

from **Rome Is Where the Heart Is**
adapted from Plautus's *Mercator*²³
by David Grote and Arthur Wilmurt

Slapstick 3 person Scene

Lysimachus is a middle-aged businessman who, as a favor to his neighbor, has hidden a female slave in his house while Dorippa,²⁴ the wife of Lysimachus, has gone for a visit to her parents in the country. Unfortunately, Lysimachus has taken a fancy to the beautiful young girl and is planning a party that evening when Dorippa unexpectedly returns. The Cook [REDACTED] may be either male or female.



200 B.C. Roman



200 B.C.-A.D. 200
approx. Roman

DORIPPA. Where are you off to? (*He stops, turns to her, waves innocently.*)

Got another lawsuit someplace?

LYSIMACHUS. Well, hello, darling. I didn't know you were back.

DORIPPA (*crossing to C*). I can see that.

[REDACTED]

DORIPPA. Busy, I take it?

LYSIMACHUS. Oh, yes, you know how it is—always something going on.

DORIPPA. So I see. Who's the woman who has been in my house?

LYSIMACHUS. Ah, yes, you noticed. Ah, well, now . . .

[REDACTED]

LYSIMACHUS. Well, yes, you see, I can explain that . . . (*He trails off into stammering, and then silence.*)

DORIPPA. [REDACTED] I'm waiting.

(*Pause.*) Who is she?

LYSIMACHUS (*dropping to his knees and protecting his head with his arms*).

I don't know.

DORIPPA. Then what was she doing in there?

LYSIMACHUS. Now, dear, don't jump to conclusions.

DORIPPA. I'll jump to anything I want, if you can't do better than that.

LYSIMACHUS. Well, you see, the fact is, I've been working on this real-estate deal, and a lady friend of a gentleman friend just came by, and she left some of her things, as a deposit, until she can bring the cash by later.

DORIPPA. That's the best you can do?

LYSIMACHUS (*rising*). It's the truth, my pet.

DORIPPA. Hah!

[REDACTED]

LYSIMACHUS. My dear, I swear, I promise you, I have nothing to do with this. I'm absolutely innocent . . .

(*COOK enters L*, [REDACTED])

(*to audience*) **COOK.** [REDACTED] I am cooking for an old buzzard who's fallen in love, and you know how impatient they get.

[REDACTED]

LYSIMACHUS. Oh, no! (*The COOK spies LYSIMACHUS, and crosses to him.*)

COOK. Sir, I am here at your command.

[REDACTED]

LYSIMACHUS. Are you talking to me?

COOK. Surely you remember me

[REDACTED]

LYSIMACHUS. Never saw you before in my life.

COOK. But you hired me cook dinner.

[REDACTED]

LYSIMACHUS (*out of the corner of his mouth*). Go away.

COOK. Did you say "go away"?

[REDACTED]

LYSIMACHUS (*shouting*). Go away!

DORIPPA (*who has been watching with interest*). What's this, another rental deposit?

COOK (*crossing to DORIPPA*). I'll bet this is the little lady, isn't it?

[REDACTED] (*LYSIMACHUS is desperately trying to signal the COOK to be quiet, to no avail.*)

COOK. Madam, you are indeed fortunate to have this gentleman for your—ha, ha—"friend". . .

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

LYSIMACHUS. Will you please shut up?

COOK (*to him*). My, aren't we a bit shy this afternoon. No need to be embarrassed.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

COOK. I assume the crocodile is still in the country? (*LYSIMACHUS tries to make himself very small.*)

DORIPPA. What crocodile?

COOK. His wife, of course.

DORIPPA (*looking at LYSIMACHUS*). So, his wife is a crocodile, is she?

COOK. That's what he called her.

[REDACTED]

DORIPPA. And she's still in the country, is she?

LYSIMACHUS (*very sickly*). No, she isn't.

COOK. Oh?

LYSIMACHUS (*pointing*). My wife.

COOK (*recovering quickly*). Charmed, madam.

[REDACTED]



1st Century A.D.
Roman

LYSIMACHUS. Now, will you please go?

COOK. You mean you don't want me here?

LYSIMACHUS. No, no, a thousand times no!

[REDACTED]

to audience **COOK.** I think he wants me to leave.

[REDACTED]

COOK. Not till I get paid.

[REDACTED]

LYSIMACHUS. All right, all right! *(He throws the COOK a small purse of coins.)*

COOK. *(to audience)* I'll leave the food, he's paid for it *(Cook leaves)*

[REDACTED]

DORIPPA *(she crosses arms and glares at LYSIMACHUS).* A crocodile, am I?

LYSIMACHUS. My dearest, I can explain everything. You see, some friends of mine . . .

DORIPPA. You and your friends! See if you can keep this house respectable while I go get my father. *(DORIPPA charges toward L exit. LYSIMACHUS tries desperately to block her way.)*

LYSIMACHUS. Now, sweetheart, there's no need for that. I can explain everything.

DORIPPA. Call me a crocodile, you snake in the grass!

[REDACTED]



2nd Century A.D.
Roman