

---

**The Sikyonian<sup>1</sup>**  
**[Sikyomios]**

### Introductory Note to *The Silyonians*

Unlike *The Shield*, this play is much better preserved in Acts Four and Five than in Acts One to Three. The remains of the papyrus, used in the making of three separate mummy cases, came to light over a period of more than fifty years.<sup>2</sup>

Some of the details of the plot are obscure, and some of the names uncertain, but the general line is clear, and displays a variation on the standard theme of lost and later recognized children – here *both* hero and heroine have to be recognized as true-born Athenians before they can come together in marriage. Moschion (a name whose owner seems doomed to unsuitable, difficult or unsuccessful love – see Introduction pp. 12–13) is here found to be the hero's brother, and relinquishes the girl to him.

## CHARACTERS

- A GOD, who speaks the Prologue
- STRATOPHANES, a captain of mercenaries
- SMIKRINES, an Athenian citizen, who proves to be Stratophanes' father
- MOSCHION, Smikrines' son
- THERON, a parasite<sup>2</sup> attached to Stratophanes
- PYRRHIAS, Stratophanes' servant
- DONAX, another servant
- MALTHAKE, Stratophanes' mistress
- RICHESIAS, an Athenian citizen
- PHILOUMENE, his daughter, kidnapped in childhood
- DROMON, Richesias's servant, kidnapped with Philoumene
- BIBBS, an Athenian democrat

## ACT ONE<sup>4</sup>

SCENE: probably Eleusis, a town fourteen miles from Athens, and the centre of the Mysteries (secret rites) and the worship of Demeter. Two houses are required, for the home of Smikrines and the lodging of Stratophanes.

A GOD: . . . his daughter, I say. And when they [the pirates] had all three persons in their power, they decided it wasn't worth their while to take the old lady, but they carried off the young girl and a servant to Mylasa, a town in Caria,<sup>5</sup> and there they put them up for sale in the market. The servant sat there with an arm round his young mistress. Up came an army officer<sup>6</sup> and asked the price. He was told, agreed, and bought them. Another man, a local character who was up for sale at the same time and was sitting near the servant, said to him, 'Cheer up, mate. The man who's bought you is the Silkyonian, a very gallant captain, and rich, too.'

*There follow five badly damaged lines, and a gap of some thirty lines; then five more mutilated lines, of which the last looks like the closing formula of the Prologue.*

You'll see in due course if you like — and please do like.<sup>7</sup>

24

*Then line endings and beginnings, with gaps, indicate a conversation in which one speaker is a woman. There is mention of someone, presumably a parasite, who is a hearty eater; there is an indication of a plot to put up a false witness, perhaps to claim that a girl (? Philoumene) is free-born; and a reasonable inference can be made that Moschion heard or overheard from Dromon that Philoumene was a free-born Athenian and that Dromon planned to take her off and seek refuge at an altar, because her master had fallen in love with her. Then the text resumes. Stratophanes and Theron are in conversation. Theron is, like a true parasite, agreeing enthusiastically with his patron, who seems to be intent on preserving some property.*

STRATOPHANES: Surely that's not —

THERON: Who?

STRATOPHANES: Pyrrhias. I sent him home to say we were safely back, and would soon be there. 120

THERON: Yes, I know.

STRATOPHANES: So why on earth is he coming back here, and at top speed, too?

THERON: Very down in the mouth, too.

STRATOPHANES [as PYRRHIAS comes in, right]: Is anything wrong, Pyrrhias? My mother -

PYRRHIAS: Your mother's dead. Died last year.

STRATOPHANES: Oh, I'm very sorry. She was a great age. So she's gone.

PYRRHIAS: But you're going to be involved in some peculiar business that you didn't expect, Stratophanes. It seems that you were not her son.

STRATOPHANES [bewildered]: Then whose son am I?

PYRRHIAS: When she was dying, she wrote down your family history here. [He produces a package.]

THERON [sentimentally]: On your death-bed, never grudge a favour to those who go on living. She wanted you to know about your family.

PYRRHIAS: There's more to it than that. When your father was alive, he apparently lost a case brought by some Bocoedian -

STRATOPHANES: Yes, I know.

