

## EURIPIDES CYCLOPS

Silenus:

Bacchus, there have been countless pains you've stung

Me with, both now and when I was but young:

Firstly, when you, through Hera, lost your mind,

Then after went away, leaving behind

The mountain-nymphs, who nursed you, secondly,

When you fought with the Giants, having me

On your right flank, my shield as your safeguard,

When with my spear I struck Enceladus hard

Upon the chest and killed him. Hold on, though –

Was that a dream? Oh no, for I also 10

Showed you the booty. Now the pain, however,

That I endure is greater far than ever:

When Hera raised those thieves of Tuscany

Against you so that you'd be forced to be

Sold far away from here, my sons and I,

Hearing of this, took ship so we could try

To find you. I steered her right at the stern:

My sons, the oarsmen, made the grey sea turn

To foamy white, as they were seeking you.

Around Cape Malea an east wind blew 20

And sank our ship and on this precipice

Of Aetna landed us, shipwrecked. Now this

Is where Poseidon's sons, the Cyclopes,

Who murder men, in far localities

Dwell in their caves. One caught us and now we  
Are kept as slaves – the man who owns us he  
Calls Polyphemus. We're now revelling  
In Bacchic routs no more but pasturing  
The flocks of that unholy man. My sons,  
Because still in their youth, became the ones      30  
To shepherd all the young lambs far away,  
While I myself have been enjoined to stay  
Behind to fill the watering-troughs and sweep  
The floors inside his cavern and to keep  
Him filled with his foul meals. And now I must  
Take up this rake and sweep away the dust  
To greet my master and his sheep. I see  
My boys leading their flock. [to the boys] What can this be?  
Have you that rhythm in your capering  
That you revealed when you were revelling      40  
In Bacchic rites with Dionysus, bound  
For his Althaea, to the lyre's sound?

Chorus:

[to a ram] Hail, noble sir! Why is it that you go  
Towards the hilly crags? Do you not know  
That *this* way is the best for you to pass  
Through gentle breezes for lush, verdant grass?  
Your bleating progenies stand there nearby  
The cave where troughs of river-water lie.  
Go, feed along the slope that drips with dew.  
Go on, or I will throw a stone at you!      50  
You wanderer of the wild, you hornèd ram,  
You guardian of every ewe and lamb

The Cyclops owns, be off with you! [to a ewe] You, feed

The lambs you left inside the cave – they need

Their sustenance. Your young have slept all day

And miss their mother's teats, so come away

From grassy Aetna! Enter your vast stall!

There is no Bacchic worship here at all,

No Bacchus, dances, words, no manic sound

Of drums, no springs of water, on the ground 60

No fresh droplets of rain. I may not sing,

United with the Nymphs, my honouring

Of Aphrodite, whom I speedily

Pursued as I enjoyed the company

Of the white-footed Bacchants. Where, without

Your folk, do you shake your bright hair about,

Lord Bacchus? Here I am, your underling,

Who serve the one-eyed monster, struggling

In exile, in a goat-skin mantle dressed.

I miss you! [to his sons] Silence, boys! Give your behest 70

That your attendants drive the flocks into

The rocky cave.

Chorus: [to the attendants] Do so! [to Silenus] What's troubling you,

Father?

Silenus:

A Grecian ship's moored on the strand:

Its sailors and the man who's in command

Are coming to the cave. They're carrying

Empty containers – they're requiring

Both food and pails for drink. Unluckily

Have they come to this place. Who can they be?

They don't know what my master's like, that here  
Where they now stand can hardly give much cheer 80  
To strangers, or that it's their destiny  
To have to face that great monstrosity  
Whose jaws eat men. Hush, so that we might learn  
What land they have come from. [enter Odysseus and his men]

Odysseus:

Strangers, I yearn

To know where we might find some spring or well  
To quench our thirst and if someone might sell  
Some food to needy sailors. Hah! We seem  
To be in Bacchus' town, because a stream  
Of satyrs by the cave I now survey.  
Then firstly to the eldest one I say 90  
"Greetings!"

Silenus:

Good-day! Tell me your country and

Your name.

Odysseus:

My name's Odysseus and the land

I rule is Ithaca.

Silenus:

I know that one –

The clever chatterer, Sisyphus' son.

Odysseus:

That's me, but cut the slurs!

