

***Excerpt from Euripides' Bacchae (lines 430-515)***

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

*The gate opens and Pentheus enters.*

**GUARD 1** Pentheus, my Lord, here we are with the prey you've asked us to hunt for. We've sat and we've waited and, true enough, we've caught him. Our watch was not wasted.

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

**GUARD 2** And as for all them women, me Lord, them that follow that god, my Lord, the Bacchantes, those whom you grabbed and locked up with chains and all in all the city's buildings, well, sir, they're all loose, sir. Running about all over the countryside, sir, all ready for their orgiasums sir, and they're all calling out for their Bellowing God, Dionysos. All their chains fell apart all by themselves, letting their legs free. So did all the padlocks of the gates. They've all gone and opened themselves right up without even one human hand touching them! This man here has a great many tricks up his sneaky sleeves.

It's your call now, my Lord.

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

*He examines Dionysos thoroughly.*

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

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

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

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

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

**PENTHEUS** Where did you get all these "mysteries" from?

**DIONYSOS** Dionysos, Zeus' son, initiated me into them.

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

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

**PENTHEUS** Did he initiate you in darkness or in light?

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

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

**DIONYSOS** They are secret to the uninitiated mortals.

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

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

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

**DIONYSOS** He who practises disrespect to the gods earns their wrath.

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

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

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

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

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

**DIONYSOS** The rest of the world dances to these dances.

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

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

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

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

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

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

**PENTHEUS** We must take you to court for your evil philosophies.

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

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

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

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

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

**PENTHEUS** Then your Thyrsus. Give it to me!

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

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

**DIONYSOS** God himself will free me when I ask him.

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

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

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

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

**PENTHEUS** *To his guards*

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

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

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

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

**PENTHEUS** Who me? I am Pentheus, Agave's and Echion's son.

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

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

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

*Exit Dionysos, guards and Pentheus*