PYRRHIAS: And, given the treaty arrangements,<sup>8</sup> he was liable to pay a large sum of money.

STRATOPHANES: A letter about all this reached me in Caria. It also told me of my father's death.

PYRRHIAS: Your mother discovered from the lawyers that you and your inheritance were liable for this debt, so she took steps to provide for you, and on her death-bed tried to restore you to your family. All very proper.

STRATOPHANES: Give me the papers.

PYRRHIAS: There. Apart from the written evidence there, I have tokens to prove your identity. The people who gave them to me said that before your mother died, she said they'd do that.

THERON: Lady of Athens, make him your own,<sup>9</sup> so that he can have his girl - and I can have Malhake!

STRATOPHANES: Oh your way, both of you. This way, Theron.

THERON: Aren't you going to tell me -

STRATOPHANES: No more talking. Forward march.

THERON: Oh well, if I must, I -

STRATOPHANES: You too, Pyrrhias, this way. You can bring the supporting evidence for my statement, and produce it immediately anyone wants to inspect it. [They go off, right.]

CHORAL INTERLUDE<sup>10</sup>

ACT FOUR

[Enter (probably) SMIKRINES and BLEPES.]

SMIKRINES: You're a common nuisance, a gasbag, a real pain, if you expect a man who weeps and pleads to be speaking the truth. Nowadays, such behaviour is a pretty fair indication that someone's up to no good. That's no way to establish truth: much better to use a small committee.

BLEPES: You're a real dyed-in-the-wool old elitist, Smikrines, by God you are.

SMIKRINES: You and your kind'll be the death of me. Why all the abuse?

BLEPES: I hate you and all your supercilious friends. Of course I'm a nuisance, but I might be of some use . . .

SMIKRINES: Never!

BLEPES: Oh, yes, I could.

He proceeds, in five damaged lines, to make wild charges of theft against Smikrines.

SMIKRINES: Get lost!

BLEPES: You too. [He moves away.]

SMIKRINES: You're right to retreat. I'd have made you button your lip, just like an immigrant.<sup>11</sup> [He moves towards his house.]

BLEPES [rejoining]: Sir, wait - just there in the porch.

SMIKRINES: I'm waiting. Why the shout?

BLEPES: I want to give you a small hint -

SMIKRINES: I'm listening.

BLEPES: It'll be worth your while -

SMIKRINES: Tell me all.

BLEPES [aping the delivery of a messenger in tragedy<sup>12</sup>]: I happened to be on my way, not from the country, no indeed . . . when someone kindly told me about a debate. I thrive on other people's troubles - I'm a terror on a jury - so off I went, loudly greeting anyone I met, for I'm a democrat, part of the backbone of the country. Well, I'd just come back from Athens to meet the village man who'd got the job of sharing out a skinny little bullock<sup>13</sup> (and of being cursed by those who got a piece - I was one of them). I take my name from the sacred township - I'm Blepes the Eleusinian.<sup>14</sup>

190 I stopped when I saw a crowd at the Temple gate. 'Excuse me,' I said, and got a place in the ring. Then I saw a girl sitting as a suppliant. An assembly was convened right away to consider her case . . .

*Seven or eight lines are missing, and the next three are damaged, but it is clear from what follows that Bleepes is recounting how Dromon spoke on the girl's behalf, explaining that she was the daughter of an Athenian citizen, but had lost her family.*

200 . . . her present guardian is threatening her safety, and I too take my suppliant seat among you.' He did so, and we all roared out, 'The girl's an Athenian,' and it was difficult to quell the uproar and restore silence. Then a young lad, pale-faced and smooth-chinned, went up to the servant and tried to whisper something to him. We refused to have this. 'Speak up!' someone promptly shouted, and 'What's he want? Who is he? What are you saying?' 'The servant here knows me,' he replied, 'in fact, I've been helping him for some time. I'm just asking him if he needs anything. I heard most of the story when he was talking just now to his master.' Then, blushing scarlet, he stepped back a bit. He wasn't utterly beyond redemption, but we didn't like him one bit; we thought he was out to get the girl. We shouted . . .

