

HERE COME THE GOATS

By Stephen A. Schrum

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Really don't mind if you sit this one out.
My words but a whisper—your deafness a SHOUT.
I may make you feel but I can't make you think.
Your sperm's in the gutter, your love's in the sink.

—Ian Anderson, *Thick As a Brick*.

"What could more flood the cheeks with tears
Than requited-but-with-an-escape-clause love?"

—Oedipus X, Greek Poet.

"She loves me.... She loves me not.,, She loves me....
She—oh, rats."

—Stephen A. Schrum.

HERE COME THE GOATS

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Dramatis personae

A Jester

A Soldier

A Goatherd

A Statesman

THE ACTION OF THE PLAY takes place in front of Thanatos Cave, set in the foothills somewhere outside the Greek city-state of Polisopolis, in Post-Golden Age Greece.

Synopsis of Scenes

ACT I—the first day

Scene 1—that afternoon

Scene 2—twilight

Scene 3—that night -`

ACT II—a week later

ACT III—the next day

My first play, *Here Come the Goats*, was written in 1978 (© 1979). It grew out of a conversation with John Parham with whom I had done three productions in succession: *Man For All Seasons*, "The Kitchen Table" and *A View From the Bridge*. While waiting to go onstage at a rehearsal for the last Play, I mentioned a Greek comedy called *Here Come the Goats* and he said, "I'll have to read that sometime." I said, "Yes, and I'll have to write it sometime."

I began by sketching the action in a review (by Claire Renuzit; see Appendix III) and went on from there. Changes were made during a mini-production for a theatre practicum class in the Fall of '78. The actors included Dirk Flaherty and Steven Flynn, now both entrenched in retail sales (shoes and toys, respectively).

A subsequent radio production for a Mass Media course was recorded that same semester at Edward R. Debes II's Pineapple 7 Studios. The show, "New Theatre," also incorporated an interview of me by Ed, which presaged our work on our documentary, "The Student at York College" the following year.

The actors for that production were as follows:

| | |
|-----------|---------------|
| Jester | Robin Gohn |
| Soldier | Steve Schrum |
| Statesman | Andi Cashmore |
| Goatherd | John Parham |

ACT I. SCENE 1

(The curtain opens. The sound of an army marching rises, then fades a la Doppler effect. As the sound fades out, the lights come up full, revealing the set: on up right is the cave; two rocks sit on stage left immediately behind the curtain, the larger rock slightly upstage and to the right of the smaller one. The stage has four entrances: behind the curtain left and right, up left, and through the cave.

After a moment, the three men enter from up left: first the Jester, then the Soldier, and finally the Statesman. The Jester is dressed in a faded purple Greek gown and sandals; his makeup, while not overdone, suggests a clown, with red cheeks and exaggerated (slightly) lines; and he is of about medium height. The Soldier is taller than the Jester and looks physically menacing; he wears a Greek lighting costume, a metal breastplate and helmet. His belt holds a sword, and he has metal bands on his wrists. The Statesman is the shortest of the three and is also chubby. He wears a long grey robe, sandals, and a laurel wreath around his head (the wreath is slightly askew). All three carry blankets, each containing a bowl; the Statesman's also carries the pot and the ladle in his blanket.

The Jester reaches centerstage when he trips and falls, with his head pointing downstage. The Soldier nearly falls over him.)

Soldier

(Screaming) Here, now, here, now, watch yourself. That's the third time you've fallen down today.

Jester

(From the ground, rolling over on his back and pointing at the sky') 'Tis such a fine day; overcast a perfectly lovely day for falling down.

Statesman

Well, there's no accounting for taste.

Jester

Uh, no. (Stands) Well, I seem to have fallen at the right place. Is that not Thanatos cave?

Soldier

Indeed, I think it is. (Thoughtfully regards the cave mouth) Our shelter for the coming invasion.

Jester

(Crosses to Soldier) We should have brought our women along with us. Done up the invasion right and (nudge, wink) improper.

Soldier

(Turns on him) We couldn't bring them; you know that. The fewer of us the better. And better without you, I'm sure.

Jester

Indeed, sir. Whatever possessed my lady's sister to fall in love with you I shall never, never know. Well, maybe I shall know that at the intercession of some Divine Muse. However, what her other sister fell in love with him, (points at Statesman) I'll truly never know. (Pauses for reaction, gets none.) Is that not right, my statesman friend? (Points at him)

Statesman

There's no accounting for taste.

