



Desdemona Early Drafts

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Desdemona Early Drafts

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DES DEMONA

8th cavalry

at USAN

out 1,950

Nov 1, 950

600 men

1/2 dead

1/2 prison

mostly

\$60 p.

\$80 p.

1969 = 60 p.

1969 = 80 p.

Mexican labor
TEXAS

Des Demona
Lays
St. Peter's Hospital

Barbara
Alacague

Erasmus on the
Kidgeel hills & the
painted themselves
the color of sand
as were nature
Chambliss
invisible with
their arrows
flaw

full of air and light
Tunnels in the sea. If you walk
the beach and listen carefully you
can hear the wind laughing from a
certain rock or twist of sand. Enter
and a tunnel spreads before you. 1

Once I ~~figured~~ ^{by} ~~figured~~ The enemy was arranged
on the hill, the sea behind

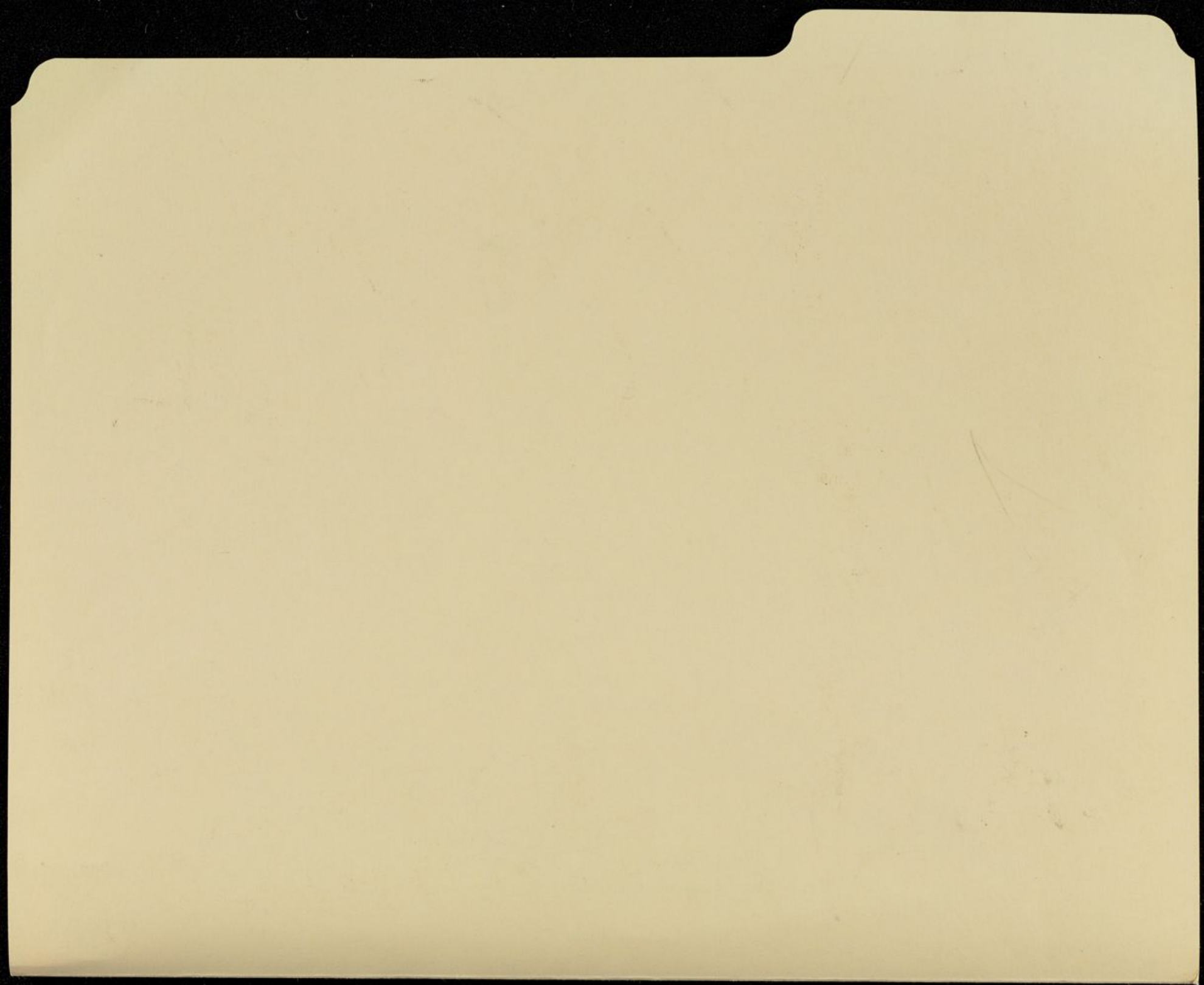
I waited there 3 days until the enemy
grew convinced I was dead.