*The next twenty-one lines are damaged, but enough remains to give the general sense, as follows:*

220 One of our people looked at the girl and spoke at some length to those beside him. Then a fine, upstanding man came forward, and two others with him. When he saw the girl at close quarters, he suddenly let fall a river of tears, and with a passionate cry clucked at his hair. This astonished the onlookers, who said, 'What's up with you? Tell us.' And he said, 'Bless you, gentlemen, I've brought up this girl from childhood, and I hope to restore her to her father.

*The text now resumes.*

240 'This servant belonged to her father and is now mine, but I give him to the girl, I renounce any return for my expense in rearing her, I make no claims of any kind. Let her look for her father and her family, I'll place no obstacles in her way.' 'Good man!' we said. Then, 'Listen to my proposal, gentlemen,' he said. 'You are now her guardians, she has nothing to fear, at least from me. Take her to the priestess and let her look after the girl for you.'

This suggestion naturally attracted much approval. 'Very proper,' everyone shouted, and 'tell us more.' And he said, 'I used to think that I was a Sikyonian. But this servant here [indicating PYRRHIAS] has just brought me my mother's will, and tokens of my birth. If I can trust the evidence of these documents, I think that I, like you, am an Athenian citizen. Don't rob me of this hope yet. If I can prove that I am a fellow-citizen of the girl whom I've brought safely back to her father, let me ask him for her hand in marriage, and make her my wife. And don't let any of my rivals take charge of the girl before her father appears.' 'Quite right,' that's reasonable,' 'certainly,' came the cries, and, 'Take her to the priestess, take her now.'

260 Then the pale-faced chap suddenly jumped up and said, 'Are you asking me to believe that this man has suddenly now got hold of a will from somewhere, and that he's an Athenian citizen, and that when he gets the girl by means of this melodrama he'll let her go?' Then there was confused shouting - 'Kill the pansy!' 'By God you won't: stuff you, whoever you are!' 'No? On your way, pooffer.' 'And damn the lot of you.' Then the soldier said to the girl, 'Come on, get up, you can go now.' 'She'll go,' said the servant, 'when you gentlemen tell her to. You tell her,' he said. 'Yes,' we said, 'you can go now.' She got up and went.

270 That's all I saw. What happened afterwards, I couldn't tell you, for I came away. [SMIKRINES goes into his house, and BLEEPES leaves, left.]

[Enter STRATOPHANES and (probably) THERON, pursued by MOSCHION, right.]

MOSCHION: Kidnappers! I arrest you!<sup>15</sup>

STRATOPHANES: Arrest us? You?

MOSCHION: Indeed I do.

STRATOPHANES: You're out of your mind, lad.

MOSCHION: You've emerged very suddenly as an Athenian citizen.

[Ironically] That's great! It's not possible. . . .<sup>16</sup>

STRATOPHANES: How? I know of no such thing.

MOSCHION: You see? Quick march to the judicial inquiry.

*Some twenty lines are missing here. Moschion probably went into the house to fetch SMIKRINES, who was joined by his wife. It is not clear which of them is speaking as the (damaged) text resumes.*

280 ?SMIKRINES' WIFE: . . . one half of a woman's dress was wrapped round you when I sent you off to the foreign woman, who was then anxious to have children.

*The next passage is too mutilated for continuous translation, but it is clear from the surviving words that Stratophanes is recognized as Smikrines' son, by the robe in which he had been wrapped as a child.*

STRATOPHANES: Then — Moschion is my brother, Father?

SMIKRINES: Yes. Come this way, we'll find him waiting for us in the house. [*They all go into Smikrines' house.*]

FOURTH CHORAL INTERLUDE

ACT FIVE

*The beginning of the act is mutilated or missing, but from the words that remain, from the rest of the scene, and from a comparison with Plautus's Poenulus, ll. 1087—1119, it is possible to conjecture that Theron was trying to bribe an elderly and poor Athenian to pretend to be Kichesias, and to claim that Philoumene is his daughter and so a free Athenian girl. But, unknown to Theron, the old man actually is Kichesias, and Philoumene is his daughter. This situation produces splendidly double-edged dialogue, with Kichesias meaning one thing and Theron understanding another, while the audience appreciates both. It is typical of Menander's dramatic economy that he uses this entertaining scene to demonstrate, too, the characters of the speakers, and of his irony that Kichesias really is Kichesias and Philoumene's father.*

KICHESIAS: You go to hell!

