

# THE BACCHAE

## OF EURIPIDES

Translated by

GILBERT MURRAY

An Electronic Classics Series Publication

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# THE BACCHAE

## OF EURIPIDES

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### DRAMATIS PERSONAE

**DIONYSUS, THE GOD;** *son of Zeus and of the Theban princess Semelê.*

**CADMUS,** *formerly King of Thebes, father of Semelê.*

**PENTHEUS,** *King of Thebes, grandson of Cadmus.*

**AGAVE,** *daughter of Cadmus, mother of Pentheus.*

**TEIRESIAS,** *an aged Theban prophet.*

**A SOLDIER OF PENTHEUS' GUARD.**

**TWO MESSENGERS.**

**A CHORUS OF INSPIRED DAMSELS,** following Dionysus from the East.

*“The play was first produced after the death of Euripides by his son who bore the same name, together with the Iphigenia in Aulis and the Alcmaeon, probably in the year 405 B.C.”*

*The background represents the front of the Castle of **PENTHEUS**, King of Thebes. At one side is visible the sacred Tomb of Semelê, a little enclosure overgrown with wild vines, with a cleft in the rocky floor of it from which there issues at times steam or smoke. The God **DIONYSUS** is discovered alone.*

### **DIONYSUS.**

Behold, God's Son is come unto this land  
Of heaven's hot splendour lit to life, when she  
Of Thebes, even I, Dionysus, whom the brand  
Who bore me, Cadmus' daughter Semelê,  
Died here. So, changed in shape from God to man,  
I walk again by Dirce's streams and scan  
Ismenus' shore. There by the castle side  
I see her place, the Tomb of the Lightning's Bride,  
The wreck of smouldering chambers, and the great  
Faint wreaths of fire undying—as the hate  
Dies not, that Hera held for Semelê.

Aye, Cadmus hath done well; in purity  
He keeps this place apart, inviolate,  
His daughter's sanctuary; and I have set

My green and clustered vines to robe it round  
Far now behind me lies the golden ground  
Of Lydian and of Phrygian; far away  
The wide hot plains where Persian sunbeams play,  
The Bactrian war-holds, and the storm-oppressed  
Clime of the Mede, and Araby the Blest,  
And Asia all, that by the salt sea lies  
In proud embattled cities, motley-wise  
Of Hellene and Barbarian interwrought;  
And now I come to Hellas—having taught  
All the world else my dances and my rite  
Of mysteries, to show me in men's sight  
Manifest God.

And first of Helene lands  
I cry this Thebes to waken; set her hands  
To clasp my wand, mine ivied javelin,  
And round her shoulders hang my wild fawn-skin.  
For they have scorned me whom it least beseemed,  
Semelê's sisters; mocked by birth, nor deemed  
That Dionysus sprang from Dian seed.  
My mother sinned, said they; and in her need,  
With Cadmus plotting, cloaked her human shame  
With the dread name of Zeus; for that the flame  
From heaven consumed her, seeing she lied to God.

Thus must they vaunt; and therefore hath my rod  
On them first fallen, and stung them forth wild-eyed  
From empty chambers; the bare mountain side

Is made their home, and all their hearts are flame.  
Yea, I have bound upon the necks of them  
The harness of my rites. And with them all  
The seed of womankind from hut and hall  
Of Thebes, hath this my magic goaded out.  
And there, with the old King's daughters, in a rout  
Confused, they make their dwelling-place between  
The roofless rocks and shadowy pine trees green.  
Thus shall this Thebes, how sore soe'er it smart,  
Learn and forget not, till she crave her part  
In mine adoring; thus must I speak clear  
To save my mother's fame, and crown me here,  
As true God, born by Semelê to Zeus.

Now Cadmus yieldeth up his throne and use  
Of royal honour to his daughter's son  
Pentheus; who on my body hath begun  
A war with God. He thrusteth me away  
From due drink-offering, and, when men pray,  
My name entreats not. Therefore on his own  
Head and his people's shall my power be shown.  
Then to another land, when all things here  
Are well, must I fare onward, making clear  
My godhead's might. But should this Theban town  
Essay with wrath and battle to drag down  
My maids, lo, in their path myself shall be,  
And maniac armies battled after me!

*The Bacchae of Euripides*

For this I veil my godhead with the wan  
Form of the things that die, and walk as Man.

O Brood of Tmolus o'er the wide world flown,  
O Lydian band, my chosen and mine own,  
Damsels uplifted o'er the orient deep  
To wander where I wander, and to sleep  
Where I sleep; up, and wake the old sweet sound,  
The clang that I and mystic Rhea found,  
The Timbrel of the Mountain! Gather all  
Thebes to your song round Pentheus' royal hall.  
I seek my new-made worshippers, to guide  
Their dances up Kithaeron's pine clad side.

*[As he departs, there comes stealing in from the left a band of fifteen Eastern Women, the light of the sunrise streaming upon their long white robes and ivy-bound hair. They wear fawn-skins over the robes, and carry some of them timbrels, some pipes and other instruments. Many bear the thyrsus, or sacred Wand, made of reed ringed with ivy. They enter stealthily till they see that the place is empty, and then begin their mystic song of worship.]*

**CHORUS.**

**A Maiden.**

From Asia, from the dayspring that uprises

To Bromios ever glorying we came.  
We laboured for our Lord in many guises;  
We toiled, but the toil is as the prize is;  
Thou Mystery, we hail thee by thy name!

**Another.**

Who lingers in the road? Who espies us?  
We shall hide him in his house nor be bold.  
Let the heart keep silence that defies us;  
For I sing this day to Dionysus  
The song that is appointed from of old.

**All the Maidens.**

Oh, blessèd he in all wise,  
Who hath drunk the Living Fountain,  
Whose life no folly staineth,  
And his soul is near to God;  
Whose sins are lifted, pall-wise,  
As he worships on the Mountain,  
And where Cybele ordaineth,  
Our Mother, he has trod:

His head with ivy laden  
And his thyrsus tossing high,  
For our God he lifts his cry;  
“Up, O Bacchae, wife and maiden,  
Come, O ye Bacchae, come;

Oh, bring the Joy-bestower,  
God-seed of God the Sower,  
Bring Bromios in his power  
From Phrygia's mountain dome;  
To street and town and tower,  
Oh, bring ye Bromios home."

Whom erst in anguish lying  
For an unborn life's desire,  
As a dead thing in the Thunder  
His mother cast to earth;  
For her heart was dying, dying,  
In the white heart of the fire;  
Till Zeus, the Lord of Wonder,  
Devised new lairs of birth;

Yea, his own flesh tore to hide him,  
And with clasps of bitter gold  
Did a secret son enfold,  
And the Queen knew not beside him;  
Till the perfect hour was there;  
Then a hornèd God was found,  
And a God of serpents crowned;  
And for that are serpents wound  
In the wands his maidens bear,  
And the songs of serpents sound  
In the mazes of their hair.

**Some Maidens.**

All hail, O Thebes, thou nurse of Semelê!  
With Semelê's wild ivy crown thy towers;  
Oh, burst in bloom of wreathing bryony,  
Berries and leaves and flowers;  
Uplift the dark divine wand,  
The oak-wand and the pine-wand,  
And don thy fawn-skin, fringed in purity  
With fleecy white, like ours.

Oh, cleanse thee in the wands' waving pride!  
Yea, all men shall dance with us and pray,  
When Bromios his companies shall guide  
Hillward, ever hillward, where they stay,  
The flock of the Believing,  
The maids from loom and weaving  
By the magic of his breath borne away.

**Others.**

Hail thou, O Nurse of Zeus, O Caverned Haunt  
Where fierce arms clanged to guard God's cradle rare,  
For thee of old crested Corybant  
First woke in Cretan air  
The wild orb of our orgies,  
The Timbrel; and thy gorges  
Rang with this strain; and blended Phrygian chant  
And sweet keen pipes were there.

*The Bacchae of Euripides*

But the Timbrel, the Timbrel was another's,  
And away to Mother Rhea it must wend;  
And to our holy singing from the Mother's  
The mad Satyrs carried it, to blend  
In the dancing and the cheer  
Of our third and perfect Year;  
And it serves Dionysus in the end!

**A Maiden.**

O glad, glad on the mountains  
To swoon in the race outworn,  
When the holy fawn-skin clings,  
And all else sweeps away,  
To the joy of the red quick fountains,  
The blood of the hill-goat torn,  
The glory of wild-beast ravens,  
Where the hill-tops catch the day;  
To the Phrygian, Lydian, mountains!  
'Tis Bromios leads the way.

**Another Maiden.**

Then streams the earth with milk, yea, streams  
With wine and nectar of the bee,  
And through the air dim perfume steams  
Of Syrian frankincense; and He,  
Our leader, from his thyrsus spray

A torchlight tosses high and higher,  
A torchlight like a beacon-fire,  
To waken all that faint and stray;  
And sets them leaping as he sings,  
His tresses rippling to the sky,  
And deep beneath the Maenad cry  
His proud voice rings:  
“Come, O ye Bacchae, come!”

**All the Maidens.**

Hither, O fragrant of Tmolus the Golden,  
Come with the voice of timbrel and drum;  
Let the cry of your joyance uplift and embolden  
The God of the joy-cry; O Bacchanals, come!  
With pealing of pipes and with Phrygian clamour,  
On, where the vision of holiness thrills,  
And the music climbs and the maddening glamour,  
With the wild White Maids, to the hills, to the hills!  
Oh, then, like a colt as he runs by a river,  
A colt by his dam, when the heart of him sings,  
With the keen limbs drawn and the fleet foot a-quiver,  
Away the Bacchanal springs!

[Enter **TEIRESIAS**. *He is an old man and blind, leaning upon a staff and moving with slow stateliness, though wearing the Ivy and the Bacchic fawn-skin.*]

**TEIRESIAS.**

Ho, there, who keeps the gate?—Go, summon me  
Cadmus, Agênor's son, who crossed the sea  
From Sidon and upreared this Theban hold.  
Go, whosoe'er thou art. See he be told  
Teiresias seeketh him. Himself will gauge  
Mine errand, and the compact, age with age,  
I vowed with him, grey hair with snow-white hair,  
To deck the new God's thyrsus, and to wear  
His fawn-skin, and with ivy crown our brows.

[Enter **CADMUS** from the Castle. He is even older than  
**TEIRESIAS**, and wears the same attire.]