Lived with a root woman. Traded
her in forests and over seae as she searched
for medicinal plants, roots and flowers.
She taught me some of her science.

Men with heads in their chests

OfficeMax®

DEMONA



Desdemona: Notes

Did you think I was a wisp of a girl? A coddled wisp who fell in love with a handsome warrior; who rode off with her under his arm?

Yes, well. A wisp indeed

Strange. Why is it only after death that I can speak? Alive, my lips were sealed or twisted into the language of obedience.

I have been courted by other men, many others. They came into my father's house with empty ornate boxes designed to hold coins of dowry gold, or deeds of property. They glanced at me and locked their glistening eyes on my father's. Showing their teeth in dotting smiles they slid in soft shoes on our marble floor. One by one they came in velvet and fur-trimmed silk, prettified hats stitched with silver thread. Each one, whether a stuttering boy or an aged widower, was eager for a chatelain weighted with riches. I am thought beautiful, but if I were not, even if I were a gi-

antess, a miniature or a horse-faced shrew, suitors in need would have sought my hand. Those already wealthy ranked me with other virgins on their list. Those in desperate straights needed no evaluation.

My father instructed me on the virtues of each offer and when I first refused he thought me fastidious. With my next refusal, he chastised me as stubborn; finally, as the refusals continued, as an embarrassment: a single female of a certain age, un-nunned, sitting at his sumptuous table instead of fasting in a convent.

I had reached the cusp of un-marriageability—that lightless abyss into which a family can fall—burdened by an eating mouth, tied to a poor unseeded womb, disconnected from the chain that the clan pays out to increase its length and its profit.

Yet my flaw was more serious than pride. I yearned for talk, for meaning, for winds from a wider world. Seas beyond canals, populations living otherwise, speaking languages of music and roar, beast and gods

un-imagined within these walls. I longed for adventure out there, yes, but in here as well. Adventure in my—you will forgive me—heart no less than in my mind.

Don't laugh. Don't walk away. I said mind. In a woman. A woman's mind.

Who could have thought a military commander, trained to let blood, would be more, could be more than a brutal arm educated solely to kill?

How did I know?

He came to a banquet my father and brothers held. Oh, the music, the perfumed ladies, the rare, elaborate food and a retinue of the powerful.

And there he was—splendid within the splendor, but seeming uneasy among the simpering and the vanity around him. It was that slight uneasiness (in a commander?) that aroused my curiosity and caused me to

engage with him. Othello, he said. Desdemona, said I. We sat on a stone bench under an arch.

And this is what he told:

"Our ship was sunk. I alone was able to swim ashore. As I approached I saw the enemy armed and waiting on the white sand. There are tunnels in the sea. If you walk the beach and listen carefully you can hear the wind's music sighing from a certain rock or swirl of sand. Enter and a hallway of light opens before you, dry as the Sahara, cool as the Himalayas. I waited there three days until the enemy believed me dead."

And this is what he told:

"As a boy I lived with a root woman who sheltered me from the slavers. I trailed her in forests and over sere as she searched for medicinal plants, roots and flowers. She taught me some of her science. How to breathe when there is no air."

And this is what he told:

"There is an island in the sea where fish jump into your boat, or you can catch them in your hand; where trees are always bearing fruit; where birds speak as humans; where the islanders have no heads and their faces are positioned in their chests"

And this is what he told:

"As a small boy I was captured by Syrians. I lived with the camels and the oxen and was treated the same. I ate what I could find. It was a happy day for me to be sold into an army where food was regular and clothes respectable. There I learned quickly the art of arms and the strength of command."

I was sad, happy, breathless and hungry for more.

Emelia. Dear Emelia. Silence seeds our degradation; forbearance waters it.

My husband knew Iago was lying, manipulating, undermining, sabotaging. So why did he not just listen, but also act on obvious deceit? Brotherhood. The quiet approval beamed from one male eye to another. Bright, tight comradery [?] Like-mindedness born of the exchange of musk; the bucks' regard of the doe, the mild contempt following her capture. The wide, wild celebrity they find with each other cannot compete with the narrow comfort of a wife. Romance is always overshadowed by braun. The language of love is trivial compared to the hidden language of men that lies underneath the secret language they speak.

Iago. My nemesis, representative of all that women struggle against. Desire bent, made crooked by blood vengeance. How typical. My husband's best friend competing with me for his love. What is this man-love that binds all to its will?

Or, perhaps he knew all along. I'm sure of it. Othello refused to, promote him, his loyal lieutenant. Why? He understood Iago's nature. Still, he was seduced by it.