Jester

Indeed. I, however, was the perfect choice, and my lady did a fine job of weeding me out from her other suitors. Why she kept the weeds, I'll never know, but, no matter, as I -

Soldier

Will you shut up! You will drive me as mad as him. (Begins to point, stops gesture.)

Jester

Well, there is no accounting for taste.

Soldier

Arrrrgh. I'm going in to check out this cave and make sure it is safe for us.

Jester

(Crosses to Statesman, puts his arm around the man) Fine, fine. In the meantime, I shall remain here and continue to engage my companion in stimulating conversation.

Soldier

Converse with him as you gather us some firewood. Night will be coming on us soon enough.

Jester

Yessss, yes, yes, yes, yes. Shall we gather some firewood, dear sir?

Statesman

There's no accounting for firewood.

(The Jester and Statesman move up left as the Soldier enters the cave. Lights fade out.)

ACT I, SCENE 2

(Lights up, not too brightly, for dusk. The three men sit huddled around a fire in front of the rocks. The Soldier is on the right, the statesman on the left. The latter is stirring a pot that is suspended over the fire. After a bit of stirring, he ladles some out into each man's bowl and distributes them. The Soldier takes his and walks to the cave where he sips at the soup, then spits and retches.)

Soldier

Faaah! Gods, what is that?

Jester

Grass soup. It's his specialty.

Soldier

It's awful.

Jester

Awful? On the contrary, I think it's not half bad.

(The Jester sips, then grabs his throat, chokes, rolls his eyes, and falls backward, head pointing to stage right — all in fun, of course.)

Soldier

(Crossing to Jester and looking straight down at him) Will you quit clowning around? This is a very serious situation we are in, and we can't even be fed properly.

Statesman

(Sipping his soup, then refilling his bowl) Ahhh, ummmm, delicious.

Soldier

It stinks!

Statesman

(Starts to sip, stops, looks dully at Soldier) Hmm...?

Soldier

It stinks

Statesman

(Smiling cherubically) Well...

(The Statesman clicks his tongue at the end of the well, and the Jester leaps up, crosses to the Statesman, and puts his chin on the Statesman's shoulder)

Jester

There's no accounting for taste.

Statesman

(Nose to nose with the Jester) You're absolutely right. (To soldier) There's no accounting for taste.

Soldier

Bah! I'm going into the cave and try to chase those bats out. (Exits into cave.)

Jester

One's got bats in his cave, the other bats in his belfry'. (Sniffs, crosses to downstage center.) Ah, the night air is coming in, wafting against mine nostril hairs. How sweet is the smell of animal dung from the nearby fields. And, what ho! A vision appears before my eyes: 'tis our three loves, hiding from the enemy Spartans, our three frail beauties — except for yours, of course. (Points at Statesman.)

Statesman

No accounting for taste.

Jester

Exactly. (Back to "dreamy vision mood.) There they are, our three sweethearts, nobly hidden from the Spartan soldiers, hidden from Sight in their home's basement in old Polisopolis. And we here, waiting for the coast to be clear of enemy warriors. Yes, here we wait, wait for that divine time when we shall at last be reunited with our loves, as memory and reality shall become one, as shall we all become one.

Statesman

(Finishing soup) Ummm, good. Well—(almost looks intelligent for the first time)—you know that ancient Roman proverb, "De gustibus non est disputandum."

Jester

Actually, no, I don't know that ancient Roman proverb. Give it to me in plain Greek.

Statesman

"De gustibus non est disputandum." That is, there's no accounting for taste.

Jester

Sounds like Greek to me,

(Lights fade out.)

ACT I, SCENE 3

(Lights up, not too brightly, for it is night. The three men sit around the fire—sans pot—with their blankets drawn tightly about them in the cool night air. The soldier and the Jester face each other across the fire, with the statesman upstage of both. (The Soldier is cleaning his sword by breathing on it and polishing it with his blanket.)

Jester

(Chilled) Brrrr. "Ah, yes," he said, I'm am sure we will have no trouble moving into yon cave, " he said. "I'm certain we can occupy Thanatos with no problem," he said.

Soldier

I said I've never known bats to mind one way or the other, I still don't know why they attacked us like that.

