

THE MINOTAUR

CAST OF CHARACTERS

THE MINOTAUR (Asterion), the youngest child and only living son of the late Queen Pasiphae. He is a boy with the head of a bull.

ARIADNE, a young woman, oldest living child of Queen Pasiphae.

PHAEDRA, a girl, younger daughter of the queen.

KING MINOS, King of Crete, ruler of the Minoan Empire. THESEUS, a young man, heir to the throne of Athens.

MINOANS, children (including CAENEUS, IASON, MAIA, and PHILOMELE), courtiers, and soldiers.

ATHENIANS, young men and women sent as a sacrifice to Crete.

CHORUS/LABYRINTH

SETTING

The play takes place in about 1500 BCE on the Isle of Crete. Locations are suggested by the ensemble. The action is continuous.

CHORUS: Set it in stone, confusion and conflict.
Shame has grown big. Let the maze hide it.
Like a devious river shifting and winding. Set it in stone,
confusion and conflict.

Here is a monster, worthy of a hero.
Where is the hero
who will save us from our fears? Here is the monster

Where is the hero? Who will slay him? Who
will save us?

Must we wait for a stranger to come across the waters?
Or is there one among us
who dares to save us from our fears?

IASON AND MAIA: Here I am! I am the hero! Here I am! I'll slay The
Minotaur!

(The other children join in chanting and throwing pebbles. Ariadne tries to break into the circle from outside but cannot.)

ARIADNE: Stop that! Leave him alone!

(The Minotaur lowers his head and charges a weak link in the circle. The circle breaks open and some of the younger children run away. Phaedra slips out of sight but remains onstage. Ariadne approaches her brother and speaks to him.)

Come on. Let's go.

MAIA: Monster-lover!

ARIADNE: Don't call him a monster. He's not a monster.

MAIA: Says you.

ARIADNE: Yes, says me.

THE MINOTAUR: Leave her alone!

MAIA: Oh, how about that? The monster can talk. I thought he could only say "moo." Moo-oo, Moo-oo.

(Several other children join Maia in circling The Minotaur and "mooing" at him.)

IASON: The king should have left him to die when he was a baby. That's what you're supposed to do with monsters.

MAIA: I'm not afraid of her. She'll follow her brother into the labyrinth and never come out. Won't you, Ariadne?

ARIADNE: I don't know what you're talking about.

MAIA: I'm talking about the labyrinth of Daedalus.

CAENEUS: *(Threatening:)* The giant maze. The one they've been building day and

night for almost a year.

(As the dialogue continues, the children form a chain winding around Ariadne and The Minotaur and coming between them.)

IASON: The most fabulous prison ever imagined. An inescapable prison.

CAENEUS: And they're building it right here under the palace!

PHILOMELE: Soon the Athenian ship will come, with seven youths and seven maidens.

IASON: Every nine years, seven youths and seven maidens will sail from Athens to Crete. And they'll enter the maze –

CAENEUS: The labyrinth of Daedalus!

IASON: And they'll never come out.

CAENEUS: If this north wind keeps up, they could be here tonight.

(Ariadne is locked between the arms of a pair of children. She breaks away and faces her tormentors.)

ARIADNE: Yes, I know! Everyone knows. Athens must pay blood tribute to Crete – fourteen young men and women to be shut up in the labyrinth until they die. But what does that have to do with me? Or with Asterion.

MAIA: *(Indicating The Minotaur:)* Don't you know? The labyrinth will be his prison too.

ARIADNE: No! That's nonsense.

(The Minotaur snarls and lowers his head as if to charge. Ariadne speaks to him softly.)

It's ridiculous. She's making it up.

MAIA: There's to be a special chamber for him in the very center of the maze.

ARIADNE: *(To The Minotaur:)* Don't listen to her.

CAENEUS: There will be miles and miles of passages within passages...

PHILOMELE: More twists and turns than a tangle of thread...

MAIA: And the beauty of it is, no matter what path the Greek murderers take, it will lead them straight to the monster in the heart of the maze!

IASON: And then the Minotaur will devour them –

CAENEUS: And spit out their bones!

THE MINOTAUR: First, I'll devour you. I'll spit out your bones!

(Ariadne tries to come between Iason and her brother.)

