

# Menander: Dyskolos<sup>1</sup>

## ACT I

### **1: Imagine**

Pan addresses the audience directly

### **2: Phyle**

Near the border to Boeotia, about 13 miles from Athens -remote. An appropriate place for a character like Knemon who is averse to contact with humanity in general. In antiquity it was known for its proximity to the shrine of Pan. For the purposes of the play, Menander has moved Pan's shrine from its site in an inaccessible place, to a location between the houses of Knemon and Gorgias.

### **3-4: stony ground**

This highlights the nature of the area - poor soil will mean poor farmers trying to eek out an existence.

### **5: Knemon**

He is the only character who is actually named in the prologue. This ensures that he is emphasized; this shows his importance as the obstacle to the central issue of the plot.

### **16: he did get married**

This might seem illogical for such an anti-social man but is necessary for the plot and would also have been expected in Athenian society.

### **19 - 20: a baby daughter ... just made things worse**

Daughters were often a financial burden on a family.

### **28: growing up**

The Greek word covers a range of ages from 14 - 21 although it is often used of the ages 18-21 which is doubtless what is meant here. Gorgias' experience of life's hardship has brought maturity and a sense of responsibility; he looks after his mother, inspires loyalty in his servant and shows a concern for his sister's reputation. On the other hand, Knemon is criticised for his neglect in leaving his daughter vulnerable to any passing male.

### **34ff: the girl has turned out...**

Surprisingly we find out that the girl has actually benefitted from Knemon's reclusive and anti-social ways. She has been brought up in isolation, away from any possible corrupting influences.

### **36: we think it proper to take care of her**

Pan has made Sostratos fall in love with the girl so that she can have a good marriage - a reward for her piety

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<sup>1</sup> Notes adapted from Menander: The Bad-Tempered Man, Stanley Ireland, with additions by D. Dicks

#### **40 - 41: well-off ... lives in town**

The Greek says that Sostratus lives in Cholargos, a deme on the north side of Athens. The point is that it is in the city as opposed to Knemon's place in the countryside. Sostratos comes from a wealthy family.

#### **42: came out hunting**

This explains why Sostratos happened to be in the area of Knemon's farm.

#### **50: Chaireas**

Chaireas is what is known as a *protatic* character, a character who is introduced at the beginning to facilitate the revealing of information and character but does not reappear in the play.

#### **50: What?**

It seems as though they are mid-conversation when they enter, a common device.

#### **51: putting garlands on the Nymphs**

We see the girl's piety; Pan had decided to reward her for this - it seems that she is deserving.

#### **54: or was that your idea**

Chaireas makes a joke. However, it has been suggested that there is a tacit implication that the wealthy had too much time on their hands and that Sostratos belonged to a class than had nothing better to do than fill its time with love escapades. We will see, however, that Sostratos' feelings for the girl are genuine.

#### **67: practical man**

Sostratos tends to misjudge people; here he thinks that Chaireas will have a solution to his problem. However, Chaireas' solution is not the right one for the situation:

- his first suggestion, a call-girl, is not relevant to Sostratos' situation
- the second, although it does focus on marriage which is Sostratos' intention, it focus on an arranged marriage with its emphasis on finances - this is not appropriate for Sostratos who has fallen in love (an emotional connection) with a girl who can bring him no financial benefit.

#### **70: I sent Pyrrhias**

Sostratos has a tendency to rely on others, as we see here and shall see elsewhere.

#### **81: Pyrrhias**

Visual, slapstick humour.

#### **88: away from the door**

Pyrrhias knows Knemon is not at home but he is terrified at the very mention of him. Comical.

#### **90: I've banged my toes**

Comic bathos.

#### **104 - 110:**

We see the contrast between Pyrrhias' business-like and courteous approach and Knemon's reaction.

The inclusion of direct speech enlivens the account.

**138: didn't approve of the marriage**

Sostratos now takes out his irritation by blaming Pyrrhias

**150: I don't think he's right in the head**

Knemon's behaviour is so extraordinary that it seems insane / unbelievable.

**151: Knemon**

Comical character.

**190-191: dropped the bucket down the well**

The well will become significant in the play as one thing after another ends up in it - first the bucket, then a mattock, and finally Knemon!

**209: Poverty**

Personification of Poverty was common in literature at this time.

**214: girl goes into house**

The girl leaves without saying thanks, perhaps due to her embarrassment at having Daos witness her conversation, perhaps due to her isolated upbringing.

**218 - 224:**

Daos is a naturally suspicious character (we will see that this is a common trait about the rustic people in the play). He shows himself to be distrusting of Sostratos, a 'city-boy'. He also aware of the importance of a girl's reputation, especially within a poorer family.

**224 - 226: I see a carnival crowd coming this way**

The entry of the chorus. The chorus would have sung but their songs would have had nothing to do with the action, unlike in tragedy and old comedy. We do not know if they would have remained on stage right up until the end of the play.

