

Eilla and Armaeus

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A short story I wrote for my Humanities class that I ended out really liking. Like so many other Greek myths, this fictional Greek Myth tells how love birds came to be.

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Chapter 1 - Eilla and Armaeus

2

1 - Eilla and Armaeus

Once in the magnificent city of Argos, long before the Argonauts conquered the many sieges of the water and brought the Golden Fleece back to the mainland, there lived a young man in that city named Armaeus, known to all as the valiant rosy-cheeked youth that had once saved a boat full of soldiers from a horde of sea serpents with his brave heroics. He was revered as a hero, and loved by all of Argos, but inside he was dying slowly.

Each night as he slept visions passed through his head of a strangely beautiful young maiden, innocent and pure. In his dreams every night he could see her soft pale skin, fragrant with the soothing scent of lavender, her long flowing brunette locks, cascading down her ivory back, and innocent blue eyes, the color of the sky after a storm. Night after night he saw her and before long fell deeply in love with her, yearning for her with all of his being. When he arose each morning, he would pray to Hera, the goddess of his fair city, and Aphrodite, the reluctant goddess of love, with all of his heart, begging to them both to reveal to him who this maiden was. Months passed, and the dream continued undaunted, no maiden resembling the girl in Armaeus' dream appearing to him.

Finally, one day as Armaeus walked along the beach in Argos, his soul having faded away greatly due to his objectless devotion, he found something large resting on the wet sand, washed in with the tide. Upon further inspection, he found the flotsam and jetsam to be to a girl. Turning the small creature over in his lap he saw the sight that sent his heart soaring. His prayers had been answered, and in his lap laid the maiden he had seen in his dreams, down to the very last detail. Gathering her up immediately, he bore her back with him, and nursed her back to health.

Eilla was the girl's name as he soon learned, and almost immediately she fell just as in love with him as he was with her, as they were destined to be together. While Armaeus originally thought Eilla to be a child of the sea, of a sea nymph perhaps, she later explained to him how she came to rest upon that Argos shore. As it turned out, she had once lived far across the sea in a small town with her parents, though one day, tragedy befell them, and Eilla was tormented, forced to watch her loving parents be killed before her eyes. Overcome with grief, she cast herself into the sea; however, instead of dying, she found herself miraculously saved. Gathering her up into his arms, Armaeus whispered to the distraught Eilla,

"Never again will you have to worry about such things again, my sweet Eilla. The Gods have spared you so I may take care of you, and I shall for the rest of my days. Without you I was dying, and should I ever be without you again, I would die as well. I promise you, we will always be together."

"I cannot live without you either, dear Armaeus . . ." Eilla whispered in return, comforted by the warmth of his touch.

"You won't ever have to my love." Was the last thing said between them of that, however as it later turned out, things would be much different then they had originally planned.

Some time later, Armaeus was invited to a wonderful feast held in honor to him by the kind king of a nearby city. Of course he obliged, promising his dearest love that he would return to her soon. Traveling off to the far away city, Armaeus was greeted by adoring townspeople, as well as lords and ladies, all welcoming him in with great ardor. Thrilled by this attention, he went in to be greeted by the king straightaway, and ate to his heart's content.

However, at this feast, his eyes were often met with that of the jealous prince, the king's one and only son. This prince, named Legatus, was about the same age as Armaeus, though no one knew his name

like they knew the heroic young man's, even though he was a prince. As the night progressed, and he saw how his father and fellow subjects adored this young man, his jealousy swelled up and consumed him. He could not stand to have someone so similar to him held above him. That night, when all the guests slept in their beds, Legatus slipped into his father's chamber and roused him. Being the spoiled brat that he was, he demanded that his father eliminate Armaeus, since he had the power to do so, being the king that he was. Being his host, the kindly king found himself unable to do his son's bidding, though at the same time he could not refuse his son. He promised him he would see to Armaeus' untimely demise.

The next day as Armaeus was leaving the kingdom; the king stopped him, pleading for him to help him. Telling him of how his wife was dying of a horrible disease, he begged Armaeus to travel up to the high mountains where the Graiae dwelt, to gather a very rare herb, the only thing that could save her. The king had been so kind to him over the evening past, that he found he could not reject his plea. Armaeus simply requested that he might go and tell his love where he was going, and then promised to promptly set off in search of the herb.

Upon telling Eilla of his recently acquired quest, the poor girl collapsed in tears. She could not bear to let him go, out of fear that he would not return. She cried to him in desperation, her tears causing her cerulean eyes to shine,

"Armaeus, I cannot live without you, what happens if you do not return?"

Drawing her into his arms once last time, he kissed her softly and replied, hoping to win back her confidence in him, "I promise, I will return to you no matter what. We belong together, and until the end of time, and I promise we will be."

