

EURIPIDES'
"CYCLOPS"
Written circa 428BCE

TRANSLATED BY
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Dramatis Personae

SILENUS

(Father of the Satyrs)

ODYSSEUS

POLYPHEMUS

(One of the Cyclopes)

CHORUS OF SATYRS

(Silenus' sons)

ODYSSEUS' MATES

(Silent)

At the front of a huge cave situated at the foot of Mount Aetna, in Sicily.

The sea might be visible in the distance. We can also hear the sounds of a river and of sheep grazing. The land is green with Spring vegetation. There are trees and rocks around the stage which will become useful props when the blinded Cyclops bumps into them and hurts himself. (He will crack his skull from l. 670 onwards).

A hot day.

Enter Silenus from the cave. He is an old man with a bent frame, holding an iron rake. All satyrs wear sheep skins, have a tail, a red leather-phallus (hanging down in the case of Silenus but proud in the case of his sons) and two small horns on their forehead. (Satyrs are half-goat, half-human.)

Note: All players wear the red leather phallus.

Silenus:

Oh, Bacchus, Bacchus! Bacchus, Dionysos! My master!

The pains I've suffered because of you during the days of my virile youth! Countless pains! I'm still suffering them now! The first one came when Hera, who, demented by a rage of jealousy, turned you, my god and master, into a possessed and frenzied maniac and you ran off, leaving behind you all your lovely nurses – all those delightful mountain nymphs! Then, the next suffering I had to endure was when I fought beside you, in the war against Earth's children, all those huge Giants. There I was, standing beside you with my shield, on your right side and, for your sake, I had killed Enceladus. Speared him right through the guts... *To the audience* hang on... is this true or am I dreaming now? No, no, no! I remember now, I remember proudly exhibiting all the spoils of the war to Bacchus! By Zeus! I sure did!

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And now, Bacchus, here I am again, having to suffer another ordeal, an even greater one than all the others! Suffering it because, once again, I had tried to save you! That was the time when my sons and I rushed to my ship and began searching for you.

Hera had stirred up all those Tuscan pirates and got them to kidnap you and sell you as a slave in some distant country or other! There I was, my Lord, at the stern of the ship, at the wheel, my sons turning the grey sea waves white, working hard at the oars, scanning the horizon, looking for you!

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But then, just as we were about to take the Headland around Malea, a terrible easterly blew hard upon us and sped our ship away from there. We landed near this rock here, this rock called Aetna. Here, in Aetna, where Poseidon's murderous children, the one-eyed Cyclopes live in their bleak caves.

One of them, Polyphemus, caught us and he won't let us go now. He has made us the slaves of his house. So now, instead of enjoying your joyful Bacchic celebrations we have to look after this godless beast's flock of sheep! No more wine for us, no more dancing, no more merry singing! My young boys are right now tending to the sheep, out there somewhere, behind those distant hills. I, being old, have to stay behind and tend to the chores of the monster's cave. Fill all his water troughs, sweep his cave, serve him his unholy meals at night.

30

Unholy meals, ungodly Cyclops and poor me, Silenus! These are my orders and orders must always be obeyed! Now I must work this iron rake so that I may welcome Cyclops, my absent master and his flock of sheep, into a clean cave.

Silenus begins sweeping when suddenly he hears noises in the distance. His sons, the satyrs are herding the sheep within (SL). Noises of bells, bleating, etc. A lyre accompanies the satyrs who are singing and dancing happily. Silenus looks up and searches the distance with his eyes.

Ah! I can see my sons bringing the sheep around. *Shouts* How are you boys? Hahaha! You look very happy. Dancing to the same rhythm we did in the old days, I see! The days when you'd be accompanying Bacchus himself to Althaia's house. Oh, the dancing we did back then ey? And the happy songs we sang! The lyre music!

Enter the chorus of satyrs, singing and dancing, led by the lyre player.

Slaves accompany them

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Chorus:

Oh, ho! Look at that ram, boys! The wayward ram!

Chorus:

Oh, noble ram, child of a noble family, don't run off that way!

That's the way to the rough crags!

No sweet breezes that way for you, no luscious grass!

Come turn this way, the way to the watering troughs.

Here, near Cyclops' cave, just there where your young lambs are bleating.

Chorus:

Come this way, where the troughs are full, darlings.

Full with the water from the swirling eddies of the river!

You, too, hey you, yes you! Come this way!

This way to the cool, grassy slope! Come here to graze!

50

Chorus:

Turn back, you! Or else I'll throw a stone your way!

Turn back you high-horned ram!

Chorus:

Turn back and head for Cyclops' water troughs!

Cyclops, who walks upon the wild fields.

And you there, noble lady, let loose your swollen udders

And let your young ones come to your teats

They've been here, sleeping in the cave all day and they miss you.

60

Chorus:

Come, come!

Won't you leave the grassy dales on Aetna's crags

And come into your vast pen?

Chorus:

Alas, there's no Bacchus here!

No dancing, no worshipers, waving their fennel wands,

No ecstatic drum beats near the gurgling springs,

Not a drop of wine here!

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Chorus:

And now I'm forbidden from the happy company of the singing Nymphs,

On Mount Nysa with the Iacchus song:

Chorus:

"Oh, Iacchus! Oh, Iacchus!"

No longer can I sing this song to Aphrodite,

The goddess of Love, while I
And the white-footed Bacchantes pursue her!

Chorus:

O Bacchus! O Dionysus! O dearest Lord!
Lord who shakes the waves of his golden locks
Where do you go to now, all alone?

Chorus:

Now, your servant is the servant of the one-eyed Cyclops
And now, far from my own home and dressed in this rough cloak of
Goat skin, I suffer without your dear friendship.

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Silenus: *Disturbed by what he suddenly sees in the distance*

Shhh! Quiet, my sons! Quickly tell your slaves to go and guide the sheep into the rocky cave!

Chorus: *To the slaves*

Go, on, men! Do as he says!

Exit slaves

Father, what is it?

Silenus:

There, on the beach, I can see a Greek ship coming in. Its oarsmen and their chief are heading this way, to this cave. They're carrying empty baskets on their heads. They're after food, by the looks of it; food and pails of water.

90

O, poor unlucky strangers! They have no idea what our master, Polyphemus is like! No idea that the ground they're walking on is hostile to foreigners. No idea that their dreadful luck has guided them right into the jaws of the man-eater Cyclops!

