
DIONYSUS
Book XVI · God of Ecstasy and Madness

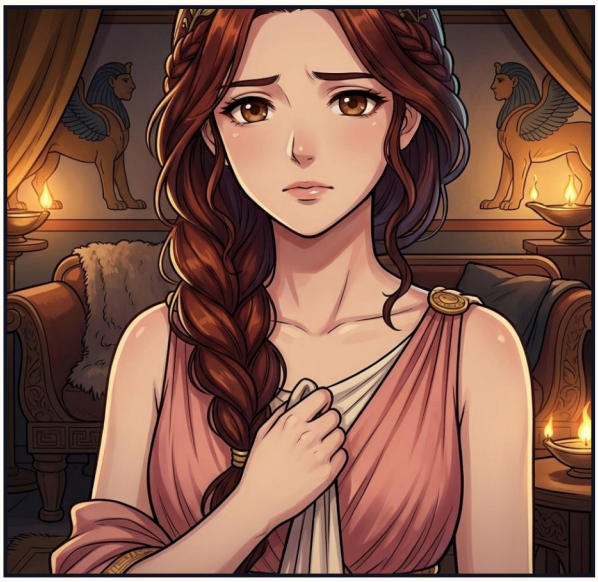
PROLOGUE – THE BRIDE OF THUNDER












Promise me one wish. Anything I ask.
I swear it by the River Styx—an oath not even a god can break.
Then come to me as you truly are. As you come to Hera.
NO—SEMELE, ASK ANYTHING BUT THAT!
KRA-KOOOM!!
Zeus saved the unborn child and carried him himself, sewn into his own thigh, until it was time.


Born a second time, from his father's thigh. The Greeks would call him "twice-born."

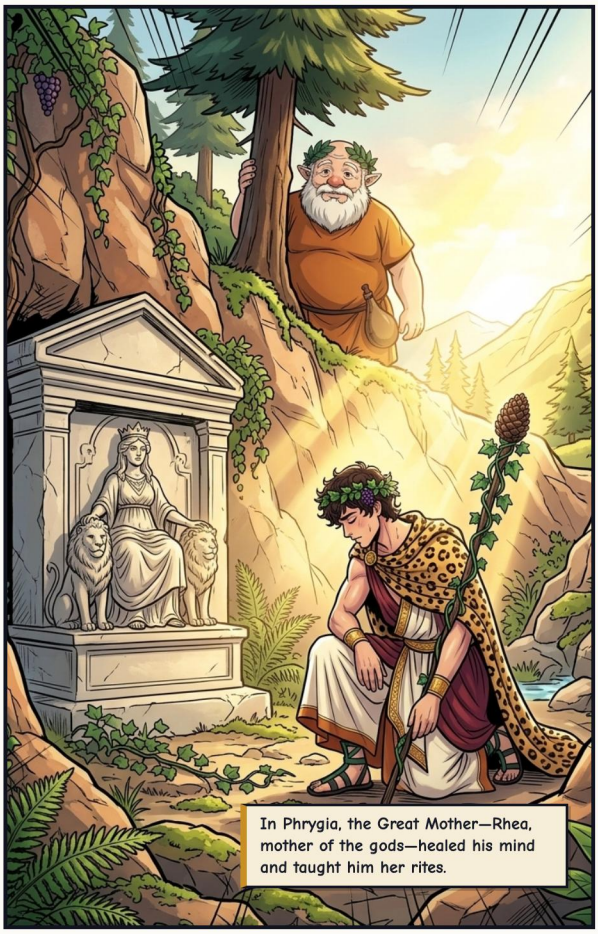

Hera is hunting for a baby. So—no baby! Just a goat. A very clever goat.


On the mountain of Nysa, nymphs raised him in secret, far from Hera's eyes.


Slower, little one. Music is like wine—you can't hurry it.




Hera struck him with madness. He wandered for years—through Egypt, through Syria—knowing no one.


In Phrygia, the Great Mother—Rhea, mother of the gods—healed his mind and taught him her rites.


Women came to dance with him—his maenads. Wherever he walked, the vine followed.

