

Theseus and the Minotaur

(CREATIVE WRITING)



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YEAR 7
MYTHS
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COMPETITION

His breath was harsh and jagged. His footsteps echoed as he clutched the thin piece of yarn in his clammy hands, as if it was the only thing he had left in the world. His lifeline. Blood-stains splattered the walls and the grunts and snarls were growing louder with every single breath he took. His heart was a prisoner of his rib cage, hammering more times than he could count. The stench of rot grew. Was he to die this very day?

Theseus was a man of strength.

Of valour.

But now was the time he questioned all of it.

Athens had always been prosperous. It was known for being the centre of arts, philosophy and enlightenment. And it just so happened that our hero, Theseus, was the prince of this wealthy land. But Athens had seen finer days.

Sobbing mothers clung to their sons and daughters, and fathers were so aghast with misery and distress to speak. For it was now the time when the fourteen unfortunate young men and women, were to be shipped to Crete.

They were nothing but sacrificial lambs.

“Father?” Theseus asked one day as he watched the ship bearing the wretched, hapless people on the horizon... the black sails fluttering in the breeze. “Where do the people go to? They set sail once every month, but none has ever returned!”

His father, King Aegeus, ambled to his son’s side, looking forlorn and weary. He replied, “The price for peace is high, Theseus, so Athens has no choice but to send off those chosen to Crete, in order to make sure we do not start another war, as it is not a battle we shall stride out victorious.”

Theseus was not satisfied with this answer.

“You still have not explained why Crete needs fourteen of our young people every single month! Why is it that none ever have returned?!” he cried, exasperated. The ship had now disappeared beyond the reaches of the horizon. He turned to his father. “Well?” he implored, slightly impatient. The king hesitated. He knew it would come to this one day.

“King Minos of Crete is a cruel man. He finds enjoyment in knowing he holds power and manipulation over our city. In his towering palace, he keeps a labyrinth. Dark, eerie and foreboding...that is where he sends them. But the worst is yet to come. Only rumours have been heard, but it is said that the Minotaur stalks the labyrinths walls, trying to quench its ever growing hunger...” Aegeus shuddered, imagining all those who had waited at the harbour for the boat to return, only realising there was no one except the ship’s captain to be seen aboard. He continued, “The Minotaur is a savage beast. Half-man and half-bull. All these people have died at the hands of King Minos, as he throws them into the lion’s den. But there is nothing you can do, my son. After these long years, none have returned to tell the tale.”

Theseus was dumb-founded upon hearing this revelation.

“A monster is to be unleashed upon our people the moment the ship docks at the port!? To what extent does King Minos’ evil reach!? I simply can’t understand how one could do such vile deeds!” He protested fiercely.

“If the monster has not been vanquished by the time the next boat for the new month’s sacrifices arrives, I myself will be one of the offerings, and slay the beast myself!” He announced grandly, with a sort of fiery determination in his eyes. His father’s stomach gave a jolt and his heart sunk. He had known where this conversation would lead. Alas, he knew his son’s motivating force for justice would aspire him to this conclusion.

He simply took a shuddering breath and told his son he was going to rest. The day's events had shook him. He almost wished his son wasn't so courageous and courteous. He knew it would only turn out to be his downfall...

Over the next passing days, Theseus made his preparations, including, though he told no one about it, a concealed dagger in the fold of his attire. His father had been trying to convince his son to drop the matter, yet to no avail. The month had slipped by, and the returning ship could be seen with its black sails on the horizon, returning from Crete. Before Theseus could investigate further at the docks, his father grabbed his arm firmly.

"Theseus, listen to me. I know there is no way I can possibly persuade you to stay here in Athens with me, but I need to ask one thing of you. On your return, you are to fly sails of white instead of black to let me know of your coming. To spare an old man the pain of agonising suspense of having to wait for the ship to finally dock, only to realise you are not there...promise me Theseus..." Aegeus wheezed, looking into his son's eyes with plead.

"I promise, father," He said softly back, in a gentle tone. He then accompanied his father to the docks...

It was already full of despairing friends and relatives. Aegeus now knew their pain.

Theseus was off with a motivating speech to his people and a wave. The other thirteen sacrifices shrunk into a corner of the ship, sick with worry and sobbing. Apart from one. A woman with long, wavy, chestnut-coloured hair, seemed barely bothered as she sat herself at the front of the ship.

It wasn't long before one flung themselves off the ship. Never to be seen again. Theseus couldn't pretend he was not slightly fearful, but he knew he was prepared to face whatever beast he came to find, even if it meant risking his life in the process.

Whilst the other sacrifices were vomiting over the edge of the ship, he was sat in a corner with his back hunched over his dagger, as he sharpened it, trying his best to conceal it from view. The boat rocked idly, and the black sails waved to and fro. The wood of the ship was chipped and aged, and creaked when one of the ill-fated passengers walked across. Briskly, Theseus slotted his dagger back in the holster, in between the folds of his rich, princely, robe and strolled brazenly to the front of the ship. Sat there was the woman with long chestnut-coloured hair.

"Why did it have to be me?" she asked him calmly. Unlike the others, her spirit didn't really seem broken.

