



By Helen's Hand

Amalia Carosella

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With divine beauty comes dangerous power.

Helen believed she could escape her destiny and save her people from utter destruction. After defying her family and betraying her intended husband, she found peace with her beloved Theseus, the king of Athens and son of Poseidon.

But peace did not last long. Cruelly separated from Theseus by the gods, and uncertain whether he will live or die, Helen is forced to return to Sparta. In order to avoid marriage to Menelaus, a powerful prince unhinged by desire, Helen assembles an array of suitors to compete for her hand. As the men circle like vultures, Helen dreams again of war—and of a strange prince, meant to steal her away. Every step she takes to protect herself and her people seems to bring destruction nearer. Without Theseus's strength to support her, can Helen thwart the gods and stop her nightmare from coming to pass?

By Helen's Hand Details

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From Reader Review By Helen's Hand for online ebook

Erin Al-Mehairi says

I read Helen of Sparta by Amalia Carosella last year and loved it. Now, I want to share with you my review of the second in the series, By Helen's Hand. Amalia is an elegant writer, with prose that drips description and feeling and with this sophomore book in the series I could ascertain that her writing had grown even more. I found her first book excellent, but her prose flowed smoother and her storytelling through word phrasing was much more fluid.

I already enjoy the subject matter. Anything written of ancient times of mythology or Romans, Greeks, Egyptians, etc. and I'm all over it. However, the writing still has to draw me in and not be dry and Amalia's writing does just that...allows me to flow with it as a river current. By Helen's Hand picks up where Helen of Sparta leaves off, so it would be enjoyable for a reader to check out both if they haven't picked up the first one yet, but I suppose you wouldn't really need to either. You could always go back and read the first as a prequel. We've read about the events leading to the Trojan War (well, those of us who enjoy reading on these topics, but at least we've all heard about it), but Amalia offers us an original perspective. We come to enjoy reading of the relationship between Helen and the whole other gamut of fully flushed characters you'll remember from mythology.

Though it features the character of mythology, this novel is more an intertwining interpretation of the intrigue and relationships, good and bad, between names you've heard of like Helen of Troy, Paris, Theseus, Odysseus, Menelaus. Helen, the daughter of Zeus, has been brought back to Sparta by her family as this novel begins and Theseus (her love-King of Athens and son of Poseidon) is caught in the underworld. Amalia shows us Helen's capability to make her destiny by defying those trying to make choices for her and trying to bring war on her people. Amalia focuses on Helen's independence and her strong will to try to thwart those coming against her and her family. Everything in Amalia's novel focuses on Helen and her relationships, even her inner self, more than the over arching mythology. The mythology is only the foundation to create a new tale in which we see Helen more clearly. They seem like real people now, not just mythical characters. As the plot unfolds we also meet Paris in this book and view the interesting love story flourishing between Helen and he. Paris is depicted much differently than the cowardly one generally remembered, instead as more of a determined and loyal man, as Amalia writes these flawed characters in a way that we gain understanding and compassion.

I was really enthusiastic about the ending as she featured a lesser known part of the myth in which there is a switch with Helen and an escape to Egypt. The Egyptology fanatic in me about peed my pants in loving this section. I won't talk on it too much more as to not spoil the book. You can ultimately tell she highly researched books, sites, articles, and consulted with professional historians on the subject to collect information in order to piece together this veritable puzzle that ultimately has many holes and suspicions. I really enjoyed how Amalia portrayed it and how she allowed us to see what could be fantasy as so very real.

Overall, this is definitely a book that you can become absorbed in and you should be able to remove a few hours of stress from your life by imaging the world of Helen and those that surround her. An epic series that rivals any other retelling out there, By Helen's Hand is certainly captivating for fans of historical fiction, mythology, or historical romance.

I highly recommend both books in this series for historical readers who like to be swept away by an ancient tale. This is a Helen you won't want to miss being emblazoned on your memory and an ending that you'll

never forget.

I was given a copy of this book in exchange for an honest review.

Jenny Q says

3.5 Stars. "Only fools bargain with the gods; only fools trust in their promises, their gifts. Fools and children and lovers."

Ever since reading *Helen of Sparta*, I have been anxiously awaiting its sequel. I loved getting to know Helen and what happened to her before she became known as Helen of Troy, and boy did I love Theseus! But after attempting to thwart the gods and their plans for war by running away with and marrying Theseus, Helen was cruelly separated from him by those gods and delivered back to Sparta and the fate she had so desperately been trying to avoid. And that's where *By Helen's Hand* begins.

