} (unless you realise our ~~own~~ reality. And remember: ~~all of us are~~ ^{we are all} awkward and some full of curiosity.

He makes us work for you. He ~~says that~~ ^{But} we are not going to do all the work. You have to do something. Everybody has. We have to share ... certainly ^{of course} ~~unequally~~ in the work, in sharing we may grow to like one another, perhaps understand.

Well! ^{What is this about?} ~~When~~ and ~~where~~ ^{does it} takes place. You like to know. ~~When~~ and ~~where~~ then? It depends. Really it's immaterial. Things don't happen; ^{situations don't arise. They} ~~are~~ made. All is art: fashioned expertly, ^{usually} ~~somehow~~ dangerously. I better tell you. We ~~haven't~~ ^{aren't} in a particular place ~~but~~ ⁱⁿ ~~some~~ ^{place}. We can ~~locate~~ ^{place} it anywhere within reason. when? That's bewildering. The parentheses are off, time oscillates backwards and forwards and jumps about a great deal. What about us? We don't come from anywhere; just ~~happened~~ ^{happen to be} to be where we ~~are~~ ^{found}. As long

as we are not rooted in immobility ^{- his words -} ~~we~~ ^{we are alive}. We are, certainly, borrowed. Flat and vacant - what? ^(Pretends to listen) ~~As you were~~. Correction. He tells me, 'we are vacant ... but preoccupied, like some icons one sees in eastern churches; dull, two-dimensional, ~~but~~ somehow ^{aware and wary} full of awareness and wariness. ~~They~~ ^{We} don't come across if you don't come across. So, ~~he whispers to me, we come across if~~ ~~you~~ ^{we} respond to stimuli. Our feelings, ^{he tells me,} are what we generate in others.

I don't know if ~~there is~~ ^{this makes} any sense. ~~in all this~~. How can it? I'm mad. What you will see ^{happening} and what you will hear ^{just} happen. That's all. ~~see lying about happened to happen there or be there~~. There is no other explanation.

All you need know to begin with is that this night is a warm night. And what does one want on a warm night? Just listen. (As he disappears).

KARPOTIS. I want a woman.

MAN. Now you know! (He disappears).

KARPOTIS. (Half-rises. Stares in front of him, vacantly. We can just see him. After a while). I want a woman. (Louder. Bangs fist on the ground). A woman! (Throws himself back and cels up. A little later.) When did you have a woman? (No answer. Louder). When did you have a woman last? (No answer. Sits up sharply). Where are you? (Shouts). Where are you? (Almost hysterical).

Trygeos ... Try geeee oos! (A man approaches).

TRYGEOS. Shush ... shush. Quiet.

KARPOTIS. Shush. Why?

TRYGEOS. Don't shout.

KARPOTIS. Don't shout! Why not?

TRYGEOS. Quiet. You'll wake him up. Just put him to sleep.

KARPOTIS. Don't leave me. Don't ever leave me when I'm asleep. Do you hear?
I don't mind ^{it} when I'm awake but I cannot stand it when I'm asleep.
... I dream so much. (By now we are used to the light. We see them ^{more clearly} better.)

TRYGEOS. I heard you.

KARPOTIS. (Looks at him ~~with~~ surprise). Dreaming?

TRYGEOS. You shouted, Try geeee oos!

KARPOTIS. What else, tell me. What else.

TRYGEOS. He's healthy. Growing up fast.

KARPOTIS. What the ~~earth~~ ^{hell} are you talking about. I asked you... (Pauses.

Thinks). What have you got fucked away down there? Eh? A young Spartan! By god that's it. A young Spartan! They are good. Trained for everything. No camp-followers to clutter things up. (Urgently).

Where is he?

TRYGEOS. (Walks about deep in thought). He'll do. He has to.

KARPOTIS. Of course he'll do. Anything will do. Where is he? (As Trygeos doesn't answer, goes up to him and shakes him.) Where is he?

TRYGEOS. Where is what?

KARPOTIS. The healthy ... who'll do.

TRYGEOS. You mean my beetle!

KARPOTIS. What?

TRYGEOS. My beetle.

KARPOTIS. ~~Don't be~~ ^{Stop being a} bloody ~~stupid~~ ^{fool}. Beetle! (Grimaces and spits). What are you talking about, do you know? You must be mad. (Goes and lies down in his original position.)

TRYGEOS. This is the only way. The only way. No other is left to us.

KARPOTIS. Trygees!

TRYGEOS. What?

KARPOTIS. Do you know ...

TRYGEOS. Yes! I think I do.

KARPOTIS. (With expression of exasperation). What's the use. (Stops. Then sits up and with force, just to scare him). We have only three hours - three hours. Do you know that? Then we'll all burn. Just like that. Burn. I dreamt it. Couldn't quite make it out. Someone was doing someone ⁱⁿ ~~or~~ daring someone to do something or not ~~to~~ do something - very confusing, everybody shouting like in a brothel - and someone saying thunderbolts will rain down, thousands of them will rain down and we'll all go up - in smoke.

TRYGEOS. I know.

KARPOTIS. It was very vivid. I ~~was~~ scared stiff. Got up and you were not here. I yelled.

TRYGEOS. Got up and wanted a woman.

KARPOTIS. A woman! Yes! ^{of course.} What wouldn't I give for a woman. I was

scared and... I wear up. Anything wrong in that? Usually go together.

TRYGEOS. Only when you are hanged!

KARPOTIS. Ouf. It's ~~too~~ bloody hot. That's ~~why~~ ^{the reason} I suppose. When did you have a woman last.

TRYGEOS. Spring two years ~~ago~~ last night of thy third call-up. Doesn't worry me much. Other things on my mind. That's all you ~~think~~ ^{think} of on your ~~bloody~~ ^{if} mind. You want ^{a woman} ~~one~~ badly... whistle for her! You are awake now. You don't mind if I clear off for a few minutes. I like to feed my pet. I have to groom it to before I take ^{off} (Moves).

KARPOTIS. Where are you going. My god. Something's wrong with you. Maybe it's the heat; or we have been here too long - no women, nothing, only bloody ^{us and the bloody rest of us.} ~~body odors~~. It gets you down. You must see one of those fellows with bulging eye, - what do they call them, psycho, psycho-crawlers or something. He will put you straight alright. Straight ^{maybe he will} alright to the luny-bin. ~~or~~ send you home to the old woman. You would like that, wouldn't you? (Suddenly he remembers something). What did you mean just now, I mean just before, I had the dream, ... here in my head. I'm the one who knows what he ^{I saw} ~~has~~ seen, how did you know? You said you knew, didn't you?

TRYGEOS. It ~~came~~ ^{through} on the wireless.

KARPOTIS. (Astounded) Wai... (The word is unfinished.)

TRYGEOS. Over there. The old Boy left it. (Karpotis tries to say something but cannot articulate). He comes most nights. Plays

the flute - you have heard him - like this (Trygeas gives a couple of blows into the flute) then sits on the rock over there and yodels his head off. ~~Sometimes~~ ^{He} recites.

KARPOTIS. What for example?

TRYGEOS. You know, the same **stuff** always. I remember bits and pieces. (imitates him).

"Unchanged, eternal nature! vast expanse of nothing hurrying to no end.

"I have listened - oh! for how long - to the bridal whispers of man marrying catastrophe. I have watched the stampede of man looking for the hiding place of life which plays everybody false.

"I was young once. I could see. The stony thing struggled on unyielding, unrelenting. Brutish ape stood up, mastered the

^{brutes.}
Here he always stops. Stands up, ~~and~~ urinates and as he shakes himself loose continues.

"His unadjustable feet are foiling beneath the weight of his distended greed. He is sinking down into primeval beastliness.

"An awful din rises from this sinking. Rival incantations mingle in raging cacophonies of righteousness. They stifle the air... I cannot breathe."

~~At about~~ ^{you} You have heard him. You ~~know what he~~ ^{says} ~~says~~ ^{house}.

KARPOTIS. I do! I do! you, of course, saw him. Have you spoken to him - actually spoken to him?

TRYGEOS. You spend most of the time asleep. That's your trouble. You don't know what's going on.

KARPOTIS. ^{Upk!} ~~Upk!~~ It's very close. I think I'll choke... or go berserk.

TRYGEOS. Listen! It's on now. ~~Yes~~ All about it ^{those} two men, thousands of ^{miles} ~~leagues~~ apart... what? ^(listens attentively) ~~Throw fire at each other.~~ ^{Can't make it out. They are} ~~(listens).~~
Set on a course of collision or something.

KARPOTIS. (Hasn't heard a thing). Why do they want to do that for.

TRYGEOS. Listen! Don't talk. (Karpotis listens ^{shrugs shoulders} suddenly, amplified voice fills the night).

VOICE: We salute our men everywhere - our heroic sailors, on the sea, our valiant soldiers defending the far-flung frontiers of Empire. This is the tenth anniversary of the war against Sparta. Athens ^{has} celebrated ^{it} with due solemnity this great occasion. The city's virgin maidens made the traditional pilgrimage to the Acropolis to thank the Goddess - Athene our warrior goddess. A glorious and inspiring spectacle. All those white-gowned, flower-ornamented girls, marching with martial spirit and chanting hymns - unfortunately no youths to applaud them, only old men were present to pray and ^{to} admire.

KARPOTIS. And lick their chops!

VOICE. Silence. Ten years of glorious victories. We are determined to go on hitting the enemy, hitting him harder and harder with each passing year until he is laid low once and for all.

TRYGEOS. That's it. We go on, year after year, killing men, ~~and~~ burning the fields and the vineyards. For what? Fools! This fool.

cannot see, none can see that the worse thing after defeat in war is victory in war. ^(To himself?) He cannot see but I can, and others will, the last ship ^{sailing in} ~~coming in~~, bringing the last news of the last disaster. Why my god! Why?

VOICE. I am speaking to you.

KARPOTIS. Me?

VOICE. Not you. And stop scratching yourself. Stand to attention when you address me.

KARPOTIS. (Instinctively does so). Yes sir!

VOICE. That's better. Have your wits about you. The Lacs are not far. You!

TRYGEOS. Me?

VOICE. Yes you, Trygeos.

TRYGEOS. What ^{is} about it!

VOICE. (Soothingly). I know what you are up to. Don't do it. You are wasting your time. That's all (off).

KARPOTIS. Arrogant bastard. Who is he?

8 → TRYGEOS. ~~I don't~~ know. ~~How can I~~ ^{I suppose.} Voice, just a voice telling us what to do. That's all. Voices, voices; real, ~~also~~ ^{and} disembodied voices ordering us about, scolding us, exhorting us, informing on us. Even when they soothe is only to lull. Incessant. Barrage upon barrage of words, all day long and all through the night — so much you cannot hear yourself think. (After a pause). I'll not give up. (Stumps). No!

KARPOTIS. I give up! (~~Throws~~ and lies down). Might as well be in bedlam. (Trygees walks about, ~~with~~ ^{with} something on his mind. ~~stretches~~ ^{They lie} out besides KARPOTIS, yawns, ~~then~~ ^{and starts to} whistles a tune. Suddenly a woman rushes on stage, laughs, screams and ~~hums~~ ^{hurrah} (maniacally). Both sit up; look as if struck by lightning). What on ... (The woman, pirouettes, dances and simmers provocatively in front of KARPOTIS).

WOMAN. I'm Bacchantes, ^{look at me. (pirouettes);} ~~Yotary~~ ^{Yotary} of Bacchus. Yotary of I want love-love! Vive l' amour! (Dances a brisk, classical ~~can-can~~ can-can). Come. What are you waiting for?

KARPOTIS. Who are you?

TRYGEES. What a damn fool question.

WOMAN. There are hundreds of us around. Chased by men. All chased by men. Chase me!

KARPOTIS. Not on your life.

TRYGEES. Of all the ^{damned} perversions ... Few minutes ago you were shouting for a woman. Here she is ... and you play hard to get. What glorious thighs! I always say that if the thighs of a woman are good the rest of her cannot be bad. She can face anything. Up and after her Karpotis unless you want me to take a hand.

WOMAN. Chase me

KARPOTIS. (To Trygees). Last time ~~or~~ chased a woman by the time I caught up with her I was good for nothing. ~~for about an hour~~ ^{Never again. (looks} as if sizing her up.) I bet she can

~~she~~ ran like a bloody che-goat. ~~I bet she can run too.~~

TRYGEOS } Well!
WOMAN }

KARPOTIS. I like to ~~take~~ ^{my sweet} you for a hike to the moon - all the way ^{there} ~~and~~ ^{no exertion} ~~please~~. All the strengths I have will be for you, ~~for~~ ^{only} you (he is, obviously, becoming erotic), until I have ^{nothing} ~~no~~ more strength ^{to give} left. (Gets up and nuzzles for the girl. She, cat-like, sidesteps and runs round).

WOMAN. Catch me.

KARPOTIS. Please sweetheart. ~~lets not~~ ^{Don't} turn this into a relay-race. A bit of play-acting is alright, but not for a man ... in my state. ~~Don't~~ ^{come} run. (Lunges at her. She escapes).

TRYGEOS. Hold it! I thought of something. (Picks up the flute and plays a Corymbantic tune not unlike the Fuzist).

WOMAN } That's better. }
KARPOTIS } } (Both dance.

KARPOTIS. Better than running - don't you agree. (Woman nods.

More couples materialise out of nowhere, dance, twist about and the fun grows. Karpotis and his partner ^{approach Trygeos} ~~work themselves~~

The keys. (Trygeos ^{hands him the keys} ~~hands him the keys~~ ^{and dancing they} ~~to the corner~~ and ~~creak~~ away ~~hand-in-hand~~ out of sight. Trygeos keeps playing. The couples dance vigorously. A chill cry is heard from behind the scenes. Man's and woman together.) A a a a a! (Karpotis and the girl run back, looking ^{as if} scared out of their wits. Everybody stops in his tracks. Karpotis is almost dumb) A monster, ... monster!

WOMAN. (Trembling) Horrible... Awful. (Takes control of herself) - Big black crab; ^{looked like eye and} big as a horse. Its eyes are like hot iron.

KARPOTIS. Here. Underneath here. In the cave, over there.

TRYGEOS. You don't make any sense Karpotis - here, there...

WOMAN. And the stench! God, how it stinks.

KARPOTIS. In the cave ^{near here} just ~~behind~~ ^{behind} us. (Becomes more confident). ^{O! yes. That's it} ~~What~~ ^{What} about it Trygeos! What is it? (more insistent). What is it? I'm fed up with your tricks - ^{your} goddelling bloody old buffoons, ^{your} damned ventriloquist ^{dolls}, your sexy holitas ^{here} and now your stinking monster. What are you driving at? Make me kill myself or go off my head. What are you up to? Tell me (grows more and more furious) or by all the catamites of the gods I will slit your damned yellow guts open. Well? (There is no reply). You are a magician. You want to drive me mad. I won't let you (grabs his broad-bladed sword and rushes Trygeos. Trygeos step back.) So

TRYGEOS (seriously). Stop Karpotis. Calm down. We are not acting in melodrama. This is serious business and if you promise me to keep it to yourselves I'll let you into my secret. You must promise that you will do nothing to prevent me from doing what I intend to do.

KARPOTIS. (Still holding his sword). I am waiting. (Three men appear out of the darkness and point spears at them).

THREE MEN. Stop where you are. (One of the three men to KARPO-

TIS). Drop your sword. (It's done).

TRYGEOS. The true, theatrical Deus ex machina — though they won't know what I mean. (To the three men whom he recognises as the enemy)

Three Spartans! You could n't have timed it better even if you were ^{talking} ~~flapping~~ part in a comedy. Do you know what comedy is?

KARPOTIS. They are ignorant barbarians.

● FIRST SPARTAN. Shut up Athenian.

TRYGEOS. Of course they are. Art, politics, drama, are anathema to them. They only know how to fight and fornicate. And it's said they are good at both.

SECOND SPARTAN. You bet we are.