But, don't say a word before we find out where they're from and how they came to be here, on this awful crag of Sicilian Aetna.

Enter Odysseus and his men. From Odysseus' shoulder hangs a wine skin. The men carry empty baskets and water pails. Only Odysseus is wearing a sword.

Odysseus:

Friends, greetings! Can someone tell us where there's a river that can quench the thirst of travellers, and, is there anyone who can sell food for this lot of starving sailors?

Suddenly he realises where he is.

Oh, I see we're in Bacchus' land, lads! There's a group of satyrs in front of that cave. *Indicating Silenus.* I think I'll talk to the older gentleman first. Greetings to you, old man.

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Silenus:

Greetings, friend. Who are you and where are you from?

Odysseus:

I am Odysseus, from the island of Ithaca, king of the Cephallenes.

Silenus:

I know this man! He's that clever chattering son of Sisyphus!

Odysseus:

That's me, all right, without the insults!

Silenus:

How did you get yourself here, in Sicily?

Odysseus:

On my way from Ilium, fighting the war in Troy.

Silenus:

From Troy? Don't you know your way home?

Odysseus:

Not my choice, my friend. Fierce winds and storms drove my ships here.

110

Silenus:

Poor man! Your Fate is identical to my Fate. We have suffered from the work of the same god.

Odysseus:

Were you driven here against your will, as well?

Silenus:

Yes, we were chasing the pirates that had kidnapped Dionysus at the time.

Odysseus: *Examines the place*

Where am I? What is this place called and who lives here?

Silenus:

This place is called Mount Aetna the highest mountain on Sicily.

Odysseus:

Where are its walls, its battlements?

Silenus:

Don't look for such things here, friend. It's not humans who occupy this land.

Odysseus:

Not humans? Who lives here then, beasts?

Silenus:

Cyclopes live here, my friend and they live in caves, not houses.

Odysseus:

And their king? Or do they have none?

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Silenus:

Yes, they have none. They all live on their own, obeying no one.

Odysseus:

Are they farmers? Do they live by the grain of the goddess Demeter?

Silenus:

No, they eat cheese, drink milk, feed on the flesh of sheep.

Odysseus:

And do they have any wine? Dionysus' drink? The stuff that flows from the grape vine?

Silenus:

No, none at all. That's why this land, the land they live on, knows nothing about dancing.

Odysseus:

And how do they treat strangers? Do they welcome them? Are the Cyclopes god-fearing?

Silenus:

Strangers? Well, they say that the most delicious flesh is that of strangers!

Odysseus:

What? Do these beasts enjoy human flesh?

Silenus:

Every stranger who landed here was butchered.

Odysseus: *Indicating the cave*

Is Cyclops in there now?

130

Silenus:

Took his dogs and went off to the mountain, hunting.

Odysseus:

Do you know of a way we can get out of here?

Silenus:

No, Odysseus, I don't but I'll help you any way I can.

Odysseus:

You could sell us some bread, friend. That's one thing we don't have.

Silenus:

I can't. I told you, we only have meat on this island.

Odysseus:

That, too, would be a sweet way of stopping the hunger.

Silenus:

There's also cheese and cow's milk.

Odysseus:

Bring them all out. Business must be done outside, in the daylight.

Silenus:

How much gold are you prepared to give for it?

Odysseus:

I've not brought any gold with me, friend but I've got Dionysus' drink.

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Silenus:

Oh, what sweet words you utter! It's been a very long time since we drank any of it.

Odysseus:
 Maron, Dionysus' own son gave it to me.

Silenus:
 Maron, the child that I raised in my own arms?

Odysseus:
 Yes, I'll say it again so we don't make any mistakes: Maron, Dionysus' own boy!

Silenus:
 Have you've got it here with you or have you left it behind, aboard your ship?

Odysseus: *Shows Silenus the wine skin*
 Here, let me show you, old man. It's in here. In this wine skin.

Silenus:
 That little thing? That's won't even be a mouthful!

Odysseus:
 That's what you think, old man. No, you wouldn't be able to empty this skin if you tried.

Silenus:
 What? Does the wineskin replenish itself... by itself?

Odysseus:
 It doubles itself!

Silenus:
 O, what a wondrous fountain this wineskin is! What a joyful spring it is!

Odysseus:
 Would you like to try a bit? Neat, with no water added?

150

Silenus:
 Good idea: A taste often dictates the purchase.

Odysseus: *Hands Silenus a cup*
 See, not only have I brought the wine but I've also brought a cup!

Silenus:
 Well, fill it up, man and let me drink so that I can remind myself of what it tastes like.

Odysseus: *Fills the cup with wine*
 Here you are!

Silenus:
 Oooo, look! The aroma! Mmmm! Oooo!

Odysseus:
 See it?

Silenus:
 No, but I'm smelling it! By Zeus, what an aroma!

Odysseus: *Hands him the cup*
 Taste it old man, taste it so that your praises are not just hollow words.

Silenus: *Gulps it down and begins dancing and singing with joy*
 O, what a lovely drop! Look, folks! Bacchus is calling on me to dance! Tra la lalala! O! Tra lala lala!

Odysseus:
 Doesn't it just slide down your throat nice and gentle?

Silenus:
 Sure does! Down my throat and all the way down to my toenails!

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Odysseus:
 Hang on, I've also got some money for you...

Silenus:
 Forget the money, just keep feeling this cup up!

Odysseus:
 And you just bring out the cheese!

Silenus:
 All right. I'll do that, even if it means I disobey my master!
 Just a cup of this stuff and I'll give you all of his sheep and all of the sheep of all the other Cyclopes;
 and then I'll go jump off the Leucadian cliff, right into the salty sea below, thoroughly sloshed to the
 eyeballs and to my eyebrows which, by then, will have lost their frown! The man who doesn't drink is
 mad!
Indicates his phallus Hahaha! One drink and a man can make this thing stand upright! Straight up!
 Upright and uptight! Hahahaha! One drink and a man can grab a woman's breast, enjoy a woman's

shrub! And then, there's all the lovely dancing and all the forgetting of worries...

Takes another gulp

So, why shouldn't I drink such a drink? To Hades with that idiot, Cyclops and his single eye!

Silenus exits into the cave

Chorus:

Psst, Odysseus. A word in your ear.

Odysseus:

Of course. From one friend to another.

Chorus:

That city, Troy and that woman, Helen, did you... capture them? Both of them?