**CADMUS.**

True friend! I knew that voice of thine, that flows  
Like mellow wisdom from a fountain wise.  
And, lo, I come prepared, in all the guise  
And harness of this God. Are we not told  
His is the soul of that dead life of old  
That sprang from mine own daughter? Surely then  
Must thou and I with all the strength of men  
Exalt him.

Where then shall I stand, where tread  
The dance and toss this bowed and hoary head?  
O friend, in thee is wisdom; guide my grey  
And eld-worn steps, eld-worn Teiresias.—Nay;

I am not weak.

[*At the first movement of worship his manner begins to change; a mysterious strength and exaltation enter into him.*]

Surely this arm could smite  
The wild earth with its thyrsus, day and night,  
And faint not! Sweetly and forgetfully  
The dim years fall from off me!

**TEIRESIAS.**

As with thee,  
With me 'tis likewise. Light am I and young,  
And will essay the dancing and the song.

**CADMUS.**

Quick, then, our chariots to the mountain road.

**TEIRESIAS.**

Nay; to take steeds were to mistrust the God.

**CADMUS.**

So be it. Mine old arms shall guide thee there.

**TEIRESIAS.**

The God himself shall guide! Have thou no care.



**CADMUS.**

And in all Thebes shall no man dance but we?

**TEIRESIAS.**

Aye, Thebes is blinded. Thou and I can see.

**CADMUS.**

'Tis weary waiting; hold my hand, friend; so.

**TEIRESIAS.**

Lo, there is mine. So linkèd let us go.

**CADMUS.**

Shall things of dust the Gods' dark ways despise?

**TEIRESIAS.**

Or prove our wit on Heaven's high mysteries?  
Not thou and I! That heritage sublime  
Our sires have left us, wisdom old as time,  
No word of man, how deep soe'er his thought  
And won of subtlest toil, may bring to naught.

Aye, men will rail that I forgot my years,  
To dance and wreath with ivy these white hairs;  
What reck's it? Seeing the God no line hath told  
To mark what man shall dance, or young or old;  
But craves his honours from mortality  
All, no man marked apart; and great shall be!

**CADMUS** (*after looking away toward the Mountain*).

Teiresias, since this light thou canst not read,  
I must be seer for thee. Here comes in speed  
Pentheus, Echîon's son, whom I have raised  
To rule my people in my stead.—Amazed  
He seems. Stand close, and mark what we shall hear.

*[The two stand back, partially concealed, while there enters in hot haste PENTHEUS, followed by a bodyguard. He is speaking to the SOLDIER in command.]*

**PENTHEUS.**

Scarce had I crossed our borders, when mine ear  
Was caught by this strange rumour, that our own  
Wives, our own sisters, from their hearths are flown  
To wild and secret rites; and cluster there  
High on the shadowy hills, with dance and prayer  
To adore this new-made God, this Dionyse,  
Whate'er he be!—And in their companies  
Deep wine-jars stand, and ever and anon  
Away into the loneliness now one  
Steals forth, and now a second, maid or dame  
Where love lies waiting, not of God! The flame  
They say, of Bacchios wraps them. Bacchios! Nay,  
'Tis more to Aphrodite that they pray.  
Howbeit, all that I have found, my men  
Hold bound and shackled in our dungeon den;

The rest, I will go hunt them! Aye, and snare  
My birds with nets of iron, to quell their prayer  
And mountain song and rites of rascaldom!  
They tell me, too, there is a stranger come,  
A man of charm and spell, from Lydian seas,  
A head all gold and cloudy fragrances,  
A wine-red cheek, and eyes that hold the light  
Of the very Cyprian. Day and livelong night  
He haunts amid the damsels, o'er each lip  
Dangling his cup of joyance! Let me grip  
Him once, but once, within these walls, right swift  
That wand shall cease its music, and that drift  
Of tossing curls lie still—when my rude sword  
Falls between neck and trunk! 'Tis all his word,  
This tale of Dionysus; how that same  
Babe that was blasted by the lightning flame  
With his dead mother, for that mother's lie,  
Was re-conceived, born perfect from the thigh  
Of Zeus, and now is God! What call ye these?  
Dreams? Gibes of the unknown wanderer? Blasphemies  
That crave the very gibbet?

Stay! God wot,

Here is another marvel! See I not  
In motley fawn-skins robed the vision-seer  
Teiresias? And my mother's father here—  
O depth of scorn!—adoring with the wand  
Of Bacchios?—Father!—Nay, mine eyes are fond;

It is not your white heads so fancy-flown!  
It cannot be! Cast off that ivy crown,  
O mine own mother's sire! Set free that hand  
That cowers about its staff.

'Tis thou hast planned  
This work, Teiresias! 'Tis thou must set  
Another altar and another yet  
Amongst us, watch new birds, and win more hire  
Of gold, interpreting new signs of fire!  
But for thy silver hairs, I tell thee true,  
Thou now wert sitting chained amid thy crew  
Of raving damsels, for this evil dream  
Thou hast brought us, of new Gods! When once the gleam  
Of grapes hath lit a Woman's Festival,  
In all their prayers is no more health at all!

**LEADER OF THE CHORUS** (*the words are not heard  
by PENTHEUS*).

Injurious King, hast thou no fear of God,  
Nor Cadmus, sower of the Giants' Sod,  
Life-spring to great Echion and to thee?

**TEIRESIAS.**

Good words my son, come easily, when he  
That speaks is wise, and speaks but for the right.  
Else come they never! Swift are thine, and bright  
As though with thought, yet have no thought at all

Lo this new God, whom thou dost flout withal,  
I cannot speak the greatness wherewith He  
In Hellas shall be great! Two spirits there be,  
Young Prince, that in man's world are first of worth.  
Dêmêtêr one is named; she is the Earth—  
Call her which name thou will!—who feeds man's frame  
With sustenance of things dry. And that which came  
Her work to perfect, second, is the Power  
From Semelê born. He found the liquid show  
Hid in the grape. He rests man's spirit dim  
From grieving, when the vine exalteth him.  
He giveth sleep to sink the fretful day  
In cool forgetting. Is there any way  
With man's sore heart, save only to forget?

Yea, being God, the blood of him is set  
Before the Gods in sacrifice, that we  
For his sake may be blest.—And so, to thee,  
That fable shames him, how this God was knit  
Into God's flesh? Nay, learn the truth of it  
Cleared from the false.—When from that deadly light  
Zeus saved the babe, and up to Olympus' height  
Raised him, and Hera's wrath would cast him thence  
Then Zeus devised him a divine defence.  
A fragment of the world-encircling fire  
He rent apart, and wrought to his desire  
Of shape and hue, in the image of the child,  
And gave to Hera's rage. And so, beguiled

By change and passing time, this tale was born,  
How the babe-god was hidden in the torn  
Flesh of his sire. He hath no shame thereby.

A prophet is he likewise. Prophecy  
Cleaves to all frenzy, but beyond all else  
To frenzy of prayer. Then in us verily dwells  
The God himself, and speaks the thing to be.  
Yea, and of Ares' realm a part hath he.  
When mortal armies, mailêd and arrayed,  
Have in strange fear, or ever blade met blade,  
Fled maddened, 'tis this God hath palsied them.  
Aye, over Delphi's rock-built diadem  
Thou yet shalt see him leaping with his train  
Of fire across the twin-peaked mountain-plain,  
Flaming the darkness with his mystic wand,  
And great in Hellas.—List and understand,  
King Pentheus! Dream not thou that force is power;  
Nor, if thou hast a thought, and that thought sour  
And sick, oh, dream not thought is wisdom!—Up,  
Receive this God to Thebes; pour forth the cup  
Of sacrifice, and pray, and wreath thy brow.

Thou fearest for the damsels? Think thee now;  
How toucheth this the part of Dionyse  
To hold maids pure perforce? In them it lies,  
And their own hearts; and in the wildest rite  
Cometh no stain to her whose heart is white.

Nay, mark me! Thou hast thy joy, when the Gate

Stands thronged, and Pentheus' name is lifted great  
And high by Thebes in clamour; shall not He  
Rejoice in his due meed of majesty?

Howbeit, this Cadmus whom thou scorn'st and I  
Will wear His crown, and tread His dances! Aye,  
Our hairs are white, yet shall that dance be trod!  
I will not lift mine arm to war with God  
For thee nor all thy words. Madness most fell  
Is on thee, madness wrought by some dread spell,  
But not by spell nor leechcraft to be cured!

**CHORUS.**

Grey prophet, worthy of Phoebus is thy word,  
And wise in honouring Bromios, our great God.

**CADMUS.**

My son, right well Teiresias points thy road.  
Oh, make thine habitation here with us,  
Not lonely, against men's uses. Hazardous  
Is this quick bird-like beating of thy thought  
Where no thought dwells.—Grant that this God be naught,  
Yet let that Naught be Somewhat in thy mouth;  
Lie boldly, and say He is! So north and south  
Shall marvel, how there sprang a thing divine  
From Semelê's flesh, and honour all our line.

[*Drawing nearer to PENTHEUS.*]

Is there not blood before thine eyes even now?  
Our lost Actaeon's blood, whom long ago  
His own red hounds through yonder forest dim  
Tore unto death, because he vaunted him  
Against most holy Artemis? Oh, beware  
And let me wreath thy temples. Make thy prayer  
With us, and walk thee humbly in God's sight.

[*He makes as if to set the wreath on PENTHEUS head.*]

**PENTHEUS.**

Down with that hand! Aroint thee to thy rite  
Nor smear on me thy foul contagion!

[*Turning upon TEIRESIAS.*]

This

Thy folly's head and prompter shall not miss  
The justice that he needs!—Go, half my guard  
Forth to the rock-seat where he dwells in ward  
O'er birds and wonders; rend the stone with crown  
And trident; make one wreck of high and low  
And toss his bands to all the winds of air!

Ha, have I found the way to sting thee, there?  
The rest, forth through the town! And seek amain  
This girl-faced stranger, that hath wrought such bane  
To all Thebes, preying on our maids and wives

Seek till ye find; and lead him here in gyves,  
Till he be judged and stoned and weep in blood  
The day he troubled Pentheus with his God!

