

DRAFT #2
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TECMESSA
(a footnote on envy)
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CHARACTERS

EURYSACES, Ajax's son. Handsome and removed.

TECMESSA, Ajax's concubine. A beauty still. Somewhat tweaked.

TEUCER, Ajax's half-brother. Way past his prime. Fading and bitter.

PLACE AND TIME

A talk show host
or purgatory.

A long time ago
and right now.

“Tecmessa apparently came later with Eurysaces to Salamis.
Or she might have died before they left Troy.”

– Bell, *The Women of Classical Mythology*

(A talk show or purgatory. Tables, chairs, glasses of water. Bright white light.)

(All three characters are on stage.)

TECMESSA

A good story has a lie. Or two.

TEUCER

A good story has to go somewhere. Maybe somewhere you've never been or don't wanna go. Like the past.

EURYSACES

A good story has to have great minor characters. Trace the arc of the bit parts and there you will find the story's heart. Because the minor figures tell you more, they shine brighter. In, ah, certain sense. Think of, ah, Dickens. Fagin, the Artful Dodger in *Oliver Twist*. Or Jack and Karen in *Will and Grace*. I think that's often true. But, ah, not in our case. Yea, probably not in our case. In our case, um, we three are largely forgotten. And that's OK. It's to be expected. We are, ah, footnotes. Maybe. Yes, yes, that's what we are, footnotes. To, ah, a larger story. Addendums.

(In unison, they each take their seats, and a bell rings.)

TEUCER

You, you son of a sheepfucker.

EURYSACES

That sheepfucker was your half-brother. Don't speak of a great man in such tones, old man, sheep or no sheep. Besides there was never evidence of sheep-fuckery.

TEUCER

I was a great archer. Number two in the contest at the funeral games.

EURYSACES

But you are old and fading now.

TEUCER

Best to take pity on me then.

EURYSACES

You left us behind, my mother and I. Your father, King of Salamis, was right to banish you and make me his heir. Besides, you go to rule Cyprus. We both do well.

TECMESSA

And what, what happens to me?

EURYSACES

Uh

(Eurysaces sips water. He holds the glass.)

TEUCER

Um

(Teucer sips water. He holds the glass.)

EURYSACES

Yup

(Eurysaces sips water. He holds the glass.)

TEUCER

Hmmm

(Teucer sips water. He holds the glass.)

TECMESSA

I said, What happens to me?

(The two men look at each other. They slam the glasses down on tables in unison.)

EURYSACES

We, ah, um, seem to be jumping ahead a bit. The characters have not yet been introduced, the story of his fall not yet told.

TECMESSA

Ajax. Always Ajax.

EURYSACES

Yes.

(A bell rings.)

EURYSACES

Eurysaces. Ajax's son. Named for his shield.

TEUCER

Teucer, Ajax's half-brother. I bury him.

TECMESSA

Tecmessa, Ajax's concubine. One of Ajax's spoils of war. He killed my father and scooped me up. Yup. I gave him a son. Eurysaces, Eurysaces, the Great shield. I told your father, I told him, his temper would be his downfall. I told him. I told him, the day you die, that same day, I'll be made to pay too. Your son and I will be made slaves. I told him—

(A bell rings.)

TEUCER

Your father was a great man. You shoulda seen him in battle. I woulda done anything for that man. A great great man.

EURYSACES

I know.

TECMESSA

Your father was a great great man. Sure, he killed my father, stole his goods and daughter. But I learned to, learned to love him. A great great great man.

EURYSACES

I know.

TEUCER

Your father was a great great great man. A contender. He shoulda been given Achilles' armor not Odysseus. He shoulda. A great great great great man.

EURYSACES

Yes, I know.

TECMESSA

He was a great great great great great man, but his temper, I told him, I told him—

(Stillness.)

EURYSACES

The problem with having, ah, a great man for a father is constantly hearing about his, ah, greatness. But things, they, um, <cough>, don't end so well for the great man. That is why he is remembered.

(Tecmessa takes out a cigarette.)

EURYSACES

Uh. You can't smoke in here, Mom.

TECMESSA

Sorry. Bad habit. But do we really have to go through this again?

TEUCER

This is our fate. Our story.

EURYSACES

Ajax's demise.

TECMESSA

Again and again. The story of his fall.

TEUCER

Who will tell it this time?

TECMESSA

He was my husband.

EURYSACES

Kinda. A concubine. He had another wife.

TECMESSA

That bitch.

TEUCER

He was my brother.