And with those words he parted, not knowing how long it would be before he laid eyes on her sweet form again.

Strong and capable, Armaeus started out towards the mountains right away, finding few troubles along the way. Days passed into weeks, but still he remained fervent, his mind and heart set on returning to his love once more. However, as he got higher and higher up in the mountains, more trouble began to find him. Gruesome creatures dwelled up in the higher parts of the range, many hungry for human flesh and blood thirsty, finding Armaeus to be a long sought after meal. Armaeus succeeded in fending them off, one by one, but each one managed to weaken him a little more, his desire to return home the only thing keeping him moving. Eventually he reached the cave where the Graiae lived, the surrounding land seeming to take on a similar hue. From that point he knew it would not be much longer before he could start his journey back to Eilla.

The peak of the mountain proved to be the most dangerous place Armaeus had yet encountered, filled with ruthless monsters and sharp rocks. Immediately he set to work searching for the small herb, this being the place the desperate king told him to look for it. For weeks he scoured the mountain peak, but not once did he so much as find a single living piece of vegetation. It was then that Armaeus realized that he had been tricked, duped into climbing this deadly mountain in hopes that he would never return. Angered and sworn to take revenge upon whoever was behind this callous wrongdoing, he started back down the mountain. However, luck proved to be against him, and as he was stepping down off the peak, the ground collapsed beneath his feet and pulled him under into a dark, deep ravine. When he came to once more, he found himself looking up several feet from where he lay in the narrow ravine, nobody around to hear his cries of terror.

Back in Argos, Eilla waited for her love patiently. Each day she walked the grounds of the magnificent house Armaeus had her staying in, staring off into space absentmindedly, and each night she prayed with all her heart that Armaeus would return the next day. However, each morning would come, and he

would never be waiting for her to arise. Each afternoon would pass, and he would not appear. Each evening would fall, and his silhouette could not be seen against the setting sun. Months passed, and Eilla's heart began to fall into darkness.

Before long, years had come and gone and Armaeus had still not returned. Eilla had fell into a bitter depression, one that she could not be pulled out of. She was dying inside, just as Armaeus had once been. All of the servant girls who worked around his homestead feared for the young maiden's life, as they had grown to care for her in the time that had passed. They begged her to do something, anything to save her from this wretched condition. Every time they pleaded for her to move on, she could only respond in a withered voice,

"I promised Armaeus I would never forsake him, and I never intend to."

So they would leave her alone for a while, only to ask her again on a later day. With time though, their relentless inquiries began to come around less and less. Before long, they stopped pursuing her. And not long after that, unable to stand the memories of Armaeus, left his beautiful house, forgetting all about her promise.

For a long time, Eilla wandered the streets of Argos, going nowhere in particular. As she roamed men and women stared at her in awe, as she was still incredibly beautiful, despite her worsening condition. For the most part, no one would speak to her, as the ever-constant look of sadness on her face warded everyone off. Everyone that is, until a bold, successful young man named Aurontae spotted Eilla walking towards him on the street and fell in love with her instantly. From that moment on he pursued her, and though she turned him away at first, eventually she found herself giving in to his ways, as she no longer had the strength to refuse him. The next week they were married, and Eilla had promised to spend the rest of her life with Aurontae.

Years passed, and in her grief and sadness, Eilla finally came to accept that Armaeus was truly gone. She tried to forget about him and live a happy life, though not for a single day could she succeed at such a thing. He was always on her mind. Still, she could not avoid living her new life, so she continued to do so without complaint for years, until several years later, she was met with a most interesting surprise. One day while tending to her daily business, a knock came at the door, and without much hesitation, Eilla went to answer it, not at all expecting to find Armaeus standing there, torn and ragged from so many years in the wild. The townspeople had told him what had happened of his beloved over all the long years, and he had come to see if it was all true. With her long lost love standing before her once more, she wasn't sure what to say, though she found she could not lie. She told him the truth, about how her life was now, how she was married, though before she got to the part where she was about to confess how all these long years, she had dwelt on thoughts of him still, he fled from her sight, too overcome to hear any more. That night he wept to Hera to help him somehow, thought he could not think of how. Caring for him deeply, Hera came down off of Mount Olympus and stole him away to sacred place where she could care for him for the time being. Meanwhile, another God came to see Eilla about breaking a certain promise.

A few days later, as Eilla slept, Zeus came to her in her dreams, in a form most foreboding. He told her of how she had broken a promise and that she would be punished for it. Getting on her hands and knees she wept bitterly, telling Zeus of how she had never intended on breaking the promise, but that she was only human, and couldn't deal with the pain she had felt. Unrelenting in his ways, the overbearing God told her that such excuses would not be enough to save her from her punishment. Crying harder, Eilla swore with all her heart that she would work to repay the sins she committed. Seeing the poor girl's resolve, he allowed her to work to earn the Gods' forgiveness. Upon telling her this, Zeus gave her the first task: to fetch the wool of the enchanted ram and weave it into a cloth worthy of a king.