*[The guards set forth in two bodies; PENTHEUS goes into the Castle.]*

**TEIRESIAS.**

Hard heart, how little dost thou know what seed  
Thou sowest! Blind before, and now indeed  
Most mad!—Come, Cadmus, let us go our way,  
And pray for this our persecutor, pray  
For this poor city, that the righteous God  
Move not in anger.—Take thine ivy rod  
And help my steps, as I help thine. ‘Twere ill,  
If two old men should fall by the roadway. Still,  
Come what come may, our service shall be done  
To Bacchios, the All-Father’s mystic son

O Pentheus, named of sorrow! Shall he claim  
From all thy house fulfilment of his name,  
Old Cadmus?—Nay, I speak not from mine art,  
But as I see—blind words and a blind heart!

*[The two Old Men go off towards the Mountain.]*

**CHORUS.**

**Some Maidens.**

Thou Immaculate on high;  
Thou Recording Purity;  
Thou that stoopest, Golden Wing,  
Earthward, manward, pitying,  
Hearest thou this angry King?  
Hearest thou the rage and scorn  
‘Gainst the Lord of Many Voices,  
Him of mortal mother born,  
Him in whom man’s heart rejoices,  
Girt with garlands and with glee,  
First in Heaven’s sovrantry?  
For his kingdom, it is there,  
In the dancing and the prayer,  
In the music and the laughter,  
In the vanishing of care,  
And of all before and after;  
In the Gods’ high banquet, when  
Gleams the graperflood, flashed to heaven;  
Yea, and in the feasts of men  
Comes his crownèd slumber; then  
Pain is dead and hate forgiven!

**Others.**

Loose thy lips from out the rein;

Lift thy wisdom to disdain;  
Whatso law thou canst not see,  
Scorning; so the end shall be  
Uttermost calamity!  
'Tis the life of quiet breath,  
'Tis the simple and the true,  
Storm nor earthquake shattereth,  
Nor shall aught the house undo

Where they dwell. For, far away,  
Hidden from the eyes of day,  
Watchers are there in the skies,  
That can see man's life, and prize  
Deeds well done by things of clay.  
But the world's Wise are not wise,  
Claiming more than mortal may.  
Life is such a little thing;  
Lo, their present is departed,  
And the dreams to which they cling  
Come not. Mad imagining  
Theirs, I ween, and empty-hearted!

**Divers Maidens.**

Where is the Home for me?  
O Cyprus, set in the sea,  
Aphrodite's home In the soft sea-foam,  
Would I could wend to thee;

Where the wings of the Loves are furled,  
And faint the heart of the world.

Aye, unto Paphos' isle,  
Where the rainless meadows smile  
With riches rolled From the hundred-fold  
Mouths of the far-off Nile,  
Streaming beneath the waves  
To the roots of the seaward caves.

But a better land is there  
Where Olympus cleaves the air,  
The high still dell Where the Muses dwell,  
Fairest of all things fair!  
O there is Grace, and there is the Heart's Desire,  
And peace to adore thee, thou Spirit of Guiding Fire!

\* \* \*

A God of Heaven is he,  
And born in majesty;  
Yet hath he mirth  
In the joy of the Earth,

And he loveth constantly  
Her who brings increase,  
The Feeder of Children, Peace.

No grudge hath he of the great;  
No scorn of the mean estate;  
But to all that liveth His wine he giveth,  
Griefless, immaculate;  
Only on them that spurn  
Joy, may his anger burn.

Love thou the Day and the Night;  
Be glad of the Dark and the Light;  
And avert thine eyes From the lore of the wise,  
That have honour in proud men's sight.  
The simple nameless herd of Humanity  
Hath deeds and faith that are truth enough for me!

*[As the Chorus ceases, a party of the guards return, leading in the midst of them DIONYSUS, bound. The SOLDIER in command stands forth, as PENTHEUS, hearing the tramp of feet, comes out from the Castle.]*

**SOLDIER.**

Our quest is finished, and thy prey, O King,  
Caught; for the chase was swift, and this wild thing  
Most tame; yet never flinched, nor thought to flee,  
But held both hands out unresistingly—  
No change, no blanching of the wine-red cheek.  
He waited while we came, and bade us wreak  
All thy decree; yea, laughed, and made my best

Easy, till I for very shame confessed  
And said: "O stranger, not of mine own will  
I bind thee, but his bidding to fulfil  
Who sent me."

And those prisoned Maids withal  
Whom thou didst seize and bind within the wall  
Of thy great dungeon, they are fled, O King.  
Free in the woods, a-dance and glorying  
To Bromios. Of their own impulse fell  
To earth, men say, fetter and manacle,  
And bars slid back untouched of mortal hand  
Yea, full of many wonders to thy land  
Is this man come. ... Howbeit, it lies with thee!

**PENTHEUS.**

Ye are mad!—Unhand him. Howso swift he be,  
My toils are round him and he shall not fly.

*[The guards loose the arms of DIONYSUS; PENTHEUS studies him for a while in silence then speaks jeeringly. DIONYSUS remains gentle and unafraid.]*

Marry, a fair shape for a woman's eye,  
Sir stranger! And thou seek'st no more, I ween!  
Long curls, withal! That shows thou ne'er hast been  
A wrestler!—down both cheeks so softly tossed

And winsome! And a white skin! It hath cost  
Thee pains, to please thy damsels with this white  
And red of cheeks that never face the light!

[DIONYSUS *is silent.*]

Speak, sirrah; tell me first thy name and race.

**DIONYSUS.**

No glory is therein, nor yet disgrace.  
Thou hast heard of Tmolus, the bright hill of flowers?

**PENTHEUS.**

Surely, the ridge that winds by Sardis towers.

**DIONYSUS.**

Thence am I; Lydia was my fatherland.

**PENTHEUS.**

And whence these revelations, that thy band  
Spreadeth in Hellas?

**DIONYSUS.**

    Their intent and use  
Dionysus oped to me, the Child of Zeus.

**PENTHEUS** (*brutally*).

Is there a Zeus there, that can still beget  
Young Gods?

**DIONYSUS.**

    Nay, only He whose seal was set  
Here in thy Thebes on Semele.

**PENTHEUS.**

    What way  
Descended he upon thee? In full day  
Or vision of night?

**DIONYSUS.**

    Most clear he stood, and scanned  
My soul, and gave his emblems to mine hand.

**PENTHEUS.**

What like be they, these emblems?

**DIONYSUS.**

    That may none  
Reveal, nor know, save his Elect alone.

**PENTHEUS.**

And what good bring they to the worshipper?



**DIONYSUS.**

Good beyond price, but not for thee to hear.

**PENTHEUS.**

Thou trickster? Thou wouldst prick me on the more  
To seek them out!

**DIONYSUS.**

His mysteries abhor  
The touch of sin-lovers.

**PENTHEUS.**

And so thine eyes  
Saw this God plain; what guise had he?

**DIONYSUS.**

What guise  
It liked him. 'Twas not I ordained his shape.

**PENTHEUS.**

Aye, deftly turned again. An idle jape,  
And nothing answered!

**DIONYSUS.**

Wise words being brought  
To blinded eyes will seem as things of nought.

**PENTHEUS.**

And comest thou first to Thebes, to have thy God  
Established?

**DIONYSUS.**

Nay; all Barbary hath trod  
His dance ere this.

**PENTHEUS.**

A low blind folk, I ween,  
Beside our Hellenes!

**DIONYSUS.**

Higher and more keen  
In this thing, though their ways are not thy way.

**PENTHEUS.**

How is thy worship held, by night or day?

**DIONYSUS.**

Most oft by night; 'tis a majestic thing,  
The darkness.

**PENTHEUS.**

Ha! with women worshipping?  
'Tis craft and rottenness!

**DIONYSUS.**

By day no less,  
Whoso will seek may find unholiness—

**PENTHEUS.**

Enough! Thy doom is fixed, for false pretence  
Corrupting Thebes.

**DIONYSUS.**

Not mine; but thine, for dense  
Blindness of heart, and for blaspheming God!

**PENTHEUS.**

A ready knave it is, and brazen-browed,  
This mystery-priest!

**DIONYSUS.**

Come, say what it shall be,  
My doom; what dire thing wilt thou do to me?

**PENTHEUS.**

First, shear that delicate curl that dangles there.

*[He beckons to the soldiers, who approach DIONYSUS.]*

**DIONYSUS.**

I have vowed it to my God; 'tis holy hair.

*[The soldiers cut off the tress.]*

**PENTHEUS.**

Next, yield me up thy staff!

**DIONYSUS.**

Raise thine own hand  
To take it. This is Dionysus' wand.

*[PENTHEUS takes the staff.]*

**PENTHEUS.**

Last, I will hold thee prisoned here.

**DIONYSUS.**

My Lord  
God will unloose me, when I speak the word.

**PENTHEUS.**

He may, if e'er again amid his bands  
Of saints he hears thy voice!

**DIONYSUS.**

Even now he stands  
Close here, and sees all that I suffer.

**PENTHEUS.**

What?  
Where is he? For mine eyes discern him not.

**DIONYSUS.**

Where I am! 'Tis thine own impurity  
That veils him from thee.

**PENTHEUS.**

The dog jeers at me!  
At me and Thebes! Bind him!

*[The soldiers begin to bind him.]*

**DIONYSUS.**

I charge ye, bind  
Me not! I having vision and ye blind!

**PENTHEUS.**

And I, with better right, say bind the more!

*[The soldiers obey.]*

**DIONYSUS.**

Thou knowest not what end thou seekest, nor  
What deed thou doest, nor what man thou art!

**PENTHEUS** (*mocking*).

Agâvê's son, and on the father's part  
Echion's, hight Pentheus!

**DIONYSUS.**

So let it be,  
A name fore-written to calamity!

**PENTHEUS.**

Away, and tie him where the steeds are tied;  
Aye, let him lie in the manger!—There abide  
And stare into the darkness!—And this rout  
Of womankind that clusters thee about,  
Thy ministers of worship, are my slaves!  
It may be I will sell them o'er the waves,  
Hither and thither; else they shall be set  
To labour at my distaffs, and forget  
Their timbrel and their songs of dawning day!

**DIONYSUS.**

I go; for that which may not be, I may  
Not suffer! Yet for this thy sin, lo, He  
Whom thou deniest cometh after thee  
For recompense. Yea, in thy wrong to us,  
Thou hast cast Him into thy prison-house!

