

THE POT OF GOLD (I)

(Enter the LAR from Euclio's house.)

LAR No-one should wonder who I am: I'll tell you in a word. I am the household spirit from this household you've just seen me come away from. This house: it's many years now since I've been occupying it, looking after it (5) for the father and grandfather of the man who lives here now. Well, this one's grandfather, on his knees, gave me the care of a hoard of gold – and no one knew. Right in the fireplace he buried it, begging me to keep it safe for him. When dying (greedy as he was) (10) he never made up his mind to reveal it to his son, and chose to leave him destitute rather than show him, his son, that hoard. He did leave him some land, not much, for him to work hard and make a meagre living. (15) When he died – the one who left me with the gold – I began to keep an eye on the son: would he show me any more respect than had his father? He took less and less trouble to care for me and offered me even fewer marks of respect. (20) And so indeed I paid him back, and so he died. He did leave something of himself: this man, a son of his, a man of the same character as his father and grandfather, the one who lives here now. He has one daughter. Every day she has incense, wine, or something to offer me. (25) She gives me garlands. In her honour I have arranged for Euclio here to find the hoard, to make it easier for him to have her married if he wanted. She has in fact been violated by a very high-class young man. The young man knows who the girl is whom he has

violated, (30) but *she* doesn't know who *he* is, nor does her father know she's been violated. Today I am going to make this old man from next door request her as his wife. I shall do so with this intention: that the one who's violated her shall find it easier to marry her. This old man who's going to ask to marry her (35) is the uncle of the young man who raped her, in the dark on the night before Ceres' feast. Now there's this old man in his house, shouting as usual. He's pushing his old servant-woman out, so she won't know. I expect he wants to check the gold, in case it's been stolen.

(Exit into Euclio's house, although waiting with ostentatious patience while...

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...STAPHYLA enters from Euclio's house, closely pursued by EUCLIO himself.)

EUC. (40) Out with you, I say, out with you now! You must get out from here, straight outside, you gazer-rounder with the spying eyes.

STA. Oh misery me! Why, why are you beating me?

EUC. To make you miserable and to make you live, you villainous woman, as vile a life as you deserve.

STA. Now what's the reason you've shoved me outdoors?

EUC. (45) Am I to explain myself to you, goad-heap? Back off, over there, away from the door. *(Staphyla shuffles half way across the stage.)* Take a look at her there, how she moves. D'you know how it is for you? If I get a rod or a prod into my hands today, I'll make that tortoise-pace of yours expand a bit.

STA. (50) Better the gods drove me to hang myself than live like this as your house slave.

EUC. Just listen to the wretch grumbling to herself on her own! I'll dig out those eyes of yours, you shameless thing, so you won't be able to watch what I'm doing. (55) Go off further now *(pushing Staphyla)* – further now – further – whoa! Stand there. Just move off that spot a finger's breadth or the width of a toenail, or look round before I tell you, and I'll hand you over as a pupil to Master Cross. (60) *(Aside)* I know for sure I've never seen a more

villainous old woman than this one, and I'm seriously afraid she'll set me a trap and play me an unexpected trick, or get an idea where the gold is hidden. The horrible woman has eyes in the back of her head. (65) Now I'll go and check: is the gold just as I left it? Oh dear me! it has got me, poor man, worried in so many ways. (*Exit into his house.*)

STA. Oh heavens, I can't work out what has happened to the master: has he had an accident? has he gone crazy? (70) He pushes me out of the house like this ten times a day. I really do not know what sort of madness has got a grip on the man. He stays awake whole nights at a stretch, and then in the daytime he's like a crippled cobbler sitting at home all day long. Nor can I work out how to cover up my master's daughter's (75) disgrace: she's due to deliver any day. There's nothing better for me, I think, than to make myself into a single long letter, once I've tied up my neck into a noose.

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EUC. (*Re-entering.*) At last I've cleared the bother from my mind; I can go out, (80) now that I've made sure everything indoors is secure. Back in with you now and look after things indoors.

STA. Why ever not? Me look after things indoors? In case someone makes off with the house? There's nothing else here in our house to do thieves any good. Cobwebs and emptiness! That's all it's full of.

EUC. (85) How odd that Jupiter isn't turning me into King Philip or Darius just for a triple witch like you! I want those cobwebs of mine looked after. I'm a poor man. I admit it. I put up with it. I can take what the gods inflict. Go inside now; bar the door. I'll be right back. (90) Make sure you don't let any stranger into the house. As for anyone wanting a light for a fire, I want ours put out, so there's no reason for anyone to ask you. If the fire survives, you'll be put out instantly. Water? Say it's run away if anyone asks. (95)

Knife, axe, pestle, mortar, household stuff which neighbours are always asking to borrow – tell them we’ve had burglars here and they’ve gone off with them. In fact, while I’m away I want no one let into my house. I’m telling you this too: (100) if Good Fortune were to come, you are not to let her in.

STA. Good Lord, I reckon she takes good care not to get let in. Close as she is, she never visits our house.

EUC. Quiet! Go indoors!

STA. I’m quiet. I’m going. (*Exit into Euclio’s house.*)

EUC. Bar the door. Both bolts. I’ll be right back. (105) It’s mental torture for me, having to leave home. I absolutely do not want to go. But I do know what I’m doing. Our director, the one in charge of our ward, said he was going to distribute money, one coin per man. If I pass that up and don’t go and ask, (110) they’d all be sure to suspect I had some gold at home. It would seem odd for a poor man not to take the trouble to go and get even just a little money. Even now that I’m keeping it a secret from everyone to stop them knowing, they all do seem to know (115) and they all say ‘Good morning’ in a friendlier tone than they used to. They come up to me, they stop, they put their hands in mine: ‘How are you?’ they say, ‘How are things?’ ‘What are you up to?’ I’ll go now, where I started off for. Then I’ll get myself back home just as quick as I can.

(*Exit to country.*)

(*Enter Eunomia and Megadorus from Megadorus’ house.*)

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EUN. (120) Dear brother, I’d like you to think that what I am saying is only what’s right for me and what’s best for you – as a proper sister should. Though I’m in no doubt that we women are generally seen as altogether irritating. We are in fact all rightly seen as chatterers. (125) No dumb woman, they