EURYSACES

Kinda. Half brother. Different mother. But I am my father's son.

TECMESSA

Your eyes, your sharp sharp tongue. You are your father's son, Eurysaces.

(A bell rings.)

EURYSACES

Enraged at not being given Achilles' shield, which was rightfully his, for he had won the contest, Ajax decides to attack the Greek camp and slay Odysseus and his men, for Odysseus had been judged the winner and took home the shield. Ajax, one against many. But he was a fierce fierce warrior, he woulda been successful. Had it not been for, ah, Athena.

ALL 3

ATHENA

(All three take a sip of water and dramatically spit it onto the floor in unison.)

ALL 3

UGH

EURYSACES

She strikes him mad, Athena, she does. Instead of attacking Odysseus and his men, Ajax attacks cattle, goats and sheep, thinking that these animals are men. But they are not men. They are cattle, goats and sheep.

TECMESSA

When I awake, I find him. He's chained up a cow and strikes it with a whip, calling it Odysseus. The cow. It was quite a sight. "Look how I pay back Odysseus and the sons of Atreus," he yells to me, while sawing off a calf's head. But then SNAP he comes out of the spell, and sees what he's done. Not a victor, but a loser. Not a warrior against men, but a torturer of the innocent, cattle, goats and sheep.

EURYSACES

I remember Dad lifting me up to show me what he'd done. "He won't be frightened by the buckets of freshly-butchered gore, not if he's really my son," he said. I wasn't frightened. Maybe this is why I like really violent porn.

(A kinda awkward pause.)

EURYSACES

I mean really really violent porn.

(A super awkward pause.)

EURYSACES

I mean really really really violent porn.

(A bell rings.)

TECMESSA

When Ajax left for the shore with his sword, I knew what he was going to do. I beg, beseech and implore. Think of what will happen to us. I beg, beseech and implore. He thinks not of us

TEUCER

The footnotes

EURYSACES

The addendums

TEUCER

The ones left behind

TECMESSA

Sword through the chest. And boom. A future gone. Ajax the conqueror impaled on his own sword by his own hand. I find his body. I cover him with my cloak since no one, loving him, could bear to see him with blood black draining life out his nostrils.

TEUCER

(as if he is experiencing it all over again)

Of all the sights I have ever seen, this to my eyes is the saddest one indeed
My dearest Ajax, when I heard your fate, and came to seek its truth
And when I heard it, still a long way off, I groaned a groan full of grief, all the
time hoping, but, now that I have seen, I want to die
Destroy me.

(Stillness.)

EURYSACES

But we don't die.

TEUCER

We don't.

EURYSACES

We live.
We exist.

TEUCER

I secure an honorable burial for my brother. I was inside the wooden horse at the sack of Troy. I return home to Salamis to see my father the king.

EURYSACES

You made a promise to my father. And you left me behind.

TEUCER

You were on the next ship. The next ship after me.

EURYSACES

A promise. And you left me behind.

TEUCER

I kept telling my father the king, "Eurysaces will be home soon." But he banished me. Banished me because of you. Because I did not bring back Ajax's bones. Because I did not bring back Ajax's son. Banished.

EURYSACES

You left me behind.

TEUCER

But you arrive and you, you are made heir. It is I again who suffers.

TECMESSA

Left me, "me" is singular. You arrive, "you" is singular. He left you, you singular, behind. But then you, you singular, were on the next ship. Then you, you singular, Eurysaces, become heir, and she, she, the wife, lives as royalty. And you, you, Teucer. Banished yes, but you, you become king of Cyprus.

TEUCER

Yes

TECMESSA

Two kings, I see. But me. But me. What happens to me?

EURYSACES

Uh

(Eurysaces sips water. He holds the glass.)

TEUCER

Um

(Teucer sips water. He holds the glass.)

EURYSACES

Yup

(Eurysaces sips water. He holds the glass.)

TEUCER

Hmmm

(Teucer sips water. He holds the glass.)

(Stillness.)

(The two men look at each other. They slam the glasses down on the table in unison.)

TECMESSA

No I will tell you what happens to me.