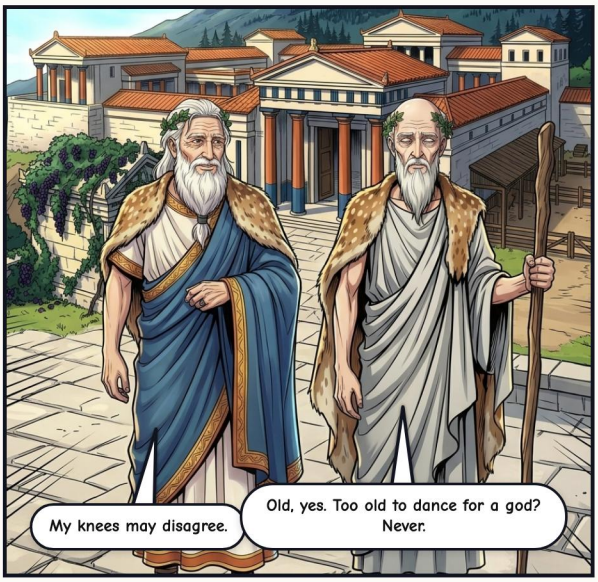

In Thebes they still call my mother a liar. It's time I went home.

ACT I – THE STRANGER AT THEBES

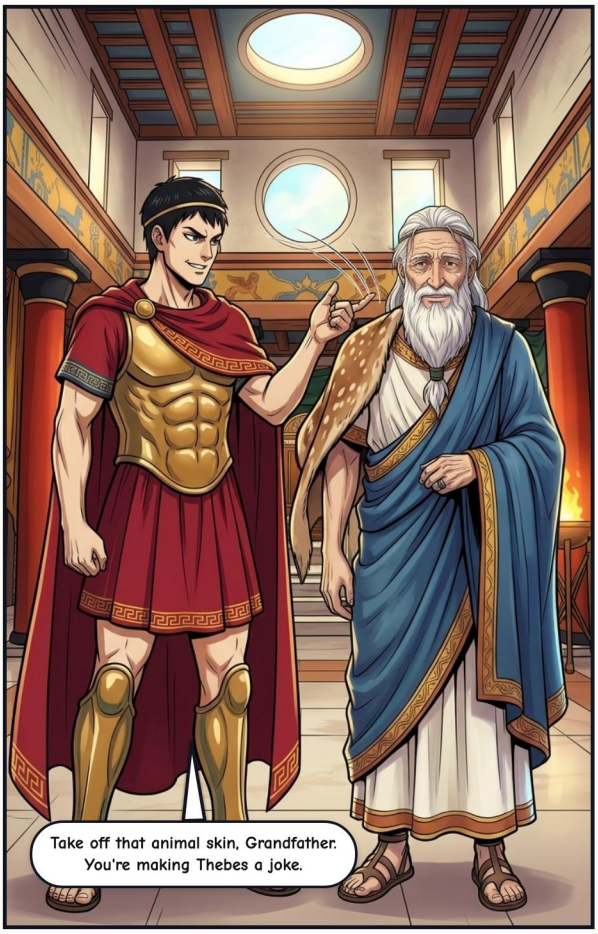


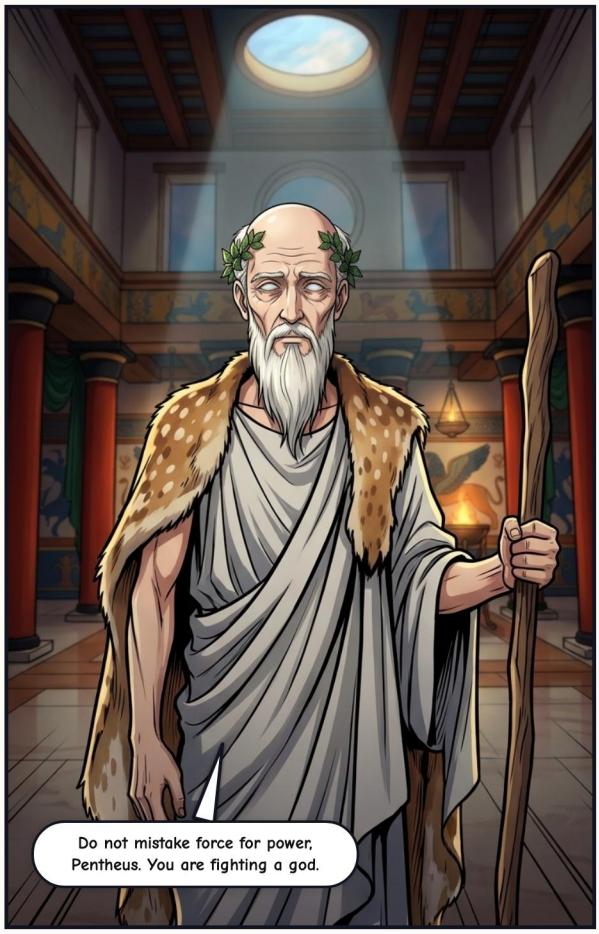









Take off that animal skin, Grandfather. You're making Thebes a joke.


Do not mistake force for power, Pentheus. You are fighting a god.


FIND THIS FOREIGN STRANGER. CHAIN HIM AND BRING HIM TO ME!

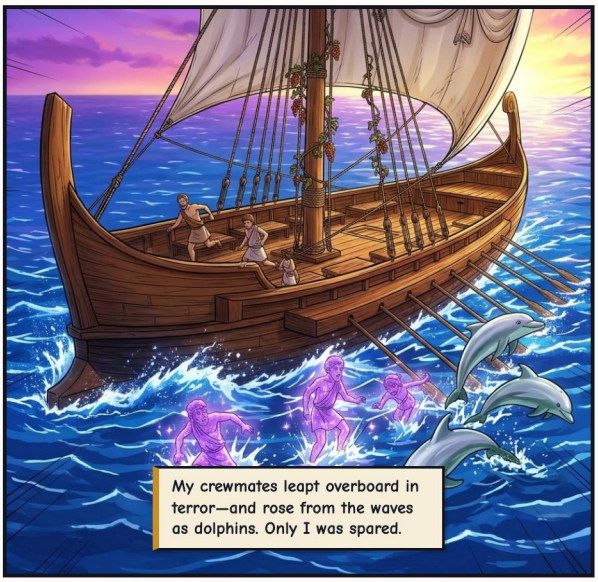

Name yourself, sailor.
Acoetes. I was a helmsman once. Hear how I met my god.

ACOETES'S TALE












A SAILOR'S STORY! THROW HIM IN THE CELLS.




A guard: "He didn't run, my king. He just held out his hands."


Who is this god of yours? And where is he?