## ACT II

**234 - 265:**

Act II starts with a master and slave mid-conversation - a common device.

We see Gorgias' character:

- he instantly jumps to conclusions about Sostratos' intentions. This may be an understandable reaction but it does show typical rustic suspicion of city-dwellers and their supposed easy life.
- but as we will see in his conversation with Sostratos, he is not bitter and anti-social as his father is, and is open to persuasion.

**242 - 243: the disgrace affects me too**

We see the importance of a family's reputation, especially for a poorer family.

**248 - 249: if he catches me ... he'll string me up**

This shows us Knemon's character - Daos is scared of him.

**250 - 253:**

Gorgias also recognises Knemon's faults but he is more tolerant than Daos; he shows Knemon as unreasonable and recalcitrant but not violent.

**254 - 255: here comes that chap again**

Dramatic coincidence

**257: smart city cloak**

A *clanis*, a cloak of fine wool that might be worn by men or women, it is an external visible sign of Sostratos' city life.

**260: no idea which**

Irony - we soon learn it is Pan.

**261: she does it everyday**

Menander gives a picture of Sostratos' mother as very pious, perhaps too much so, almost to the extent of superstition.

Sostratos' words show him as an adolescent, maybe a little spoilt and self-indulgent - he is impatient and irritated that Getas was not available when he wanted him, and relieved to have escaped from having to attend his mother's religious rituals.

**267-8: I'll knock**

Menander brings Sostratos right to brink of disaster - he nearly knocks on the door which would have lead him to a confrontation with Knemon. He is rescued in a most unlikely manner - by Gorgias confronting him!

**269 - 314:**

There is a clear contrast between Sostratos and Gorgias. We have already seen a visual contrast in their clothing - Gorgias commented on Sostratos 'fancy cloak'. Gorgias has been described by scholars as pompous and pretentious - he certainly speaks here with long, meandering sentences; this contrasts to Sostratos' more direct speech. What is the reason for such a contrast? Wouldn't we more logically expect the 'city boy' Sostratos to speak in a more pretentious manner? Several suggestions have been put forward by scholars:

1. to show Gorgias' feelings of social inferiority - he deliberately speaks in a style which he hopes will impress the city-dweller;
2. to emphasise Gorgias' rusticity - he relies on sententia (it was common believed that more rustic people spoke using maxims and sententia);
3. to make us feel sympathy for him;
4. to display Gorgias' intellectual limitations and to suggest a gentle ridicule of him.
5. the charge he is about to bring against Sostratos is very serious - Gorgias wants to prepare his case well.

Perhaps Menander intended all these different interpretations, to appeal to a variety of people in his audience.

Interestingly, this whole section from line 271-283 forms one complex sentence in the Greek.

**274-277:**

The idea of an individual's fate being in accordance with his just desserts was commonplace at this time. Likewise, the temptation for the wealthy to use their riches to evil was another common theme.

**284: Let me put it this way**

At last he gets to the point and when he does it is actually quite brief in contrast to the ramblings that preceded it. Perhaps this suggests that Gorgias has realised that his generalisations have led nowhere and that he has failed to make the impression he intended. As a result he becomes more direct in his speech.

**285-286: don't despise us because we're poor**

Gorgias fears that Sostratos might look down on them because they are poorer than he is. He uses 'us', showing that although he may not always agree with his father, in this aspect they are united against the more well-off stranger.

**288:**

After all Gorgias' pretentious ramblings, Sostratos' brief and understated response comes as a bit of a surprise and there is comedy in the way that he fails to acknowledge the severity of Gorgias' accusations.

**289-292:**

His accusation - Gorgias accuses Sostratos of trying to seduce an innocent girl, a serious charge. He mentions the death-sentence; while he does not specifically mention 'seduction' or 'attempted rape'. these were the crimes that could result in the death sentence.

**297: he attracts sympathy**

Playing on the sympathies of the jury was a common tactic in law-courts; in *The Wasps*, Aristophanes says, "what flattering can a juror not hear? They wail about their poverty and add further ills to those they do have,"

**302-314:**

Sostratos' answer to Gorgias is brief and to the point - in direct contrast to Gorgias' lengthy pontificating earlier. He sounds sincere and his intentions seem honest - for example, he wants to see the girl's father rather than force himself upon the girl. He also makes mention of Pan and the Nymphs to add validity to his statement and assertions of love. The mention of Pan and the Nymphs will also remind the audience that it was Pan who caused Sostratos to fall in love - possibly dramatic irony, certainly humorous as Sostratos does not realise that he is already Pan's victim.

His claim of love seems genuine - he even agrees to accept her without a dowry, which was a normal and usually obligatory feature of marriage - this is a common device used in New Comedy to show sincere love.

**317: You've convinced me completely**

Gorgias moves from hostility to friendship very quickly and this comes as a bit of a surprise. He now calls Sostratos 'my friend'. This shows us his personality - he displays an openness of character and a receptiveness to what the audience knows is a sincere declaration of love from Sostratos.