Silenus:

Whence did you sail?

Odysseus:

Troy's battlefield.

Silenus:

What's that? How could you fail

To find your way back home?

Odysseus:

Storms drove us here.

Silenus:

The fate you have is just like mine, I fear.

Odysseus:

Against your will like me, then?

Silenus:

Yes, that's right –

For thieves grabbed Dionysus and took flight – 100

We chased them.

Odysseus:

What's this country? What are we

To call its citizens?

Silenus:

In Sicily

This is the highest place – Aetna, it's called.

Odysseus:

Where are the walls and ramparts?

Silenus:

It's not walled

At all. These bluffs are all unoccupied.

Odysseus:

No people, then? Well, do wild beasts reside

On them?

Silenus:

Cave-dwellers called the Cyclopes

Dwell here.

Odysseus:

And who's the man who governs these

People? Or do they rule themselves?

Silenus:

They live

As solitaires – there's no-one to give 110

Them orders.

Odysseus:

Do they sow Demeter's grain?

Or how else do they live?

Silenus:

Well, they sustain

Themselves on milk and cheese and lamb.

Odysseus:

Do they

Possess the drink of Dionysus?

Silenus:

Nay.

Thus they don't dance.

Odysseus:

Are they congenial, then,

To strangers?

Silenus:

They maintain the flesh of men

Is most delicious.

Odysseus:

What is that you say?

They eat men?

Silenus:

Everyone who came this way

Was slaughtered.

Odysseus:

And the Cyclops – where is he?

At home?

Silenus:

No, on a wild-beast-hunting spree      120

On Aetna.

Odysseus:

Do you know how we may go

Away from here?

Silenus:

Alas, no, I don't know.

We'll help, though, if we can.

Odysseus:

Well, we lack bread:

Please sell us some.

Silenus:

We can't: as I have said,

We've only meat.

Odysseus:

A pleasant food to quell

One's hunger, that.

Silenus:

We've milk and cheese as well.

Odysseus:

Fetch them, for daylight's fit for trade.

Silenus:

But you

Must name your price.

Odysseus:

I have no gold but do

Have wine.

Silenus:

Great news! The very thing that we

Have lacked so long.

Odysseus:

And it was given me 130

By Maron, the god's son.

Silenus:

By that do you

Mean that young lad I raised myself?

Odysseus:

I do –

The son of Dionysus.

Silenus:

Have you stored

The wine you've just told me about aboard

Your ship or is it with you?

Odysseus:

See, old man,

The wine-skin holding it.

Silenus:

It barely can

Fulfil my thirst.

Odysseus:



You cannot drink it dry,  
That wine-skin.

Silenus:

Does this wine-skin, then, supply  
Wine of itself?

Odysseus:

Yes, twice that which can spill  
Out of the skin.

Silenus:

Oh what a lovely rill                      140  
You speak about! It makes me so elated.

Odysseus:

Will you first taste it unadulterated?

Silenus:

That's fair – a taste invites a purchase.

Odysseus:

See,  
I happen to have brought a cup with me.

Silenus"

Ah, splash some in so that I may arouse  
The distant memory of a carouse.

Odysseus:

There!

Silenus:

What a bouquet!

Odysseus:

What's that? Have you caught  
The fragrance?

Silenus:

No, I smell it.

Odysseus:

Then you ought

To taste it so your praising it won't be

Mere words. [Silenus drinks]

Silenus:

Oh my, Bacchus is tempting me 150

To dance.

Odysseus:

Did it not gurgle splendidly

As it went down your throat?

Silenus:

Why certainly –

Down to my toenails.

Odysseus:

And we'll give you cash.

Silenus;

Oh sod the gold! Keep pouring out your stash

Of wine!

Odysseus:

Bring out some cheese or lamb!

Silenus:

Indeed

I'll do just that and pay but little heed

To Polyphemus. One cup of this stuff,

That I will now quaff down, will be enough

To pay for all these flocks and then to fling

Myself from Leucas' rock-face, plummeting 160

Into the salty sea, pie-eyed. He who

Does not enjoy a drink is quite cuckoo.  
For drink will cause a fellow's dick to stand  
And let him take a pair of breasts in hand  
And hope to stroke a snatch and dance and lose  
All cares. Shall I not, then, caress such booze  
And send that stupid Cyclops. With his one  
And only eye, off to oblivion?