Odysseus:

We've destroyed the whole of Priam's household.

Chorus:

And, of course, once you've got hold of young Helen, each and every one of your boys fucked her, right? I mean, since she obviously loves to fuck one man after another, right? The bitch! Took one look at the fancy pants of the barbarian, one look at his golden chain dangling from his neck and off she went! Right out of her skull! Ran off with him, leaving that poor, nice little guy, Menelaos behind! Damn all women! I wish they never existed! Destroy them all... every one of them... just leave one on my lap!

Enter Silenus and a couple of his sons from the cave carrying sacks of cheese and pails of milk. The noise of sheep bleating is heard within. (SL)

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Silenus:

Here you are, king Odysseus! Cheese, butter and milk. *Indicating within* And there, the flocks of bleating lambs. Take them, Odysseus! Take them and leave this cave. But give me Bacchus' wine first. *Odysseus and his mates take the sacks of cheese and hang them over their shoulders. They pick up the pails of milk but are stopped suddenly by the noises of a loud fart, snorts and heavy footsteps etc, made by Cyclops as he's approaching them.*

O, no! Here comes Cyclops! What are we going to do now?

Odysseus:

O, no! We're stuffed, old man! We're dead! Where can we go?

Silenus:

Go inside the cave, quickly. It's dark in there. He won't be able to see you.

Odysseus:

Bad idea, old man! You want us to jump into his own nets?

Silenus:

No, it's not such a bad idea. There are lots of places to hide in there.

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Odysseus:

No way! I won't do it! The whole of Troy would groan with dreadful anger to see me run away from one man after they saw me standing up with my shield and sword against a countless hoard of her soldiers!

No, if I'm going to die, then I will do so as a noble but then, if he doesn't manage to kill me, then my fame will continue to live on.

Enter Cyclops. He is carrying a huge roughly carved wooden club.

At first he doesn't notice Odysseus and his men who have cowered behind a stone near the cave's entrance and yells at the satyrs who are joyfully and carelessly hopping about.

Cyclops:

Oi! What's all this? What's going on? What's with all this dancing about? Have we got a Bacchic holiday or something? There's no Dionysus on this island! There are no castanets, no beating drums around here!

Now, how are my little newborn lambs going in the cave? Are they well? Are they suckling well? Are they running around next to their mothers?

Have you done the milking yet? Are the baskets filled with cheese?

Speak! Speak or else someone will be crying bitter tears after they feel the weight of this club!

Go on, speak! You, there! Don't look down, look up at me!

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Chorus:

Here you are! My eyes are raised. High. Up towards Zeus himself and the heavens! *Pointing skywards*

Look! I can see the stars! I can see the great hunter Orion, Poseidon's son, Orion, your brother, Polyphemus!

Cyclops:

Have you prepared my dinner well?

Chorus:

Of course we did! Of course we did. It's all ready for you!

Only thing missing there, is your guts!

Cyclops:

You filled all the bowls with milk?

Chorus:

There's so much milk there, boss, you could drink a whole urn of it, if you want!

Cyclops:

What is it? Cow's milk? Sheep's milk or a mixture of both?

Chorus:

Whichever takes your fancy, boss, so long as it's not me!

220

Cyclops:

You! Eat you? Ha! All that hopping about and dancing inside my guts! It'd kill me!

He suddenly turns and notices Odysseus and his men.

What? Who are these men near my cave there? Are they pirates or thieves? Has the island been invaded by them?

Peering into the distance

Well now! Look there! I can see lambs there—all tied up with twisted cane... and all this cheese...

looks all around him in amazement all my cheese baskets are tossed around everywhere... and

Indicating Silenus this old man, this bald old man... ha! His face tells me he got a belting from someone!

Silenus approaches Cyclops, whimpering.

Silenus:

O, poor, poor me! My whole body is burning from all that beating!

Cyclops:

Beating? Who beat you? Who's been clobbering you over the head, old man?

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Silenus: *Indicating Odysseus and his men*

They have, Cyclops! They beat me all up because I wouldn't let them run away with your possessions.

Cyclops:

What? Don't they know that I'm a god and a god's son as well?

Silenus:

I did tell them but they took no notice, boss. Just kept grabbing all your stuff and taking them out and then, then they started on the cheese. I told them to stop again and again but they still wouldn't listen. Tried to stop them but they wouldn't stop. Then they started on your sheep, boss. Again I tried to stop them but they said that what they were gonna do to you was to tie you up with a triple rope, rip all your guts out, beat the crap out of your backside with a huge whipping stick, tie you up hand and foot, toss you onto the rowing benches of their boat and sell you off to whoever wants someone to turn a mill or move big, heavy rocks around.

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Cyclops:

Oh ho! Is that right? *To one of the satyrs:* You! Run quickly into the cave, get out my best carving knife and sharpen it well! Then build a big, blazing fire in the hearth with a huge pile of wood. These men will be slaughtered, roasted on the coals and then fill my guts with a juicy meal. I, their host, will eat some of them straight from the hot coals, roasted and some of them I'll just have them boiled tender in the huge cauldron.

The satyr runs off into the cave

I'm sick and tired of all that wild mountain meat. I'm fed up with lion flesh and deer flesh. It's been far too long since I've tasted man's flesh!

250

Silenus:

A change in the menu is always a very pleasant thing, boss. No good having the same old boring stuff over and over again. Come to think of it, it's been a very long time since we had any human visitors to your cave.

Odysseus:

Visitors! Ah yes! Now, Cyclops, listen! Listen to your visitors as well now. The only reason we came down from our ship and visited your cave was so that we could buy some food from you but this man here, after we gave him a drink, he sold us your sheep for a skinful of wine. He took the wine, drank it and handed us the sheep –willingly, to willing customers. No one was forced to do anything. He’s a liar, this man, simple as that. He was sprung selling your stuff behind your back and, now he’s lying through his teeth.

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Silenus:

Who’s lying, me? Damn you...

Odysseus:

Sure, damn me -if I’m lying, that is!

Silenus:

O boss! No! I swear, Cyclops! I swear by your father, Poseidon, boss! And I swear by Great Triton and by Nereus and by the daughters of Nereus and Calypso and by the holy waters of the great Ocean and by all the fishes inside it, boss! I swear... my big, handsome boy, Cyclops, my dear, dear Cyclops, my sweet, sweet bossyboots, Cyclops! I swear that I was not at any time ever trying to sell your possessions to these foreigners. I swear that if I’m lying... well, if I’m lying, may Hades take my darling, darling children here, all these children that I love so much!