It's hard to review this book without revealing plot points, but I'm going to try and hope that I still make sense while being vague enough to avoid spoilers. I have very mixed feelings about *By Helen's Hand*, and it pains me to say it. Amalia Carosella writes beautifully, but I found the first half of this book to be rather slow and repetitive as Helen mopes around missing Theseus, fearing Menelaus, and bemoaning her cursed beauty, and I questioned the necessity for the points of view of several of her suitors. The story really kicks into gear once the games for Helen's hand have been concluded and her fate as Menelaus's wife is decided. Plotting, deception, and intrigue abound as Helen tries everything she can think of to save her people from war and herself from Menelaus's jealous anger.

What I love about this story is that, rather than portray Helen's beauty as the sole cause of the Trojan War, Carosella paints a picture of a woman cursed by the gods with a beauty that drives men crazy, "a woman cursed to bring ruin upon men for the glory of her father." Men can't help but be bewitched by her. Combine that with many city-states just looking for an excuse to go to war and we have a much more complex picture of Helen and what actually caused the Trojan War. (Short answer: the gods!) I also love that we get to know Paris. We met him briefly in the first book, and we all know what happens when Paris sees Helen in Sparta, but I love that this story leads us up to that moment from his point of view as well. I really enjoyed getting to know who Paris was before Troy.

Finally, the other aspect of this story that didn't sit quite right with me was the ending. It was not at all what I was expecting, and it really threw me for a loop. I had hoped for a certain outcome, but the way that it came about seemed so fantastical to me that I had to go look it up to see how plausible it was. Turns out there are several conflicting versions of Helen's story surviving from antiquity, and Carosella's version of Helen's whereabouts during and after the war is based on one of them. So I had to kind of sit and think about it for a while to determine how I felt about it. It makes sense when I think about how Helen, through her efforts to thwart the fate the gods had planned for her, actually ended up bringing her prophecy to fruition, that it is also by her hand that her final outcome is determined. It's kind of only fair after a lifetime of the gods torturing her. Still, the ending seemed a bit rushed and left me feeling like I needed a little more payoff after waiting so long for it.

Overall I did like the book--though as I've pointed out, some parts more than others--and I think this duology is well worth a read for anyone interested in Ancient Greece and mythology. These books offer great insight into the figures central to the Trojan War and breathe far more life and substance into a woman who deserves

to be known as much more than "the face that launched a thousand ships."

Elena says

By Helen's Hand is the second and last book in the Helen of Sparta series by Amalia Carosella. After escaping to Athens with Theseus, Helen is forced to return to Sparta. While her suitors compete in games to win her hand, Helen searches new allies to avoid marrying Menelaus and causing a terrible war. Will she succeed?

I think Carosella did a splendid job with *Helen of Sparta*, so I was very excited to read this book and see her take on the Trojan war. I was expecting something different and original, as she did in the first book, but still the turn of events took me completely by surprise. (view spoiler) So yes, I was very happy with how things turned out.

Another thing I appreciated was the time Carosella spent developing secondary characters. While in the first book the story was narrated only from Helen's and Theseus's perspectives, in *By Helen's Hand* there are multiple point of views. It is true that some of them felt a little repetitive and slowed the pace down a bit; but I really liked Odysseus and Polypoetes and their different interactions with Helen. I also loved Helen's relationship with her brothers, which was heartwarming and realistic. Lastly, even if I didn't much like him, Paris was well characterized too.

I warmly recommend this series to everyone. I am looking forward to reading more books by this author in the future!

Stephanie says

The story of Helen and Paris is an ancient tale blended with Greek Mythology. When I read the first book *Helen of Sparta* I couldn't imagine how Carosella could bring a fresh take on the story or characters for that matter. But she did and delighted up all with a new look and *By Helen's Hand* surprised me more than the first book. I was really taken back a little by Paris. Carosella gives a fresh take on him. At first I wasn't sure how it was going to work but it did. You see I've never cared for him at all. The people in this story or the gods really never had any redeeming qualities in my opinion. Except for Theseus I should say. I adore him. Anyhow, this story explores Helen wanting to desperately escape her destiny and a young Paris who makes a name for himself.

Much of what Helen went through was so exhausting and I kept wondering how much more could she possibly go through! In other stories I've read about these two I was never convinced of the reasons why Helen would want to run away with Paris. How could he possibly help her if no one else could? I really can't say more about this particular situation so you must read this story to find out.

My hats off to Carosella. It's not easy blending myth with history and she does a splendid job with this tale. I am delighted she has brought back to life the story of Helen and Paris. A truly intriguing story with myth, betrayal, love, hate, intrigue and much more.