THERON: You are being difficult.

KICHESIAS: Damn you, go away. Did you really think that Kichesias would do such a thing, or take a bribe from anyone? It's disgraceful, it's immoral! Kichesias?

THERON: That's right, Kichesias Skambonides.<sup>17</sup> Good. You've got it, then. Take your pay for this, then, and not what I mentioned earlier. 350

KICHESIAS [*bewildered*]: For what?

THERON: For being Kichesias Skambonides. Your suggestion is much better. You seem to have grasped the general idea. You become *him*. Fortunately, you're short and snub-nosed, as the servant described him.

KICHESIAS [*sadly*]: I have become the old man that I am!

THERON: Then say that you lost your daughter from Halai when she was four years old, along with Dromon, a servant.

KICHESIAS [*sadly*]: Yes, I did.

THERON: Good!

KICHESIAS: She was kidnapped by pirates. You have reminded me of sorrow and suffering, and of my poor child.

THERON: Splendid! Just go on like that, and shed a tear or two. 360

[*Aside*] He's a great chap!

[*Enter DROMON, left, talking to himself.*]

DROMON: Well, my young mistress is in safe keeping . . . [Sees KICHESIAS] Oh, sir!

*A few lines are missing.*

She's alive, and she's here in Athens. [KICHESIAS faints] Don't faint, sir. Get up! Theron, water, water, quick!

HERON: I'll run and get it, sure. And Stratophanes is inside, I'll send him out to you.

DROMON [as KICHESIAS begins to revive]: The water won't be necessary now.

HERON: Still, I'll go and get Stratophanes. [*He goes into the house.*]

DROMON: He's coming round. Kichesiast!

KICHESIAS: What's wrong? Where am I? And *what* did I hear someone say?

DROMON: Your daughter's safe and well.

KICHESIAS: Really safe, Dromon, or just — alive?

DROMON: She's still a virgin, no man has laid a hand on her.

KICHESIAS: Thank God!

DROMON: And you, sir?

KICHESIAS: I'm alive, Dromon, I can say that much. Beyond that, when you see a poor, lonely old man, you have to believe he's in a pretty bad way.

[*Enter STRATOPHANES, from Smikerines' house, talking back over his shoulder.*]

STRATOPHANES: I'll be right back, Mother, when I've looked into this.

DROMON: Stratophanes, this is Philoumene's father!

STRATOPHANES: Who is?

DROMON: This gentleman here.

STRATOPHANES: How do you do, sir.

DROMON [*to KICHESIAS*]: This is the man who's kept your daughter safe.

KICHESIAS: Blessings on him.

STRATOPHANES: With your consent, sir, I shall be blessed, and happy too.

DROMON: Stratophanes, let's go and get Philoumene now, for heaven's sake.<sup>18</sup>

STRATOPHANES: You go on. I'll be right behind you, when I've had a word with the people in the house.

DROMON: Come on, Kichesiast. [*They go off, left.*]

STRATOPHANES: Donax! Hey, Donax! Go and tell Malthake to transfer all my gear to the house next door — suitcases, rucksacks,

all the baskets and trunks . . . And tell her to come over here herself to my mother. The foreign slaves and Theron and the donkey-drivers and the donkeys can all stay there with you. These are my orders. I'll settle everything else myself with Philoumene's father . . .

<sup>19</sup> [*He goes off, left, as MOSCHION enters from Smikerines' house.*]

MOSCHION [*gloriously*]: As things stand now, Moschion, you mustn't even look at the girl again. She's gloriously fair, Moschion, and she's got lovely eyes — you're wasting your time, she's going to be your brother's bride, the lucky man. For just think — still at it, you fool? . . . Well, I won't say it. I'll obviously have to be Best Man, one of a trio with them. [*Despairingly, to audience*] Ladies and gentlemen, I won't be able . . .