Jester

I do. It's because you smell like a cheap whorehouse in Gaul. I'd attack you if I had sharp little fangs. Gods know why they bit you at all. "Tis easier to attract flies with honey than with vinegar," 'tis said. Not that I'm saying they should have enjoyed me more than you. I would rather not be tasty to the flying nice.

Statesman

'There's no accounting for tasty.

Soldier

(Stands, readies sword to strike statesman) Shut up! If I hear you utter that vile phrase once more' I shall thrash you soundly with the flat of my sword.

Jester

Did you say "flat"?

Statesman

Flat? No accounting for taste.

Soldier

(To kneeling position) You needn't egg him on.

Jester

(Also to kneeling position) I don't know why' not. Otherwise he wouldn't say anything.

Soldier

(On one foot, one knee) That would be preferable to the repetition of one damned phrase.

Jester

(To one foot, one knee} But he declaims it so well.

Soldier -

(Stands, feet spread) Shut up, you fool.

Jester

(Stands, feet spread) 'Tis a fool I am indeed. And in thought, and in word.

Soldier

(Throws blanket off) I said, shut up!

Jester

(Swirls cape closely about self I shall never shut up; clams of the Mediterranean, unite!

(The Statesman ducks behind the rocks, derriere high in the air; the Soldier raises his sword to strike the Jester.)

Soldier

You—you—oh, no! (Drops sword, runs off right.)

Jester

I thank you, my friend. (Statesman kneels) You have just saved my life with your grass soup. My would-be murderer had to, ah, run off. 'Truly though, he who fights and runs away, lives to fight — or at least run — another day'. Luckily he can't digest your cooking.

Statesman

There's no accounting for grass soup. (Lights black out; curtain,)

ACT II

(Curtain opens to sounds of battle. Sounds fade out; lights come up. It is now one week later, and all three men are quite sick of each other's company. 'The Soldier sits by the cave, facing off right. The Statesman sits by the rocks, looking off left. The Jester sits downstage center, facing the audience. A long pause follows the lights, then:)

Statesman

Well, there's no accounting for taste.

Soldier

(Leaps to his feet, draws his sword, faces the Statesman) I'll kill him! I'll bloody kill him, bloody pig! (He steps toward the Statesman, but the Jester leaps up and restrains him) Let me kill hin! I want to kill him! (Changing to a whine) Let me kill him?

(He drops the sword and falls to his knees, sobbing. The Jester picks up the sword and tosses it offstage right, then leans down and pats the Soldier on the back.)

Jester

Now, now, there, there.

Soldier

(Shrugs off the pats like a petulant child.) Bloody pigs. (Stands, walks downstage to declaim the following) I'm a soldier, a soldier! In olden times such a declaration would make men shiver, tremble, and look on with awe! A soldier could be served in any inn and not even have to pay. But now, soldiers have their faces slapped by old women carrying smelly fish. I'm a soldier! I should be back in Polisopolis driving out the Spartan pigs! But no, I hide here like a mouse whose cheese rests under a huge unsteady rock.

Jester

There, now, my friend (going to him. There's always a better mousetrap.

Soldier

I should be killing, yet I hide. I should fight for my homeland, yet I crouch in fear! I should have those Spartan dogs—

Jester

Pigs.

Soldier

—pigs falling before my sword and crying for mercy, yet I closet myself in a cave. (To Jester) Do you understand how I feel?

Jester

Of course I do, of course. (Moves downstage center, Soldier counters upstage right) I'm a Jester. I make Jokes, bad puns, bawdy comments. Time was when a jester could go to any inn, be served, and sneak out before he had to pay. No more. Smelly fish cone up to us on the street and hit us with old women wearing babushkas and carrying shopping baskets. I'm a Jester I should be spilling my blood for nothing, yet I veil myself in the suburban foothills of my homeland. I should be having my fragile body drawn and quartered, yet I cloak myself behind two companions. I should be losing my life anonymously in a big battle over a little land, yet I camouflage myself as a wanderer and save my skin for another witticism, another joke, another bon mot. (To Statesman:) Do you know how I feel?

(The Statesman stands, comes downstage left as the Jester counters upstage.)

Statesman

I'm a Statesman—and there's really no accounting for taste.

Soldier

That does it! I'll kill him! (Reaches for his sword, can't find it) Where's my sword:

Jester

(Looking off right) Oh, um, is that it over there, being devoured by that goat?