Stephanie M. Hopkins

Judee says

Interesting alternate ending

I am glad I read this second book in the series, to see how the story ended up different from the tales of mythology I read as a child. Very thought provoking.

Debbi says

A very interesting and creative conclusion to the story of Helen of Troy. You will be surprised, and will have a good time getting there! If you have not read the first book, you should.

Marcia Leben says

This was a fantastic read, even better than 'Helen of Sparta'. I love that there were more characters who got chapters in this book, with Helen in first person and all the others in third person. This structure works really well.

There are some twists that are not in line with the traditional story, and it really sucked me in because of that, especially towards the end.

The first book felt a bit more heavy on the romance side, because of the relationship between Theseus and Helen, another reason I like this second part better. Helen is more strong on her own, now that she can't rely on Theseus. I was also pleased she got to spend a little more time with her brothers.

I think that if you love Madeline Miller's books, you will probably also love these.

Tracey says

I've just spent the last few day immersed in the world of Greek Myth ... and I loved it!

By Helen's Hand picks up where Helen of Sparta left off. I really warmed to Amalia's Helen and found myself willing her to thwart the Gods and avoid the war and destruction of her nightmares. I felt her frustration as every plan she made to save her people failed at the last moment. All seemed doomed

And then there was a sharp intake of breath when began the last chapter. No spoilers but its a great ending.

I also liked the final thoughts at the end of the book too.

Erin says

Let the lions roar at the storm, if they liked. Perhaps I was no longer queen of Athens, but I was still Helen of Sparta and a daughter of Zeus. I was wind and rain and thunder and lightning. And no matter what came, I

would survive it.

Hallelujah! Amalia Carosella triumphs again and shakes up any pre-conceived notions that I might have had about Helen, Paris, city of Troy or the Greek gods. *By Helen's Hand* is the sequel to *Helen of Sparta*, a book that I absolutely relished for its refreshing take on the deeply mythologized Helen. Picking up immediately where the previous book left off, Helen returns with her brothers, Pollux and Castor, to Sparta, to reunite with her family and face her dreaded suitor, Menelaus. Helen, is also grieving the departure of her dearly beloved, Theseus, who might just be lost to the underworld all together. And there is the shepherd boy, named Paris, who dreams of the day when the Spartan princess will be his for the taking. **Fellow readers, let me be frank, you will want to lose yourself in this book.**

Helen's continued resolve to save the people from the ravages of war by defying the gods doesn't change. Convincing her brothers and fathers to offer more suitors to avoid Troy's fate is admirable, but even I came to realize that it(the fall of Troy) was all going to happen in the end. This is something that I really loved because I hate when the protagonist does a complete 180 from one book to the next without full justification. Paris, too, is different than the "coward" that I had always labelled him as. Instead, he emerges as a dreamer, accepting the will of the gods, taking the rightful place as a prince and following his fate to Helen of Sparta. I grew to love this Paris and I think other readers will too.

I really liked the ending of the book because it was drastically different than what I imagined, but it left me feeling quite satisfied. Readers will appreciate the author's note and character glossary at the back of the book too. A book not to be missed!

Thanks to Netgalley for an advanced egalley copy of a book in exchange for an honest review.

Stephanie Thornton says

We all know the story of Helen and Paris, but *By Helen's Hand* is a fresh interpretation of the events leading up to the Trojan War. Picking up where *Helen of Sparta* left off, Amalia Carosella has woven a unique sequel that tugs on the threads of many myths to create a whole new picture of these famous lovers. What I enjoyed most about these two books was the full cast of characters--it's a veritable who's who of mythology, with unexpected roles for Theseus and Heracles, Oenone and Cassandra. That alone was enough to make this history nerd squeal with glee!

Not only that, but Helen is painted as a woman desperate to save her people while also seeking her way out of a loveless marriage with Menelaus. I've always scorned Helen as the temptress who causes the destruction of Troy (a major strike against her as I happen to like Hector and Andromache, Cassandra and the rest of the Trojan royal family), but Carosella has portrayed Helen as entirely sympathetic, trying to do her utmost to thwart the will of the gods. Unfortunately for Troy, those pesky Greek deities aren't often foiled...

Erin says

Find this and other reviews at: <http://flashlightcommentary.blogspot....>

I've a confession to make and I don't like beating around the bush so I'm just going to come out and say it. I've been avoiding this review for weeks and even now I can't help feeling that I've been holding off because I didn't want to say goodbye to Amalia Carosella's *By Helen's Hand*. Writing a review bookends my experience with almost every novel I read and this is one I simply didn't want to be done with.

