

## SEM-II MIC ENGLISH

### Introduction to Plautus Pot of Gold

#### **The Story:**

The grandfather of Euclio, an Athenian miser, entrusted a pot of gold to his household deity after burying the pot in the hearth. The god, angered in turn at Euclio's grandfather, his father, and Euclio himself, has kept the secret of the treasure from all, until finally the daughter of Euclio, Phaedria, has endeared herself to the god. In an effort to help the young woman, the deity shows Euclio where the gold is hidden, so that the miser, by using the money as a dowry, might marry his daughter to Lyconides, the young man who has seduced her. Euclio, miserly and distrustful by nature, is thrown into a feverish excitement by the discovery of the gold. He fears that someone will learn of its existence and either steal it or trick him out of it. After carefully hiding the gold in his house once more, he is afraid that even his old female slave, Staphyla, might learn of its whereabouts. Staphyla becomes worried about her master's strange behavior and about the fact that her young mistress is pregnant. Meanwhile, Megadorus, a wealthy neighbor and uncle of Lyconides, plans to marry Euclio's daughter himself, and he enlists the aid of his sister Eunomia in his suit. Megadorus declares that he is so pleased with Phaedria's character that he will marry her without a dowry, which is contrary to the Athenian custom.

Seeing Euclio in the street, Megadorus goes to ask the old miser for his daughter's hand in marriage. Euclio, distrustful because of his newfound gold, thinks that Megadorus is in reality plotting to take the gold from him, but Megadorus assures him that all he wants is to marry Phaedria, with or without a dowry; he even offers to pay the expenses of the wedding. On these terms Euclio agrees to marry his daughter to Megadorus. After Megadorus leaves, however, Euclio cannot convince himself that the prospective bridegroom is not after the pot of gold. Euclio informs Staphyla of the proposed marriage, which is to take place that same day. Staphyla knows that after Phaedria is married she will no longer be able to conceal her pregnancy, but she has little time to worry. Soon a caterer, bringing cooks, entertainers, and food, arrives at Euclio's house to prepare the wedding feast. Megadorus has hired the caterer as he has promised.

Returning from the marketplace with incense and flowers to place on the altar of his household god, Euclio is horrified to see all the strangers bustling about his house, for he immediately suspects that they are seeking his pot of gold. In a fury of apprehension, Euclio first drives all the caterer's people from the house and then removes his pot of gold from its hiding place. Only after he has removed it from the house does he tell them to return to their work. Euclio decides to take the gold and hide it in the nearby temple of Faith. On the way there, he meets Megadorus, who asks Euclio to join him in drinking a bottle or two of wine. Euclio refuses, suspecting that Megadorus wants to get him drunk and then steal the pot of gold. Going on to the temple of Faith, Euclio hides the money. Although he does not know it, a slave belonging to Lyconides, the young man who has violated Euclio's daughter, observes where Euclio places the money. The slave is just taking the money from its hiding place when Euclio, rushing back to see if it is still safe, prevents the theft.

In a further effort to find a safe hiding place for his gold, Euclio takes it to the grove of Silvanus. Lyconides' slave, anxious to please his master and to repay Euclio for the beating he just received for trying to steal the gold, watches Euclio and sees where he hides the gold in the grove.

In the meantime, Lyconides, having learned of Megadorus's plans to marry Phaedria, goes to Eunomia, his mother, and tells her that he himself wants to marry the young woman. Pressed by Eunomia for his reasons, Lyconides reveals that he violated Phaedria while he was drunk and he now wishes to make amends by marrying her. Even as they speak, the excitement among the women in Euclio's house tells Eunomia and Lyconides that Phaedria's baby has been born. Eunomia agrees to help her son. Lyconides goes to Euclio to tell him of his guilt in violating the miser's daughter. He finds Euclio greatly upset, for the miser has just discovered the theft of his gold from the grove. Lyconides believes that Euclio is angry with him because he fathered Phaedria's child, and Euclio thinks that the crime to which Lyconides is confessing is the theft of the gold. Finally, the young man convinces Euclio that he did not steal the miser's gold. He then tells Euclio about his violation of Phaedria and about the birth of the child. Megadorus has, in the meantime, renounced his claim to Phaedria. Euclio, who had been looking forward to the marriage of his daughter to the rich Megadorus, feels that he has been utterly betrayed by the world.

After Euclio and Lyconides part, the slave appears and tells Lyconides about the pot of gold he has stolen. Lyconides insists that the slave bring the gold to him. After a lengthy argument, the slave reluctantly obeys; he hates to think that the gold will be returned to the miserly Euclio. After the slave brings him the gold, Lyconides goes to Euclio's house and returns the treasure. The miser is so happy to have the pot of gold once more in his hands that he readily agrees to a marriage between his daughter and Lyconides, in spite of the fact that Lyconides violated Phaedria and caused her to bear a child out of wedlock. Strangely enough, after the wedding Euclio has a change of heart and gives the entire pot of gold to the newly wedded couple.