Soldier

(Looking) It is! (Walks almost off-stage) Away, you creatures! Leave my sword alone. You there, Goatherd, stay your animals from eating my sword.

Goatherd's Voice

Apologies, sir. Lucianus, cut that out, and give it back. (Enters from right, holding out sword with several pieces chewed out) There you are, sir, your sword. My apologies, I'm sure. (Bows)

Soldier

(Taking his sword) What is your name, Goatherd?

Goatherd

I have no name, sir, not as such. I am simply Goatherd. Uh, that is, Goatherd, Junior. My father, too, was a Goatherd.

Jester

(Stepping in) Have you a son, goatherd?

Goatherd Yes, sir.

Jester

And his name

Goatherd

Well, he'll be following in my footsteps as well—(checks sandals, finds goat crap, says "yuck" while trying to wipe it off)—ah, so I've named him Goatherd, also.

Jester

Goatherd, the Third, as it were.

(The Soldier, disgusted by this banter, walks off to the cave.

Goatherd

(To Jester) Of course, sir. Uh, your friend seems to be a bit peeved at the turn of the conversation. I guess we got his goat.

Jester

Oh, he's fun to be with.

Goatherd

Really?

Jester

Uh, yes, we constantly "goat" him on.

Goatherd
And the other fellow?

Jester
Doesn't say much.

Goatherd
A good scapegoat, no doubt.

Jester
Truly good! You should see him in the city; his clothes!

Goatherd
Flashy, I suppose?

Jester_
Hardly. His "sport goat," for example —

Goatherd
...is in reality a "goat" of mail?

Jester
And in his house he has a tremendous "goatrack."

Goatherd
To hang his "goats" and hats on, of course.

Jester
Of course. But there's more. Do you know what he carries in his goatpocket?

Goatherd
Goat cheese?

Jester
(Turning away) You peeked!

Goatherd
(To audience, innocently') Too soon.

Jester -
(Over his shoulder) By the way, I like your beard.

Goatherd
Why, thank you. But it's not called a beard.

Jester

(Leaning in for the joke) It's called...

Goatherd

A goatee.

(Both laugh loudly at the last joke, slapping thighs_ and knees, etc. The Soldier walks down toward them.)

Soldier

Will you two stop cackling? You sound like a pair of hens!

Jester

Or the goose that laid the "goaten" egg! (Slaps the Goatherd's back.)

Goatherd

(Abruptly stops laughing) I say, that's taking it a bit far, isn't it?

Jester

(Also stops abruptly) Ah. I suppose it is. Well, you know what they say.

Goatherd

No. What do they say?

(The Jester points at the Statesman.)

Statesman

There's no accounting for taste.

Goatherd

(Crosses to Statesman) Does he always do that when you point at him?

Jester

At him, to him, around him, constantly. Try it.

(Goatherd points at Statesman.)

Statesman

There is no accounting for taste.

Goatherd

(Tapping his head with index finger) Or other things, I imagine. Well, enough pleasantries, on with some exposition. What brings you gentlemen to this spot?

Jester

Well, Polisopolis...

Soldier

(Leaping on Goatherd, grabbing his collar) I knew it! He's a Spartan spy! But I've got you now. I could just spit when one of these sly Spartan spies come sprinting by.

Jester

(Puts restraining hand on Soldier's shoulder) He's not a spy, my friend.

Soldier

How would you know? I'm a Soldier; I can tell these things.

Jester

Then how do you explain the herd of goats with him?

Goatherd

I've herd of goat-Soldier (To Goatherd) Shut up! (To Jester) They're his confederates. (Begins to throttle Goatherd.)

Jester

They are goats.

Soldier

That's what they want you to think.

(They look off right. Goat noise. Jester looks at the Soldier, who is reluctant to admit his mistake.)

Soldier

Sorry, I thought you were a Spartan spy.

Goatherd

(High falsetto) Would you release me, please? (Soldier does so. Now, what's all this about, uh, Spartan spies, was it?

Soldier

(Steps away, to downstage) Yes, the murdering, raping, pillaging dogs!

Jester

Pigs.

Soldier

Pigs!

Jester

Oh, go brood in the cave. The Soldier walks into the cave.) 'Tis a long story, sir. Pray, won't you sit while I relate it? (Points to rocks.)