TRYGEOS. I see, you ^{can} follow the drift of my thoughts. But tell me: why the night attack? Is n't it unorthodox? ~~The~~ ^{you} overtrained, the overdrilled Spartans! Yet always wanted to see what you killed. Has your general Brasidas learn a new drill?

FIRST SPARTAN. Brasidas is dead.

TRYGEOS. Hurrah! I suppose he has an appointment to sup with our Cleon in hell. He died too. Just recently.

SPARTAN. I know. We danced when ^{we heard the} ~~the~~ news came in.

TRYGEOS. I have a wonderful idea. You danced at Cleon's death. Now we dance ^{at} ~~at~~ Brasidas's ~~death~~. Then we celebrate together the death of both and say good riddance. Shall we? (The Spartans are not impressed).

SPARTAN. Shut up grandpa.

KARPOTIS. The voice! It warned us about ~~them~~ 'The Lacs are not far' it said.

TRYGEOS (with stentorian voice). Peeet! (~~Pe~~ ie. Peet. A spear is pressed to his side.) Alright Spartan. What do you want with us. We have food, we have wine, we have women! What more do you want?

SPARTAN. We'll take you with us.

TRYGEOS. And then?

SPARTAN. We'll kill you and put them in the army brothels.

WOMAN. No! No!

SPARTAN. Yes, yes!

WOMAN. O.K. Spartan. Chase me. (She pirouettes and sings).

I flee from Skylark
I love the flowers ^{and the bees,}
and the trees.

But best of all I love him
Goad-god Pan- I love him
For he does my every whim,
my every whim.

From him I fly,

To him I call

Was she pushed or did she fall.

Was she pushed or did she fall.

SPARTAN. Alright! Pack it up. You'll have plenty of time to show us what you can do. (To his colleagues). Tie them up. Her first.

(The women run, the Spartans chase them. All stop. The apparition of a monster looms in the depths of the stage; its eyes ablaze. It lets off a low, shrill grunt.)

WOMAN. Ooo! The monster!

TRIGEES. Throw away your spears, Spartans. (They heritate.) Do as I tell you. At once. You cannot quit it. It has a ^{tougher than yours} tough skin. (The monster approaches slowly - we can make out a giant beetle. It grunts.) Don't do anything silly! (Spartans drop their spears. Trigees picks them up, also Karpotis's sword and throws them down the precipice.) That's that. Best place for them. (To the beetle).

Come my pet! (He goes to it and caresses it). Good pet! And now ^{that} thanks to the beetle, ~~that~~ we are all a friendly, little community. I have a few words to say to you.

We fight. We know that. For what? To die. That will come soon enough. No need to hurry it in there! To get rich? Half our loot goes to the generals the other half to the gods. We ruin each other's fields, destroy each other's possessions. We loose real riches there. To get slaves? We may become slaves ourselves. Mistresses? Well we cannot manage what we have to need more. Besides, we cannot feed them. We are not all ^{of us,} big landowners or millionaires. And do we get them? Maybe. But what really happens? We leave our own women to stringy old ~~to goats~~ fumbler's to salivate with. That's all ^{we do} ~~that~~ in and we have been doing it for

years. We fight for nothing. There's not even fun in it. Now I ask you. whose fault is it? The reply is always the same. The Athenians blame the Spartans, the Spartans blame the Athenians and so on. whose fault is it then?

SPARTAN. It is the fault of the Athenians.

TRYGEOS. No one can accuse Sparta of producing men of robust intellect! They ~~can~~ swallow slogans. Unfortunately they are not the only ones. As I was saying - whose fault is it? I don't know. I'm going to find out.

KARPOTIS. How?

TRYGEOS. I'll pay the gods a visit!

KARPOTIS. I knew it! You have been acting "queer" all the evening - and what an evening! You've gone round the Tent. You must have. Listen Trygeos - come to your senses. We are not back in Troy. The gods don't come down to mix in our affairs. They've grown wise to us. They stay put.

TRYGEOS. You don't understand Karpotis - none of you can. I am different. I till the land, I commune with it and I know that we should not torture ~~the~~ ^{it} land we should ^{look at it,} ~~cuddle it~~, lie on it, enjoy it. I trained this noble beetle to take me to Zeus - the only living thing that dared present itself to the immortals. If you don't believe me look up Aesop. (To the beetle). Now, my pet, ~~it's~~ time we

were off. (He jumps on its back). Off to heaven! (Beetle rises, hovercraft-like with hissing noise. Trygaeos in loud voice).

There, I'll search for the cause of our lunacy! I'll ask the gods ~~for homocid and understanding~~ to let me fill my land in ^{peace} ~~...~~ ^{I will ask} for peace on earth, peace ... (disappears).

KARPOTIS. He has done it- the fool! He'll break his neck!

Tarhallastarkha. Mad. Somebody give me a drink.

CEARTHIM.

Βιβλιοθήκη Πανεπιστημίου Κύπρου

SCENE II.

[Heavens. Everywhere light except in corners or when light fades or goes out. Nothing particularly striking about the place: more of a celestial Motel than a permanent habitat of the gods. Couldn't the gods afford a better place? They could - and in the course of the play this becomes obvious. Because they were migrant gods and in their special way, conscious of the accelerating changes to their image, did not feel like building castles and skyscrapers for themselves. That was left to others, less conscious of impermanence. But this is neither here nor there. Heaven is not ~~an~~ attractive ^{and the} place we find ourselves in is no more attractive than the average stage anywhere. When the curtain rises we see a man - mature and ageless - dressed impeccably in evening clothes. He is Hermes, messenger of the gods, god of trade and of all rascalities. He is a wily, tough, slippery and imaginative god. The other is his youth companion and batman, Harmodios.]

HERMES. [Looking straight ahead]. I am bored!

HARMODIOS. Glorious Hermes! Do I bore you?

HERMES. No, not you my boy. Life bores me. This continuous nothing. Were I not immortal I would jump out of that

window and kill myself.

HARMODIOS. Shall I order some celestial music?

HERMES. What? We have heard all the records from Marzys to Goddedammerung to the pops and back again... a thousand times. The insufferable monotony of this variety. The stupid mortals down there don't know how lucky they are. They can become no-beings at the blinking of an eye, if they want to.

Have we anything new?

HARMODIOS. I'll have a look. Shall I bring your slippers?

HERMES. No.

HARMODIOS. (Goes near Hermes). I'll loosen your collar; you can relax better. (Hermes shakes his head). This suit suits you.

HERMES. Thank you dear boy! (Knocks at the door and shout "Anybody in?")

HARMODIOS. Shall I see who it is? (More knocks).

HERMES. Fix me a drink - make it strong. I will see who it is. (Knocks. "Anybody in" sounds peremptory). One moment. (He opens door and sees the beetle. ~~What~~ What in hell's name is this?)

TRYAEDS. (Seen coming forward from behind the beetle.) The Egyptians call it scarab - with them it's holy. I call it "pet"; it's really a beetle.

HERMES. ~~And~~ Who the hell are you? Take this bloody stinking beast away from here. At once - take it away.

TRYGEOS. (To the Beetle). Go down to the cage, my pet. I'll call you when I need you. Go! (He pushes the beetle away and comes in. Carries a basket full of provisions. Closes door behind him).

HERMES. Well?

TRYGEOS. Surprised?

HERMES. Stop being facetious. If you cannot show respect for a god, ... you will be damned well made to. Thank whichever god you believe ~~you believe~~ it that I am too bored to get angry.

TRYGEOS. (Contrite). Sorry. I didn't recognise you. Forgive me. You are, of course, the great God Hermes. (Kneels before him).

HERMES. (Pulls him up). Now ... stop being a fool! Stand up.

TRYGEOS. (With deference). You are the god ~~the~~ ^{me} Athenians, revere above all other gods.

HERMES.
TRYGEOS.

Really,
Truly!

HERMES. I have gathered as much. I have seen some statues of me, certainly. Horrible ones! You use me, usually, as a gator-post. There I stand, a ferocious Priapus - sometimes the house-maids hang their baskets on my extended membrum virile and chat to their friends. You think a lot of me alright! As for reverence... we'll let it pass. And now what?

TRYGEOS. I came to bring you these. (Hands him bottles of various provisions).

HERMES. Very kind of you. (Looks at one bottle. Whistles). 90% proof. Excellent. A change from nectar. (A loud). Forget the drink. Bring glasses only. (To Trygeos). What are these for?

TRAIKOS. Offerings. They ~~are~~ offerings to god Hermes. We never visit your temple without bringing you something. We know you rely on us for your existence - you neither sow nor reap, your priests tell us so. The situation is like this: (he is now sure of himself). We have been playing a kind of game down there for years - a fool's game if you ask me - have neglected our work in ~~the~~ ~~fields~~ and have neglected you. We realise how badly off you must be. (Harmodios enters with glasses). A ~~small~~ little present, to begin with.

HERMES. Presumably more is to follow! (Trygaeus studies Harmodios).

TRAIKOS. Spartan! How did you get here before me? what are you doing here?

HARMODIOS. Who are you? I don't know you (To Hermes) Uncouth; he smells so.

TRAIKOS. Aren't you the Spartan who stuck a spear in my side ~~side~~ ~~side~~ few minutes ^{back?} ago?

HARMODIOS. Tell him Hermes, that I never stick spears into ^{anybody.} people. (Shudders). How horrible!

HERMES. Don't upset yourself Harmodios - pour me some of this (hands him the bottle).

TRAIKOS. Harmodios! ^{oh!} (Covers mouth with hand). He is the spit image of the Spartan. (Looks around. Sizes the situation). Fine. (Drink is poured).

HERMES. (Takes a long gulp.) Very good! Join me in one?

TRYGEOS. Thank you, but no strong stuff for me. Liver trouble you know. I'll have a drop of wine - if I may? (Hermes nods). This (Picks bottle and Harmodios pour him some). It's expensive wine. I ~~used~~ ^{drank} a lot ^{of it} with my wife on our wedding night. She loved it.

HERMES. The wine?

TRYGEOS. And ... the wine. I loved it too. (Harmodios makes a grimace). You must try it sometimes Harmodios! (To Hermes) To your health.

HERMES. (Empties his glass - Harmodios fills it). Cheers. Who are you? You haven't told me.

TRYGEOS. My name is Trygeos - Athenian. Honest man of the soil. I grow wheat; I grow vegetables; I cultivate vineyards and produce my own wine. I have a few olive trees, some chicken, two goats and one cow. I forgot - I have also a wife and two daughters, but they don't help much; anyhow I haven't seen them for a long time. What else? Oh: yes. I make regular payments to the temples, give food to the priests, do no mischief, never spy on my neighbours, I am no informer either for the government or of political parties, I vote regularly and have never been a candidate for office. I can honestly say that I don't like to be hickspittle or martinet; my weights are always what the law prescribes, my children are legitimate, usually I mind my own business, I work hard, help my fellow-men when I can and my health is good. I

can run uphill, even at my age, with shield and and pack and can look after my end well in a scrap. Once I won first prize for discus-throwing. My hobbies are sleeping and dreaming-awake. That's about all — and in greater detail that you'll get it in "Who is Who".

HERMES. Very interesting.

HARMODIOS. ~~Not a teeny-weeny~~ ^{No teeny-weeny} naughtiness at all?

HERMES. (Kicks Harmodios lightly). Inside Harmodios. I think I am going to enjoy this meeting. Such a long time since I had a chat with a ^{wily} mortal. (Has another sip). This is first class. What game have you been playing? ~~for years?~~

TRYGÆOS. Haven't you heard?

HERMES. No.

19 → TRYGÆOS. It's in all the papers.

HERMES. I, no longer see the incoming dispatches. New security arrangements. I am still Zeus's principal trouble-shooter but have no seat on the Council. I misbehaved, or so I was reported, Zeus pointed his finger at me and said: "By the unanimous decision of the Olympians I suspend you from the Council. The Council will approve of it. Go!" You see when Zeus decides, his decision is automatically the unanimous will of all of us. This is the new order of our divine democracy. Please do go on.

TRYGÆOS. It's really nothing new. Has been going on for ages. (Hesitates).

HERMES. I am listening.

TRYGEOS. The game I spoke is ^{an extraordinary kind of game...} ~~is not really that~~... it's ~~an extraordinary~~ kind of game, I ~~mean~~ ^{was}.

HERMES. Is that all? Mere triviality. What is extraordinary about that?

TRYGEOS. War?

HERMES. Yes. Is it anything unusual like a Terrestrial ^{or} stellar convulsion?

No. A straight-forward, common-of-garden, war. What of it?

● TRYGEOS. It has been going on for very long time - dreadfully long time.

HERMES. ^{Nothing unusual.} What is this ~~one~~ ^{one} for?

TRYGEOS. I don't know. (Looks puzzled.) What for? I don't know.

HERMES. Do not be distressed Mr. Trygeos. No fool who wars ever knows what he is warring for. Even if he starts ^{off} by thinking that he does, he soon finds out that he does not. Who is fighting whom?

TRYGEOS. The Athenians are fighting the Spartans.

HERMES. Perhaps now you can tell me why you, the Athenians, went to war with Sparta or has it happened so long ago you ^{have} forgot ~~it~~.

● TRYGEOS. All their doings. The Spartans wanted to kill us and we went to war to kill the Spartans. It has dragged on though...

HERMES. Why did the Spartans want to kill you?

TRYGEOS. I don't really know. I suppose because they thought we were going to kill them.

HERMES. And why should they think that?

TRYGEOS. Because we thought they would kill us... and if they were going to kill us we might as well kill them

before they killed us,

(and if... (Something disturbs him and his voice trails away). It just occurred to me. How ~~stupid~~ ^{we are not} we are. ~~Never~~ really awake. We dream and what we dream we believe, we imagine and what we imagine think it truth, we go on and do one stupid thing after another till the dream becomes a nightmare and we wake up - only momentarily, with a start. We go on again, ~~wandering~~ somnambulists. God! What fools we are. (Pauses again. Hermes eyes him sardonically). Yet there's right and wrong; there's one's home; the people one loves; temples; visions spun of words, voices which speak like a spirit inside you. One is tangled with images. Oh! I am bewildered. You see clearly one moment, you look again and all is twisted, unrecognisable.

HERMES. You are putting forward a fatalising hypothesis. Philosophers call it ~~negation~~ ^{precisely} of what is negative which ~~it~~ ^{if it} does not mean "yes", means nothing. But that is philosophy. I will let you into a secret. When the gods want to amuse themselves, they turn their reflecting mirrors (thinks better of it)... I better not tell you. It will shake your faith in the gods! It is not interesting anyway. Shall we have a game? Prefer cards or backgammon?

TRYGÆOS. I don't mind... Backgammon.

HERMES. Harmodies, the tac-tac.

TRYGÆOS. I'll play but on one condition.

HERMES. You are my guest Trygæos. You should not impose conditions.

TRYGÆOS. I apologise. I mean if I win, may I ask a favour

of you. (Backgammon is brought in).

HERMES. You may. (They sit down on opposite sides of backgammon).
With two or three dices? ^{With} Three is more complicated but it is
a better game.

TRYGÆOS. Let's play with three. Who goes first, or shall we throw for
it?

HERMES. You throw first Trygæos. (Trygæos throws - 3 sixes) Three
sixes, first throw. (clashes box violently). Unbelievable. Bad
omen. I cannot play. ^(Goals eleven) ~~with you~~. How was your journey?

TRYGÆOS. Comfortable but very lonely.

HERMES. These type of journeys usually are. What can I do for
you? Remember, I have very little time ... and please no
facetiousness or cracks like the "timeless have no time!"

TRYGÆOS. I came to see Zeus, father of gods to ...

HERMES. (Stopping him). Out of the question.

TRYGÆOS. Why?

HARMODIOS. Dare ask a god why!

HERMES. I gave him dispensation to talk. Have you an
appointment?

TRYGÆOS. No.

HERMES. A letter of recommendation from anyone ... anyone high,
bishop, commissar, president?

TRYGÆOS. No.

