

The Brides of Achilles

Olivia Kost

O brides of Hades,
to be cut down in your youth,
by a father,
 an enemy,
all for a man who could not heel.
How did you find the strength
to remain resolute,
 unyielding
against masculine martyrdom?

O brave Poluxene,
 to be robbed of nobility,
 a life,
 a hope.
And yet, you welcomed death
with heart bared
for all to admire
the loveliness
 of unblemished ivory and dripping scarlet.
Could you hear the wails of your mother
as she petitioned
for a place
 at your steadfast side?
Please,
grant me an ounce of your vigor
which allowed you to remain
like marble in your forced fortitude.

O innocent Iphigenia,
 victim of Agamemnon—
 a father's unyielding hubris.
Under false pretenses did you go willingly
 to your sacrifice—
 a promise of marriage,
 union unto death.
Did your knees falter as your altar
transformed—
 cream to crimson?
Did you feel the winds rise as your breath faded?

O sweet, budding Parthenos, avenged by rage-filled mothers—
 Maternal visions tinged murderous merlot.
Did their strength course through your opened veins
as you died for a man who was never intended to be
yours?
As your daughter through unfaltering femininity alone,
 allow your strength to flow
 through me as I stand,
 unwavering woman,
 as you once did.

Olivia Kost is currently in her final semester at UND, graduating with degrees in English and secondary education. She is originally from Bismarck, North Dakota. Olivia would not be where she is today without the support of both her family and friends. Her love for literature was ignited by her father and their many trips to Barnes and Noble since she was a child.