Goatherd

I would be happy to, sir. (Points offstage right.) Those bushes over there should keep, my children occupied in the meantime.

(They walk to the rocks. The Goatherd sits on the stage right rock. The Statesman remains motionless where he'd been. The Jester gestures to the other rock.)

Jester

Please, sir, you too. I require a larger audience.

Statesman

(Shakes head) Taste. (Sits.)

(In the following narrative, the Jester paces, enhances the story with mime, and changes voices with the quotes,)

Jester

Well, you see, about a month ago we heard of the impending invasion of Polisopolis, our home city-state. A few thousand Spartan warriors were heading in to lay the city to waste and conquer it. 'Twould hardly be worth it in that order, but that's war, Anyway, about the time that the city was being made secure from the invaders, the three daughters of locus the Shipwright found themselves in a frenzy. So worried were they that the' called together their three husbands to be. The oldest, engaged to the soldier, stood firm and said, "You men are called to war and we fear for your lives! The youngest of the sisters, the jester's lady, cried and said, "Yes, we so fear for you." (Remembers her, sighs.) Well. "We do not wish for you to die," continued the first, "or else we shall find ourselves old maids, never to marry, without our dear ones by our sides." At this the second cried even more, and the third, the middle sister, drained a wineskin and belched, thus making their feelings unanimous.

Goatherd

The third is, uh, (trying not to point at the Statesman.

Jester

Yes, the fat, red-faced one with the big nose who can drain a ten gallon wine urn in ten seconds is the Statesman's. (Points.)

Statesman

There's no accounting for taste. (Sighs) But she kisses so nicely

Jester

Even so. So the three ladies said, "You—" meaning us, "must flee the city 'fore the invaders come. Hide in the foothills till the danger is past, and then, when the storm has passed over, and the air is fresh as after a Spring shower, we shall be reunited. Ahhhh! (Reverie.)

Goatherd

(Pause, waiting for more) But what about the women?

Jester

(The reverie breaks) Ah, yes. What about them? Well, we protested. "What about you, our fair ladies? Shall we run off and leave you unprotected, to have your virtue forcibly removed? And what shall we do e'er after, should you be carried off as spoils of war? To which they replied, "Worry not, our lovers, for we shall hide in our basement underground, also waiting for the storm to pass—as you shall wait in yonder foothills by the cave of Thanatos."

Statesman

Ah, yes. (Sighs, gets up, walks into cave. The other two watch him go, then:)

Goatherd

And so you came here.

Jester

Yes, it's been a week now. No news, no sign of the enemy. Many fights among ourselves. We need desperately to be reunited with our women, or we will go mad. Or madder.

Goatherd

(Stands) Then why don't you go? As the old saying says, "A good runner is never caught. " And also, "Virtue consists in action.

Jester

(Crosses to down right.) That may be true.

Goatherd

Well then?

Soldier's Voice

I can't take it anymore! (Enters hastily from cave, ends up nose to nose with Jester. He said it again! It's the straw that broke the donkey's back! I can't take it anymore!

Jester

My friend the Goatherd has a remarkable idea. We should sneak into the city and see our ladies.

Soldier

(Turns away, steps downstage of Jester) But is that wise? We could be killed.

Jester

(Step to Soldier) After all, virtue consists in action, does it not?

Soldier

(Moves again. Reluctantly:) Well, yes...

Jester

(Follows) And, a good runner is never caught.

Soldier

(Less reluctantly) No, I guess not...

Jester

So—we should go back?

Soldier

(Spins to him as the Statesman comes back onstage from the cave and walks quietly across the stage) Agreed!

Statesman (Stops dead, eyes wide) Agreed!

Jester

(To Statesman) Agreed! We're going back to see our ladies again. (Points to each) His Lana, my Adriana, and your Angostura.

Statesman

(Again blank.) Hm. (Walks to left, almost off stage.)

Jester

(To Goatherd) We take leave of you, sir. Many thanks for your fine advice. Let us go, gentlemen, to Polisopolis.

(The Soldier pulls out his eaten sword and raises it high, leading first the Statesman, then the Jester, off. The Goatherd turns, gives them a Boy Scout salute when they're gone. Lights black out; curtain.)