You, my husband, distrusted the man you were; the man I so accurately perceived you to be. Alone together that man shone. That man touched me with fingers that held nestlings as well as swords. Fingers that wiped blood from his brow also stroked my breasts. My error was truly believing you were the visage of your mind.

When the man I envisioned was lost to me, I was lost to myself.

Where, to whom could I turn?

My mother gave me sound instruction regarding manners, speech, duty, but the rest she kept closeted. The most valuable gift she passed along to me, the one who gave freely the devotion and nurture of her careless self, was Barbary, my nurse. She understood loss and sang its hurt and its sorrow.

Willow.

Shall she imagine the future if neither had died?

1. O's stories of his past equal fantasy and horror.
2. D's imagined future equals utopia.

What I now know: The dead are not quiet nor waiting.

Desdemona: Notes

Did you think I was a wisp of a girl? A coddled ~~wisp~~ ^{bloom} ^{blossom} ^{bud} who fell in love with a handsome warrior; who rode off with her under his arm?

Yes, well. A ~~wisp~~ ^{bud} indeed

Strange. Why is it only after death that I can speak? Alive, my lips were sealed or twisted into the language of obedience.

I have been courted by other men, many others. They came into my father's house with empty ornate boxes designed to hold coins of dowry gold, or deeds of property. They glanced at me and locked their glistening eyes on my father's. Showing their teeth in doting smiles they slid in soft shoes on our marble floor. One by one they came in velvet and fur-trimmed silk, prettified hats stitched with silver thread. Each one, whether a stuttering boy or an aged widower, was eager for a chatelain weighted with riches. I am thought beautiful, but if I were not, even if I were a gi-

antess, a miniature or a horse-faced shrew, suitors in need would have sought my hand. Those already wealthy ranked me with other virgins on their list. Those in desperate straights needed no evaluation.

My father instructed me on the virtues of each offer and when I first refused he thought me fastidious. With my next refusal, he chastised me as stubborn; finally, as the refusals continued, as an embarrassment: a single female of a certain age, un-nunned, sitting at his sumptuous table instead of fasting in a convent.

I had reached the cusp of un-marriageability—that lightless abyss into which a family can fall—burdened by an eating mouth, tied to a poor unseeded womb, disconnected from the chain that the clan pays out to increase its length and its profit.

Yet my flaw was more serious than pride. I yearned for talk, for meaning, for winds from a wider world. Seas beyond canals, populations living otherwise, speaking languages of music and roar, beast and gods

un-imagined within these walls. I longed for adventure out there, yes, but in here as well. Adventure in my—you will forgive me—heart no less than in my mind.

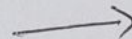
Don't laugh. Don't walk away. I said mind. In a woman. A woman's mind.

* Who could have thought a military commander, trained to let blood, would be more, could be more than a brutal arm educated solely to kill?

How did I know?

Insert [He came to a banquet my father and brothers held. Oh, the music, the perfumed ladies, the rare, elaborate food and a retinue of the powerful.

And there he was—splendid within the splendor, but seeming uneasy among the simpering and the vanity around him. It was that slight uneasiness (in a commander?) that aroused my curiosity and caused me to



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p8

And this is what he told:

"As a boy I lived with a root woman who sheltered me from the slavers. I trailed her in forests and over sere as she searched for medicinal plants, roots and flowers. She taught me some of her science. How to breathe when there is no air."

And this is what he told:

surrounded by a violet
 "There is an island [^]in the sea where fish jump into your boat, or you can catch them in your hand; where trees are always bearing fruit; where birds speak as humans; where the islanders have no heads and their faces are positioned in their chests" *(over)*

And this is what he told:

"As a small boy I was captured by Syrians. I lived with the camels and the oxen and was treated the same. I ate what I could find. It was a happy day for me to be sold into an army where food was regular and clothes respectable. There I learned quickly the art of arms and the strength of command." *(over)*

I was sad, happy, breathless and hungry for more.

notes

h (Emelia. Dear Emelia. Silence seeds our degradation; forbearance waters it.

once

I WAS shipwrecked and cast
upon their shores. ~~Although~~ They
laughed at my deformity, my head
rising awkwardly above my shoulders,
they were generous: fed me, and tended
to my wounds. ~~They~~ All human
attributes were theirs except for one:
they could not sing for they had no
throats. When I sang (for them) they
crowded about ~~and~~ wept their pleasure.
Tears rolled down to their ^{waists} ~~waists~~ as they
for thanks they built a ^{me} raft, and
I sailed away ~~in~~ ~~and~~ ~~and~~ I had no fear.

