

# APATHOS

A submission to the 4<sup>th</sup> Panhongkongaia

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## Scene 1

*The Agora in Athens, early in the evening. Apathos, a simple-looking Athenian citizen of around 40 years, has just come out of the Heliaia (the courthouse). He seems a little tipsy, and with a happy face expression descends the stairs towards the square.*

### APATHOS

What a joy to see that traitor Agastenos condemned by the jury! Rightly so, he sold the plans of our new city wall to the Corinthians, who might sell it further to the Lakedaimonians. But only after adding a hefty comission. These Corinthians are lacking honour even in their treachery. And he denied it until the very end, even after Daphne made her speech, how she saw him conversing in the night with Iambulus at that fig orchard towards Piraeus. And his lawyers smearing Daphne with rhetoric fallacy, they said she attacked Agastenos only because she fell in love with his nephew, who wanted to marry beautiful Sotera and never even looked at her even though she comes from a better family.

And yet, and yet.. When the Magistrate said that for the foreseeable time there are not traitors to be condemned, no corruption of public finances to be uncovered, I got a little bit sad. No more entertainment close at hand, except the one I make for myself. Well, nothing I can do about it, I guess. I'm just gonna sit down here on my favorite column and have a look at the town in the evening.

*A group of younger men appraoch Apathos. They are wearing more expensive and cleaner Chitons, newer sandals and more antique (modern) hairstyles than Apathos.*

### EPEIUS

If it isn't our dear citizen Apathos, idling on the Agora again. The pride of Athens, lazy as an old slave and always attending the public hearings.

### APATHOS

Good evening to you too, Epeius. You call me lazy, you old bummm? I've seen you in as many courthouse hearings as you've seen me, even though I'm twice your age. We Athenians enjoy the little pleasures we have in life, that is the way it's always been.

ΕΡΕΙΟΣ

Truer words have not been spoken during the whole trial just now. Well come on then, do you join us for a cup of mulled wine in the Taverna here at the corner?

ΑΡΑΘΟΣ

I think I rather stay here for a bit and watch the Polis going to sleep. I might come later though.

ΣΑΒΥΛΛΟΣ

Come on Apathos, you used to be more fun than that! And besides, you have neither wife nor kids that nag you about coming home drunk in the middle of the night. You are.. you are living all our dreams!

ΑΡΑΘΟΣ

Sometimes I wish I had what you all have, wife and kids and a honourful position in the Polis, maybe as a general in our navy or a magistrate at court.

ΣΑΒΥΛΛΟΣ

That's not what I wanted to hear! And not what I will remember. You, my poor old, burdenfree friend, are a prime example to all Epicureans like me. Generals get killed in battle, taken ransome or murdered at home by ungrateful soldiers. Magistrates have their character being corrupted by soothsayers and counsellors and priests, and all loose their integrity and honour in the end. You, my friend, are much superior. By not doing anything, you avoid suffering.

ΕΡΕΙΟΣ

Yes! You are not even coming with us for a small drink! Except you changed your mind? No..? You are not apathic, you are just avoiding the headache in the morning! The true mind of a philisopher!

ΑΡΑΘΟΣ

And I thought the philosophers are drinking every night at their Symphosia and talking sweet words to handsome boys. I have no interest in such things. I am friend of the pigeons, the sea gulls and the market folk. No orgies for me, maybe that's why I am so irrelevant in this large city.

TISIAs

That's not true at all, dear Apathos, you are very important to me! You can do me a great favour, even now. You do hang out on the Agora most days, don't you?

APATHOS

Sure, you can find me here nearly every day.

TISIAs

Have you heard any news of a ship from Massalia<sup>1</sup> then?

APATHOS

Massalia? Is that in Asia? Sounds like a foreign dish to me, something with a lot of strange Eastern spices for sure.

TISIAs

I've never heard of any dish like that. The Massalia I'm talking about is a small colony towards the setting sun, in the land of the Keltoi. I have considerable financial interests over there. I've underwritten a large wholesale of coloured tunics going to there, and I'm in urgent need for some news because I heard rumors from a sailor off Sikelía<sup>2</sup>. That sailor told a slave on a cargo boat bound to Athens that the colony was horrible ransacked by barbarians. He met a refugee at the strait, who walked the whole way from Masallia. Walked, can you believe that?

APATHOS

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<sup>1</sup> Now known as Marseille through the Latin form *Massilia*. One of the most remote Greek colonies.

<sup>2</sup> Sicily.



I can't say I do, I'm struggling to walk to the Agora from my house every day.

TISIAS

And that man told the sailor that the whole town was burned down and the men were all killed in the most gruesome way, as gruesome as only barbarians could devise. Blood everywhere, those poor Greeks should have been given a good death after their civilizing work, not having their tongues chopped off and limbs eaten alive by wild Panthers. Only the women were sent back to Sikeliá, because the Keltoi thought they were too ugly to enslave. But I'm not sure if that man was telling the truth or not.

APATHOS

What makes you believe that?

TISIAS

He said he arrived in Sikeliá by foot after moons of walking through Etruscan lands. But when he came to Syracuse, he found no signs of the Greek women from Massalia. Shouldn't they have been there before him, as they were going by ship?

APATHOS

And I thought you'd find it unbelievable that these Barbarians thought Greek women are ugly. Maybe those women stole the ships and started a colony somewhere else, in a place without barbarians and panthers?

ΕΡΕΙΟΣ

If that happened, I'm sure somebody will write a play about that and we'll hear all at the next Dionysia. Well boys, let's have that drink before it's too late?

ALL

Sure, let's go.

TISIΔS

Tell me if you hear anything Apathos. My financial stability depends on this.

APATHOS

Will do, you know where to find me...

*All off except Apathos*

## Scene 2

APATHOS

Let me think, let me think. Ah yes! I know the person who might know all the gossip around here.

*Apathos walks towards a particularly dingy looking market stall.*

APATHOS

Hey you! Mother of our most beloved playwright!

EURIPIDES' MOM

Do you want to buy anything? I have onions, two nets 'er obole.

APATHOS

Dear mother of poetry, isn't it to late to make a good onion stew?

EURIPIDE'S MOM

Why? Its not e'en ev'ning. You just put a bit of pork fat in a pot, fry the onions golden and make your soup from 'ere.

APATHOS

You're as good with soups as our dear Artist is with words.

EURIPIDE'S MOM

What do you want then? Annoy an old lady over her highly successful son? Educated men from all over the barbaric countries will read his plays in Millenia to come, be sure of 'at.

APATHOS

Many people buy their legumes through your hands, and all market folk at the Agora are up to date on the recent news. I wonder if you heard anything from Massalia recently?

EURIPIDE'S MOM

Peas 're very cheap in up 'ere in Massalia, that's what I've heard recently. Three sacks of peas for one obole!

APATHOS

You've heard nothing about vandalizing Keltoi Barbarians, murdering Greek men and not enslaving the women?

EURIPIDE'S MOM

Why would the Keltoi vandalize, if they get peas for such good prices. I have them here too, you can buy them. One sack for two oboles, alas, but they are as fresh and tender 's can be. I can tell you a good recipe for 'em as well.

APATHOS

Good women, you talk about the Barbarians as if they would care about the price of peas.

EURIPIDE'S MOM

And why wouldn't they?

APATHOS

Have you even ever been outside Attica, talking about Barbarians like that?

EURIPIDE'S MOM

Sure, son. Born in Corinth, came to Athens twenty years back, but in my youth I've been all over Greece and even into Thrace. You can't make a career out of selling vegetables without knowing the best suppliers all over.

It seems you haven't been around much, though, judging from your idiotic questions.

APATHOS

Why would I go around? With the Agora and the public trials, I'm happy here.

EURIPIDE'S MOM

Well, reflect on that. 'nuf said, I'm a busy women. Gonna bag 'ese onions up for good if I'm supposed to sell them as fresh tomorrow again.

### Scene 3

*The next morning on the Agora. Workers are erecting their stalls for the day and are engaged in lively chatting.*

ARTEMAS

Oh, it's that bloke next to my stall again, like in Epesus last year! Trying to steel my customers over again, aren't you?

ATHAMAS

Artemas, old sea dog! Nah, I haven't stolen anything from you. Just saved a few unlucky souls from your clutches.

ARTEMAS

Well, in life sometimes you loose and sometimes the others win. Still a believer in your cause, aren't you?

ATHAMAS

If by my cause you mean helping wretched souls to a better life, then yes, of course.

ARTEMAS

That's the zealot I was remembering! Have you even been back in the meantime? Maybe its been all going to shit while you were away.

ATHAMAS

Nothing's gone to shit! Cyrene<sup>3</sup> is a beautiful port city with a booming economy, and life is ever improving. And yes, I've been there last winter to bring back a group of new-arrivers, 47 good Greek souls from Epesus, Rhodes and Miletus.

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<sup>3</sup> Important Greek colony in western Lybia, directly south of the Pellepones.

ARTEMAS

I can't follow now, are you heading a charity organization to lead people to Paradise, or do you need more gullible idiots to slave away for your profit in a godforsaken and sunburnt land?

ATHAMAS

I truly believe life in Cyrene is better for these low-class Greeks that I am trying to persuade. They have real opportunity there! Take Athens. Everything is owned by someone. At Pireus, taverna after taverna, if you wanted to open your own you'd have to walk a good mile to find a lot that somebody is willing to sell. In the town square, even the market stalls are back-to-back. In Cyrene, life is overflowing and full of possibilities. The weather is mild, the city is growing and you can have your own business wherever you want. We are always in need of tow-makers, barrel-makers, tool-smiths, vine dressers, olive dressers, tunic makers, you name it!

