

**EURIPIDES’  
“BACCHAE”**

First production posthumously in 403BCE  
At City Dionysia  
1<sup>st</sup> Prize

Translated by  
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**Dramatis Personae**

**DIONYSOS**<sup>[1]</sup>

(also known as Bromius, Bacchus, Evius -see Home page)

**TEIRESIAS**

(Prophet of Thebes)

**KADMOS**

(Founder and former king of Thebes)

**PENTHEUS**

(King of Thebes, Kadmos’ grandson)

**AGAVE**

(Pentheus’ mother)

**MESSENGER**

**SERVANT TO PENTHEUS**

**TWO SERVANTS TO KADMOS**

**CHORUS OF EASTERN BACCHANTS**

**THEBAN FOLLOWERS OF AGAVE**

**GUARDS, ATTENDANTS TO PENTHEUS**

*The royal palace of Thebes.*

*Two or three steps separate the palace from the ground.*

*Night. Behind the curtains we hear flutes, tambourines and drums playing “eastern” (Lydian/Persian) music. The percussion is made by swords banging upon drums, as we’ll see later.*

*Female shouts of “ecstasy” and joyful rage, the signifiers of Dionysiac festival.*

*Thunder and Lightning interrupt the music and the festive shouts.*

*The Lightning briefly reveals a tomb at Stage Right and back, close to the palace wall. Dionysos the god is standing behind the tomb and is seen through the lightening.*

*He has come to Earth in the guise of a human.*

*A brief silent pause before Dawn slowly lights up the stage.*

*In front of the tomb and with his back to the audience, stands Dionysos.*

*The tomb is made of stones and a thin curlicue of smoke is slowly rising from above it.*

*He is carefully and reverently placing some grape vines upon it and around it.*

*In the surrounding ground, we will see shoots of fennel.*

*He is holding a tall thyrsus*<sup>[2]</sup>

*Dionysos is a young, handsome, gentle man with a boyish (if not effeminate) appearance and with long, soft, blond plaits. On his head is a garland of ivy, again fashionably and fastidiously placed, and his clothes are brightly coloured (thus showing he’s a foreigner and from the east). His beard is red.*

*The ivy garland, I would have it, forms a long but soft drape that hangs plaited within his hair from the top of the back of his head to almost the ground.*

*He addresses the audience. Gently, softly and with dignity.*

*Dionysos: Looks around him, examining the “land”*

*So here I am! Thebes!*

I am Dionysos, son of Zeus. My mother was Semele and she was Kadmos' daughter.  
Zeus delivered me from my mother with one of his awesome lightening bolts.

*Indicates the tomb behind him.*

Up there!

I have left my godly appearance and taken on that of man and so, here I am now, walking by the  
brooks and creeks of Dirki, through the waters of Isminos.

Yes, I have taken the guise of a common man, me the god, Dionysos.

*Again turns and points at the tomb.*

I can see my mother's tomb back there, near the royal palace. Struck dead by Zeus' flame... and there!  
The smoke still raises from the ruins of her house, a potent sign that Hera's savage anger towards my  
mother will never be quenched.

I thank and admire old Kadmos for turning this into a sacred monument in honour of his daughter.

Of course, it was I who shaded the tomb with vines, full of grapes.

I've left behind me the gold-rich farms of Lydia and Frygia. I went through the stony walls of Vaktria,  
and the wild and freezing lands of the Medes, the sun-washed fields of Persia, the whole of blessed  
Arabia and the rest of Asia. A land, spread far alongside the sea with cities full of sublime tall towers,  
full of Greeks and Barbarians all pleasantly mingled together.

And in all these lands I have shown my mysteries, taught my dances and established myself as a god.

This is the first Greek city I've visited, the first one I've come to introduce myself and my rites.

**23**

Firstly, I've stirred these Theban women, dressed them in fawn skins and armed them with the thyrsus  
and its ivy crown.

Kadmos' daughters, you see, would not accept that my father was Zeus. They should have known  
better than to behave like that towards my mother. They were accusing her of having slept with some  
mortal or other and then blamed Zeus for my birth. Typical Kadmos' trickery: protect the daughter's  
honour and you protect your own. But the sisters kept spreading the rumour that my mother had slept  
with a human and that she had blamed a god for her "improper" pregnancy and that's why, they say,  
that God had killed her.

So, to these Theban women, I've delivered a little bit of madness. Made them leave their house and  
rush off all in a rage to the mountains where they now live.

I've made them wear the dress of my rites and ceremonies and tore the logic out of their minds. The  
whole female population of Thebes. Then, I've sent them off to the mountains to live with Kadmos'  
daughters, my mother's sisters, among the wild beasts, in a wild forest, beneath the wild firs and rocks,  
without roof nor shelter over their heads.

This city must learn one way or another, whether it likes it or not, that it can't stay uninitiated and  
ignorant of my rites!

This city must learn, one way or another, whether it likes it not that my mother was innocent and this  
city must apologise to her!

This city must learn, one way or another, whether it likes it not that I am here to reveal to the whole  
world that I am her son, Semele's son and the son of Zeus!

**42**

Old man Kadmos has now left his crown to his daughter's son, Pentheus. Now that's a man who  
habitually fights with gods and leaves me out of all his libations and prayers. So, I shall show him and  
all his Thebans that I am truly a god. After that, after I've settled everything here and got them all to  
know me, I shall go elsewhere in the world, teaching the people about my strength as a god.

If the people of Thebes decide to take arms against my Bacchantes and pursue them from their  
mountain, I'll stand at the head of my Maenads and enter the battle with them.

This is why I've taken on the guise of a man.

*From both sides of the stage we hear the tambourines and ecstatic sounds of women. It is that of the  
chorus of maenads (Dionysos' followers) and, after a short pause they enter dancing wildly,  
frenzied[3], noisily.*

*They are foreigners, "Orientals."*

Dionysos: *(continued)*

Ah! My darling group of followers! Here you are! Come, come in, my darlings! You, who have  
followed me here, all the way from Tmolos, Lydia's stronghold, that land inhabited by barbarians.  
Come, my travelling mates, my friends, play your Phrygian instruments, your drums and tambourines,  
the instruments that mother Rea and I discovered.

Play around here, around King Pentheus' palace and let Kadmos' city hear us. I'm off to visit the other  
Bacchantes, the Thebans, those whom I made live in the crags, peaks and valleys of Kitheron. I shall  
join them in their dances there.

*Exit Dionysos*

*The Chorus of Maenads plays for a few moments before one begins to speak.*

**64**

Chorus:

I've left the Asian land, the wholly mount of Tmolos and worked my way here,  
In speed and hard labour!

In speed

And

In sweet labour,

With a joyous exhaustion

Chorus:

I've come to you, singing ecstatic songs for Dionysos, the god who bellows thunders.

Who – who's there?

Who – who's in the road?

Who – who's outside their house?

Let them all shut themselves inside their homes!

Let them all shut their mouths

In holy silence!

**70**

Chorus:

O, my Lord, Dionysos!

My voice will always sing your praise!

Blessed is he who knows the sacraments and sacred rites of the gods

And performs Dionysos' cleansing rituals high on the mountains,

His soul in unison

With the god's band of followers -

For he lives a life pure!

Chorus:

And blessed is he, too, who has faith in the mysteries of our Great Mother, Cybele

And wears the garland of ivy,

And waves a Bacchic staff

And bows to Dionysos

He, too, is blessed indeed!

Chorus:

Come, Bacchantes!

Bacchantes Come!

Let's bring back Dionysos the god who bellows thunders strong!

A god born of god!

Chorus:

Bring him back from the mountains of Phrygia!

Bring him back, Bacchantes,

To the streets of Greece

Bring back

Dionysos!

**88**

Chorus:

A long while ago, at the time when his mother's stomach

Was full with him and with pain,

Zeus sent his bolt of burning light at her,

Relieving her of the child, of the pain and of her life,

Untimely all, all done before time!

And immediately, Zeus snatched the child

And

Made a womb out of his

Holy thigh, then quickly sowed the wound with

golden needles,

Lest his

Wife, Hera, sniffed out the act!

**100**

Chorus:

Then, when the Fates weaved whole his time in the womb, Zeus brought forth Bull-horned Dionysos and placed a garland of writhing snakes amidst his tresses, a cause for Beast-eating Maenads to do the same with their wild hair.

A garland of snakes upon the head of a god  
A garland of snakes upon the heads of his Maenads!

**105**

Chorus:

O Thebes! Garland yourself with ivy!  
Thebes! You who nurtured Semele,  
Adorn yourselves richly with branches of bryony  
And dance wildly with branches of fir and oak!

**111**

Chorus:

Put on the dappled fawn skins on your back and crown your heads with soft curls of white wool.  
Wrap holy ivy around the rebellious wand of our god and hold it with reverence -  
And when our god, Dionysos, the god who bellows thunders, arrives with his ecstatic band –there, high upon the mountain, Upon the mountain, to where the women have escaped from their loom and their shuttlecock- all those women, made wild by the frenzy Dionysos sent them, that’s when the whole of Thebes shall dance, shall dance wildly, ecstatically!  
When Dionysos arrives upon the mountain.

Chorus:

**120**

Home of the Kouretes!  
most sacred land of Zeus!  
Crete’s deepest valley!  
There the three crested Corybantes invented this drum!  
A piece of skin tightly drawn over a circle,  
Which when in frenzy they bring together its loud beat with that of the soft breath of the Phrygian Flutes.  
This drum they’ve put in mother Rhea’s hands for her to accompany the wild cries of the Bacchantes.