Furthermore the use of the word friend (*philos*) is significant in Greek literature - it refers to a reciprocal bond and a recognition of mutual obligations of help and support. We now know that Gorgias will help Sostratos.

### **320: you can certainly help**

Sostratos quickly recognises the significance of Gorgias' claim to friendship and asks for help. Some suggest that this shows Sostratos' parasitic nature and / or his relief at not having to follow through with his initial plan of knocking on the door and confronting Knemon himself.

### **325: the chap with the temper**

Typical understatement from Sostratos - part of his character. Also, perhaps to ward off any protestations from Gorgias that Knemon will be impossible to win over.

### **328 - 335:**

Knemon is poor, or at least poorer than Sostratos. However, the fact that he works his farm alone is probably due more to his misanthropic nature - he *chooses* not to have anyone to help him. He wants to isolate himself from mankind (we have already heard that he won't cultivate the land near the road as he does not want to meet up with anyone).

### **335: a husband of his own kidney**

A husband who is just like him! This will no doubt be a warning to Sostratos who is not like Knemon at all! We see Sostratos' miserable response to this - "that means never."

### **340: We're family**

The importance of family.

### **344: There's no time for anything else**

Gorgias is so busy he doesn't have time for love - another contrast between him and Sostratos who seems to have plenty of time on his hands. Sostratos is living the life of the rich 'city-boy' while Gorgias has a busy life in the country.

### **347: god's**

Reminds us of Pan's interference - he made Sostratos fall in love with the girl

### **352-357:**

Gorgias tells Sostratos how difficult his task will be. Knemon is likely to be annoyed at the mere suggestion of a son-in-law (whereas in Greece most fathers would no doubt be relieved to find a husband for their daughter, especially without the cost of a dowry). We also see once more the difference between Sostratos and this rural family when Gorgias mentions that Sostratos' slick clothing would likely antagonise Knemon.

### **363-4:**

Yet another mention of Sostratos' fancy clothing.

### **367-369:**

Sostratos will need to prove himself with hard labour. Knemon is not the type to be impressed by expensive clothing or fancy speech. Once again we see a large contrast between Knemon and Sostratos.

### **372-374:**

This is probably intended for the audience, not Gorgias or Sostratos since neither of them replies to it so we can probably assume they did not hear it.

### **376: mattock**

A two-pronged hoe designed to be used like a pick-axe - useful on rockier areas and steeper slopes where a plough would struggle. A mattock often symbolised hard work.

### **381-391**

Sostratos' speech here has a number of functions:

1. confirms his determination. Gorgias has told him he will have to work to show him how impossible it will be to impress Knemon, but Sostratos welcomes the challenge and it seems to make him even more determined.
2. emphasises the virtue of the girl's isolated upbringing. She will be unaware of life's darker side and unencumbered by superstitions and pre-conceived ideas. It shows that Knemon's choice of an isolated life is not necessarily a completely bad thing - something positive has come out of it.
3. Humour in the last three lines - a lightening of the scene.
4. Reinforcement of the audience's sympathy for Sostratos - he is going well out of his comfort zone to win over Knemon to get the girl.

**The entrance of Sikon and Getas forms a bridge between Acts II and III. It also adds comedy at the end of Act II in readiness for Act III.**

The cook would probably have carried props to identify him as a cook; the mask would also have helped with the identification.

### **392 - 401:**

Humour - the cook, Sikon, has been turned into mincemeat by his victim. Cooks in antiquity were often hired not only to cook the animal, but also to butcher it. Humorous scene - of the sheep nibbling shoots as they proceed.

Sikon greet Pan as he passes - we have already seen the importance of this.

### **402:**

Getas arrives and he is hardly the "real ball of fire" that Sostratos mentioned in L181. Some scholars argue that this is yet another example of Sostratos' "repeated misinterpretation of reality". Instead of a cunning man, who might have found a way to avoid the labour he seems to hate, he is limited to moaning about the work. The portrayal of the over-burdened slave was common to Greek comedy - cf. Aristophanes' *Frogs*. Here Getas struggles under the weight of the rugs and cushions that the sacrificial party will lie on during their feast.

### **406-420:**

Another reference to Pan; also reminds us of Sostratos' mother's extreme piety. Getas seems to share Sostratos' disenchantment with his mistress' superstitious piety. To dream of Pan was a significant event; hence Sostratos' mother's reaction. We, as the audience, already know of Pan's involvement in making Sostratos fall in love with the girl; we know more than the characters in the play. Pan has put "fetters" on Sostratos - the 'chains' of love.

### **416: leather jacket**

Typical of rustic dress - in Sostratos' mother's dream, Sostratos was wearing a leather jacket - symbolises his quasi-conversion into a rural man.

### **427: I don't trust you**

The insult draws Act II to a close and reinforces the depiction of Getas as a habitual grumbler.