Chorus:

Odysseus, may I speak to you?

Odysseus:

You may,

For we are friends.

Chorus:

That city far away 170

And Helen – did you take them?

Odysseus:

Yes, it's true,

We did. All Troy is gone.

Chorus:

And did you screw

That bitch in gang-bangs? Oh, she sure enjoys

Fucking, for, looking at those trousered boys

With gold around their necks, a-fluttering

She threw herself at them, abandoning

The splendid Menelaus. Would that all

The female sex were gone (but let them crawl

Into *my* lap!).

Silenus:

My lord Odysseus, see –

This flock is yours, bred of that company 180

Of bleating sheep, and all these cheeses too,

Produced from curdled milk. Be off with you

And take them all! However, do not go

Until you've given me your wine. Oh no!

Here comes the Cyclops. What are we to do?

Old man, we're done for. Where should we flee to?

Silenus:

Into the cave and hide!

Odysseus:

What you propound

Is dangerous.

Silenus:

That is not so – I've found

A lot of hiding-places there.

Odysseus:

No, I

Refuse to do it, for if I should fly 190

From just one man, a groan from Troy would be

Heard far away, since I so frequently

Faced countless Trojan warriors, shield in hand.

No, if I die, my exit will be grand,

Or, if I'm to live on, my reputation

Will still be fitting of my noble station. [enter Cyclops]

Cyclops:

Make way! What's this? Why all this laxity?

Why do you make this Bacchic revelry?

Here is no Bacchus, no bronze castanets,

No rattling of timpani. Now let's 200

See how my lambs are doing! Are they done  
With feeding at the teat and do they run  
Beside their mothers? And has my great horde  
Of cheeses from the milk been duly stored  
In buckets? What have you to say? This club  
I'll quickly use to make somebody blub.

Look *up*!

Chorus:

I do – Zeus and the stars I see,  
Orion, too.

Cyclops:

My meal – it's properly  
Prepared?

Chorus:

Oh yes, it is, and therefore do  
Prepare to eat.

Cyclops:

The mixing-dishes, too,                      210  
Are filled with milk?

Chorus:

Ah, filled with milk they are –  
You'd easily quaff off a storage-jar,  
If you preferred, in its entirety.

Cyclops:

Is it sheep's milk, cow's or a pot-pourri  
Of both?

Chorus:

Just take your pick, but do not drink  
Me down as well.

Cyclops:

Of that I would not think:

You'll kill me off with all your gambolling

About my cave. But what's this gathering

I see? Have pirates landed here? I see

My lambs wrapped in some sort of drapery 220

Of twigs, my cheese-bins in a mess, as well

As some old man whose head would seem to swell

From blows.

Silenus:

From these harsh blows I'm very hot

With fever.

Cyclops:

Who gave you that bruise you've got,

Old man?

Silenus:

These men, since I'd not let them take

Your property.

Cyclops:

I see. Did they mistake

Me for a mortal? I'm a god, you see.

Silenus:

I told them so, but still your property

They kept on plundering. And then the cheese

They started on in spite of all my pleas, 230

Then they began to bear your sheep away,

And after that they said to me that they

Would grab you and before your one eye rip

Your guts out and then lash you with a whip,

Then take you to their ship where they would tie

You to the benches and have someone buy

You as a quarry-worker breaking rocks

Or throw you down a well.

Cyclops:

Oh yes? A pox

On them! [to a servant] Quick as a flash, take off and grind

My carving-knives and with large faggots mind 240

You start a blazing fire! [servant leaves] I will kill

Them all immediately, and they shall fill

My belly, hot and tender. I have had

Enough of deer and lions – I'd be glad

To feast on men again.

Silenus:

Yes, novelty

Is pleasanter than what is customary,

Master. For it's been quite a while since you

Were visited by strangers.

Odysseus:

Hear us, too, -

Cyclops. We landed here and, in our need

Of food, we came here to your cave to plead 250

That we may trade with you. This fellow sold

Your sheep to us for wine instead of gold –

A fair trade, for there was no force applied

By either party, but this man has lied:

Behind your back he sold your sheep to me.

Silenus:

To hell with you!

Odysseus:

I'm speaking truthfully.

Silenus:

Now by Poseidon, who created you,

I'm telling you that all I said is true.