270

Chorus: *To Silenus*

Hold the crap, Silenus! I saw you with my own eyes, selling Cyclops’ stuff to the strangers and if I’m lying, well, if I’m lying let Hades take my own father but don’t blame the strangers for something that they didn’t do!

Cyclops: *To Chorus*

It’s you who’s lying! I’ve got more faith in this bald man, here, than I have in the great Judge of the underworld, Rhadymanthys himself!

Turning to Odysseus

But let me ask you, strangers, where are you from? Which is your country? In what city were you raised?

Odysseus:

Ithaca is where we were born, Cyclops and after we sacked the great city of Troy, the winds swept us all over the place until they finally brought us here, to your island.

280

Cyclops:

Oho! Are you the lot that went to punish Troy, that city by the river Scamander, for having stolen that nasty bitch Helen?

Odysseus:

Yes, that was us. We were the ones who had to take on that terrible ordeal!

Cyclops:

Shameful expedition that one! All that fuss, going all the way to Phrygia for the sake of one woman! Shameful stuff that!

Odysseus:

It was the will of a god, Cyclops. No mortal should be blamed for that.

But now, noble son of Poseidon, the god of the sea, we beg you and speak to you not as slaves but as free men: Don’t let your heart endure the awful consequences of you having killed us -us, who came here, to your house, as friendly visitors; and of you having made a sacrilegious meal out of us for the benefit of your jaws.

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Us, Lord Polyphemos, who have kept all of your father’s temples safe, in every corner of Hellas. His temple at Tainarum remains untouched and pure to this day and so are the deepest sacred hollows of Malea. So is the silver-rich rock at Sunium, beloved by your father and by the goddess Athena together. So are all of Gerastus’ havens as well. We’ve given the Phrygians nothing belonging to Greece. We could not endure such an awful shame. In all this, you too can take credit, because you, too, live in Greece, though at its most distant reaches, here, under the flame-dripping rock of Mount Aetna.

Cyclops yawns. He is not impressed by Odysseus’ pleas.

But, listen, Lord, if you will pay no heed to these words then you must remember that there’s a law among mortals, a law that a host must obey and it says that:

300

“Lost and shipwrecked visitors who come to you as suppliants must be received with all due hospitality and given gifts and clothes, if necessary and not have their bodies perforated with spits that are usually used to roast bulls with, and they definitely should not be made food for your jaws and guts.”

The soil of Priam’s country has delivered enough misery to Greece, Polyphemus. It has drunk the blood of enough Greek corpses, many of us were killed by the spear during that war. Enough women are now left without their men, enough old women and old men will now die without sons. And so, if you, Cyclops, cook and make a dismal meal of the few Greek men that are left alive, where could anyone turn to for protection?

Cyclops yawns again

309

Cyclops, hear my words! Put aside the fury of your jaws! Choose reverence rather than irreverence. Evil deeds have brought awful sufferings to many.

Silenus: *To Cyclops*

Boss, I want to give you a piece of advice. Cyclops, mate, leave not a speck of this man’s flesh untouched, not a bite of it, boss; and if your teeth will get to his tongue and you eat it, if you eat his tongue, boss, then I guarantee, you, too, will become clever and eloquent like him.

Cyclops: *To Odysseus*

Ey, little man! Wise men believe in one god and one god only: Wealth! Everything else is just words; fat words, lovely words but that’s all. All these shrines and temples of my father, built on every shore in Greece mean nothing to me. What’s the point of telling me all about them?

320

You can mention Zeus’ thunderbolt, too, if you like and it would mean nothing to me. Not afraid of it, not one bit! I don’t know and I don’t even care if Zeus is a more powerful god than me. Nothing else matters either, see, and I’ll tell you why.

See, let’s say Zeus decides to rain upon us. Well, all I have to do is to just go inside that cave, underneath that dry roof there, lie down on my backside and rip into a roasted calf or into some wild beast or other, then guzzle down a whole vat of milk, deliver a huge feast into my belly and then, and then I do battle with Zeus’ thunderbolts: His bolts come from up above and mine come from down below!

Farts loudly

Hahahaha!

Then, when the terrible snows come down upon us all the way from Thrace, I just cover myself up all snugly with the hides of wild animals, light up a blazing fire in there and to Hades with the snow!

Won’t affect me in the slightest!

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As for Earth, whether she wants to or not, she’ll still bring up the grass which will feed all my animals which I, in turn, will feed to the most important divinity in the world, my own belly. No sacrifices, nothing for anyone else, just my own lovely guts! Yum, yum!

Drink, eat and worry about nothing! That’s what smart people like me think about Zeus! As for all those fools who made all these laws for the humans and make their lives miserable, well they ought to be hanged! Every one of them!

340

I’ll never stop gratifying my soul and I’ll even eat you to do it.

You were talking about gifts that hosts give to their guests. Well, you’re going to get your gifts all right. I won’t have you blaming me for neglecting my duties, little man, so I’ll give you gifts: You will be given the fire to cook you with and you will even be given salt, fresh salt that came right from the waters of my father’s kingdom. Then you’ll get a bronze cauldron, a huge cauldron which when it gets to be boiling, it will cover your badly dressed little body beautifully!

Now, all of you, little men, go inside the cave and pay homage to its god! Prepare yourselves to be my feast!

Hahaha! Go on, in you go!

Cyclops prods them towards the cave.

Odysseus:

What dreadful luck! I have survived the toils of Troy and the torment tossed at me by all the oceans, only to end up in the heartless harbour of this horrible, godless beast!

350

O, Athena! My goddess, Pallas Athena! Heavenly daughter of Zeus, come to me! Come to me now and help me. Come straight away because I’m in deeper danger now than I was in on the battleground of Troy! You, too, Zeus! Divine protector of all guests! God whose abode is the brilliant stars, look upon

this! See what's going on here because if you can't, if can't see this injustice, then they're wrong to believe you're a real god... you would be a false and worthless god!

Odysseus and his men enter the cave. Silenus follows them. Cyclops enters last having let off a loud fart.

Chorus:

Come then Cyclops! Open your gaping gullet wide! Your meal is now ready. Go on, lie down on your soft fleece-covered couch and eat the flesh of your guests: Straight out of the cauldron, or from the oven or from the burning coals.

