Ariadne

 By

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This book tells the mythological story of Ariadne and Phaedra the daughters of King Minos, King of Crete and sisters of the Minotaur. Ariadne is the eldest daughter and the first to come under the spell of Theseus, Prince of Athens. When the eldest son of King Minos is killed by a bull while in Athens, King Minos demanded a yearly sacrifice of seven youths from Athens to be sent to Crete to be sacrificed to the Minotaur that lives in the labyrinth under the city of Knossos. Theseus comes with the last batch of youths with the intention of killing the Minotaur, so that the sacrifices can stop. Ariadne falls in love with Theseus and agrees to help him kill the Minotaur and to escape the labyrinth. Daedalus, who built the labyrinth gives Ariadne a ball of string to give to Theseus, so that he can find his way out of the maze. Theseus agrees to take both Ariadne and Phaedra away from Crete back to Athens in exchange for their help. When the Minotaur is killed Ariadne and Theseus flee the island, but Phaedra is not at the meeting point and they leave without her. Unbeknownst to Ariadne, Theseus had told Phaedra that the meeting point was at another location as he had no intention of taking both sisters with him. In fact he had no intention of taking either sister back with him to Athens. On the way back to Athens Theseus’s ship stops at the Island of Naxos and Theseus and Ariadne spend the night in a cottage on the island. In the morning when she awakens Theseus and his ship are gone. Ariadne is on constant vigil hoping that Theseus will return for her, but someone else arrives on the island that changes her life forever.

Phaedra stuck on Crete with her enraged Father does eventually go to Athens and becomes the wife of Theseus. After Theseus and Ariadne flee Crete Daedalus and his son Icarus who have been imprisoned on Crete by Minos escape the island with manufactured wings and fly away except for Icarus who soars too close to the sun. Minos is more enraged by this escape then of his daughter and leaves the island searching for Daedalus. Phaedra’s older brother takes control of Crete and offers Phaedra as a wife to Theseus to keep the peace with Athens.

The story goes back and forth between the sisters and tells what eventually happens to both of them. I liked this story because it depicts the gods as real entities and active in the story. Very similarly written as Madeline Miller’s books are about Achilles and Circe where the gods are very real and play vital roles in her stories.