

children of the fire god, Hephaestus,
 highway builders who tame the wilderness
 and civilize the land. As he marched here,
 people came out in droves to worship him,
 including their king and helmsman,
 Delphus. [20]

Then Zeus inspired in him prophetic skills,
 and set him on this throne as fourth in line.
 Here Apollo speaks for Zeus, his father.
 My prayers begin with preludes to these
 gods. [20]

My words also give special prominence
 to the goddess who stands outside the shrine,
 Pallas Athena. I revere those nymphs
 inhabiting Corymba's rocky caves,
 where flocks of birds delight to congregate,
 where holy spirits roam. I don't
 forget [30]
 how Dionysus, ruler of this land,
 divine commander of those Bacchic women,
 ripped Pentheus apart, as if he were
 a cornered rabbit. (1) I also call upon
 the streams of Pleistus and Poseidon's
 power,
 and Zeus most high, who fulfills all things.

I'll take my seat now on the prophet's
 throne.

START HERE

May I be fortunate, above the
 rest, [30]
 to see far more than previous attempts.
 If any Greeks are in attendance
 here, [40]
 let them draw lots and enter, each in turn,
 as is our custom. I will prophesy,
 following directions from the god.

*[The Priestess enters the temple, only to
 return immediately, very agitated. She
 collapses onto her hands and knees.]*

It's horrible!
 Too horrible to say . . . awful to see.
 It drives me back . . . out of Apollo's shrine.
 My strength is gone . . . I can't stand up.
 I have to crawl on hands and knees — my

legs
 just buckle under me . . . An old woman
 overcome with fear is nothing, a child.
 No more . . .

*[The Priestess gathers herself together and
 stands with great difficulty, holding onto the
 temple doors for support.]*

As I was entering the inner
 shrine— 50
 the part covered up with wreaths—I saw
 him, [40]
 right on the central navel stone, a man
 the gods despise, sitting there, in the seat
 reserved for suppliants, hands dripping
 blood.(2)
 He'd drawn his sword, but held an olive
 branch.

It had a tuft of wool on top, a mark
 of reverence—it was large and white.
 I saw all that distinctly. But then I saw
 in front of him something astonishing,
 on the benches groups of women sleeping
 — 60

well, they weren't exactly women,
 I'd say more like Gorgons—then again,
 not much like Gorgons either. Years ago,
 I once saw a picture of some monsters
 snatching a feast away from
 Phineas. [50]

But the ones inside here have no wings—
 I checked. They're black and totally
 repulsive,
 with loud rasping snorts that terrify me.

END HERE

~~Disgusting pus comes oozing from their
 eyes.
 As for their clothing—quite
 inappropriate—
 to wear before the statues of the gods,
 or even in men's homes. I've never seen
 a tribe which could produce this company,
 a country which would admit with pride
 that it had raised them without paying a
 price,~~