**130**

Chorus:

Ah, but the sly Satyrs stole it from her hands and straightaway united it with the crazy dances of Dionysos that come every second year.  
A splendid joy for the god.  
Happy is that Satyr who runs freely in the valley, dressed in the soft, holy skin of a deer, seeking the blood of a slaughtered stag and the joy of eating raw flesh as he charges deep into the mountains of the Phrygians and the Lydians.

**140**

Chorus:

First among the blessings, Thunderous Dionysos!  
In the valley flows the milk and the sweet wine.  
In the valley the nectar from the bees runs freely and so do the smoky smells that are like Syrian incense.

And

There the god, holding a fennel torch, lit high, jumps and runs, jumps and runs until he urges his maenads into the mystic dance and with his cries makes them wild.

Look there how he lets his curly tresses loose to the whims of the wind’s breath.

And

Then, triumphantly he shouts:

Chorus:

Blessings, blessings!

Sing for Dionysos with the heavy sounds of the drum.

Blessings, blessings to the blessed God, with Phrygian shouts and cries, when the sweet-voiced sacred flute plays loud songs in harmony as they travel up the mountain, that mountain.

Joyfully then, like the filly follows her mare, the maenad kicks her legs high.

*Enter Teiresias, a blind seer, holding the hand of a boy-guide with one hand and a thyrsus with the other.*

*Almost totally bald and with a thin long grey beard. The ivy garland around his bald head,*

*precariously situated and askew, make him a comical figure. He is wearing a fawn-skin jacket. His body is bent by his many years.*

**170**

Teiresias:

Who keeps the gate?

*The boy goes and knocks at the door.*

Call Kadmos out here. Kadmos, Aginorus' son, who left the city of Sidon and came here to build this towering city, Thebes.

Let someone go in and tell him that I, Teiresias is looking for him. He knows why I'm here and what we've agreed on. An old man, me, with an even older man, him. We'll light up fennel reeds and dress in soft deer leather. We'll cover our heads with garlands of ivy.

*The boy goes through the gate to inform Kadmos. He does not come back.*

*Small Pause*

*Enter Kadmos, already dressed in fawn skin and ivy garland and carrying a long thyrsus. He is older than Teiresias and looks much like him, though we see a bit more evidence of "joie de vivre" about his demeanour and behaviour. We need to show this extra bit of jovial behaviour so that we can create a sharper contrast with his demeanour towards the end of the play.*

*His ivy garland is well placed and he's often running his hand over it, taking care that it's not out of place.*

*He greets Teiresias with enthusiasm.*

Kadmos:

O, my friend! What joy the sound of your voice gives me. I heard it inside the palace and thought, now, there's a wise voice from a wise man!

Here I am, Teiresias, dressed the way the god wants us to dress. We must obey everyone of Dionysos' wishes, in every way possible. He is my daughter's son and he proved to all the mortals that he is indeed a god. Let's show him our respect as much as we can.

He hops about excitedly and checks out his "dancing" feet.

I have no idea where we should dance, where we should place our foot, where we should bend our aged head.

**185**

Guide me, old Teiresias, me a poor old man. At least you are a wise man. I'll be thrashing the earth with this thyrsus. What a great thing it is, ey? We've forgotten our years with all this happiness.

Teiresias:

You feel exactly as I feel, my friend, because I, too, feel young and I, too, shall have a go at this mystic dancing.

Kadmos:

Well then, shall we take a carriage to the mountain?

Teiresias:

No! No, no, no! This is not how one shows reverence to a god!

Kadmos:

Well then, here we are: I, an old man will guide you, another old man.

Teiresias:

Nothing to worry about. The god will guide us both there without the slightest effort on our part. No fatigue whatsoever, Kadmos!

**195**

*Kadmos: Looks around him with some concern.*

Hey, Teiresias? Are we going to be the only two doing Dionysos' holy dance?

*They begin a very slow advance towards exit SL. They stop near the curtain when they sense Pentheus coming from the other end.*

Teiresias:

Yes, Kadmos because we are the only ones who can think straight. The rest of them? They are all wrong!

Kadmos

Come on, old man. We'll be late. Hold onto my hand, now.

Teiresias:

Here you are. Grab my hand.

Kadmos:

A mortal should never treat the gods with disdain.

Teiresias:

No point in playing around with subtle words. All our traditions, all those things handed down to us by

our ancestors from many years back will not be dislodged, no matter how subtle the thinking. O, I can hear them say, “aren’t you ashamed of your years? Going dancing at your age, your head wrapped in ivy?” No, I am not ashamed. God shows no prejudice in age. He wants reverence from all... he is not interested in numbers.

**210**

*Kadmos: Looking deep into behind the curtains SR*

Teiresias, old friend, seeing that the sun’s rays don’t help your eyesight I’ll tell you what I see with mine. I can see Pentheus coming towards the palace. Ehion’s son. I’ve handed Thebes’ throne to him. He looks quite disturbed. I wonder what news he’s about to bring us.

*They hide behind the tomb*

*Enter Pentheus SR. with two armed guards. He is a young man, full of anger.*

*He wears a short tunic and a sword. His hair is long but tied neatly in a “pony tail”*

*He enters the stage not having noticed the two men and addresses his guards.*

**215**

Pentheus:

All I’ve done is to go away from Thebes for just a short while and what happens? My ears are buzzing with dreadful and bizarre disasters, hitting my beloved country.

I heard that our women have left their homes and gone off to the mountains dancing the Bacchic dances! Some new, young god! Utter rubbish! There they are, placing great tubs full of wine in the centre of their group, in the middle of nowhere and off they go, one here, another there, rolling around with any man they come across and giving the excuse that they are maenads; but what are they doing?

**225**

Serving Dionysos? No way! They’re serving Aphrodite!

I’ve caught some of them, tied their hands and locked them up in various public buildings. The rest, those who escaped, I’ll catch from the mountains. Ino, for example and Agave, she who with Ehion gave birth to me, as well as Aktaion’s mother, I mean Aftonoe. I’ll shut them up behind bars as well so that I can stop this scoundrel’s bacchic rites.

I’m told that he is some young foreign smooth talker, some magician from somewhere in Lydia, with blond and scented plaits, and they say also that one can see in his wine-coloured eyes the charms of Aphrodite. And this man hangs around all the young girls and offers them entry to the “mystic rites!” If I get to catch this crook anywhere near this palace I’ll make sure I’ll stop his thyrsus-thrashing and his hair-waving once and for all, by separating his torso from his head.

**241**

Ha! Apparently, this fool says that Dionysos is a true god. He says that Dionysos was sown up inside Zeus’ thigh! How stupid! The true fact of the matter was that Zeus burned him, along with his mother with flaming lightning.

Well, when some stranger comes and gives you all these lies and insolence, what do you do? Isn’t all this stuff worthy of the hangman’s rope?

*He notices Teiresias and Kadmos*

Ha! O, my God! Now there’s a real sight to behold! Is this some sort of madman’s apparition? Our good old prophet, Teiresias, the seer of the guts of beasts! There he is, dressed with delightful skins of deer and, with him, my mother’s father –what a laugh-off for his bit of bacchic revelry with his own thyrsus at the ready.

No, no, no, grandfather, seeing you like this, I just can’t believe that your old age has filled your head with wisdom.

Unwind that ivy from your thyrsus, relieve your hands of them grandfather. They do not suit you. Did you persuade him to do this, Teiresias? Is it you who wants to bring to our city this new god only so that you can make more money with more new waffly oracles from birds and fires?

Your grey hair saved you old man. Otherwise, I’d tie you up and place you in the very centre of these wild women. That would teach you to bring to our good city treacherous new rites. I’m telling you both, no good comes out of drunk women.

Wine wisdom and orgies are dangerous.

**263**

*Chorus: To Pentheus (Shocked)*

O, what disrespect! What awful disrespect you show to our gods, friend! Not even towards Kadmos who sowed here the earth-born seed from which your race of men was born and you, Ehion’s son!

How can you shame you own race like this?

Teiresias:

When a wise man is given the opportunity to speak, it's no big problem to speak the truth. You, Pentheus, you are, of course an articulate man, or so you think, but your words lack logic. Audacity, strength and eloquence all on their own, make for a bad citizen – a stupid one.

This new god, whom you mock... I can't tell how strong he is here in Greece but there are two things, young man that are most important to people: It is, goddess Demetre (call her by whatever other name you want) who feeds the folk on Earth and who IS Earth; and her counterpart, Dionysos, the son of Semele, this god, the god who discovered the juice of the grape and which he brought to us mortals.

**280**

This liquid holds back the pain of the tortured soul, gives soft sleep to folk and lets them forget their daily suffering. There's truly no better medicine for pain or fatigue.

He is truly a god and he is revered as much as the other gods so that mortals may enjoy his offerings. You laugh at the fact that he was sown into Zeus' thigh? Well, let me show you exactly how that happened.

You see, as soon as Zeus grabbed the newborn Dionysos from the fire of the lightning bolt, he took him to Mt Olympus and presented him to all the gods there as another god. Hera, however, his wife, would have none of this and wanted him thrown out of the Heavens, so Zeus, the great god that he is, thought of this clever idea to protect the child. He opened up a small pocket in the sky, in the ether, that surrounds our earth and placed him in there. This, it seems calmed Hera's anger and he too, was able to avoid Hera's constant whining. In time, the words, "ether" and "thigh" were mingled in the minds of men and so the myth has been spun how Dionysos was sown in Zeus' thigh.

**295**

Moreover, this god is also a teller of oracles. He's a prophet. You see, the Bacchic rites and the ecstasy which comes with it, have a potent prophetic strength because when the god takes over the body of his followers completely and utterly, when he enters himself in their body, and therein he blossoms to his full, those lucky people are given the abilities of the prophets. It's called Prophecy through frenzy.