ARTEMAS

I feel that by telling all these lies to all idiots in all the seven cities, you started to actually believe them. I tell this stuff to people that I am trying to lure to Massalia every day.

ATHAMAS

Why do you tell things that you don't believe are true?

ARTEMAS

You can't be this naïve, can you? For profit, by Apollo! Times are hard and I have a quota to fill. The magistrate in Massalia promised that they'll forego my debts if I bring 250 new idiots to their stinking town. If I bring 350, they will even buy me a nice small house.

ATHAMAS

Life in Cyrene is really good. And I can't believe Massalia is as bad, given that good Greeks inhabit it.

ARTEMAS

Good Greeks, ha? We are collecting the drunkards, robbers and thieves to populate these new colonies. Men that were never looked at by a Greek woman because they are poor or of bad character, and women that are too ugly so their fathers couldn't find them a husband. And for what? Just that some dumb magistrate can say: 'We are not just a city, we are a *Metropolis*, with daughter cities all over the world.' And then the profit takers come, the ship builders and insurance sellers and bronze traders, who search a good investments and pay crooks like me to lie to these idiots to come, risk their lives during the passage and then do their dirty business for them.

ATHAMAS

I will sacrifice to Hermes that he will keep separate our schedules. I can stand this talk once a year, but no more.

ARTEMAS

And I can't bear your naivety more than once a year as well. But now look, our tents are set up, and ready to receive our customers soon. Then we will see whose speech is more attractive, and how many we can bring home with us.



### Scene 4

*A few hours later, at noon. The Agora is full of people. Apathos is sitting on his usual bench and watches the crowds idly. A bit in the distance are the stalls of Athamas and Artemas, which are surrounded by bystanders.*

EURIPIDES' MOM

*Shouting:* Onions! Three Obols per sack! The best oninos! Three Oboles per sack, only today!

ARTEMAS

*Shouting:* ...honourable citizens of Athens, I can promise you a life of milk and honey in Massalia. Yes madam, you heard correctly. Milk and honey for every new citizen of Massalia, guaranteed by our magistrate. The summers are mild, the winters are warm. In Attica, you earn one Drache per day for your work as a labourer. In Massalia, you'll earn three, and in a few years you can retire! Choose life, choose Massalia!...

APATHOS

*To himself:* Did I just hear Massalia? Did it come from these stalls, with the small crowd in front of them? Ah, but its so hot and I don't want to surrender the best spot right here in the shade.

*In agony:* Ah, life is difficult!

EURIPIDE'S MOM

*Shouting:* Fresh green beans! Two sacks for five Obols! Make a nice stew with these beans! Two sacks for five Obols, of three sacks for seven!

ARTEMAS

*Shouting:* Did you just hear this crazy lady? In Massalia, the Keltoi deliver us beans for half an Obol per bushel, right to your doorstep.

APATHOS

*To himself:* There, I've heard it again!

*In agony:* Goodbye, dear shady spot! I will not see you again, some old arse will sit on you once I stand up. Goodbye!

*Apathos gets up and walks to Athamas and Artemas stalls.*

APATHOS

Dear Sir, did you just talk about Massalia?

ARTEMAS

Yes, I did. Do you want a new life in Paradise?

APATHOS

Me? No, I have a good life here. I just want to know if it burnt down. I have a friend with financial interests over there, who wants to inquire if it was destroyed by some Barbarians. I personally couldn't care less though.

ARTEMAS

Destroyed, with its powerful walls and watchful soldiers? It could easily withstand any Barbarian army.

ATHAMAS

So they finally finished the walls? Cyrene's walls have been standing for a good fifty years now.

ARTEMAS

Oh yes? But ours are built with granit, a good ten metres tall, not like this sandstone rubble you find in Cyrene.

ATHAMAS

*To Apathos:* Don't listen to him, the quality of Cyrene's walls have been tested by time. No Nubian or Phoenician could ever penetrate it, and we

can call support from other Greek cities in a few days time, we are not at the end of the world like *his* clique.

APATHOS

I'm desperately confused now. Who is Cyrene?

ATHAMAS

Cyrene is the largest colony in Africa, just two days south of Meleia with the trade winds.

APATHOS

And why would I be interested in Africa?

ATHAMAS

Life there is very pleasant. We have friendly weather and good wine and olive oil. The hinterland is perfect for goat raising and agriculture. There is a large Agora, a theatre and public baths, but most importantly, you'll be an important member of our town, most new-arrivers join the magistrate or the courts in a short time. You look like a man who knows his ways around Athens?

APATHOS

I know the best spot in the shade to sit on in the Agora, and I gave it up just to come here.

ATHAMAS

Such a man is well-equipped for the life in Cyrene. You will be held in high honours, as you know so much about Athens. I can't promise you to become rich, but you'd had a good shot at building up a small homestead in the Cyrenika, or business in the town.

ARTEMAS

Dear friend, just hear him talk! Small business, homestead, raising goats! Pah! (*spits on the ground*) That is the life we want to escape, don't we? Let me tell you the founding story of Massalia, for a welcome change. Daring Greeks from Phocaea led by Prince Protis sailed to the edges of the world in search of a life worthy of Gods. They arrived at a tranquil and perfectly round harbour, and were greeted by the wise King Nannus, of the Keltoi.

APATHOS

I thought the Keltoi were bloodthirsty deamons?

ARTEMAS

The Keltoi are angels! King Nannus is a wiser ruler than most despots on the Pelepones.

APATHOS

Do they sell you peas, or you sell peas to them?

ARTEMAS

Now you are confusing me. Why would they buy peas from us, when they themselves have them so abundantly?

APATHOS

Just now you said that they come to your town to sell them. But before, this crazy lady over there told me that they would be stupid not to come to your town to buy them.

ARTEMAS

(*thinking quickly*) Ah, I think I've come to the bottom of this confusion. Some Keltoi come to our town to sell them, but then other Keltoi come and buy some, while we, of course, collect taxes from both.

APATHOS

Good system, indeed.

ARTEMAS

Now, let me return to my story. King Nannus' daughter, the beautiful princess Gyptis, was just in search of a worthy husband, but couldn't find any worthy suitor amongst her own people. When she was just about to despair and retire to a life of a spinster, she noticed white sails on the horizon, and as the ship came closer she saw a tall and handsome figure emerging on the deck, which was Protis, our hero. From that moment on, she wanted to marry nobody else than him. Her father, wise as he was, immediately agreed to her wishes. They were the ruling couple for over 50 years, and to this date most Greeks in Massalia marry beautiful and lonely Keltoi princesses.

*Apathos has gone to a state of deep concentration.*

ATHAMAS

This sounds all pretty strange. How can everyone marry a princess?

ARTEMAS

And so what? Are you envious about our foundation myth? I'm sure Cyrene's story is as boring as your whole town. Probably Zeus made love to a duck and then Hera got angry and he hid the duck somewhere far away and now it's a town.

ATHAMAS

*Mumbling:* It was Apollo, not Zeus.

ARTEMAS

I'm sorry, what?

ATHAMAS

Apollo is the God involved. And Cyrene wasn't a duck, but a queen that wrestled with lions and shot deer, only second to the archery god himself. And then Apollo transported her to Africa on his golden cart and continues to watch over our city.

*Apathos is slowly awakening from his trance.*

APATHOS

And those princesses, how do they look like?

ARTEMAS

Usually perky. And most of them have red hair.

APATHOS

I see, I see.

*Apathos is again entering a state of high concentration.*

*BYSTANDER 1*

This Massalia sounds too crazy for me. But a small house in Cyrene might do.

BYSTANDER 2

I agree. If I marry a princess, my wife will kill me.

BYSTANDER 1

What's your relationship to the Ptolomaic Kingdom in Egypt then?

ATHAMAS

Good good, they are Greeks as well, aren't they? They honour our sanctuary of Apollon and send sacrifices every year.

*Apathos is slowly regaining focus again.*

**APATHOS**

And do you have a large Agora and a tree that gives shade and underneath a bench, just like that one?

*He points to his bench on which now a fat old man is sitting.*

**ARTEMAS**

We even have two Agori, and a lot of benches.

*Apathos again enters his state of deep concentration*

The end.





# Ceyx and Alcyone

by Nosos ©468 BC

## CHARACTERS

*King Ceyx*, husband of Alcyone, king of Trachis

*Hesperus*, mother of Ceyx

*Lucifer Morningstar*, father of Ceyx

*Priestess of Dionysus*

*Nurses 1 and 2*, nurses

*Dionysus*, the god who comes

*Girls 1 and 2*, girls

*Tethe Yenea*, a mother and grandmother

*Meter Yenea*, a daughter or granddaughter

*Thygater Yenea*, a daughter or granddaughter

*Pairos Pamphainos*, a young boy

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## ACT I

### THE MYSTERY OF DIONYSUS

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*The theater is decorated as the interior of a temple of Dionysus. In the center rear of the stage is a large idol of Dionysus with his Nysiads around him.*

*On center stage, before the idol, the old woman Hesperus lies on a hospital bed. The old woman is tied to several heart monitors, pain medicine regulators, and breathing tubes that beep and hiss as the old woman lies in pain and sedation. The old woman grasps at her pained kidneys and her skin is yellow from jaundice. Beside the bed are several lesser priestesses of Dionysus wearing brightly colored priestess scrubs.*

*On the right side of the stage, hidden behind a long curtain, is Hesperus' son, King Ceyx. He watches from afar as the priestesses attend to the old woman.*

*Further to the right of the stage, hidden behind another long curtain, are two priestesses. They secretly observe King Ceyx from behind as he watches the old woman.*



**NURSE 1**

Behold poor King Ceyx there behind the curtain. A more tragic figure who could find in fair Trachis.