In my first battle I pointed my ^{childish} anger
with a daring completely ^{strange} ~~new~~ to me.

My husband knew Iago was lying, manipulating, undermining, sabotaging. So why did he not just listen, but also act on obvious deceit? Brotherhood. The quiet approval beamed from one male eye to another.

Bright, tight comradery [?] Like-mindedness born of the exchange of musk; the bucks' regard of the doe, the mild contempt following her capture. The wide, wild celebrity they find with each other cannot compete with the narrow comfort of a wife. Romance is always overshadowed by braun. The language of love is trivial compared to the hidden language of men that lies underneath the secret language they speak.

Iago. My nemesis, representative of all that women struggle against.

Desire bent, made crooked by blood vengeance.

How typical. My husband's best friend competing with me for his love.

What is this man-love that binds all to its will?

Or, perhaps he knew all along. I'm sure of it. Othello refused to, promote him, his loyal lieutenant. Why? He understood Iago's nature. Still, he was seduced by it.

You, my husband, distrusted the man you were; the man I so accurately perceived you to be. Alone together that man shone. That man touched me with fingers that held nestlings as well as swords. Fingers that wiped blood from his brow also stroked my breasts. My error was truly believing you were the visage of your mind.

When the man I envisioned was lost to me, I was lost to myself.

Where, to whom could I turn?

My mother gave me sound instruction regarding manners, speech, duty, but the rest she kept closeted. The most valuable gift she passed along to me, the one who gave freely the devotion and nurture of her careless self, was Barbary, my nurse. She understood loss and sang its hurt and its sorrow.

Willow.

Shall she imagine the future if neither had died?

1. O's stories of his past equal fantasy and horror.
2. D's imagined future equals utopia.

What I now know: The dead are not quiet nor waiting.

Desdemona: Second draft

Did you think I was a wisp of a girl? A coddled doll who fell in love with a handsome warrior; who rode off with her under his arm?

Yes, well. A doll indeed

Strange. Why is it only after death that I can speak? Alive, my lips were sealed or twisted into the language of obedience. (over)

I have been courted by ~~other~~ men, many, ~~others~~. They came into my father's house with empty ornate boxes designed to hold coins of dowry gold, or deeds of property. They glanced at me and locked their glistening eyes on my father's. Showing their teeth in doting smiles they slid in soft shoes on our marble floor. One by one they came in velvet and fur-trimmed silk, prettified hats stitched with silver thread. Each one, whether a stuttering boy or an aged widower, was eager for a chatelain weighted with riches. I am thought beautiful, but if I were not, even if I were a gi-

yes, mother
yes, father, I will

eager ~~hungry~~ for
of a bride

antess, a miniature or a horse-faced shrew, suitors in ~~need~~[^] would have sought my hand. Those already wealthy ranked me with other virgins on ~~men's~~ ^{Scale} their ~~list~~[^]. Those in desperate straights needed no evaluation.

My father instructed me on the virtues of each offer and when I first refused he thought me fastidious. With my next refusal, he chastised me as stubborn; finally, as the refusals continued, as an embarrassment: a single female of a certain age, un-nunned, sitting at his sumptuous table instead of fasting in a convent.

I had reached the cusp of un-marriageability—that lightless abyss into which a family can fall—burdened by an eating mouth, tied to a poor unseeded womb, disconnected from the chain that the clan pays out to increase its length and its profit.

Years passed And at
I was able to say no. }

Yet my flaw was more serious than pride. I yearned for talk, for meaning, for winds from a wider world. Seas beyond canals, populations living otherwise, speaking languages of music and roar, beast and gods

un-imagined within these walls. I longed for adventure out there, yes, but in here as well. Adventure in my-you will forgive me-heart no less than in my mind.

Don't laugh. Don't walk away. I said mind. In a woman. A woman's mind.

*At last I was ~~enable~~ able to say up.
Years passed,*

Emelia. Dear Emelia. Silence seeds our degradation; forbearance waters it. [mtk]

My husband knew Iago was lying, manipulating, undermining, sabotaging. So why did he not just listen^{to}, but also act on obvious deceit? Brotherhood. The quiet approval beamed from one male eye to another.

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braun. The language of love is trivial compared to the hidden language of men that lies underneath the ~~secret~~ language they speak. ^{in public.}

Iago. My nemesis, representative of all that women struggle against.

Desire bent, made crooked by blood vengeance.

How typical. My husband's best friend competing with me for his love.

What is this man-love that binds all to its will?

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Who could have thought a military commander, trained to let blood, would be more, could be more, than a brutal arm educated solely to kill?

I knew. How did I know?