Chorus:

Tear them up into little bits, gnaw at their bones, enjoy, Cyclops, enjoy your meal, enjoy the flesh of strangers!

Screams of pain and anger are heard from within the cave.

Chorus: *moving away from the cave, in fear and disgust*

No, no! Give me no share of it! Give us none of your ship's cargo. Keep it all down, in your own cargo hold!

No, don't let me look into the dreadful cave! I don't want to see the sacrilegious sacrifices that this Cyclops from Aetna is making!

More screams for a few seconds, then a short pause before Cyclops is heard belching, laughing heartily... and farting.

Chorus:

In there! In there this beast has killed the visitors and he's now eating their flesh! Cyclops is feasting on human flesh!

369

Chorus:

Heartless! Heartless is the beast who murders those who approach his shores, looking for some refuge by his hearth. Heartless he is if he kills and cooks the strangers, then grinds their bodies between his teeth, straight after he's roasted them on the burning coals.

Chorus: *Repeats as a refrain*

No, no! Give me no share of it! Give us none of your ship's cargo. Keep it all down, in your own cargo hold!

No, don't let me look into the dreadful cave! I don't want to see the sacrilegious sacrifices that this Cyclops from Aetna is making!

Short pause before Odysseus comes out of the cave, carrying the wine skin. He is in a state of utter despair.

Odysseus:

O, Zeus! Zeus, how can I ever speak now? How can I utter anything, now that I've seen things that are incredible, things done only in myths, dire deeds, deeds not performed by mortals!

Chorus:

What is it, Odysseus? Has Cyclops killed your mates and ate them?

Odysseus:

Two of them! The fattest ones. Lifted them up into his hands, weighed them up for size and ate them!

380

Chorus:

Poor, poor men! Tell us the whole story. What happened in there?

Odysseus:

The moment we walked into his rocky cave, Cyclops lit up a blazing fire which he fed with three truckloads of huge oak branches and then put a giant cauldron on top of it.

Next, he chopped up a whole lot of small branches from a fur tree and made a bed near the fire. Then he took an enormous urn—one that could hold some ten jugs of milk—and filled it up to the brim with the frothy white milk he drew from the cows' teats.

390

Next to that urn, he placed a tall, wide cup, made of ivy wood. I'd say it was about four feet wide and about six or seven feet high.

Then, with a sharp knife, he went about trimming lengths of buckthorn wood into long spits, the ends of which he poked into the fire to make hard. And when he had everything ready, this appalling, god-hated Cook from Hades, picked up two of my mates, lifted one over the huge, bronze cauldron and there cut his throat with a swift expert motion.

400

As for my other mate, the beast lifts him up by the ankle and crashes him upon a huge jutting rock, splattering his brains everywhere.

Then, he picked up his sharp knife and butchered the men's bodies to bits. Some bits he threw into the fire while others, their arms and legs, he tossed into the boiling cauldron.

In utter despair and with tears streaming from my eyes, I was running around Cyclops obeying his orders. All my other mates, crowded themselves behind rocks, trembling like a swarm of frightened birds, their faces white and drained of any blood.

409

But then, when Cyclops had enough to eat, gorging himself on my unfortunate friends, he fell flat on his back and, from his dreadful mouth, he belched out a foul smell. Just then, a divine thought filled my head. I picked up a cup, filled it with this Maronian wine and brought it up to Cyclops' face. "Look," I said, "Look here, son of a god, Cyclops. Look at the divine drink the Greeks make out of their vines. Dionysus' very joy! Here, taste it!"

The savage beast, his stomach stuffed full of the ungodly meal he had just eaten, raised his hand, took the cup to his lips and swallowed the whole lot in one gulp! Then, he raised his hands in the air and praised me. "O what a wonderful friend you are, stranger," he said. "First you give me a splendid meal and then you give me a splendid drink!"

420

Now, seeing that this had pleased the monster, I gave him another cup of it, knowing full well that this drink would bring about his destruction and his just punishment.

And true enough, after a few cups, he began to sing and so I kept stoking the fire in his heart by serving him one cup after another of this lovely wine. He sang his miserable songs next to my crying friends so loudly that the whole cave was echoing with the giant's frightful voice.

But just now, I slid quietly out of the cave and I am ready to save myself, my friends and you, if you want. It's up to you, so tell me if you would like to escape this unholy monster and live inside Bacchus' palaces, along with all the Nymphs there.

431

Because that's what Silenus, your father, really wants, too but he's an old drunk, I'm afraid. He's still in there, in the cave and his love for the wine has made him weak and thoughtless. He's stuck in that cup, just like a little bird is stuck, caught in a bird trap, flapping his hands about frantically, trying to escape.

But you! You're young! Come with me. Get back to your old friend, Dionysus. He's a very different sort of creature to Cyclops, that's for sure!

Chorus:

If only, my dear, darling friend! If only the day would come that we could escape from the clutches of that Beast! *Raising his fallen phallus* This little siphon of mine is getting desperately lonely! There's no sex to be had in that cave, that's for sure!

440

Odysseus:

Well then, let me tell you my plan for punishing that savage and for letting you escape this slavery.

Chorus:

Tell me! Hearing about Cyclops' death would be sweeter than the sweetest sounds made by an Asian lyre!

Odysseus:

He is so drunk and so happy now, that he wants to go to all his brothers, all the other Cyclopes and have a jolly party with them all!

Chorus:

O, I get you! You want us to ambush him all alone in some forest and murder him, or throw him off a steep cliff...

Odysseus:

o, no, no! Nothing like that at all. I've got a different plan in my head for him.

450

Chorus:

Yeah? What is it then? We've heard a lot about how cunning you are!

Odysseus:

First thing I'll do is to tell him to forget about the party. I'll tell him to keep the wine all to himself and enjoy it for the rest of his life and not to share it with the rest of his brothers. Then, after he succumbs to Dionysus' drink and falls dead asleep, I'll pull out this huge olive tree log from a corner in there, make it pointy at one end with my sharp sword here and put it into the fire. Then, when I see it getting all red and hot, I'll lift it up and shove it hard, deep into Cyclops' eye. The fire will melt his eyeball and make him totally blind!

460

See, just like the boat builder twists and turns the drill into a whole in the wood with his two straps, that's what I'll do with the burning log, drilling it deep right into his eye socket. Burn out his eyeball!