**NURSE 2**

To have to watch the last moments of one's mother is a burden, to be sure. To have to watch his mother suffer both from painful kidney failure and, at the same time, from the diminishments of advanced dementia. Were the boy to approach his mother, she would not even recognize him from one moment to the next. I've seen myself as the woman's mind fails when I've introduced myself to insert a stent and just a minute later forgotten who I was or what I was there to do. It is no easy task for a child to watch their mother deteriorate so.

**NURSE 1**

And not just his mother! But just this morning to also have lost his poor wife Alcyone. The beautiful daughter of King Aeolus. What a catch she was for any man, whether crook or king. As beautiful as one born of the gods and as kinky as one born of the furies. Lo, it's whispered that during their lovemaking, Queen Alcyone would dress as Hera while King Ceyx would dress as Zeus. In their lust they would then commit heresy and hubris as Hera begged to be dragged naked from her father Chronos' maw, while Zeus begged to be spanked for his multiple infidelities with mortal lovers. The king's passion for his queen was mythic, but alas, she was taken just this dawn. It is said that at the sunrise the king awoke to a mighty enforestment of his morning wood. As for the queen, she was herself engorged in her queenly mystery and happy to don her Hera costume. Dressed as the queen of the gods, she blasphemed once by calling her mortal husband by the name of the god and then blasphemed again by titillating with a story of queen Hera's own infidelity. This must have been too much even for the patient gods, for just at that moment, the goddess Hera gloriously entered the room and commanded her asterionide nymphs to transform beautiful Alcyone into a halcyon bird; a bird so named for both its beauty and its fishing abilities.

**NURSE 2**

Tragedy after tragedy spilling from the life of tragic King Ceyx. And not a family member in sight to console him during this challenging time.

*Lucifer enters unseen behind the two nurses. He is ornately dressed in red silks and diamonds. He is pale and charming and has folded wings across his back.*

**LUCIFER**

Not in sight, though his father has not forsaken him.

*As Lucifer unexpectedly appears, Nurse 2 cries in fright and faints at the sight of him.*

**NURSE 1**

Lucifer! The morning star! You've come down from your throne in the morning sky to come see your son, then? You've come then to see your wife and son in their time of need?

**LUCIFER**

My wife's mind is gone as was our love before it. But my true son still stands, silently stoic. What father could leave his son in misery on the day of the loss of both his wife and his mother. But I see that his mother has not yet taken up the mystery of Dionysus.

**NURSE 1**

Surely not! For it's forbidden for any outsider to observe the mystery. Even the king! We priestesses are sworn to keep a veil around the mystery. It must only be offered to those elderly souls about to pass in order to ease their suffering. We were here watching your son the King to ensure that we could shoo him away before the revealing of the mystery.

**LUCIFER**

Is that the only reason then? Come now, you must admit that my son is quite a handsome beauty and with such a stunning sexual history at that. You can not hide your sly peeping from me my dear. But here, I will take him away myself to keep your secret rites unknown. You must tend to your gossiping friend. Take her away to be tended to with smelling salts and compresses.

*Nurse 1 picks up Nurse 2 in her arms and carries her off stage. Lucifer elegantly and silently sidles up to Ceyx. Ceyx is aware of his father's approach but is not startled. Ceyx continues to sob silently into his elbow as Lucifer puts his fatherly hand on his shoulder.*

**CEYX**

Come to console me father? Was the day of the loss of both my wife and my mother finally enough to drag you from your bright morning performances. Or perhaps more likely, have you come to me with another scheme to break from your lowly seat at the footstool of the great heavenly stars? Another spear you wish to hurl at the godhead of the night sky?

**LUCIFER**

My son, I'm hurt. You know that it is no small feat for me to maintain my position as the brightest in the evening sky. Yet not even that battle for position could keep me on this terrible day of BOTH of our mourning.





**CEYX**

Perhaps. I'm a king now father and I know the moral sacrifices required of greatness. But enough of our fond reunion. You've seen our mother and now we should be off. The priestesses of Dionysus have asked all to be gone from the temple before the moment of my mother's passing.

**LUCIFER**

The moment of her passing? No, my boy it's not her passing that they wish to conceal from you. But let us delay a moment. I've spoken to the priestesses and they have left us here without supervision. Let us tarry a moment and observe just what they have in store for the loyal adherents of the god of delusion.

*Ceyx and Lucifer turn their attention to Hesperus and the priestesses around her bed. Hesperus is now clutching at her back in pain from her kidneys. From the left side of the stage enters the Priestess of Dionysus dressed in a white surgical coat and elaborate jewelry.*

**HESPERUS**

Oh priestess, my kidneys scream in pain. Must I be treated so cruelly by the humors as I near my end. This is no fate for an old crow when once long ago I was...I was...

*Hesperus coughs so violently that the actress' mask falls off. Behind the mask of Hesperus is a wrinkled, pitiable old woman. The woman looks at her wrinkled hands and feet in disappointment.*

**HESPERUS**

Priestess, what is happening that I should be looking at the back of an old woman's hands. These are not my hand, but the hands of an old crow. And priestess, tell me what is this pain I feel in my back?

### PRIESTESS

It is your kidney my lady. I'm afraid that you have been gravely ill for some months now. You have sought refuge in our temple while awaiting today's sunset.

*The priestess helps put the mask back on Hesperus.*

### HESPERUS

Oh, is that right? I don't recall falling ill. But I suppose I need to trust one so bedazzled as yourself. And oh, look at my hands. Why, these are the hands of an old woman. Surely I couldn't have lived such a long life as that. All my memories of girlhood seem so close to me. When I walk around in my memories, all I stumble upon are my times of innocence and youth. When I catch a glimpse of myself in the reflection of a pool, it's a bright eyed maiden who winks back at me. But lo, there does seem to be some memories of old age rummaging around in here too. But they are so distant, like faraway chickens seen on the side of a faraway hill. I can tell that they must peck away at their own feed on their own paths, but they live a different life than I do. Those memories of an old lady seem so distant, so unnecessary to the core of who I am. They are lived by a stranger who I do not wish to get to know. They are the freeloading guest to a party who the hostess meets on their way out; they have no need to know each other and the hostess quickly turns back to her finer guests. See priestess, is this the final moment of the elderly? To close the eyes of a momentary, futureless passerby while the finer, truer beauty strolls away to her home in the past?





## PRIESTESS

Indeed, it is not the ending that any benevolent god would will for a loyal soul. But alas, it is the curses of Pandora's box that creep into your human bloodstream and age you so unceremoniously. But lo, my lady, that fate truly is not the wish for the compassionate god of wine for his maidens. Cast back many years ago to see him riding in from the East, the god who comes. The glorious conqueror riding from the East on a stag and bringing healing in his wake. He brought with him a new healing, a new communion between the living and the dead; a blood communion. He was a foreigner treading far from his home, crusading from his home in the west to be only reluctantly accepted into the Parthenon of the gods. Only by conquest and victory was he accepted as a god in this land. Battling not only for his own right but also to bring the good and the healing wine of his communion. And see his communion is what he brings to you in this dying hour.

*The priestess gestures grandly to the statue of Dionysus. Bafflingly, the statues of the nysiads and maenads surrounding the sculpture begin to shake their hair and stretch their limbs. Behind them, the wall of the temple begins to give way and slide backwards. As it falls away, a great forest creeps in to surround the statue and encompass the room. The scene stretches out for miles across the horizon with lush vegetation, waterfalls, and deer and elk springing across the scene. The ceiling of the temple gives way to an evening sky covered lightly with thick, lush foliage. The sun sets to the North at the rear of the stage. And as the nysiads and maenads become more numerous and fly around the temple chamber, the figure of Dionysus slowly turns from stone to flesh. Unlike his statue, the god Dionysus is covered with thick hair intermingled with moss and foliage growing out of his shoulders and back. He is beautiful as a perfect creature and majestic as a towering tree.*

## PRIESTESS

Behold my lady, it is the god Dionysus come to bring you his mystery.

*Dionysus approaches the bed of Hesperus. As he approaches, as if from a long way away, he walks along a vineyard of golden grapes. As he walks, he casually plucks a bunch of grapes that he then takes a bite from. A maenad floats nearby with a bowl that they hold out as Dionysus crushes the grapes in his hands and lets the juice run down. As it drips, it miraculously transmutes from juice into wine. The scent of a heady, aged wine engulfs the entire theater. The characters all sway with the intoxicating scent. As Dionysus strides to the side of the bed, the priestesses all reverently file to the outskirts of the stage to observe. Dionysus affectionately caresses Hesperus' cheek as the maenad brings the bowl of wine to her elderly hand.*



**LUCIFER**

Watch carefully now my son, this is what you were brought here to witness.

*As Hesperus drinks the wine, her hands and feet miraculously transforms into that of a beautiful young woman. Hesperus looks at her young supple hands first with awe and then with self-admiration.*

**HESPERUS**

At last once again I see myself as I was. See here my hands and my feet, these are the hands of a young woman. I once was a young woman. I was...I was...

*Hesperus again coughs so violently that the mask falls off of the actress. But this time, underneath the actress is now a beautiful young woman at the peak of her vigor and desirability.*

**HESPERUS**

...a young woman. I...a young woman. Of course, I'm a young woman. My name is Hesperus, the virgin daughter of Eos. A maiden. And why is this maiden laid down in an overstuffed bed surrounded by a gaggle of biddies. See, we are



surrounded by gods. Here before me is the pliant god Bacchus. I know him well. I have served him well. Served him to my brothers, served him to my sisters, served him at the temple, and served him at the agora.

