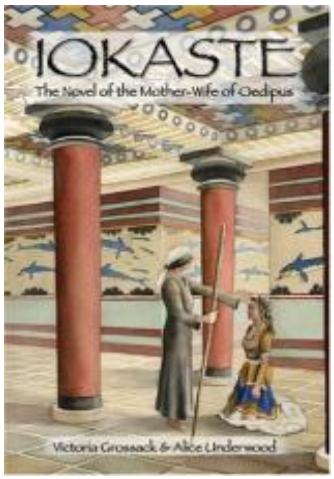
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Iokaste: The Novel of the Mother-Wife of Oedipus

by Alice Underwood and Victoria Grossack



About the Book

For millennia the story of Oedipus - who, despite all efforts to avoid his fate, killed his father and married his mother - has captivated imaginations. Even more compelling are the experiences of his wife and mother, Iokaste. In **Iokaste: The Novel of the Mother-Wife of Oedipus**, we finally hear her story.

As the book opens, Iokaste's brother Kreon tells his sister she must die. The sacrilege of her unnatural marriage is revealed; the queen of Thebes can either take her own life or be torn to pieces by an angry mob. She has until dawn to choose the means of her death. Horrified, Iokaste's daughter asks: How much of the truth did you know? And when did you know it? Iokaste answers these questions.

Through the disappointment of her first marriage and the loss of her firstborn child, Iokaste learns the sacrifices demanded of a queen. When her husband dies, Iokaste and her brother contend with the dangerous Sphinx and contrive a plan to protect their city. Then the prince of Korinth claims the heart of the queen, and Iokaste finds herself involved in a relationship richer and more complex and than she ever imagined possible - but this very love threatens the destruction of all she holds dear.

Discussion Guide

1. In **Iokaste**, blindness is a recurring theme. Who is blind literally? Who is blind figuratively? Who has the clearest vision of what is happening?

2. In **Iokaste**, the characters -- Iokaste, Oedipus, Kreon, Menoeceus, Melanthe, Niobe -- all have different attitudes toward the gods. Compare and contrast them.

3. If you are familiar with Sophocles play, Oedipus Rex, compare it with the version of the myth told in **Iokaste**.

4. In **Iokaste**, three different people served as the Tiresias. Which do you think was the most human? Could they all see the future equally well?

5. If you are familiar with the myth about the Sphinx controlling Thebes, contrast it with the version related in **Iokaste**. Which version seems most likely? Do you think something else really happened?

6. Did Iokaste trust Oedipus more than she trusted Kreon?

7. Was Iokaste right to ask Pelorus to save her baby?

8. Do you think Iokaste was a good queen? Why or why not?

9. If you are familiar with the myth of Niobe and the death of her children, how does the version in **Iokaste** differ?

10. Iokaste, Laius and Oedipus were all a part of the prophecy that Oedipus would kill Laius and marry Iokaste. Compare and contrast their reactions when they learned their fate.

Author Bio

Alice Underwood studied classics at The University of Texas and Princeton University while earning her degrees in mathematics. Her passion for antiquity has taken her from the shadowed catacombs of Princeton's libraries to the ruins of Pompeii and the sunny shores of Crete and Santorini. Currently an Executive Vice President at one of the world's top insurance brokerage firms, Alice lives and works in New York City.

Critical Praise

"A real page-turner . . . a wonderfully nuanced novel that repays any previous knowledge of its subject matter - but never requires it"

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