The next morning she set out in search of the enchanted ram, though she found herself uncertain of

where to find it. She wandered around the countryside endlessly for several days and nights until she finally fell to the ground in tears. Zeus had never told her where to find the creature, so now she found herself at an inexcusable loss. Much to her luck however, the goddess Artemis was looking down from the heavens and saw Eilla. Taking pity on her she soared down to the earth in the form of a majestic wolf, herding the enchanted ram into the field that Eilla lay in. Seeing the gentle wolf, she knew right away that it was no normal animal, but the goddess of the wood, Artemis. Falling to her knees she thanked Artemis for her help, and recognizing her gratitude, Artemis left her with the ram. Gathering up as much of the enchanted wool as she could, she went back to the city, her heart set on creating the most beautiful blanket, in hopes of getting her love back.

Right away she set to work, but before long she found the task much more difficult than what she bargained for. The job alone of being able to weave was much more than she could handle, let alone weaving something worthy of a king. After many weeks of trying and trying, Eilla began to feel her hope wearing thin. However, once more, luck was on her side, as this time the goddess Athena was gazing down upon the earth, and seeing Eilla, took pity on her. She came down to her in the form of a kindly old woman, and going to the desperate young maiden and offering to help her out. Eilla treated the woman more than kindly, in return the old woman weaved for her the most amazing cloth, beyond that of any mortal weaver. Right away Eilla recognized the woman as the incredible crafter Athena and fell to her knees, thanking her in the utmost way. At that Athena left her with the finished product, which the young lover offered to Zeus right away.

Impressed beyond expectations at the skill of the craft, Zeus was glad and told her that she had passed his test. Eilla was ecstatic, thinking that once more she would get to have her sweet Armaeus back again. However, at this point, Zeus passed her on to the zealous goddess Aphrodite, to receive her next task.

Aphrodite was not as receptive to Eilla as Zeus had been. She had cared for Armaeus greatly as well, and was angry with the girl for hurting him so. Eilla begged and pleaded with the goddess to give her a chance, and through much persuading, she finally gave way. She gave her a task to complete, though a bit of a harder one: to capture the golden horned deer, and with its antlers carve a dagger worthy of a knight. A bit less confident of this task, though still determined, she set off once more.

Just as last time, Eilla found great troubles in performing this difficult task; however, also as last time, the goddesses Artemis and Athena came to her aid. Having found a liking in Eilla, they helped her with what she needed, and with a golden dagger more beautiful and effective as any ever seen before, she went back before Aphrodite, who accepted her resolve and sent her on to Hera, who would await her with her final task.

Hera was the least pleased with Eilla of all. At first she flat out refused to so much as give Eilla a chance, but Eilla, who had worked and slaved to get this far, was determined to get Armaeus back, whom she truly loved with all her heart. Without weeping, without begging, she told Hera this; and Hera, stunned by the blaze of truth in her eyes, gave way and allowed her one final task: to take a single tail feather from the great eagle up in the mountains, and form that feather into a beautiful quill, worthy of a royal scribe. Exasperated, she set out for the last time, though this time a little more fearful.

Just as she had feared, this final task was the hardest of all. She was not strong enough to climb a mountain, and even with her determination, she soon found herself losing hope. Artemis and Athena however, sitting up on Mount Olympus, refused to let this poor girl fail after putting forth so much effort. Stepping from their seat in the heavens, they descended to Earth and helped Eilla once more, until before long she had the most beautiful quill on all of heaven and earth to present to Hera.

When Hera saw the quill, she knew that Eilla was true of heart and granted her the forgiveness of the Gods. She allowed the mortal girl entrance to the sacred garden Armaeus lay waiting in, still disheartened and unaware of all that had gone on. Leading Eilla, Hera told Armaeus all that had

happened, and placed the lovers back in each other's arms. Overwhelmed, Armaeus wept as Eilla promised him in a sweet voice, filled with the love she held within her, the love that had lived all this time,

"We belong together, and until the end of time, and I promise we will be. I will never forsake you, never again."

Forgiving her completely, just as the Gods did, Armaeus gladly took her back, and together they remained, side by side in the beauty of the garden Hera had created for them.

Time passed, and the couple grew old with one another, under the constant loving watch of the many gods and goddesses that had grown to care for them. One day, when they were both very old, they went before the Gods and asked to be allowed to be together until the end of time, as they had always promised one another. Thrilled to see such undying adoration, Zeus turned them into a pair of lovebirds, which to this day are never seen apart. From that day forth the beautiful birds could be seen together, perched upon a branch in a exquisite garden, never the one leaving the other, until the end of time.