Yet, he also possesses much of Ares' art of war, as well. You can visualise a whole army, standing in line, ready for attack, spears, shields and bows at the ready. Suddenly, even before a spear has been thrown, a panic, an incomprehensible frenzy takes over the whole army. This frenzy is the work of Dionysos.

You'll also see him around Delphi, jumping about its stones, over the two-peaked mountains of pine, shaking the huge Bacchic branches.

Dionysos is a great god, loved and revered throughout the whole of Greece!

**310**

But believe me, young Pentheus! Don't ever think that great authority over men, like the one you hold, means great strength! Don't be too proud of such a throne. Nor be proud of a faulty opinion. There's no wisdom in pride of such things. Think a little better and accept this god on earth, participate in his rites and put the ivy garland around your head.

It's not Dionysos who forces women to submit to lust. Wisdom is all things natural. A wise woman will not abuse her chastity even during the Bacchic rites. This you have to see.

**320**

You know how you enjoy it when there are many people at these gates and Pentheus' name is exalted throughout Thebes? Well, I think that that's how Dionysos feels also when we revere him.

You laugh at poor Kadmos here, your kind grandfather but he and I, with the ivy on our heads will go dancing the Bacchic dances! You see our grey hair and you think we must be mad but we shall dance! We shall dance! (*kicks his heels high*).

We're not going to stand here and argue theology with you and use your type of sacrilegious words. Pentheus, you're incurably insane!

There's no medicine for that and no matter which medicine you take, you'll still be mad!

Chorus:

Old man, Teiresias, your words certainly don't offend Apollo. By respecting the Bellowing Dionysos you show yourself a wise individual.

**330**

Kadmos:

Come, my child. Teiresias is right. Believe as we do. Don't try and move away from our Laws. Your mind is a bit... flighty at the moment and so, no matter what you put your mind to, you comprehend nothing. Even if by your calculation, Dionysos is no god so what? It would be best for you to lie. Lie so that Semele believes that she gave birth to a god. That way, even we and our whole race, would receive honours.

You saw Aktaion's gruesome death. Torn to shreds by flesh-eating hounds, the very ones he was nurturing. That's the Fate that visited him when he boasted that he was a better hunter than Artemis.

Don't let the same happen to you. Come, let me make you an ivy crown and pay your respects to the god as we do.

**343**

Pentheus:

Forget it! No, don't come near me! Off you go! Go on, off to your Bacchic rites you go! Don't try and corrupt me with your idiocy. I'll have this teacher of yours, this teacher of madness and frenzy, arrested.

*To his attendants*

One of you go quickly to this god's "throne," where he does all his prophesying and with iron picks toss everything upside-down, break down walls, throw all the garlands to the four winds. Toss them all to the storms.

This ought to hurt him a bit. And let some others search the city for this effeminate stranger, this idiot who brought this new sickness to our women and has polluted their bed. And when you catch him, tie him up and bring him here to me. Then he'll see a merciless trial. He'll see a bitter celebration of his religion here in Thebes.

*Exit guards hurriedly SL.*

*Exit Pentheus angrily into the palace, centre gate.*

**358**

Teiresias:

Irrational, impetuous youth! Fire in the head! He can't see where his words are leading him. Out of his wits one moment, thoroughly insane the next!

Come, Kadmos, come, my old friend. Let's go. At least we can pray to the god for him. He's a madman that grandson of yours and I wouldn't be at all surprised if he brought some new disaster to Thebes.

Right, now you follow me with your thyrsus and I'll try and keep my body straight. You do the same with yours. It'd be a great shame for two old men to tumble over. Come on, we have to hurry.

Dionysos, Zeus' son is waiting.

Do you think Mister Mournful in there (*indicating Pentheus*) will bring into your palace something to really mourn about, Kadmos? I'm not giving you a prophesy now, though I am a seer; I'm just talking: hollow words from a hollow-headed old man.

*Exit both*

**370**

Chorus:

Most revered of all gods, holy goddess!

Holy goddess who gently hovers over earth with her golden wings!

Do you see what Pentheus is up to?

Chorus:

Can you feel the unholy insult he sent to our Dionysos, Semele's son, the god who's first among the blessed gods, the gods whose wreaths are most brilliant, the gods of joy?

This our god's domain: Rites with dancing, rites that unite our laughter with the sounds of the flute, rites that allow us to forget our everyday cares.

Chorus:

Ah! And that's when the shiny grape – when we're having our supper among the gods – that's when the shiny grape, I say, lets the garlanded, hearty men be overtaken by sleep.

Chorus:

The folk whose mouths are unreined, unlawful and unwise come to a bad end. Calm life and circumspection are the unassailable foundations of a good home because the inhabitants of the heavens look down and inspect our work from above.

Chorus:

The wise are not wise if they don't consider a human's lot.

Life is short.

He who constantly pursues great achievements in this life, won't have time to enjoy those he already has achieved.

**400**

Chorus:

So far as I can tell, these are the doings of madmen and evil minds.

How I'd love to be in Cyprus, Aphrodite's island where sublime love is spread evenly among the folk.

Take me to Pafos, Dionysos, Bellowing god, take me to Pafos, where one hundred fountains rage in the barbarous torrent of a river, though it never rains; and to Pieria where the beautifully crowned seat of the Muses is and the revered chambers of Olympus! Guide me there, god, leader of the Bacchants.



There the Graces, there the Passion, there the Bacchants usually hold their celebrations.  
Dionysos, Zeus' son enjoys the wearing of flowers.

**420**

Chorus:

He loves Peace, the goddess who gives joy and feeds children. He gave equally to rich and poor the happiness of his wine, the liquid that sends away all sadness. He despises those who hate this joy, those who do not enjoy their lives sitting with friends by the light of the night sky.

Chorus:

Wisdom? It is wise for men to distance themselves from illogical, far fetched emotions and fruitless thoughts. Give me the thoughts and deeds of the common folk. Now those, I'll accept far easier.

*Enter the guards who Pentheus has sent earlier, with Dionysos in chains. Dionysos is carrying his thyrsus. One of the guards walks over to the palace and bangs at the gate with his spear. The gate opens and Pentheus enters.*

**433**

Guard 1:

Pentheus, my Lord, here we are with the prey you've asked us to hunt for. We've sat and we've waited and, true enough, we've caught him. Our watch was not wasted.

Now this... "beast" was quite tame with me, my Lord. Never shook his legs or anything, trying to escape, like, but gave his hands to me without the slightest hesitation. He didn't become pale or lose the deep blush of his cheeks. He just let himself be taken easily, laughed even and wondered where we'd be taking him. Towards me, in any case, this man was a proper gentleman and I felt a bit ashamed about tying him up, see, so I said to him, "Stranger," I said, "I ain't doin' this out of my own accord, it's 'cause of Pentheus' orders. He sent us to do it," I said.

Guard 2:

And as for all them women, me Lord, them that follow that god, my Lord, the Bacchants, those whom you grabbed and locked up with chains and all in all the city's buildings, well, sir, they're all loose, sir. Running about all over the countryside, sir, all ready for their orgiasums sir, and they're all calling out for their Bellowing God, Dionysos. All their chains fell apart all by themselves, letting their legs free. So did all the padlocks of the gates. They've all gone and opened themselves right up without even one human hand touching them! This man here has a great many tricks up his sneaky sleeves. It's your call now, my Lord.

**451**

Pentheus:

Move away from him. He's no bother while he's chained like that. He's not that fast that he'll escape me.

*He examines Dionysos thoroughly.*

Hmmm. Physically, you're not unattractive, stranger. Just like the women for whom you came here, in Thebes. Nice, long plaits, hair that hasn't felt hard work, and, for a greater sexual effect, it's spilled all around your beard. Your skin is lovely and white because you take good care of it, I see. You don't expose it to the sun's rays and you stay in the shade all day, hunting Aphrodite's beauty.

But first, tell me, what is your race? Where are you from?

**461**

Dionysos:

That's an easy question to answer. You've heard of Tmolos of the many blooms?

Pentheus:

Yes, I've heard of Tmolos. That's the place that surrounds Sardis.

Dionysos:

That's where I'm from. Lydia is my home.

Pentheus:

Where did you get all these "mysteries" from?

Dionysos:

Dionysos, Zeus' son, initiated me into them.

Pentheus:

Is there a Zeus in Lydia who gives birth to new gods?

Dionysos:

No, just the one here, who slept in marriage with Semele

Pentheus:

Did he initiate you in darkness or in light?

Dionysos:

Face-to-face. In the light of day.

**470**

Pentheus:

What are these mysteries? What is your view of them?

Dionysos:

They are secret to the uninitiated mortals.

Pentheus:

Is there some benefit for those who participate in these mysteries of yours?

Dionysos:

It is not right for you to know this but it would be good for you to see those mysteries.

Pentheus:

You're making them sound great so that I can be persuaded to go on listening to you.

Dionysos:

He who practices disrespect to the gods earns their wrath.

Pentheus:

Tell me clearly what your god looks like –if you ever saw him!

Dionysos:

He looked as he pleased. That was not something which I could determine.

Pentheus:

All the words that came out of your mouth so far meant nothing to me.

**480**

Dionysos:

It is not wise for someone to say anything wise to the ignorant.

Pentheus:

You came here, to Thebes, to introduce this god of yours first?

Dionysos:

The rest of the world dances to these dances.

Pentheus:

That's why when it comes to wisdom, they're far worse than the Greeks.

Dionysos:

In that too, they are better; it's just that their laws are different.

Pentheus:

These... holy orgies of yours... do you perform them during the day or in the night?

Dionysos:

Most of them during the night. Darkness adds a certain modesty.

Pentheus:

That's quite a dubious thing for the women... and rather lecherous, I'd say.