HERMES. In that case nothing can be done. If you had an

document or something I could send it on with a covering letter.
You don't know, of course, - how can you? - that the gods
struck camp and have gone.

TRYGEOS. Gone? Where? Down to earth, where?

HERMES. You must live in a fool's paradise Mr. Trygeos. What
with the ironmongery flying all over the place, spying, blubbing,
trailing sickening smells mixed with stale sweats - quite
vile (shows disgust) - and the megatonic candle-flashes
popping off around us they consider even the sky unsafe, let
alone that imperfect and unstable piece of rock and vapour
you call earth. (With grand gesture). The gods have
fled Trygeos - gone to the utter extremity of illimitable
heaven. Can you sense the throbbing impact of this portentous
action; the concatenation of its poetry: its tenuous
cataclysm? ^{are a square; no feeling for} Doubtlessly not. You ~~know nothing of modern~~
aesthetics. You can see no beauty ^{I can assure you there is, and there is} in dish-washing, ~~no heroism~~
^{love} in scuttle and ^{scary} ~~neither~~ ^{erotic thrills in scurry} can you imagine the putative sympathy. You
only have to ^{search} ~~look~~ for them.

You were going to ask what am I doing here ^{then} and why
in Harmodios with me? I am the rear party - I am always
picked for the worst jobs, and he is my P.S. by special favour
of Zeus.

TRYGEOS. Dammit all. Another failure. My bad luck, ^{as always.} so
damned frustrating. I feel like breaking something.

(Makes for the bottles. Hermes steps in front of him).

HERMES. No vandalism here. What do you want Zeus for? May I know or is it private?

TRYGEOS. We have been fighting for a long time. We need peace.

I came to intercede with him to restore peace to us before we are

HERMES (You've mixed up your gods somehow. Come to the colony - the pagan one)
 ruined. Please help us. We are desperate.

TRYGEOS (with some passion)

HERMES. (To Harmodios) Send a signal, immediately and wait for a reply.

(To Trygeos) The war with Sparta you were telling me about?

TRYGEOS. Yes. It goes on and on.

HERMES. Which one is it? There are so many going on all the time.

TRYGEOS. The one Pericles started.

HERMES. Ah yes, I know. The Peloponnesian War. I read about it in Thucydides. Stupid affair. Is ~~not~~ Thucydides dull ~~though?~~ So high-minded. Well! It has been over ages ago. You must be suffering from delusion Trygeos. That's ~~what it is~~ ^{finished with} Athens lost. Last time your city hit the headlines was when a Roman called Sulla was there making mince-meat of your fellow citizen and again when a chap named Mozozini, ^{a Venetian I believe,} ~~was that was his name~~ Mozozini a Venetian, cannonaded it and blew up something - I believe the Parthenon. There was ~~a great stink~~ ^{consternation} here among the goddesses. Everybody consoled with Athene. That is why I remember it.

TRYGEOS. I don't understand!

HERMES. Precisely what don't you understand.

TRYGEOS. We haven't lost the war! It's a joke. We were still at it a few hours ago - I knew I was there - and, in fact, we had the upper hand.

HERMES. Facts must be faced Trygeos. You have lost the war.

TRYGEOS. Does it mean my wife and daughters have been killed or sold into slavery. (Becomes wild). Does it? Answer me?

HERMES. (Very coolly). It must have taken you a long time to come here. Listen to me carefully. What you speak of is an old story, dead and lost; not even a memory to those going about below now who, themselves, before long will ~~not~~ be ~~even~~ memories - perhaps only ghosts of frightful malevolence. There are references to it in history books for young boys to learn the great deeds of the past! Your wife and daughters, all those you knew important and unimportant ones disappeared ~~like~~ ^{as} so many before and after have disappeared like flashing meteors between two winks of ~~the~~ night. Their earth-shaking deeds and of course their hopes and their agonies made ^a (passing furrow in the void, nothing more. A Acid odour hung about ~~after~~ them but not for long. (Trygeos visibly shrinks). Don't get distressed.

TRYGEOS. I... don't feel well. I better lie down - if you will allow me.

(He slumps to an armchair). Nothing is left for me now.

HERMES. Don't get disheartened. No need to. There is always an

atrocious end to whatever has a beginning (Harmodios enters and hands a message).

TRYGEOS. (Staggering to his feet looking lost). I'll go. (He walks away).

HERMES. Come back. (Trygeos turns round). I have a message - cannot make it out. Zeus, like all incumbents on power suffers from folie de grandeur; uses lot of riddles and pregnant nothings. It appears that your interview is refused. Mankind ^{may} perish - too many of them, gave him too many headaches. Don't know how to live; their whole life is a treadmill rush from no-point to nowhere. Listen to this: ~~now~~ It is priceless! (Reads). "Shout. Universe reverberates. Deaf, cannot listen. Complains. They do things to themselves, themselves and those who do them complain the others want them done. Enjoy eating one another, grouse at the same time. Know the worst and infallibly do it. Arrogant; guilty of hubris. Also, and simultaneously, servile and sycophantic. I have tired of them". He is in one of his bad moods. He orders me to pack and vacate the place. Polemos is taking over and will be here to tomorrow. You know who he is.

TRYGEOS. My ¹ ~~active~~ ^{do} ~~word~~ - War! All is up with us then. (After a short pause). It's immaterial. From what you're said earlier I'm not alive, perhaps I never was alive. If I am not me who am I?

HERMES. Who knows! Echo of a wish maybe. Yet you were conceived and took form and continue to exist outside reality. You are the most enduring of abstractions. Abortive from sexless

mind

by purposeful will. The same as I was aborted from unorganised fear. We exist because of our hybrid parentage.

25 → TRYGÆOS. ^{If we are bastards... well} Then we have nothing to worry about. I'll have a drink. It will cheer me up. (Harmodios pours him a drink.)

HERMES. Except for the illusion: it is real. While we were talking the advance guard of Polemos moved in. Time we left.

● TRYGÆOS. (Finishes his drink). As you wish. (Door opens and a woman ^{enters} with determined steps).

DYANE. May I come in? (Laughs). What a silly question. I am in, aren't I?

HERMES. Do come in! It is a public place after all. (Seriously). You may not know it but this is a palace of the gods (as an afterthought after having a good look round) — well, a poor country house of the gods.

HARMODIOS. Send her away. We don't want her here. Women bring bad luck.

● TRYGÆOS. The dancer! I know you! How is Karpotis? You are the Bacchic dancer aren't you?

DYANE. Damn sense if you please. Let me bring you up to date. Bacchic revels have been abolished.

HERMES. Who are you? Not, I presume, one of Zeus's invitees. I thought he got past it by now.

DYANE. Does it matter who I am? Call me what you wish. Demeter or Dryad; mother or mistress; virgin or virago;

nymph or wench; Amazon or harlot; comforter or seducer; maiden or medusa; harriidan or heroine. I am all and everything at the same time. Satisfied?

HERMES. Go on.

DYANE. I couldn't help overhearing you. Are you quitting?

TRYGEOS. You must be her. I recognise you now. How lovely you are. (Tries to embrace her. Dyane pushes him and he falls down).

DYANE. Time and place for everything master Trygeos - carnal heart. And you are the tribe who usually calls us names and made the most expressive words in the vocabulary those which denigrate us. Up! (Pulls him up. Puts her hand on his shoulders and turns to Hermes) What are you planning to do? Flee? Where to? You are tied, both of you are tied, by a succession of umbilical cords to your ^{ness} creators. I see the position you are in. You are cornered and epitomize the essential masculine quality in your reaction. No audience - you flee. There is an audience - you bare your teeth and prepare to finish the game one way or another. You react either as ~~the~~ rabbit or ~~the~~ bull. You never think.

TRYGEOS. Do you? Since when women started to think.

DYANE. Ever since our hunches suggested to us that we are the key ^{every thing} ^{event} ^{creation} to our ~~perpetuation~~ We became conscious of a purpose and contrive to secure our ends. We plan, we plot, we think.

We use you, yes, but try also to make you grow up; outgrow your childish lunacies, your dreams of glory, your putative missions and restless striving after what?: Achievement - you never know what it is and you cannot even define it. You remain moored to your infantillism. You refuse to grow. You are, in fact, a biological mistake. Some mathematical joker made out of you an ellipsis.

HARMODIOS. What rhetoric! If you let her she will jaw jaw till she drives us all mad.

DYANE. Enough ^{from} you, loving little you...

HERMES. Sorry to interrupt your flow of words. I'm puzzled. Do you always bludgeon your men like this or use other stratagems, as well. I cannot visualise how any one can fall for you ... unless you fall on top of him. Ha! Ha! (She remains grave). Misplaced joke. My fault. I ought to know better. Women are humorless when anything touches their amour propre. All the aeons I have known Athene never succeeded to make her laugh at one of my jokes. She opens her big, grey owl-eyes and grins. I feel that under her breath she says: "You silly ass". You are not one of those are you? Well now that you have insulted us, what do you want of us.

DYANE. Stay put. Don't give this ~~place~~ up to Polemos. It's imperative.

HERMES. Imperative or not, I have my instructions. And why,

pray, should I let you speak to me like this. Imperative! The arrogance of the woman.

TRYGEOS. We cannot stay ^{my} dear. ~~hardly. Orders are orders.~~ ^{we have to leave.}

DYANE. I'm sorry if I spoke sharply out of turn. Stay. Please stay and help to save peace.

TRYGEOS. An ally - you are an ally.

HERMES. Peace my dear woman is a condition - not a maiden about to be raped and has to be saved. Unless you mean that horrible creature the Polemos's crowd locked away in a dungeon. Come, I'll show you. (Goes to a window). In that ~~barren~~ castle over there. Roads are blown up, paths destroyed, stones have been heaped round the entrance, you cannot reach her.

DYANE. We'll try. Will you help? (Heavy, rhythmic footsteps are heard, drums beat). What is it?

HERMES. Polemos is coming to take possession. (Trygeos goes to Dyane. She takes him by the hand).

DYANE. Don't be afraid.

TRYGEOS. I am.

DYANE. Stay with me.

TRYGEOS. I can't; I failed and there is nothing to be done. I'm going back. I get so confused here. Don't know whether I'm coming or going. I like my world tidy where a man can fit and do his proper work. This being and not being is beyond me.

HERMES. Trygeos was born before theology and marxism. He can't

reach the cool wisdom of paranoia. Ready Trygeos.

TRYGEOS - Yes. Shall I take the bottle with me?

HERMES. Before going I would like to say a few words - by the way, what is your name? We have not been properly introduced. Bad manners.

DYANE. Dyane, spelled with y and e at the end.

HERMES. Why? Is it two of you ... in one.

DYANE. Like all women - I'm two, the two most valuable things you ever possess.

HERMES. (Swallows) Hm! Trygeos may agree with you. I was going to say that you can go downstairs and see for yourself. I have been. Polemos has a whole army of subordinates working down there - all egg-heads with a villainous-looking lot of commissioners over them. They are all in big cubicles, hermetically closed. Thousands of cubicles; miles of corridors. Some have numbers; others names. One department, for instance, deals with "thought" another deals "psychological credibility" a third with "image co-ordination". There are departments dealing - I jotted some titles down in my notebook (reads) - with "seismogenous economics", "philosophical warfare", "sexual subversion", "inter-stellar interjection", "ethic perforation research", "cell dehydration", "inter-continential optics", "long-range obliteration capability", "death-life-ratio computation" "earth-detonabilizer study group", "logistics", "bolistics" and much else. There are rooms full of files, plans, maps, diagrams, reports, which deal with everything I was told: from the

antecedents and actions of a fellow like Trygeas, to the "conditioned ethos of the ant", ^{and} ~~to~~ the "statistical probabilities of cosmic collisions affecting the incidence of fertility". I found one explained it to me as a vast machine, every bit having its function. I found that talking to them was like talking to a locomotive. They know so much and so little. It is really frightening - and I repeat this Dyane - frightening to see this concourse of soulless men in their vast beehive working ^{blindly} together like an organic unit, ~~and~~ informed by the spirit of Polemos. Nothing that you or I can do will turn off their course.

Once they start ~~then~~ go in earnest the noise will be insufferable. Another reason why I must go. Can't stand noise. (Noises are heard off stage) Goodbye. (The noise increases in volume).

DYANE. (Commandingly). Stop! Both of you. Don't leave me. I'm afraid - desperately afraid. Polemos imprisoned his rival and has hit his smithies. His bellows ~~begin~~ started to blow; I feel their breath. I can hear his crisp commands escalating down - cool, precise with a fatal ring of finality. (Noise reverberates as if an explosion). Is this the preamble, or the real thing. Oh! God. (Covers her face with her hands. Noise reaches a shrill crescendo). Can't you hear? Listen... Listen. The deep throated roar of engines revving up; the headlong crash of silent wills ^{from} ~~between~~ panoplied nations; the many-voiced curses from cities bristling with murderous intent; the crush of bodyless words...

unseen havoc hissing hideous death ... (almost hysterical)
 fireball embracing fireball ... I cannot stand it (staggered
 about and falls down. Hermes and Trygeos pick her up. Noise
 ceases. Looks up at them).

Thank you my friends... There is no escape and there is very
 little time to escape that. Trygeos, please hurry and bring
 your friends here - everybody. Polemos must be contained. Hurry.
 TRYGEOS. (Gives heritantly affirming nod).

HERMES. Resistance is futile.

DYANE. Stay Hermes. I would lose you too. You are our only hope.
 You are weary, that's all. Once you rallied the gods against
 Zeus. You've established the principle of equality at the Council
 table. But you have slipped and let Zeus regain his former power.
 Your fault. You gave in. Don't give in now. This will give
 you youth - your youth back. Stay with me. (She embraces
 him. Hermes softens and caresses her hair. At the same
 time he makes a sign to Hermodios to disappear).

HERMES. What are you waiting for Trygeos? Hurry. (Winks
 at him).

⊗ X X.

SCENE III.

[Same as before. Few seconds or centuries - time difference.

Diane paces about thoughtfully. Stops and picks up a flower from a bowl by (the big window?).

DIANE. (Stretches her arms. Smells the flower. Breathes in deeply).
Lovely! (Looks at it). It lives; it dies. Pity. (Looks out of the window). This morning is alive. I feel its life. I'm not part of it. (Looks at the flower, studiously). Everyone himself - a world, an entity, perhaps an illusion. How does it go. Hm! (Humms).

Love grips, out
of restless loins tightens at one throat
The silent clamour of unwound nerves.
Limbs tense, leavened to ecstasy by
hips which are curved for kissing.

Alone! Come -

I heard ~~my~~ ^{my} speechless cry - tread
My illumination's darkness softly,
For I'm alone within myself
And within you,

Alone.

(Repeats the last line. Hermes comes in.) ~~Hallo! ^{come} bath.~~
HERMES. What are you humming?

DYANE. Had a nice bath.

HERMES. Harmotios was wild because I let you rub my back. It was his job, he said.

DYANE. And what did you say.

HERMES. That you rubbing my back was, for me, a rare luxury. Addresses don't know how to use their hands. They are so...peremptory. Where have you studied the magic art of touch? Don't say anything, Mystery has its advantages. You haven't answered my question.

DYANE. (Carresses him behind the ear). There.

HERMES. Stop it or we will have to start all over again.

DYANE. (Still carressing him). Is Harmotios really wild?

HERMES. He went off in a huff. He has grown a ferocious beard and says ~~that~~ from now on he will serve only the Muses - no one else.

DYANE. (Chuckling). And they are all female. Poor ^{androgynous} Harmotios!

HERMES. I am not so sure. Nowadays there must be some who are hermaphrodites - these damned poets have banded my name about so much, they even made me the imperative half of this 'uncomfortable' mixture. Still?

DYANE. Your question!

HERMES. Yes.

DYANE. Not about ... my magic art of touch! What about my other arts.