ACT II1

(Curtain opens, accompanied by sounds of thunder. It rolls off into the distance as the lights come up, not quite full. Nothing; happens for a few seconds; then the Soldier enters from up left, sadly walks to the cave, leans an arm against it, and puts his forehead against the arm, obscuring his face. A pause; then the Statesman enters from up left, crosses to the rocks, sits, burying his face in his hands. Again a pause; then the Jester enters from up left, walks to downstage center, sits, puts a hand to his forehead. He sighs. The Soldier sighs.)

Statesman

(Sighing) Why, oh, why is there no accounting for taste?

(Both the Soldier and the Jester look at him, and then turn away. Even the Soldier is not angered by this version of the old Roman proverb, not during his sadness. A few more beats of silent sadness, then:)

Goatherd's Voice

(Merrily) Well, well, well, you have returned! (Enters right) And so soon, the next day! (To center stage) How did it go, eh? Went well, hey? Splendidly, nay? (Pause, walks to Jester) Well, my friend, did you find out how well your three ladies are? (Jester gives him an icy glare, turns away.) Hmm. I say, Soldier friend (goes to him) did your triumphant march to the city go well? (Soldier glares, turns away) Hmm again. (Crosses to Statesman) How about you, Statesman friend? Did it go well for you? (Points; no reaction. Points again; still no reaction. The Goatherd is surprised, points again, this time in front of the Statesman's face. 'The Statesman bites the finger.) Ahhhhhhhhh! Well. I sense I have worn out my welcome. I shall take my leave of you. Good day, gents. (Goes off right,) Well, well, well.

Soldier

(After a short, anger-building pause:) Bloody hog! If it wasn't for him and his damn advice, we wouldn't be in this mess. (Hands on hips, does a mincing version of the Goatherd) "Well, well, well."

Jester

(Curling up into a ball) 'Tis a well indeed into which we've been delivered. A black pit, a dark hole, a deep depression.

Soldier

And all his fault!

Jester

Yes, but we accepted his advice. We are as much to blame as him.

Soldier

But had he not stuck his snout into our business...

Jester

We would then either have killed each other, or still be at each other's throats. And yet, maybe death would be better than knowing this, this -

Statesman

Bitter, bitter taste.

Jester

Yes, exactly. (Rises, walks to Statesman, looks down at the twisted figure. You feel the pain of this injury even as acutely as I, and you are not of sound mind.

Statesman

(Looks up, not too quickly) Sound mind? Sound mind? (Stands) Who would not have gone mad in this situation? (Walks downstage.) Your Adriana, his Lana have deserted you, as I was deserted by my fair Angostura. Fair, yea, even poor in table manners. Hardly the most beautiful, the most pleasant, nor the sweetest—but she was my love, and I loved her. (Anger stirs him) And one, like the other two, allowed herself to be carried off by those Spartan pigs! "Raped they were," said one neighbor of our loves. "Aye, and joyously so, added another. "They presented themselves to the invaders, finely coiffed, perfumed, and dressed," said a third, "and cried to the Spartans, 'Take us, we're yours.'" Like sacks of potatoes were our dear ones carried away by those Spartan asses. And three took *my* love away! Oh, cruel Fates, oh, damnéd gods of love! (Shakes fist at the sky.)

(The Goatherd enters slowly.)

Goatherd

Oh, gentlemen, I couldn't help but overhear. I am indeed sorry to hear it. My heart goes out to you. My condolences and sympathies, I'm sure.

Soldier

Why do you continue to return and haunt us? Why can you not be gone and be done with it?

Goatherd

(Sarcastically (I crave pardon, sir. I am merely passing through to retrieve one of my goats who wandered off.

Soldier

Then retrieve, and bother us no further.

Jester:

(As menacingly as the Soldier) Aye, get on.

Goatherd

(Bows) Yes, good sirs, yes, I shall. (Crosses to center and calls off left) Here, my dear little lost one. Here, Angostura.

(The Statesman starts at this. His body snaps along with his mind in a visible jerk. He looks off left, sees the goat.)

Statesman

Ah, yes, my dear Angostura, how lovely you are! Let me kiss your fine fuzzy little peachy-cream face. (He runs off left, arms extended for an embrace.)

Goatherd

I'm afraid he's not going to get much action out of that goat. She won't even let me milk her. Cold hands, I suppose.

(He turns to the others to acknowledge their laughter. Instead the Soldier walks to the goatherd, grabs his collar and lifts him up off the ground.