Right here. If only you could see.


RRRUMMBLE!!






STAND STILL! STAND STILL!


A herdsman: "My king—the mountain! You must hear what the women are doing!"


"We found them asleep among the pines, my king—modest, peaceful, tending fawns like children."


"Your mother, Agave, struck a rock—and water sprang out. Then wine."


"We thought we'd capture her for you. We hid in the bushes and sprang out."


"They routed us, my king. The cattle scattered. We barely escaped."


CALL OUT THE ARMY! EVERY SHIELD IN THEBES!
Or... would you like to see them yourself? Unseen?

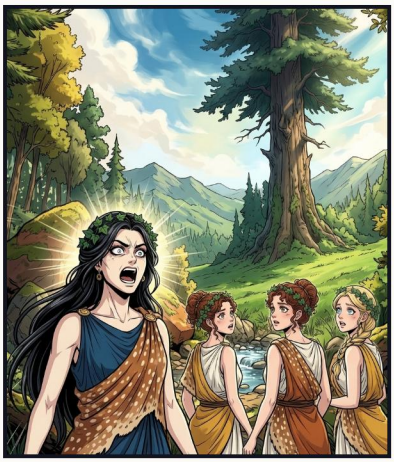



Hold still. A curl has slipped out of place.


I see two suns... and you—you have horns. Were you always a bull?