HERMES. Life-giving. [Embraces her]. Now, at last, I can understand why love has such a pull. It is this (points at

and briefly delineates her body), ... shaped and tuned to perfection. I used to laugh at the tricks of old Zeus, sometimes a bull, sometimes a swan, young shepherd or old man just for an affair. Poor fellow! He must have wanted to escape, ~~very~~ ^{very} badly ~~instead~~, from the remorselessly matronly body of Hera, ~~and~~ with its chilly virtue and insatiability.

DIANE. Isn't she any good.

HERMES. So good that ^{for Zeus,} making love to her is a penance. I think that even her moments of ecstasy are calculated.

DIANE. (Laughs). Poor Hera! Funny, the same word twice within two minutes. I was ~~humming~~ singing to myself when you came in. You wanted to know about it. It was not a song. It was what the psychologists ^{describe} as feminine post-coitus cooling-off reaction. How do we communicate? We are alone. We lose ourselves in love but we are still alone. Why? Why this unsurmountable fencing in. I like to hold you, feel you, be in you, to be you. That's how I can fulfil myself - by breaking my isolation. Never mind. It was a mood and has passed.

HERMES. (Looks at her questioningly). You like it here.

DIANE. Couldn't be better. Central-heating, air-conditioning, all the clothes I desire, every comfort ... and you - ageless and tireless. What more can a woman want?

HERMES. I can hardly believe it myself. ^{And all} All thanks to Polemos. Ever since he installed himself here we have been doing

unbelievably well... we live like rockfellers. Where does he get all his money from?

DYANE. ^{Good knows (Chigoles)} ~~It baffles me.~~ ^{Forget me invoking you.} I'm absolutely baffled. There is never ~~any~~ money for anything but he never appears to be short of it - ever. ~~You think~~ that he opens a ~~tab~~ ^{it} and money just pours out.

HERMES. (Plays with bow and arrow). Mind you he is a first-class fellow and will do anything for us. (Picks the bow). This primitive weapon, so quietly deadly, not like the stuff they have now. I had a chat with him and he is not at all what Trygeos imagines him to be. He is suave, cultured and very, very knowledgeable. He looks after his men well. They have the best of everything and are the first everywhere. He asked me if we were comfortable and told me not to hesitate to ask if we want anything. He always keeps his promises. This is the first time I met someone really honest and the first time I have been treated with genuine deference.

DYANE. They are very quiet. ^(Hermes kisses the back of her neck, caresses her side and flicks)
HERMES. ^{How eloquent your back is - fingle form at its best. (Dyane turns, kisses him, laughs and verges)}
DYANE. ^{He told me they} He told me ~~that~~ they have gone into a state of cold ^{and} suspense.

like when your gun is cocked, your finger on the trigger and you hold your breath - I did not quite get the gist of it.

DYANE. (Shudders). I feel shudders down my spine.

HERMES. Shall I turn on the heater?

DYANE. No! No! I'm scared. This silence is eerie. What are they doing? Why are they so long?

HERMES. You mean Trygeos and the rest. (Dyane says yes with her eyes). I should not worry. ~~They are so many they will do the job.~~ ^{alright: There are so many of them.} I was told (forefinger points downwards) that no obstacles will be put their way.

DYANE. (Smiles then laughs). It was funny. And very, very moving!

HERMES. My brain is not all that agile. One moment terror, the next giggles.

DYANE. ~~The same thing really;~~ but nothing to do with what we were saying. ^{something clicked - a} picture ~~flashed~~ ^{flashed} in my mind. It happens to me when I am scared. It was funny and made laugh. You see in ~~one~~ ^{of the main} ~~thoroughfares~~ ^{street of the} of a big city at the busiest time of day a duck appears ^{from nowhere,} followed by nine ducklings. Without looking left or right she steps ^{straight} into the street followed by ~~the~~ ^{all} ~~ducklings~~ ^{the} ~~little ones~~ in a straight line. Such dignity. No duckers ever looked more dignified. It was wonderful. (She laughs).

HERMES. What happened?

DYANE. Breaks screeched, vehicles stopped violently and pedestrians froze in their tracks. The ducks crossed the road, very, very proud and very indifferent. They were ducks you see! Don't look puzzled; there is no point in it. But one can make one out if one wishes to. (She laughs again). Do you like me?

HERMES. Let me see. Hm! Hm! Vital statistics - just right. Depart-

ment - good. Walk - well(!) you walk so well, such firm tread,
 you give the impression that you are not afraid to face anything, ^{iron}
 or gold. Breasts - alert and expectant.

DYANE. Better than ~~what is said~~ in the Song of Songs!

HERMES. ~~Do~~ not interrupt! Where was I? Curves - unceasingly
^{articulate;}
^{elegant;} you look at them and they compose their own panegyric.

But whichever way ~~or whichever way~~ I look at them they look
 so fragile, they require my constant support. And, of course, there
 is that suggestion of subcutaneous fat which ^{makes} the curvatures
~~smoother and smooth~~ ^{and} soft and nice to explore. ^{(Looks at her}
^{expresses}
^{your express}
^{all over).}
~~isn't~~ my favourite? Your silly, expressive nose (gives
 it a gentle pull) and the short, so beautifully curved (traces it)
 upper lip which when associated with the other in investi-
 gation, plays havoc with the architecture of my body. Now
 do I like you? It remains to be seen.

DYANE. You like what you see of me, ... not the real me.

HERMES. ~~But~~ ^{are you not the real me!} ~~there~~ ^{is} another you. ~~you should love her~~
 I would like to meet her. What

I see is good enough for me. Shall we go in?

DYANE. (Tearingly, while she dances provocatively.) What for?
 To enact a new variation of the same ^{theme} ~~story~~ - the
 tentative approach (she makes the motions of feeling one's
 way); the preparation (motions of kissing, caressing);
 the ascending sensualisation (looks innocently uncom-
 prehending); the sharp, steady clash; and, oh!, the

lingering denouement. Have I got it right?

HERMES. You have. But

DYANE. O! Hermes I love you, love you (embraces him). Kisses him).

HERMES (when he ~~forgets~~^{gets} his breath back) don't turn it into a manual for amateurs. Let them go the way of trial and error.

DYANE. You are the one who formulated and applied it, not I.

HERMES. A bright! I ~~will~~ will let you do all the formulating and all the application in the future! Then we compare results. I assure you I will co-operate wholeheartedly.

DYANE. O! Yes!

HERMES. Come nearer. (He moves towards her and she runs away).

DYANE. I'm the wolf - she wolf ... remembers story where you are. I take over. [Suddenly there is an irruption of people with placards and banners shouting).

HERMES. People come at the most awkward moments. (This is ^{only} just heard above the tumult. Shout the demonstrators, individually and in unison:)

"Save ancient monuments."

"long live the living!" — "PEACE! PEEEEACE!"

"Disarm and Conquer."

"Be strong, till all are weak!"

"Hands off Poma!" "Save Caesarismo"

"More equals less, in economics" — and vice versa!"

"Men are men when they ARE MEN"

(In Unison.) "Down! Down! Down! (Hermes stops his ears. Be-

comes angry. (Squawks).

HERMES. Stoop. (Ariste continues). Stop. (They stop).
That's a ^{much} better. May I know the meaning of all this?
(All start together. Another hallaballoo). A bright. One by
one, or you get out. This is private property. You are trespassing
- you are all trespassers.

● HARMODIOS. This is Elysian and universal. We have the right to be
here.

HERMES. My bearded Harmodios! Have you arranged all this to
spoil my afternoon? If that near your purpose you have succeeded
admirably but may I know the reason why?

37 → DYANE. To show us in front of all this crowd as if there is not enough
gossip doing the rounds already.

HARMODIOS. (Pointedly turns his back to her). I didn't arrange it.
Started out and they followed. Each wants to put his case before
you and each says he represents thousands, ~~per~~ maybe millions,
like him. (Points at them). They like walking!

HERMES. I can see that. What else do they like doing. I see they are
in pairs.

DYANE. Hermes!

HERMES. Tell them I cannot hear complaints. I am no father confessor.
I can do nothing for them now or hereafter. Tell them ... I
better tell them myself. (Face them). Listen. I am only a tribal
god ^{I believe in nothing, I offer nothing, expect nothing.} without ~~any~~ authority. I transmit orders, carry out instruct

lows, help ~~to~~ replenish the celestial border ~~everyway~~ I can (aside)
 - sometimes by downright robbery - ~~assist help assist drag~~ ^{help} some reluctant souls across
 the stormy Acheron ~~to~~ hell, ~~help~~ ^{assist the} occasional crook ~~to~~ become
 a business tycoon and as soon as he becomes one he discards
 me, I arrange stock-exchange hits, keep money circulating and
~~by~~ circulating grow - have you ever thought of that... this thing
 going round, cold, lifeless and yet astonishingly fecund - I have
 seen enough of divine folly and human cupidity to be astounded
 at nothing and I have become convinced that alarmists are
 always wrong, there is always enough evidence on both sides of every
 question ~~to~~ enable you, in all sincerity, to remain comfortably
 uncommitted. Have I made myself clear?

ALL TOGETHER (thunderously). Nooooo!

HARMODIOS. You prevaricate - that's our view.

POLEMOS. (Unseen - heard through amplifier). Hermes! What's happening
 up there?

HERMES. Noisy?

POLEMOS. Yes. I hate noise. Need ^{any} help?

HERMES. No, thank you. You may switch off now. Funny you should
 hate noise and advertise it also. You revealed your Achilles's
 heel. So long.

MANY TOGETHER. Who was that?

HARMODIOS. Polesmos. (Sounds of Ah! To Hermes). Will you listen
 to us.

HERMES. (To Dyane). Bring me a glass of wine and sit by me darling.
We cannot escape.

A DEMONSTRATOR. (Long hair, trousers, youthful. Comes forward from the rest).

"Right and wrong confusedly mixed
In a world full of war, a world that stinks
with crime, which denies the ploughman
Honour, and forces the sheep from fields
of desolation to the wilds and turns the scythe
To murderous steel"

SEVERAL TOGETHER. We are against it!

HERMES. (To Harmodios). Tell her (he pauses and goes nearer) it
is a her, not to plagiarize Virgil and tell me what is
bothering her, what is bothering all of you.

FIRST DEMONSTRATOR. I'm a unilateralist.

SECOND DEMONSTRATOR. I'm a multilateralist.

THIRD DEMONSTRATOR. I want us strong to defend not strong to offend.

FOURTH DEMONSTRATOR. Every^{body} mind their own ^{Everybody's} hands off everybody.

FIRST do. Whose hands?

SECOND do. The other fellow's.

THIRD do. How are you going to enforce it?

SECOND do. By general ~~and~~ and complete divestment. That's
what we need - divestment.

FIRST DEMONSTRATOR. We must give the example. Divest ourselves first.

DYANE. That sounds a bit odd!

HERMES. I am interested to see what comes next.

SECOND DEMONSTRATOR. Cameras may be hidden somewhere. All of us together - then we are safe.

THIRD DEMONSTRATOR. Unless we force them to, nothing will happen.

HARMODIOS. "Down with them all!" Yes, that should be our slogan. Down with all of them - then all will be safe. (Hermes looks bewildered).

● DYANE. ^{These} They are evidently newer and more multifarious versions of Trygons. I believe they've come to ask for your help.

HERMES. (with suavity). If you "down them all" whom are you going to leave standing?

HARMODIOS. Facts.

DYANE. What? (Harmodios ignores her).

THIRD DEMONSTRATOR. We'll do away with those who will destroy us.

HERMES. Are they many.

SECOND DEMONSTRATOR. A few.

THIRD DEMONSTRATOR. But they are very powerful.

HERMES. How are you going to do away with them?

HARMODIOS. How? (The others look confused).

HERMES. Surely you do not plan ~~a~~ hecatombs! They have a habit of perpetuating themselves. I will tell you what happened to me, ages ago. I was returning from a long trip. Zeus sent me to tell Prometheus to repent. Prometheus was stubborn. ~~Repent!~~ Never. He had an idea. It led him do certain things. Action springs more often than not from thought. Thought leads to action.

Correct? (Some look puzzled). Well then, if thought leads to action and action to further thought and so on you go on doing things. Shape your life. And if others ~~do~~ ^{and} ~~think~~ likewise you shape the story of life. But supposing your thought turns to belief.

DYANE. (Pinches him and whispers in his ear). Get on with the story.

HERMES. (Softly to her). I have an idea. If they get bored they will leave us alone. As I was saying. If you start or end with belief then your action becomes sacrosanct and your ideas sacred. No one can talk or argue with you. You are a know-all and infernal nuisance. †

I was returning from this trip. Angry. Angry with Prometheus who chose to nurse his beliefs and suffer horribly - it was not, however, beneath his dignity to moan - and angry at Zeus for punishing horribly for no other reason except policy. Top ^{man} ~~and~~ subordinate fell out. And there, ladies and gentlemen, you have the whole idiotic drama of human affairs in a nutshell. Authority and defiance. And the problem, your problem, is how to make defiance authoritative without giving it authority.

HARMODIOS. Can't you be more explicit?

HERMES. Again I digressed. I was approaching Olympus. We were still primitive and lived on a mountain. There I saw a lot of gods and goddesses Trooping down looking dejected and very miserable; ~~they~~ had their tails between their legs. They were running away. I asked why. Zeus was in one of his

unpredictable moods. Accused ~~them~~ all of incompetence, dereliction of duty even of treachery and kicked them out.

I said to them. Ares? + you gods? They answered yes. What is Zeus? God. Well, you are gods he is god what have you to be afraid of. Back all of you. Hephaestus arranged for some lightning conductors to neutralise his bolts and we marched in meaning business. He was livid, ~~blasted us~~ ^{I told him we did not} want to fight only to assert our rights. If he tried to use force ~~we~~ would use force and start where he started with his father - the genitals. Zeus argued for a while and then accepted our proposition: equality among the gods with himself first among equals. He learned his lesson and I must say that he has never forgiven me. We do not always keep a tight rein on him but he does not dare defy us completely.

Do likewise.

FIRST DEMONSTRATOR. Our policy is not to kill but to enlighten.

SECOND " To convince, not threaten.

THIRD DEMONSTRATOR. How can you convince an opponent, you don't talk the same language, unless you use force ... or the threat of it.

SECOND DEMONSTRATOR. (Jump on a chair). We have to talk, argue, demonstrate, sit up, lie down, protest, prise open new vistas, shock-treat life to sanity, give the future hope (with emotion) lift our eyes to heaven ^{at night} and see only stars.

FIRST DEMONSTRATOR. We must inspire the dejected like Hermes the gods.

HERMES. By all means. Do that, do that, but don't turn this into a public meeting. I loath ranting. Go ahead. Do what you like. You have the whole of your life in front of you.

DYANE. Not so Hermes and you know it. Life is forfeit - theirs, mine everybody's. They should hurry ~~out~~ to join Trygeos and the rest. (To HARMODIOS). You know where Trygeos is, take them there. (To the rest). You'll find many like you, some older people ~~too~~ with simpler humanity. If you join together forces you can help yourselves. But hurry. Polemos is not asleep; he lies there, listening, calculating, waiting, always ready - Cerberus with blinkless eyes. Hurry.

HARMODIOS. I'll lead. (To the rest). Forward. (March out striding to the Tune of Red Flag).

The people plea for the earth to live
And live with it we cry.

To plants and birds and men we give

This solemn stern reply :-

Spurn every fear from nerve and soul

Resolve with us to reach the goal

And strike the light from murderer's hand

The light ^{which} ~~that~~ kills and burns the land

Strike it from murderer's hand!

Forward! United we stand. (Troop out)

HERMES. What a frightful time. ~~And~~ the fools march to it. We are

rid of them, thanks to you.

DYANE. I shouldn't disparage them Hermes. My sympathies are with them.

HERMES. And mine are with you. (Thinks). Now what does that make me. A hunger-on twice removed? Never mind! When I said with you I meant the whole of you, part, niche, fold, curve, the unexplainable tidal mysteries of your blood, your sugared breath - sorry, Shakespearean echo - and your funny little ears (kisses her, draws back, looks at the ears), they are pointed. You are wise to hide them.