Dionysos:

Shame, of course can be seen during the day, too, if it exists and if one were to look for it.

Pentheus:

We must take you to court for your evil philosophies.

**490**

Dionysos:

And you, too, for your ignorance and your disrespect for the god.

Pentheus:

How bold this Bacchic initiate is! His tongue is not at all trained in speech.

Dionysos:

Show me, then what terrible fate you have in store for me. What am I about to suffer?

Pentheus:

First, I'll chop off this long plait of yours.

Dionysos:

The plait is sacred. I nurture it for the god.

Pentheus:

Then your Thyrsus. Give it to me!

Dionysos:

You come and take it away from me yourself. I'm holding it for Dionysos.

Pentheus:

And then we'll be guarding your body in jail day and night.

Dionysos:

God himself will free me when I ask him.

Pentheus:

Of course, you'll be praying to him only when you're among all those women followers of yours, all those Bacchantes. You'd all be working together to accomplish your escape.

**500**

Dionysos:

God is present even now, next to me and he sees all that I'm going through.

Pentheus:

Where is he? I can't see him. Not with my eyes.

Dionysos:

He's right beside me but you couldn't possibly see him because you are disrespectful of him.

Pentheus: *To his guards*

Guards, arrest this stranger! He mocks me as well as Thebes!

Dionysos:

Let me tell you calmly: you don't know what you're doing -don't tie me!

Pentheus:

But, you see, I must, because I have the greater power of us two.

Dionysos:

You don't even know that you're alive, nor what it is you're doing, Pentheus, let alone who you are!

Pentheus:

Who me? I am Pentheus, Agave's and Egeon's son.

Dionysos:

Pentheus! Your name means grief. Very well qualified to bring it upon yourself! Just as your name suggests.

Pentheus:

Off you go! Guards, lock him up in the stables, near the horses' stalls. Let him enjoy the darkness in there. Dance in there all you like. As for all those women you've brought with you, your partners in crime, either we'll sell them all or I'll be putting an end to their drum-beating by holding them here, to be my prisoners and to work my looms

Dionysos:

I'm going; even though I cannot be forced, nor do I have to suffer any pain. For all these uncalled for insults and for saying he does not exist, Dionysos himself will extract his own punishment. By being disrespectful to us, you invoke his anger.

*Exit Dionysos, guards and Pentheus*

**519**

Chorus:

Gracious virgin, Dirke, Aheloo's daughter, you who once received into your clear waters Zeus' child when the great god snatched it from the immortal fire and sown it into his thigh. And when the right time came Zeus shouted, to you, "Come, child! Come, you who has knocked at the door of birth twice, come into my deep, male womb! Here I'll present you to the world and say that, here in Thebes they'll call you, Dionysos!"

**530**

Chorus:

Yet you, blessed Dirke, now send away the garlanded band of dancers which I've brought for you. Why? Why do you fight me still? Why evade me? Your turn will come though when you'll think about Dionysos. I swear by the joy of the full-grape wine that the time will come when you'll think most respectfully of this bellowing god.

Chorus:

O what anger, what anger the earthly race and Pentheus has shown towards us! He was the child of a serpent which Egeon has sown into the soil. The dragon who bore a human form, a murderous giant, enemy to the gods.

Chorus:

This here Pentheus will send us to the gallows, us Dionysos' followers and Dionysos himself, our leader, he wants to lock him in some hidden room, in some dark jail.

Chorus:

Can you see all this, Dionysos? Can you see how they torture your prophets? Come to us. Come, shake your golden thyrsus high towards Olympus and stop the rain of insult sent by this murderer.

Chorus:

I wonder where you are, Dionysos. Are you at the peaks of Nyssa where the wild animals graze, with your thyrsus leading your trusty bands? Or are you at the twin Korykian peaks?

**560**

Chorus:

Soon you'll come to the bushy caverns of Olympus, where once Orpheus with his lyre used to gather the Muses and the wild animals beneath the trees.

Chorus:

O, blessed greens of Pieria, Dionysos adores you and he'll come to dance leading his swift-footed Maenads. They'll pass the rushing waters of the river Axios and then they'll pass the father of all rivers, the river Lydias, that with his sparkling waters, gives the joy of comfort in living to all the mortals and quenches the thirst of the wonderful horses and of their land.

*From within the palace we hear the crashing and smashing of a building and the voice of Dionysos calling his followers.*

Dionysos:

Io! Io! Hear my voice! Hear my voice, my followers! Bacchants! Bacchants!

Chorus:

Who's there? Who's there? I heard the voice of Dionysos. Where did he call me from?

**580**

Dionysos:

Io! Io! I call again! It is I, the son of Zeus and Semele.

Chorus:

Io! Io! My Lord! My Lord! Come to us, Dionysos, my Lord!

Dionysos:

Move Earth, move! Shake, our beloved Earth!

*More collapsing of the building*

Chorus:

Quick! Pentheus' palace is being turned into ruins.

Dionysos is in those ruins! Pray for him!

Ahhhh! I'm praying for Dionysos!

Look, the stone pillars and those logs! See how they rolled out of their position! Dionysos is calling out from in there somewhere, under the palace's roof.

Dionysos:

Lightning strike! Light up your burning torches! Put Pentheus' chambers to the torch!

*The light on Semele's tomb shoots up for a second.*

Chorus:

Ah! Did you see the flame on Semele's holy tomb? Once the flame of lightning extinguished it with Zeus' thunder.

Throw your shaken bodies to the ground, maenads! Throw them!

*The chorus falls around the tomb in supplication.*

*After a short pause:*

*The palace door opens and Dionysos enters, barely touched by the disaster inside.*

Dionysos:

My dear Lydians, are you so frightened that you fell prostrate to the ground? Looks like you realised that Dionysos has destroyed Pentheus' house. Come on, get up now and show some courage. Shed away your body's terror.

Chorus:

How bright is the light of our joy!

How happy we are to see you!

We despair no longer!

Chorus:

We are no longer unprotected!

**610**

Dionysos:

Were you saddened when they took me and threw me in Pentheus' dark jails, my dears?

Chorus:

How could we not be sad? Who would be our protector if you fell into some terrible misfortune? But how did you manage to free yourself from the grips of that irreverent man?

Dionysos:

Easily. I freed myself with ease.

Chorus:

But didn't he have your hands tied up with thick knotted ropes?

Dionysos:

And that's exactly where I showed him how foolish he is. His mind was full of hope instead of reality and so, in his delusion, he thought that he had tied me up but, the fool, he had neither touched me nor hurt me in the slightest.

He took me to the stall of a bull and instead of tying the ropes around my hands he tied them around the bull's knees and hooves, all the while fuming with rage, his body covered in sweat and biting at his lips. I watched him from nearby in utter comfort.

It was then that Dionysos came and lit the flame on my mother's tomb. As soon as he saw that he thought that the palace was burning and so he was jumping all around the place, shouting for someone to bring Aheloos in there. All the slaves got down to work but – all in vain!

I left then and he, too, gave up on trying to save the palace, found his black sword and rushed out into all the rooms.

**630**

But I think that Dionysos created an apparition in the court and Pentheus charged at it, fighting it as if he was fighting me. More than that, Dionysos, seeing my awful fetters, gave Pentheus something else to think about: He shook the palace from the foundations up, smashed everything! Stupid boy, he was so exhausted now, he dropped his sword and gave up. Irrational man! A mortal trying to fight it out with a god! So, I quietly got out of the palace, forgot about the fool and, here I am, among you!

*Sounds of heavy footsteps from within.*

Ah! I think I can hear the heavy footsteps of army boots. I'm sure he is coming out here. I wonder what he'll say about all this. This will be an easy job for me. Let him be as furious as he wants. I shall meet him calmly because that is how wise people work, calmly.

**640**

*Enter Pentheus with his guards.*

*He is furiously waving his black sword*

Pentheus:

What terrible things I've suffered! The foreigner has escaped me even though not long ago he was a tightly secured prisoner.

A! There he is! There's that man!

What is all this? How did you escape and came out here?

Dionysos:

Hold it! Calm down!

Pentheus:

How did you manage to escape the ropes? How did you get out?

Dionysos:

Did I not tell you that someone would untie me? Or had you not heard me?

**650**

Pentheus:

Who? You're always coming out with some new excuse.

Dionysos:

He who nurtures the vine for the mortals!

Pentheus:

And who is that? Some vine god who gives up on every law of order amongst the mortals?

Dionysos:

You mock those things that Dionysos does for the good of the people.

Pentheus: *To his guards*

Guards, give everyone my orders to surround the palace!

*The guards run off.*

Dionysos:

What? Do you think that walls can hinder gods?

Pentheus:

O, you're a wise man, all right! Wise only about the things that suit you!

Dionysos:

Precisely. I am wise about all the things that matter in the world. But do listen to the words of him who is coming down from the mountains. He has something to announce to you.

Don't worry, we'll stay here with you. We won't be escaping.

*Enter Herald (He is a herdsman and holds a rough, wooden shepherd's crook)*

**660**

Herald:

Lord Pentheus, I left Mount Kitheron -the place which is forever sparkling with the constant fall of snowflakes- to come to you, ruler of our Thebes.

Pentheus: (*Impatiently*)

Yes, yes, you came, and what new disaster has your coming brought to us?

Herald:

Lord, I saw the frenzied Bacchants up on the mountain, rushing out of their house as if stung hard by a gad fly. They were rushing wildly up towards the mountain, showing their white thighs as they did. Seeing all this I immediately came to tell you about it; but I saw them doing awful things in the city, too, Lord. Should I tell you freely what I saw, my Lord or should I watch my words? I wouldn't want to cop the wrong end of your wrath, my Lord because I know you can be a bit sharp with it and you do have the royal power.