By Triton, Nereus, Calypso as well,

By all the Nereids, by the sea-swell, 260

By all the fishes living in the sea,

Fair master, I am speaking honestly.

I did not sell your goods, and if I lie,

May my two sons, the apple of my eye,

Be damned forever.

Chorus:

No, be damned yourself.

With my own eyes I saw you steal his pelf.

Damnation take my father if I tell

An untruth. Do not wrong the strangers.

Cyclops:

Well,

You're lying! For I trust this honest judge

Rather than you. [to Odysseus] I think you won't begrudge 270

One question – where have you sailed from? And where

Do you call home? And in what city's care

Were you brought up?

Odysseus:

By birth we're from the land

Of Ithaca. We sailed here from the strand

Of Troy, which we have sacked. Hither by force

Of savage sea-storms being blown off-course,



We sailed.

Cyclops:

Are you the warriors, then, who left  
Your home to punish Ilium for the theft  
Of worthless Helen?

Odysseus:

Such a toil to face!

But, yes, we faced it.

Cyclops:

What a great disgrace                      280

To sail so far just for the sake of one  
Woman!

Odysseus:

But blame no mortal – it was done  
By a god. Cyclops, son of the god of the sea,  
O noble one, we're free men – hear our plea:  
We came as benefactors to your cave –  
Don't make a godless meal of us! Please save  
Our lives! Poseidon, your own father, we  
Have kept secure in every sanctuary  
In Greece. The port of holy Tainarus  
Remains undamaged still because of us;                      290  
The nooks of rocky Malea yet stay,  
The silver rock that stands near Sunium's bay,  
That's sacred to Athena, is secure,  
And all Geraistus' refuges endure;  
We trounced the Trojans. In this you, as well,  
Possess a share, for out here you still dwell  
In Greece, beneath Mount Aetna from whose throat

Drips fire. But if you do not take note  
Of what I've said to you, there's a decree  
That one must take in men shipwrecked at sea      300  
And give them gifts and dress them, too, and it's  
What we require and not to roast on spits  
To feed your belly. For sufficiently  
Has Troy brought death upon our citizenry,  
Drinking the blood of many corpses shed  
From hostile spears; so many widows bled;  
Old folks have perished childless, and if you  
Intend to cook us in some gruesome stew,  
Where can we turn? Listen, Cyclops, to me  
And put aside your ravenous gluttony!      310  
Be kind, not base, for many folk have found  
That gain that's basely won has proved the ground  
For punishment.

Silenus:

                    Hear me – eat every bit  
Of him; and if you bite his tongue, then it  
Will make you clever and extremely shrewd.

Cyclops:

Ah, little man, the wise deem plenitude  
The god to worship because everything  
Besides is merely empty prattling  
And vaunting, and I pay but little heed  
To all my father's shrines. Why did you need      320  
To mention them? At Zeus's thundering  
I do not shudder, nor in anything  
Do I think he's superior to me.

If I have thought about him previously,  
I'll not do so henceforth. When he sends rain,  
Within my water-tight cave I remain  
And roast a calf or some other wild beast,  
And once I have prepared it, then I feast,  
Then drink a jar of milk, and then I drum  
Upon that jar, a pandemonium 330  
To rival Zeus's thunderbolts, and when  
The Thracian North Wind sends down snow, why then  
I don the skins of wild beasts, then I make  
A blazing fire, so after that I take  
No notice of the snow. I see grass grow  
Upon the earth, whether it wills or no,  
And feed my flock. To no divinity  
I sacrifice my sheep but only me  
And my most sacred gut. To put away  
Our food and tipples every single day 340  
And feel no pain – well, that is Father Zeus  
To men of sense. But those who introduce  
Laws that will snarl the lives of mortals – well,  
In my opinion they can go to hell.  
I'll still indulge myself by eating you,  
And as for gifts I'll prove that I am true  
To custom: you'll have fire and a pot  
And salt, of which my father has a lot.  
Your ill-clad bodies by the bubbling  
Will then be dressed. Go in and in a ring 350  
Stand round my household shrine and give to me  
Sensuous entertainment.

Odysseus:

Misery!

Escaping all the toils of Ilium

And braving that sea-storm, I now have come

Upon a man with such a cruel heart.