DYANE. How you talk. (Hermes opens his mouth to say something, Dyane puts her fingers across it). You talk too much. (Takes him by the hand and walks across to the window). Here comes Trygees.

HERMES. Again? This is getting monotonous. More complaints I suppose. Something always happens. Plans miscarry. Aren't they ever tired of this pralling repetition? He looks glum. I don't want to see him. Let's go into the purple room; it is insulated against noise. We can forget all about the world. ~~the~~

(They go. Stage is empty for a moment. Apparition of a figure in the corner. Enters Trygees.)

TRYGEOS. Hermes! (Loudly). Hermes! Where are you? (Opens door).
Hermes!

POLEMONS. (An apparition). You disturb me.

TRYGEOS. (Taken aback?) Aah!

POLEMONS. I said you disturb me.

TRIGEOS. Yes.

POLEMOS. What answer is that. Have you heard what I said or not?

TRIGEOS. I've heard.

POLEMOS. Stop shouting then. Our work involves study, concentration and planning and we require perfect quiet. Hermes and his guests are here on sufferance presumably you are a guest. Therefore no noise.

TRIGEOS. (Gets over his fright). May I ask something? Really I don't want to bother you but I feel I have a right to know. I'm a citizen of a democracy and usually get hints about the bad things ~~which are~~ ~~being~~ arranged for us. The others don't have even this dubious advantage.

POLEMOS. You are a democrat! How interesting. (makes his appearance). I ~~am~~ ^{too, am} also a democrat. Never do anything before letting everybody know what I propose to do and let them vote on it. You, of course, vote and decide ^{on} all issues.

TRIGEOS. (Perplexed). Yes. Of course. No. I mean it's not quite like that. ~~Our system~~ ^{Our system} ~~is~~ ~~more~~ ~~advanced~~. We vote but don't decide because those we vote for decide themselves, and we don't actually decide whom to vote for because that has been already decided by committees which have been advised by the leaders who in turn have been elected from lists prepared by committees. ^{As you see it} ~~which have been~~ is rather complicated. But they tell us what is to be done. No secrets there. We always know the difficulties ^{how} ~~at right~~. How much more we have to pay for anything we need. How much

it will cost us if we fight and how much more if we don't. We know every inch of the last time ahead. No secrets, ~~there~~ there. We are always warned about something or other.

POLEMOS. Do you prefer the other kind?

TRYGEOS. Dictatorship? God forbid. We've had ~~it~~ I know. Better a lot of idiots than one blazing fool "whether aborted monolithically or divinely spawned," as my friend Karpotis used to say.

You are Polemos. We have not been introduced but still: may I ask ^{you} something?

POLEMOS. You may.

TRYGEOS. What are you up to now?

POLEMOS. Singularly badly phrased why dear Trygeos. I am not up to anything, as you put it. Never am. As you know I am not the prompter but the one who is resorted to. Do you get my meaning? Now I am simply watching. A situation is developing between the ism of a new big Sparta and the ism of a new big Athens - symbolically speaking, of course. A delicate and anxious situation, very anxious. (Dyane appears). Come and join ^{us} Dyane

TRYGEOS. (Dyane's presence appears to give him courage). Why don't you leave us in peace! (To Dyane). We've saved her.

DYANE. What are we waiting for? Let's celebrate. Will you join us Polemos?

POLEMOS. Delighted. I like to drink the health of my obverse side. How is she, by the way.

TRYGÆOS. She will be along soon if they don't wear her out with welcomes. (^{Meanwhile} They've moved to a bar in the corner and filled their glasses).

DYANE. To us! To Peace! To the world! (~~They drink~~). I must invite Hermes. (She presses an invisible button. Former crowd comes in).

POLEMOS. I'll drink to that. (When the crowd is in.) ~~A~~ Celebration night! No music?

DYANE. I must have pressed the wrong button. (To Polemos). These electronic nothings you men installed confuse me. (Presses again). There is considerable commotion, talk and intermittent drinking while the following takes place. One hears occasional words or phrases, indistinct. "We are on top". "Bastards are finished" "Once & for all". "Hm!" "Suffered". "Serves them right". "You look smashing".)

TRYGÆOS. (To Dyane). To your health. (They drink.) Somehow I don't feel comfortable.

POLEMOS. You have achieved your aim. You should ^{be} feel elated Trygæos - ^{on top of the world.}

TRYGÆOS. I don't, though. I feel as if I am strangled. Perhaps ^{the price} ^{effort was too} ^{high.} great & the price ~~always~~ in any case, was high.

POLEMOS. It always is.

TRYGÆOS. Yes, thanks to you!

HERMES (Just comes in). You two got together at last! Let us see who is going to knife whom first.

POLEMOS. ~~Is~~ there ^{is} a second knifing?

HERMES. Invariably.

POLEMOS. Now you have Peace; it may be hot or cold Peace. What are you going to do with her? With yourselves also? Cheat each other and kill each other off by other means?

TRIGEOS. I ~~don't~~ know. The only thing I know ^{just now} is that we must get rid of you, for ever.

HERMES. (To Polemos). Too true old boy. You are no longer a distraction. You have become a comprehensive nuisance.

DYANE. Can you be persuaded a teeny-weeny bit, to abolish yourself?

POLEMOS. Sorry! No time to be involved in argument. I know of your questions and Hermes will ~~send~~ ^{give} you my answers. (Hands Hermes a paper). But before ^{I go} I should like to ask Trygeos how he proposes to abolish me. I am naturally interested.

TRIGEOS. You have been rejected. That's the beginning of the end.

POLEMOS. You mean hocarno. I see. In that case I better take my leave. (He hesitates). Let's see. (Whispers something in Hermes's ear).

HERMES. (To the talking, jiving, taunting couples). Here! All of you. Are you happy?

ALL TOGETHER. Yes.

HERMES. How silly of me! Of course, you are. You look it. What for?

ALL TOGETHER. Our Victory. Peace!

HERMES. Oh! Yes. I forgot. And now you will go back to ^{do some} ~~your~~ jobs.
^{work:}
 What will you do?

FIRST DEMONSTRATOR. I don't know, it depends.

TRYGEOS. To my fields.

SECOND DEMONSTRATOR. Lucky you. You have fields to go to.

THIRD " (woman). Marriage for me.

FIRST " I don't like to do anything in particular. Just loaf around.

SECOND " I think I'll take up public relations or something -
 easy money. I'm pacifist.

FOURTH DEMONSTRATOR. Does it matter what we do, as long as we
 do it.

HERMES. And what of peace?

HARMODIOS. (Comes forward as the spokesman). We shall guard her
 like the apple of our eye. We shall defend her with every ounce
 of strength we possess. (jumps on a low stool). We shall wage
 war against the warmongers. (The others: "Hear! Hear!")

TRYGEOS. BRAVO!

HARMODIOS. We shall not be caught napping again.

HERMES. Very commendable. But who will want to catch you
 napping?

HARMODIOS. The armament manufacturers.

POLEMOS. Stop down my young man ^{and try to} ~~lets~~ talk rationally. According
 to the latest statistics in all countries classified as

civilised twelve per cent of the people are connected directly and indirectly with so-called defence. i

HARMODIOS. I mean the real controllers, the politicians.

HERMES. All of them or only those not of your persuasion.

FIRST DEMONSTRATOR. All of them... unless they support our aims. If they are not with us they are against us.

● HERMES. Impeccable logic. Who else?

FIRST DEMONSTRATOR. The generals.

POLEMOS. Most unwarlike I assure you. Majors and colonels, yes! Generals no. Haven't you read any war memoirs!

SECOND DEMONSTRATOR. We'll fight every one ^{who is} against us - general, politician, priest, scientist, journalist, industrialist, commissar, fakir, hoodja and mannequin. (A girl pulls him). You are itching to dance. Stop swooning like love-lorn weed. We are discussing serious business here. Don't interrupt. (To the others) We are going to organise and fight.

● POLEMOS. What bellicosity! And I am the one who is ^{always} being accused of this failing. Well, Trygeos, I wish you success. You have a lot of support.

TRYGEOS. We've grown million-headed and million-handed Polemos. We're going to abolish you.

DYANE. ^(With dreamy insouciance) Consider yourself non-existent; a vanished terror of our disturbed adolescence; the haunting bruise of conscience which had its dying fall!

POZEMOS. (Suave but serious). Only my extinction can now inspire a lyrical phrase. No one rhapsodises me any more. Gone are the days when I was welcomed as the father of all, the dispenser of the highest virtue. (To Trygeos). You are premature. To abolish me you have to abolish the type of animal you are now. (Turns to Dyane). I cannot say the same about you. You are the living spark which spans the spasms of time. Indestructible. You understand me. You hate me. I am the destroyer. The hot breath of fury which withers creation. You contemplate me and your vision sags. You feel my presence and provided you are not near to burn like moth ... it is an exultation. Near me you live such life that makes you truly alive. Do you deny that? (Radio whistle is heard). Sorry, I have to leave you, and ... for your sake I won't say an revoir. Hermes will finish this soliloquy. Goodbye. (All nod. He goes.).

GIAL DEMONSTRATOR. Goodbye. He is nice.

DYANE. As long as he ^{is} remains inactive and stays in ~~the~~ history books. (To herself) He really knows a lot and ~~he~~ understands us women very well.

TRYGEOS. Can we have the rest Hermes. (Hermes takes the paper out of his pocket). Did he have it all prepared - like in a play. I'm surprised. Well, well! You never know.

HERMES. Let's find the place. (Moves his lips). ... "deny that".

Yes here it is. (Reads). "You cannot deny it, because, as you know, I have no existence outside of you. I am an insubstantial ^{force} which has no entity and volition and yet capable of destroying you. In other words you are capable of destroying yourselves by the simple expedient of creating me. You fail to think and start hitting and the more you hit the more you create things to hit with and sometimes the thing becomes too big and when you hit with it, it hits you as well". I cannot make this out. Pegasus is obtuse sometimes. "For +

TRIGEDS. He is making sense alright.

HERMES. "You blame me; and call me. When you are frightened you use me to excuse your fears. For me are the hurrahs of the herd - ^{the hurrahs of} from your crowded assemblies, your monstrous party rallies, For me your bellows work for twenty-four hours a day; to me you reach out as arbiter for your follies. And the way you go about ^{in trying to enlist} using my services, the duplicity, the chicanery, the relentless deviousness of your thoughts, your mortal anxiety not to be branded aggressors only defenders, your self-righteousness are ^{so unctuous} ~~so monotonous~~ ^{so} infuriatingly repetitive, so boring, they are enough to make hell weep ^{hit} the boredom of it all!" (Folds paper).

Actually I agree with him. You mortals are so repetitive, ~~and~~ so dull, you hardly ever bother to change your methods. Now and again something new crops up and one is compelled to take notice for a while until it ~~begs~~ starts repeating itself.

Personally I prefer to read about them in books. It is less tiring.

TRYGEOS. And now what?

FIRST DEMONSTRATOR. Polemos is sore. He lost the game and he's sore.

DYANE. I didn't like the urgent sound of the call he had. ~~What~~ What do you think it was.

HERMES. Maybe an exercise! They always carry out exercises, just to reassure themselves.

TRYGEOS. That's it. Exercises. Provocations. I remember...

HERMES. Alright Trygeos. Forget it. Let's have some music, and a drink? (HERMES goes towards the bar. A girl stops him).

WOMAN DEMONSTRATOR. Where is the ladies?

HERMES. We have not reached that point of gentility yet. No segregation here.

WOMAN DEMONSTRATOR. I'm only a half-cast.

HERMES. I don't mean that kind of segregation. It does not matter here what is the colour of your skin, what political party you belong, monolithic or porous, or how you pray, bending down, kneeling down, looking up doe-like, down dog-like or yelling screaming mad and thunderously applauding the biggest of the big brothers. I was referring to the segregation of sexes. The Olympians do not believe in it. Press button E and follow your nose. Just make the sign E and press.

(Woman does what she is told. Then things begin to move, the scenery changes, lights flicker and go out, women scream. Just as the lights go out -)

HERMES. The silly cow pressed the wrong bloody button.
(Darkness).

x x x

Βιβλιοθήκη Πανεπιστημίου Κύπρου

SCENE IV.

[When things settle down and order is re-established, the lights come on. We are in a big office. Karpotis is sitting down smoking a hookah. He talks to a fattish man who is standing up.

KARPOTIS. I told you. Nothing doing!

FATTISH MAN. This is a friendly offer. If you refuse...

KARPOTIS. You will do... absolutely nothing my friend. This is not United Union Territory. Beat it.

FATTISH MAN. We'll see about that. (After a pause). Won't you give me half?

KARPOTIS. Not even a quarter. I buy at tenth the price I sell and I can get all the stuff I want. My original offer stands.

FATTISH MAN. My government will not stand for that. It's an insult

KARPOTIS. Then let your government sit on it. Why should they be interested, anyway. This a buccaneering job. What do you expect to get out of it? More acres for your United Union?

FATTISH MAN. You destroy our business and you spy on us. You dirty spy. (Turns to go, pulls gun and turns round). You will spy no more!

KARPOTIS. (Has already drawn his). Mine is cocked. Drop it and clean out.

TRYGEOS (Comes in). The man said, drop it. (Fattish whom drops his gun).

KARPOTIS. Always in the nick of time Trygeos.

FATTISH MAN. (As he leaves). ^{We'll raise the matter at the} ~~The United Nations. will hear of~~
 this you are a neo-colonialist agent. (Goes out).

KARPOTIS. In any case mine are much cheaper than yours.

TRYGEOS. Who is the guy.

KARPOTIS. Sit down Trygeos. Hermes and Dyane coming:

TRYGEOS. How did you know about them?

KARPOTIS. ^{How do I know it? I have my informers} ~~Don't give me that. The papers are full of your exploits.~~

You three are inseparable. ^{I read the papers too!} (A couple of puffs at the hookah). No hints about Ibsenic triangle or anything of the sort though.

TRYGEOS. Papers: Ibsenic triangle. Hm! (After short pause).
 Friend of yours?

KARPOTIS. He wanted to sell me arm to sell to the colons in order to be able to sell more to the anti-colons... you get the point. (Hermes and Dyane come in. They listen). I do that to both sides. I sell better stuff and at cheaper prices. Welcome. What can I offer you? Something cool?

DYANE. Nothing, thank you. Can I try one of this (points to the hookah).

KARPOTIS. Unsuitable for a lady. Have a cigarette. Specially blended for me. And for Hermes - a cigar?

HERMES. We have had a good lunch, a nice cigar will do admirably. (Cigar and cigarettes handed round).

TRYGEOS. You are in business now.

KARPOTIS. ~~A bit~~ More than that. I'm in the empire business. You see we have now national empires, social empires, empire empires and my type, sub-national or supra-national. That's what I am and ^{everyone} everybody comes to me.

TRYGEOS. How did ~~it~~ ^{you manage it?} happen? You were ^{poor, like} ~~with me~~. You were my comrade!

HERMES. ^{Don't tell us:} Let me see if my divine eye can follow the design.

KARPOTIS. D. K.

HERMES. We start with the head - brain is the most important and the most unsatisfactory thing ever invented. Everybody talks good, everybody acts foul. All pine for quiet, all plan for trouble. Every fool who has an idea in his head wants to enforce it. Every nincompoop who shouts a slogan wants also to wave a pistol. Since now-a-days every other man lives by slogans there is a need for a lot of pistols. You thought of that and being of the race of Odysseus you said to yourself - I see their game, I'll get in and beat them at it.

KARPOTIS. Absolutely on the dot. Though I'm no longer a gun-runner. Now I deal in armaments on a prodigious

scale. I employ hundred thousand people all over the world. Mine is a truly international organisation. You should read some of the letters I get; there is no "good cause" neither a "bad one" for that matter, which has no money in it. I am addressed "Comrade-in-arm" "Liberator", "friend of the oppressed" "Sage" and what not. And all because I supply arms to those who want to use them against those I buy them from. And for this, my friends, I am revered as libertophil.