Pentheus:

Speak! You're excused of everything you're about to say. We have no right to be angry at the just. In any case the more awful things you can tell us about the Bacchants, the more I'd be able condemn their instructor.

**677**

Herald:

Just a short while ago, when the sun's rays were breaking out and getting ready to warm the earth, I took my herd of young cattle to graze over to the mountain side. Just then, I saw three groups of dancing women. The leader of the first was Aftinoe, then your mother, Agave, of the second and of the third group was Ino.

Their bodies looked relaxed, asleep and some were rested with their backs against the pine trees, others rested on fir leaves, their heads bowed modestly towards the ground, to all intents and purposes looking as if they were one with Nature; not the way you said, my Lord, drunk with wine and with the sweet sounds of flutes, chasing lust in the dark solitude of the night.

When my horned herd neared them and made their usual bellowing noises, your mother woke up, jumped into the centre of the other Bacchants and yelled loudly.

The others, too, threw the sweet sleep from their eyes and stood up straight! What a sight for sore eyes, my Lord! Very pleasant indeed! Young virgins, older women, young women, married or unmarried!

First they let their hair fall to their shoulders, fixed all the clasps and pins of their fawn skin dresses that have become loose and then tied around their waist snakes whose heads came up and licked their beautiful cheeks.

Others, who had babies back home and their breasts were bursting with milk held gently in their arms young deer or young wild wolves which they suckled with their own white milk.

**700**

Others were making garlands of ivy, fir branches and bryony. One of them hit a rock with her thyrsus and the rock became a spring of gushing clear water. Another digs her reed into the ground and right on that spot the god opens up a spring from where wine rushes out. Those who wanted a drink of milk, all they had to do is scratch the ground with their fingernails and out it would come, all bubbly and white. Sweet honey dripped from the ivy around their thyrsus.

So, my Lord, if you were there just at that very minute and saw all them things, you'd be praising the god who you now condemn.

Well, we herdsmen gathered together and began to argue about what them women were doing. Some of that stuff was damned awesome, horrible!

**720**

Then one of us, a traveller from the city and good with his words, says to the rest of us, "Hey, you folk who live along the gentle mountain slopes, would you like us to grab Agave, Pentheus' mother, out of all this mystic Bacchic stuff and take her to the King? He'll be very pleased with us."

We all thought it was a good idea, so we hid behind shrubs, ready for the ambush. But, I can tell you, Lord, we was also fearing for our lives. The women, though, suddenly began to shake their thyrsus as if they were entering into a bacchic ceremony and, at the same time, all of them with one voice, began to cry out for Zeus' son, Dionysos.

Everything around them joined in the ceremony, the mountain, the beasts, everything swayed in its spot.

Agave was also doing like the others and she was heading in my direction. Suddenly, I leapt out of my hiding place and jumped at her, hoping to catch her.

**730**

But just then she shouted, "Hey, my speedy bitches, there are some men here who are hunting us.

They want our submission. Come, run with me. Arm yourselves with your thyrsus and come with me!

Let's get them"

We just managed to run away and escape the slaughter but they threw themselves, with no spear nor sword, at the calves that were quietly grazing nearby. One of those women tore a poor, tiny calf away from its mother's udder and others ripped calves to bloody pieces with their bare hands and then they began eating them raw.

My Lord, you could see bits of flesh strewn all around the place. Whole sides of animals, legs, other chunks of animal flesh hanging from the fir trees, dripping blood. Huge bulls, my Lord which only a few minutes earlier stood tall and proud, the sort that if one got them angry they'd tear everything apart with their massive horns, well, now they dropped their bodies to the ground and straightaway countless girls dragged them about with their bare hands and... and by the time you blinked your royal eye, my Lord, they'd have the skin torn off those massive carcasses of them bulls.

And then they went flying about like the wild birds that ruin the proud wheat stalks of Thebes, the ones that fly low next to the rushing waters of Asopos river. Then off them women rushed to the villages of Erythres, near Ysies, at the foot of Mount Kitheron and just like an invading army they turned everything upside down, ripping children out of their houses and taking all sorts of goods from there, which they just threw carelessly over their shoulder without tying anything together; still nothing fell to the dark soil, not even bronze or iron, my Lord!

And, o, my Lord Pentheus, around their hair there was this brilliant fire that had no effect on them. Didn't burn them one bit.

Then all the men came out fuming with anger and fully armed, wanting to bring these Bacchantes into submission, but then, my Lord, if only you could have seen this most awesome thing! Most terrible thing to see.

**760**

Our sharp spears and arrows drew no blood from them yet they threw their thyrsus at us and wound us so we quickly turned and ran off. Now I'm certain, my Lord that that lot had some god helping them. Then they went back to the peak of the mountain where their god produced springs of clear water for them from the earth. Snakes rose up to their cheeks and with their tongues washed away the blood until their skin once again became bright white.

**770**

My Lord, you'd better let this god, whoever he is come into the city because he has many other great powers. They also say -and I agree with this meself- that he's the god who brought the wine to the mortals. Great stuff that. It stops all sadness. Truth is, my Lord, when the wine is missing so does love and then... well, there's nothing sweet left for us mortals then.

Chorus:

I'm reluctant to utter my words openly to the king but they must be uttered. Dionysos is lesser to no God.

*Exit Herald*

*Enter guards running and puffed out, returning from the first command.*

Pentheus:

This stranger is so close that the fire of these outrageous Bacchantes is touching us. It is a great shame for all the Greeks. There is no time to waste.

*To his guards*

Men, run quickly to the Elektran gates. Call together all the shieldsmen, all the riders of our fast horses, all the catapult drivers and all the sharp arrow shooters. Tell them we must prepare for an attack against the Bacchantes. This matter must end. Fancy suffering all this in the hands of mere women!

*Guards run off again.*

Dionysos:

My words have convinced you of nothing, Pentheus. Still, even though you've treated me badly, I ask you to calm down. You mustn't raise arms against the god. Dionysos will not take kindly to you sending his Bacchantes away from the mountains where they hold their rites.

**792**

Pentheus:

I'm not here to receive your advice. You've escaped the fetters, isn't that enough? Or should I repeat the punishment?

Dionysos:

If I were you I'd do what all folk do to gods: offer a sacrifice, instead of getting angry. It's like kicking at thorns.

Pentheus:

Ha! For him, I'll sacrifice a lot of women. That will teach them, disturbing all the valleys of Kitheron.

Dionysos:

You'll all be chased away; and what a shameful sight that would be! All these bright bronze shields turned to flight by the thyrsuses of the Bacchants!

**800**

Pentheus:

How on earth have I got mixed up with this stranger? Whether tied up or loose he won't shut up!

Dionysos:

There's still time, Pentheus! There's still time for you to make things right again.

Pentheus:

How? By becoming a slave to my women slaves?

Dionysos:

I'll bring all the women here for you... using no weapons at all.

Pentheus:

O, sure! What a nice little trap that would be for me, ey? Very clever!

Dionysos:

What would be the point of such a trap? To save you with my cleverness?

Pentheus:

You've had all this arranged with them earlier so that you can convert the whole city into believing in your god.

*Enter the guards again... puffing*

Dionysos:

Yes! You're quite right, Pentheus! You're quite right! I've discussed it with Dionysos. You're absolutely right. That's what happened.

Pentheus: *To the guards*

Bring my weapons out here – and you (*Dionysos*) shut your mouth!

*Guards rush off again, this time into the palace.*

**810**

Dionysos: *He has just thought of something*

Hold on! Pentheus, would you like to see them yourself, up on the mountains, all of those... women together?

Pentheus: *Enthusiastically*

Sure. Of course, of course! I'd give an awful lot of gold for the privilege.

Dionysos:

Oh, yes? Why so eager?

Pentheus:

I want to see these poor, wretched women drunk.

Dionysos:

But these things would be hard for your eye. What sort of pleasure would you gain from it?

Pentheus:

Absolute! I'd be sitting quietly beneath the fir trees...

Dionysos:

A, but even if you go there quietly, they'll still know you're there.

Pentheus:

Hmm. You're right. Then I'll go quite openly.

Dionysos:

All right then, let's go... Will you really try to do this exercise?

**820**

Pentheus:

Get me there, quickly. I'd hate to lose any more time because of you.

Dionysos:

You'll have to change your clothes first, Pentheus. You need to wear fine linen.

Pentheus:

What's all this? You want to dress me up as a woman?

Dionysos:

Because if you show yourself there as a man, they'll kill you.

Pentheus:

You're right again. I can see you're an old hand at this sort of trickery.

Dionysos:

The god Dionysos taught us all this.



Pentheus:  
Well, then, my wise counsellor, how do we do all this?

Dionysos:  
Let's go into the palace and I'll dress you up.

Pentheus:  
Dress me up with what? Women's clothes?

Dionysos:  
Don't you want to watch the Maenads then?

**830**

Pentheus:  
Well... tell me everything you're going to do to me.

Dionysos:  
I'll let your hair fall all over your back.

Pentheus:  
All right. Then?

Dionysos:  
Then I'll dress you up with long robes, right down to your feet and on your head you'll wear a ribbon.

Pentheus:  
And after all this?

Dionysos:  
You'll carry a thyrsus in one hand and you'll wear a dappled fawn skin around your body.

Pentheus:  
No, no, no! I just can't wear women's clothes. I just can't do it!

Dionysos:  
Well then, if you end up in a fight with the Bacchantes it'll be your blood on the ground, not mine!

Pentheus: *Thinks for a minute, then*

Yes! Right! When we get there we must first spy on them.

Dionysos:  
It's far wiser to hunt the dangerous without putting yourself in danger.

Pentheus:  
How will I be able to walk through the street without being seen by all the Kadmeians?