## ACT III

### **428: Lock the door**

It was very unusual to lock the door during the day and this serves to emphasize Knemon's antisocial ways. With Knemon leaving the house, we think that he will most likely be going to his fields and will meet up with Sostatos. However, Menander misleads us here as Knemon will not meet up with him; Knemon's plans will be frustrated by the arrival of Sostratos' mother which sends Knemon back into his house and so prevents him from going to his fields.

### **430: Plangon**

We don't know exactly who this is. It could be Sostratos' sister whom we see more of in Act V. On the other hand, since neither Knemon's daughter nor Sostratos' mother are named, one could argue that it would be unlikely that Sostratos' sister would be singled out in this way, especially when Parthenis who is addressed by name in line 433, is quite clearly a servant.

### **430 - 440:**

The arrival of Sostratos' mother and the sacrificial party is one of noise and bustle, exactly the sort of thing that Knemon hates and tries to avoid. It is yet another intrusion upon Knemon's privacy and desire for isolation. Knemon suffers repeated intrusions in this play - first Pyrrhias' approach, then Sostratos' mere presence near his door, then the presence of an entire loud noisy crowd, and several other intrusions yet to come.

### **432: One shouldn't approach this god in silence**

Pan is celebrated with noisy worship; probably yet another annoyance for Knemon!

### **437: We've been ... waiting for ages:**

Menander indicates the passing of time with this.

### **440: baskets, water, offerings**

Necessary accessories for any sacrifice. The first held the food and offerings, specifically the barley that was sprinkled over the victim before it was sacrificed, the water was used for the ritual washing of hands, the offerings were often cakes, either edible or made of incense.

### **442-454:**

These lines confirm Knemon's antipathy towards anyone who invades his personal space. However, his character is developed further; his hatred here is focussed on his view of the selfishness of people. He seems to believe that selfishness is the main factor in determining people's behaviour - so maybe he isn't so bad after all?!

We are also reminded of Knemon's mania for work in line 442 (we saw this before in Pan's prologue - line 31). Again, this is not a bad thing, so our perception of Knemon is gradually developing; we see more than just his misanthropy.

Knemon has been prevented from meeting Sostratos by Sostratos' mother's sacrifice to Pan. However, it was Pan who made Sostratos fall in love with the girl and who therefore, could be said to want Sostratos and Knemon to meet up. So a sacrifice to Pan obstructs Pan's plans. There is humour in this irony.

Knemon thinks about moving away from Pan's shrine - this highlights the lack of logic in such an antisocial man living next to the shrine of a noisy god which causes crowds of people to congregate there.

**457-464:**

Attracting the attention of people inside a house was a conventional opportunity for humour - it allows for the humour of exaggerated knocking and shouting. Getas makes this even more humorous with his continued grumbles against the girls responsible for getting the pot in which he blames their forgetfulness on their sexual promiscuity and also mentions their tendency to lie to cover their wrongdoing. There is further humour for the audience who know that Knemon has no male slaves, the very slave that Getas is calling for. The slave he is calling cannot come as he does not exist - the audience know this but Getas does not (dramatic irony).

**479: contract**

The only reason that the antisocial Knemon can think that anyone might choose to visit him would be for some business contract. Greek citizens were actually quite sociable (think of the practice of symposia) so Knemon's surprise at someone at his door serves to emphasize his lack of interaction with the world at large.

**471 - 473:**

The humour of the situation is increased with bathos, created by the contrast between Knemon's question and the actual purpose of Getas' errand. Bathos is also created by the repetition of "pot".

**489 - 490: Some people have no idea...**

Just as with Sostratos' reaction to Pyrrhias, Sikon finds it impossible to understand or accept the reality of Knemon's attitude and behaviour; this shows how outrageous and unusual it was. He needs to see it for himself in order to be convinced of it. Also, just like Pyrrhias, Sikon attempts to use tactics that would have worked in the city - but they fail in this rural region.

**498: You back again**

Does this suggest that Knemon cannot tell the difference between Getas and Sikon? Or perhaps that Getas is with Sikon so he is actually addressing this to Getas. Another possible interpretation hinges on Knemon's antisocial attitude - he views all invasions on his privacy as one and the same, regardless of the individual concerned. (This is similar to his reaction to Pyrrhias' approach which he saw as tantamount to an invasion of his land).

**505: cook-pan**

Note that Sikon asks for a 'cook-pan' whereas Getas asked for a 'pot'. A cook-pan was much larger than the humble pot; this shows Sikon's sense of self-importance in that he wants a specific and more expensive piece of cookware - a normal pot simply won't do. This is bound to incense Knemon (who doesn't even want to loan out salt and vinegar) even more.

**506: I haven't got one**

Knemon gives a list of all the things he supposedly doesn't have. Apparently lists like this were a stock feature in Greek comedy.

### **508: You didn't tell me**

Are these words a weak excuse, an attempt to deflect his anger, or designed to inflame Knemon even more?

