

Cyclops
By Euripides

Adapted into English Verse
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Cast of Characters:

SILENUS, a slave to the **CYCLOPS**

ODYSSEUS, King of Ithaca

THE CYCLOPS

CHROUS of **SATYRS**

SERVANTS to the **SATYRS**

ATTENDANTS to **ODYSSEUS**

The action takes place before the entrance to the cave of the Cyclops at the base of Mount Etna.

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*(We are **b**efore the entrance
 to the cave of the Cyclops at
 the base of Mount Etna.
 SILENUS enters, carrying a
 rake.)*

SILENUS

Oh Roaring Dionysus, how can I
 Count all the labors done for you in my
 Full bloom of youth and now in my old age?
 First, Hera drove you deep into a rage
 Of madness: You abandoned those who held
 You to their breasts and nursed you, Nymphs who dwelled
 Upon the mountains. Then, the time you fought
 A war with earth-born giants, was I not
 Right there upon your right flank with my shield
 Protecting you? Then, on the battlefield
 I struck down Enceladus, striking through
 The center of his shield while holding to
 My sharpened spear. Oh, what? Was this all but
 A mere delusion? Or a dream? No! What
 I did Great Zeus has witnessed and I showed
 The spoils to the Bacchic God. The load
 I now must bear is worse, I say; for when
 Great Hera turned a group of mortal men
 Against you, those foul Tuscan pirates, they
 All had a plan to smuggle you away
 To far-off lands. But, when the news reached me
 I roused my sons and set upon the sea
 To search for you. I took charge of the stern
 And saw that all my sons made water churn
 From blue to gray as they slaved at each oar
 And all in search of you, My Lord. We tore
 Apart the sea until we came around
 The coast of Malea. And then we found
 Ourselves within an eastern wind that blew
 Our ship upon the rocky coast in view

Of great Mount Etna, where Poseidon's spawn
 The one-eyed Cyclopes who feast upon
 The flesh of men while dwelling deep in dark
 And lonely caves all live. Our lives are stark
 With misery as we were captured by
 A Cyclops called Polyphemus. We try
 To revel in our Bacchic rites, but we
 Are all enslaved and we are forced to be
 The herders of a flock belonging to
 A godless Cyclops. So, my sons must do
 The work of shepherds, toiling here among
 The tender lambs, though, they too are quite young.
 They toil on the rocky hills while I
 Am ordered to remain behind with my
 Indentures. I am ordered now to fill
 The troughs and sweep the cave and then I will
 Be forced to wait upon the Cyclops when
 He gorges on unholy meals. But, then,
 His orders are my duties, so, I take
 My leave to clear his cave out with my rake
 All to assure my Cyclops master and
 His flock of sheep return to something grand:
 A dark and dank yet clean and cheery hole!

*(CHORUS OF SATYRS enter along with
 their SERVANTS driving a flock of
 sheep.)*

But, now I see my sons all use a pole
 To drive their flock of sheep. They now head here.
 What are you doing boys? It might appear
 The beats you now beat with your feet recall
 The rhythm of a song sung in the hall
 Of Althaea while dancing by the fire
 And strutting to the music of the lyre.

(The CHORUS addresses a ram:)

CHORUS

COME ALONG
 COME ALONG
 COME ALONG
 COME ALONG

COME ALONG
 COME ALONG
 COME ALONG
 COME ALONG

YOU THE SON OF A NOBLE SIRE
 YOU THE SON OF A NOBLE DAM
 WHY DO YOU STRAY FROM ME
 I SAY
 WHY DO YOU MAKE FOR THE ROCKY WAY
 DO YOU NOT SEE A WAY YOU CAN WALK WITH EASE
 FULL OF GRASS TO GRAZE AND A GENTLE BREEZE
 WHERE THE WATER WILL
 FLOW ALONG
 FLOW ALONG FROM THE MOUNTAIN STREAMS
 FLOW ALONG TO YOUR WAITING TROUGH
 FLOW ALONG