**840**

Dionysos:  
We'll take the deserted roads. Don't worry, I'll guide you.

Pentheus:  
We must do what's necessary so that the Bacchantes don't get a whiff of all of this. I'm going inside to think about it all.

*The guards come out of the palace bearing weapons for the king.*

Dionysos:  
Sure. Go, I'm ready to help you with everything.

Pentheus:  
I'm going and I'll either take up my weapons or I'll take up your advice.

*Guards and Pentheus exit into the palace, guards despondent.*

Dionysos:  
Women, we have trapped our man! He will go to the Bacchantes and, with his death, justice will be achieved. Dionysos, it is up to you now to get revenge. You are not very far. First of all, take away his mind.

**850**

Give him a slight dose of madness, enough for him to wear women's clothes; otherwise, if his mind is clear he won't wear them. Then I've got to make a fool of him, parading him through Thebes, dressed as a woman. That will teach him to make those dreadful threats of his.

I'm off now, to dress him up in his funeral clothes. The clothes with which he will be meeting Hades, once his mother slaughters him with her bare hands. Only then will he learn that the son of Zeus, Dionysos, is a god of peace for the good folk but he is also a fearsome god who those who don't respect him.

**862**

Chorus:

I wish!

I wish that one day I'd be able to take part in the Bacchic dances, those all night dances of joy!

I wish that one day I'd be able to see my white feet kick high to the rhythm of those dances!

Chorus:

And

I wish that one day I could rush with my fawn skin through the cool breeze like a fawn does, like a fawn that while playing in the soft grass is chased by a hunter and jumps over his clever traps and fences while the hunter blows his whistle to quicken the pace of his hounds.

Chorus:

Panting hard now, I see the little deer turning towards the river beds and valleys, swift as the high wind, happy to have escaped the men and happy to be among the lush growth of the forest.

Chorus:

What better, what wiser gift a god could give to men than to hold their hand high above their head as a sign of victory over their enemy?

**880**

Chorus:

I always admire the good.

Chorus:

God's justice might be late arriving but it does arrive and it does punish those who, because of their stupidity and madness, don't bow their heads to the gods.

Chorus:

The gods wait. They wait and hide in many ways within Time's huge steps and within those steps they hunt the irreverent man.

Chorus:

No man can be more powerful than God's laws. Man must study them well and know them fully.

Chorus:

It is a waste of time to search for the answer of the question "what is god," since that answer has been established a long time ago. God was there just as Nature was, from the beginning.

Chorus:

What is wisdom? What is good advice?

What is good?

What is more wonderful than a god lifting your hand high as a sign of victory over your enemy?

I love the beautiful. Always!

Chorus:

Happy is the man who has escaped the storms of life's angry seas and found a harbour; and happy is the man who have endured those storms.

Chorus:

Men are infinite in number and their hopes have no end and some of these hopes bring joy to some and nothing to others.

Chorus:

I say blessed is the man whose life has been happy – so far.

These are useful pieces of advice. True wisdom.

*Directing the following to Pentheus who is still inside the palace.*

You, Pentheus! It is you, I mean. You who's anxious to see things you really don't need to see, it is enough for you to look to find what can be found.

*Shouting*

Pentheus! Come out of the palace. Let me see you dressed in your new clothes as a Maenad, a Bacchant. You who's anxious to spy on your mother and on the Bacchic rituals.

*Enter Pentheus and his servant.*

*Pentheus is dressed as a Bacchant. Long curls, long white robe, garlands, thyrsus.*

*He enjoys his new get up and enthusiastically accepts Dionysos' suggestions.*

*He is in a daze.*

**918**

Pentheus:

I... I think I can see two suns... and our city of seven gates, Thebes... there are two of them also. And you, stranger, you act as my guide, I see you've turned into a great bull and two huge horns have sprouted out of your head! Were you ever before a beast?

Dionysos:

Ah, yes! Your eyes have been restored now, Pentheus. Now you can see properly. You see? God is with us now, not like before when he fought us.

Pentheus:

So, how do I look? Look at my face. Is it more similar to my mother's Agave's or to Ino's?

Dionysos:

Hmm... to tell you the truth, when I look at you carefully... I think I can see both of them in you. O, look at this curl, you've messed it up. Not at all like I did it inside.

Pentheus:

Yes, I had a bit of a dance inside and as I whirled my head around a bit, like the Bacchantes, I threw it out of its place.

Dionysos:

Here, let me fix it for you. Lift your head a bit.

Pentheus:

Come, I'm in your hands. Tidy me up a bit.

Dionysos:

Look here! Your girdle is very loose and the folds of your robe don't fall straight, all the way to your ankles.

**936**

Pentheus:

Yes, I thought so! It's all right with the left leg though, isn't it?

Dionysos:

You'll see, Pentheus. I'll be your best friend once you see how wise and properly behaved the Bacchantes are.

Pentheus:

How do I hold the thyrsus so that I can look more like a Bacchant? Right hand or left?

Dionysos:

You hold it with your right hand and move your right foot forward at the same time. I'm glad you've changed your mind about all this.

Pentheus:

Do you think I'd be able to lift the whole mountain, its valleys and all the Bacchantes on my back?

Dionysos:

Of course you will! Now that you have your mind back, you can do whatever you like. Not like before.

Pentheus:

Well, should I bring great levers and pulleys for the job or could I do it with my bare hands, arms and shoulders? I mean tear up the whole mountain.

**950**

Dionysos:

You'd have to be careful not to destroy the Bacchantes' haunts and the dens of Pan! You know how Pan loves to play his pipes around there.

Pentheus:

Quite right, quite right. It's not proper to use my strength to defeat mere women. I'll hide among the fir trees.

Dionysos:

Absolutely! You must hide yourself well, since you're going there secretly, to spy upon them.

Pentheus:

He, he! I think I'll be catching these women as one catches the little birds: inside their little love nests.

Dionysos:

Well, that's what you're going there for, to spy on them and catch them... that is... if they don't catch you first!

**960**

Pentheus:

Take me right through the centre of Thebes, stranger! Because I want to show them that I'm the only one among them who dares do such a thing.

Dionysos:

You are the only one who cares for your city, enough to undergo such trials, Pentheus. The trials are worthy of just such a brave man as you. Follow me. I'll be your guide and your saviour.

Once we're there, others will take over from me...

Pentheus:

My mother, yes.

Dionysos:

You're a revered symbol to them all, Pentheus.

Pentheus:

That's why I'm coming.

Dionysos:

...take you from me and deliver you to...

Pentheus:

Take me from you... like a spoilt child, you mean?

Dionysos:

...your mother.

Pentheus:

You are giving me such a big head with all your compliments.

Dionysos:

And what a big head!

**970**

Pentheus:

I do deserve it, of course!

*While Pentheus is absorbed in his clothes.*

Dionysos:

You're a mighty man, Pentheus! Mightier than the mighty and there are mighty battles waiting for you, mighty enough for your glory to reach the heavens!

Oh, Agave and all of you, daughters of Kadmos, open your arms, get ready for the man I'm bringing you. Receive him and offer him this mighty battle – a battle of which I'll be the winner. I and Dionysos. The battle will disclose whatever else is necessary.

*Exit Pentheus, Dionysos and Pentheus' servant.*

**977**

Chorus:

Run, frenzied bitches, run to the mountain where Kadmos' daughters are gathered for their rites! Raise them all! Raise those women against this man who's put on women's clothes and has gone to spy on the Maenads.

Chorus:

His mother will see him first, either from a high crag or from behind a woody hiding place. She will see him and she will shout, "Who is that who's come to spy upon Kadmos' mountain-loving daughters? Who is his mother? Because surely, a woman's blood has not given birth to him, rather some lioness or some gorgon from Libya has given him life."

Chorus:

Let Justice come, let Justice appear, let Justice carry a sword, slashing the heathen's throat from end to end, Ehion's son, the unjust, the mortal who treats our laws with disdain.

Chorus:

He comes to you, Dionysos, with evil intent, with an unjust mind, there he comes to your mystic rites and to those of your mother.

Chorus:

With a madness in the heart  
And a madness in the mind,

**1000**

Chorus:

To conquer the unconquerable with might but no mind. Death will put his mind on a straight path. The wise minds are the minds that obey the gods and stay within the bounds of their mortality and so long as they live, they'll feel no sorrow.

Chorus:

I feel no envy for the wise.

Chorus:

I love to hunt other great things, great and obvious and I lead a life with reverence, shedding unjust views and, day and night, with joy I honour the mortals.

Chorus:

Let Justice come, let Justice appear, let Justice carry a sword, slashing the heathen's throat from end to end, Ehion's son, the unjust, the mortal, who treats our laws with disdain.

Chorus:

Come, Dionysos, appear, like a bull or like a many-headed dragon, or like a lion full of flame and fire!

Chorus:

Come, Dionysos, come and smile and entangle the wild hunter of the maenads in your nets, while he's fallen in the fatal hands of the Bacchantes.

*Short pause of utter silence.*

*Enter Pentheus' servant. Horrified.*

Servant:

Glorious palace of old Sidon, the man who had sown the snake's teeth into the ground and harvested earthly being! Most excellent palace in the whole of Greece. How deep a hurt I feel for you even though I am but a mere slave here.

Chorus:

What's up? Are you bringing us some bad news from the Bacchants?

**1030**

Servant:

Pentheus, Ekhion's son is dead.

Chorus: *Exuberantly.*

O Lord Dionysos! You are indeed a great god!

Servant:

What? What did you say? What did you say, woman? You are happy with our Lord's misfortune?

Chorus:

Ha! I'm a foreigner! I shout with joy with a foreigner's voice. There's no need for me to cower from the fear that they'll lock me up.

