

Senex / Domina / Hysterium (PAGES 6 – 10)

SENEX

Slaves!

(PROTEANS enter from center house, dressed as SLAVES, assume slavish attitudes.)

We are about to start our journey. My robe!

(PROTEANS place his robe on him.)

My wreath.

(PROTEANS place wreath on his head.)

DOMINA

(Appearing in doorway, center house)

SENEX!

SENEX

(Frowns)

My wife.

DOMINA

Slaves! Stop cringing and fetch the baggage!

PROTEANS

(Exiting into center house)

Yes, yes, yes.

DOMINA

Senex, you are master of the house and no help at all. Where is Pseudolus? Where is Hysterium? Summon them!

(SENEX is about to speak, DOMINA calls out.)

Pseudolus! Hysterium!

(HYSTERIUM enters from center house.)

HYSTERIUM

Ah, Madam, you called?

DOMINA

Yes, Hysterium.

HYSTERIUM

And I answered. Ever your humble.

(Kisses hem of her cape.)

DOMINA

Have you prepared my potions?

HYSTERIUM

(Holds up small bag)

Yes, madam. In addition to your usual potions, I have included one for tantrums and one for queasiness.

DOMINA

Thank you, Hysterium—slave of slaves.

HYSTERIUM

I live to grovel.

(HE kisses her hem. DOMINA calls to HERO on balcony of center house.)

DOMINA

Hero, come kiss your mother goodbye.

HERO

Yes, mother.

(Exits into center house. SLAVES enter from center house, carrying baggage.)

DOMINA

Slaves, take that baggage and go before us, you clumsies!

PROTEANS

(As THEY scurry O.U.L.)

Yes, Yes, clumsies, yes

DOMINA

Senex! Come away from that house of shame!

SENEX

(Crossing to her from house S.R.)

I was just standing there saying, "Shame, shame, shame!"

DOMINA

Hysterium!

HYSTERIUM

Yes, madam?

DOMINA

Where is Pseudolus?

HYSTERIUM

Where is he indeed! I have not seen him since he dressed Hero this morning.

DOMINA

Tell him that while we are gone, he is to watch over Hero. He is to keep him cheerful, well-fed, and far from the opposite sex.

SENEX

My dear, the boy has to learn sometime.

DOMINA

And when that time comes, you shall tell him ...

SENEX

Yes, dear.

DOMINA

What little you know. Now, go and fetch the gift we bring my mother.

SENEX

Yes, dear.

(HE exits into center house, as HERO enters from it.)

HERO

Good morning, father.

DOMINA

Ah, Hero. Your father and I are off to visit my mother in the country. What a joy it would be were you to accompany us. But, alas, the sight of anyone in good health fills my mother with rage.

(SENEX reenters from center house carrying bust of DOMINA.)

Ah, there I am. Do you think it will please my mother?

HYSTERIUM

Oh, yes, madam. The craftsmanship is superb.

DOMINA

And the resemblance?

HYSTERIUM

Frightening.

DOMINA

The time of farewell is at hand. Hysterium, Slave-in-Chief, here are my husband's final instructions.

(SENEX opens his mouth to speak, SHE continues.)

(DOMINA)

In his absence, his entire household is in your spotless care. Your word shall be absolute, your authority unquestioned.

SENEX

And furthermore

DOMINA

We are on our way I

SENEX

(Mutters.)

We are on our way.

DOMINA

Farewell, beloved son. Farewell, thoughtful Hysterium. Senex, come along! And carry my bust with pride.

(SHE exits U.L. A beat, and then her voice is heard.)

Senex!

SENEX

(Looking O.U.L.)

Yes, dear.

(Turns to audience.)

A lesson for you all. Never fall in love during a total eclipse!

(HE exits. HYSTERIUM watches them, turns to audience.)

HYSTERIUM

Well, to work, to work! Now that I am completely in charge, I am going to be a very busy slave.

(Sees HERO, who has drifted toward house S.R., brings him C.S.)

Here! Come away from there. You must never know what goes on in that house.

HERO

But I do know.

HYSTERIUM

You do?

(HERO nods.)

Isn't it amazing? Well, I can't stand here talking.

(Crosses to center house, picks something from a column of center house, stamps it out, grimaces, enters center house, calling.)

Pseudolus!

(HERO watches him go, then turns to audience.)