Helen is the natural focus of the narrative, but Carosella's Helen is anything but typical. Forget all you know, or think you know about the face that launched a thousand ships because the Helen we see between these pages is not the siren of legend. Beneath Carosella's pen, Helen is a complex and genuine figure who's wants and desires make her a remarkably relatable protagonist. I can't imagine that adapting Helen and her mythic beauty to fiction that would appeal to modern readers was easy, but I feel Carosella managed to beautifully redefine this character as a woman of strength, intelligence, and depth.

Paris enjoyed a cameo appearance in book one, but I found his lover, Oenone, who debuts in *By Helen's Hand* absolutely captivating. I was equally impressed with other members of the supporting cast, notably Polypoetes and Odysseus, and I think that's part of what I like about Carosella's work. As an author, she puts a lot of effort into developing both her primary and secondary cast and I think that adds something very special to her books.

Finally, I want to note the ending of the narrative because those chapters caught me completely off guard. I can't go into too much detail or I'd give it all away, but I didn't see any of part of that twist coming and I was tickled by the fact that Carosella managed to pitch that kind of curve ball at her audience. We all know how the story plays out, but Carosella made it own in an incredibly creative and unexpected way. More than that, she did so without infringing on the classic tale and I've an incredible amount of respect for her for finding a way to be true to both her story and the one that inspired it.

I loved *By Helen's Hand* and would definitely recommend it other readers, but it should be noted that the novel picks up where it's predecessor left off and while it can be read as a standalone, I really wouldn't advise reading the books out of order. *Helen of Sparta* lays the foundation for *By Helen's Hand* and I think the relationships and drama in the second volume are best appreciated by those who know what each of these characters has been through.

Emma says

Carosella did extremely well at creating a feeling of possibility in one of the most well known stories of the ancient world. In this, the novel follows the form of Greek tragedy; it's situated within the mythological framework, but the details and emphasis are shifted to present a specific picture, in this case of Helen. I was, in fact, surprised and pleased by the ending, such was the feeling the author had engendered in me for her main character. The supporting cast are deftly drawn, again in terms of what best fits Helen's story, but not at all implausible given the evidence. For me, it's only made me dislike Agamemnon and Menelaus all the more. Think I'm going to struggle not to hold on to Carosella's image of them when I see their names in other sources!

It was not just emotion and character done well, but style too: the evoking of Homer in phrases such as wine-dark sea; the familiarity and distance of the characters that feels very much like how I see the individuals of myth; the easy, flowing style that allowed for violence and romance and tension and catharsis.

Many thanks to Amalia Carosella, Lake Union Publishing, and Netgalley for this copy in exchange for an

honest review.

Stephanie says

In this second installment of *Helen of Sparta*, Helen has been found by her family and returned to Sparta. As a daughter of Zeus, she was given the gifts of beauty and foresight. With her knowledge of the future, she tried to avoid war by escaping to Athens with her beloved King Theseus. However, with Theseus caught in the Underworld, Helen was left vulnerable. Back in Sparta, the King wastes no time marrying off Helen so an heir for Sparta is set. The games are underway and many eligible men are seeking Helen's hand, but can Helen defy her fate and stop a marriage to Menelaus? And What of Theseus lost in the Underworld? What of Paris, the shepherd boy that Helen met long ago? What of the gods and their path for each player?

I could not wait to get my hands on this book! After reading the first, *Helen of Sparta*, I wanted to continue to see how Helen forged her own path in a world that seemed determined to let her do anything but that.

Helen continues to be determined and cunning, not passively bending to the will of the gods, but actively trying to forge her own future. Even though I knew what would eventually become of her, I kept my hopes up for Helen to have things go her way. I became completely absorbed in each character's story as the point of view changed between Helen, Paris, Theseus, Polypoetes, Odysseus and Menelaus. Everyone's purpose and motivation came through strongly, shining light on all of the different personalities and reasons for their actions. Descriptive writing brought the time period to life and I could easily imagine the different palaces, Paris' hill and even the Underworld. Again, I loved the blend of historical fiction and mythology making for an exciting and fascinating sequel.

This book was received for free in exchange for an honest review.

Renee Stanger says

Beautiful

What a remarkable story of Helen. Easily could be from original mythological tales. I was enthralled as if I were there witnessing the events unfold.

Amalia Carosella says

Of course I love it, it's mine! :)

If you enjoyed *Helen of Sparta* and *By Helen's Hand*, I hope you'll sign up for my Newsletter, The Amaliad, to stay up to date about Authors!me -- and for your trouble, I've got a bonus prequel short story *Ariadne & the Beast* for subscribers! It's set about 30 years before *Helen of Sparta* and addresses Theseus's adventure with the Minotaur, and his run in with Ariadne in Crete!