ARIADNE: *(To The Minotaur:)* Ignore them. They're only trying to make you mad.

THE MINOTAUR: Are you all right?

ARIADNE: Yes. Are you?

THE MINOTAUR: Yes. But...I had that dream again last night. About the labyrinth.

ARIADNE: Oh.

THE MINOTAUR: Even when I'm far up in the hills, inside a cave, I can hear them building it. Especially at night. When everything is quiet. I dreamed they were building it for me.

ARIADNE: It was only a dream.

THE MINOTAUR: In my dream, they are building the prison for me. And when they're done, the soldiers come for me. They come to throw me in the labyrinth. But every other time when I've had the dream you were there when the soldiers came, and you wouldn't let them take me – until last night. Last night, you weren't there.

ARIADNE: I would never let anybody hurt you, Asterion. You know that, don't you?

THE MINOTAUR: I know you love me, Ariadne. But what if there's nothing you can do to save me? *(Pause.)* Or what if it's too late?

ARIADNE: When I am queen, you will live in the palace with me.

THE MINOTAUR: Let's run away.

ARIADNE: Run away?

THE MINOTAUR: Yes, now, before they come for me.

ARIADNE: But this is our home.

THE MINOTAUR: No. It's your home.

(Pause.)

ARIADNE: Where would we go? If we ran away.

THE MINOTAUR: Anywhere. Anywhere we could be safe and together.

ARIADNE: Don't worry. Everything will be all right. I promise.

(They embrace and then each turns to go in a separate direction. The Minotaur hesitates and turns back to Ariadne.)

THE MINOTAUR: You'll come tomorrow, won't you?

ARIADNE: Yes. Like always.

(She gives him another hug.)

See you tomorrow!

(The Minotaur leaves. Ariadne watches him go and is about to leave too, when Phaedra appears.)

PHAEDRA: Ariadne

ARIADNE: Phaedra! What are you doing here?

PHAEDRA: I was listening. You should spend more time listening. Instead of playing games in the woods and hiding in caves. You would learn things.

ARIADNE: Like what?

PHAEDRA: Like what people say about you.

ARIADNE: I don't care what they say about me.

PHAEDRA: They say you are bringing shame to the kingdom by running around like a wild animal, keeping company with monsters.

ARIADNE: Why should I care? It doesn't matter what they think.

PHAEDRA: Doesn't it even matter what they think about him? About The Minotaur?

ARIADNE: He has a name.

PHAEDRA: In the Athenian court, he is known as "The terrible Minotaur of Crete." A monster who must be fed on human flesh. Which is why they believe they must send their young men and women to be sacrificed.

ARIADNE: But that makes no sense. As soon as they get here, as soon as they see him, they'll know he's not what they've been told.

PHAEDRA: No one will ever return to Athens to tell what they've seen. So it won't matter whether he's actually what they believe him to be or not.

ARIADNE: But what if Theseus kills Asterion?

PHAEDRA: What if he does? Theseus will never escape from the labyrinth. No one will ever escape.

(Philomele enters. She hurries towards Phaedra and Ariadne.)

ARIADNE: I have to go warn him.

PHAEDRA: *(Indicating Philomele:)* Shh. Not now.

ARIADNE: I promised him I would keep him safe.

PHILOMELE: Phaedra! Ariadne! Everybody is looking for you. The sails of the Athenian ship have been sighted. You have to come back to the palace.

PHAEDRA: We were just coming.

(Phaedra reaches to take Ariadne's hand. Ariadne hesitates, looking off in the direction taken by The Minotaur.)

PHILOMELE: *(Taking Phaedra's other hand:)* Come on.

(Philomele pulls on Phaedra's hand and leads her off stage. Reluctantly, Ariadne follows. As they exit, The Chorus enters and continues to construct the labyrinth. The pace of the construction is intense, but controlled and deliberate, not frenetic.)

CHORUS: Set it in stone. Confusion and conflict.

No one will ever enter and leave.

Blood of them all will flow like a river

and Athens will mourn

her youths and her maidens. The offspring of shame,

no one will mourn him. Set it in stone.

Confusion and conflict.

