

LYCUS

To the great captain, Miles Gloriosus, who comes this day to claim her. She cost 500 minae.

PSEUDOLUS

*(Amazed)*

Five hundred!

LYCUS

A great sum, to be sure. But being a man of conquest, his heart was set on a virgin.

PSEUDOLUS

*beg* → You say she just arrived from Crete?

LYCUS

Yes.

PSEUDOLUS

Mmm. I hope the great captain is kind to her. She deserves a bit of affection before ...

*(Sighs, then to HERO.)*

Tragic, is it not?

*(HERO moans.)*

LYCUS

What is tragic?

PSEUDOLUS

The news from Crete.

LYCUS

What news?

PSEUDOLUS

Why should I darken your day?

*(Heaves a deep sigh.)*

Farewell, Lycus.

LYCUS

*(Grabs him)*

What is the news?

PSEUDOLUS

What news?

LYCUS

The news from Crete.

PSEUDOLUS

I heard it. Tragic.

LYCUS

Pseudolus.

*(Shakes him.)*

PSEUDOLUS

You force me to tell you! Crete is ravaged by a great plague. People are dying by the thousands.

LYCUS

But this girl is healthy. She goes smiling through the day.

PSEUDOLUS

She doesn't! I thought you knew. When they start to smile, the end is near.

LYCUS

No!

PSEUDOLUS

Yes. I am told it is lovely now in Crete. Everyone lying there, smiling.

LYCUS

Is it contagious?

PSEUDOLUS

Did you ever see a plague that wasn't?

LYCUS

My other girls!

PSEUDOLUS

*and* → You had best get her out of there.

HERO

Yes!

LYCUS

And then?

PSEUDOLUS

I could look after her until the captain comes.

HERO

He could!

LYCUS

But would you not be... ?