Athena, Zeus's daughter, do your part,

I pray: a greater trouble than the coast

Of Troy inflicted and the uttermost

Of danger I'm enmeshed in, and, Zeus, you

Are the protector of all guests and who 360

Dwell in the heavens: if you do not see

What's happening here, then all humanity

Is wrong to think that you are Zeus and call

You god when you are not a god at all.

Chorus:

Cyclops, open your wide and gaping maw –

Your guests are roasted, ready for you to gnaw,

Rend and devour, as you recline, dressed in

Your mantle made of fleecy, soft goat-skin.

I want none of this repast – *you* must fill

Your belly with this cargo's load. May ill 370

Befall this house! The offerings, as well,

The godless Cyclops revels in – to hell

With them, because he's anxious to prepare

These strangers in the pot to be his fare!

His guests here sought refuge but he, instead

Of refuge, boiled them that he might be fed.

Odysseus:

O Zeus, what can I say now that I've seen

In here such dreadful doings that have been  
Read only, never done?

Chorus:

Odysseus, what

Is this? Surely the foul Cyclops's pot                      380  
Has not prepared your friends to be his meal?

Odysseus:

It has. I saw him single out and feel  
The two most fleshy members of our crew.

Chorus:

How did this come about, you poor man, you?

Odysseus:

When we entered the cave, a fire he lit  
And heaped up mighty logs of oak on it,  
Three waggon-loads in fact, and then he laid  
A bronze cauldron to boil there, and he made  
A bed of fir nearby, and presently  
He milked the calves; to its extremity                      390  
A mixing-bowl with this milk he filled up.  
Then next to it he placed an ivy cup,  
Some four feet wide and six feet high. Then he  
Placed buckthorn spits there, each extremity  
Burnt off, the rest scraped with a scythe. And when  
The murderous cook had all things ready, then  
He grabbed two of my men: the throat of one                      400  
He slashed above the cauldron – this was done  
With just one flourish - while the other he  
Grabbed by the tendon, then immediately  
Smashed him against a knife-edged rock and dashed

His brains out. With a sharpened blade he gashed  
And roasted all the fleshy parts and tossed  
The limbs into the cauldron. I, quite lost,  
Stood by him, weeping greatly. I obeyed  
The orders that he made to gain my aid.  
The others, bird-like, cowered far away  
In the cave's recesses, their faces grey.  
When sated with my shipmates' flesh, he fell  
Upon his back and belched a loathsome smell      410  
Out of his maw. But then a heavenly thought  
Came to me, and a cup of wine I brought  
To him and said, "Poseidon's son, come try  
The holy drink that Greece's vines supply,  
Lord Bacchus' gleaming cup." Now quite replete  
With his foul meal, the cup in one complete  
Swallow he drained, and then, his arms raised up  
In admiration, he said, "Ah, this cup  
Is splendid, stranger-friend." I saw how much  
It pleased him and therefore another such  
I offered him, knowing that wine would be      420  
His downfall and he'd pay the penalty  
And very soon. Then he began to sing,  
So I inflamed his heart by offering  
Cup after cup. He made his tuneless sound  
Beside my weeping crew, while all around  
The cave it echoed. I then silently  
Crept from the cave that I, should you agree,  
Might save us both. So do you wish or no  
To be quit of this savage beast and go      430

To Bacchus' halls and with the Naiads dwell.

Your father said he would, but he is well

Into his drink and very weak, and he

Sticks to his cup of wine dementedly,

Just like a captured bird, his wings in vain

Flapping. You're young, though, and so that again

You'll see Bacchus, your friend (undoubtedly

So different from this Cyclops), flee with me.

Chorus:

Dear friend, if only we could scramble out

Far from that beast. My little water-spout 440

Is longing for some action, but right here

That's not a possibility, I fear.

Odysseus:

Then hear the punishment that I have brewed

For that foul beast, a method to elude

Bondage.

Chorus:

Say on, for there's no sweeter sound

Than news that Cyclops went beneath the ground,

Not even Asia's lyre.

Odysseus:

He saysthat he

Is passionate to join the company

Of fellow-Cyclopes to celebrate

The wine he's been so happy with of late. 450

Chorus:

I get it: in the woods you hope to kill

The beast or push him off some rocky hill

When he's alone.

Odysseus:

Not so – I have a yen

For something cunning.