**[DIONYSUS, without his wand, his hair shorn, and his**

*arms tightly bound, is led off by the guards to his dungeon. PENTHEUS returns into the Palace.]*

**CHORUS.**

**Some Maidens.**

Achelous' roaming daughter,  
Holy Dircê, virgin water,  
Bathed he not of old in thee,  
The Babe of God, the Mystery?  
When from out the fire immortal  
To himself his God did take him,  
To his own flesh, and bespake him:  
"Enter now life's second portal,  
Motherless Mystery; lo, I break  
Mine own body for thy sake,  
Thou of the Twofold Door, and seal thee  
Mine, O Bromios,"—thus he spake—  
"And to this thy land reveal thee."

**All.**

Still my prayer toward thee quivers,  
Dircê, still to thee I hie me;  
Why, O Blessed among Rivers,  
Wilt thou fly me and deny me?  
By His own joy I vow,  
By the grape upon the bough,

Thou shalt seek Him in the midnight, thou shalt love  
Him, even now!

**Other Maidens.**

Dark and of the dark impassioned  
Is this Pentheus' blood; yea, fashioned  
Of the Dragon, and his birth  
From Echion, child of Earth.  
He is no man, but a wonder;  
Did the Earth-Child not beget him,  
As a red Giant, to set him  
Against God, against the Thunder?  
He will bind me for his prize,  
Me, the Bride of Dionyse;  
And my priest, my friend, is taken  
Even now, and buried lies;  
In the dark he lies forsaken!

**All.**

Lo, we race with death, we perish,  
Dionysus, here before thee!  
Dost thou mark us not, nor cherish,  
Who implore thee, and adore thee?  
Hither down Olympus' side,  
Come, O Holy One defied,  
Be thy golden wand uplifted o'er the tyrant in his pride!

**A Maiden.**

Oh, where art thou? In thine own  
Nysa, thou our help alone?  
O'er fierce beasts in orient lands  
    Doth thy thronging thyrsus wave,  
    By the high Corycian Cave,  
Or where stern Olympus stands;  
In the elm-woods and the oaken,  
    There where Orpheus harped of old,  
    And the trees awoke and knew him,  
    And the wild things gathered to him,  
As he sang amid the broken  
    Glens his music manifold?  
Dionysus loveth thee;  
Blessed Land of Piërie,  
    He will come to thee with dancing,  
Come with joy and mystery;  
With the Maenads at his hest  
Winding, winding to the West;  
    Cross the flood of swiftly glancing  
Axios in majesty;  
Cross the Lydias, the giver  
    Of good gifts and waving green;  
Cross that Father-Stream of story,  
Through a land of steeds and glory  
Rolling, bravest, fairest River  
E'er of mortals seen!

**A VOICE WITHIN.**

  Io! Io!  
Awake, ye damsels; hear my cry,  
    Calling my Chosen; hearken ye!

**A MAIDEN.**

Who speaketh? Oh, what echoes thus?

**ANOTHER.**

A Voice, a Voice, that calleth us!

**THE VOICE.**

Be of good cheer! Lo, it is I,  
    The Child of Zeus and Semelè.

**A MAIDEN.**

O Master, Master, it is Thou!

**ANOTHER.**

O Holy Voice, be with us now!

**THE VOICE.**

Spirit of the Chained Earthquake,  
Hear my word; awake, awake!

*[An Earthquake suddenly shakes the pillars of the Castle.]*

**A MAIDEN.**

Ha! what is coming? Shall the hall  
Of Pentheus racked in ruin fall?

**LEADER.**

Our God is in the house! Ye maids adore Him!

**CHORUS.**

We adore Him all!

**THE VOICE.**

Unveil the Lightning's eye; arouse  
The fire that sleeps, against this house!

*[Fire leaps upon the Tomb of Semelê.]*

**A MAIDEN.**

Ah, saw ye, marked ye there the flame  
From Semelê's enhallowed sod  
Awakened? Yea, the Death that came  
Ablaze from heaven of old, the same  
Hot splendour of the shaft of God?

**LEADER.**

Oh cast ye, cast ye, to the earth! The Lord  
Cometh against this house! Oh, cast ye down,  
Ye trembling damsels; He, our own adored,

God's Child hath come, and all is overthrown!

*[The Maidens cast themselves upon the ground, their eyes earthward. DIONYSUS, alone and unbound, enters from the Castle.]*

**DIONYSUS.**

Ye Damsels of the Morning Hills, why lie ye thus dismayed?  
Ye marked him, then, our Master, and the mighty hand  
he laid  
On tower and rock, shaking the house of Pentheus?—  
But arise,  
And cast the trembling from your flesh, and lift untroubled  
eyes.

**LEADER.**

O Light in Darkness, is it thou? O Priest, is this thy face?  
My heart leaps out to greet thee from the deep of loneliness.

**DIONYSUS.**

Fell ye so quick despairing, when beneath the Gate I passed?  
Should the gates of Pentheus quell me, or his darkness make  
me fast?

**LEADER.**

Oh, what was left if thou wert gone? What could I but despair?  
How hast thou 'scaped the man of sin? Who freed thee

from the snare?

**DIONYSUS.**

I had no pain nor peril; 'twas mine own hand set me free.

**LEADER.**

Thine arms were gyvèd!

**DIONYSUS.**

Nay, no gyve, no touch, was laid on me!

'Twas there I mocked him, in his gyves, and gave him dreams for food.

For when he laid me down, behold, before the stall there stood

A Bull of Offering. And this King, he bit his lips and straight Fell on and bound it, hoof and limb, with gasping wrath and sweat.

And I sat watching!—Then a Voice; and lo, our Lord was come,

And the house shook, and a great flame stood o'er his mother's tomb.

And Pentheus hied this way and that, and called his thralls amain

For water, lest his roof-tree burn; and all toiled, all in vain. Then deemed a-sudden I was gone; and left his fire, and sped Back to the prison portals, and his lifted sword shone red.

But there, methinks, the God had wrought—I speak but as I guess—

Some dream-shape in mine image; for he smote at emptiness, Stabbed in the air, and strove in wrath, as though 'twere me he slew.

Then 'mid his dreams God smote him yet again! He overthrew All that high house. And there in wreck for evermore it lies, That the day of this my bondage may be sore in Pentheus' eyes!

And now his sword is fallen, and he lies outworn and wan Who dared to rise against his God in wrath, being but man. And I uprose and left him, and in all peace took my path Force to my Chosen, recking light of Pentheus and his wrath.

But soft, methinks a footstep sounds even now within the hall;

'Tis he; how think ye he will stand, and what words speak withal?

I will endure him gently, though he come in fury hot. For still are the ways of Wisdom, and her temper trembleth not!

[*Enter PENTHEUS in fury*]

**PENTHEUS.**

It is too much! This Eastern knave hath slipped His prison, whom I held but now, hard gripped In bondage.—Ha! 'Tis he!—What, sirrah, how

Show'st thou before my portals?

*[He advances furiously upon him.]*

**DIONYSUS.**

And set a quiet carriage to thy rage.

**PENTHEUS.**

How comest thou here? How didst thou break thy cage?  
Speak!

**DIONYSUS.**

Said I not, or didst thou mark not me,  
There was One living that should set me free?

**PENTHEUS.**

Who? Ever wilder are these tales of thine.

**DIONYSUS.**

He who first made for man the clustered vine.

**PENTHEUS.**

I scorn him and his vines.

**DIONYSUS.**

For Dionyse  
'Tis well; for in thy scorn his glory lies.

**PENTHEUS** *(to his guard)*.

Go swift to all the towers, and bar withal  
Each gate!

**DIONYSUS.**

What, cannot God o'erleap a wall?

**PENTHEUS.**

Oh, wit thou hast, save where thou needest it!

**DIONYSUS.**

Whereso it most imports, there is my wit!—  
Nay, peace! Abide till he who hasteth from  
The mountain side with news for thee, be come.  
We will not fly, but wait on thy command.

*[Enter suddenly and in haste a Messenger from the Mountain.]*

**MESSENGER.**

Great Pentheus, Lord of all this Theban land,  
I come from high Kithaeron, where the frore  
Snow spangles gleam and cease not evermore. ...

**PENTHEUS.**

And what of import may thy coming bring?



**MESSENGER.**

I have seen the Wild White Women there, O King,  
Whose fleet limbs darted arrow-like but now  
From Thebes away, and come to tell thee how  
They work strange deeds and passing marvel. Yet  
I first would learn thy pleasure. Shall I set  
My whole tale forth, or veil the stranger part?  
Yea Lord, I fear the swiftness of thy heart,  
Thine edgèd wrath and more than royal soul.

**PENTHEUS.**

Thy tale shall nothing scathe thee.—Tell the whole.  
It skills not to be wroth with honesty.  
Nay, if thy news of them be dark, 'tis he  
Shall pay it, who bewitched and led them on.

**MESSENGER.**

Our herded kine were moving in the dawn  
Up to the peaks, the greyest, coldest time,  
When the first rays steal earthward, and the rime  
Yields, when I saw three bands of them. The one  
Autonoë led, one Ino, one thine own  
Mother, Agâvê. There beneath the trees  
Sleeping they lay, like wild things flung at ease  
In the forest; one half sinking on a bed  
Of deep pine greenery; one with careless head  
Amid the fallen oak leaves; all most cold

In purity—not as thy tale was told  
Of wine-cups and wild music and the chase  
For love amid the forest's loneliness.  
Then rose the Queen Agâvê suddenly  
Amid her band, and gave the God's wild cry,  
“Awake, ye Bacchanals! I hear the sound  
Of hornèd kine. Awake ye!”—Then, all round,  
Alert, the warm sleep fallen from their eyes,  
A marvel of swift ranks I saw them rise,  
Dames young and old, and gentle maids unwed  
Among them. O'er their shoulders first they shed  
Their tresses, and caught up the fallen fold  
Of mantles where some clasp had loosened hold,  
And girt the dappled fawn-skins in with long  
Quick snakes that hissed and writhed with quivering tongue.  
And one a young fawn held, and one a wild  
Wolf cub, and fed them with white milk, and smiled  
In love, young mothers with a mother's breast  
And babes at home forgotten! Then they pressed  
Wreathed ivy round their brows, and oaken sprays  
And flowering bryony. And one would raise  
Her wand and smite the rock, and straight a jet  
Of quick bright water came. Another set  
Her thyrsus in the bosomed earth, and there  
Was red wine that the God sent up to her,  
A darkling fountain. And if any lips  
Sought whiter draughts, with dipping finger-tips

They pressed the sod, and gushing from the ground  
Came springs of milk. And reed-wands ivy-crowned  
Ran with sweet honey, drop by drop.—O King,  
Hadst thou been there, as I, and seen this thing,  
With prayer and most high wonder hadst thou gone  
To adore this God whom now thou rail'st upon!