*Hesperus sits up in the bed, puts her feet on the ground and shakily stands up. She turns in the direction of Lucifer.*



## HESPERUS

And there on the horizon, my love, the Morningstar. He rises to me now as I rise to meet him. And will today be the day that the Morningstar rises far above the horizon? Aaargh! But what is this pain in my back? Have I been taken by surprise by street urchins? My kidneys feel like they've been stomped on. And oh, these hands, these beautiful parchment hands, why do they not bend? And my knees, they feel like I've twisted them both while crossing the river. Oh my love, my Morningstar, I want to run to you, but my legs give way.

*Hesperus reaches out towards Lucifer but her knees give out beneath her. She topples to the floor. Lucifer does not move towards her but only remains hidden with Ceyx. Hesperus now spread on the floor is still radiantly beautiful, her limbs and hair around her like a water nymph.*

**HESPERUS**

Ah but why should I worry about some star in the East. I am the young. I am the beautiful. I am as we all wish to be and as I truly am. I live forever in beauty.

*Hesperus dies. Dionysus and his nymph servants turn from the beautiful dead body and retreat ceremonially back into the distance and then over the hill and out of sight.*

**PRIESTESS**

And with that my sisters, the mystery of Dionysus is completed. Our sister Hesperus has had a peaceful departure knowing herself in the finest memory of herself.

*The priestesses lift Hesperus' body back into her bed and roll it mournfully off stage. The body is rolled past Lucifer and Ceyx, still hidden behind the curtain. As they pass by, Lucifer watches them go as if mourning his dead wife, but then quickly turns to Ceyx.*

**LUCIFER**

Quickly son, now is when we must act.

**CEYX**

Act? They've just wheeled off your dead wife.

**LUCIFER**

And if you want to see your own wife alive again, we must act quickly.

**CEYX**

Alcyone? Don't toy with me father. It's your wife we've watched die here today. My own wife is long since gone, cursed by goddess Hera herself, wife of king of kings Zeus.

**LUCIFER**

Cursed, my boy, but not dead. The wife of Zeus, so often cuckolded by her husband in the form of an animal has in spite cursed your wife into the form of an animal. And now through the death of my own wife we'll have the last laugh to break the spell of mighty Zeus.

**CEYX**

A blaspheme against Zeus? The king to whom I as a king must cower?

**LUCIFER**

Cower no longer my son. Today we strike back at that entitled tyrant. Today we break that maniac's curse on your wife. Tell me, when your mother drank of the grapes of Dionysus, what became of her?

**CEYX**

She transformed. She transformed into a young girl.

**LUCIFER**

Ah, but that's not quite right is it? Who did she become then?

**CEYX**

Why, she became herself, didn't she? She didn't transform into just anyone, she became more herself than she had been before.

**LUCIFER**

Her most beautiful self. The self she wished to see. The self she wished others to see.

**CEYX**

The grapes, father! Do you know what this means?

**LUCIFER**

Surely not, my boy. Tell me what it all means.

**CEYX**

If we could steal the grapes, then we could transform Alcyone back into the form of my wife. I could have my wife back at last!

**LUCIFER**

It sounds so crazy that it just might work, son! But what shall we do? The gap across to Dionysus' land is so far.

**CEYX**

We'll reach it together, father. If you'd but hold onto my hand, then you could stretch across to the other side to snatch a few grapes. What say you father, would you help me with this monumental task?

**LUCIFER**

Anything for you, my only son. It's a brilliant plan. But just that perhaps I should stand fast on this side of the portal while you reach across to the grapes? There are those in the godly realms who would not like to see me in their realms that they know are rightfully mine.

**CEYX**

Of course, of course. Here now, grab my hand tightly. Yes, now reach me across. I'm getting close, father, keep reaching. Oh, but my head feels so strange as I enter the land of Dionysus.

**LUCIFER**

That's the fragrant scent of the golden grapes son. They turn our nights into moments. To plant your feet in Dionysus' land is to lose a lifetime to his intoxication.



**CEYX**

It is indeed as it feels, father. I can feel the fragrance playing with time. But look father, the grapes are just out of reach. Can you not stretch any further father?

**LUCIFER**

Alas my boy, my puny arms can stretch no further without coming undone. Oh alas, shall we lose your wife forever then? What is to be done, my boy?

**CEYX**

Fear not, father. Release my hand for just a moment and I will scamper into Dionysus' lands and retrieve the grapes. That's it, father. Oh my, it does indeed feel as if the sun and moon are swirling about me. But here, here are the golden grapes. My, so shiny and heavy. I'll throw them to you father, catch!

**LUCIFER**

Incredible, my boy. But perhaps we should snatch a few more clusters of the grapes while we're here.

**CEYX**

Indeed, father. Here is more. And more still. Catch them all, father, I am cleaning out Dionysus' vines. Oh and look how funny you look now father, carrying a stack of grapes up to the ceiling. I dare say that's all I can scour here, father.

**LUCIFER**

And that's all that I can carry as well, my son. But where to put them? Alak, we have no baskets to carry these out and I fear bruising them on the hard floor. Perchance let me run them outside real quick. I'll just be a minute, son. You wait for me here and I'll be back for you.

**CEYX**

Um, sure father. Uh, maybe we could get me out of here pretty quick though. Oh, you're gone. Well this is a nice place to hang out though. Even though the portal does seem to be closing in pretty quickly. No worries, though, I'm sure my dad will be back here soon. I'm sure. And the portal's closed. Oh my.

*Ceyx wanders around the land of Dionysus for some time. After a while, he plops down on a grape vine cultivator's bench, spits on the ground, and draws shapes in the mud. He grows increasingly distressed. After some time like this, Dionysus is seen approaching over the horizon.*

**DIONYSUS**

So the little demigod has been stranded in my lands. This is not a place for mortals, gods' blood or no.

**CEYX**

Sorry about that. I was looking at some of your grapes and I guess I got a little lost. Any chance you could portal me back home?

**DIONYSUS**

I'd be happy to. But as your father warned you, beware that much time has passed on earth while you were wandering here.

*Dionysus gives Ceyx a gentle punt through the portal and back to the temple.*

**DIONYSUS**

And don't worry about the grapes. Your father is welcome to them.

*Ceyx rises from the floor and brushes himself off. He is alone in the empty temple which is now a shabby mess; the curtains are worn and faded, the floor unwashed, the windows foggy with dirt.*

**CEYX**

Much time indeed. It seems that this little maneuver's cost me at least a year. I must hurry back to my kingdom to tend to my people. But lo, if a great time has passed then I can't be sure my reception. Here, I'll take this tapestry to drape around myself as a disguise.

*Ceyx moves through the empty temple to the door.*

Thus disguised, I enter back into my kingdom to find my father.



\* \* \*

## ACT II

### THE KINGDOM OF LUCIFER

\* \* \*

*Exterior, city center of Trachis. As Ceyx enters from the temple into the square cloaked in his red tunic, passersby do not recognize him as the king. Near the temple is a bustling marketplace. To the side of the market are the steps up to the Areopagus court. In the distance is the royal palace.*



#### CEYX

At last, back in my kingdom. But lo, what is this oddity? Though the temple looks like it's fallen into disrepair, the citizens all look as if they've all gone on Ozempic and been gifted gym memberships!

*As King Ceyx walks through the city square, it is conspicuous how many beautiful men and women are in the city. Everywhere you look looks like a Benneton ad. Beautiful young women stroll along the streets in bikinis, crop tops, and toga butt-huggers. The men are tanned and*

*muscular and wearing speedo style togas. Everyone on the street is young, there is a noticeable absence of children or old people.*

**CEYX**

I say, young girl...

**GIRL 1**

Girl? Sonny, you just made my day haha.

**CEYX**

Oh, ok. I say, do you know how fares the king of this fair city?

**GIRL 2**

Well, I'll be! Ain't heard tell of no king runnin' this here city in over a year. That feller just up'n skedaddled! Now if you'll excuse me, I'm off to jigger me some young bucks, hoo doggy!

**CEYX**

Oh, I see. Farewe... Well you then, other young girl.

**GIRL 2**

Ew! Boy, get outta my DMs 🦴 you mad crusty!

**CEYX**

No no, I'm just trying to ask if you know where the king of this city is.

**GIRL 2**

King?? Ain't never seen one 🦴👑 that's ancient history frfr 🤔👉 we out here ruling ourselves, no cap 🔥👁️ just straight vibingggg 😊💫 WOOOOO LET'S GOOOOOO 🚀👑🎉

*Ceyx wanders away from the girls confused by their words and their language. He stumbles through the crowd gazing around at the extravagant 24-hour nightclubs and endless wet-tshirt contests. Then in the distance he hears a familiar voice and pushes through the crowd to get to it.*

**LUCIFER**

Golden grapes of the gods! Golden grapes of the gods! Haven't gotten your golden grapes yet? The only golden grapes you'll ever need are Dr. Lucifer's Patented Perennial Phosphoric Grapes!



**CEYX**

Dad? What the hell is happening here? What's going on in Trachis?

**LUCIFER**

Why, Ceyx! So glad to see you again, it's been a minute.

**CEYX**

A minute? Dad, it's been a year! You left me stranded in Dionysus' realm. You left me there to die.

**LUCIFER**

Left you? Stranded? My son, you got out didn't you? My resourceful boy. And I did try to go back for you, but by the time I got back from the grape warehouse the portal had already closed. What was I to do?

**CEYX**

You...you really came back for me? I guess there wouldn't be much you could do if the portal was closed, and it did close up pretty fast.