He came to a banquet my father and brothers held. Oh, the music, the perfumed ladies, the rare, elaborate food and a retinue of the powerful.

And there he stood—splendid within the splendor, but seeming uneasy among the simpering and the vanity around him. It was that slight uneasiness (in a commander?) that aroused my curiosity and caused me to engage with him.

Othello, he said.

Desdemona, said I.

We sat on a stone bench under an arch.

*I still remember
the ~~smell~~ ^{waft} of hinden trees
and the soft ^{ness} look in his eyes.
well of*

And this is what he told:

an orphan
"As a ~~small~~ boy I lived with a root woman who sheltered me from slavers. I trailed her

in forests and over sere as she searched for medicinal plants, roots and flowers. She

songs and
taught me some of her science. How to breathe when there is no air. Where water hid

in cactus and certain vines. Yet soon I was captured by Syrians. I lived with the cam-

els and oxen and was treated the same. I ate what I could find. It was a happy day for

me to be sold into an army where food was regular and clothes respectable. There I

learned quickly the art of arms and the strength of command. In my first battle, I pointed

my childish anger with a daring completely strange to me. I was sad, happy, breathless

and hungry for more." *violent encounters where I could excel
and QUASH loneliness inside
the*

And this is what he told:

SANK
"Our ship ~~was sunk~~. I alone was able to swim ashore. As I approached land I saw the

enemy armed and waiting on the white sand. *a ridge above* There *I knew* are tunnels in the sea. If you walk

the beach and listen carefully you can hear the wind's music sougning from a certain

the signals an opening
kind of rock or swirl of sand. Enter and a hallway of light opens before you, *3* dry as the

Sahara, cool as the Himalayas. I waited there three days until the enemy believed me

dead."

And this is what he told:

"There is an Island surrounded by a violet ocean where fish jump into your boat, or you can catch them in your hand; where trees are always bearing fruit; where birds speak as humans; where the islanders have no heads and their faces are settled in their chests. Once, desperate for water, I ^{food's fresh} was cast upon their shores. Although they laughed at my deformity, at my own head rising awkwardly and vulnerably above my shoulders, they ^{the hilarity of} were generous. They fed me and tended to my ^{needs} wounds. All human attributes were theirs except for one: they could not sing for they had no throats. When I sang for them, they crowded about. Tears rolled down to their waists as they wept their pleasure. It was difficult to sail away, so awed was I by their civilization."

the songs
the root
woman
taught
me

And this is what he told:

"There are armies of women who kill men in battles so fierce the moon hides from so ^{the} much blood. They cut off their right breasts to ease the arrow shots of the long bows. For this they are called No-mazons and must remain virgins until their first slaughter. ^{of a man} Whole regiments of ^{men} fall before them. They still rule wooded nations and desert cities. I have seen them and marveled at their war skills."

Those are the tales he told. Tales that stopped my heart as they fired my mind. Tales of horror and strange. ^{much as} I was captured by love and the prospect of ^{inhabiting} a ^{broad} ^{original} world.

Yet I now know there are other tales. Not of the inchoate, un-healed past, but of a human future.

broad
original
world

*think now of
early thoughtless*
Oh, ~~look~~ what our deaths have forfeited: arms wrapped around shoulders against cruel
gale
~~winds~~ of mistrust and despair; we two sailing in ships bound for harbors surrounding
castles burning white under the blue blaze of the sky.

A fruited vital peace more vivid than war.

A living peace unwilling to court death as its price.

available
Ask me: is it still out there, this human peace? As someone in a privileged position in
^
time and timelessness, my answer is a roar. Yes! I know it. I see it.

Be assured the dead are not quiet nor waiting.

Third

Desdemona: Second draft

Did you think I was a wisp of a girl? A coddled doll who fell in love with a handsome warrior; who rode off with her under his arm?

Yes, well. A doll indeed

Strange. Why is it only after death that I can speak? Alive, my lips were sealed or twisted into the language of obedience.

Yes, my mother.

Of course, father.

I will, I will I will.

I have been courted by many men. They came into my father's house with empty ornate boxes designed to hold coins of dowry gold, or deeds of property. They glanced at me and locked their glistening eyes on my father's. Showing their teeth in dotting smiles they slid in soft shoes on our

marble floor. One by one they came in velvet and fur-trimmed silk, prettified hats stitched with silver thread. Each one, whether a stuttering boy or an aged widower, was eager for a chatelain weighted with riches. I am thought beautiful, but if I were not, even if I were a giantess, a miniature or a horse-faced shrew, suitors cruising for a bride would have sought my hand. Those already wealthy ranked me with other virgins on their menu. Those in desperate straights needed no evaluation.