Chorus: *Excited with joy*

Yes! Woohoo! This scheme of yours is a real beauty! Insane!

Odysseus:

After that, it will only be a matter of putting you guys and your old man aboard my black ship and, working both rows of its oars, we'll speed you away from this place!

469

Chorus:

Can I help with the log, too? At least touch it while you're poking it into his eyes? Sort of the way people touch the libation cups during a ceremony. I want to take part in this blood libation.

Odysseus:

That's a must because this log is huge! Very heavy to lift so we'll need your help.

Chorus:

Heavy? What's heavy? I could lift the weight of a hundred carts to get the chance to scorch out that beast's eye! Scorch it out like a wasps' nest!

Odysseus:

All right, then, but for now, hold your tongue. You know my plan. Sit tight and wait for my signal. Wait for the master's command!

480

There's no way I'm going to leave my mates behind, inside that cave. True, I've found a way to get out and I could escape if I wanted to but I've come here with my mates and I'll leave here with my mates.

It'd be a terrible sacrilege to escape alone.

Odysseus enters the cave

Chorus:

Right! Now who's going to be the first at the pole and who'll be next after him? Who'll hold the burning log and who'll turn it and twist it inside Cyclops' eye, melt down that bright sight of his?

Cyclops sings drunkenly within.

Chorus:

Listen! He's drunk now... awful voice! Awful tune! Shhh! *More singing within.* Knows nothing about singing...

Cyclops, Silenus and Odysseus appear at the entrance of the cave. Cyclops and Silenus are drunk and Cyclops is leaning on Silenus' shoulder one moment and on Odysseus' the next. Odysseus has the wine skin and Silenus the cup.

Chorus:

Here he is! He's coming out of his rocky cave now.

490

Chorus:

Come boys, let's teach this uncouth fellow something about singing. In any case, one way or another he won't be able to escape his fate. Cyclops will be blinded!

Chorus:

What a happy chappy is the man who's sings the Bacchic song! How happy he must be as he heads off to the party, his sails filled with the delicious juice of the grape vine!

Chorus

There he is, leaning on his best friend's shoulder, on his way to his bed, a bed where the scrumptious, lusty body of his mistress is waiting for him. And when he gets to the door of his choice -he and his plush long hair, all washed in scented myrrh- he'll sing out, "Hellooooo? Who can open the door for me, please?"

503

Cyclops:

Hahaha! Tralala la la! Ohhhh, I'm... I'm... well, I'm totally pissed! Hahahahaha! Loaded! Clogged with wine! *Farts* Hahahaha! Oh, what joy! What joy! My heart is dancing about inside me! *Belches* Hahaha! I'm loaded to the brim. Like a ship is loaded to the brim! To the brim of the ship! I'm fully loaded!

Pats his stomach fondly

Ohohoho! What a delightful cargo this ship's belly is carrying! Full of cheer! Party time! Party time in Spring, with my brother Cyclopes!

To Odysseus

Come, my deary, deary friend! Pass me that wine skin!

Chorus:

Cyclops! What a sight for sore eyes you are as you step forth, out of your chambers!
Someone loves you, Cyclops! Some enchanting nymph is waiting for your beautiful body to enter the cool chambers of your den. Torches are lit brightly and the lovely bride will grace your brow with a garland of lovely flowers.

Odysseus:

Cyclops listen to me. Listen! I need to tell you something. Listen because I know this god Bacchus, whose drink I've given you.

521

Cyclops:

Bacchus who? Don't tell me he's a god, too! Is he?

Odysseus:

O, yes, Cyclops! Mortals think he is the biggest source of good cheer!

Cyclops:

Well then, in good cheer I shall belch for him! *He belches loudly.* Hahaha!

Odysseus: *Waving the wine skin at him*

That's the sort of god he is, you see. He harms no one!

Cyclops:

A god living in a wine skin! How can he do that?

Odysseus:

He's happy no matter where you put him!

Cyclops:

It's not right for gods to wear skins, though!

Odysseus:

Why should you be worried about what he wears? Or, has the hide made him taste bitter?

Cyclops:

I can't stand that hide... *takes another drink* but this drink is delicious! I love it!

530

Odysseus:

Well, stay here and drink, then, Cyclops! Enjoy it!

Cyclops:

But don't you think I should give some of it to my brothers?

Odysseus:

Well, they'd respect you more if you keep it all to yourself!

Cyclops:

Yeah but by giving them some, I'll be helping them, helping my own folk, wouldn't I?

Odysseus:

Listen, too much partying can often end up in too much violence.

Cyclops:

Violence? I might be pissed but there's no way anyone could take me on!

Odysseus:

Mate, trust me! It's best if the drunks stay at home.

Cyclops:

It's stupid to be drunk and not have a party!

Odysseus:

The wise drunk stays at home.

Cyclops: *To Silenus*

What do you say, Silenus? Should we stay home?

540

Silenus:

Yes, that's what I reckon. What do we need other drunks around for?

Cyclops: *Looks around him and enjoys the sunshine and the ground*

Hmm! I agree. Beautiful, warm sun, beautiful green grass. The ground here is nice and soft with all the grass and flowers.

Silenus:

Yes, boss. Drinking in the hot sun is great. Now, lie down here, boss.

Cyclops lies down and stretches his body all the more to enjoy the sun. Silenus places the cup behind Cyclops, out of his reach.

Cyclops:

Oi! What are you doing? Why are you hiding that cup behind me?

Silenus:

I don't want anyone kicking it and smashing it as they walk by.

Cyclops:

Yeah, right! You mean you want to pinch it and drink it all yourself! Put it here, between us. *Silenus obeys. To Odysseus* Now, you, stranger! Tell me, I want to know what your name is.

Odysseus:

My name? My name is Nobody... Now you tell me, how will you repay my kindness?

550

Cyclops:

I will repay you by eating you last!

Silenus pours a drink in the cup and begins to drink it.

Silenus:

A fine reward you've given our little visitor, boss!

Cyclops:

Oi! What do you think you're doing? Drinking my wine behind my back?

Silenus:

Oh, no, boss. The wine just... up and kissed me because I'm so handsome!

Cyclops: □ You'll pay for this, you'll pay for loving the wine that does not love you back!

Silenus: Raises the cup to his ear and pretends to listen to what it's saying to him.

Oh, no, Cyclops! It says –the wine says– that it loves me very, very much!

Cyclops: *Impatiently*

Come on, come on! Poor some into the cup for me... let me have it here!

