

A Musing Tale

by Angie



*The muse in silence sings aloud:
and there my love will live*

- John Clare

Calliope gazed down at the planet below her and sighed. She loved this period of history, despite the the myriad ills humans inflicted upon each other.

This period was also unique - the last few years of relative innocence, before technology took over all aspects of living. She had returned to it often, to experience that relative calm before the storm.

She ached to mark this period as special. It was her job, as a Muse, to make people happy, and this period needed it. It seemed to be holding its collective breath. Despite the chaos, there was still room for art, and her particular love - literature and writers. She was encouraged and thought carefully about how to approach her particular desire.

Books didn't reach enough people. She wanted to inspire what had flown last from Pandora's box - hope, as well as romance and love. She came to understand that there was only one way - through the medium called television. It was a magic box which provided the kind of entertainment formerly delivered on a stage - but with so many more possibilities and such effect.

Calliope was enthralled at the imagination and scope of this medium, while realizing that it also isolated its viewers from both reality and each other. Perhaps she could address that failing, she thought, and her project grew larger in her mind.

So she found a playwright, a writer for the television medium, a romantic, a lover of art and classic literature, and fine music. This last was especially important. Music soothed, elevated, tamed and inspired. Her sisters were all dedicated to it in some fashion.

Calliope also loved the spoken word, the cadence of a beautiful voice. She favoured eloquence, especially when it was literate and romantic. She must have this too.

She was assertive, so her sisters insisted, and she did nothing to decry that notion now.

She needed a little inspiration, that would in turn inspire something basic in the human psyche. Psyche herself would tell her that love was all, but Calliope aspired to more. In itself, love was not enough. It must also be rooted in the soul, in the mind - and it must embrace others, give them comfort, encourage them.

She sought out the mind of her mother Mnemosyne. In moments, an answer returned and she smiled. Of course, how could she have forgotten? But then her mother was Memory, not she.

She sent a few hints into the artistic ether, directed at her chosen, spacing them out to encourage him along a path, to follow the threads. She saw his head rise and knew he had been caught.

Over the next while - she did not measure time in chunks as humans did - she watched as a script emerged and her playwright manoeuvred his way through the labyrinthine machinery of television, gathering support for his idea. He finally broadcast relief and joy, and she knew he had been successful.

She watched, fascinated, as the story she had suggested took shape and unfolded into production, drawing in artists of every discipline. Truly, this medium far exceeded stage plays - but still it needed actors. She watched carefully.

The casting began. The main character had to be other than human, yet be believable, beautiful even, and he had to have a voice that would melt the hearts of all who heard him.

Calliope wanted to ensure her project's perfection, so again she asked her mother, and a name and face appeared in her mind. She investigated and was enthralled. Yes, it had to be he. She made the name known to those seeking.

Then came the casting of the leading lady. More difficult. Calliope didn't like to think of herself as sexist, but it was a fact she focused more on men. Again, her mother made a suggestion on request, and again the fit was perfect.

Calliope peered into the future and found coincidences that indicated the Fates were perhaps also collaborating just a little, and she thanked them silently to herself. A Muse dare not ask the Fates

for help - or even draw their attention. They were too unpredictable, their vision long-reaching and inscrutable - sometimes deadly. Arts must be unencumbered by fears of the fragility of their thread of life. Meanwhile, her chosen production prepared to begin work in earnest. Calliope watched, her hands clenched, hardly daring to breath.

Then as she watched from her invisible perch, she heard the voice of the leading man for the first time. Eloquence surrounded him like his flowing costume cloak, as he spoke the words written for him. He was indeed beautiful in the form they created for him - leonine, regal, calm. The bearing of the actor himself was unexpectedly exciting as well. He was large, well-shaped, strong.

Calliope was half in love with him, as she watched him quietly dominate the sets and action. She saw the body language as he met his leading lady, saw the look in their eyes, and knew that this relationship was special. They could feel the essence of eternal love - and they broadcast it to an eager television audience.

Over the next while, she thrilled to see how her idea became precisely what she had hoped for. Yes, it seemed the women of this world really did need pure romance in their lives. The men were much less enthused with this new/old concept, but nevertheless it literally roared onwards, gaining a life of its own, a dedicated following, inspiring an almost religious fervour. The individual episodes were steeped in myth, music, literature. It elevated television drama to new heights.

Calliope sighed in happiness. She could feel the love that emanated from the planet when television played the latest episode, gathering in so many who had felt excluded, unwanted, failures, giving them hope and courage beyond anything she had expected.

She watched as the love for the series grew, and continued to grow, even after it ended, among all age groups, even some who had not been born when it had been introduced. That love did not stay restricted to that small group. Their belief in helping, a strong theme in the play, was extended to many in need.

There was something magical, eternal, that spoke to the deep needs of the heart. She knew what it was, of course, but had seen it manifest so seldom as strongly. She mused on this, as Muses will.

She watched as time rolled onwards, leaving the original production far behind; a memory, a wish, a love - but the basic theme remained as strong as ever. It had touched so many that it lived on in many hearts, growing, maturing. It was indestructible, as all worthy ideas must be. Joy and laughter were encouraged in its name, and in its best form, it was all-inclusive, generous, a reason for friends to meet, to communicate, to share - and always to help those less fortunate.

Of course, it wasn't perfect. Nothing was. It saddened her that, even in this beautiful dream, there were divisions, those who shunned others of their group. Disagreements became heated on occasion. But still, she was satisfied that at its best, in its most pure, her idea was preserved and it triumphed.

Every so often, she encouraged those who followed the dream she had set in motion. They rewarded her with treasures beyond her imaginings in music, sculpture, painting - and of course literature.

She watched, fascinated, as the idea matured, pulling in more adherents, despite the physical and geological limitations that restricted the distribution of her message of hope and love.

Then technology made the dream more accessible, more inclusive, world-wide. The landscape became richer with every new fan, whether they had known it from its first appearance or not. It was a dream that could not be suborned. It had become indestructible.

Calliope also kept a watch on the actors who had brought her idea to life and followed their careers, doing her best to see that they were loved and remembered for their roles in her inspiration. She watched their birthdays celebrated, their careers bloom and grow. Her heart swelled with love and gratitude.

Of course, her project was not the only one these actors were thankful for, but it had touched each of

them in some way. They never forgot it and neither did the still active, but now mostly much older, group of fans.

So looked ahead further into time, now very curious. And it seemed that this particular dream of love would persist.

She realized, with some astonishment, that she had tapped into a universal theme, one so much needed in every time that it often grew of its own accord, albeit in slightly different form. The threads of this message were safe from the Fates. They could cut individual life strands, but they could not kill the dream. It grew and matured.

She puzzled over this for a while and then asked her mother a question.

‘Yes’, came back the answer, immediately. *‘We exist to inspire, but we could not do so if the hearts of humans did not admit the possibility, Calliope. You did well, my daughter.’*

‘With your help,’ Calliope replied.

‘No, I merely suggested the tools. Yours was the inspiration.’

Encouraged, Calliope bethought how she might do more. But when she looked down again, she realized that many of the women who had discovered the value of love through her happy intercession, were still dedicated to passing it on to others and inspiring others. They had faith in themselves and in their purpose. Often men too became part of the movement, and the strength of both sexes was multiplied as a result.

There was really nothing more for her to do.

With a sigh, Calliope returned to the heavens, deciding that perhaps now she would rest for a while. She remembered the voice and leonine character and settled into a long dream of love.

She was after all an incurable romantic. She smiled as he voiced her name.

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