### **520: be blown to the locals**

Just like Sostratos, Sikon has suffered in this rural environment.

### **521-554**

Sostratos enters, exhausted and sunburned as we see later in line 757 - this may have been shown by the mask, but not necessarily. His appearance now provides a striking and humorous contrast to his 'city slicker' appearance of before. We see that Sostratos is completely unused to physical labour. He has thrown himself into the digging, with the inevitable result that his enthusiasm has taken a savage toll on the muscles of his back and shoulders - the very result that Daos had wanted for Sostratos in line 373. While he was working, he kept looking around for Knemon (529-530). All his efforts, however, were sadly in vain as Knemon did not come. However, Sostratos did not shirk from the physical labour, showing his determination to win over the girl and the sincerity of his emotions.

**"I started to straighten up...."**: Sostratos tried to straighten up to counteract the effect of constant bending forward. Once he straightened up, his lack of suppleness caused his back muscles to seize so that he could not bend forwards again, with the result that he could only bend at the hips keeping his back rigid. This posture made him look like a "well-beam", a device for raising water from shallow wells. It consisted of a pivoted beam, with a bucket attached to a rope at one end and a counterweight at the other. The operator pulls the rope to make the bucket descend into the well, while the counterweight then lifts the bucket and water to the surface. Note that Sostratos is now using 'country vocabulary' after his day working the fields!

**"I don't think he'll come now"**: Direct speech enlivens the monologue with quasi-dialogue and allows the conversation to be related with brevity. At the same time, the failure of Sostratos to meet up with Knemon makes his mission seem even more unlikely. The audience wonders how the two will ever meet up - this builds the tension and prepares us for future events.

### **543: something draws me**

Sostratos explains why he has come back to Knemon's house. It sounds as though there is an external force drawing Sostratos there; Menander gently reminds us of Pan's involvement.

### **547:**

Getas arrives on stage again; this is dramatically necessary for the play so that he can meet up with Sostratos, but also allows for another comic opportunity - again we see the badgered, overworked slave. The idea that he is blinded with smoke is also visually humorous.

### **551-554:**

At first Getas does not recognise Sostratos. This is a standard comic ploy which is also used later in Roman Comedy; however, it is explained by the smoke in Getas' eyes so is not entirely gratuitous. There is also humour inherent in the idea that Sostratos desperately wanted to find the supposedly very clever Getas before, and now Getas does not even recognise him.

**557: We expect him any minute.**

Kallippides (Sostratos' father) is essential as Sostratos needs his father's permission to marry, just as he needs Knemon's permission. He does not arrive with his wife, allowing Menander to exploit the comical potential of the two contrasting entrances of Sostratos' mother and father. It also focuses the audience on the problem of convincing Knemon first - i.e. at this point, Knemon is the obstacle that Sostratos must overcome first, rather than distracting the action with another obstacle (his own father).

**558 - 559: the sacrifice here is quite convenient**

Earlier Sostratos was relieved not to have been caught up in the sacrificial preparations, while now he sees it as convenient and is quite happy to use it for his own purposes (to further cement his friendship with Gorgias); he also mentions that this will make Gorgias further obligated to help him in the future.

**563-569:**

Getas is sarcastic here - we have already seen him bemoaning the amount of work that he has to do; obviously, therefore, he would be unlikely to be thrilled at the prospect of extra guests. Surprisingly, he makes no response to Sostratos' mention of wedding plans; Getas is absolutely involved in his own predicament of having too much work to do and his master's marriage intentions pass him by completely.

**569: cooking salt**

The denial of salt was a proverbial sign of miserliness and anti-social behaviour; Getas emphasises this by saying they wouldn't give even a *pinch*.

**574:**

The old woman's frantic exit from Knemon's house acts as a striking contrast to Sostratos' optimistic exit. Getas is still on stage, but it is clear that her speech is not meant for his ears. Getas' interjections are asides meant to diminish the pathos of the scene. This is not tragedy after all, so we shouldn't expect genuine fear and panic; hence, Getas' mocking of the situation ensures that the scene is not truly tragic, but mock-tragic.

Simiche mentions the well; this is the second time it has been mentioned - previously the loss of the bucket had caused Knemon's daughter to appear on stage flustered and needing help with fetching water. Now the attempt to rescue the bucket has resulted in the loss of the mattock as well. (One could even say that Sostratos' 'well-beam' posture is another indirect mention of a well). The repeated mentions of the well build up to the ultimate denouement.

**580: poor rotten old piece of rope**

This is a telling description of Knemon's household (very frugal) and it matches Knemon's mania for self-sufficiency (remember this is the man who insists on tending his land by himself) - we see this later in his reaction to the suggestion that they call Daos for help. It seems they have no spare bucket either and no hook that might be used to rescue the bucket.

**487 - 599:**

We see Knemon's view of the situation - he immediately assumes that any loss is the result of deliberate intention specifically designed to inflict personal damage upon him (paranoid!). Simiche asserts that it was an accident in line 488 in response to Knemon's accusation.