I go to Salamis with you, Eurysaces, and

No

I travel to Cyprus to find

No

No instead

I find myself working as a greeter at the world's larger retailer and here I stand day after day after day in a vest and synthetic pants greeting people, people who quite frankly are beneath me, and the work, the work is so so so monotonous that I begin a smoking habit, first Parliaments, Virginia Slims, Camel Lights and then I start to roll my own, and only then is the dull drab existence of saying hello to every person who rolls a cart into this imperial warehouse of unnecessary delights become moderately tolerable and then in my spare time, I volunteer as a counselor at a woman's clinic where my job is to counsel women when they are in need of counseling and it is a terrible failure but I give them advice like it's all right for a woman to be silent and that being hit isn't such a bad thing and my tips how to hide bruises are completely not appreciated and one day I loose my cool after listening to all this complaining and I yell at the women at the women's center YOU THINK YOU HAVE IT BAD YOU DON'T HAVE IT BAD AJAX KILLED MY FATHER AND RAPED ME AND MADE ME HIS SLAVE BUT I STUCK IT OUT GAVE HIM A KID EVEN THOUGH THE WIFE GOT EVERYTHING SO QUIT YOU'RE COMPLAINING IT'S DRIVING ME NUTS and this this really is not appreciated and they begin to question my qualifications as a counselor and then

No

No

I am not a greeter at the world's largest retailer and I am not a volunteer counselor
No

I move to Williamsburg, not Colonial Williamsburg, Williamsburg Brooklyn, and I learn to play the guitar and I buy a trucker hat and I place an ad in the paper for fellow musicians obsessed with Krautrock and that's how I meet Brad and Jamie we form a trio with me on the guitar and vox and Brad on the guitar and vox and Jamie on the drums and vox, and we release a couple of EPs and are generally well-regarded even though we don't sell all that many CDs, but the blogs love us and and people can't tell when I'm singing or Brad's singing or Jaime, and we are kind of infamous, locally, for playing a gig where we play one song that last twenty two minutes and only has two chords in it, but we plat at such loud volumes that we literally beat the audience into submission and that's when I realize that I really need to break up this band and explore my love of heavy metal, and so I break up that band and form another band with three other guitarists, all unnamed, and a minimalist drummer named Doctor Sylvester, and we all play even longer songs with even fewer chords, and we all wear black

capes and black masks and we are called Trückerdeathspeed, and there are umlauts involved in the proper spelling of our new band name, and before our shows we fill the club with fog courtesy of a dry ice machine, and we play one song that goes on for, uh I don't know, maybe 2 hours or more, and it consists of one undulating note, again played at ear-splitting volume, and occasionally I will sing over top this undulating note, my voice heavily distorted, barely recognizable, singing something like:

(maybe into a mic, heavily processed)

DSKLHF SKLDHG ARGHHHHHHH
 DSLGHDLSJHGLJFS KSDHGLASRYIT ARGHHHHHHH

And I make the occasional recognizable word like
 Satan no hope fever wasting death

Or something to that effect, but after the black drone heavy metal death rock goth mindfuck music brings me considerable acclaim I realize I really wanna move away from the guitar so we all start playing analog synthesizers and ring modulators and Doctor Sylvester strokes a massive gong with a quiver, and we create this massive drone and this massive massive massive sound, but I miss, I miss, miss pop music and I miss, I miss, I miss the structure, the verse chorus verse, of a good pop classic and so I tell the twelve members of Trückerdeathspeed, cause we now got seven more guitarists, that I am breaking up the band to go solo and become a pop star and that's when the majors start sniffing around and making promises and I feel like my luck will finally change that I'll be remembered and then my first single comes out and it sounds like:

(The song begins and she lip-syncs to the words.)

I DON'T WANNA TAKE YOUR MONEY (pronounced MO-NAY)
 I JUST WANNA RIDE YOUR PONY (pronounced PO-NAY)

I DON'T WANNA STEAL YOUR RICHES
 BUT GET RID OF THOSE STINKY BITCHES

PONY!
 PONY!
 PONY!
 PONY!

(The song ends.)

No
 No

Tecmessa does not move to Williamsburg to form two influential bands and then
sell out to make manufactured pop music No
Tecmessa turns her head she sees Eurysaces on the ship she knows he will be safe
she knows his father's father's kingdom will be his and she sees him she waves
good-bye to her son to her past with Ajax and then she turns from the shore with
the ship leaving in the distance and Tecmessa turns and she turns away out of the
line of vision and walks into the crowd and Tecmessa walks and she vanishes into
blue and
I disappear fade from view
Disappear fade from view
Disappear fade from view
Disappear now
Disappear now
Disappear now
Disappear
And now so will you
We will all disappear
A footnote to this
Event
Disappear now
Disappear now
Disappear.

(A bell rings.)

(Blackout.)

(End of play.)