

Harvey's Odyssey II: The Cyclops

Contributed by Mr_Kite

Startled by the heavy slam of the door behind him, the coach turns quickly, his dress shoes spinning on the sweaty white tiles. The shouts that lured him in die quickly to a murmur, and quicker again to nothing. Twenty-five pairs of taps screech, and the hiss and roar of twenty-five hot showers fades into the empty depth of twenty-five cold silences, one on top of another. The only sound remaining is the padded thump-thump of panicked hearts.

He can see nothing: some meddling immortal - that spiteful earth-shaker Poseidon, he supposes - has conspired to create a thick steam haze. His eyes scan the whiteness. It's futile. He clears his throat and speaks sharply.

"What the hell is going on in here?"

The white-tiled walls return the query, unanswered. He can sense the bodies surrounding him, and opens his mouth to force the question, but a single faint drip interrupts. Biting his lower lip in contemplation, he surveys the mist again: nothing. Ten seconds later there's another drip, a little bit louder now. It's coming from the doorway. A long minute later, and the drip is beating at presto tempo in unison with the now-vibrating hearts.

The mist begins to thin. As his eyes begin to serve him, the coach is horrified by the sight of a swirling pink rivulet of diluted blood, sliding into the drain at his feet. Like prospectors chasing some cursed treasure, his eyes follow the trace upstream to the headwaters, slowly revealed by the mocking mist. Then Poseidon, with an impeccable feel for dramatic timing, sweeps the remaining cover away in an instant, revealing the source with stunning effect. Its form is unmistakable.

Minutes earlier, it had all been good fun. But convention dictates that after any period of good fun, somebody must lose an eye. That somebody was:

"Sandi?"

The 211 cm chunk of flesh now guarding the door had been the innocent victim of a twisted-towel whip fight between the two Johnsons: a typically-reckless Mark had missed a typically-agile Michael, lashing the eyeball of the typically-omnipresent ruckman. Several small midfielders now lay writhing on the floor as testament to the sickening violence that followed.

Sandilands now licks at the blood streaming from his bubbling right socket, savouring its thick metallic tang and salinity. His good eye peers up from under his brow, fixing on the coach, and a growl escapes from his cavernous chest. The men, now visible and pressed against the walls, await direction from their leader. Their leader awaits direction from above.

Bright-eyed Athene, Olympian advocate of the great purple chief, rushes to the scene from her mountain-top day-bed and sets about her task with urgency. She works first on her favourite's appearance: browning his skin and making it lustrous with olive oil; broadening his shoulders and filling out his biceps; adding tasteful blonde tips to his mullet and smothering it in top-shelf product. Seeing that the men are now looking upon the coach in awe, as if he were some immortal god, the goddess sets to work on his mind, granting him cunning and craftiness over and above that for which he is already renowned. Pleased with her intervention, she whisks back to Olympus to spectate.

With the blissful knowledge that Zeus' daughter has blessed him, the coach hesitates no longer, darting behind a low partition while the one-eyed giant stands frozen by a strangling mixture of admiration, fear and agony. Finding himself face-to-face with the sheepish Johnsons, he takes them into his counsel with a wink and, with a whisper, lays out his devious plan.

Slithering across the floor now, he grabs one of several soaps that lie conspicuously around Luke McPharlin's feet, and flings it at Sandilands with godly dexterity. Atop Olympus, Athene hurriedly dons a panama hat and lobbies the archer god Apollo, who agrees, for a reasonable price, to vouchsafe the soap's passage straight and true into the good eye of the terrible beast. Apollo is a man of his word.

The impact and sting of the soap blinds and enrages Sandilands, but his woes are far from over. The two naked Johnsons leap forth and begin slapping him in turn. Meaty thwack after meaty thwack batter his face and torso. Bang! Slap! Crash! Who has ever seen such furious Johnsons! They swell with pride at every blow, knowing they are serving their god-like leader with honour.

While the tormented giant spins and howls, the coach now opens the door and leads his troops out, like a simple shepherd boy leading his fattened-lambs from the woods. But unlike the shepherd boy, he strides before the pack

glowing and surging and electrified by the motherly labour of bright-eyed Athene. The exhausted Johnsons bring up the rear of the pack, leaving Sandilands crying and staggering and crashing into the walls. As a final act of fury, the wounded giant throws great handfuls of loosened tiles towards the fading sound of jiggling buttock cheeks. But his tormentors are too far gone.

The coach lets the group pass him by. He looks back and sees Sandilands framed by the doorway, curled up in a ball amongst the dust and the rubble, wailing like some huge dying cat. It makes a sorry sight for his eyes but he's certain that, with the will of the Olympian gods, the ruckman will return to health in good time - if not by the time Dawn paints the sky with crimson, then certainly by Round One against Collingwood.