FLOW ALONG
 FLOW ALONG BY THE CAVE WHERE YOUR YOUNG ONES
 FLOW ALONG ARE WAITING NOW
 FLOW ALONG
 YOU CAN HEAR THEM AS THEY BLEAT

BLEAT BLEAT
 BLEAT BLEAT
 BLEAT BLEAT
 BLEAT BLEAT

SHOO SHOO SHOO THE LOT OF YOU
 I SAY I SAY NOW COME THIS WAY
 COME THIS WAY WITHOUT DELAY
 COME ALONG
 COME ALONG
 COME ALONG COME GRAZE UPON THIS GRASS THAT YOU
 COME ALONG

COME ALONG CAN SEE IS SPRINKLED
 COME ALONG WITH THE MORNING DEW
 COME ALONG
 COME ALONG
 RIGHT HERE UPON THIS SLOPE

RIGHT HERE UPON THIS SLOPE
 DON'T MAKE ME THROW A STONE AT YOU
 YES YOU
 DON'T MAKE ME THROW A STONE AT YOU
 COME ALONG
 COME ALONG
 COME ALONG
 COME ALONG

COME ALONG
 COME ALONG
 COME ALONG
 COME ALONG

COME ALONG NOW RAM
 YOU A SHEPHERD AS I AM
 LET US TEND THE FLOCK OF THE CYCLOPS
 FOR THE WILD MAN OF A WILD LAND
 COME ON DOWN NOW RAM
 YOU A SHEPHERD AS I AM
 JOIN ME IN MY SHEPHERD SONG
 COME ALONG
 COME ALONG
 COME ALONG
 COME ALONG

COME ALONG
 COME ALONG
 COME ALONG
 COME ALONG

(They address a ewe.)

LOOK OVER THERE
 AN EWE
 HELLO TO YOU
 SET FREE YOUR UDDER THERE ABOUT TO BURST
 GIVE A TREAT TO YOUR LAMB
 GIVE YOUR TEAT TO YOUR LAMB
 AND YOU CAN SLAKE THEIR THIRST
 HEAR HOW THE BABIES BLEAT
 BLEAT BLEAT
 BLEAT BLEAT

FOR THE TREAT OF YOUR TEAT
 BLEAT BLEAT
 BLEAT BLEAT
 BLEAT BLEAT
 BLEAT BLEAT
 THEY AWAIT YOU IN THE CAVE WHERE THEY SLEEP
 GO AND GREET THEM IN THE CAVE
 THEY MISS YOU AND THAT IS WHY THEY SAY
 BLEAT BLEAT
 BLEAT BLEAT
 BLEAT BLEAT
 BLEAT BLEAT
 SO GO PAST THE PASTURES
 BUT DON'T TAKE TOO LONG
 THE CAVES OF MOUNT ETNA AWAIT YOU
 AND THAT IS WHY I SING THIS SONG
 COME ALONG
 COME ALONG
 COME ALONG
 COME ALONG

COME ALONG
 COME ALONG
 COME ALONG
 COME ALONG

THERE IS NO DIONYSUS HERE
 THERE IS NO BACCHIC WORSHIP
 OR THE SHAKING OF THE THYRUS
 NO THUNDER OF THE DRUM
 WHERE THE WATER RISES UP FROM THE SPRING
 THERE IS NOT A DROP OF WINE
 AND I AM ALL ALONE AS I SING

I CANNOT JOIN THE NYMPHS ON NYSA
 AND CALL TO APHRODITE
 "IACCHOS IACCHOS"
 AS I CHASE THE OTHER BACCHANTS
 THE SWIFT WHITE-FOOTED BACCHANTS

OH GREAT DIONYSUS
 GREAT FRIEND DIONYSIS
 WHERE DO YOU NOW WANDER

WANDER ALL ALONE
 AS YOU SHAKE YOUR GOLDEN HAIR
 AS IT BLOWS UPON THE BREEZE
 WHILE I YOUR SERVANT AND YOUR ACOLYTE
 DO NOT SERVE YOU
 BUT SERVE A CYCLOPS
 I SERVE THE ONE-EYED CYCLOPS
 I WANDER FAR FROM YOU
 AND SERVE HIM AS A SLAVE
 WHILE CLAD IN THIS WRETCHED GOAT SKIN CLOAK
 SO FAR AWAY FROM YOU
 CUT OFF FROM YOU
 SO FAR FROM YOU
 SO FAR AWAY FROM YOU

SILENUS

But now, be-still your tongues, my sons and see
 That all your servants drive the sheep to be
 Beneath the cavern's rocky dome.