Soldier

You hog! If it wasn't for your advice, we'd still be here, hoping for a happy reunion. Now we must live with the torment of this treachery. But you won't live to watch and enjoy our sufferings. As of now, you are a dead man.

Goatherd

I guess 'tis easier to be wise for others than for one self.

Soldier

(Tossing the Goatherd to the ground) Bah! You and your unending platitudes! They make me spit! (Spits.) And you, you snake, you shall crawl beneath my sword. (Draws sword, looks at it; with fury he readies to strike the Goatherd, stops.) No, damn you! I will not feel on my conscience the pain of your death. Let my death instead be on your conscience. May your guilt gnaw at you as the worms will gnaw at my corpse. Damn you!

(With the last word out, he stabs himself with the sword, groans, and falls, face toward upstage left. The Goatherd sits, amazed at this. Just then, the Statesman runs in, and trips over the rocks, falls down within reach of the sword.)

Statesman

Oh, woe, the fair Angostura has rejected me. Such bitterness I feel. (Finds sword with outstretched hand.) A sword! Ah! a true star-crossed lover, I! (Plunges sword into self.) Ahhhh. The taste of blood is bittersweet.

(He flops on his back, presenting himself and the sword as the Arthurian sword and stone. The Goatherd rises to his knees, looks frightened as the Jester who, having been silent through all this, walks to the Statesman's body. Lights dim everywhere; spotlights light up the two men.)

Jester

I always believed that fighting was for fools. Well, now I'm a fool. You have killed my two companions by your words. Now I shall kill you with a sword. (He pulls out "Excalibur" and

holds it aloft like an inverted cross.) To take a man's life is thought to be the ultimate sin. Against you the sin shall be small.

(He steps toward the Goatherd. 'The Goatherd begins to plead for his life.)

Goatherd

No, I pray you. No, please, I pray-

(His plea is cut off by the sword thrust. The Jester pulls out the sword, and the Goatherd falls dead. The spotlight on the Goatherd goes out, leaving only the follow spot on the Jester, who walks down center, stops. He looks at the blood on the sword, licks it. Suddenly in realization of what he has done, he screams.)

Jester

Oh, gods!

(He drops the sword and falls to his knees, weeping into his hands. This goes on for a few seconds. From the right we hear goat noises. The Jester's weeping segues into laughter, gentle at first, then louder. As it subsides, he picks up the sword, holds it up like a cross, then tosses it behind him. The spotlight fades with his laughter, and the stage lights come up full, bathing him in the glow of Enlightenment. Shaking his head and smiling, The Jester rises, looks about for the Goatherd's staff. He finds it, picks it up gently, gets the feel of it.)

Jester

Such is the stuff and the staff of life, I guess. (Looks off right. Let us go, my little brothers. To the foothills beyond to graze and play .

(He exits off right. Goat noise. Birds chirp as lights fade out. Curtain.

*York, PA.
Summer, 1978.*

APPENDIX I

Costumes and Characters' Appearances

STATESMAN:

Dark circles under his eyes
Fiftyish or so
Laurel wreath on head
Regular long Greek robe, grey in color/
Sandals
Always looks dazed unless otherwise noted in script

JESTER

Short purple toga-like gown
Red cheeks; makeup almost like clown, but not excessively exaggerated into clown; merely clownish
Thin, height between Statesman (short) and Soldier (tall)
Melodramatic, overacted, overgestured

SOLDIER

Tarnished breastplate over his short toga
Helmet; no plume
Metal bands around wrists
Sandals
Short-tempered but cowardly; false bravado

GOATHERD

Old, stooped; long white hair, goatee
Long white robe; bottom is dirty and stained brown with goat dreck
Sandals
Carries staff (resembles old stage crook for "gonging" vaudeville acts)
Still somewhat energetic

APPENDIX II

The Set

A functional cave is needed. The two rocks must be sturdy enough to be sat upon. Surrounding set should give the appearance of a hilly green countryside, with an upslope and a couple of bushes—although this is not absolutely necessary. Minimum of scenery could be two rocks and the cave.

APPENDIX III

REVIEW: HERE COME THE GOATS (Part 1)**By Claire Renuzit**

Ab initio we see men demonstrating *autre temps, autre moeurs*, but still universality shines through illuminating our modern *Zeitgeist*. Let the light shine!

