

The Maenads

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CHARACTERS

STEWART (MELIOU) - M, late 30s. Fussy, academic.

JACOB (ANTHE) - M, 30s. Shy, passionate.

MAX (KALYKE) - M, 30s. The best bro.

DEVON (CHOIROS) - M, 20s. Intense, a little off.

PHIL (HONEY) - M, 50s. Basic, lonely.

SETTING

Location: high on a mountain.

Time: now.

Early sunset on a high mountain clearing. Lichen-spattered crags, late-season grasses, and a crooked tree nodding to the wind. From off, a distant hum. Then a rhythm beat out on hands and knees. The hum becomes a choral drone of Ancient Greek getting louder as it nears.

ALL

(in Ancient Greek)

*To the mountain, to the mountain
Where the crowd of women waits
To the mountain, to the mountain
All the earth will dance
Where the crowd of women waits*

Five men dance into the clearing, dressed in strange combinations of warm-weather outdoor apparel and fawn skins. Ivy and flowers sprout from their hair. Four carry decorated fennel rods called thyrsuses. One has a mandolin as well.

The drone crescendoes and dies. A brief pause, then, with a nod, they launch into a football chant, with a totally different style of moves.

ALL

WE ARE THE MAENADS
THE MIGHTY MIGHTY MAENADS
EVERYWHERE WE GO
PEOPLE WANNA KNOW
WHO WE ARE
SO WE TELL THEM
WE ARE THE MAENADS
THE MIGHTY MIGHTY MAENADS
OOH!
AAH!

Four of the men strike a final pose, while the man with the mandolin (Jacob) strums.

They break.

Yea boy! That was fucking sick!

MAX

I don't know.

STEWART

I'm all nipped up.

MAX

I thought it was all right.

PHIL

And when you came in with the strings at the end...

MAX

It was all right?

JACOB

Oh dude

MAX

Hey, let's -- come on, let's talk about it. I've got a few notes.

STEWART

About how awesome it was?

MAX

It was definitely better than the last time.

STEWART

Yeah, cause we nailed it. Ooh! Aah!

MAX

It's...Max, right?

STEWART

Yeah.

MAX

OK, I know you weren't at our previous meetings, so there's no way you could have really *nailed* the dithyramb...

STEWART

Dithy...

MAX

JACOB

The first song.

MAX

Oh yeah. Jake showed me some in the car.

STEWART

Yeah, also, Phil?

PHIL

Too much vibrato?

STEWART

Where's your thyrsus?

PHIL

Might've left it on the back seat. Sorry. Sorry.

STEWART

No need to apologize. You're among friends here. Sisters.

PHIL

Nephews.

STEWART

Sisters. But you know when everyone has a thyrsus, and we're all waving our thyrsuses, singing the praise of our god, and even Max-the-new-guy has a thyrsus --

MAX

Jake made it for me.

STEWART

And it's just one -- one maenad -- without a thyrsus. One bald maenad...

PHIL

So sorry. Do you want me to, um, find a branch?

STEWART

When you've caught your breath.

PHIL

I just need a minute. The elevation.

STEWART

And lastly the chant at the end? The football thing?

Fit like a glove.

MAX

Uh....

STEWART

Come on!

MAX
(good-natured)

Devon speaks up. He's direct, intense, but a little hard to read emotionally.

It's fucking bullshit.

DEVON

I wouldn't use those words, but

STEWART

It's bullshit. That's all it is.

DEVON

It's not exactly in keeping with the spirit of the...the sacredness of what we're attempting

STEWART

I thought the whole thing was to get us stoked.

MAX

Stoked?

PHIL

Yeah, brother. Stoked. Pumped. Maximum psyched.

MAX

It's actually funny you say psyched

STEWART

Weren't we all stoked? Jake?

MAX

No, I was definitely stoked, but --

JACOB

Oh shit, tell me.

MAX

JACOB
I thought it was a little...

STEWART
Exactly.

PHIL
Let him finish.

JACOB
It's a football chant right? And it's very manly. It's a masculine energy. And we're supposed to be women...

MAX
Ohhhhhh

JACOB
Not that women can't play football or do chants or

MAX
But it's the way we

JACOB
It's the way we did it

MAX
Totally. I'm sorry bud, that's my bad. I goofed.

JACOB
No it's ok it's just a thought.

MAX
No I remember you said we were women, I just like, with the car ride and the Red Bulls, and trying to find a bathroom, plus like five hours getting up here

PHIL
Sorry I'm a little out of shape.