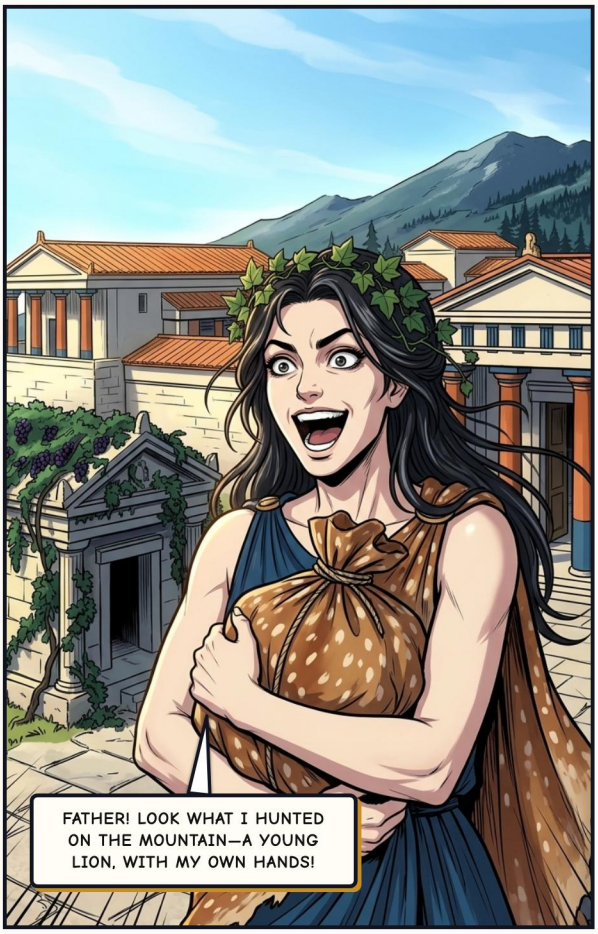


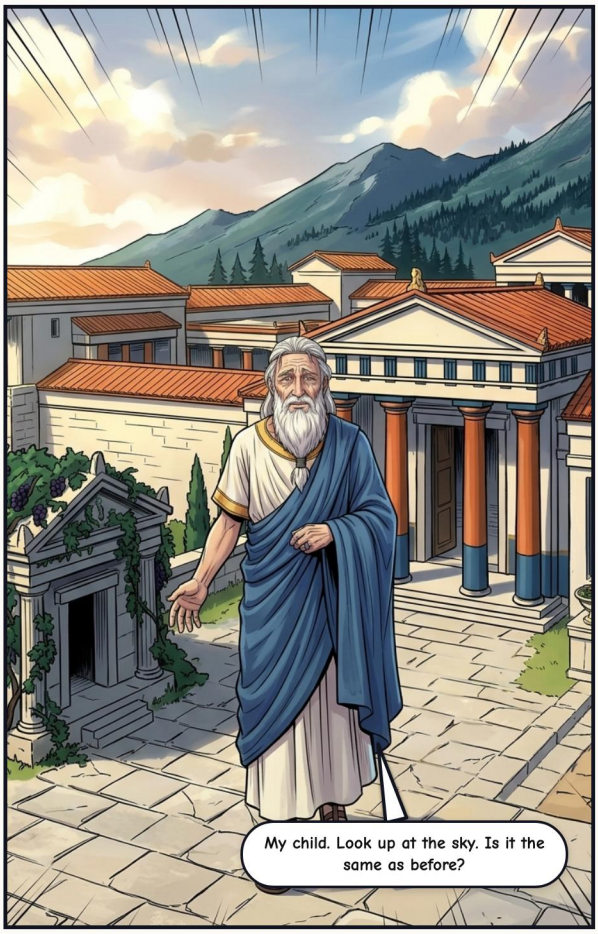


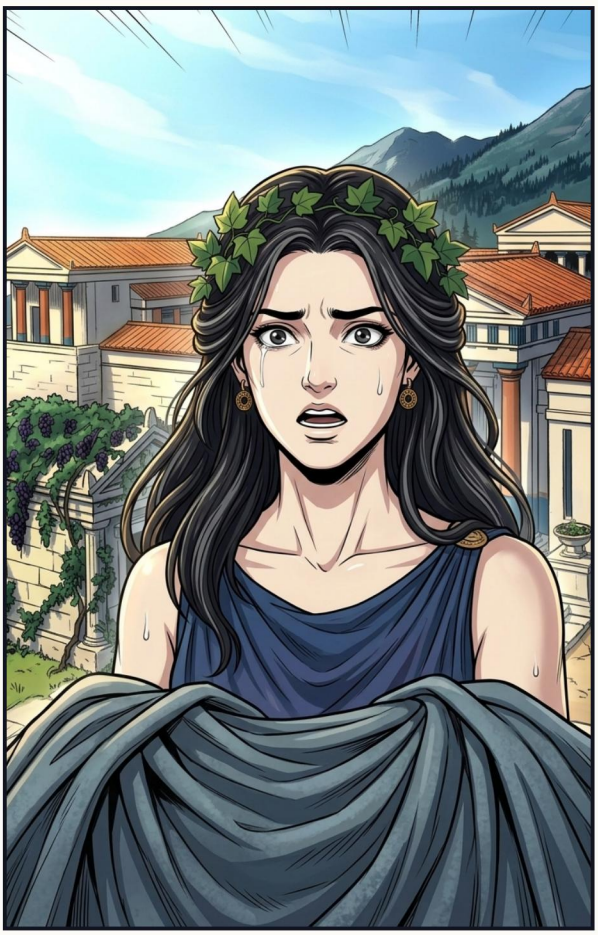







FATHER! LOOK WHAT I HUNTED ON THE MOUNTAIN—A YOUNG LION, WITH MY OWN HANDS!


My child. Look up at the sky. Is it the same as before?




Thebes denied my mother and mocked her son. Now Thebes knows me. House of Cadmus—go into exile.

