**Bacchus and Ariadne**

**Classical story/myth:**

It all begins with Theseus, the Athenian hero volunteered to sail to Crete as one of the young boys and seven maidens who were to be sacrificed to the monster Minotaur, the son of the Cretan king Minos. During this time, he meets princess Ariadne. Theseus falls in love with Ariadne, the daughter of king Minos. Ariadne gives him a ball of thread to help him to find his way back from the labyrinth where Minotaur resides. He ties one end of the thread to the door of the labyrinth and unfurls it as he progresses inside. He then finds the Minotaur and slays him in the ensuing fight. After escaping from the labyrinth using Ariadne’s thread, he sets sail to return to Athens taking Ariadne with him. The ship stops on the island of Naxos where Ariadne falls asleep, and Theseus, after having stolen Minos’s daughter, cruelly abandons Ariadne on the island.

There she wandered on the shore, forsaken, and alone. Unloved by Theseus, her gown loose, her bosom naked, and her feet bare. She cried as she stood by the shore, watching Theseus’s ship sailing away in the distance. “Her briny tears augment the briny flood; she shriek’d and wept, and both became her face, no posture could that heav’nly form disgrace. She beat her breast: - “The traitor’s gone,” said she; “What shall become of poor forsaken me?’” After she had spoken those words, the sounds of cymbals rattled on the shore. She swooned for fear, and falls to the ground, no vital heat was in her body found. Before her was a chariot pulled by two cheetahs, and scudding satyrs ran before their god. He was followed by drunken nymphs and a man wrapped in snakes, a sort of parade of drunken dames pursuing their drunken god. Ariadne and Bacchus meet, and eventually, very quickly I might add, they marry. He brought her comfort. She was a woman deserted, weeping because she was alone, abandoned, betrayed by someone who helped and who promised to love her and give her a crown of stars.

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**Day 2:**

Aria continues to wander by the shoreline. Her briny tears have run dry. It’s been almost forty-eight hours since she was abandoned on the island. Half nude and scared, she thinks of all the reasons why this could have happened. What had she done wrong? She thought that Theo had truly loved her; he had seemed so grateful to her. Without her help, he would have never found his way out of the labyrinth, he would have never defeated the Minotaur, and yet here she stands on the wet sand. The ship had disappeared in the distance the day before and was nowhere to be seen. If the world were really flat, perhaps it had fallen off the edge, or she hoped as much. Perhaps falling off the edge of the earth was too harsh a punishment for a man she loved, or thought she loved.

“Come away with me, Aria. We can see the world. I’ve got a fast ship and the Minotaur’s head in barrel. Can you image the fame?”

“Theo, I can’t just leave. My father-”

“Screw your father!” He interrupts Aria. “He can’t keep us apart. They’ll sing songs about my bravery, they’ll sing songs about our love! Come away with me, forget the king. Forget this life.”

“I can’t just leave my kingdom-”

“Of course you can! You helped me, and I promised to marry you, didn’t I? I’m a man of my word.”

“It doesn’t feel right to run off like this. Can’t we wait till morning to discuss this?” She doesn’t understand the rush.

“Morning?” He pauses. The way he’s glaring at her makes her skin crawl, but then his face softens.

“Fine, in the morning then. Goodnight.”

The last thing she remembers is her head on a pillow and gazing up at the ceiling. She woke up in a heap of loose clothing and sand, the ship of her former companion disappearing before her eyes.

She wails and whines, bare feet kicking up the beach all around her, and yelling obscenities into the open expanse of sea and sand, for about a day. Why should she blame herself? The folly and dishonor of man had lead her here, not her own doing. After tiring herself, she sits and thinks for a while.

“There must be a way off this island,” she says to herself.

“There is,” says a voice, located somewhere behind her. She stands up with a jolt, shocked and

frightened. Wasn’t she alone? She hears a rusting in the trees.

“Who are you!” she calls out. The trees rustle as if in response, and then she hears the sound of cymbals rattling on the shore. She turns her head quickly, her body following its lead, and comes face to face with a handsome man who appeared no older than a quarter of a century. She falls to the ground in a bundle of sand chocked strips of cloth, her bosom bare, but she makes no effort to conceal herself. She has lost the ability to think of words in order to form sentences in which to demand what in hell was happening before her. The young stranger was not alone.

Behind him was a chariot, pulled, not by horses, but leopards. Beside the chariot stood people, two the size of children, but with horns protruding from their skulls, and goat’s legs where their own chubby ones should have been. There were four women, all wrapped in silk and gold, who laughed and danced, their eyelids heavy as if fighting the will of the sandman. There was a large man, muscular and barbaric, wrapped in live snakes as if they were clothing. It was as if a parade of oddities had found its way to the island. Aria could not believe any of it. She continued to silently stare. The young man waves his hands, but she does not react. She is aware of him, but lost in thought.

“Hello in there,” sings the man, his voice as pure as a soft melody.

“Hello,” Aria hears herself say back.

“I heard your cries, I felt your kicks, the sand has whispered a sad song in my ears. I’d like to help you.”

“Help me?”

“Yes! Of course, I can’t just leave a beauty such as you to die alone.” Aria stares at him. He’s youthful and rouged, rough and soft, with a silver chalice in his left hand.

He notices her glance, “Wine?” he asks.

“Water,” she says, and with his right arm stretched toward the sky, another silver chalice appears in his hand.

“Water,” he repeats, and hands her the glass that has appeared out of thin air.

To be continued...