Silenus pours some wine into the cup and examines it.

Silenus:

Now let me see... how much water should we mix with it?

Cyclops:

No, no water, you'll ruin it. Just give it to me like that!

Silenus: Offers the cup with one hand and a garland with the other.

Here! Put this garland on first. I'll just take a little sip.

560

Cyclops: *Exasperated*

This barman is a crook!

Silenus:

Zeus, no! *Smacks his lips* Yummm! This wine is so sweet! Now wipe your face, boss. Your drink is coming! *Fills the cup again. Cyclops wipes his mouth and his beard.*

Cyclops:

There! Wiped my mouth and my beard. Now hand it over!

Silenus:

Right. Now, boss, first lean gently on your shoulder and then, and then you raise the cup – all the way up – and drink it... like this... see? *Silenus drains the cup so quickly that Cyclops hardly saw the act ...* or, maybe, you didn't see... Hahaha!

Cyclops:

Oi! Oi! What do you think you're doing?

Silenus:

I'm drinking to your health, Cyclops, sir!

Cyclops snatches the cup and the wine skin from Silenus' hand and gives them to Odysseus.

Cyclops:

Here, Nobody, you do the pouring from now on.

Odysseus: *Fondles the cup and the wine skin*

Oh yes! This is familiar territory for my hand this one.

Cyclops:

Go on, then. Pour the bloody thing!

Odysseus: *Insisting on reverence for the drink*

Shhh! Be quiet! I'm pouring it, I'm pouring it!

Cyclops:

Hard thing to do for a man who's already pissed!

Odysseus: *Hands him the cup*

Here you are. Now drink the lot of it in one go. Go on! Bottoms up! A man drinks till a man dies. Till death do you part!

Cyclops: *Guzzles the wine up fast.*

Oh, Zeusy, Zeusy, Zeusy! What a wise bit of wood is that of the grape vine!

Odysseus:

Yeap, but you've got to finish the lot because, after having this great meal you just had you'd better quench the thirst in your stomach. If you do that, if you quench the thirst that's in your guts, you'll fall into a sweet sleep but if you don't drink it all and leave some behind, Bacchus will dry your gullet out!

Cyclops takes another long drink.

Cyclops:

Ahhh! Deeeelicious stuff! Wow! I can't get my breath back! Pure joy this stuff! Oh, look! Whaaaat? Is the sky spinning about? I think it's all dancing around with the earth... Hey, that's Zeus' throne up there and there's Zeus and all the other holly divinities.

580

Do you think I should go and kiss them all? Hahaha! Here come all the pretty Graces. I think they want to... excite me... get my candle burning... Forget it, girls! *Putting an amorous arm around Silenus' shoulder.* I'm off with this Ganymede boy here. Much better way to relax than with all you ladies! I always did love the boys more than the girls!

Silenus: *Frightened*

Boss, boss! It's me, Silenus! I'm not Zeus' son, Ganymede! I'm Silenus!

Cyclops lifts Silenus up in his arms

Cyclops:

O, yes you are! You are Ganymede and I'm snatching you away from Dardanus' house! Let's go little boy!

Silenus: *To his sons*

O, no! My darling sons! I'm heading off to suffer unimaginable sufferings!

Cyclops:

What is it, boy? You're not in love with your lover? Are you making fun of me because I'm drunk?

Silenus:

O, no, it's not that! It's just that this little sip of wine I had... it's turned sour on me!

Farting, Cyclops takes Silenus into the cave. Odysseus follows him but a short while later Odysseus comes out again.

590

Odysseus: *To the satyrs*

Come, boys! Come noble sons of Bacchus! Let's go. Cyclops is fast asleep in the cave. We'll make that beast belch out of his disgraceful mouth all the human flesh he's eaten. The huge log is in the fireplace now, burning and smoking. There's only one thing left for us to do: go and burn his eye out! Come on, time for you boys to show that you're men!

Chorus:

Our heart will be as strong as steel and rock. Let's go in now before our father is screwed. And don't you worry about us. You can rely on us.

599

Odysseus: *Prays to the Heavens*

O, Hephaestus! O, Lord of Mount Aetna, god of fire! Save us from this dreadful neighbour, in this cave here! Save us once and for all! Burn that bright candle of that single eye of his!

And you, child of the black night, you dear Sleep! Come, Sleep, come and fall upon this beast –this god-hated beast! Fall upon him with all of your might and take him away! Odysseus and his brave men have glorified you on the battlefields of Troy. Don't let them now be destroyed in the hands of this terrible beast, this beast that cares not for gods or men... Because if you don't, if you don't come to our aid, we'll start honouring Chance as a god! We'll start thinking that Chance is mightier than all the other gods!

Odysseus enters the cave

Chorus rushes to the entrance of the cave, takes a quick look inside and comes out again.

608

Chorus:

O, ho, ho! And now, like a tight pair of pliers, the pain will grip the horrible eater of human guests by the throat and the fire will extinguish the glow of that eye of his.

The log's sharp point, well hidden in the hot ashes, has now turned into charcoal. It's an awesome branch of a great oak tree.

Chorus:

Let the wine, Maron's wine, do its work, now! Let it swirl the beast's brains about, let it spin him into a frenzy of pain and let it spit out his eye. Let the drinking of wine be the beast's demise.

619

Chorus:

Once all that happens, I'd very much like Bacchus, the love of my life, to appear, wearing his lovely ivy garland and we can go with him, away from here, away from this desolate cave of Cyclops.

Chorus:

O, I wish! I wonder if I will ever get that pleasure!

Odysseus emerges from the cave, angry at the satyrs.

Odysseus:

Will you, wild animals, shut up? For god's sake, you lot, be silent! Shut and seal your big mouths!

Don't even breathe! Or blink an eyelid! Don't cough!

You're going to wake that beast up before his eye gets to do its battle with the flaming log!

Chorus:

Right! We'll shut up!

Chorus:

And we'll choke our breath inside our cheeks!

630

Odysseus:

Come then. Let's go inside and grab a hold of that log. It's ready. Its point is red hot.

Chorus:

First tell us who'll be at the head of the line. Who's going to be the first to lift the log to burn Cyclops' eye? Tell us so that we can get properly organised beforehand.

Chorus:

We lot out here, by the cave's entrance are far too far away to be able to reach the log from here and poke it in his eye!

Chorus: *Pretending to be limping*

And us lot are lame... all of a sudden!