Chorus:

Ah, what is it, then?

We've long heard of your ingenuity.

Odysseus:

I hope to keep him from that revelry

By telling him that he must always keep

The liquor to himself. When he's asleep,

Knocked out by wine, an olive-branch I've seen

Inside the cave I'll sharpen with my keen- 460

Edged sword. And then I'll stick it in the fire,

And when it's blazing hot, it's my desire

To poke it in his single eye until

It melts; just as a vessel's joiner's drill

With double thongs is used, I'll make him blind

And burn his eye.

Chorus:

A plan of such a kind

I'm mad about.

Odysseus:

Then on my black ship you

And all your friends, and old Silenus too,

I'll take and sail away.

Chorus:

But could my hand

As well, as in libations, hold the brand

470



That blinds the Cyclops? How I'd love to play  
A part in this blood-letting!

Odysseus:

Yes, it may.

Indeed you'll have to help us, for the brand  
Is big and heavy.

Chorus:

Now that you have planned  
To smoke the cursed Cyclops' eye right out  
As if it were a wasp's nest, there's no doubt  
That I could lift a hundred carts.

Odysseus:

Then stay  
Your tongue – you know my plan – and when I say  
The word, put faith in me, the mastermind.  
For I will never leave my friends behind. 480

Chorus:

Who's first? Who's next? Who'll be the one to turn  
And twist the brand in his one eye and burn  
It all away? He's coming out: be quiet!  
He's drunk and singing – what a tuneless riot!  
He has no talent there. He's going to pay  
The price. Now let us with our roundelay  
Show him some culture in our revelling.  
But he will still be blinded – that's the thing!  
Happy the man who sings the Bacchic cry!  
Cheers to the vineyard juice that makes him high, 490  
Puffing his sails! His dear companion  
He clasps, his sexy mistress waiting on

His bed for his approach, his gleaming hair  
Well smoothed with myrrh; then he says, "Who is there  
To open the door for me?"

Cyclops:

I'm full of wine.

Oh lordy, lordy! Ah, this heart of mine  
Is skipping with the feast, and I am full  
Right to the very top deck of my hull.  
The cheerful cargo is inviting me,  
Now that it's spring, to venture on a spree                500  
And call upon my brother-Cyclopes.  
Come on, my friend – the wine-skin, if you please!

Chorus:

He's coming from his halls, a lovely sight!  
He shouts out, "Do not hang about! No, light  
The lamps! For someone loves me." Yes, soon now  
A pretty bride is going to grace your brow  
With flowers in your dewy cave. But you  
Will not be crowned with but a single hue.

Odysseus:

Cyclops, this Bacchus whom I give to you  
To drink I'm well acquainted with.

Cyclops:

But who                510

Is he? You worship him?

Odysseus:

We do, for he

Is joy's best source for all humanity.

Cyclops:

At any rate I'll belch him out with pleasure.

Odysseus:

Such is this god. He won't in any measure

Harm any mortal.

Cyclops:

Yes, but why would he

Live in a wine-skin?

Odysseus:

He lives happily

Wherever you may put him.

Cyclops:

Surely, though,

Gods shouldn't clothe themselves in skins.

Odysseus:

Oh no?

Not if it pleases them? Do you contest

The use of skin?

Cyclops:

Oh yes, skins I detest,

But I adore this drink.

Odysseus:

Alright then, stay!

Enjoy yourself and keep on drinking!

Cyclops:

May

I share it with my brothers?

Odysseus:

You will be

More honoured if you act clandestinely

And keep it for yourself.

Cyclops:

I'd aid them more

By sharing.

Odysseus:

Revelling ends in furore

And quarrelling.

Cyclops:

Besotted though I be,

I will not let a soul manhandle me.

Odysseus:

A man who tipples overmuch should stay

At home.

Cyclops:

A man who's drunk and keeps away

From revelling is stupid.

Odysseus:

He who's stewed

And chooses to remain at home is shrewd.

Cyclops:

Silenus, should we stay, then?

Silenus:

Yes. Wherefore

Do we need other drinkers?

Odysseus:

Furthermore

The ground blooms beautifully.

Silenus:

Drinking wine,

Moreover, sitting in the sun is fine.

Lie down upon the ground!

Cyclops:

There – I’ve done so.

Silenus:

Why do you put the bowl behind me?

