

ISSUE SIXTEEN

EXPLOITS

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an UNWINNABLE publication



Thomas Loughney on
AMERICAN PSYCHO

RUSTY VENTURE vs. RICK SANCHEZ •

The SONG of ACHILLES • MINI MAPS • PEDRO the LION

• The GREAT BRITISH BAKING SHOW

BOOKS

The SONG of ACHILLES – Madeline Miller’s *The Song of Achilles* is unafraid to show the darker realities of Greek heroism. Whether it be sexual slavery or child soldiers, *The Song of Achilles* shows the horrors that were accepted in the *Iliad* with a modern attitude. Directly criticizing Greek myths, it shows how obsessing over honor and glory harms others and leads to the supposed hero’s downfall.

It does this by ignoring a Greek hero in favor of his mortal sidekick. Patroclus may be Achilles’s companion, but he is an outcast and lacks the talents that could bring glory. But he is caring and is willing to follow Achilles into battle out of love.

The first half of the book even ignores the heroics and battles, instead focusing on a blossoming romance between Patroclus and Achilles. While heroes and gods make their appearances, it is growing intimacy and maturation that the pushes story forward. Glory is sidestepped for love, with even Achilles, who in the *Iliad* is known for his rage, being shown as a peaceful child.

The Song of Achilles uses the Trojan War to offer a new perspective on the violence and cruelty that are valorized in Greek myths. Patroclus and Achilles are child soldiers who are sixteen when they join the war. As Achilles gets a taste for blood, he begins a downward spiral as he follows the traditions and ideals that plague Greek heroes. He becomes prideful, falling prey to the hubris that destroys many men.

Miller is also unafraid to show how these heroes exploited women and children, forcing them into sexual slavery for the Greek army and its generals. Even Achilles, who may not rape the women under him, still views them as his property, as shown in his feud

with Agamemnon. Miller shows that a man’s glory lies in the men he kills and the women he enslaves, with Achilles being just another killer.

Yet Patroclus, who is not bound by heroic honor or pride, follows a more modern moral code. He views the women enslaved by the Greek army as people and tries to protect them from harm. Instead of fighting, he works to heal. In the end, it is Patroclus who takes up Achilles’ armor and dies attempting to inspire the Greek army. He dies without glory or power, but more of a hero to our contemporary eyes than the monstrous Achilles.

– WILLIAM DOWELL