Chorus: *Bowing his legs*

Same with me! There I was standing properly one minute and the very next, my legs went all wobbly!

640

Odysseus:

Just like that? One minute standing straight and the next you're wobbling?

Chorus: *Rubbing his eyes*

And my eyes! My eyes are suddenly full of dust and ashes!

Odysseus:

What a lot of cowards! What a useless lot!

Chorus:

What? Who are you calling "cowards?" We're not cowards! We're just... trying to save our bums, our spines, our teeth! We hate punchups, that's all. We're not cowards!

Chorus:

Hey listen! I've got a special Orphean spell I can recite, one that will make that log walk right up to Cyclops' skull all by itself and set that one-eyed sucker of Earth's son, all up in flames!

649

Odysseus: *Disgusted*

I knew all along that you were like this. Cowards! This just proves it!

O, well, I must make do with just my own mates! But if you're useless with your hands at least be useful with your mouths and cheer us on. Give us courage. Lift our spirits a bit!

Odysseus shakes his head in dismay and walks into the cave

Chorus: *At Odysseus' back*

No worries, Odysseus! We'll do that! Hehehe! Let the Carians take the risk, as they say in the classics!

If cheering can do it boys, then let the boss burn!

All Chorus: *Singing and dancing as a cheer squad*

Go, boys, go! Stick it up him, poke it into him!

Be brave boys and burn that sucker out!

Burn that eyeball of his! Burn it good and proper!

Cyclops is a horrible beast!

Fill his skull with fire!

Kill the shepherd of Mount Aetna!

661

Twist and turn that log, boys!

Twist it!

Turn it!
And move away from him now!
Move away from him.
The pain will make him wild,
So wild, he might hurt you!
Wild sound of pain from Cyclops within.
Cyclops: *Within*
Oh, my eye! My eye! They've made charcoal out of my eye!
Chorus:
Oh, what a lovely tune, Cyclops! Sing it again, please!
Cyclops: *within*
Ahhhh! Oh, the shame! They've ruined me! Ahhhh! They've destroyed me! I am lost!
Cyclops appears at the cave's entrance, his back to the audience, his arms extended as a barrier to anyone wanting to escape from it. Shouts at the men inside.
But you won't escape this rocky cave, you... you nobodies! You won't find any pleasure in your deed, I'll tell you that right now! I've got my arms covering the whole entrance. They're tight up against the cave's walls! You won't escape punishment!
The Satyrs are spinning about him, teasing him.
Chorus:
What's up, Cyclops? What are you screaming like that for?
Cyclops: *Turns his head towards them*
They've destroyed me! Look!
Chorus:
Ahhh! How ugly you look, boss! Simply frightful!
670
Cyclops:
Ohhh! Ugly and wretched!
Chorus:
Did you get pissed and fall into the fire?
Cyclops:
No, no! It was Nobody! Nobody has blinded me!
Chorus:
Yeahhhh? Nobody has blinded you? So... so that means nobody has caused you any harm, then, ey?
Cyclops:
No, no, no! Nobody plucked my eyeball out! It was Nobody!
Chorus:
Yeah, you said that: Nobody blinded you, sooo, you're not blind, then, Cyclops, are you?
Cyclops:
Ahhh! The pain! The horrible pain! I hope you get to feel this pain!
Chorus:
But, boss, tell us, how is it that you're blind if, as you say, nobody has blinded you?
Cyclops:
Stop making fun of me! Tell me where this Nobody is!
Chorus:
Who? Nobody? Nobody is nowhere, Cyclops. Anywhere. Nowhere! Puff! Nowhere!
Cyclops:
Listen you! It was my visitor who did this to me. That horrible visitor who got me so drunk with that wine of his!
Chorus:
Oh yes! The wine! Wine is a very dangerous thing, boss. Bloody difficult to wrestle with!
Cyclops:
By the gods, tell me! Have they escaped or are they still in there?
680
Chorus:
They're right there, boss! Near the cliff's edge! Standing very quietly.
Cyclops:
Where? Which way?
Chorus:
To your right, boss.

Cyclops moves away from the cave's entrance and tripping and stumbling and farting, spins about this way and that, confused by the misleading directions of the Chorus

Cyclops:

Where, where?

680

Chorus:

On this rock here? Caught them yet?

Cyclops runs that way but falls and bumps his head

Cyclops:

Ouch! One pain after another! Ahhh! I've broken my skull!

Chorus:

Quick, Cyclops. This way! They're running away!

Cyclops:

But you said they were here a minute ago! Aren't they here?

Chorus:

No, boss, I said here! This way!

Cyclops:

Damn it, where?

Chorus:

Turn that way. To your left!

Cyclops:

My left? Where? Oh, my poor head! You're laughing at me! You're making fun of my misfortune!

Chorus:

No we're not, Cyclops. The man is right in front of you!

Cyclops: *Shouts*

Where are you, you most vile creature?

Odysseus and his men walk softly behind Cyclops and get to the other side of the stage.

Odysseus:

I'm right here, Cyclops! Right here, keeping Odysseus safe and sound!

690

Cyclops:

Odysseus? What's that you're saying? Have you changed your name now?

Odysseus:

No, this is the name given to me by my father and it's time now for me to pay you for that unholy lunch you had. What would be the point, otherwise, I ask you, of setting Troy in flames if I don't punish you for murdering my own war mates?

Cyclops:

O, no! The old prophesy has come to pass! It said that I'd be blinded by you after the fall of Troy... but the prophesy also said that you, too, must pay the penalty of your own deeds. Your journey back home will be long and stuffed full with terrible sufferings on the ocean.

701

Odysseus:

Cry, Cyclops, cry! Cry all you want. I've done what I promised I would do. Now I'm off! I'm going down to the shore to get into my ship and set sail away from here, over the Sicilian sea and head for my sweet home. Ithaca.

Exit Odysseus and his men

Cyclops: *Heading towards the cave.*

Not so fast you don't! I'm going up to that hill and, blind as I am, I'll rip one of the great stones up there and hurl it over to your ship, crushing it and your friends to smithereens. I'm going up there through the back entrance.

Farting, Cyclops goes into the cave

Chorus: *Hurrying after Odysseus*

We too are off. We're Odysseus' shipmates now and from now on we'll be serving our beloved god, Bacchus.

Exit all.
**END OF
EURIPIDES'
"CYCLOPS"**