

# Harvey's Odyssey I

Contributed by Mr\_Kite

In an entirely original concept\*, I am adapting Homer's The Odyssey to another place and time, casting Mark Harvey as the central character. This is the first in what I hope will be a season-long series. Read on, brothers and sisters, read on...(A harp arpeggio plays)The nail of his right index finger lazily scratches at the armrest of the recliner he now inhabits. Sweat-derived scum begins to peel away in distinct sections: a thick consistent top layer; a wafer-thin film; a pale and uninspiring goo; and, finally, a heterogeneous but strangely beautiful basal crust, whose peculiarities - like the pea beneath the princess' mattress - are mimicked by the overlying strata. Blowing the scrapings away, he sees the clean black leather beneath. And he sees that it is good.Easing back in the chair with hands clasped behind his head, the coach now forms an imposing silhouette against the grass and blinding concrete terraces of Fremantle Oval, the ground's centre circle framed by the isosceles triangle of his left arm. His gaze drifts beneath the desk and, seeing the heavily-pilled tracksuit pants and tattered ugg boots, he eases forward again, feeling embarrassed, though no one else is around. If a visitor happened by - Pav, Rick Hart, that old water boy who looks like Yoda - he would have to remain seated.He leans forward now, elbows on desk and fists on jaw line, forcing his cheeks high until they almost touch his furrowed brow. All of the videos and DVDs and books and papers lining the shelves loom before him, laughing and probing, coldly: "Are you ready for this?". "Dunno", he whispers, stroking the patchy stubble on his chin. A short time later he resolves to stop conversing with inanimate objects. That was the downfall of Damian Drum, or so he has heard.Abruptly, and without knocking, a deep mauve haze of melancholy enters the room, settling around him. He begins to feel strangely out-of-place, as though adrift in an ocean far from home. Frowning at his ill-fitting purple polo shirt, he plucks at its fabric, testing its reality. It all seems so foreign, so other-worldly. Doubts infest his mind, bouncing against and chewing at his skull's inner wall. Was he good enough? Were they good enough? Why was he even here? Here, in this harsh, isolated place, far from the padded jackets and the icy breath and the sloppy, tasteless four-n-twenty pies of his earlier life? His head, involuntarily, rattles now from side to side and now from back to front and now round and round, fruitlessly attempting to expel the concerns through one or both ear holes.Calming slightly, or perhaps advancing into a higher, Zen-like form of madness - it's hard to say - he reaches for the phone, pining for the counsel of Kevin Sheedy. But just as his clammy fingertips touch the handset, a knock at the door jolts him.Without awaiting his invitation, Cameron Schwab enters the room - at least, the bodily form of Cameron Schwab enters the room. The tense, squirming muscles and flickering red eyes betray his real identity: Apollo, deliverer of prophesies, cunningly disguised as Cameron Schwab. The coach is wary."Hi Cameron", he says, smiling as best a former Essendon hard man can."We should never have sacked Troy", booms Schwab, foregoing any niceties and displaying fury dramatically incongruous with his pale skin and delicate spectacles. "It leaves us lacking centre-square hardness."A droplet of sweat trembles on the tip of Schwab's equine nose as he awaits reply. Knowing better than to engage in a shouting match with an immortal - a fiery death usually results - the coach is measured and unflinching."Hardness won't be an issue Cameron. And Troy retired - he wasn't sacked.""Oh", says Schwab, noticeably slumping as Apollo, defeated, sublimates and dissipates through the open window. "Sorry, I...", he starts, turning his flaccid body back from whence it came, "I don't know what came over me."As Schwab's shaking head is eclipsed by the closing door, the coach sits back in his chair and sighs. If he could ward off the meddling Gods - and he was certain they would interfere again - then, he reasoned, he was capable of handling anything, even a pre-derby press conference with John Worsfold. It was almost time to perform now: like a demon before the players, like a gibbon before the press, like a philosopher before the fans. Like a Docker.With that thought lingering, he springs from his chair and strides out of his office and out of the building, possessed by supernatural energy and entirely unconscious now of his bogan attire. He would go home, roast a suckling pig for himself, cast another onto the fire to appease the Gods, and retire to enjoy the boon of sleep until the first rays of rosy-fingered dawn. Then he would awake and lay out his plan for the men, his plan to take them all to their rightful home: the MCG in late September. \* Not true.