Silenus:

Oh,

So that someone who’s passing by won’t spill

Its contents.

Cyclops:

No, you hope to drink your fill 540

By stealing it. Put it between us two.

[to Odysseus] And you, my friend, what is the name that you

Go by?

Odysseus:

No-One. What thanks, then, will you give?

Cyclops:

Until I eat the last, I’ll let you live.

Silenus:

A splendid gift to give a guest!

Cyclops:

What are

You at? You’re drinking slyly from that jar.

Silenus:

The wine kissed me because my looks are fine.

Cyclops:

Oh, you will feel remorse you loved the wine –

It doesn’t love you back.

Silenus:

That's just not true –

It's fallen for my looks.

Cyclops:

Now look here, you: 550

Just pour the wine and give the cup to me

Once it is full.

Silenus:

How is it? Let me see!

Cyclops:

Sod off! Just give it me!

Silenus:

Just let me try

A taste, and then I'll garland you

Cyclops:

Oh my,

A crooked waiter!

Silenus:

Oh, how sugary

The wine is! Cyclops, wipe your mouth, for see –

Your drink is on its way.

Cyclops:

My lips are clean,

My beard as well.

Silenus:

Then show your manners – lean

Upon your elbow! Drink! Look – just like me.

So bottoms up! [drinks quickly] Perhaps you *didn't* see. 560

Cyclops:

What are you doing?

Silenus:

Down the hatch!

Cyclops:

[to Odysseus] Hey, you,

My friend, take over! Pour the wine!

Odysseus:

*I do*

Have some acquaintance with the vine.

Cyclops:

Pour it!

Odysseus:

I'm pouring. Quiet!

Cyclops:

That advice won't fit

A man who's sozzled.

Odysseus:

Here's mud in your eye!

We both should drink together till we die.

Cyclops:

How clever is the wood of this grapevine!

Odysseus:

If you have feasted well and drunk much wine

Until your belly's lost its thirstiness,

You'll fall into a tranquil sleep, unless 570

You leave some – Dionysus then will dry

You up.

Cyclops:

Good lord, how very close was I

To drowning in it! Ah, the joy I feel  
Is unalloyed. The earth and heavens reel,  
All intermingled. Zeus's throne I see.  
I see the holy, blessed company  
Of all the gods. Should I not, then, embrace  
Them all? I'm being lured by every Grace.  
Enough! I'll bed down with this Ganymede,  
Who'll make me more illustrious indeed                      580  
Than all those Graces. Young boys gladden me  
More than do women.

Silenus:

   Am I, then, to be  
Your Ganymede?

Cyclops:

   Oh yes, from Dardanus  
I'm snatching you.

Silenus:

   Ah, how calamitous!  
My sons, a dreadful fate's awaiting me.

Cyclops:

Do you, then, spurn a drunk man haughtily  
And spurn your lover?

Silenus:

   Oh, how I will rue  
My glimpsing of this wine! [exit Cyclops and Silenus]

Odysseus:

   Come hither, you  
Children of Bacchus, noble progeny!  
The man is in the cave, and presently,                      590



While he relaxedly is slumbering,  
Unwittingly he'll belch out everything  
From his disgusting maw. The brand is set  
Within the cave, and there is nothing yet  
To do but burn the Cyclops' eye. Be brave!

Chorus:

Our hearts will be hard like this rocky cave.  
Before my father suffers something new,  
Go in. All things are ready now for you.

Odysseus:

With me, Hephaestus, lord of Aetna, bore  
Into your neighbour's eye that evermore                    600  
We will be quit of him. Sleep, child of Night,  
Attack this godless beast with all your might,  
And do not let Odysseus and the crew  
He leads be eaten up by someone who  
Has no regard for gods or men lest we  
Should think that Chance is a divinity,  
The strongest one.

Chorus:

                    The tongs will firmly take  
The neck of this guest-eater, and this stake  
Will burn his eye out. Yes, that huge oak-limb  
Lies in the ashes, primed to torture him.                    610  
Let the wine do its work and swirl about  
His brain, tormenting him and spitting out  
His eye. The ivy-wreathed Bacchus I yearn  
To see when this is finished and then turn  
Away from this forsaken cave. O how

Could I be more content than I am now?