INTERLUDE — THE GOLDEN TOUCH

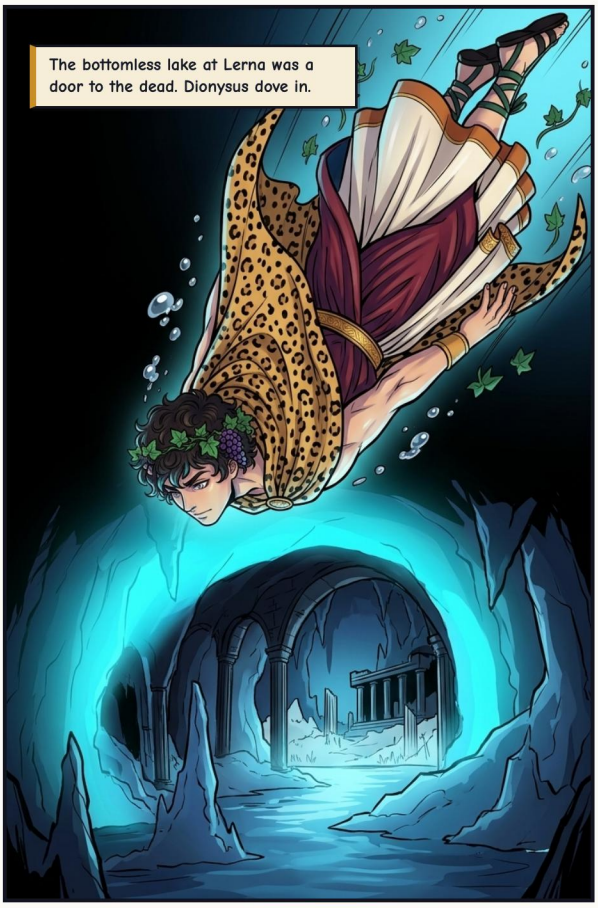


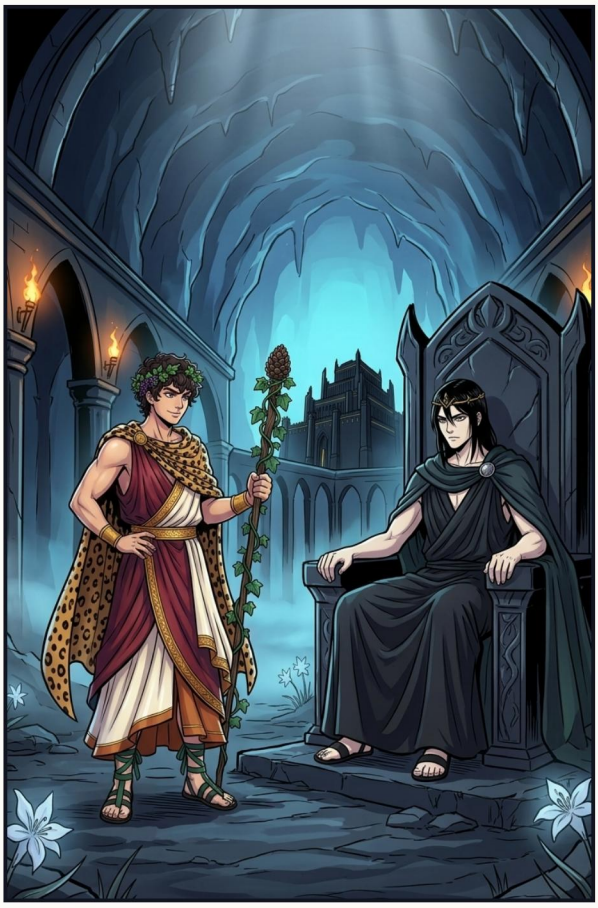






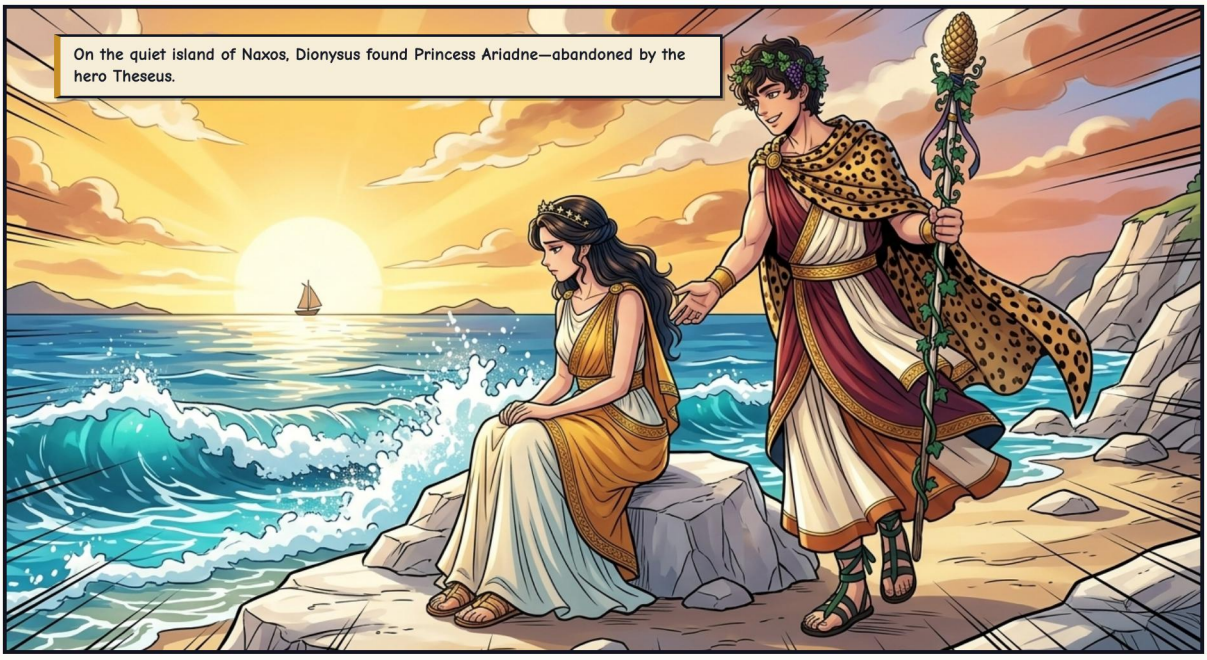
ACT II — THE CROWN OF STARS

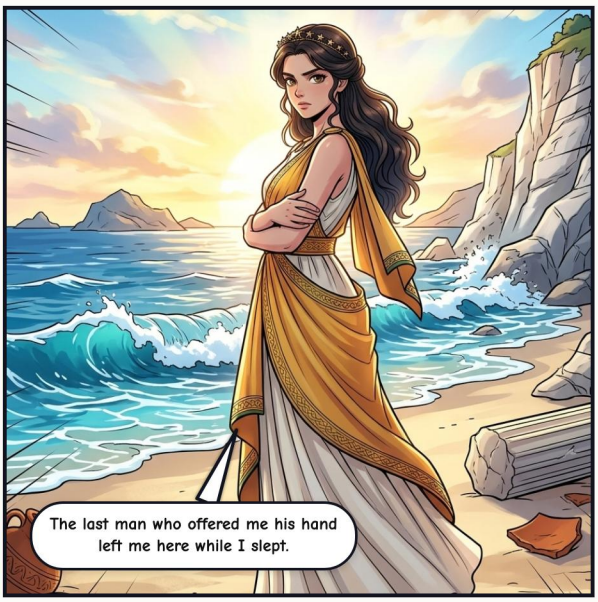









On the quiet island of Naxos, Dionysus found Princess Ariadne—abandoned by the hero Theseus.


The last man who offered me his hand left me here while I slept.

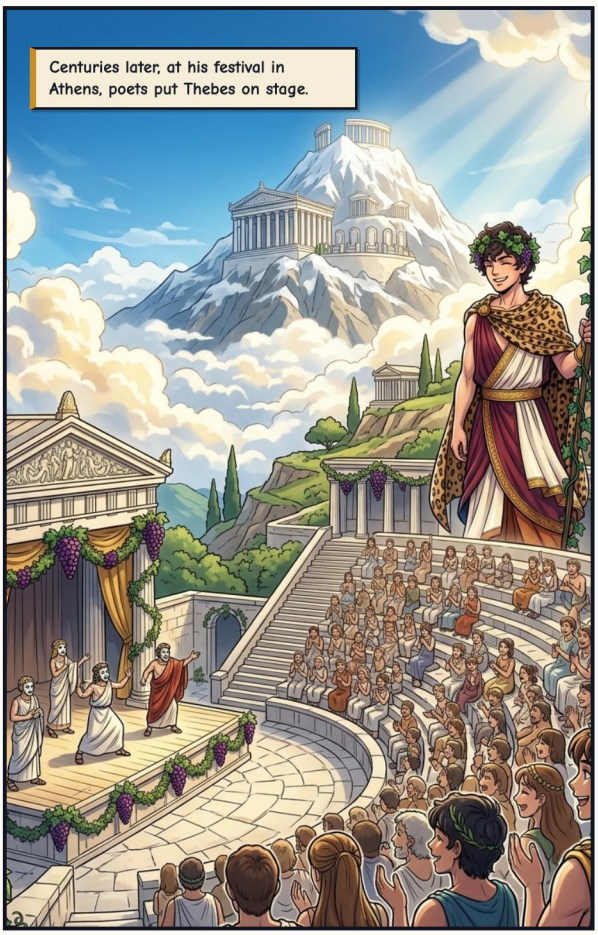

Then choose. I won't promise anything you can't watch me keep.
Stay, then. I'll decide with my eyes open.


A mortal hero left you on the sand, Ariadne. Let me set your crown in the stars instead.




Semele. Welcome, Thyone—goddess at last.


Ancient cities counted the Twelve differently. Later storytellers say Hestia gave up her seat.
Take my seat among the Twelve, young Dionysus. My place has always been beside the hearth.


Centuries later, at his festival in Athens, poets put Thebes on stage.


A mask lets you see the world through someone else's eyes. That is my real gift.


Doubted, denied, twice-born—in the end, the whole world learned to see him.
Raise your voice, dance beneath the stars—and never forget how sweet it is to be alive!

EPILOGUE — TWO WHO CLIMBED BACK









COLOPHON

Dionysus: God of Ecstasy and Madness

Gods of Olympus: Greek Mythology

CLASSICAL SOURCES

Euripides (Bacchae), Homeric Hymns 7 and 26, Ovid (Metamorphoses 3, 8, 11), Apollodorus (Library 3.4–3.5), Hesiod (Theogony), Pausanias. The Hestia throne story is modern (Robert Graves).

Freely adapted from classical Greek and Roman mythological sources in the public domain.

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WORK IN PROGRESS & FEEDBACK

This comic is part of a work-in-progress collection. If you spot a mistake or want to share feedback, please mention the version stamp below.

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