Book Review

Once a Monster

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Set in Victorian England, this Dickensian retelling of the ancient Greek legend of the Minotaur presents us with a captivating tale of good versus evil with elements of friendship, loss, greed, betrayal, ambition, and ultimately hope. The story focuses on Nell, who had been entrusted to Mr. Murdstone by her dying mother and who was working as a mudlark along with other children. Nell dreamed of being a dancer, like the ones whose costumes her mother would sew in her work as a seamstress. Instead, she was stuck with the humdrum reality of searching for items along the banks of the Thames for Mr. Murdstone to sell for his own benefit. One day, however, she discovered a unique find – a man who had been badly beaten. This was no ordinary man as he has a strange appearance and refers to himself as Minos. Murdstone tries to profit off this man by trying to pass him off as the Minotaur – the legendary half-bull half-man who had been slain by Theseus. The story takes an interesting turn as Minos starts to have dreams or nightmares or even recollections of the labyrinth and other key elements of the story of the Minotaur. This interesting book is well-written and hard to put down. It is thoroughly enjoyable and leaves one wondering who the true monster is in the story and who the true hero is. This book certainly deserves to be recommended to any enthusiast of modern retelling of ancient myths.