*The end of the play is lost. A few surviving half-lines have a reference to a torch and garlands, clearly for a wedding — perhaps Theron's to Malthake. Then a standard formula concludes the drama, though it is not clear who speaks it.*

ACTOR: Speed our play with loud applause! And may laughter-loving Victory, daughter of a noble line, smile upon us all our days. 421

*A few more short fragments of the play are preserved in quotations by other authors, but they cannot convincingly be assigned to any particular scene.*

6. Both the form of the saying, and its exact meaning, are doubtful.
7. The text of this line is uncertain.
8. The text is fragmentary, but the words that survive are significant, and the general sense is clear.
9. The text is damaged, but the general sense is clear.
10. See note 9.
11. Some line endings are damaged, but the sense is clear.
12. See *The Girl from Samos*, note 4.

#### *The Shield*

1. See A. R. W. Harrison, *The Law of Athens* (Oxford, 1968), pp. 10-12, 132f.
2. He wanted to win enough to provide for her dowry.
3. A few lines are damaged here, but the sense is clear.
4. Because they had no self-interest to serve. And as their evidence would be accepted only under torture, it was thought to be reliable.
5. Because Daos would also be inherited as part of Kleostratos's estate.
6. He has not stolen any oil. Cooks were proverbial thieves.
7. An heiress's inheritance had to be kept in trust for her children.
8. The text is damaged here.
9. An approximation of the sense, based on the words that survive.
10. The great medical schools of the ancient world were in areas where Doric, not Attic (Athenian) Greek was spoken. And doctors were old-established comic figures.
11. The opening line of Euripides' *Shenobola*. See Aristophanes, *Frogs* 1217.
12. From Chairemon's *Achilles, Killer of Thersites*. See *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 1970, 22f.
13. From Aeschylus's *Niope*. See Plato, *Republic* 380a.
14. The source is unknown, but the language is tragic.
15. A fourth-century tragedian. See *Hermes* 1954, 300f.
16. The opening line of Euripides' *Orestes*.
17. There is an indication only of a brief reply here.
18. Euripides, *Orestes*, 232.
19. A short comment of this kind is clearly missing from the text.
20. The exact meaning of the allusion is lost to us. But Smikrines' suspicious nature is clear.
21. Enough text remains to produce an approximation of the dialogue.

#### *The Silyonians*

1. Silyon was (and is) a town on the south side of the Gulf of Corinth. Until the action of the play begins, Stratophanes has thought himself to be a native of this town, and he is the Silyonian of the title.
2. See Introduction, p. 15 and E. W. Handley in *BICS* 12 (1965), 38.
3. Literally, a man who eats at someone else's table. The parasite made a living by attaching himself to a wealthy man and, in return for small services and agreeing with everything his patron said, being fed at his patron's table.
4. The Prologue is damaged, but it is clearly spoken by a god (no human character could know all these facts) and its general tenor is clear.
5. Now part of Turkey.
6. Probably Stratophanes.
7. Cf. *Old Comtantes* 1. 46.
8. Various Greek states had agreed terms for the settlement of disputes between their nationals. Boeotia was the territory immediately north-west of Attica.
9. That is, an Athenian citizen.
10. Because of the gaps in the text, it is not clear which act's ending is indicated here. However, a numeral in the papyrus makes it clear that the next section begins with Act Four.
11. Resident foreigners in Athens clearly had to guard their tongues in the community that allowed them in.
12. The speech has links of style and content with that in Euripides, *Orestes* 866 ff. The first few lines are damaged, but the sense is clear.
13. The animal would be sacrificed, its entrails given to the god, and the rest eaten by the male members of the community.
14. 'The Eleusinian' distinguishes him from any other Athenian who might have the (relatively common) name of Blepsos.
15. Any citizen had the right to arrest a kidnapper caught in the act.
16. The text is damaged from here to the end of the act, and only approximate translation is possible.
17. This was the 'family' name of one of the districts of Athens.
18. The text is damaged, but the general sense is clear.
19. The text is damaged here.

#### *The Man She Hated*

1. The latest (so far) of these was first published in 1977, and so does not appear in the Oxford Classical Text. My translation of it is based on