

I turned to Hipposthenidas. 'Who did you send to them?' I asked: 'if he hasn't much start, we can catch him up.' 'I had better tell you the truth, Caphisias,' he replied, 'I doubt if you *could* catch him. He has the best horse in Thebes. He is someone you know—the head man of Melon's chariot-eers. He has been privy to the business from the start, because of Melon.'

'Do you mean Chlidon,' said I—for I had just caught sight of the very man—'the one who won the horse-race last year at the Heraclea?'

'Just so,' he said.

'Then', said I, 'who is this who has been standing at the outer door for some time, looking at us?'

Hipposthenidas turned round.

'By Heracles!' he cried, 'it's Chlidon! I hope nothing dreadful has happened.' As soon as he saw we had noticed him. Chlidon quietly stepped forward. Hipposthenidas motioned to him, and told him to speak before us all. 'I know these men perfectly well,' began Chlidon, 'and when I couldn't find you either at home or in the market-place, I guessed you were with them, and hurried on here, so that you should know everything that has happened. When you ordered me to make all speed to meet the men on the mountain, I went home to get the horse. I asked my wife for the bridle, but she couldn't find it for me. She spent a long time in the store, pretending to look for it and make everything ready. In the end, when she had tricked me long enough, she confessed that she had lent it to a neighbour last night at his wife's request. I was angry, and I said some hard things; and she proceeded to utter some dreadful words, calling down curses on my journey and my return. May the gods visit as much on her! 588 Finally, I was provoked to strike her in anger, and a crowd of neighbours and women soon gathered. I took a disgraceful pounding, and gave as good, and I've only just managed to get away and come to you. Send someone else to them, please. I am quite out of my mind, and I am in a very bad way.'

[19] Our feelings were strangely altered by this. Just before, we had been frustrated by the obstacles; now the urgency of the crisis brought on an agony of fear. No postponement was possible. I turned to Hipposthenidas, and grasped him by the hand to give him encouragement. The gods, I said, were calling us to our work. Phyllidas went off to attend to the reception of his guests, and to lure Archias to the drinking-bout. Charon went <to make preparations to receive the exiles>. And Theocritus and I went back to Simmias, to have an opportunity to talk to Epaminondas.

Are the conspirators acting with a thoughtful plan or are they reacting to the circumstances of the moment?