Howbeit, the kine-wardens and shepherds straight  
Came to one place, amazed, and held debate;  
And one being there who walked the streets and scanned  
The ways of speech, took lead of them whose hand  
Knew but the slow soil and the solemn hill,  
And flattering spoke, and asked: "Is it your will,  
Masters, we stay the mother of the King,  
Agâvê, from her lawless worshipping,  
And win us royal thanks?"—And this seemed good  
To all; and through the branching underwood  
We hid us, cowering in the leaves. And there  
Through the appointed hour they made their prayer  
And worship of the Wand, with one accord  
Of heart and cry—"Iacchos, Bromios, Lord,  
God of God born!"—And all the mountain felt,  
And worshipped with them; and the wild things knelt  
And ramped and gloried, and the wilderness  
Was filled with moving voices and dim stress.

Soon, as it chanced, beside my thicket-close  
The Queen herself passed dancing, and I rose  
And sprang to seize her. But she turned her face

Upon me: "Ho, my rovers of the chase,  
My wild White Hounds, we are hunted! Up, each rod  
And follow, follow, for our Lord and God!"  
Thereat, for fear they tear us, all we fled  
Amazed; and on, with hand unweaponèd  
They swept toward our herds that browsed the green  
Hill grass. Great uddered kine then hadst thou seen  
Bellowing in sword-like hands that cleave and tear,  
A live steer riven asunder, and the air  
Tossed with rent ribs or limbs of cloven tread,  
And flesh upon the branches, and a red  
Rain from the deep green pines. Yea, bulls of pride,  
Horns swift to rage, were fronted and aside  
Flung stumbling, by those multitudinous hands  
Dragged pitilessly. And swifter were the bands  
Of garbèd flesh and bone unbound withal  
Than on thy royal eyes the lids may fall.

Then on like birds, by their own speed upborne,  
They swept toward the plains of waving corn  
That lie beside Asopus' banks, and bring  
To Thebes the rich fruit of her harvesting.  
On Hysiae and Erythrae that lie nursed  
Amid Kithaeron's bowering rocks, they burst  
Destroying, as a foeman's army comes.  
They caught up little children from their homes,  
High on their shoulders, babes unheld, that swayed  
And laughed and fell not; all a wreck they made;

Yea, bronze and iron did shatter, and in play  
Struck hither and thither, yet no wound had they;  
Caught fire from out the hearths, yea, carried hot  
Flames in their tresses and were scorched not!

The village folk in wrath took spear and sword,  
And turned upon the Bacchae. Then, dread Lord,  
The wonder was. For spear nor barbèd brand  
Could scathe nor touch the damsels; but the Wand,  
The soft and wreathèd wand their white hands sped,  
Blasted those men and quelled them, and they fled  
Dizzily. Sure some God was in these things!

And the holy women back to those strange springs  
Returned, that God had sent them when the day  
Dawned, on the upper heights; and washed away  
The stain of battle. And those girdling snakes  
Hissed out to lap the waterdrops from cheeks  
And hair and breast.

Therefore I counsel thee  
O King, receive this Spirit, whoe'er he be,  
To Thebes in glory. Greatness manifold  
Is all about him; and the tale is told  
That this is he who first to man did give  
The grief-assuaging vine. Oh, let him live;  
For if he die, then Love herself is slain,  
And nothing joyous in the world again!

**LEADER.**

Albeit I tremble, and scarce may speak my thought  
To a king's face, yet will I hide it not.  
Dionyse is God, no God more true nor higher!

**PENTHEUS.**

It bursts hard by us, like a smothered fire,  
This frenzy of Bacchic women! All my land  
Is made their mock.—This needs an iron hand!

Ho, Captain! Quick to the Electran Gate;  
Bid gather all my men-at-arms thereat;  
Call all that spur the charger, all who know  
To wield the orbèd targe or bend the bow;  
We march to war—'Fore God, shall women dare  
Such deeds against us? 'Tis too much to bear!

**DIONYSUS.**

Thou mark'st me not, O King, and holdest light  
My solemn words; yet, in thine own despite,  
I warn thee still. Lift thou not up thy spear  
Against a God, but hold thy peace, and fear  
His wrath! He will not brook it, if thou fright  
His Chosen from the hills of their delight.

**PENTHEUS.**

Peace, thou! And if for once thou hast slipped chain,  
Give thanks!—Or shall I knot thine arms again?

**DIONYSUS.**

Better to yield him prayer and sacrifice  
Than kick against the pricks, since Dionyse  
Is God, and thou but mortal.

**PENTHEUS.**

That will I!  
Yea, sacrifice of women's blood, to cry  
His name through all Kithaeron!

**DIONYSUS.**

Ye shall fly,  
All, and abase your shields of bronzen rim  
Before their wands.

**PENTHEUS.**

There is no way with him,  
This stranger that so dogs us! Well or ill  
I may entreat him, he must babble still!

**DIONYSUS.**

Wait, good my friend! These crooked matters may  
Even yet be straightened.

[**PENTHEUS** *has started as though to seek his army at  
the gate.*]

**PENTHEUS.**

Aye, if I obey  
Mine own slaves' will; how else?

**DIONYSUS.**

Myself will lead  
The damsels hither, without sword or steed.

**PENTHEUS.**

How now?—This is some plot against me!

**DIONYSUS.**

What  
Dost fear? Only to save thee do I plot.

**PENTHEUS.**

It is some compact ye have made, whereby  
To dance these hills for ever!

**DIONYSUS.**

Verily,  
That is my compact, plighted with my Lord!

**PENTHEUS** (*turning from him*).

Ho, armourers! Bring forth my shield and sword!—  
And thou, be silent!

**DIONYSUS** (*after regarding him fixedly, speaks with resignation*).

Ah!—Have then thy will!

[*He fixes his eyes upon PENTHEUS again, while the armourers bring out his armour; then speaks in a tone of command.*]

Man, thou wouldst fain behold them on the hill  
Praying!

**PENTHEUS** (*who during the rest of this scene, with a few exceptions, simply speaks the thoughts that DIONYSUS puts into him, losing power over his own mind*).

That would I, though it cost me all  
The gold of Thebes!

**DIONYSUS.**

So much? Thou art quick to fall  
To such great longing.

**PENTHEUS** (*somewhat bewildered at what he has said*).

Aye; 'twould grieve me much  
To see them flown with wine.

**DIONYSUS.**

Yet cravest thou such  
A sight as would much grieve thee?

**PENTHEUS.**

Yes; I fain  
Would watch, ambushed among the pines.

**DIONYSUS.**

'Twere vain  
To hide. They soon will track thee out.

**PENTHEUS.**

Well said!  
'Twere best done openly.

**DIONYSUS.**

Wilt thou be led  
By me, and try the venture?

**PENTHEUS.**

Aye, indeed!  
Lead on. Why should we tarry?

**DIONYSUS.**

First we need  
A rich and trailing robe of fine-linen

To gird thee.

**PENTHEUS.**

Nay; am I a woman, then,  
And no man more.

**DIONYSUS.**

Wouldst have them slay thee dead?  
No man may see their mysteries.

**PENTHEUS.**

Well said'—  
I marked thy subtle temper long ere now.

**DIONYSUS.**

'Tis Dionyse that prompteth me.

**PENTHEUS.**

And how  
Mean'st thou the further plan?

**DIONYSUS.**

First take thy way  
Within. I will array thee.

**PENTHEUS.**

What array!

The woman's? Nay, I will not.

**DIONYSUS.**

Doth it change  
So soon, all thy desire to see this strange  
Adoring?

**PENTHEUS.**

Wait! What garb wilt thou bestow  
About me?

**DIONYSUS.**

First a long tress dangling low  
Beneath thy shoulders.

**PENTHEUS.**

Aye, and next?

**DIONYSUS.**

The same red  
Robe, falling to thy feet; and on thine head  
A snood.

**PENTHEUS.**

And after? Hast thou aught beyond?

**DIONYSUS.**

Surely; the dappled fawn-skin and the wand.

**PENTHEUS** (*after a struggle with himself*).

Enough! I cannot wear a robe and snood.

**DIONYSUS.**

Wouldst liefer draw the sword and spill men's blood?

**PENTHEUS** (*again doubting*).

True, that were evil.—Aye; 'tis best to go  
First to some place of watch.

**DIONYSUS.**

Far wiser so,  
Than seek by wrath wrath's bitter recompense.

**PENTHEUS.**

What of the city streets? Canst lead me hence  
Unseen of any?

**DIONYSUS.**

Lonely and untried  
Thy path from hence shall be, and I thy guide!

**PENTHEUS.**

I care for nothing, so these Bacchanals

Triumph not against me! ...Forward to my halls  
Within!—I will ordain what seemeth best.

**DIONYSUS.**

So be it, O King! 'Tis mine to obey thine hest,  
Whate'er it be.

**PENTHEUS** (*after hesitating once more and waiting*).

Well, I will go—perchance  
To march and scatter them with serried lance.  
Perchance to take thy plan. ... I know not yet.

[*Exit PENTHEUS into the Castle.*]

**DIONYSUS.**

Damsels, the lion walketh to the net!  
He finds his Bacchae now, and sees and dies,  
And pays for all his sin!—O Dionyse,  
This is thine hour and thou not far away.  
Grant us our vengeance!—First, O Master, stay  
The course of reason in him, and instil  
A foam of madness. Let his seeing will,  
Which ne'er had stooped to put thy vesture on,  
Be darkened, till the deed is lightly done.  
Grant likewise that he find through all his streets  
Loud scorn, this man of wrath and bitter threats  
That made Thebes tremble, led in woman's guise.

I go to fold that robe of sacrifice  
On Pentheus, that shall deck him to the dark.  
His mother's gift!—So shall he learn and mark  
God's true Son, Dionyse, in fulness God,  
Most fearful, yet to man most soft of mood.

[Exit **DIONYSUS**, following **PENTHEUS** into Castle.]