TRYGEOS. And condemned as an international menace.

KARPOTIS. Only by the established establishments... and with some judicious contracts here and there ^{even} they are taken care of. But those which are being established have a different attitude.

DYANE. Don't you feel lonely here.

KARPOTIS. A rich man, dear Dyane, is never lonely. Besides, I have a strong bodyguard. The chap Trygeos met on his way in came here with a thousand armed technical advisors to do a deal with me. But he came to me alone. The rest were held for interrogation by my guards. Now he knows. He will try no more tricks.

HERMES. You are a man after my own heart. As a ^{youngster} ~~young~~ man I would have envied you.

DYANE. Are you happy?

KARPOTIS. Only a woman will ask ^{such} ~~this sort~~ of question. (Stops). No.

TRYGEOS

HERMES. Sheev perversity. That's it - perversity. I remember. You wanted

~~a woman and you wouldn't chase me~~ ^{chase} ~~me~~ ^{Beckett.} ~~Beckett.~~HERMES ~~TRYGEOS~~. Why?~~Not to me, I don't know what it is.~~KARPOTIS. Happiness is not important. Power is. ~~But~~ I cannot have

the power I want, the power I can have, the power I can wield. No space to build giant factories for inter-world and sub-aquatic experiments. Otherwise I would have armed myself with the most up-to-date devices and from my undisclosed position in the sky or under the ocean hold the balance of obliteration. Nation can fight nation but no nation can fight KARPOTIS particularly when no one knows where to find him. (Radio-printer starts clicking). Excuse me a moment. (Reads, scowls, smiles). Unidentified submarine in my harbour. Believed ^(comes back) ~~Accounted for~~. What an opportunity, Trygeos, to impose peace. One man holding the world in thrall, keeping the wars small and profitable, ^{the wider} ~~saving~~ ^{peace}. Think of it!

HERMES. A very practical possibility. Thucydides spoke of sanity emerging from opposing fears. Here you would have its consummation. But it's beyond you.

DYANE. My god! ^{What can one do.} ~~The impasse we find ourselves in~~ ^{Will it be ever possible} ~~How can~~ ^{to} reason with man? (Changes mood.)

Tell me Karpotis: what has happened to ~~prevent~~ you change

so much?

TRYGEOS. I left you with ~~power~~ ^{the group}. You were supposed to follow ~~me~~ ^{me to Hermes}. You never turned up.

KARPOTIS. I haven't changed. I'm still with you. But on my terms. You are too woolly-headed, archaic. (Sounds of distant flute). Funny! Flute at this time and age. And here?

TRYGEOS (Listen) It is.

KARPOTIS. I remember now. The flute started it. We finished the job. You recollect how hard I worked. Well this flute starts (sound ceases) - it has stopped. Good! Well the flute! ^{Actually} started; it was Pan. ^{He} started it. Everybody stops what he is doing dances, shouts whoopees ~~and~~ ^{some} runs off to do whoopee, ^{others} argues, disputes, bargain call ~~one another~~ ^{each other} names and shriek at the top of their voices. And the names - I never knew there were so many dirty words in the dictionary. It was pandaeonium. I said to myself. If there are the same people with a cause, give me the lunies. Lunacy has no causes. It's straightforward.

TRYGEOS. What happened then?

KARPOTIS. Here I am. The supremely successful man. (The music is heard again drawing near).

HEAMES. More visitors?

KARPOTIS. Not here.

TRYGEOS. Music.

KARPOTIS. Pan. (All listen. Trygeos and Karpotis stiffen, follow the beat of the music, turn and watch Dyane. Suddenly.)

TRYGEOS } Whoppee! (Both rush towards her).
KARPOTIS }

DYANE. Are you mad! Stop it.

TRYGEOS. (Aggressively). Don't run.

KARPOTIS. On that side. Don't let her run away. Dyane... Dyane.

(Make concentric advance. Hermes looks on quizzically)

DYANE. Hermes! Keep them away, please. (Runs to him for protection)

TRYGEOS. Dyane, ... I love you!

DYANE. Stop them.

HERMES. Trygeos, Karpotis. (Music stops abruptly. They come to).

TRYGEOS. I ... am sorry. I don't know what came over me.

HERMES. The urge of creation, I presume. A bit = cataclysmic perhaps!

DYANE. I need fresh air. I'll walk in the garden. (To Hermes) Coming?

HERMES. Yes. (Dyane goes out first. Hermes before exit). Even your pleasures turn out to be either Herculean labour, penance or martyrdom. Really it is time you learned at least one thing - how to make love! (Goes).

KARPOTIS. Love! I can have a different girl every night if I want to.

HERMES. (Popping his head round the door). ~~Endless variety becomes the same monotony.~~ Plus ça change plus la même chose. (Disappears).

Trygeos and Karpotis look at each other - embarrassed - for a couple of seconds. They burst out laughing).

KARPOTIS. Prize mugs we are!

TRYGEOS. In front of him to.

KARPOTIS. Pity he happened to be here.

TRYGEOS. But we were ~~fast~~. It would have been difficult.

KARPOTIS. For Dyane. Don't be a fool. She can cope with a whole platoon and at the end she'll be as fresh as a daisy. Would you like to stay here with me?

TRYGEOS. Do what?

KARPOTIS. To ~~advise~~ me. Look round the office occasionally. Just to have you around. It's good to have an old friend around.

TRYGEOS. I'm a farmer. No head for business.

KARPOTIS. Don't worry. You won't have to use your brains. I ~~use~~ use mine. I have enough for both of us. Look where it got me! (Gestures.)

TRYGEOS. Still you have to meet people, talk to them, arrange deals.

KARPOTIS. The only thing you need know about business transaction is this: shout more than the other fellows, lie more convincingly, and pretend always that you have money, MONEY, behind you.

TRYGEOS. Money talks eh?

KARPOTIS. Talks? It roars. It illuminates the heavens above and turns hell into a pleasant retreat. You can do anything with it except carry it.

TRYGEOS. Because of the cash boys. (Laughs). In any remark. I cannot do it Karpotis. Besides I'm committed as you know.

KARPOTIS. Enough of that foolery. What do you expect to achieve and for whom? Would they bother about you? No, of course not.

TRYGEOS. Still...

KARPOTIS. Mind you I agree with you: the big guys mustn't do anything stupid. They'll spoil everything. But all these little

flare-up here and there do a lot of good. They are good for business, good for trade, prevent us from stagnating and helps us to learn about places - we hear about places we never thought they existed. Besides a whiff of cordite makes man a man.

TRYGEOS. I don't know what to say.

KARPOTIS. Don't say it. Think about it. You'll have money. You'll have power. You can do what you want to do and everybody will respect you for it. Those who haven't been rich and powerful don't know what it means. There is stirring music in power, inspiring stanzas in substantial bank-balances. (Harmodios bursts in, Disagustedly.)
What is this?

HARMODIOS. Is Hermes here? Trygeos, glad I found you. Where is Hermes?

TRYGEOS. In the garden.

HARMODIOS. Not there.

KARPOTIS. What's going on here? Am I allowed to know?

TRYGEOS. Harmodios is a friend of Hermes. We left him behind when we came ~~in~~ to see you. What's up Harmodios.

HARMODIOS. Everything's up.

TRYGEOS. For instance.

HARMODIOS. Everything.

TRYGEOS. Let's not go back to Attic comedy now. Tell me what is bothering you.

HARMODIOS. Peace is ~~not in the deep freeze~~ ^{abducted; held incommunicado.}. She will perish. She is beyond our reach.

KARPOTIS: What was I telling you Trygeos.

TRYGEOS: (Ignoring him). You fools! You ~~didn't~~ ^{blegdy look} guard her properly. You ~~didn't~~ ^{bet her} guard her properly. You ~~became~~ ^{did not guard her properly because you} cocksure and lax.

HARMODIOS: It was her fault ~~really~~. She ~~was~~ ^{drunk too much} ~~fed~~ and ~~loused~~. Every ~~one~~ ^{one} wanted to treat her, and she became more and more drunk each ~~day~~. But she walks one day and stumbles into the arms of a tall ~~thin~~ general. We've tried to ~~rescue~~ ^{get} her back. She got away and fell in the arms of a squat heavy-jowled general with a couple of rows of medals on his chest. Then hundreds of soldiers gathered round and she ~~we~~ ^{we} could see her no more. We ~~stood~~ ~~that~~ ^{we} shouted our slogans. We became hoarse ~~from~~ ^{with} shouting. The general came forward and ordered ~~to~~ ^{us} go home. He had enough of us. "We are sufficiently powerful," he said "to protect peace." Our profession is peace. Clear the square or my soldiers will clear you of it." What could we do?

KARPOTIS: There it is a nutshell. Strength! Have you got it, you can stand up and talk and people will obey you. A general tells them to go home and they go.

HARMODIOS: You weren't there. You don't know what it is to face armed soldiers.

KARPOTIS: Don't know! Poor lad! Tell him Trygeos. ~~Do~~ I know?

TRYGEOS: (Nods) ^{think}

KARPOTIS: Do you ^{think} I happen to be where I am by miracle. Straight out of a cocoon so to speak. No my lad. I too made my ~~own~~ sacrifice

to entrenched stupidity. I, too, committed suicide a thousand times for empty shibboleths; felt those tremendous apprehensions which claw the tissues of hardihood. ^{Felt them alright and} ~~and~~ ^{mistook} for images of glory ^{Valhalla} ~~dearable~~ still I learned better; ~~until~~ I found there is no ~~dearable~~ in the horror of fear; ~~until~~ I realised that there is only one thing that can help you: Power. I became powerful. Now I can spit in a general's eye if I want to or kick the back-side of a cocky representative of any damn government.

Stay here, Trygeer. For old friendships' sake. ~~Stay~~ if for nothing else. You'll be better off.

TRYGEER. ~~From Harmonios~~ Trying a spot of appeasement?

KARPOTIS. This is meaningless and you know it. The trouble with you is that you can't forget your prejudices. You want to ^{do} something unusual but in the usual way.

TRYGEER. (To Harmonios). We must find Hermes.

KARPOTIS. What will he do for you? Fortify your goaded resolution? Perhaps. ^{he can do that with his quickness. But can} ~~(Then leave).~~ Can he help you out of your undisplayed dilemma? (As the disappear). No! He can't. (He goes to the door). ^{What does it matter if the big ones} ~~let the big ones~~ destroy themselves; ~~then~~ the little ones will be ^{on} ~~left~~ top... You fools!

X X X

ACT V.

[~~We are~~ Back in Act III. The group of youngsters are still there; ^{lost} ~~almost~~ in erotic stupor. Music is playing. Enter Hermes, Trygeos, Dyane. They look grave. Evidently they have been arguing or quarrelling a great deal).

HERMES. I told you a thousand times. I can change nothing; I can help no one.

TRYGEOS. Then...

GIRL. Shush.

HERMES. (Goes near the group) ^{kicks girl gently on backside} ~~What the hell are you doing?~~ Don't

^{shush my} ~~still at it?~~
GIRL. Ouch!

DYANE. (Comes up). You are still here then.

GIRL. It's been ever so cosy. We've had a smashing time. Lovely lot of records you have. We've enjoyed ourselves. (Cuddles up ^{to} her partner).

HERMES. There is your answer. Enjoy yourself. ~~Forget~~ ^{me} whatever it was your mission was about. You prick ^{like} ~~a~~ bad conscience. I've had about enough of you.

TRYGEOS. ^{But} ~~They~~ ^{are} on the move again.

HERMES. What of it!

TRYGEOS. What shall we do?

HERMES. How the hell do you expect me to know what you can or will do. A woman ~~is~~ raped once, ~~and~~ always knows what ~~to~~ do next time. You have been raped

a thousand times and you are still green.

TRAGEDOS. If this thing happens none of us will survive.

HERMES. I will, have no fear. Why? Because I evolve, adapt myself, change. Here I always own. So can you if you set your mind to it. In our divine council we learn all there is to learn about the brutal law of survival. It's very instructive too, believe me to be subordinate and equal, law-maker and law-breaker at the same time, to praise and undermine to dispute and agree simultaneously and keep your seat in the ^{Zeus's} Cabinet. Adaptability - that is my motto. Make ^{it} your motto, Tragedos.

TRAGEDOS. You suggest we give in?

HERMES. ~~Persist in the thought~~ Oh! God - myself - ^{dense can you get.} how can one get across.

I hate these infernal questions which require a long monologue. So does ~~everybody~~ ^{everyone round here} think.

TRAGEDOS. You haven't answered.

HERMES. I know I haven't, you fool. Well. Don't give in. It's cowardice. Get on - on the winning side. There are always two sides. Push only what is crumbling - then you are ^a survivor! Go with the stream - that is enlightened self-interest. There is nothing to it. quite easy. Above all never conjure up tragedies for yourself. At best tragedies are only melodramas and when they are not they are frightfully uninteresting. The trouble with you mortals is that you have been trained to look in front of you in fear, downwards in terror and

upwards in awe. what you don't know scares you. Once you get to know the little thing that scares you and find it harmless you open up bigger areas of fear. You think you tumble from scare to scare when you are spinning round on a top and you are exactly where you always were - balanced on a precarious pin-head of illusion. You take the ^{tangent} ~~from~~ ^(Tones down) ~~of~~ ^{existed as} ~~life for~~ universal continuity. It tricks you. Get above it; ride it don't let it ride you.

TRYGEOS. (Actually outside ^{all} ~~this~~ ^{shrugs} ~~quint of his~~ ~~shrugs~~ his shoulders). I suppose it's alright. In time...

HERMES. If you have it old boy, if you have it! Dyane will tell us. (Dyane has been reading a message passed to her by one of the girls. She ^{is} ~~is~~ very concentrated ^{here} and whilst the above was going on ^{she} ~~was~~ ^{becoming} ~~getting~~ increasingly agitated). Dyane:

DYANE. (Looks at Hermes then at Trygeos, steadily ^{as if} ~~as if~~ for first time).

Hermes! Trygeos! (Scrieks violently. All freeze in their ^{places} ~~places~~).

HERMES. What's the matter Dyane?

DYANE. (Looks ^{wild} ~~wild~~. Shrieks and shouts). Leave me alone. Alone! (She goes into a mad swirl of dance) Alone!

TRYGEOS. Bitchant. The original Bitchant.

HERMES. Apollo - ~~that~~ ^{you} callow little god - ~~has~~ ^{you've} turned her to a Pythoness. (Dyane continues the dance. She shrieks. ^{Alight} ~~the~~ picks her out and ^{she} ~~is~~ held in its beam while the ~~others~~ ^{rest} rest)

are in darkness. She slows down and stops, panting, ~~chiselled~~.

DYANE. Echo! (Shrilly). The echo! Where is it? What? I remember now. Time. Yes time. Goes ding-dong, ding-dong (sabres the air ^{violently} with one hand) ding... Sliced off...

Stands in midstream forlorn
like the bridge of Avignon...

Where am I? Tomb? Who is there? (Shouts). Who is there?
Wait: I remember! ~~was~~. Everything is clear. I cannot follow you. You have been going round and round, round and round... and the funny thing you have been going only round. ^{Ha! Ha!} Round and round. + Barren. I cannot wait. Life is short. It is short. I must grasp my hour (twirls round)... my fleeting hour to germinate, ~~to~~ produce. I don't want to remain fallow. Medea told me, ~~it's~~ "our fate ~~to~~ ^{either} produce ^{or not to produce} what is ~~ultimately~~ our masters and destroyers, ~~or not~~. Bad ^{either} ~~both~~ ways. ^{well you} To be ploughed with dragon's teeth - poor girl, ^{she} knew all about dragon's teeth - or lay barren, covered in bitter thickets. That's our problem.