**LUCIFER**

Indeed. Now, it's nice catching up with you after so long, but I really do have to get back to my little business here. **GOLDEN GRAPES RIGHT HERE!** You need 'em, I've got 'em. Defy yourself to become yourself!

**CEYX**



But dad, what happened to my kingdom? How did it get overrun with partiers and socialites? Are these all Maenads? Has the city been overrun by the orphic raving ones; the children of the vine?

**LUCIFER**

What? No, these are your subjects, the same subjects you left to their own devices a year ago. They're just...well...

*As lucifer talks, a gorgeous young Tethe Yena in a tight leather toga keeps pressing up against Ceyx; far too close to be unintentional. She is clearly trying to cop a feel of Ceyx's kingly booty.*

**CEYX**

I say girl, remove your hands from my person or I'll have them removed from you!

**TETHE**

Come on sailor, I'm just looking for a good time.

**CEYX**

What? But you're at least 20 years younger than me! You can't be more than 14. And I'm a...well I'm a widower I suppose. I have no time for your youthful games.

**TETHE**

Youthful? Oh that's sweet of you hunny. The last time I had anyone up in this coochie, Regan was still emperor. Now come on and give mama a big kiss while I still got the moves.



*Tethe embraces the unwilling Ceyx and forcefully kisses him on his face and neck. Ceyx pushes her away.*

**CEYX**

No! Bad touch! Bad touch! Now tell me true, why are you here lass?

**LUCIFER**

Why is she here, son? For the same reason as anyone, for my Patented Perennial Phosphoric Grapes.

*Lucifer holds up a bunch of the golden grapes stolen from the land of Dionysus, now embossed with a picture of his profile and the words "Dr. Morningstar". Ceyx's face drops as he realizes his father's business.*

**CEYX**

But dad, we got these grapes together. They were for...we were going to go save my wife together.

**LUCIFER**

The golden grapes are for all the citizens of Trachis. The golden grapes bring beauty to an ugly land, bring light to the fog of endeavor. The golden grapes will save the whole world, my boy.

**TETHE**

Well he's saving the whole world right now, if you ask me. These golden grapes are amazing. I tried them on day one and look at me now. The body and face I had at 14. The absolute pinnacle of my fertility and marriageability in 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE Greece, in which we all live. While recognizing that beauty standards and laws around consent change over time, we can all agree that at this time and place the body that I would choose to inhabit would be my 14 year old self, and that that beauty standard of the time that this play takes place in no way reflects badly on the author of the play who is just doing his best to write a mildly historically accurate, though often knowingly tongue-in-cheek, satire of Greek drama.

**CEYX**

So then this is your real face, but the face that you had when you were just a girl. The voice of a girl, the blush of a girl. But then how old are you under this mystifying skin?

**TETHE**

Hey, didn't your mamma ever teach you not to ask a woman her age? Now come here and let me lick that frown off of your face.

**CEYX**

Ah! Bad touch! Bad touch!

*Tethe suddenly grabs her chest and staggers backwards.*

**TETHE**

Aaarghhh, my heart. I thought I'd have more time.

*Tethe stiffens and falls backwards, dead. Cexy rushes over and feels her pulse.*



**CEYX**

What is this, father? Have our grapes over excited her?

**LUCIFER**

My grapes do nothing of the like, boy. She was an old woman of 80. It's no wonder that your flirtations would drive her to an early grave.

**CEYX**

80? Ewww, she licked me with her old lady tongue.

*Meter Yena and Thygater Yena run onto the stage and over to Tethe Yena. Both appear to be 14 years old and beautiful (by 6BCE standards, I'm just saying).*



**METER AND THYGATER**

Oh gods, mother!

**CEYX**

My condolences to both of you. It is indeed a tragedy to have to witness the passing of your...um, was she both of your mother then.

**METER**

She was our mother and grandmother.

**THYGATER**

She was my mother. She was her grandmother.

**METER**

That's a lie and you know it. She was my mother. You're my daughter, so she was your grandmother.

**THYGATER**

This again? Are you ever going to let this ruse of yours go? I'm the mother and you're the daughter. You can't go around trying to be a mother to your own mother.



**CEYX**

What's all this then? You two squabble like sisters, yet you claim to be the mother and the daughter. The family is the back-bone of the Thracian city-state and it can not be muddled by ambiguous relationships between mothers and daughters. Come out with it now, who is the mother and who is the daughter?

**METER AND THYGATER TOGETHER**

I'm the mother and she's the daughter!

**THYGATER**

Isn't it obvious, stranger? My 8-year-old daughter here is tired of living under her mother's control. Now that she can express herself as a grown woman, she wishes to live as her own queen, and even as the queen of her own mother.

**METER**

It's as she says, but it is she who wishes to live as her 40-year-old mother. Now that she's eaten the golden grape, my child can present herself as whatever age in her life she wishes. And it's no coincidence that she wishes to present herself as the same Aphroditic age as I do.

**THYGATER**

It's as she says, but it is I who wishes to present myself in a younger form in which neither my boobs nor labia had yet begun sagging. It is she who wishes to look the age for her first husband and I who wish to look the age for my second.

**CEYX**

Enough! This case is indeed vexing, as your faces are both indistinguishable to the years. This is a matter that requires judiciousness. This is a case that requires probing wisdom. This is a case that requires...a court scene!

**METER AND THYGATER**

Gasp! But we would need a judge for such a trial.

**CEYX**

And so you have one right before you. For I am no mere stranger. I am in fact...

*Sweeping off his hooded disguise and revealing his royal face to all.*

...King Ceyx of Trachis!

*All people on the stage gasp in disbelief. The co-ed beach volleyball game comes to an abrupt end. All the participants in the enkrides eating contest stare in shock as fried dough drips from their gaping mouths. The game of topless chicken fight ends with all the girls falling off their boyfriends' shoulders into the pool at once.*



## CEYX

Indeed, it is I, your king. I have returned from the land of the gods after a year of Dionysian imprisonment. And what do I find in my city upon my return? Debauchery. Bacchanalianism. Toga parties! It is nearly too much for any one ruler to endeavor. But here I am, my people, come back to bring order to the chaos. And where we must begin to bring healing to this city is to bring restoration to the law. And here is just such a case that demands my kingly judiciousness and jurisdiction. A mother who is being usurped by her own daughter? A daughter who wishes to place herself above her own mother? It calls to us from the very heart of the crisis of illusion that we find ourselves in. If we can not know who we are, then how can we not are who we know?

*The crowds part as the king leads a procession up the steps to the Areopagus. On the highest step, Ceyx turns to address the massive crowd of teenage spring-breakers.*

## CEYX

I, King Ceyx, call this trial to order. All gathered here today stand witness to these hearings, these deliberations, these opinions, these mastications, and these verdict...ations. We have here a mother and a daughter who have become indistinguishable from one another and so have begun to entwine their identities. This can not stand. And especially, I might add, if anyone here has been sexually active with whichever of these two is the 8-year-old.



*A grossed-out groan goes up from the crowd. Several men and a few women in the crowd hum and stare at their toes. One shout comes up from the crowd, "Hey, she told me she was 12!"*

**CEYX**

Regardless, we must discover which of these two is of the age of matriarchy and which is of the age of...not quite consent. We'll begin with GENERAL TRIVIA! Meter, we'll start with you. How many trials did Heracles have to carry out to atone for killing his wife and children? And for 100 bonus points, in which city is Heracles said to have retired?

**METER**

Um, I don't think anyone knows that.

**CEYX**

Thygater, over to you for the steal.

**THYGATER**

Ummm...pass.

**CEYX**

OK then, on to round two: youth slang. Thygater, what is skibidi, gyatt, giga chad, and kys? And for 100 bonus points, give an example of touching grass.

**THYGATER**

I refuse to answer any of those questions.

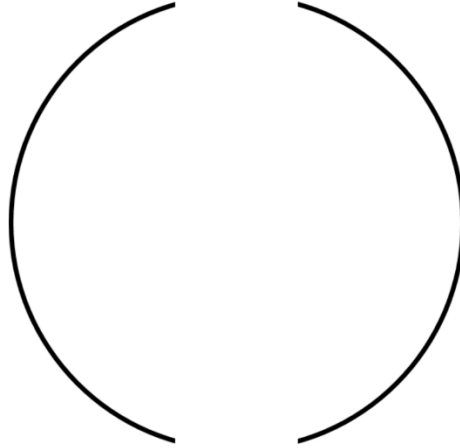
**METER**

That's alpha-speak. We don't talk like that.

**CEYX**

Alright, zero points for everyone. It seems that conventional tests of maturity are not going to work here. We seem to have both a mature child and an immature adult, but legally only one is of the age of consent. This is going to take some real Solomoning here. Hmmm...eureka! Meter and Thygater, both of you will now be subjected to a cognitive test to empirically measure your maturity and intelligence.