**CHORUS.**

**Some Maidens.**

Will they ever come to me, ever again,  
The long long dances,  
On through the dark till the dim stars wane?  
Shall I feel the dew on my throat, and the stream  
Of wind in my hair? Shall our white feet gleam  
In the dim expanses?  
Oh, feet of a fawn to the greenwood fled,  
Alone in the grass and the loveliness;  
  
Leap of the hunted, no more in dread,  
Beyond the snares and the deadly press:  
Yet a voice still in the distance sounds,  
A voice and a fear and a haste of hounds;  
O wildly labouring, fiercely fleet,  
Onward yet by river and glen ...  
Is it joy or terror, ye storm-swift feet? ...

To the dear lone lands untroubled of men,  
Where no voice sounds, and amid the shadowy green  
The little things of the woodland live unseen.

What else is Wisdom? What of man's endeavour  
Or God's high grace, so lovely and so great?  
To stand from fear set free, to breathe and wait;  
To hold a hand uplifted over Hate;  
And shall not Loveliness be loved for ever?

**Others.**

O Strength of God, slow art thou and still,  
Yet fairest never!  
On them that worship the Ruthless Will,  
On them that dream, doth His judgment wait.  
Dreams of the proud man, making great  
And greater ever,  
Things which are not of God. In wide  
And devious coverts, hunter-wise,  
He coucheth Time's unhasting stride,  
Following, following, him whose eyes  
Look not to Heaven. For all is vain,  
The pulse of the heart, the plot of the brain,  
That striveth beyond the laws that live.  
And is thy Fate so much to give,  
Is it so hard a thing to see,  
That the Spirit of God, whate'er it be,



*The Bacchae of Euripides*

The Law that abides and changes not, ages long,  
The Eternal and Nature-born—these things be strong?

What else is Wisdom? What of man's endeavour  
Or God's high grace so lovely and so great?  
To stand from fear set free, to breathe and wait;  
To hold a hand uplifted over Hate;  
And shall not Loveliness be loved for ever?

**LEADER.**

Happy he, on the weary sea  
Who hath fled the tempest and won the haven.  
Happy whoso hath risen, free,  
Above his striving. For strangely graven  
Is the orb of life, that one and another  
In gold and power may outpass his brother,  
And men in their millions float and flow  
And seethe with a million hopes as leaven;  
And they win their Will, or they miss their Will,  
And the hopes are dead or are pined for still,  
But whoe'er can know,  
As the long days go,  
That To Live is happy, hath found his Heaven!

[*Re-enter DIONYSUS, from the Castle*]

**DIONYSUS.**

O eye that cravest sights thou must not see,  
O heart athirst for that which slakes not! Thee,  
Pentheus, I call; forth and be seen, in guise  
Of woman, Maenad, saint of Dionyse,  
To spy upon His Chosen and thine own  
Mother!

[*Enter PENTHEUS, clad like a Bacchanal, and strangely excited, a spirit of Bacchic madness overshadowing him.*]

Thy shape, methinks, is like to one  
Of Cadmus' royal maids!

**PENTHEUS.**

Yea; and mine eye  
Is bright! Yon sun shines twofold in the sky,  
Thebes twofold and the Wall of Seven Gates. ...  
And is it a Wild Bull this, that walks and waits  
Before me? There are horns upon thy brow!  
What art thou, man or beast! For surely now  
The Bull is on thee!

**DIONYSUS.**

He who erst was wrath,  
Goes with us now in gentleness. He hath  
Unsealed thine eyes to see what thou shouldst see.

**PENTHEUS.**

Say; stand I not as Ino stands, or she  
Who bore me?

**DIONYSUS.**

When I look on thee, it seems  
I see their very selves!—But stay; why streams  
That lock abroad, not where I laid it, crossed  
Under the coif?

**PENTHEUS.**

I did it, as I tossed  
My head in dancing, to and fro, and cried  
His holy music!

**DIONYSUS** (*tending him*).

It shall soon be tied  
Aright. 'Tis mine to tend thee. ... Nay, but stand  
With head straight.

**PENTHEUS.**

In the hollow of thine hand  
I lay me. Deck me as thou wilt.

**DIONYSUS.**

Thy zone  
Is loosened likewise; and the folded gown

Not evenly falling to the feet.

**PENTHEUS.**

'Tis so,  
By the right foot. But here methinks, they flow  
In one straight line to the heel.

**DIONYSUS** (*while tending him*).

And if thou prove  
Their madness true, aye, more than true, what love  
And thanks hast thou for me?

**PENTHEUS** (*not listening to him*).

In my right hand  
Is it, or thus, that I should bear the wand  
To be most like to them?

**DIONYSUS.**

Up let it swing  
In the right hand, timed with the right foot's spring. ...  
'Tis well thy heart is changed!

**PENTHEUS** (*more wildly*).

What strength is this!  
Kithaeron's steeps and all that in them is—  
How say'st thou?—Could my shoulders lift the whole?

**DIONYSUS.**

Surely thou canst, and if thou wilt! Thy soul,  
Being once so sick, now stands as it should stand.

**PENTHEUS.**

Shall it be bars of iron? Or this bare hand  
And shoulder to the crags, to wrench them down?

**DIONYSUS.**

Wouldst wreck the Nymphs' wild temples, and the brown  
Rocks, where Pan pipes at noonday?

**PENTHEUS.**

Nay; not I!

Force is not well with women. I will lie  
Hid in the pine-brake.

**DIONYSUS.**

Even as fits a spy  
On holy and fearful things, so shalt thou lie!

**PENTHEUS** (*with a laugh*).

They lie there now, methinks—the wild birds, caught  
By love among the leaves, and fluttering not!

**DIONYSUS.**

It may be. That is what thou goest to see,

Aye, and to trap them—so they trap not thee!

**PENTHEUS.**

Forth through the Thebans' town! I am their king,  
Aye, their one Man, seeing I dare this thing!

**DIONYSUS.**

Yea, thou shalt bear their burden, thou alone;  
Therefore thy trial awaiteth thee!—But on;  
With me into thine ambush shalt thou come  
Unscathed; then let another bear thee home!

**PENTHEUS.**

The Queen, my mother.

**DIONYSUS.**

Marked of every eye.

**PENTHEUS.**

For that I go!

**DIONYSUS.**

Thou shalt be borne on high!

**PENTHEUS.**

That were like pride!

**DIONYSUS.**

Thy mother's hands shall share  
Thy carrying.

**PENTHEUS.**

Nay; I need not such soft care!

**DIONYSUS.**

So soft?

**PENTHEUS.**

Whate'er it be, I have earned it well!

[*Exit PENTHEUS towards the Mountain.*]

**DIONYSUS.**

Fell, fell art thou; and to a doom so fell  
Thou walkest, that thy name from South to North  
Shall shine, a sign for ever!—Reach thou forth  
Thine arms, Agâvê, now, and ye dark-browed  
Cadmeian sisters! Greet this prince so proud  
To the high ordeal, where save God and me,  
None walks unscathed!—The rest this day shall see.

[*Exit DIONYSUS following PENTHEUS.*]

**CHORUS.**

**Some Maidens.**

O hounds raging and blind,  
Up by the mountain road,  
Sprites of the maddened mind,  
To the wild Maids of God;  
Fill with your rage their eyes,  
Rage at the rage unblest,  
Watching in woman's guise,  
The spy upon God's Possessed.

**A Bacchanal.**

Who shall be first, to mark  
Eyes in the rock that spy,  
Eyes in the pine-tree dark—  
Is it his mother?—and cry:  
“Lo, what is this that comes,  
Haunting, troubling still,  
Even in our heights, our homes,  
The wild Maids of the Hill?  
What flesh bare this child?  
Never on woman's breast  
Changeling so evil smiled;  
Man is he not, but Beast!  
Loin-shape of the wild,  
Gorgon-breed of the waste!”

**All the Chorus.**

Hither, for doom and deed!  
Hither with lifted sword,  
Justice, Wrath of the Lord,  
Come in our visible need!  
Smite till the throat shall bleed,  
Smite till the heart shall bleed,  
Him the tyrannous, lawless, Godless, Echion's earthborn  
seed!

**Other Maidens.**

Tyrannously hath he trod;  
Marched him, in Law's despite,  
Against thy Light, O God,  
Yea, and thy Mother's Light;  
Girded him, falsely bold,  
Blinded in craft, to quell  
And by man's violence hold,  
Things unconquerable

**A Bacchanal.**

A strait pitiless mind  
Is death unto godliness;  
And to feel in human kind  
Life, and a pain the less.  
Knowledge, we are not foes!  
I seek thee diligently;

But the world with a great wind blows,  
Shining, and not from thee;  
Blowing to beautiful things,  
On, amid dark and light,  
Till Life, through the trammellings  
Of Laws that are not the Right,  
Breaks, clean and pure, and sings  
Glorying to God in the height!

**All the Chorus.**

Hither for doom and deed!  
Hither with lifted sword,  
Justice, Wrath of the Lord,  
Come in our visible need!  
Smite till the throat shall bleed,  
Smite till the heart shall bleed,  
Him the tyrannous, lawless, Godless, Echion's earthborn  
seed!

**LEADER.**

Appear, appear, whatso thy shape or name  
O Mountain Bull, Snake of the Hundred Heads,  
Lion of Burning Flame!  
O God, Beast, Mystery, come! Thy mystic maids  
Are hunted!—Blast their hunter with thy breath,  
Cast o'er his head thy snare;  
And laugh aloud and drag him to his death,

Who stalks thy herded madness in its lair!

[*Enter hastily a MESSENGER from the Mountain, pale and distraught.*]

**ESSENGER.**

Woe to the house once blest in Hellas! Woe  
To thee, old King Sidonian, who didst sow  
The dragon-seed on Ares' bloody lea!  
Alas, even thy slaves must weep for thee!

**LEADER.**

News from the mountain?—Speak! How hath it sped?

**MESSENGER.**

Pentheus, my king, Echion's son, is dead!

**LEADER.**

All hail, God of the Voice,  
Manifest ever more!

**MESSENGER.**

What say'st thou?—And how strange thy tone, as though  
In joy at this my master's overthrow!

**LEADER.**

With fierce joy I rejoice,

Child of a savage shore;  
For the chains of my prison are broken, and the dread  
where I cowered of yore!

**MESSENGER.**

And deem'st thou Thebes so beggared, so forlorn  
Of manhood, as to sit beneath thy scorn?

**LEADER.**

Thebes hath o'er me no sway!  
None save Him I obey,  
Dionysus, Child of the Highest, Him I obey and adore!

