

Antics With The Argonauts

The task that was bestowed upon me, Jason of Iolcus, son of King Aeson, would not be easy, but it was one that only I alone could accomplish.

My mission was both simple and dangerous: travel to the land of Colchis and snatch the golden fleece in exchange for my rightful throne. Of course, only I could regain control of my own kingdom, but I left not unprepared. Beasts, monsters, and foes alike would be scattered across Greece. That was why I assembled the greatest team I could gather: the Argonauts. They consisted of Heracles, the renowned warriors; Orpheus, the enchanting musician; and many other men who would be of tremendous assistance. We were the best of the best, but despite our fearsome abilities, concerns lingered on my mind.

I stood at the bow of the *Argo*, scouting the waters ahead as most of the men continued to row. The seas were calm, the sky was clear, and the wind helped guide us forward - today was luckily a calm day. However, the concerns in my head were anything but. Colchis was a far off nation in the east. It was one difficulty to travel there, and another difficulty to travel back. What kinds of challenges would my men and I face? The ruler of Colchis, King Aeetes, would hopefully be level-minded enough to reason with, but there were also rumors of a ferocious beast: a dragon. Such a monstrosity protected the golden fleece, and to fall against it would bring my entire life to ashes - literally. My thoughts wracked my brain, and I squinted, trying to shield my eyes from the salty sprays of water. The Argonauts could not see their leader with such a dilemma, so whether I liked it or not, I needed to push on.

Then, all of a sudden, the sound of music rang in my ears.

I turned around to see Orpheus, the wondrous bard himself, practice a small melody on his iconic lyre. The tune was melancholy, slow with hints of deeper notes. Although the men around him appeared nonchalant with his performance, their eyes followed me as I walked toward him and placed my hand on his shoulder, snapping him out of his musical trance.

“Orpheus, my dear friend, why so blue?” I asked. “The day is perfect, and we are lucky to have received such a respite on our journey. Your music is wonderful, but why do you play such haunting tones during such a pleasant time?”

Orpheus looked at me with tired, shadowed eyes, and his voice was as sad as the music he was playing. “I miss my wife, Jason. I miss her a lot.” He plucked a string on his lyre just once. “I miss her more than Demeter missed Persephone during the frigid seasons, and my heart yearns for her each and every day.”

“Your love for her is everlasting, is it not?”

He nodded, then continued to play his solemn tune. “Everything I do, I do for love. Every note I play, every song I sing, I do as if she was my only audience. I can only hope Eurydice is able to hear my voice from the depths of Hades.”

“Your troubles with Eurydice ended long ago, Orpheus.” A new voice entered, and I turned to see that it was none other than the powerful figure of Heracles himself. He made an innocent yet strong smack on the musician’s back, causing him to play a sour note. “All love dies eventually, whether by our own hands or not. Maybe it was about time you found a new maiden whose beauty rivals even Aphrodite’s. I know I would.”

I spoke up, wanting to defend my friend’s commitment. “Heracles, if *your* love was trapped in the underworld and *you* were desperate to be with her again, what would *you* do?”

“Try and get her back, of course! Or perhaps not, depending on who she is. If she was a princess of sorts, I’d fight Hades himself if I had to! Though, if she was a commoner, I’m sure I could find myself another wife.”

“And risk your devotion under the gods’ careful watch?”

“Why not? If Zeus himself had his fair share of paramours, then why can’t I?”

“Because you and I are but human men, just like the rest of the Argonauts on this ship?”

Heracles opened his mouth to let out a hearty chortle, only for a sudden splash of seawater to fly into it. Orpheus and I laughed as he sputtered it out immediately. Then, Heracles’ voice and expression showed clear signs of annoyance. “Amused at your own teammate. Very, very funny. At least the sound of your laughter is better than whatever music was weighing down our spirits earlier.”

At the mention of his expertise, Orpheus shifted his hands over to the strings of his lyre. He closed his eyes, plucked them a few times, then began to perform. Unlike his previous melody, this was a jovial tune, one that was fast-paced and full of glee. It was almost as if the musician’s thoughts from earlier had disappeared entirely. Heracles and I bobbed our heads to the beat, and soon enough, more the Argonauts joined in on the fun. Some clapped along to the music, others made improvised songs, and it felt like the entirety of the *Argo* rocked above the waves. Happiness spread from man to man, and not even I was immune to its effects.

Perhaps Colchis wouldn’t be so bad after all.