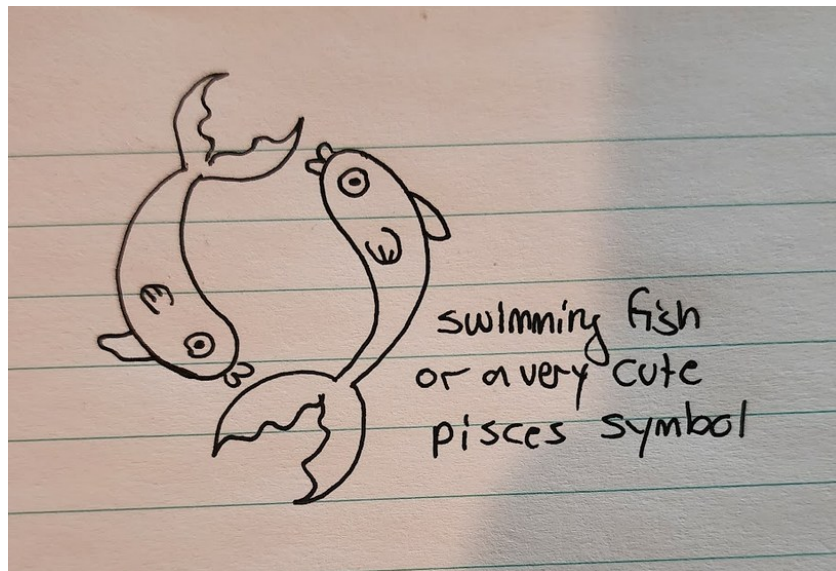
*Ceyx picks up two tablets and draws on each a pair of semi-circles that form an incomplete circle. He hands one tablet to each girl along with a piece of chalk.*



### CEYX

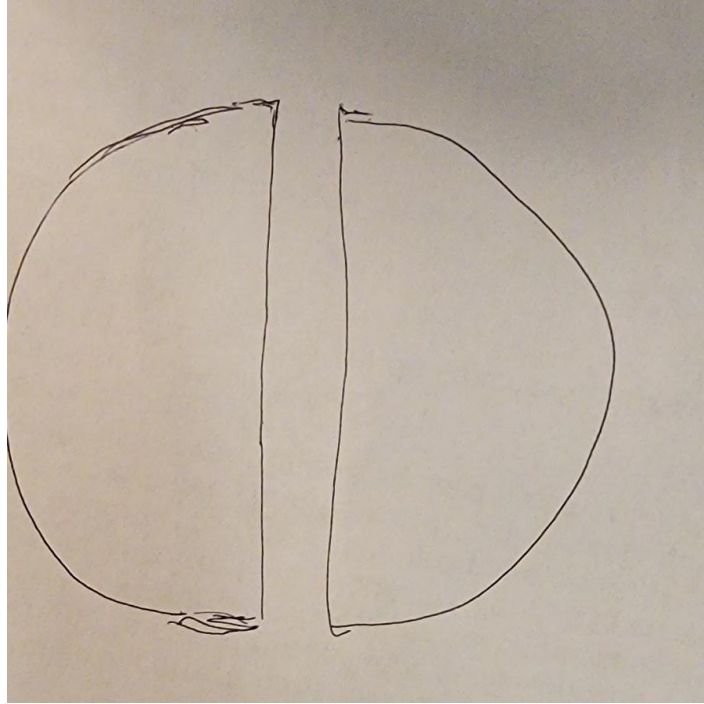
Each of you will have to use the given shape as a starting point to create a figure. Be as creative as possible. The goal is to transform the simple lines or shapes into a unique drawing by incorporating original elements. Your drawings will be evaluated on fluency, originality, elaboration, title, and resistance to premature closure.

*Meter and Thygater both begin drawing on their respective tablets. After a few minutes, both are asked to show their drawings to the crowd. First Thygater held up her picture. The crowd oo's and aah's in wonder at the picture.*



*Next, Meter held up her picture. The crowd boos and heckles the picture.*





**CEYX**

The results could not be more clear. Thygater is clearly the more cognitively mature of the two and could only have come to such maturity through age. She has proven herself to be of age and the mother of Meter. Meter, meanwhile, has demonstrated her intelligence of a child and shall be recognized as a child from now on until she can pass this confounding test some time in the future.

**METER**

A child? But I have a doctorate!

**CEYX**

Well they'll call anyone a doctor these days won't they? They'll give those degrees to just about anyone. I mean, these days you could become a doctor just by sitting around in a boat all day.

*The crowd all jeers at Meter's made-up doctorate degree. Some onlooker yells, "Being precedes biology, idiot!"*

**CEYX**

And more importantly than the single case, I have now brought back to the city the rule of law. This profound judgement puts my city back onto the road to order from the chaos wrought by my father's grape madness. And yet, I can not stay here to carry on this important work personally. Don't wail, my citizens. It is just that when I set out to steal these magical golden grapes from the land of Dionysus, it was for the purpose of restoring my fair wife Alcyone to her former beauty and humanness. I believe that in the same way that these grapes have

allowed all of you to leave your too old and too young selves behind to choose a time in your life to reflect upon your appearance, so too will Alcyone be allowed to leave her cursed bird body behind to return to her blessed queenly glory. And she and I will once again have sex.

*The crowd cheers.*

And so now I must depart for the island of Alcyone, my dear queen. There I will search for my queen and give her a magical golden grape. Dad, grape me.

*Lucifer tosses Ceyx a golden grape.*

Farewell my people. When I return, it will be alongside your beloved queen Alcyone.

*The crowd cheers. Ceyx descends the steps of the Areopagus into the adoring crowd. As he passes through the crowd, he once again raises his red hood to conceal his identity. The onlookers are confounded as to where their king has suddenly disappeared to. Leaving the crowd inconspicuously, Ceyx cuts down the hill towards the city's boat dock.*

\* \* \*

## INTERLUDE

### AN ENCOUNTER ON THE FERRY

\* \* \*

*On the stage is the Alcyone Island ferry. Around the ferry is a dark and mysterious lake. As Ceyx enters the ferry, the darkly cowed ferryman on the dock pushes the ferry out onto the foggy lake and waves goodbye to it. Looking around the boat, Ceyx sees a young boy child, Pairos Pamphainos sitting quietly to the side. They are alone on the boat. Happy for the company, Ceyx trots over to sit next to the boy. The boy is silent as Ceyx sits down, not looking up.*

#### CEYX

Well this is a fortuitous encounter. I haven't seen an actual child since I returned to Trachis. In all of my time there it seemed that everyone only wanted to be their most beautiful selves. It's refreshing to see a child content with just being a child. You're shivering, are you cold?

#### PAIROS

No, sir. You just keep going. So you like children?

#### CEYX

Well of course, don't we all? Like children? I'm just happy that when you were faced with the choice of what was most beautiful, that you remained a child.



**PAIROS**

Yes, sir. I'm just a little boy. I'm traveling on this big lake all by myself. I hope you'll take care of me while we're out on the lake all alone.

**CEYX**

Well...of course I'll take care of you. If I need to, I mean. I guess it's a pretty smooth ride over to the island from here. There's hardly even any ripples on the water. I think we can just drift along and enjoy the ride, don't you?

**PAIROS**

Yes, sir.

*The two sit in silence for some time. The boy keeps looking at the floor. Ceyx looks around the boat and out to the open water around them. The boy looks up at Ceyx.*

**PAIROS**

So do you want me to suck your dick, or not?

**CEYX**

Woah, what? Wha..why...I didn't ask for that. I don't want that.

**PAIROS**

Hey it's OK, I'm a full grown man under here. I'm just wearing my childhood skin.

**CEYX**

Wait, you're not a child? I thought...

**PAIROS**

Woah, woah! Did you think I was a real child? Were you trying to come on to an actual child? Are you some kind of sicko?

**CEYX**

But...no, no I thought you were a real child. But I wasn't trying to "come onto you". I thought you were just a real boy and I thought I'd talk to you. You know, like human beings. I swear, I wasn't trying to get you to...to suck...

**PAIROS**

OK, OK. I get it. Sorry for the misunderstanding. You might as well sit down then. We've still got a ways to go.

**CEYX**

Sure, sure. Could you scoot over a little then? So...um...how...

**PAIROS**

Please don't ask me any questions, ok?

**CEYX**

Sure. It's just, why a child? You could be whatever age you want. You could be yourself when you were a beautiful teenager. Or when you were a burly middle-aged man. Why not settle on any of those times?

**PAIROS**

Those times when I was beautiful? When I was burly? All those times? Come on, I've grown up. I've seen all the stages that my body's gone through and none of them were beautiful or sexy. I'm fat. I've got eczema and a patchy beard. I don't know why, but since I was 13, I haven't been able to stop stinking. I wash every day with soap, but I just can't stop stinking. I'm not like all the people back in Trachis. I can't choose to be my beautiful self because I've never been beautiful. I'm an ugly adult and I was an ugly kid. But at least when you're a kid people give you the benefit of the doubt. At least as a kid nobody's expecting me to be beautiful and tan and muscular. I can just be an ugly kid that nobody will notice.

**CEYX**

But then why...why go into this line of work?

**PAIROS**

Giving blow jobs on a boat? Why not? There's enough perverts out there who want to know what it's like to get sucked off by a little kid. And as long as I'm technically an adult, there's no consequences for them. Heh Elie Wiesel talks about that in his book Dawn, did you know that? He says that if they had the chance and knew they wouldn't get in any trouble, every red blooded man would have sex with a teenager. And that guy won a Nobel Prize, so he ought to know his stuff. Imagine that, living through the Holocaust just to come out thinking that everyone wants to have sex with kids.

*Pairos begins to cry quietly into his jacket lapel.*

**PAIROS**

That's why I'm getting out of there, why I'm leaving Trachis. All their beauty and sexiness. That place is for the beautiful people. But not everyone used to be beautiful or is ever going to be beautiful. Some of us are just ugly. We're just cursed. And for people like us, we all end up on Alcyone Island. And that's where I'm going.