MAX
it just

He mimes the information slipping his mind.

STEWART
Right, so we'll cut the chant, find a proper end for the dithyramb, *make a new thyrsus*

MAX

Wait why are we women though?

A slight, uncomfortable pause.

STEWART

Anyone want to take this?

JACOB

The followers of Dionysus were women.

MAX

Sick. No dudes?

STEWART

There were male worshippers, obviously, but the *maenads*, the heart of the *thiasos* were all female.

DEVON

They were also all drunk.

STEWART

We're going to -- we'll get there, Devon. We haven't even had the invocation.

JACOB

It's already sunset.

STEWART

We'll get there. The hike took longer than anticipated.

PHIL

Sorry.

DEVON

So you're gonna invoke Dionysus, and what happens when he shows up and you're not drunk? How's even gonna show up?

STEWART

Can we just --? One thing at a time. The maenads

MAX

More like the men-ads, am I right?

Phil enjoys the pun. No one else does.

STEWART

They leave the city, they leave society behind, and they come to the mountains, which are holy to Dionysus, and while we're here, we're not us. We are ecstatic

Devon looks or coughs.

STEWART

Soon-to-be-ecstatic female worshippers, revelers, celebrants: participants in the divine mystery of flesh and spirit

DEVON

Death and rebirth.

JACOB

Liberation.

PHIL

Fraternity. I mean sorority.

STEWART

If we do this right, if we really mean it, we have a chance to touch something transcendent and totally beyond our previous lives. We're exploring the eternal feminine, the drunk, the uninhibited, the sensual-mysterious, the nature-loving, orgiastic, pleasure-worshipping, violent, liberated, destroying and birthing female that that that's in all of us. That's half the world. The mystery. Right? Right?

Their answers are simultaneous.

JACOB

Right!

MAX

Shit yeah.

PHIL

Right.

DEVON

That's facts.

Phil climbs to his feet and tries to pull a branch off the nearby tree to make his thyrsus. Devon comes behind him and cuts it down for him.

It's a little unnerving. Once Phil's got it, the others help him to dress the staff. Meanwhile...

STEWART

So the next thing I want us to do is take on our maenad names, which we will use exclusively while we're up here on the mountain.

MAX

Love it.

STEWART

They should be something meaningful to you and connected to our cult. For example, my name will be Meliou, which is the word for honey, sacred to Dionysus and, fun fact, a theoretically plausible source of entheogenic hallucinations.

PHIL

Oh I like that. Can I also be Honey?

STEWART

No, Uncle Phil, you can't be Honey. Honey's taken.

PHIL

But mine would be in English. So you're that thing you said, and I'm plain old Honey.

MAX

Hey that works

STEWART

I'd rather you chose a new name

PHIL

Great name for a girl. You meet a girl named Honey, you just picture someone healthy. Warm, young, good skin.

STEWART

If you want to be healthy, warm, and young, I'm sure we can come up with a different

DEVON

I'm Choiros.

JACOB

Pig...?

STEWART

Yeah, Pig. If, sure. For why?

DEVON

It means I'm God's pig.

STEWART

You know what, great. That is a great maenad name, Choiros. Thank you.

MAX

I'll be Chainsaw.

STEWART

Chainsaw?

MAX

Chainsaw.

STEWART
(barely audible sigh)

Your maenad name is

STEWART

Chainsaw.

MAX

Chainsaw.

STEWART

So like you're a woman whose name is...

MAX

Chainsaw.

(beat)

There's all kindsa ladies out there, man.

Max nudges Jacob for approval. Jacob shyly
nods, not wanting to upset Stewart.

STEWART

Is there anything maybe more in the spirit of -- because we're in the natural world, we've
shed civilization

PHIL

It's his name isn't it?

JACOB

Her name.

STEWART

Of course it's his name, Phil.

JACOB
Her name.

DEVON
Honey.

STEWART
His name's not Honey. My name is Honey.

MAX
No you're Meliou. He's Honey.

JACOB
She.

STEWART
OK, JACOB: WHAT'S YOUR NAME?

JACOB
(nervous)
I thought I'd be Anthe.

STEWART
(cooling down)
Flower. That's beautiful. Yes, Anthe. We will call you Anthe.

MAX
Yo how'd you come up with that?

JACOB
It's just Greek.

MAX
Can you make something Greek for me?
(to the group)
I don't wanna be Chainsaw anymore. I want some Greek shit.

JACOB
What do you want?

MAX
Do you know the Greek for chainsaw?