My father instructed me on the virtues of each offer and when I first refused he thought me fastidious. With my next refusal, he chastised me as stubborn; finally, as the refusals continued, as an embarrassment: a single female of a certain age, un-nunned, sitting at his sumptuous table instead of fasting in a convent.

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Yet my flaw was more serious than pride. I yearned for talk, for meaning, for winds from a wider world. Seas beyond canals, populations living otherwise, speaking languages of music and roar, beast and gods un-imagined within these walls. I longed for adventure out there, yes, but in here as well. Adventure in my-you will forgive me-heart no less than in my mind.

Don't laugh. Don't walk away. I said mind. In a woman. A woman's mind.

Emelia. Dear Emelia. Silence seeds our degradation; forbearance waters it. [mtk]

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Where, to whom could I turn?

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And there he stood—splendid within the splendor, but seeming uneasy among the simpering and the vanity around him. It was that slight uneasiness (in a commander?) that aroused my curiosity and caused me to engage with him.

Othello, he said.

Desdemona, said I.

We sat on a stone bench under an arch. I remember the well of softness in his eyes.

And this is what he told:

"As a orphan child I lived with a root woman who sheltered me from slavers. I trailed her in forests and over sere as she searched for medicinal plants, roots and flowers. She taught me songs and some of her science. How to breathe when there is no air. Where water hid in cactus and certain vines. Yet soon I was captured by Syrians. I lived with the camels and oxen and was treated the same. I ate what I could find. It was a happy day for me to be sold into an army where food was regular and clothes respectable. There I learned quickly the art of arms and the strength of command. In my first battle, I pointed my childish anger with a daring completely strange to me. I was sad, happy, breathless and hungry for more violent encounters. Only there could I excel and quash the loneliness inside. "

And this is what he told:

"Our ship sank. I alone was able to swim ashore. As I approached land I saw the enemy armed and waiting on a ridge above the white sand. I knew there were tunnels in the sea. If you walk the beach and listen carefully you can hear the wind's music soughing from a certain kind of rock or swirl of sand. They signal an opening. Enter and a hallway of light opens before you, dry as the Sahara, cool as the Himalayas. I waited in the light three days until the enemy believed me dead."

And this is what he told:

"There is an Island surrounded by a violet ocean where fish jump into your boat, or you can catch them in your hand; where trees are always bearing fruit; where birds speak as humans; where the islanders have no heads and their faces are settled in their chests. Once, desperate for food and fresh water, I was cast upon their shores. Although they laughed at my deformity, at the hilarity of my own head rising awkwardly and vulnerably above my shoulders, they were generous. They fed me and tended to my needs. All human attributes were theirs except for one: they could not sing for they had no throats. When I sang for them the sings the root woman taught me, they crowded about. Tears rolled down to their waists as they wept their pleasure. It was difficult to sail away, so awed was I by their civilization."

And this is what he told:

"There are armies of women who kill men in battles so fierce the moon hides from the ribbons of blood. They cut off their right breasts to ease the arrow shots of the long bows. For this they are called No-mazons and must remain virgins until their first slaughter of a man. Whole regiments fall before them. They still rule wooded nations and desert cities. I have seen them and marveled at their war skills."

Those are the tales he told. Tales that stopped my heart as much as they fired my mind. Tales of horror and strange. I was captured by love and the prospect of inhabiting a broad original world.

Yet I now know there are other tales. Not of the inchoate, un-healed past, but of a human future.

Oh, think now what our thoughtless deaths have forfeited: arms wrapped around shoulders against gales of mistrust and despair; we two sailing in ships bound for harbors surrounding castles burning white under the blue blaze of the sky.

A fruited vital peace more vivid than war.

A living peace unwilling to court death as its price.

Ask me: is it still out there, available, this human peace? As someone in a privileged position in time and timelessness, my answer is a roar. Yes! I know it. I see it.

Be assured. The dead are not quiet nor waiting.

7
Tenth
July 5

Desdemona: Second draft

Did you think I was a wisp of a girl? A coddled doll who fell in love with
a handsome warrior; who rode off with her under his arm?

Yes, well. A doll indeed

Strange. Why is it only after death that I can speak? Alive, my lips
were sealed or twisted into the language of obedience.

Yes, my mother.

Of course, father.

I will, I will I will.

I have been courted by many men. They came into my father's house
with empty ornate boxes designed to hold coins of dowry gold, or deeds
of property. They glanced at me and locked their glistening eyes on my
father's. Showing their teeth in dotting smiles they slid in soft shoes on our

marble floor. One by one they came in velvet and fur-trimmed silk, prettified hats stitched with silver thread. Each one, whether a stuttering boy or an aged widower, was eager for a chatelain weighted with riches. I am thought beautiful, but if I were not, even if I were a giantess, a miniature or a horse-faced shrew, suitors cruising for a bride would have sought my hand. Those already wealthy ranked me with other virgins on their menu. Those in desperate straights needed no evaluation.