Knemon also tends to exaggerate - "you've ruined me", "let you down on a rope".

The scene is full of bathos rather than pathos- we are, after all, talking about the loss of a hoe-like implement when Knemon speaks of his ruin!

**597: I'm all alone now, not a soul to help**

It seems that the isolation that Knemon has wanted for so long now presents him with a problem. Perhaps Knemon realises that he cannot be totally self-sufficient? One could counter this by noting Knemon's instant refusal to ask Daos for help; however, some have suggested that this is purely an automatic response. Either way, we see the beginnings of a change in tone, a suggestion of a more vulnerable side of Knemon in these lines.

**599 - 560: we could give you a rope and grapple...damn you all to eternity**

Getas' offer jolts Knemon back to his former self as he refuses the offer of help (earlier he had refused to help Getas and Sikon).

**602-604: That's your genuine Attic farmer...stony soil...no profit**

An interesting comment, this suggests that Knemon is not alone in his untrusting, anti-social, misanthropic attitude, but that this is rather typical of Attic farmers, whose character has been created by the hard life he leads. Much of Knemon's hard life is, of course, self-imposed as he chooses to work without help from others; however, the mention of 'stony soil' does suggest to us that farming was not an easy life.

**609: local farm-labourers they are ... how peculiar**

Getas sounds rather snobbish here. (Apparently even the slaves / servants are snobbish towards the rural community; it seems that the slaves look down on free but poor citizens!).

**611-612: I simply won't take no for an answer.**

Again we see Sostratos self-confidence and his certainty that people will do what he wants.

**614-615: For your friend, I've been for ages before we met**

A strange assertion; what does he mean here? Does he consider himself a friend of the family because he has been in love with the girl for ages? Or does it show his self-centred view of life in general and his lack of connection with reality? Perhaps he wants to emphasise the friendship to stress Gorgias' obligations towards him?

**617-619:**

Gorgias continues to be concerned about his family (we saw his concern for his sister earlier). It also reminds us that he is head of his household and responsible for those within. Furthermore, he countermands Sostratos' instructions to Daos - Sostratos told Daos to attend the feast, but Gorgias told him not to leave the house - he might be Sostratos' friend and committed to helping him, but he has not given up his authority and shows that he still has a mind of his own.

## ACT IV

This scene mirrors the scene in the previous act where Simiche emerged from the house panicked and needing help; however, now the cause of her panic is not a mattock in a well, it is Knemon in a well! In the previous scene Getas merely commented (in asides) on Simiche's panic; here, Sikon interacts with the woman. This is understandable as Simiche actually asks for help and Sikon is angry because Simiche is interrupting the sacrificial proceedings.

Previously Knemon had threaten to throw Simiche down a well; now it is Knemon who is in the well and Simiche is urged to throw something on top of him. Sikon's reaction stops the scene from being truly tragic (which would be inappropriate) and adds humour to it instead.

### **626: he was going down**

Ancient wells were sometimes fitted with hand and toe holds for make access for cleaning, etc. Despite his age, Knemon has attempted going down the well on his own, refusing help in his characteristic manner. He has fallen to the bottom.

### **634: struggle with a dog in the well**

A reference to one of Aesop's fables in which a man attempted to rescue his dog, which was stuck in a well, only to be bitten by it.

### **639 - 665:**

Sikon's monologue has two main functions:

1. to allow time for the rescue to take place
2. to allow the audience to visualise the rescue (similarly to messenger speeches in tragedy).

We also see Sikon's vindictiveness and malice - we will see these again in Act V. In some ways, this blackens his character and by extension, wins some sympathy for Knemon.

### **641: drink the well dry**

Sikon assumes that Knemon fell down the well because of his miserliness; this would also account for his refusal to lend them a pot earlier. Sikon assumes that Knemon's behaviour must be due to miserliness rather than a desire to be left alone.

### **666: Enter Sostratos**

We move from Sikon's imagined version of events to Sostratos' first hand account. This is a comic echo of the typical tragic messenger speech. Although the events could well have been tragic (Knemon is in a lot of danger and could easily have been killed, the girl is visibly distraught), it is actually full of humour (for example, Sostratos who is supposed to be helping with the rescue, keeps forgetting his purpose every time he sees the girl).

**670: Gorgias jumped straight down into the well**

Once again we see Gorgias' consideration for his family.

Surprisingly Menander does not give Sostratos a starring role in Knemon's rescue. However, this adds to the humour - after all his efforts to impress Knemon, when Sostratos has the chance, he does not get to take it as Gorgias beats him to it. There is also comedy in Sostratos' distraction from the serious task at hand whenever he looks at the girl. Furthermore, the theme of Sostratos' reliance on someone else - it is Gorgias who will help him to marry the girl; it will not be due to Sostratos' own efforts as it might well have been had he impressed Knemon by rescuing him.