The play I speak of is *Here Come the Goats*, a recently-unearthed discovery found in the Vatican Library behind some old mouse traps and smuggled out by an anonymous researcher who later presented it to the present translator, Stephen A. Schrum. It is his translation and adaptation to modern "jive talking" that came to the On-Off Broadway Theater to achieve a current *coup de theatre* for Oedipus X, the original author.

From the encyclopedia we find that Oedipus X was a post-Golden Age Greek, and from further reading, we find that those times were much like today's. In fact, this play could be considered the classic forerunner of modern French-Absurdist Theatre.

And still, in the strictest sense of Greek tragedy, *Goats* is a comedy. Ancient antecedent of Ionesco or not, it still functions well in this genre.

The *Dramatis Personae* lists but four characters, *un homme d'etat, un homme d'epree, un homme d'esprit*, and the Goatherd whose flock gives the play its name. It seems the first three have all been deeply involved in *affaires d'amour* with three sisters. At the same time, their Greek city-state, Polisopolis, is under declared war with Sparta, and even as the audience enters the theater, hostile Spartan troops are converging on Polisopolis. The sisters then convince their boyfriends to flee the city and hide out in the nearby hills to wait out the war and the end of the slaughter. In the meantime, the girls will hide in a secret basement in their house. The play opens, in medias res, as the men reach their cave hideaway.

The three traveling companions get along with each other quite well at first, but later aggravation sets in. The soldier is cold and indifferent, and thinks killing is his *raison d'etre*. Because of this he feels he is a coward at having deserted his duty for a mere woman, albeit the lady he loves. He develops an acute case of cognitive dissonance that remains with him for the rest of the play.

His foil is the Jester, the *railleur*, who is a true *belle esprit*. He believes that if "*dulce est disipere in loco*," it must be ecstatic to *always* play the fool. His *vis comica* and behavior, full of *mauvaise honte* and *mauvaise gout*, unnerve the soldier, who is attempting to be properly depressed all the time.

Holding the middle ground is the Statesman, who is really *non compos mentis*. His favorite phrase is, "*De gustibus non est disputandum*," which he repeats incessantly at every turn of the conversation. And he believes it—his favorite meal is grass soup, which the others detest.

At the end of Act I, the trio's *esprit d'corps* is beginning to wane, and the curtain falls on a hot and fiercely funny battle resulting from a slight disagreement that snowballs. The soldier threatens the others' lives, and the Statesman tries to bury his head in the ground like an ostrich.

The curtain rises in Act II a week later (stage time) and *tempus* has indeed *omnia relevat*. All have that *taedium vitae* that comes from being so long away from a loved one. At this point, the Goatherd enters, a truly wise man in spite of his membership in the *faex populi*.

Following a series of puns on the word, "goat," the three men tell the herder their story. In reply, he gives them pieces of wisdom he has accrued during his long life, such as "*Virtus in actione consistit*," and that "*jamais ban coereur ne fut pris*," suggesting they return to the city-state to see how their mates are. The men agree, and go to attenuate their anxiety. They leave for the town at Act II's end.

Act III--the men return, greatly saddened. As the saying goes, "*Graviora quaedam sunt remedia periculis*." Their sweethearts have been joyously raped and carried off to Sparta as spoils of war. Apparently the women got rid of the men so they could be open for the invaders.

And it worked.

After a few moments wailing, lamentations, and exposition, the soldier is incited to violence, but is unsure of his target, befuddled by the fact that the Statesman has just fallen in love with a goat, Angostura, a namesake of his ex-love. The soldier then kills himself rather than the Goatherd, so the guilt will be upon the herder. Stumbling in, rejected by the goat, the Statesman ends his life as well.

The only one left, the jester, angered by the turn of events, kills the Goatherd; then, when he licks the blood from the sword, he realizes what he's done. He cries until a chorus of goats calls to him. He laughs: *satori*, enlightenment, is come. Picking up the Goatherd's staff, he leads the goats off. "*C'est la vie!*" he shouts, and the curtain closes.

The profound religious implications in this play are very numerous and I haven't time for them here. More later on this fine play.

(Note; immediately after writing this, Claire Renuzit fell from her tenth floor apartment to death below. A neighbor said that Claire was possibly being drunk at the time, or possibly just kidding around. Anyway, part 2 was never written.)