My father instructed me on the virtues of each offer and when I first refused he thought me fastidious. With my next refusal, he chastised me as stubborn; finally, as the refusals continued, as an embarrassment: a single female of a certain age, un-nunned, sitting at his sumptuous table instead of fasting in a convent.

I had reached the cusp of un-marriageability—that lightless abyss into which a family can fall—burdened by an eating mouth, tied to a poor unseeded womb, disconnected from the chain that the clan pays out to increase its length and its profit.

Yet my flaw was more serious than pride. I yearned for talk, for meaning, for winds from a wider world. Seas beyond canals, populations living otherwise, speaking languages of music and roar, beast and gods un-imagined within these walls. I longed for adventure out there, yes, but in here as well. Adventure in my-you will forgive me-heart no less than in my mind.

Don't laugh. Don't walk away. I said mind. In a woman. A woman's mind.

Emelia. Dear Emelia. Silence seeds our degradation; forbearance waters it. [mtk]

My husband knew Iago was lying, manipulating, undermining, sabotaging. So why did he not simply listen to, but also act on obvious deceit?

Brotherhood. The quiet approval beamed from one male eye to another. Bright, tight comradery [?] Like-mindedness born of the exchange of musk; the bucks' regard of the doe, the mild contempt following her capture. The wide, wild celebrity they find with each other cannot compete with the narrow comfort of a wife. Romance is always overshadowed by braun. The language of love is trivial compared to the hidden language of men that lies underneath the secret language they speak in public.

Iago. My nemesis, representative of all that women struggle against. Desire bent, made crooked by blood vengeance.

How typical. My husband's best friend competing with me for his love? What is this man-love that binds all to its will?

Or, perhaps he knew all along. I'm certain of it. Othello refused to promote him, his loyal lieutenant. Why? He understood Iago's nature. Still, he was seduced by it.

You, my husband, distrusted the man you were; the man I so accurately perceived you to be. Alone together that man shone. That man touched me with fingers that held nestlings as well as swords. Fingers that wiped blood from his brow also stroked my breasts. My error was truly believing you were the visage of your mind.

When the man I envisioned was lost to me, I was lost to myself.

Where, to whom could I turn?

My mother gave me sound instruction regarding manners, speech, duty, but the rest she kept closeted. The most valuable gift she passed along to me, the one who gave freely the devotion and nurture of her careless self, was Barbary, my nurse. She understood loss and sang its hurt and its sorrow. [mtk]

Who could have thought a military commander, trained to let blood, would be more, could be more, than a brutal arm educated solely to kill?

I knew. How did I know?

He came to a banquet my father and brothers held. Oh, the music, the perfumed ladies, the rare, elaborate food and a retinue of the powerful.

And there he stood—splendid within the splendor, but seeming uneasy among the simpering and the vanity around him. It was that slight uneasiness (in a commander?) that aroused my curiosity and caused me to engage with him.

Othello, he said.

Desdemona, said I.

We sat on a stone bench under an arch. I remember the well of softness in his eyes.

And this is what he told:

"As a orphan child I lived with a root woman who sheltered me from slavers. I trailed her in forests and over sere as she searched for medicinal plants, roots and flowers. She taught me songs and some of her science. How to breathe when there is no air. Where water hid in cactus and certain vines. Yet soon I was captured by Syrians. I lived with the camels and oxen and was treated the same. I ate what I could find. It was a happy day for me to be sold into an army where food was regular and clothes respectable. There I learned quickly the art of arms and the strength of command. In my first battle, I pointed my childish anger with a daring completely strange to me. I was sad, happy, breathless and hungry for more violent encounters. Only there could I excel and quash the loneliness inside. "

Q then said they were not invisible -
They were Chameleons able to
assume the shades they inhabited

to amazing precision.

"There are armies of women who kill men in battles so fierce the moon^{itself} hides from the ribbons of blood. They cut off their right breasts to ease the arrow shots of the long bows. For this they are called No-mazons^{Breast or A-mazons} and must remain virgins until their first slaughter of a man. Whole regiments fall before them. They still rule wooded nations^{Kingdoms} and desert cities. I have seen them and marveled at their war skills."

Those are the tales he told. Tales that stopped my heart as much as they fired my mind. Tales of horror and strange. I was captured by love and the prospect of inhabiting a broad original world.

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Of a space within life or beyond it
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~~My mother gave me~~
~~once had~~ a slave called Barbary,
MTK.