**671-680**

Note the contrast between Sostratos' and the girl's reaction to Knemon's plight - Sostratos "cared less than nothing" while the girl was exhibiting all the typical signs of mourning.

**682: Gorgias was a veritable Atlas**

Atlas was the Titan who held up the heavens - while Sostratos was supposed to be hauling Knemon up from above (except that he kept getting distracted and looking at the girl) Gorgias was supporting him from below, like Atlas.

**686: I came out and here I am**

Sostratos says he left as soon as Knemon was out of the well once again. Presumably this is to assert his correct behaviour - he does not want any suggestion of impropriety which might have arisen had he been alone with the girl or acted inappropriately ("I very nearly kissed her"). Of course he was ostensibly alone with the girl at the top of the well during the rescue but it is unlikely that anything could have happened during a rescue attempt, while Sostratos' hands were on the rope, and the girl's brother and father were nearby, albeit down a well. Once the rescue had been completed, Sostratos realised that his emotions could easily get out of control (after his prolonged proximity to the girl during the rescue) and left promptly.

**691: Knemon is wheeled out...**

Knemon is weak from his ordeal and presumably badly injured. Logically it would not make sense to bring a severely injured man on stage, but it is necessary for the play's events.

**699: I'm in a bad way**

Knemon believes that he is seriously injured - this makes him more approachable. This also causes him to pass on his responsibility for the girl to Gorgias, a plot device that enables Sostratos to win his bride and for Pan's plans to come to fruition.

**699-670: Ask your mother to come**

Presumably so that she can be a witness to the arrangements that Knemon is going to make.

**704: you miserable man**

Clearly Knemon's ferocious attitude has not completely dissipated; nor has his aversion to outsiders.

**709: Myrrhine:**

Knemon's ex-wife and Gorgias' mother. This is a common name given to older, married women in literature.

**710 - 748:**

We see Knemon's reasons for his anti-social attitude (he perceived people as being selfish and self-interested). It seems that he meant well and that his reasons were good. Furthermore, he now admits that his behaviour was wrong. This shows us that Knemon is not a completely dislikable man, which is necessary, as we would be uncomfortable with the idea of Sostratos marrying into a family with such a disagreeable man. A more satisfactory resolution can be attained if Knemon and Sostratos have a chance of getting along.

**712: self-sufficient**

Self-sufficiency was often regarded as the ideal state in Greek thought. However, in Knemon's case, the quest for self-sufficiency proved futile as it relied on his physical capability to maintain it.

**722 - 725**

Good old Gorgias! He *knew* what Knemon was like and yet, despite years of hostile neglect and the realisation that Knemon would probably not change (lines 250-252), he helped Knemon.

**731: I'm adopting you as my son**

Given Knemon's intractable nature, this is probably the only way in which Sostratos will be able to marry the girl - if Gorgias is the one who has the authority to grant this. One could ask why Menander did not make Knemon experience a change of heart at this stage, making him more amenable to the idea of Sostratos as his son-in-law. This might work in a more modern play, but in Greek thought, character did not change - character was fixed at birth - and so the idea that Knemon might soften to that experience would be unbelievable to a Greek audience, while passing on the responsibility for the girl and estate could just be an acknowledgement of his weakened and precarious state.

Likewise, had Knemon died, this would have removed the obstacle to marriage but would have been too extreme for a comedy. It would also leave the girl as an *epikleros*, a heiress with no legal protector. Instead Menander makes Knemon's accident a serious one so that he is made to believe that he might die in the near future and decide to pass responsibility on to Gorgias.

**740 - 741: Lay me down again ... strictly necessary**

This suggests that Knemon has come to the end of his speech, but in an excellent bit of characterisation, Menander makes Knemon exhibit the tendency of the old to beyond what is necessary. He also once again explains his reasons for his anti-social behaviour, helping us to feel more sympathetic for him.

**749: if you agree**

Gorgias does not need Knemon's permission but we see his respect and concern for his family once again in the way he defers, or attempts to defer, to his father.

**757-758: a farmer...he's not soft**

Knemon would not be impressed by a soft 'city-boy'; it is hard labour that impresses him.

**760: You'd better consult your family**

Just as the girl's guardian is required to give his permission for the marriage, so Sostratos needs his father's permission before he can get married.

**769 - 770: he's ready to treat a poor man as his equal**

In the beginning the differences between the urbane Sostratos and the rural Gorgias / Knemon were emphasized; now their similarities are stressed in preparation for the happy denouement of the play.

**773: Is Kallippides your father?**

Gorgias instantly recognises Sostratos' father. He did not know Sostratos but this is easily explained as Sostratos was described in the prologue as a man about town. He probably did not frequent the rural areas much.

**778: he seems to be starving**

Kallippides' hunger provides the reason for his entrance at this moment. The element of hunger is also quite common in Greek comedy - we often see characters fixated on food.