(The Chorus completes the construction of the labyrinth and separates into two groups – MINOANS and ATHENIANS. One of the Athenians is THESEUS. After everyone else is assembled, the KING of Crete enters, flanked by SOLDIERS and accompanied by Ariadne and Phaedra.)

MINOANS: We grant you honor, youths and maidens who have come from a

distant shore.

Handsome youths and pretty maidens who come to meet the Minotaur.

ATHENIANS: We have heard he breathes out fire. We have heard he drinks hot blood.

Will he swallow us entire, or chew us as his cud?

MINOANS: Handsome youths and pretty maidens, welcome to the Isle of Crete. We humbly pray the Lord Poseidon, may your stay be long and sweet.

MINOANS: Handsome youths and pretty maidens, we bid you welcome to our shore.

Is there one among you children who dares to face the Minotaur?

(Theseus steps forward.)

THESEUS: I do.

KING: You want to fight The Minotaur?

THESEUS: Yes.

KING: Then you must be very eager to meet your death. Who are you?

THESEUS: I am Theseus, son of King Aegeus, your majesty.

KING: Aegeus is a fool to be so careless of his son's life. His only son. Or perhaps you are an imposter?

THESEUS: My father sent this token with me, so you would know I come here with his blessing and as the true heir to the throne of Athens.

(Theseus is wearing a signet ring which he now removes and holds out. A soldier takes the ring from Theseus and hands it to the King, who examines it.)

KING: True son or no, Aegeus will never again see you alive.

THESEUS: I give myself into the keeping of the gods. If I earn their favor, they will send home a son worthy of a noble father.

KING: The gods do not favor the sons of murderers!

(Angrily, the King throws the ring to the ground. It rolls near to Phaedra, who first looks to see if anyone is watching and then quickly picks it up.)

THESEUS: My father is no murderer.

KING: Tell that to the beast inside the maze! Tomorrow at dawn, Theseus, you shall enter the labyrinth. Alone. If you do not reappear by sunset – with the head of The Minotaur – then your companions will follow you into the maze.

THESEUS: And what if I emerge victorious? What then?

KING: Name the prize and you shall have it. Gold? Ships? My daughter's hand in marriage?

THESEUS: Freedom. I want freedom for Athens from Minoan rule. And from all our debts to Crete.

KING: Freedom?! For that tribe of ungrateful savages? They wouldn't know what to do with it.

(All exit, except for Ariadne. As soon as the others are out of sight, she begins looking for her brother. She calls to him urgently, but quietly.)

ARIADNE: Asterion? Are you there? I have to talk to you.

(Cautiously, The Minotaur emerges into the open.)

THE MINOTAUR: Are you alone?

ARIADNE: Yes.

(He runs to her and they embrace.)

The Athenians are here.

THE MINOTAUR: Yes, I know. I saw their ship in the harbor. The ship with black sails. *(Pause.)* It's true everything they said? About the labyrinth. About me. I am to be the monster inside the maze?

ARIADNE: Not if you get away now, while everyone is still at the banquet. But you have to hurry.

THE MINOTAUR: What about you? You'll come with me, won't you?

(Pause.)

ARIADNE: I want to, but...

THE MINOTAUR: But you won't. Because you also want to stay here and become queen some day.

ARIADNE: If I came with you, it would only make it more dangerous for you.

THE MINOTAUR: I don't want to be alone.

ARIADNE: But you have to! You have to go now. **THE MINOTAUR:** No.

ARIADNE: Did you know that Theseus is here? He wants to slay the famous Minotaur.

THE MINOTAUR: Theseus? *(Mocking:)* The great Athenian hero has come to Crete to fight me?

ARIADNE: Yes! He's been killing bandits and ogres all up and down the coast of Greece.

THE MINOTAUR: And now he wants to kill me?

ARIADNE: Yes, so you see —

THE MINOTAUR: I'll be happy to fight him. To do battle with Theseus.

ARIADNE: But he'll kill you.

THE MINOTAUR: Maybe. Maybe not. Maybe I'll kill him.

ARIADNE:

(Ariadne stops mid-sentence. She hears — and so does the audience — the sound of soldiers approaching.)

Listen... They're coming for you. Hurry!

THE MINOTAUR: No. I'm tired of running away. Life is not about running away!!

Closing: Elsa: "Issues" Julia Michaels.