*Pairos continues crying quietly. Ceyx looks off from the boat. He can't see land yet. They'll arrive at Alcyone Island after nightfall.*

\* \* \*  
**END PART ONE**  
\* \* \*



\* \* \*  
**ALTERNATE ART**  
\* \* \*

**Lucifer**

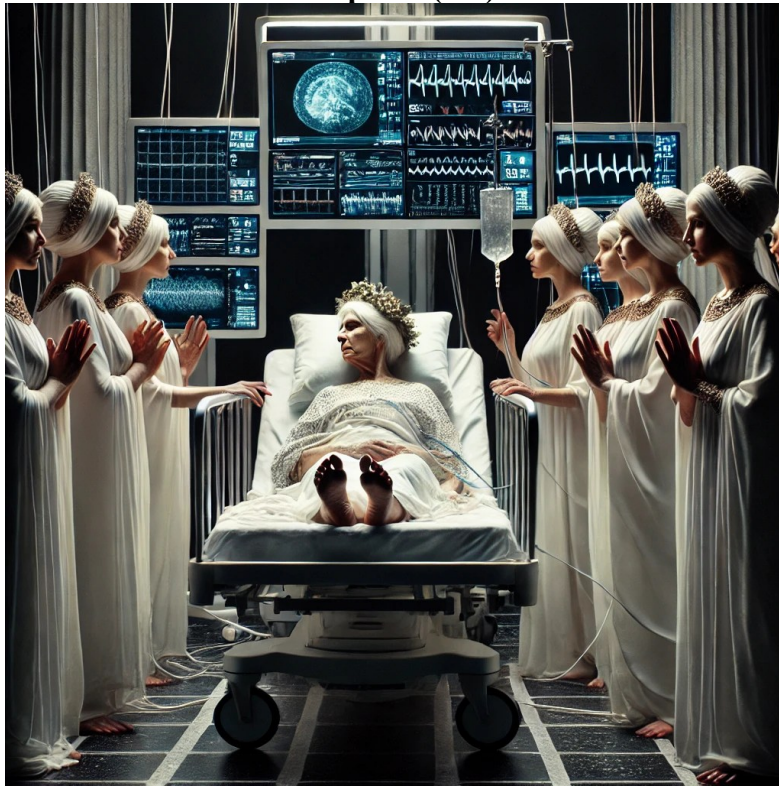


**Lucifer and Ceyx**





**Hesperus (old)**



**Hesperus (young)**





## Dionysus



## The City of Trachis





Tethe and Ceyx



Tethe and Ceyx





**Tethe and Ceyx**



**Tethe and Ceyx**





**Meter and Thygater**



**Meter and Thygater**



# GUAYARMINA

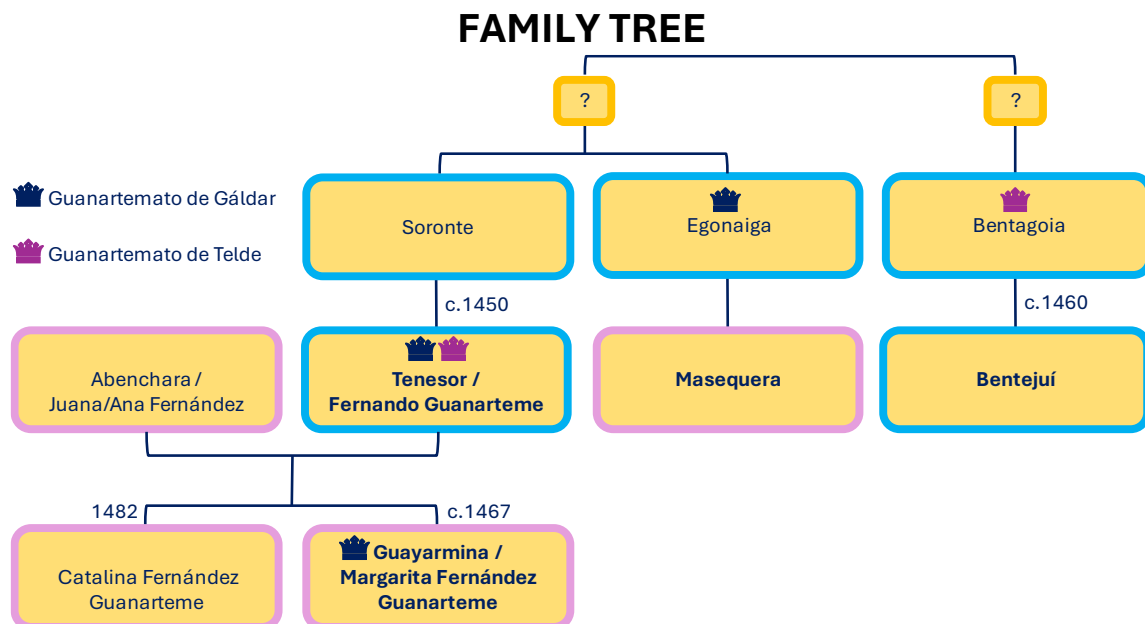


by Elvira Rex



## CHARACTERS

GUAYARMINA	Princess of Gáldar, circa 16 years of age
MASEQUERA	Daughter of the deceased guanarteme (king) of Gáldar, and cousin and confidante of GUAYARMINA
CHORUS	of Canarian aborigine rebels
BENTEJUI ( <i>ben-teh-who-ee!</i> )	Son of the deceased guanarteme of Telde, and GUAYARMINA and MASEQUERA's cousin, c. 23 years old
TASARTE	Faycán (high priest) of Telde, BENTEJUI's friend
TENESOR SEMIDÁN (=Lord)	Father of GUAYARMINA and former guanarteme of Gáldar and Telde, c. 33 years of age



## MAP OF EVENTS (GRAN CANARIA)



## SCENE

*Large cave of ceremonies at the heart of Ansite Fort – a natural cave complex in the treacherous crags of the Gran Canarian (then known as “Canaria”) mountains, long inhabited by its aborigines, now host to the last remaining members of the resistance under siege. The walls are lined with pelts and ritual items and a hearth smoulders in the middle, giving off little light. GUAYARMINA and MASEQUERA enter.*

## GUAYARMINA

Dearest cousin, come hither and lend an ear to my woes, in which you share, and to which the Gods are deaf. In vain have I day and night prayed for mercy from Acorán who created all. He has long abandoned us in our plight. Fruitlessly have my hot tears fallen before the altar of the sun, Magec mother of the blaze, whereupon her searing rays have made them vanish leaving not a sign of my long suffering. At night too, have I continued my dehydration, but Achuguayo the moon god has not but blinked his single bright eye in response to mine perennially bathed by a stream of sorrow. Lend, I say, your ear, for ‘tis clear not another being in the sky or earth, not one God nor wretched Castilian invader, has any care what befalls our people and our ways, and we only have ourselves upon which to rely.

## MASEQUERA

Alack, cousin, ‘tis only too true! ‘Twould seem indeed the Gods have forsaken us, for this siege weighs heavy on our dwindling ranks. And yet, I doubt not that our daring warriors, chief among them brave Bentejuí Semidán, your betrothed, will win out in the end. How could they not? They are skilled beyond measure in combat, experienced, and their cause is the most just. No doubt we shall return to be in the Gods’ favour if we persevere in our fight and lose not heart.

## GUAYARMINA

Ah, optimistic friend! I know not what to believe – yet, just now, your words produced a pang in my heart such that I suspect our fate to be darker than you describe if we stay the current course. I fear you have abandoned reason for blind hope!

## **MASEQUERA**

Nay, say 'tis not so, cousin! Your vassals need your unwavering encouragement! They thirst for the echoes of your rallying cry through these caverns just as the arid sand thirsts for the surf.

## **GUAYARMINA**

Forgive me, dear companion. My skill in the labour of hope has been much degraded since the day my beloved father, Tenesor Semidán, guanarteme and regent of Gáldar and Telde, was robbed us by the same loathsome usurpers who now besiege our mountain fort. I have heard not a word regarding his fate since Magec's zenith was at its lowest in Acorán's vast blue dominion. Does he live or die? And what of my mother, likewise abducted, heavy with child? What of my sibling? Did Magec ever spread her tender warmth over that ill-fated babe? Does she yet? I pray that they at least may be spared, though we, entrenched in this starless cave, may not be.

*Exit GUAYARMINA and MASEQUERA. The CHORUS of Canarian rebels enters.*

## **CHORUS**

Hear you, O God of the firmament? Recognise you, just as we have, the clear voice ringing through these caves? Our princess Guayarmina, leader of the rebellion, who led us to these distant mountain parts and vowed to guard us from the Castilian savages, their barbaric religion and technology, hear you how she surrenders in soul if not yet in body? See you how she loses the battle before it's lost? Woe! Have you indeed forsaken us, Acorán, mightiest of Gods? If she will not resist our vile assailants, who will?

*Enter BENTEJUÍ.*



## **BENTEJUÍ**

Assemble, men, once more for battle! Gather your heavy rocks, your spears of pine tipped with sharp flint, that they may soon be bathed in Spanish blood. Light the ritual fires, chant the sacred rites, and ready your hands and hearts for gory deeds. The enemy grows placid and sedentary as it girds the mountain, confident that this siege will soon overthrow us. Not so, by the Gods! I vow they will never conquer us as long as I live, and we will make them feel our power this night.

## **CHORUS**

Haste, soldiers, swiftly make the arrangements, for this ambush could tip the balance of war! There is hope yet if noble Bentejuí breathes. Quick then, brother, cinch up your skins – you there, friend, this rock will do much better – let us make ready together for the fray.

*Enter TASARTE.*

## **TASARTE**

Hark, Bentejuí, son of Bentagoia! Cherished bosom-friend, I come bearing news both sweet and sour, just as a bowl of goat's milk is sweet but sours when it has been forgotten long hours away from Magec's watchful eye. Word has reached our small band of the imminent arrival of Tenesor Semidán, your cousin and would-be father-in-law, who was taken from our ranks by the previous band of pillaging Iberians in seasons past. 'Tis told he is become a defector – a base traitor – whose allegiance is now bound to the Castilian crown, as is his soul, or what tatters can remain of it, to the Catholic faith. He returns to us, commanded by the murderous Pedro de Vera and his soldiers armed with glinting steel, to request an audience with your grace. Will you meet with him?