July 9

Desdemona: draft

Did you think I was a wisp of a girl? A coddled doll who fell in love with a handsome warrior; who rode off with her under his arm?

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marble floor. One by one they came in velvet and fur-trimmed silk, prettified hats stitched with silver thread. Each one, whether a stuttering boy or an aged widower, was eager for a chatelain weighted with riches. I am thought beautiful, but if I were not, even if I were a giantess, a miniature or a horse-faced shrew, suitors cruising for a bride would have sought my hand. Those already wealthy ranked me with other virgins on their menu. Those in desperate straights needed no evaluation.

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Barbary

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"Our ship sank. I alone was able to swim ashore. As I crawled along the beach I saw no enemy waiting on a ridge above the white sand. But I had heard the people of this place were invisible. Others said they were not invisible—they were chameleons able to assume the shades they inhabited. They could only be detected by their smell which meant in order to encounter their smell one had to get close enough to be killed. I chose not to discover which was true: invisibility or camouflage. I knew there were tunnels in the sea. If you walk the beach and listen carefully you can hear the wind's music sighing from a certain kind of rock or swirl of sand. They signal an opening. Enter and a hallway of light opens before you, dry as the Sahara, cool as the Himalayas. I waited in the light of a sea tunnel three days until the enemy believed me dead."

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"There is an Island surrounded by a violet ocean where fish jump into your boat, or you can catch them in your hand; where trees are always bearing fruit; where birds speak as humans; where the islanders have no heads and their faces are settled in their chests. Once, desperate for food and fresh water, I was cast upon their shores. Although they laughed at my deformity, at the hilarity of my own head rising awkwardly and vulnerably above my shoulders, they were generous. They fed me and tended to my needs. All

human attributes were theirs except for one: they could not sing for they had no throats. When I sang for them the songs the root woman taught me, they crowded about. Tears rolled down to their waists as they wept their pleasure. It was difficult to sail away, so awed was I by their civilization."

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[Barbary mtk]

see notes

Oh, think now what our thoughtless deaths have forfeited: arms wrapped around shoulders against gales of mistrust and despair; we two sailing in ships bound for harbors surrounding castles burning white under the blue blaze of the sky.

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in my mind. *The mind my husband ~~said he wished to be~~ ^{determined defined} believed ~ free and bounteous "*

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as she died

[Willow Song]

*I mourned her then. And felt confident
no such end was in my future*

6 11

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q 6

Barbary! Barbary. Come closer. How I have missed you. Remember the days we spent by the canal? We ate sweets and you saved the honey for me eating none yourself. We shared so much.

We shared nothing.

What do you mean? You were my best friend.

I was your slave.

What does that matter? I have known and loved you all my life.

I am black-skinned. You are white-skinned.

So?

So you don't know me. Have never known me.

Because of your skin? It is you who lack knowing. Think. I wed a Moore. I fled my home to be with him. I defied my father, all my family to wed him. I joined him on the battlefield.

And he slaughtered you.

10 6

And your lover slaughtered you as surely as if he had strangled you. Remember the song you sang every day until you wasted away and embraced death without fight or protest?

"Willow...." [mocking]

Don't. Don't.

Listen to me.

No, you listen. I have no rank in your world. I do what I am told. I brought you what you wanted before you knew you wanted it. I kissed your every cut and bruise. I held you when fever made you tremble, and when your parents made you weep. You never had to wash your hands or feet or face. I did that for you.

You blame?

I clarify!

Barbary. We are women. I had no more control over my life than you had. My prison was unlike yours but it was prison still. My good fortune was in rescue, yes, but it was I who had the courage to accept it:

"I tore from a limb fruit that had lost its green

My hands were warmed by the heat of an apple

Fire red and humming.

I bit sweet power to the core.

How can I say what it was like?

The taste! The taste undid my eyes.

And led me far from gardens planted for a child.

To a wilderness deeper than any Master's call."

Was I ever cruel to you? Ever?

No. You never hurt or abused me.

12/19

Who did?

You know who did. But I have thought long and hard about my
sorrow. No more "willow". Afterlife is time and with time there is
change. My song is new:

"Someone leans near

And sees the salt my eyes have shed.

I wait, longing to hear

Words of reason, love or play

To lash or lull me toward the hollow day.

Silence kneads my fear

Of crumbled star-ash sifting down

Clouding the rooms here, here.

I shore up my heart to run. To stay.

B 10

But no sign or design marks the narrow way.

Then on my skin a sudden breath caresses

The salt my eyes have shed.

And I hear a call—clear, so clear:

"You will never die again."

What bliss to know

I will never die again.

[Barbary mtk]

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