Servant:

Do you think the Thebans are such cowards?

Chorus:

I get my orders from Dionysos, not from the Thebans.

Servant:

I don't begrudge you that but it's not right for you to rejoice over these sad events.

Chorus:

Tell me, how did this unjust man who loved injustice die?

**1043**

Servant:

I was following my master and the stranger and, after we walked past all the Theban houses, we went through the murky waters of Asepos and the three of us climbed the peaks of Kitheron. The stranger was first, then my master and finally me. The stranger was leading us to the place where we could see the mystic rites performed by the Bacchants.

We walked and talked softly so that we could see them but they couldn't see us.

We eventually came to a grassy spot and there we spread ourselves flat on the ground. All around us were deep crags and precipices and the river's waters rushed mightily and the pine trees with their huge shades cooled us.

The maenads were sitting nearby and enjoyed themselves with pleasant deeds, fixing the ivy that fell off their thyrsus or, just like the happy young fillies that had just been released from their cart's handsome yoke, sang sacred songs to each other.

Poor Pentheus could sense the presence of the crowd of Maenads but he couldn't see them so he said to the stranger, "stranger, my eyes can't see these rotten Bacchants from here. Let me climb high up onto the tip of that fir tree so that I can see better their lecherous deeds."

And it's from that moment on that I truly saw the stranger's miracles.

He grabs a branch which was very high up on the tree, bends it and brings it down all the way to the black soil. All the way down from the depths of the sky.

The branch made a perfect and beautiful circle, like the ring of a wheel, drawn and made by a compass. Something no mortal could have done. Then he places Pentheus onto the branch and slowly, carefully, lets it rise, so that he won't fall down. The king then sat on that branch and waited.

Suddenly though, the Maenads saw him better than he saw them himself.

**1075**

No one could see the stranger any more and it was only a minute later that Dionysos –I'm sure it was he- called out loudly:

"Maenads! I've brought you the man who mocks you and mocks my rites also. Come, he's yours, punish him!"

And with these words, heaven and earth were filled with sacred fires. Then a great silence filled the air. A silence which bound all the trees of the valley, all the shrubs and one could not hear the voices of the beasts.

The women didn't seem to have heard Dionysos' voice so they stood and, aloof and with their eyes wide open they waited.

Dionysos yelled again and this time Kadmos' daughters recognised Dionysos' voice and rushed quickly and like doves attacked.

Agave, his mother, his sisters and all the other Bacchants, wild with the god's spirit, jumped over huge

torrents of valleys and caves and when they saw the king sitting on the fir tree, first they began throwing rocks at him. Then they climbed a rock and from there threw at him long branches of fir, made like spears. Others again sent their thyrsus flying at poor Pentheus but they too, kept missing him.

**1100**

That's because he was far too high for them. The poor king sat there not knowing what to do. The Maenads then tore great big branches from the tree, made wooden levers out of them and then tried to rip out Pentheus' tree from the roots. Those efforts also amounted to nothing. Then Agave shouted, "Come, Maenads, come stand around it, grab the branches of the tree with your hands and climb up to the beast. Kill it so he won't reveal our mystic rites to the world."

The Maenads surrounded the tree and with a thousand hands tore the fir from its roots. Down came Pentheus, crashing to the ground, the fear cutting his breath. He knew he was near his death.

First it was his mother, Dionysos' priestess. She started the slaughter. She jumped upon him with anger and he took the ribbon from his head so that his mother would recognise him and spare him and patted her cheek softly. "It's me, mother," he said, "your son, Pentheus. You gave birth to me, mother, in Ehion's palace! Have pity on me, mother! Don't kill me, don't kill your son just because he's made a mistake."

**1120**

But he couldn't convince her. She was frothing at the mouth and her eyes rolled wildly in their sockets. Dionysos' spirit had made her crazy. Mad. Seized by the spirit of her god.

She then grabbed her son's arm, stepped on his shoulder blade and ripped his arm clean off his body.

The strength was not her own but her god's. On the other side Ino was doing her part, tearing his flesh. So did Aftinoe. The whole population of Maenads stopped and gazed at the spectacle. The whole place echoed with screams and he was groaning with pain while he was still alive. Then the Maenads began a war cry and each carried some part of Pentheus' body. One carried a hand another a foot with its shoe still attached on it, others tore at his ribs showing them bare and others with bloody hands tossed parts of his flesh to each other.

Bits of his flesh were strewn about everywhere. Some up against the rough rocks others so deep in the shrubs of the forest that it was impossible to find them all.

And his poor head! His mother happened to take a hold of it. She stuck it at the end of her thyrsus and now carries it around the mountain's paths, yelling, "it's the head of a mountain lion! It's the head of a mountain lion."

She left behind her sisters and the rest of the Maenads and she is heading this way proudly carrying the poor prey, calling Dionysos her "fellow hunter" and "partner in the hunt" and "most victorious."

With this victory, Agave gained only a black tear.

I don't want to witness her misery when she comes to the palace so, I'll leave now in case we're both here at the same time.

Wisdom and respect for the gods is a great virtue and a possession most worthy for the mortals to have.

*Exit Pentheus' servant.*

**1153**

Chorus: *Joyful*

Ah, let us rejoice the victory of our Lord, Dionysos and let us mourn the death of dragon-born Pentheus, who put on women's clothes and looking for a reason to die, took a weighty thyrsus with him. A bull guided him to his death.

Chorus:

Women of Kadmos, you've turned a glorious victory into a lament full of tears.

What a delightful victory it is, really, holding in your arms your child's blood-dripping hand.

Chorus:

Ha! I can see Pentheus' mother Agave rushing towards the palace.

What a dreadful sight! How wild her eyes!

Receive her, receive her you group of Dionysos' followers!

*Enter Agave, wild, bloodstained, with Pentheus' head stuck on her thyrsus. Ecstatic.*

*She is followed by two or three other blood stained Bacchantes.*

**1168**

Agave:

Bacchantes of Asia!

Chorus:

O, how I shudder when I look at you!

Agave:

Look! I bring from the mountain a branch, freshly cut, a jewel to my thyrsus. It's for the palace. Oh, what stunning hunt!

Chorus:

I see it, Agave and I shall accept it. We will celebrate together.

Agave:

I caught it with my own hands. I caught this lion with my own hands, no traps, nothing. Come! Come and look!

*She shows them the head but they withdraw in fear*

Chorus:

Where did you catch it?

Agave:

At Kitheron.

Chorus:

What's Kitheron?

Agave:

A mountain. That's where we killed this lion.

Chorus:

Which of you struck first?

Agave:

I was honoured to be the first. I am honoured and famous also for my dancing.

Chorus:

Who was next?

Agave:

Kadmos' ...

Chorus:

Yes? Kadmos' what?

Agave:

Kadmos' daughters next. They threw themselves at the beast straight after me. O, what a happy hunt!

Chorus:

....

*(Text lost)*

Agave:

Come, join the celebrations!

Chorus:

How can I, poor woman?

*Agave pets Pentheus' head*

Agave:

What a delightful little lamb! How silky and thick the down on his cheek. Soft and barely visible beneath his hair.

Chorus:

It looks like the mane of a wild beast that lives deep in the forest.

Agave:

Dionysos is wise and wise was his act to throw his maenads at this hunt.

Chorus:

Dionysos is an excellent hunter.

Agave:

An excellent hunter, yes.

Chorus:

Excellent, indeed!

Agave:

The Thebans, too will praise me!

Chorus:

Your son, too, Pentheus.

Agave:

Everyone will praise me for catching this lovely lion. What a great catch!

**1196**

Chorus:

A rich reward!

Agave:

Richly rewarded

Chorus:

And you're happy then?

Agave:

Am I happy? I am happy and totally elated, because I achieved great, wondrous things through this hunt.

Chorus:

Agave, go and show your catch to the locals. Show them all what a good hunter you are.

Agave: *To the audience*

Come near, people of this land, this Thebes with her splendid towers. Come and see the catch we, Kadmos' daughters caught without traps or nets or with Thessalian spears but with our own bare hands. No need for people to try so hard with their javelins. Here we are, with these bare hands alone we caught and tore the beast to shreds.

Where is my old father? Where is that old man? Someone tell him to come out here. Pentheus, too, my son. Where is he? Let him take the high ladder and putting it safely against the palace wall, let him nail onto the sculptures this lion's head which I, yes I, hunted and caught.

*She runs enthusiastically behind the curtain, SL.*

*Enter Kadmos in mourning.*

*He is followed by two servants who are carrying the remainder of Pentheus' body on a bier.*

**1216**

Kadmos:

Come, servants, follow me with your most melancholy burden. Follow me to the palace with Pentheus' corpse. I had to search for it all over the crags of Kitheron. Miserable Fate. Miserable work to find all his body in slaughtered and bloody pieces, lying here and there, among the shrubs, impossible to find.

I was returning from the rites with old Teiresias when I overheard one of my daughters talking about their incredible and dire deeds, so I quickly turned back to find the child the Maenads killed. And here he is.

I met Aftonoe who, together with Aristaios gave birth to Aktaion. Ino was with her. I saw them running wildly, half crazed all around the forests.

They told me that Agave was heading this way, her step crazy as her mind... Here she is. I see she's looking sad.

*Enter Agave still carrying the head of Pentheus and still full of blood.*

*Her friends are still with her, as before.*

Agave:

Father, be proud of your daughters. You, more than all the other mortals gave birth to the best of them. Of course, they're not only talking about me but about all of us, but more so about me because I've left my shuttle cock next to my loom and took up the greater deeds. Now I hunt beasts which I catch with my bare hands and bring here in my arms. This one for example, this trophy you see here is to be hung onto the palace walls.