Yours? I can hear your thoughts Trygges. (Becomes vehement). I can. They buzz like a ~~thousand~~ captive blue-bottles. They yell :- Oh! this agony of drift; this galling urge for excuses, for refuge. What for. To escape facts? You can escape them only if you can understand them, if deep inside you, you can understand them! Have you seen Terror

grip the infant's brain? It's a fact, not illusion. You're in a cataclysm of situations striving to free itself and be deeper and deeper involved? These situations are man-made. Have you seen the look of utter impotence in men's eyes as they turn to heaven? A bird flies; lips quiver in inner prayer - 'oh: why, can't I fly away too? Have you? It's everywhere, at every time. Perhaps you have. You're surrounded by these fields. But have you felt it? No. You don't feel because you surrender too early and become brave to escape your discomfort. You find glory by turning yourselves to pawns - all of you turning yourselves to pawns - in some monstrous game of chess played by blind devils.

And you do that when you get perplexed. You get perplexed and get paralysed (Stops). I hear music. (hissem)^{no.} My fibres are humming. (Hysterical). Hermes! What's happening? (The scene comes back to normal).

HERMES. Nothing my dear.

DIANE. What's happening?

HERMES. You are fixed. A bit excited maybe. You were telling us we are perplexed.

DIANE. I know. (Matter of fact). Of course you are. You find an obstacle. Not a physical one: you are sufficiently brutish to charge at a physical obstacle; but intellectual one the dimensions of which you cannot realise. That

frighten you. (To Trygeos). Is n't it so? And because you don't know its nature and cannot argue it away you become important, terrified. Do you know what I think? If you could give birth even once, you would see that really there is no fears except fear itself. You get it?

A GIRL. (^{DEMONSTRATOR} Lying in the corner with a young in stupor). What are they talking about?

DEAN DEMONSTRATOR. Search me!

GIRL. (Amble to centre of stage). I say! Any of you interested in anything or only talk.

TRYGEOS. Pipe down!

GIRL. (Approaches Hermes). What about you?

DYANE. Don't touch her. (Restrains herself, then with ^{vivacious} ~~suavity~~ ^{suavity}). A ^{young} ~~formid~~ ^{formid}!

HERMES. She will soon learn!

TRYGEOS. (Pushes the girl away). Get back to your place or you will have your ^{little} bottom smacked.

GIRL. (Goes away). Not so little!

DYANE. (Just above a whisper). Proper little harlot. (To Hermes). Do you like her?

HERMES. [Embracing her ^{from back} and kissing ~~nap of her neck~~ ^{nap of her neck}]. I ~~like~~ ^{love} this amorous, insatiable bitch here. (To Trygeos) Don't look so grim! (To Dyane). Mind you ... I would like to study her reactions ... for amusement!

DYANE. (Faces him). What?

HERMES. Well ... intellectual amusement!

DYANE Everything to you - our love I suppose to - is intellectual amusement.

HERMES. Dash it all my dear. I am immortal, arn't I? where would I be if I had no curiosity. (He seizes something. Urgent). Just a second. ^(TO TRYGEOS) Take a long, good look. (Light fades slightly and the windows are illuminated from below with yellowish, then mauve, then ghostly blue light which reaches skywards).

TRYGEOS. My God!

DYANE. I feel it - in my fibres!

DEMONSTRATORS. (Look transfixed) She says. The ~~best~~ ^{last} ... No!

HERMES. (Studies a globe). Some one give me a pair of dividers. Quickly.

DYANE. (Hands him a pair). What is it?

HERMES. (Measures. Thinks for a second.) ^{I am not quite} ~~Dyane Trygeos,~~ ^{come.} ~~One moment! (Thinks again?)~~ ^{certain} ~~come with me.~~ (We may still make it. (Depart. The other remain gazing at the window ^{at the window} as if petrified).

ACT VI.

[Large room, ~~example~~ in a skyscraper or a big hotel. It overlooks nothing in particular. Hermes, Trygeos and Dyane stand somewhere in the centre.]

DYANE. What an exciting journey! The air was cool and lovely. I must sit down and take my shoes off. (Sits).

TRYGEOS. No one here. I thought we were coming to surprise them.

HERMES. ~~Something must have gone wrong.~~ They ^{ought to} ~~should~~ be here by now. I cannot understand it. These animals are so well trained;... they take to protocol as a duck to the water. They should have responded. Everything was arranged with such meticulous care. I cannot make it out.

TRYGEOS. Perhaps we are early ourselves.

HERMES. Alright. The same trite joke we trot out everytime we take a journey! We had a cosmic push behind us, and overtook time.

TRYGEOS. That's what happened.

DYANE. The gifts have started.

HERMES. They are here. Now we shall see what we are going to see. At last Trygeos, I hope you will be satisfied.

TRYGEOS. What shall I say to them?

HERMES. Nothing. We are not on the same wavelength. We will not be here to them. In fact we are not here. [Four doors

open simultaneously and four men stride in. They pause.]

DYANE. Another masculine gathering. The four horsemen of the Apocalypse. (Acts out of the way. One man is short and fat, the other long fat; the one is lean and concave the other convex and lean. All four look as determined as bulldozers and almost run over Hermes and Trygeos who have to scamper out of the way of their wife for ~~the~~ vigorous handshaking).

HERMES. They have a hundred horse-power drive apiece! (With Trygeos, ~~the~~ ^{mayer} ~~withdraw~~ to the back of ^{room} ~~stage~~).

STAMOLCHEY Evgeny. (Ebullient). Thank you for the invitation. I came right away. Lunaskayia was in labour but I left her because I wanted to meet you.

STOKENVILLE Algermon. What? (Direct, self-controlled)

STAMOLCHEY. No need to ~~upset you~~ worry over it. Lunaskayia is my pedigree cow. I'm very fond of her.

STOKENVILLE. It is I, who must thank you, Mr. Stamolchev for your invitation.

STAMOLCHEY. My invitation?

STOKENVILLE. Yes. Here is your telegram. "Personal meeting imperative". Read it. (Hands it to him. Stam. reads.)

ARCHONEAU ^{jean,} (Marshal. (Majestic). I had an invitation from you Sir Arthur and from Stamolchev. Both came at the same time. Then I had one from Algermon Stokenville.

FORELORN, Sir Arthur. (Suave, hard-headed, with simulacrum of abstract-

ion). My policy, through this crisis, has been "wait and see." I said to myself: Let things simmer for a while. Something will come out of it, and if nothing does come out, simmering may do a lot of good. I sent no invitations. I received one from ^{Stamolchev} ~~Stokenville~~, and from ~~both~~ ^{the} of you ^{both} ^{and Stokenville} in quick succession. You proposed the place and time of meeting. You offered us your hospitality. I had to cancel a dinner engagement & attend.

ARCHONEAU. You sent no message! Do not trifle with destiny Sir Arthur. Only the paramountcy of duty permits me to ignore your calculated slight of last year and sit in conference with you.

STOKENVILLE. ^{To Stamolchev} (With vigour). You must know the contents of your telegram. Is it necessary to read it through? It is long, stereotyped and ^{very} abusive, ^{and} ^{but} however obscure it is, the invitation is clear. That is why I am here.

STAMOLCHEV. (Excitedly). A hoax! A dirty trick. Unscrupulous fabrication. Never wrote it. Never invited anyone. It's me who was invited, by you. me.

ARCHONEAU. You have invited me too.

FORELORN. And me.

STAMOLCHEV. What on earth for! And why? To clutter up the place.

ARCHONEAU. What you say can only be the expression of the political credo of the uneducated. You forget the developing realities, Monsieur Stamolchev.

STAMBOUCHEV. Didn't want to get your goat. I had an invitation from you to come. I've accepted it. Here I am. Your guest.

FORELORN. Is it true to say that everyone ~~has~~ been invited by every body else and equally true to say that no one has invited any one? It appears to be so. Have our chancelleries done this without our knowing it.

STAMBOUCHEV. Not mine. Out of the question.

STOKENVILLE. It is a hypothesis I cannot entertain.

FORELORN. I, also, am at a loss. (Stops for a moment). However, the question how we came to be here may not be significant at the moment. The fact that we are here may prove significant.

ARCHONEAU. Yes - indeed, indeed! I concur.

STAMBOUCHEV. I'll stay on condition we issue immediately a communiqué saying that "Premier Evgeny Stambouchev, forever anxious to preserve and strengthen ... and strengthen peace ^{accepted} ~~responded~~ with alacrity the invitation etc".

STOKENVILLE. We came on our knees to you - that's what you want us to say.

STAMBOUCHEV. Internal conditions in my country compel me to demand that

STOKENVILLE. The honour and power of my nation conceived in liberty and dedicated to liberty preclude the possibility of it being categorised a suppliant.

ARCHONEAU. So does the honour of Marshal Archoneau and the honour of France. Monsieur.

HERMES. Hear, how they talk! They are the gods not us.

FRAGERS. (In a whisper). Gods who ain't! gods!

FORELORN. My government believes in personal contacts and, I would like to add I am glad to be here.

STAMOLCHEV. I will remain only on condition

ARCHBISHOP. (Interrupts him). My country never begins pourparlers under conditions Monsieur.

STAMOLCHEV. (looks him up and down). In that case there is no more to be said. (He moves towards the door...with hesitation).

HERMES. Think again Stamolchev. And again. Beyond that door you are on a doom-laden, irreversible course.

STAMOLCHEV. Did anybody say anything?

STOKENVILLE. (Emphatically). No.

FORELORN. I trust you will not, none of you will accuse me of levity if I remind you of that old British patriotic song:

We are here, because we are here

Because we are here.

We are here...

As we happen to be here because we happen to be here through a series of baffling circumstances which might be, let me hasten to admit, unprofitable to unravel at the moment would it not be to the advantage of us all if we availed ourselves of the opportunity, even informally, of exchanging a few words. After all there is a

situation developing which, ~~is~~ indeed, for want of less emotive term can be described as quite dangerous— dangerous to all.

STAMOLCHEV. (Pointing at Stokenville). It's his fault. He is the aggressor.

FORELORN. Words have been flung out at last— I'll not describe them or comment on them; may we take it that communication has been established?

STAMOLCHEV. We say in my country: "You shoe a horse and the donkey lifts up his legs in sympathy". My quarrel is with him. Keep out of it Sir Arthur Forelorn if you don't want ... well, to be hurt.

STOKENVILLE. May I say that mine is exclusively with you. I am determined not to let you get away with it, come what may. I don't fear your threats and I am not afraid to face them. Do you get it or shall I spell it out for you. (Atmosphere ^{becomes} gets heavy).

DYANE. Things are hotting up.

HERMES. They are showing off their horns. Butting will come later.

Trygeos, ~~locks~~ ^{lock} all the doors. No one is to leave the place.

FORELORN. Since we are talking somehow, might I suggest that it will be preferable if we all sit down. We shall be more comfortable and if at all pertinent to suggest, less likely to be carried away.

ARCHONEAU. I find the suggestion singularly attractive. Pray be seated. (makes regal gesture and sits down. The two antagonists eye him dubiously and sit down. So does Forelorn. Archeneau picks up bottle.) Claret. Excellent. Why did I ~~not~~ ^{not} see it earlier.

A drink, I trust, will be welcome.

FORELORN: Always is.

STAMOLCHEY: Vodka for me. (Stops). Not yet. We have some unfinished business. Well, Stokenville?

✓ STOKENVILLE. Our position was made unalterably clear in my all-nation hook-up six days ago. ^{It is not subject to alteration. I will} ~~from that I am prepared to budge~~ not an inch. (Forelorn and Achonear have a drink).

STAMOLCHEY. And our attitude has been explained and analysed with characteristic clarity in my private letter to you. We didn't publish it because we didn't want to embarrass you further by broadcasting what we know of your political decisions and military preparations against the freedom of a little socialist country under the powerful protection of my Soviet Union.

FORELORN. (Looking at his glass, musing). What is He Cuba to you and you to Cuba?

● STAMOLCHEY. What are you talking about.

FORELORN. An anti-classical ditty just came to mind - you wouldn't understand.

STAMOLCHEY. Wouldn't I? I'm a boor eh? I'll have you know that I could quote the Bible by heart when you, at that age, didn't know which way the chicken lays its eggs. (To Stokenville): Did you read my letter.

STOKENVILLE. (Snaveh). Your letter was 564 pages long. It has immobilised my top Russian translators for a week now. Chunks

read so far, deal with everything except the points I raised. There is a reference to Genesis followed by a polemical refutation of it; three references to Abraham Lincoln bearing upon the alleged incidence of mental retardation in America;

STANMOLCHEV. (Chuckles). Good one that!

STOKENVILLE. one hundred pages of stodgy passages from Karl Marx, a complete sub-chapter from the fourth edition of Stalin's 'Problems of Leninism';

STANMOLCHEV. (Tumps up). I don't believe it. Never. I want proof. (Sits down). I'll make a note of it.

STOKENVILLE. Acres of abuse but no argument. If it were a short letter I would have answered it.

STANMOLCHEV. We write a lot, in my country.

ARCHONEAU. And read little.

STANMOLCHEV. Jean Archoneau. Your report is cheap. It does not befit your country, ~~neither~~^{nor} the character of these solemn proceedings. If, by what you just said you intended to insult my party and my government as illiterates ~~beers~~ I must tell you that my party and government are conducting unswervingly and consistently in all directions, an offensive against the forces of imperialism and war.

ARCHONEAU. How infallibly you prove ~~your~~^{the} accusations against yourself. And how you carry on. In France we use logic. Everything logical must be expressed clearly and succinctly. Verbosity, we find,

springs from confusion and creates confusion.

STAMOLCHEV. In face of the intrigues of the warmongers we'll strengthen the forces fighting for peace.

ARCHONERU. Till there is no peace left to fight for ~~unwillingly~~
~~our~~ ~~the~~ ~~undisturbed~~ ~~measurable~~ ~~own~~

FORELORN. ~~My~~ government always considers it expedient...

STAMOLCHEV. At this juncture what your government considers expedient or inexpedient is utterly irrelevant. Everybody knows that the ^{venezian} reactionary circles of American finance capital are bent on enslaving the entire world and to do that they are prepared to plunge us all into thermonuclear ^{war} hell. Both of you (to Forelorn and Archoneau), if you value your existence and haven't kowtowed to Stokenville should join me to resist the mad dogs of imperialism.

STOKENVILLE. And what about the howling hyenas of aggressive communism?

DYANE. What are they arguing about? Why don't they get on with whatever they have to get on with.

HERMES. They know only too well! The sad thing is that they consider ^{it of such overwhelming} it ~~important~~.

FORELORN. My government believes that success depends, primarily upon the exercise of moderation and in this particular case, moderation of language. One side may like to grow bigger and fatter men, the other fatter and leaner. Let us forget

about these things and see if we can find ways and means to live together. Since we gave up our thalassocracy the world has shrunk. We are all neighbours now, living in glass houses. It might be to our benefit if we throw no stones.

STOKENVILLE. You are right Forebarn. Stamolchev said something. I will not let it pass. I am convinced there are no expectations of spectacular reversals in his methods and aims. (Moves to a map. Points - addresses Stamolchev). You have swallowed up, this, this, this & this (points at areas in the periphery of the Soviet Union) during half of my life time.

STAMOLCHEV. Swallowed nothing. We liberated them.

STOKENVILLE. As a bon constructor liberator what he gobbles down. You² have tried to do the same here (points at Azerbaijan) but were prevented. You had this (points at Korea) three-quarters down your gullet^s but you were forced to disgorge it with a strong kick on your backside. Now you are trying to do the same down here (points Cuba and South America) on my doorstep. You have found a method to make people loan you their country. You ^{make of such} use ~~that~~ country ^{as a base} to pounce on the next one. Your ambitions are limitless. The more they are satisfied the more insatiable they grow. You must be stopped. You will be stopped - here!

STAMOLCHEV. Have you finished. (Takes his watch out).

STOKENVILLE. (Sits down). Well? (Stamolchev looks at his watch ^{pointed by} ~~document~~ ~~del~~).