## **ACT V**

By the end of Act IV, the theme of Sostratos' quest for his bride has been brought to a successful conclusion, so what need is there, therefore, for Act V? The answer lies in comic traditional format in which the closing scenes frequently portrayed the comeuppance of characters who had created problems earlier in the action, together with a revel that marked the obligatory happy ending. In the final scene we see Getas and Sikon get their revenge on Knemon for his earlier treatment of them.

Act V also ties up the loose ends - Gorgias is rewarded for the assistance he has given to Sostratos, and thus he too experienced the help inherent in a relationship with philoi. It also provides a way for Knemon to be drawn into society and the celebrations without requiring a complete change of personality, which, as we have already seen, would not have been considered believable in Greek thought.

**784-785: I expected better of you**

The Act opens with a double surprise. When Act IV ended, Sostratos had been confident that his father would agree to the marriage. Now we meet the characters in mid-conversation where Sostratos expresses disappointment; the audience makes the obvious assumption that Kallippides has refused consent. However, this is a misdirection and we soon find out that it is a different wedding that Kallippides is refusing, that of his daughter to Gorgias. This is an unexpected twist to the plot and one that we had no inkling of prior to this.

**788 - 818:**

In some respects Sostratos' speech echoes that of Gorgias earlier. Gorgias had lectured Sostratos on the proper behaviour expected of the rich; now Sostratos provides his father with similar instruction. It would seem that Sostratos has become similar to Gorgias with his growing closeness to the family.

**809 - 810: it will ensure the same generosity for you in turn**

The philo bond was a reciprocal one.

It must have been even more important in a time of political upheaval where one's fortunes could change very quickly depending upon who was in power.

**812 - 817:**

Kallippides is won over very easily. While this might seem unlikely, it is dramatically necessary - there is no dramatic need for further opposition to delay the resolution of the play.

**821-822: I heard all your conversation**

Eavesdropping is a common convention in New Comedy - it enables the dramatic tension to be maintained by not needing Sostratos to repeat his conversation with his father to Gorgias.

**830-831: a soft life...other people's hard work**

In his reluctance to depend on other people and his insistence upon earning his living through his own efforts, Gorgias is similar to his father.

**839 - 841:**

Like Kallippides, Gorgias seems to concede very quickly. Of course, we do have some lines missing here so maybe his surrender is not as easy as it appears. The speed of his concession shows his openness to persuasion, his easygoing manner and his flexibility, rather than a weakness of character. In this he is different from his father who seems considerably less flexible.

**851: bring the old man with you**

Sostratos again imposes his own arrangements on others; we have seen this before. This also brings Knemon dramatically into focus, in preparation for the scene with Getas and Sikon.

**863: I've achieved a marriage**

Irony - Sostratos has actually done very little to bring about the marriage; others were more instrumental in bringing this about.

**867: he begged me to bring the old servant**

This gives a reason for Simiche to leave the house so that Knemon can be alone which is essential for the scene with Getas, Sikon and Knemon.

**870 - 873: forget him ... we're all family now**

There is still a gulf between the personalities of Sostatos and Gorgias. Gorgias has shown himself time and again to be deeply considerate of his family, while Sostratos, who can be a little self-centred, simply ignores Knemon rather than trying to encourage him to join in the celebrations. He also sweeps aside Gorgias' protests of shyness in his typical confident manner.

**877: something awful will happen to you**

Simiche builds the dramatic tension in preparation for the next scene.

**879: flautist**

The aulos.

**880:**

The piper would probably be the official musician at the festival. When the music starts, it would suggest that the play was reaching a conclusion; however, Getas' comment that he is not ready for the music yet, alerts us to the fact that the play's action is not yet over.

**886: I've been plotting for ages**

Getas wants revenge on Knemon. We later see Getas explaining that he wanted to coerce Knemon into attending the celebrations, but at this time we see no mention of this, only of Getas' intention of vengeance.

**891 - 892:**

More successful in the original Greek - the force of Sikon's reply suggests that he sees in Getas' ostensibly innocent phrasing a reference to buggery.

**887: suppose we haul him out**

There was no way of showing on stage actions that would have taken place inside, so Knemon must be brought outside. This may seem illogical in terms of plot, but would not have troubled Greek audiences.

**910ff:**

Designed to irritate the Knemon as much as possible - we have music, constant knocking on the door, shouting, repeated demands for extraordinary pieces of equipment. A comic and noisy scene!

**932 - 940:**

We now see a more positive motive for Getas' and Sikon's harassment of Knemon, to coerce him into joining the celebrations. This helps to tie up the loose ends of the play by including Knemon in the uniting of the families.

**948: Naiad's rill**

Water - i.e. for the mixing of water and wine.

**950: like pouring water into sand**

A comic nod to the stereotype that women were overly fond of alcohol.

**964 - 967:**

Getas steps out of character at the end to address the audience. Pan opened the play and Getas ends it; the play begins and ends with a direct address to the audience.