**MESSENGER.**

One can forgive thee!—Yet 'tis no fair thing,  
Maids, to rejoice in a man's suffering.

**LEADER.**

Speak of the mountain side!  
Tell us the doom he died,  
The sinner smitten to death, even where his sin was sore!

**MESSENGER.**

We climbed beyond the utmost habitings  
Of Theban shepherds, passed Asopus' springs,  
And struck into the land of rock on dim  
Kithaeron—Pentheus, and, attending him,

I, and the Stranger who should guide our way,  
Then first in a green dell we stopped, and lay,  
Lips dumb and feet unmoving, warily  
Watching, to be unseen and yet to see.

A narrow glen it was, by crags o'ertowered,  
Torn through by tossing waters, and there lowered  
A shadow of great pines over it. And there  
The Maenad maidens sate; in toil they were,  
Busily glad. Some with an ivy chain  
Tricked a worn wand to toss its locks again;  
Some, wild in joyance, like young steeds set free,  
Made answering songs of mystic melody.

But my poor master saw not the great band  
Before him. "Stranger," he cried, "where we stand  
Mine eyes can reach not these false saints of thine.  
Mount we the bank, or some high-shouldered pine,  
And I shall see their follies clear!" At that  
There came a marvel. For the Stranger straight  
Touched a great pine-tree's high and heavenward crown,  
And lower, lower, lower, urged it down  
To the herbless floor. Round like a bending bow,  
Or slow wheel's rim a joiner forces to.  
So in those hands that tough and mountain stem  
Bowed slow—oh, strength not mortal dwelt in them!—  
To the very earth. And there he set the King,

And slowly, lest it cast him in its spring.  
Let back the young and straining tree, till high  
It towered again amid the towering sky;  
And Pentheus in the branches! Well, I ween,  
He saw the Maenads then, and well was seen!  
For scarce was he aloft, when suddenly  
There was no stranger any more with me,  
But out of Heaven a Voice—oh, what voice else?—  
'Twas He that called! "Behold, O damosels,  
I bring ye him who turneth to despise  
Both me and ye, and darkeneth my great Light.  
Tis yours to avenge!" So spake he, and there came  
'Twixt earth and sky a pillar of high flame.  
And silence took the air, and no leaf stirred  
In all the forest dell. Thou hadst not heard  
In that vast silence any wild things' cry.  
And up they sprang; but with bewildered eye,  
Agaze and listening, scarce yet hearing true.  
Then came the Voice again. And when they knew  
Their God's clear call, old Cadmus' royal brood,  
Up, like wild pigeons startled in a wood,  
On flying feet they came, his mother blind,  
Agâvê, and her sisters, and behind  
All the wild crowd, more deeply maddened then,  
Through the angry rocks and torrent-tossing glen,  
Until they spied him in the dark pine-tree:  
Then climbed a crag hard by and furiously

Some sought to stone him, some their wands would fling  
Lance-wise aloft, in cruel targeting.

But none could strike. The height o'ertopped their rage,  
And there he clung, unscathed, as in a cage  
Caught. And of all their strife no end was found.  
Then, "Hither," cried Agâvê; "stand we round  
And grip the stem, my Wild Ones, till we take  
This climbing cat-o'-the-mount! He shall not make  
A tale of God's high dances!" Out then shone  
Arm upon arm, past count, and closed upon  
The pine, and gripped; and the ground gave, and down  
It reeled. And that high sitter from the crown  
Of the green pine-top, with a shrieking cry  
Fell, as his mind grew clear, and there hard by  
Was horror visible. 'Twas his mother stood  
O'er him, first priestess of those rites of blood.  
He tore the coif, and from his head away  
Flung it, that she might know him, and not slay  
To her own misery. He touched the wild  
Cheek, crying: "Mother, it is I, thy child,  
Thy Pentheus, born thee in Echion's hall!  
Have mercy, Mother! Let it not befall  
Through sin of mine, that thou shouldst slay thy son!"

But she, with lips a-foam and eyes that run  
Like leaping fire, with thoughts that ne'er should be  
On earth, possessed by Bacchios utterly,  
Stays not nor hears. Round his left arm she put

Both hands, set hard against his side her foot,  
Drew ... and the shoulder severed!—not by might  
Of arm, but easily, as the God made light  
Her hand's essay. And at the other side  
Was Ino rending; and the torn flesh cried,  
And on Autoñoë pressed, and all the crowd  
Of ravening arms. 'Yea, all the air was loud  
With groans that faded into sobbing breath,  
Dim shrieks, and joy, and triumph-cries of death.  
And here was borne a severed arm, and there  
A hunter's booted foot; white bones lay bare  
With rending; and swift hands ensanguinèd  
Tossed as in sport the flesh of Pentheus dead.  
His body lies afar. The precipice

Hath part, and parts in many an interstice  
Lurk of the tangled woodland—no light quest  
To find. And, ah, the head! Of all the rest,  
His mother hath it, pierced upon a wand,  
As one might pierce a lion's, and through the land,  
Leaving her sisters in their dancing place,  
Bears it on high! Yea, to these walls her face  
Was set, exulting in her deed of blood,  
Calling upon her Bromios, her God,  
Her Comrade, Fellow-Render of the Prey,  
Her All-Victorious, to whom this day  
She bears in triumph ... her own broken heart.

For me, after that sight, I will depart



Before Agave comes.—Oh, to fulfil  
God's laws, and have no thought beyond His will,  
Is man's best treasure. Aye, and wisdom true,  
Methinks, for things of dust to cleave unto!

[*The MESSENGER departs into the Castle.*]

**CHORUS.**

**Some Maidens.**

Weave ye the dance, and call  
Praise to God!  
Bless ye the Tyrant's fall!  
Down is trod  
Pentheus, the Dragon's Seed!  
Wore he the woman's weed?  
Clasped he his death indeed,  
Clasped the rod?

**A Bacchanal.**

Yea, the wild ivy lapt him, and the doomed  
Wild Bull of Sacrifice before him loomed!

**Others.**

Ye who did Bromios scorn,  
Praise Him the more,  
Bacchanals, Cadmus-born;

Praise with sore  
Agony, yea, with tears!  
Great are the gifts he bears!  
Hands that a mother rears  
Red with gore!

**LEADER.**

But stay, Agâvê cometh! And her eyes  
Make fire around her, reeling! Ho, the prize  
Cometh! All hail, O Rout of Dionyse!

[*Enter from the Mountain AGAVE, mad, and to all seeming wondrously happy, bearing the head of PENTHEUS in her hand. The CHORUS MAIDENS stand horror-struck at the sight; the LEADER, also horror-struck, strives to accept it and rejoice in it as the God's deed.*]

**AGAVE.**

Ye from the lands of Morn!

**LEADER.**

Call me not; I give praise!

**AGAVE.**

Lo, from the trunk new-shorn  
Hither a Mountain Thorn  
Bear we! O Asia-born

Bacchanals, bless this chase!

**LEADER.**

I see. Yea; I see.

Have I not welcomed thee?

**AGAVE** (*very calmly and peacefully*).

He was young in the wildwood

Without nets I caught him!

Nay; look without fear on

The Lion; I have ta'en him!

**LEADER.**

Where in the wildwood?

Whence have ye brought him?

**AGAVE.**

Kithaeron ....

**LEADER.**

Kithaeron?

**AGAVE.**

The Mountain hath slain him!

**LEADER.**

Who first came nigh him?

**AGAVE.**

I, I, 'tis confessèd!

And they named me there by him

Agave the Blessèd!

**LEADER.**

Who was next in the band on him?

**AGAVE.**

The daughters ....

**LEADER.**

The daughters?

**AGAVE.**

Of Cadmus laid hand on him.

But the swift hand that slaughters

Is mine; mine is the praise!

Bless ye this day of days!

[*The LEADER tries to speak, but is not able; AGAVE begins gently stroking the head.*]

**AGAVE.**

Gather ye now to the feast!

**LEADER.**

Feast!—O miserable!

**AGAVE.**

See, it falls to his breast,  
Curling and gently tressed,  
The hair of the Wild Bull's crest—  
The young steer of the fell!

**LEADER.**

Most like a beast of the wild  
That head, those locks defiled.

**AGAVE** (*lifting up the head, more excitedly*).

He wakened his Mad Ones,  
A Chase-God, a wise God!  
He sprang them to seize this!  
He preys where his band preys.

**LEADER** (*brooding, with horror*).

In the trail of thy Mad Ones  
Thou tearest thy prize, God!

**AGAVE.**

Dost praise it?

**LEADER.**

I praise this?

**AGAVE.**

Ah, soon shall the land praise!

**LEADER.**

And Pentheus, O Mother,  
Thy child?

**AGAVE.**

He shall cry on  
My name as none other,  
Bless the spoils of the Lion!

**LEADER.**

Aye, strange is thy treasure!

**AGAVE.**

And strange was the taking!

**LEADER.**

Thou art glad?

**AGAVE.**

Beyond measure;  
Yea, glad in the breaking

Of dawn upon all this land,  
By the prize, the prize of my hand!

**LEADER.**

Show them to all the land, unhappy one,  
The trophy of this deed that thou hast done!

**AGAVE.**

Ho, all ye men that round the citadel  
And shining towers of ancient Thêbê dwell,  
Come! Look upon this prize, this lion's spoil,  
That we have taken—yea, with our own toil,  
We, Cadmus' daughters! Not with leathern-set  
Thessalian javelins, not with hunter's net,  
Only white arms and swift hands' bladed fall  
Why make ye much ado, and boast withal  
Your armourers' engines? See, these palms were bare  
That caught the angry beast, and held, and tare  
The limbs of him! ... Father! ... Go, bring to me  
My father! ... Aye, and Pentheus, where is he,  
My son? He shall set up a ladder-stair  
Against this house, and in the triglyphs there  
Nail me this lion's head, that gloriously  
I bring ye, having slain him—I, even I!

*[She goes through the crowd towards the Castle, showing the head and looking for a place to hang it. Enter from*

*the Mountain CADMUS, with attendants, bearing the body of PENTHEUS on a bier.]*

**CADMUS.**

On, with your awful burden. Follow me,  
Thralls, to his house, whose body grievously  
With many a weary search at last in dim  
Kithaeron's glens I found, torn limb from limb,  
And through the intervening forest weed  
Scattered.—Men told me of my daughters' deed,  
When I was just returned within these walls,  
With grey Teiresias, from the Bacchanals.  
And back I hied me to the hills again  
To seek my murdered son. There saw I plain  
Actaeon's mother, ranging where he died,  
Autonoë; and Ino by her side,  
Wandering ghastly in the pine-copses.