LEADER OF THE CHORUS (to SERVANTS)

Away

With you! You heard his words; now go!

*(ATTENDANTS exit. LEADER OF THE CHORUS
 addresses SILENUS:)*

You say

Your words with such concern, my father; why?

SILENUS

I see a Grecian ship arrive down by
 The shore. The men who man the oars head here;
 They now make for the cave. It does appear
 That their commander leads them and they wear
 Some empty vessels on their necks and bear
 Some pails for water. They have come ashore
 In search of food and water. Oh, you poor
 Unlucky strangers, you head here although
 We don't know who you are while you don't know
 The manner of our master. They may find
 Out that Polyphemus is most unkind.
 The Cyclops rules a land of misery

And they step in his jaws and soon may see
 How they become the food they seek, I fear.
 But, just keep still my sons so we may hear
 What brought them here to Sicily to seek
 Provisions right beneath Mount Etna's peak

(ODYSSEUS and his ATTENDANTS enter.)

ODYSSEUS

Good strangers, could you tell me where we may
 Procure some water from a stream to slay
 Our thirst? And might a person here agree
 To sell provisions to brave sailors? We
 Are in great need. But, what is this? We seem
 To find ourselves within a Bacchic dream.
 Is this a town of Dionysus? There
 I see a tribe of Satyrs. Where
 Might be the eldest, for I will say, "hail!"

SILENUS

And I say hail to you, sir. Please regale
 Us with your name and nationality.

ODYSSEUS

Odysseus of Ithaca. You see
 The Lord of Cephallene before you.

SILENUS

I
 Have heard of him, a rambling butterfly;
 A sharp-tongued son of Sisyphus.

ODYSSEUS

You find
 The very man before you. But, be kind.
 Why be so rude?

SILENUS

You come to Sicily;
 But, tell me why and where you came from?

ODYSSEUS

We

Arrive from Ilium. We were there for
The long and bloody, endless Trojan War.

SILENUS

Well, then it seems that you became quite lost
When heading home to Greece.

ODYSSEUS

Our ship was tossed
Upon the sea by mighty winds and we
Were forced here quite against our will.

SILENUS

I see.

Oh my, it seems that you and I are bound
Within a wretched fate.

ODYSSEUS

So, then you found
Yourself here quite against your will?

SILENUS

Yes, we

Pursued a pirate band who daringly
Abducted Dionysus.

ODYSSEUS

Well, then where
Do we all find ourselves and who lives there?

SILENUS

This is Mount Etna; and, the peak you see?
The highest point in all of Sicily.

ODYSSEUS

But, why do I not see a barricade
Or any city wall?

SILENUS

Because you strayed,
Good sir, quite far beyond the world of men.
No man dwells on these rocky bluffs.

ODYSSEUS

Who then?
What, wild beasts inhabit all I view?

SILENUS

The Cyclopes live here, although, they do
Not live in houses. They all live in caves.

ODYSSEUS

Who is their ruler? Do they live as slaves
Or do they have a say in their own fate?

SILENUS

Each rules himself and will not supplicate
To anyone or anything.

ODYSSEUS

Do they
Then sow Demeter's grain, or, in what way
Do they sustain themselves?

SILENUS

On flesh of sheep
And milk and cheese.

ODYSSEUS

And tell me, do they keep
The drink of Dionysus, juice that flows
Down from the vine?

SILENUS

Oh no. So, no one knows
A hint of joy or dancing in this land.

ODYSSEUS

Do they obey the Gods and lend a hand
Of hospitality to strangers who
Arrive here?