Odysseus:

Shut up, you savages! Don't even take

A breath, blink, clear your throat lest you should wake

The filthy beast before that single eye

Of his can with the blazing fire vie. 620

Chorus:

We hold our breath.

Odysseus:

Come, then, for you must go

And grab the fire-brand. It's all a-glow.

Chorus:

Who should be first to grab that charcoaled stake

And burn his eye out so that we can take

Part in whatever fate there is to be.

Chorus A:

We're too far from the door.

Chorus B:

I suddenly

Went lame.

Chorus A:

Me too. As I stood here just now,

I sprained my feet, although I don't know how.

Odysseus:

Standing ?? How did you get a sprain that way?

Chorus B:

My eyes are full of dust and ash, too.

Odysseus:

Hey, 630

You're worthless cowards!

Chorus A:

What? A coward? Me?

Since for my spine I feel some sympathy

And value all my teeth you shame me so?

An Orphic incantation, though, I know

So wonderful the brand will on its own

March straight up to the Cyclops's head-bone

And set on fire the one-eyed progeny

Of Earth.

Odysseus:

For long your personality

I've known: I know it better now: I must,

Then, use my friends. But, since you're not robust 640

Enough, at least let's hear your exhortation

So that my friends may feel your inspiration

And be emboldened.

Chorus:

Right! A mercenary

Will take the risk, and by our cheering we

Will blind him. Great! Thrust bravely and burn out

The eyebrow of this foul, guest-eating lout!

Burn, blind the Aetnian shepherd! Thrust, rotate

So that he doesn't incapacitate

You in his pain!

Cyclops:

Aah! My eye's cindery.

Ye gods!

Chorus:

Oh sing that lovely song for me

650

Once more!

Odysseus:

I'm in such pain! Ah, I'm undone!

But you will pay the price, every last one

Of you. I'll man the entrance, my hands fast

Against it, so none of you will get past.

Chorus:

What's all this racket?

Cyclops:

I'm undone!

Chorus:

Yes, you

Are looking pretty ugly.

Cyclops:

Wretched, too.

Chorus:

Did you fall in the coals when you were three

Sheets to the wind?

Cyclops:

No-One has ruined me.

Chorus:

Well, that's alright, then.

Cyclops:

No, it's really true.

No-One has blinded me.

Chorus:

Alright, then, you

660

Still have your sight.

Cyclops:

You mock me. Where's No-One?

Chorus:

He's nowhere.

Cyclops:

But by hm I am undone –

The offensive guest who gave that drink to me

And drowned me in it.

Chorus:

Full of jeopardy

Is wine, and ineluctable.

Cyclops:

Are they

Still in my house or have they slipped away?

Chorus:

They're standing quietly beneath the ledge.

Cyclops:

My left or right?

Chorus:

Right.

Cyclops:

Where?

Chorus:

Near the cliff's edge.

Got them?

Cyclops:

I've got pain after pain. Ow! Ooh!

I broke my head.

Chorus:

Plus, they've eluded you. 670

Cyclops:

What? Did you tell me they were over here?

Chorus:

No – here.

Cyclops:

Where's that?

Chorus:

Just turn around and veer

Towards your left.

Cyclops:

You make a mockery

Of me.

Chorus:

I promise I will cease. Now he

Is right in front of you.

Cyclops:

You bastard, where

Are you?

Chorus:

Far off, where I can take good care

Of Odysseus.

Cyclops:

What's that new name that you say?

Odysseus:

The name my father gave me. You shall pay

For that foul feast of yours. Our victory

In sacking Troy was all in vain if we 680

Are not paid for the slaughter of my men.

Cyclops:

An ancient prophecy from way back when  
Has been fulfilled: it was foretold I'd be  
Blinded by you when you traversed the sea  
From Troy. But it was also said that you  
Would pay the penalty for what you'd do  
By sailing many years across the sea.

Odysseus:

Be off, then , to eternal purgatory!  
The deed is done. I'll go now to the strand  
And cross the sea to my dear native land. 690

Cyclops:

Oh no, you won't, for I will break away  
A portion of this rock so that I may  
Shatter you all to pieces. I will go  
And climb up to the precipice, although  
I'm blind, straight through this tunnel here.

Chorus:

And we

Henceforth shall form a naval company  
And be the shipmates of Odysseus and  
Be servants evermore in Bacchus' band.