HERMES. It is later than you think. (All look at the clock and synchronize their watches.)

.. Later than you think! (Like a broken record this part is heard for five or six times.)

.. Later than you think ... later than you think ...

later than you think ... later than you think.

STAMOLCHEV. (~~Stares~~ his face and ears. Shouts). Stop it!

STOKENVILLE. (Almost simultaneously but not quite). Stop it.

FORELORN

ARCHONEMAN

} (Exchange glances.) Anything the matter? (The other

few turn and look at the clock - anxiously).

HERMES. Look at it. It is important. Everything is measured by it - even ~~the~~ eternal verifies. Look up. Yes! Look up. Everybody is doing it, now. They look up. At the sky. But they see no stars. No stars can be seen. Why? There is no reason why they shouldn't be seen. Only lines are drawn deeper round the mouth; eyes have turned inwards; ^{they} try to fix on something but there is nothing there, nothing viable, not even memory. They cannot see the stars you have drawn a huge madman's grin across the sky - a toothless grin ready to break in madman's laughter and spew oblivion. You are powerful men. Why steal the stars from those who like to gaze at the stars... ~~Remember the laughter~~ You are too small for such cosmic joke.

(Stokenville and Stamolchev are passing to and fro).

ARCHONEMAN. It's getting chilly.

TRYGEOS. There is nothing left to do but pray.

FORELORN. If only prayer could help!

STAMOLCHEV. Prayers: To whom pray?

TRYGEOS. The powerlessness of your powers to save you. (Forelorn slings his shoulder).

STAMOLCHEV. (Stops in his tracks. Faces Stokenville. Opens his mouth. Says nothing).

STOKENVILLE. (Quietly). I left you an honourable way out. Recall your ships.

STAMOLCHEV. (Firmly). No.

STOKENVILLE. Please do.

STAMOLCHEV. No. My captains have been ordered to proceed on their peaceful journey to their destination.

STOKENVILLE. And mine have orders to stop these death-loaded ships. These orders are not revocable.

STAMOLCHEV. What if my ships don't stop.

STOKENVILLE. They will be sunk.

ARCHONEAU. (Looks at paper handed him by Trygeos). Your ships are now an hour's journey apart.

STAMOLCHEV. Thank you for this unnecessary bit of information. I know where my ships are. (To Stokenville). If you sink my ships it's going to be war.

STOKENVILLE. It is the grimmest of possibilities but it has been considered.

STAMOLCHEV. You'll bear the entire responsibility for this.

FORELORN. As there is no reasonable ^{expectation} of confirming the argument in another place, the question of moral or other responsibility can have no validity and cannot be even of academic ^{interest} ~~value~~, except perhaps, assuming even partial survival - and by all scientific prognoses this is a big assumption, - to a Papuan historian of the future ^{preparing a thesis} ~~speculating~~ on the extinction of European civilization.

STAMOLCHEV. You will become extinct. My system will survive. We ^{et} become your grave-diggers.

DYANE. How obscene!

FORELORN. On the assumption that your system is likely to survive you are prepared to incinerate both us and yourself.

STAMOLCHEV. (Impatiently). No red herrings! (To Stokenville). Have you got any idea of my arsenal? And of my artillery vehicle. I can rub out every town in your country.

STOKENVILLE. I know. But as soon as your rockets leave their pads an avalanche of death will descend on you. Even my second strike capability is such that it can destroy every target in your country.

TRYGEOS. Is this what they call the 'balance of terror'.

HERMES. 'Balance of suicide'. ^{can} You see ^{now} (Trygeos) the unredeemable failure of your race of mortals? Still you want to save them? (Trygeos nods). It's not worth it.

STAMOLCHEV. Will you withdraw your private fleet?

STOKENVILLE. Unless you withdraw yours first and promise

to withdraw all offensive weapons from my area.

STAMOLCHEV. Then it's war.

FORELORN. Is n't there anything we can do.

STAMOLCHEV. You are the people in between - ~~inevitable~~ position. What can you do. It's war, Forelorn, war. (He goes to the door).

STOKENVILLE. War it shall be (he walks to the opposite door. Stamolchev tries to open his door. Pulls, nothing happens. The ^{same} ~~next~~ Stokenville.)

STAMOLCHEV. This is a bloody imperialist trick. Who locked my door. Why? (Looks at the other three). Well, who did it?

STOKENVILLE. Mine is locked also. (The other two try their doors).

ARCHONEAU. All locked.

FORELORN. Indeed they are. It appears to me that through an oversight of ^a security zealot we are now prisoners.

HERMES. You are not a prisoner. Giv Arthur Forelorn.

FORELORN. (who has heard it). What?

HERMES. (Audible to all but not seen). None of you is a prisoner. Though it might be an excellent idea! Removing all of you from the scene gives the world time to breathe and maybe recover its sanity. Unfortunately it cannot be done. You are too well guarded. I am not going to scold you, advise you or tell you whose particular social and economic dunghill is more fragrant than the others. Only this.

think again of what you are doing—and...think quickly. No one is going to do the thinking for you.

I saw your pyrotechnics; ~~also~~ the mute horror of the void. I wept. You, Stokenville and Stamolchev! Maybe you are too tough for Fears.

I am not. (Silence).

STAMOLCHEV. Who is he? Where from?

FORELORN. I am just as bewildered as you are.

ARCHONEAU. A war of nerves by other means.

STAMOLCHEV. A hoax. You've planned it. You are all against me.

(Almost hysterical). Guards, guards! (Bangs on door). Open up!

Open up: Open up.

STOKENVILLE. You will damage yourself! Come and sit down. We are in the same boat, remember.

STAMOLCHEV. (Allows himself to be guided to a chair. He is given a drink).

Thoughts. You are very kind Stokenville.

STOKENVILLE. So are you, without your parody of rockets and theories.

ARCHONEAU. (To himself). "Jailer jailed" - I can see the headlines.

STAMOLCHEV. What is to happen?

ARCHONEAU. Whatever is to happen I am prepared to face it as it befits Archoneau.

Archoneau.

FORELORN. I think we have better make up our minds to stay here quietly until we are released — or taken out and shot.

STAMOLCHEV. Do you think we are going to be shot. (A flow a pause?) We can't stay here. Simply we can't.

ARCHONEAU. Why not Monsieur. You are on my national territory. You are my guest.

STAMOLCHEV. In twenty-eight minutes, if my watch is right

STOKENVILLE. we shall be incinerated.

STAMOLCHEV. Yes.

ARCHONEAU. If this is a target area it will be an act of unprovoked aggression.

STAMOLCHEV. Does it matter - really matter? (To Stokenville). For the last time - withdraw your fleet... I appeal to you.

STOKENVILLE. And I appeal to you. Order your ships to return and withdraw your armament from my doorstep.

STAMOLCHEV. You must do what I ask. For me this is a question of honour.

STOKENVILLE. For me a question of policy and of the destiny of my country. What I have stated are my minimum requirements. They are irreducible. If they are complied with we open up possibilities for further negotiation and agreement.

STAMOLCHEV. (Looks at ceiling and whistles - eventually). No.

FORELOAN. Gentlemen! I am not privy to your quarrel. I run, ~~however~~ ^{never-}theless, equal risk with you. Couldn't you, even now, find a compromise formula? For example: freeze your fleet in their present position for twenty-four hours - to give us time to think.

STOKENVILLE. Under present exigencies such an attitude by an ally - and twenty-four hours is long enough for him to have his rockets in position - is pointless if not ~~downright~~ ^{outright} capricious.

FORELORN. (With a slight touch of temper - for once). I was not trying to wriggle out of my responsibilities. Let's give ourselves time to think. We can't do that after we are vaporized.

ARCHONEAU. I agree with Forelorn and I join with him in appealing to you both for a twenty-four hour standstill. (He tries the phone - dead). We are cut off. We cannot communicate with outside. We are trapped, yes trapped like rats. Only twenty five minutes. My country is not involved in this. ~~And yet will~~ burn. Twenty-five minutes. (All look at the clock which becomes increasingly more audible and provides the inescapable background noise for the following).

FORELORN. Twenty-four minutes. (Silence. Stokenville ~~the~~ traces something on table. Left hand proceeds horizontally, right vertically and come to contact.)

STOKENVILLE. (When his hands meet). Shooooo. (lifts hands up in gesture of despair. Stamolchev covers his face).

FORELORN. Twenty-three minutes.

STAMOLCHEV. (Savagely). Must you! Ad right, I know I'm offering myself a sacrifice to myself. So are you. Must you remind me of it. (Silence. Tic-tac. Tic-tac, tic-tac.) Impotent,

absolutely impotent. (Tic-tac, tic-tac, tic-tac)

ARCHONEAU. If we were birds mesmerised by snake we could sing our way down its throat. We can't do even that. (Tic-tac, tic-tac)
(All eyes ~~are~~ not for long away from clock. Forelorn fills his pipe, slowly, deliberately).

TRIGOS. They feel very uncomfortable.

HERMES. Their spirits are trapped and their bodies are sweating copiously wherever they ^{are} ~~may~~ be. They contemplate the nothingness they have the power to achieve and ~~beg~~ are beginning, I believe to realise the magnitude of the nothingness. If only their understanding was not brutalised by their viewpoint and their mind not savaged by prejudice. If, if, if...

FORELORN. (Of Stamolchev). A match?

STAMOLCHEV. (Squintly). Haven't got any.

FORELORN. Light Stokenville? (Stokenville hands box of matches. Hunch not steady). Thanks.

STAMOLCHEV. (Jumps up, goes to map). Where are you?

STOKENVILLE. (Follows. Points). Here.

STAMOLCHEV. I am here. (Points. Looks at clock. Urgently). We must keep apart. We must keep them apart. (Tic-tac).

STOKENVILLE. What made you do it? (Tic-tac, tic-tac).

STAMOLCHEV. We thought that if we establish ourselves here (points) without being noticed we could dominate the whole of this area (Points to Caribbean

and adjoining bands.) We would have caught you with your pants down.

STOKENVILLE. Now we caught you with your pants down.

STAMOLCHEV. You would have done the same if someone came and put himself under you for protection. (After a pause - as if to himself). Keep apart. Keep apart.

STOKENVILLE. How in god's name can they keep apart. Our orders are given. Only we two, can revoke them. How can we revoke them.

STAMOLCHEV. Oh! My God. (Sits down. looks almost beaten. Tic-tac Tic-tac. Stokenville sits down, heavily. Tic-tac, tic-tac. Stamolchev, ~~almost~~ in a whisper). We are trapped. (All look at one another and at the clock. Dyane appears, like a butterfly ballet dancer and strokes briefly and gently first Stokenville's then Stamolchev's head. Instruments in front of them ring. Both pick up receivers).

STAMOLCHEV. Yes! ... Yes my dear ... Hello. Hello. Cut off.

STOKENVILLE. Stokenville speaking. Hello darling ... Yes, yes.

Hello? Hello? (replaces receiver). Line dead. (These two operations go on almost simultaneously). My wife.

STAMOLCHEV. My wife too ... We were cut off. (Something clatters on them. Pick up receivers. Tic-tac. Tic-tac). Dead, dead dead (bangs it down).

(Stokerville and Stamolchev stand, sit down, gesticulate expressively with their hands their eyes never away from the clock for long).

FORELORN. (Draws out his pipe, taps table with fingers ^{like} ~~and~~ beating a Tune. Looks furtively at clock ^{at times} ~~occasionally~~. Archoneau walks to and fro at the back. His lips move but we don't hear what he says.) The waste of it all! And so unnecessary.

STAMOLCHEV. (Almost beside himself.) Give me time—time (stamps heavily on floor) to pull back. You hear! To pull back.

STOKENVILLE. That's all we need — time. God give us Time.

ARCHONEAU (Heard now in macabre declamation).

“ Les blessés s'abîtraient dans le ventre
Des chevaux morts; au seuil des bivouacs désolés
On voyait des clairons à leur poste gelés,
Restés debout, en selle et muets, blancs de givre,
Collant leur bouche en pierre aux trompettes de cuivre.
Boulets, mitraille, obus ... (Stop)

Nonsense! ^{now} No order ~~etc~~ ^{we} atomize sans gloire,
sans mort ... sans rien.

FORELORN. (With matter of fact finality). Five minutes. (Silence)

STAMOLCHEV. (Desperate). We must get out of here. (Doors open and a group of ^{three} girls come in. They carry placards)

1 DYANE
~~TRYAEDS~~. Will they start all over again?

HERME. Folly and tragedy evolve themselves at higher levels. They obstinately stayed put. Only succumbed to their fears. I expected something better. Perhaps I should have known better.

TRYAEDS. Thought everything was up. (we see them - and only them - in the spotlight as they walk to the front of stage).
What made them change their minds?

HERMES. Sobering fear and Dyane's intervention.

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with the slogans they now shout).

FIRST GIRL. The will to live

SECOND GIRL. We have the will to live.

THIRD GIRL (with the other two, Hermes, Trygeos and Dyane joining) We'll live. We'll live.

STAMOLCHEN. [Excited. Embraces Stakenville]. A breakthrough. Saved. Let's issue our orders immediately.

STOKENVILLE. At once. (Boots go out while going to group) I thought you were on his side.

FORELORN. (Rising with hardly noticeable relief. To demonstrators). Congratulations; your action was unconstitutional. (To Archonem) We almost had our chips - pardon solecism. For all the good we did we might just not have been here.

ARCHONEM. We are secondary powers ^{So Ardyn we are} - just in the way. Neither hammer nor anvil. ^{hammer, anvil.} (Even my similes are archaic. However, we can do with dinner. Be my guest.

^{HE} FORELORN. The lighted. Let's go. (Both leave) ~~the lighted~~

HERMES. ~~At this kind of business they are~~ ^{rather than the other way.} ~~superior.~~ (Lights dim until we hardly see anything on stage. They come on, focus first on TRYGEOS followed then Hermes, then Dyane.)

TRYGEOS. Reprimed. Hermes: For anachronism.

~~HERMES. A tragedy or tragedy are always resolved at a higher level than the one they have originated. Then stayed put. Only succumbed to their fears.~~

~~TRYGEOS. Thought everything was up with us: (Only to see it)~~

them ^{in the} spotlight ^{- can't only them -} as they walk ~~and come~~ to the front of stage
 What ~~happened~~ to make them change their minds

HERMES. A last gust of sanity and Dyane's intervention.

TRYGEOS. ~~Did~~ You didn't say anything to them, did you?

DYANE. I touched them, ~~rather~~ rather gently. They were reminded of their wives and ~~somehow~~ ^{softly} softened.

TRYGEOS. ~~What a pity~~ ^{They must be good wives; pity} their ^{wives} were n't here.

HERMES. It would have been better if the wives were here and ^{these demi-gods were home washing dishes.} ~~they were not.~~ Matters would have been settled more easily.

(As they walk along, Hermes soliloquizes). This ^{it has} ~~has~~ been a long journey and has taught me much. I stood on earth for an eternity of time. I have seen things - the ghastly confusion of things you call history. I ^{followed} ~~have~~ seen your actions; ~~have~~ studied your motives; roamed inside your minds. I have found out that man ^{to be} weak, incompetent, confused and unthinkingly brave.

He must abdicate responsibility and authority and devote himself to the tasks ^{flight increases slightly; we are where we started, Act I}) he can perform best - producer of wealth, inventor of gadgets, economic provider and generative sire. He can do these very well. But he cannot and must not rule. Women are ^{better at it} ~~some~~ rulers - ^{borne to rule} ~~let~~ them rule. You may not be better off but at least you will be spared to live on with your misery. (While

~~be~~ disappearing). This is my last advice to you Trygeos.
 (Goes. Flute plays softly. Dyane pirouettes, leans
 over sleeping Karpotis, kisses his mouth and flees).

KARPOTIS. (Sits up). A woman! I want a woman. Try
 geeeeeos.

TRYGEOS. Yes!

KARPOTIS. There you are! (Coils back to sleep).

CURTAIN.

END.