Come, father. Hold it yourself. Hold it proudly, father, it's a worthy catch. Invite your friends and have a feast because my achievements make you happy.

Kadmos:

O, what a black, black, immeasurable, intolerable, misery this is for an old man's eyes!

What awful murder you have done with your bare hands! What a beautiful sacrifice you have offered to the gods, Agave!

O, Agave! And you want to invite Thebes and me to feasts! O, what an ill Fate, first for you and then for me. How utterly Dionysos has destroyed us.

He was right in doing so, of course but he was so hard! A true god of our race.

Agave:

How joyless old age makes people! How miserable it turns their face. I wish my son will be as good a hunter as his mother when he'll be going off on hunts with the rest of Thebes' youth! But he only knows how to do one thing only and that is how to fight against the gods! Counsel him father. He listens to you.

Is there no one who can go and bring him here to see me so ecstatic?

Kadmos:

O, unfortunate woman! How terribly you will suffer when you've discovered what you've actually done! I hope you stay as you are, ignorant of the deed. You might not be the happiest of human beings but you'll also be free of suffering!



Agave:  
Father, what is it that you see and don't like? What makes you so sad?  
Kadmos:  
Daughter, turn your eyes to this part of the heavens.  
Agave: *obeys*  
Here you are. What's there that you think I should be seeing?  
Kadmos:  
Is it the same sky or do you think it has changed in some way?  
Agave:  
It's more... translucent... brighter!  
Kadmos:  
Now look into your soul. Is it as turbulent as before?  
Agave:  
I... don't know how this happened but I... I feel different, as if I'm coming to, recovering from something... my old thoughts have been replaced.  
Kadmos:  
Agave, if you can understand me answer my questions.  
Agave:  
But... I forgot what we were talking about, father.  
Kadmos:  
Tell me, daughter. With whom did you enter the wedding chamber?  
Agave:  
You gave me to the "sown one," the one who, they say, sprung out of the dragon's seed. Ehion.  
Kadmos:  
And what child sprung from your union in that house?  
Agave:  
Pentheus. I am his mother and Ehion his father.  
Kadmos:  
Now look, daughter, look into your arms. Whose head are you holding?  
Agave: *answers without looking*  
The lion's, of course. Just like the huntresses said...  
Kadmos:  
Think now, Agave. It's a small effort to look at it.  
**1280**  
Agave:  
Ahhhh! What is this? What do I see? What is this in my arms?  
Kadmos:  
Concentrate, daughter. Look more closely.  
Agave:  
Ahhh! I can see the greatest of pains! Oh, my darling! O, miserable Fate!  
Kadmos:  
Does it look like the head of a lion to you any more?  
Agave:  
No, no! It's the head of my Pentheus I'm holding in my arms! Pentheus!  
Kadmos:  
Yes... mourned by me, Agave, before you recognised it!  
Agave:  
Who killed him? How did he come to be in my hands?  
Kadmos:  
O bitter truth! How belated you come!  
Agave:  
Tell me. I can't wait any more. My heart is breaking.  
Kadmos:  
You and your sisters have killed him, Agave.  
**1290**  
Agave:  
But where did it happen? Here in the palace or elsewhere?  
Kadmos:  
At the same place where the wild bitches once killed Aktaion.

Agave:

But why did Pentheus come to Kitheron, the poor boy?

Kadmos:

He came to mock Dionysos and your Bacchic rites.

Agave:

But how did we get up there?

Kadmos:

You were driven by the Bacchic Frenzy! The whole city was at it.

Agave:

Now I understand. Dionysos has destroyed us.

Kadmos:

Of course he did and quite rightly too. He was insulted most arrogantly; you had no respect for this god.

Agave:

Father, where is my beautiful son's body?

Kadmos: *He points at the bier.*

I've looked all around the forest and slowly gathered the pieces.

Agave:

Have you joined all the pieces together well?

Kadmos:

.....

*(Text missing)*

Agave:

But what role did Pentheus play in our disrespect for the god?

Kadmos:

He had become just like you. He didn't respect Dionysos either. The god threw us all into a common disaster: you, Pentheus and me. My household is utterly destroyed. What a horrible shame, what a dreadful misfortune to see the only male fruit of your womb dead! I have no other heir!

*Directing his words to Pentheus' head in Agave's arms*

O, Pentheus! You were the pride of the palace, son of my son, strength of our city. Your proud stature would frighten anyone who dared to hurt me, an old man. He'd get his just rewards if he had tried anything against me.

Now, I, I the great Kadmos, who has sown the great race of Thebans and took the great harvest, I must be thrown out of this palace with no honour.

My only son! Even dead I will love you more than all the men on earth.

You'll never again run your hands through my beard, nor will you ever call me your mother's father ever again. You used to say, "Who's being unjust to you, who hurts your honour? Who hurt your heart, grand-father and made you feel so bitter? Just tell me, grand-father and I'll put him straight!" All this is gone now, my child. Wretched am I and you are dead. Your poor, hapless mother, our whole race doomed.

*To the other Bacchantes (friends of Agave)*

If there's anyone who insults the gods let him turn his eyes to this and let him believe.

Chorus:

I too, feel your pain, Kadmos but your grandson was punished justly.

Agave:

Ah, father! Look at me and how I've changed!

*(Looking at the corpse of Pentheus)*

What is this corpse I'm holding in my hands, and how can I, a pitiful woman, hold him tightly, lovingly into my chest?

Oh, child! How can I possibly mourn and farewell all these mangled parts of yours, my son? I used to adore and kiss your whole body once – I raised it with my own two hands.

Old man, bring here the head of this unfortunate child. Let's try and bring it as close to the rest of his powerful body as we can.

*(Kadmos obeys)*

Oh, my beloved face, cheeks of youth! Look, my son, with this cloth I cover your head and the other blood-drenched parts of your body.

With what shroud should I cover you?

Which hands will bury you my son?

*Dionysos appears at the parapet of the palace.*

**1330**

Dionysos:

This man has fallen into the traps of the Theban Maenads because he mocked me. As for them, they must leave this city because with equal arrogance they committed his murder. They must never see their country again because it is a sacrilege for murderers to stay around the tombs of their victims. You, now Kadmus! You will take the shape of a snake and so will your wife, Armonia will also become a snake because you, a mortal, dared to marry Ares' daughter. Zeus' oracle has said it and you will obey it: You and your wife will yoke a cattle cart and with it lead an army of foreigners. Your army would be countless and with it you'll conquer many cities but after you've destroyed Apollo's shrine, you and your armies will have a terrible homecoming.

You, however, and Armonia will be saved by Ares and he will dictate that you should live in the land of the blessed.

These are my words, the words not of a mortal but of the son of Zeus, Dionysos. If, instead of refusing me you had accepted this fact, you'd now be very happy, indeed and you'd have me as your ally.

Kadmus:

Forgive us, Dionysos! Forgive us. We have treated you unjustly.

**1345**

Dionysos:

This you've understood far too late and not when it was important.

Kadmos:

Yes, we have only just understood this but your punishment is harsh.

Dionysos:

I, too, though a god, felt the insults.

Kadmos:

Gods should not be the same as the mortals in their anger.

Dionysos:

These are things which Zeus, my father has declared a long time ago.

Agave:

Pitiful beings, father, our exile is our Fate.

Dionysos:

Why then delay the things that cannot be changed?

*Exit Dionysos*

Kadmos:

What a black calamity we all fell into, my daughter! A dismal luck to you and to your sisters, your son and your father! A heart broken man, an old man, I must now go and live among foreigners. And the despair continues. Once there I must lead an army of those foreigners against my own Greece.

And then how can I, with Armonia, Ares' daughter, my wife, snakes both of us, allow such an army of spearmen crawl all over the tombs and altars of Greece? And my dismal Fate won't end there and I won't rest even after I cross the streams of Aheron.

Agave:

And I, too, father, will leave you. I too, will go to exile. How I will miss you!

Kadmos:

Because my darling child, when you hug me, when you hug this old man; when you throw your arms around me, around this wretched and disabled man with his hair all grey, I feel as if a swan is covering me.

**1366**

Agave:

Where should I turn to now, father? Thrown out of my own country like this?

Kadmos:

I don't know, child. I just don't know. How little can be the help that a parent can offer to his child!

Agave: *Addressing the palace*

Farewell palace. Farewell land of my parents. Desolate and thrice cursed, I'm exiled from the house I entered as a bride.

Kadmos:

Go to the house of Aristaios my child, Aftonoe's husband. Perhaps there you'll find your sisters also.

Agave:

Father, I will miss you!

Kadmos:

And I you, my daughter. I cry for you and for your sisters.

Agave:

How cruel is this god, King Dionysos. What brutal punishment to send you from your palace!

Chorus:

People all over Thebes defied this god.

Agave:

I'm leaving now, father. Good bye!

Kadmos:

Good bye my sweet daughter. May good only come your way.

Agave: *To the Theban Bacchants*

Come, let's go my friends. Let's go and find my grief-stricken sisters who left before us. Let us go to a place so far from Kitheron that neither it can look upon me nor I upon it, lest the memory of the thyrsus is called upon again. Let other Bacchants look after such things from now on.

*Exit Agave and the Theban Bacchants*

**1388**

Chorus:

The Fates have many guises and the gods bring about many things unexpected by mortals. Those things we expect do not necessarily happen.

So ends this play.

*Exit All*  
**End of**  
**Euripides'**  
**"Bacchae"**

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[1] To avoid confusion I've used only the name Dionysos.

[2] A tall staff or spear (emblem of Dionysos and his followers) wrapped round with ivy and vine branches and often with a pine cone at the top

[3] The words, "frenzy" and "mania" are interchangeable in meaning for the purposes of this translation.