Agâvê was not there. The rumour is  
She cometh fleet-foot hither.—Ah! 'Tis true;  
A sight I scarce can bend mine eyes unto.

**AGAVE** (*turning from the Palace and seeing him*).

My father, a great boast is thine this hour.  
Thou hast begotten daughters, high in power  
And valiant above all mankind—yea, all  
Valiant, though none like me! I have let fall

The shuttle by the loom, and raised my hand  
For higher things, to slay from out thy land  
Wild beasts! See, in mine arms I bear the prize,  
That nailed above these portals it may rise  
To show what things thy daughters did! Do thou  
Take it, and call a feast. Proud art thou now  
And highly favoured in our valiancy!

**CADMUS.**

O depth of grief, how can I fathom thee  
Or look upon thee!—Poor, poor bloodstained hand!  
Poor sisters!—A fair sacrifice to stand  
Before God's altars, daughter; yea, and call  
Me and my citizens to feast withal!

Nay, let me weep—for thine affliction most,  
Then for mine own. All, all of us are lost,  
Not wrongfully, yet is it hard, from one  
Who might have loved—our Bromios, our own!

**AGAVE.**

How crabbèd and how scowling in the eyes  
Is man's old age!—Would that my son likewise  
Were happy of his hunting, in my way  
When with his warrior bands he will essay  
The wild beast!—Nay, his valiance is to fight  
With God's will! Father, thou shouldst set him right.

Will no one bring him thither, that mine eyes  
May look on his, and show him this my prize!

**CADMUS.**

Alas, if ever ye can know again  
The truth of what ye did, what pain of pain  
That truth shall bring! Or were it best to wait  
Darkened for evermore, and deem your state  
Not misery, though ye know no happiness?

**AGAVE.**

What seest thou here to chide, or not to bless?

**CADMUS** (*after hesitation, resolving himself*).

Raise me thine eyes to yon blue dome of air!

**AGAVE.**

'Tis done. What dost thou bid me seek for there?

**CADMUS.**

Is it the same, or changèd in thy sight?

**AGAVE.**

More shining than before, more heavenly bright!

**CADMUS.**

And that wild tremour, is it with thee still?

**AGAVE** (*troubled*).

I know not what thou sayest; but my will  
Clears, and some change cometh, I know not how.

**CADMUS.**

Canst hearken then, being changed, and answer, now!

**AGAVE.**

I have forgotten something; else I could.

**CADMUS.**

What husband led thee of old from mine abode?

**AGAVE.**

Echîon, whom men named the Child of Earth.

**CADMUS.**

And what child in Echîon's house had birth?

**AGAVE.**

Pentheus, of my love and his father's bred.

**CADMUS.**

Thou bearest in thine arms an head—what head?

**AGAVE** (*beginning to tremble, and not looking at what she carries*).

A lion's—so they all said in the chase.

**CADMUS.**

Turn to it now—'tis no long toil—and gaze.

**AGAVE.**

Ah! But what is it? What am I carrying here?

**CADMUS.**

Look once upon it full, till all be clear!

**AGAVE.**

I see ... most deadly pain! Oh, woe is me!

**CADMUS.**

Wears it the likeness of a lion to thee?

**AGAVE.**

No; 'tis the head—O God!—of Pentheus, this!

**CADMUS.**

Blood-drenched ere thou wouldst know him! Aye, 'tis his.

**AGAVE.**

Who slew him?—How came I to hold this thing?

**CADMUS.**

O cruel Truth, is this thine home-coming?

**AGAVE.**

Answer! My heart is hanging on thy breath!

**CADMUS.**

'Twas thou.—Thou and thy sisters wrought his death.

**AGAVE.**

In what place was it? His own house, or where?

**CADMUS.**

Where the dogs tore Actaeon, even there.

**AGAVE.**

Why went he to Kithaeron? What sought he?

**CADMUS.**

To mock the God and thine own ecstasy.

**AGAVE.**

But how should we be on the hills this day?

**CADMUS.**

Being mad! A spirit drove all the land that way.

**AGAVE.**

'Tis Dionyse hath done it! Now I see.

**CADMUS** (*earnestly*).

Ye wronged Him! Ye denied his deity!

**AGAVE** (*turning from him*).

Show me the body of the son I love!

**CADMUS** (*leading her to the bier*).

'Tis here, my child. Hard was the quest thereof.

**AGAVE.**

Laid in due state?

[*As there is no answer, she lifts the veil of the bier, and sees.*]

Oh, if I wrought a sin,

'Twas mine! What portion had my child therein!

**CADMUS.**

He made him like to you, adoring not  
The God; who therefore to one bane hath brought  
You and this body, wrecking all our line,  
And me. Aye, no man-child was ever mine;  
And now this first-fruit of the flesh of thee,

Sad woman, foully here and frightfully  
Lies murdered! Whom the house looked up unto,

[*Kneeling by the body.*]

O Child, my daughter's child! who heldest true  
My castle walls; and to the folk a name  
Of fear thou wast; and no man sought to shame  
My grey beard, when they knew that thou wast there,  
Else had they swift reward!—And now I fare  
Forth in dishonour, outcast, I, the great  
Cadmus, who sowed the seed-rows of this state  
Of Thebes, and reaped the harvest wonderful.  
O my belovèd, though thy heart is dull  
In death, O still belovèd, and always  
Belovèd! Never more, then, shalt thou lay  
Thine hand to this white beard, and speak to me  
Thy "Mother's Father"; ask "Who wrongeth thee?  
Who stints thine honour, or with malice stirs  
Thine heart? Speak, and I smite thine injurers!"  
But now—woe, woe, to me and thee also,  
Woe to thy mother and her sisters, woe  
Always! Oh, whoso walketh not in dread  
Of Gods, let him but look on this man dead!

**LEADER.**

Lo, I weep with thee. 'Twas but due reward

God sent on Pentheus; but for thee ... 'Tis hard.

**AGAVE.**

My father, thou canst see the change in me,

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[*A page or more has here been torn out of the MS. from which all our copies of "The Bacchae" are derived. It evidently contained a speech of Agâvê (followed presumably by some words of the Chorus), and an appearance of DIONYSUS upon a cloud. He must have pronounced judgment upon the Thebans in general, and especially upon the daughters of CADMUS, have justified his own action, and declared his determination to establish his godhead. Where the MS begins again, we find him addressing CADMUS.*]

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**DIONYSUS.**

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\* \* \* \* \*

And tell of Time, what gifts for thee he bears,  
What griefs and wonders in the winding years.  
For thou must change and be a Serpent Thing  
Strange, and beside thee she whom thou didst bring  
Of old to be thy bride from Heaven afar,



Harmonia, daughter of the Lord of War.  
Yea, and a chariot of kine—so spake  
The word of Zeus—thee and thy Queen shall take  
Through many lands, Lord of a wild array  
Of orient spears. And many towns shall they  
Destroy beneath thee, that vast horde, until  
They touch Apollo's dwelling, and fulfil  
Their doom, back driven on stormy ways and steep.  
Thee only and thy spouse shall Ares keep,  
And save alive to the Islands of the Blest.

Thus speaketh Dionysus, Son confessed  
Of no man but of Zeus!—Ah, had ye seen  
Truth in the hour ye would not, all had been  
Well with ye, and the Child of God your friend!

**AGAVE.**

Dionysus, we beseech thee! We have sinned!

**DIONYSUS.**

Too late! When there was time, ye knew me not!

**AGAVE.**

We have confessed. Yet is thine hand too hot.

**DIONYSUS.**

Ye mocked me, being God; this your wage.

**AGAVE.**

Should God be like a proud man in his rage?

**DIONYSUS.**

'Tis as my sire, Zeus, willed it long ago.

**AGAVE** (*turning from him almost with disdain*).

Old man, the word is spoken; we must go.

**DIONYSUS.**

And seeing ye must, what is it that ye wait?

**CADMUS.**

Child, we are come into a deadly strait,  
All; thou, poor sufferer, and thy sisters twain,  
And my sad self. Far off to barbarous men,  
A grey-haired wanderer, I must take my road.  
And then the oracle, the doom of God,  
That I must lead a raging horde far-flown  
To prey on Hellas; lead my spouse, mine own  
Harmonia. Ares' child, discorporate  
And haunting forms, dragon and dragon-mate,  
Against the tombs and altar-stones of Greece,  
Lance upon lance behind us; and not cease  
From toils, like other men, nor dream, nor past  
The foam of Acheron find my peace at last.

**AGAVE.**

Father! And I must wander far from thee!

**CADMUS.**

O Child, why wilt thou reach thine arms to me,  
As yearns the milk-white swan, when old swans die?

**AGAVE.**

Where shall I turn me else? No home have I.

**CADMUS.**

I know not; I can help thee not.

**AGAVE.**

Farewell, O home, O ancient tower!  
Lo, I am outcast from my bower,  
And leave ye for a worser lot.

**CADMUS.**

Go forth, go forth to misery,  
The way Actaeon's father went!

**AGAVE.**

Father, for thee my tears are spent.

**CADMUS.**

Nay, Child, 'tis I must weep for thee;

For thee and for thy sisters twain!

**AGAVE.**

On all this house, in bitter wise,  
Our Lord and Master, Dionyse,  
Hath poured the utter dregs of pain!

**DIONYSUS.**

In bitter wise, for bitter was the shame  
Ye did me, when Thebes honoured not my name.

**AGAVE.**

Then lead me where my sisters be;  
Together let our tears be shed,  
Our ways be wandered; where no red  
Kithaeron waits to gaze on me;  
Nor I gaze back; no thyrsus stem,  
Nor song, nor memory in the air.  
Oh, other Bacchanals be there,  
Not I, not I, to dream of them!

[**AGAVE** with her group of attendants goes out on the side away from the Mountain. **DIONYSUS** rises upon the Cloud and disappears.]

**CHORUS.**

There may be many shapes of mystery,

And many things God makes to be,  
Past hope or fear.

And the end men looked for cometh not,  
And a path is there where no man thought.

So hath it fallen here.            *[Exeunt.]*