## **BENTEJUÍ**

Alas, alack! 'Tis as we had most feared, then. Our erstwhile leader Tenesor son of Soronte, my dear cousin; he who safeguarded the guanartemato of Telde by assuming the throne when I was too young for that honour; he who not long ago defended my land from the upstart Doramas son of Doramas (who, though a fearsome warrior, was no noble, having cropped hair, and who has since died a hero's death in the battle of Arucas); he who entrusted those two most resplendent beauties: Guayarmina, and the great island of Canaria, to my care; he, I say, whom I loved like a father, is now naught but a hateful turncoat!

I will meet with him, if only to remind him of the strength of my hand and the resilience of our people, that the fear of Acorán the true God be rightfully restored to his traitor's heart.

## **TASARTE**

As you command. I shall fetch him from the foothills, your grace.

## **CHORUS**

Pray dally, Tasarte, for every hour brings our people nearer doom!  
Alack, if reports are true! How could a noble Canarian, born true of these fertile soils encircled by the sea, turn on his countrymen so?

*Exit TASARTE. Enter GUAYARMINA.*

## **GUAYARMINA**

Beloved! Can it be? Is my father, the great patriarch of the houses of Gáldar and Telde, returned? What joy! My prayers and countless tears after all have not been in vain. He lives! He is here! He will free us from this stony prison, rid us of the Castilians, and enable us to roam Canaria at will once more, to assume our rightful thrones! All our woes are over, dear Bentejuí! Soon you and I shall wed and celebrate our union with a feast of a hundred goats!

## **BENTEJUÍ**

Sweet, trusting, pale-armed Guayarmina, whose beauty commands our legion. Would that the words your red lips had let loose rang true. Would that your father's arrival were not a portent of gory death. He comes not as an ally but as a spy, a Castilian collaborator, a mouthpiece for bloodthirsty Isabel and Fernando, to incite our surrender.

## **GUAYARMINA**

How now! My own begetter, a Spaniard sympathiser? There must be some error! Pray speak not of my father in such hateful terms, or the Gods shall rain shame upon our family, of which you are a member, as a storm.

*TENESOR enters, dressed in sumptuous Castilian attire.*

## **TENESOR**

O keenest joy! O all-consuming elation! If my old eyes play not tricks on me, 'tis my beautiful daughter Guayarmina, princess of all Canaria! And here, my dear cousin, Bentejuí of Telde. I wish to embrace you both!

## **CHORUS**

Abhorrent vision! This man, once our respected ruler, appears before us not clad in skins but in the gaudy garb of our Iberian suppressors! Look away, great Acorán, from your perch above all, for this display cannot please you. Avert your eyes, fellow natives!

## **BENTEJUÍ**

I will embrace no enemy of my people, traitor.

## **GUAYARMINA**

O woe! What my ears could not allow my eyes now confirm: a father is transformed to an oppressor!

## **TENESOR**

Naïve girl, an oppressor I am not, but a pacifier, come to end the spilling of blood on this land. I am not transformed but evolved, become enlightened in faith and duty, and just as a lizard sheds its skin, so was it necessary and good for me to shed my old, barbaric customs and ways of thinking. I hope you will agree and do the same in time, O unhappy youths. Pray heed me in what I say, or your fates will be dire – so my new God has decreed it.

## **BENTEJUÍ**

I will have you invoke no false deity here. As for your being a lizard, 'tis true you did scurry away and back unharmed like a lowly reptile. Lest you forget once more from whence you came and whither you've defected, let me remind you we Canarians hunt and consume the lizard.

## **GUAYARMINA**

Pray, my Lord, be not so rash, for all our fates may depend on this man's message, a man we once held so dear, and who appears now arrayed in such otherworldly finery it dazzles all the senses. Speak, Tenesor, detail what you have to say and we will listen.

## **TENESOR**

I go no longer by that barbarian's name, "Tenesor". Almighty king Fernando of Aragón and queen Isabel of Castilla, whom I met in the gleaming city of Córdoba and, having known them, I now serve with all my soul, took care to personally safeguard the same by becoming my godparents when they baptised me. I took the name Fernando in the great monarch's honour and the surname Guanarteme in homage to my own noble roots. My wife Abenchara underwent a parallel conversion, ceasing to be known by her

native name and being reborn in the love of God as Juana Fernández. Our second child, Catalina Fernández Guanarteme, was born in Iberia a few seasons past, and has lived under the protection of God and the crown. I wish only for you, dear Guayarmina, cherished Bentejuí, to join us, that we may be a united family under the Christian faith. You, daughter, may take the name of Margarita, and you, cousin, Benjamín. You need only forswear your stubborn loyalties to false idols, to backwards culture and customs, and to an all but dead cause, to be accepted into the warm bosom of the Castilian crown. They will take care of us – they offer lands, luxuries you have never even had the capacity to imagine, titles and unwavering friendship, in exchange for very little. They offer eternal salvation, to boot! What say you, dear youths? Will you heed your worldly relative's advice? Will you agree to surrender and end this doomed war, and make this old man glad beyond compare?

### **BENTEJUÍ**

Your poison words cannot touch me, foul betrayer. Think you that mere promises of riches can tempt us, last bastions of what is good, to turn our backs on our ill-used race? I think not. I am made of nobler stuff than you, rat.

### **CHORUS**

Our leader does not surrender! O noble Bentejuí, we will die before we abandon your side and just cause.

### **GUAYARMINA**

Woe, father! Though you describe a life of ease and plenty, I fear this offer would not extend to all our peoples, and as their leader, I cannot turn my back on everyone who ever did show me love and kindness, on everything I have ever known in my short life. Pray, is there no other way? Might we not be spared, and our race allowed to continue as before? Can you not exert your influence and intercede in our favour instead of theirs?

**TENESOR**

Alas, witless daughter, you seem not capable of perceiving your situation, just as a sightless pigeon flies into a roaring fire and therein is consumed. So is it also with you, dauntless cousin. Heed me now: the Castilians will not desist in their effort. They are sure to obliterate your meagre host if you do not yield, which makes that your only choice. No friends, no one you have ever held dear to this day shall remain alive if you do not soon surrender. Whether you do so or not, you shall be changed: to a Catholic, or a corpse.

**BENTEJUÍ**

Death daunts me not, villain. I would sooner take my own life than become what you have. Better to perish a united race than yield to tyranny.

**TENESOR**

Fool, what good is a pile of bones to another?

**BENTEJUÍ**

I will not waste syllables on you, scab, for you know not the meaning of honour.

**TENESOR**

My God will secure your eternal damnation if you destroy yourself. I do not wish that fate on you.

**BENTEJUÍ**

My God will punish you tenfold, in time, for not taking your own life like a nobleman, instead choosing treachery.



## **GUAYARMINA**

Peace, men! There should be no such conversation between relatives, who once fought side by side. My dear Lord Bentejuí, my intended, you would surely not deprive me of your existence? Allay all thoughts of glorious death and hear this: I have chosen to go on in this life for I am not yet done with it. I shall deliver myself to the mercy of these foreigners and try to live among them as my father has done. Perhaps this new God will prove more sympathetic than our wilful Canarian ones, who have after all deserted us. Pray join me in this not dishonourable mission: persevere!

## **CHORUS**

And so, our princess joins the usurper's host. But what difference? We are but pawns in the hands of nobles and Gods, selfish both. Survive in defeat or join Bentejuí in death – we will not escape the whims of one or the other. How unfortunate to have been born powerless in these Fortunate Isles!

## **BENTEJUÍ**

Weak woman, 'tis plain that this renegade's venom has corrupted your mind, so that all sense of duty and justice has deserted it, just as I must now forsake you. I tarry no more, lest his faithless influence begin to creep into my mind also, as a flea burrows into skin. I go now to my death, wholeheartedly welcoming it, for I will be remembered for all time as the last hero of Canaria.

*Exit BENTEJUÍ.*

## **TENESOR**

Hapless spawn, let these old hands wipe the tears from your cheek, pale as the sea's foam. Your decision proves you wise beyond your years, and long will your people thank you for it. Bentejuí has shown inferior foresight – I urge you to put him out of your mind. Let us now descend together from this dark, high jail into the light. We shall seek my ally Pedro de Vera to communicate the happy news of your capitulation, after which we

shall cross the sea to the rich land of Iberia. There, you shall be reborn Lady Margarita Fernández Guanarteme and you will marry a worthy aristocrat, bearing him many offspring.

### **GUAYARMINA**

As you wish, father.

*Enter MASEQUERA.*

### **MASEQUERA**

Alas, alack! I curse this blackest day, when a hero is forever lost to the world! Tear out your hair, beat your fists upon your chest, for nothing can undo his demise! O pitiless Gods! Why do you idly witness this tragedy? The great warrior Bentejuí Semidán is dead! He and his stalwart faycán climbed to a steep mountaintop and jumped to their deaths, their shouts of “Atis Tirma!” (“for you, land!”) echoing through the island’s ravines. Cease your beating, heart – ‘tis in vain since he is gone.

### **GUAYARMINA**

Woe! Indescribable woe, thrice woe! Woe is you, lover, and all Canaria, for your loss! Woe for our children that will never be, and those unhappy babes to be born instead under the Iberian yoke. I am utterly undone. Let us away with speed, father, to our new future, for I, too, begin to yearn for the abyss.

*Exit GUAYARMINA, TENESOR and MASEQUERA.*

### **CHORUS**

Thus comes this goat song, as all mortals must, to a grim end.