SILENUS

They say strangers often do
Supply them with fine flesh that tastes so sweet.

ODYSSEUS

What do you say? They think of men as meat
And make a feast of us?

SILENUS

The Fates but bring
All men here to receive a butchering.

ODYSSEUS

Where is the Cyclops, he himself? Is he
Within his dwelling?

SILENUS

He is on a spree
In search of wild beasts on Etna's slope.
He hunts there with his dogs.

ODYSSEUS

If we may hope
To leave this land, do you know what you must
Do?

SILENUS

No, Odysseus. But, you can trust
That I will help you, it is guaranteed.

ODYSSEUS

Then sell us bread as that is what we need.

SILENUS

But, as I said: All that we have is meat.

ODYSSEUS

That can be pleasant and it can defeat
The pangs of hunger.

SILENUS

There is curdled cheese
And milk from cows.

ODYSSEUS

Bring them out; present them please
Out here in light of day so I may see

What I may purchase.

SILENUS

How much gold will be
Provided in exchange?

ODYSSEUS

No gold, but I
Bring you the drink of Dionysus.

SILENUS

Why,
What wonders in your words! How long have we
Been waiting for it!

ODYSSEUS

There is more: You see,
The god's own son gave me this gift of wine.
I got it from Maron.

SILENUS

These arms of mine
Once cradled him! You say that it was he?

ODYSSEUS

The son of Dionysus. Can I be
More clear?

SILENUS

Is it within the shop or here
With you?

ODYSSEUS

Just look, old man, it should be clear:
As this is wine-skin, then it should hold wine.

SILENUS

Well, I say the quantity is fine
Were I to want but just a mouthful.

ODYSSEUS

Oh,
But this is wine more potent than you know.

SILENUS

Enough to knock a satyr to the ground?

ODYSSEUS

Enough to move a Bacchant to profound
And wild dancing.

SILENUS

Oh, it sounds divine!
I shall partake of this enchanted wine!
All hail to Dionysus!

ODYSSEUS

So, will you
Imbibe it without water? Or, cut through
The potency by watering it down?

SILENUS

That seems quite right. Why would I choose to drown
The flavor when I sample when it should
Invite a purchase?

ODYSSEUS

And, is it not good
I brought this cup for sampling?

SILENUS

Let it flow
Into the cup. It was so long ago
That I last had a drink. My memory
Must now be irrigated!

ODYSSEUS

It flows free!
And here you are!

SILENUS

Great Gods! Oh, what a fine
Aroma!

ODYSSEUS

So, you say you see the wine?

SILENUS

Oh, don't be droll! No, by Olympus, I
Can smell the scent.

ODYSSEUS

What stops you then? Just try
It. Words of praise mean more if you have tried
It.

SILENUS

All hail Dionysus! He has cried
To me, "Now, sing and dance and dance and sing!"

ODYSSEUS

Now, tell me: Is the wine now gurgling
Quite gently down your throat?

SILENUS

Oh, how it flows
Right down my gullet, flowing to my toes!

ODYSSEUS

And yet, we will have money for you too.

SILENUS

Just let the wine flow free, yes, that will do!
Forget the money!

ODYSSEUS

Yes, but still you must
Bring us the cheese and the lambs.

SILENUS

Oh, trust
Me, I will do it and will pay no heed
Unto my master. I but only need
A single sip of this fine wine and I
Become a madman. I would dare to try
To take the herds of any Cyclops here
For one more sip of wine and have no fear
To take a Leucadian leap once I
Am fortified by finest wine and fly

With bliss upon my face into the sea.
A man who drinks his wine unhappily
Is truly mad, for drinking is a call
For men to rise and stand up truly tall,
Erect in two directions and, then take
A lovely breast within each hand and shake
A hand across some lovely locks and then
Look forward to some lovely dancing when
All cares and woes will be forgotten. So,
Should I not kiss a drink so fine and go
And tell the wretched Cyclops with one eye:
"Now, go and hang yourself until you die!"

(SILENUS exits.)