"Are you not motivated with the prospect of killing the Minotaur? Avenging those we have lost?" Theseus asked with incredulity. She met his puzzled gaze.

"Is that all you care for? I'm not sure I could possibly feel motivated, when I'm faced with the fact that I will never see my family ever again." she said softly. This gave Theseus a jolt of realisation. The thought of never seeing his father again had never crossed his mind until this moment. All that Theseus had thought were of fine banquets, and the thought of doing his citizens proud, their cheers of adoration and awe. But the quiet woman's words were not what he had in mind until this moment, yet he simply shook it away and addressed her again.

"I do not think of such things. Pray tell, what is your name?"

"Alexandra. A simple peasant girl, and daughter of a carpenter and seamstress. I of course know who you are. I wish you luck in the slaying of the Minotaur. We have almost reached the island of Crete," Alexandra said, gesturing at the horizon.

Theseus looked up and indeed they were approaching the island.

Statues and monuments of lions and blade wielding warriors lined the palace steps. The sacrificial lambs stumbled over the stairs as the guards poked the hilts of their spears into their backs and snarled at them brusquely to get a move on. Whilst Theseus was but slightly aggravated by this, Alexandra looked simply infuriated at being treated in this manner. She looked prepared to shove one of the guards down the stairs if he continued to poke her. Clearly, one of the guards spotted her face and clenched fists and requested that their hands be bound behind their backs with a length of rope. When Alexandra's eyes met Theseus', they were glowing with a fire that seemed inhuman...

King Minos scoffed at his offerings scornfully.

"I am missing one offering, it seems... then I suppose there will be twice the amount when the next month comes..." he said with a menacing, lopsided grin.

"And what have we here...? The Prince of Athens himself! I had heard of your foolishness boy, but to think you can slay the Minotaur, then you are simply deranged." he remarked snidely, then he let out a nasty laugh.

"Take them to their cells. The trial awaits them at dawn..." King Minos ordered with brutish control.

The cell was depressing and damp. Whilst in the pitch-black of his dark cell, Theseus heard a voice calling out to him.

He looked up, to meet a pair of green eyes looking at him. He was startled.

"Who is there?" he questioned cautiously and suspiciously, yet with a sort of authority.

"Please quieten your voice. I am not here to bring you harm..." a gentle voice called through the shadows.

“Who are you?” Theseus asked indignantly, refusing to look away from the eyes that shone through the darkness.

“I am the daughter of King Minos. My name is Ariadne.” the voice whispered.

A hand reached through the cell bars, holding a ball of dainty, scarlet thread.

“This is for you. Even you slay the Minotaur, you shall never find your way out of the labyrinth, but if you use this string, you shall have a clear path out. Yet before you take it, you must promise me that you will take me to Athens with you! For it will only be a matter of time before King Minos realises that I have aided you.” Ariadne said.

“I promise, yet may I ask why you are helping me?” Theseus asked, still suspicious.

Ariadne didn't reply, but quickly murmured that she had to leave before the guards caught her, and left without a word. Theseus looked at the string and raised an eyebrow, before hiding the lace in his robe next to his dagger. He fell into an uneasy sleep...

The sacrifices were woken abruptly and led to the chamber that housed the labyrinth. As Theseus was being brought in, he caught sight of a young woman, who he took to be Ariadne, with her emerald eyes.

Firstly, Alexandra was sent into the maze, the gloomy darkness. Minutes passed no sound was heard. After a time, the other sacrifices were sent in, one by one. Theseus secretly passed the end of the string ball to Ariadne, who took it and clutched it tight. He approached the entrance to the maze, whilst unraveling the vermillion lace, he walked into the shadows...

Would he ever leave the maze ever again?



Dark thoughts plagued his mind. His valour left him...

His breath was harsh and jagged. His footsteps resonated and pierced the empty gloom. His heart was a prisoner in his rib cage. It hammered faster with every passing moment. The stench of rot grew and an increasing amount of bloodstains were smeared across the walls. He clutched the ornate, ruby thread in his clammy hand, as if it was the only thing he had left in the world...his lifeline. Grunts and snarls filled Theseus' ears. He knew, shortly, the beast would be upon him. He tried his hardest to pull himself together, thinking of those he was fighting for, the reason he was here... It was at this moment he knew, that when the beast came, he would be ready...

The Minotaur sniffed. It had finally found one of the last of his prey. Following the scent, the Minotaur relentlessly stalked it's prey, knowing that it's meal was just around the next corner...

Gleaming through the charcoal darkness, two malicious eyes locked with Theseus' as he felt something sharp toss him high up into the air. The impact against the cold, hard stone was nothing compared to his ribs crying out in agony as two unforgiving hooves pushed into his chest.

Theseus remained somewhat calm, for he knew he was doing this for his people, his father, and all who had fallen in these walls. He would rid the world of the nefarious creature.

The Minotaur brought its horns to Theseus' throat, that were stained with its previous victims blood, ready to kill. Theseus, filled with motivation, plunged his concealed dagger into the monster's shoulder blade.

The monster let out a howl of anguish. It sprang away from Theseus, the shining dagger still embedded in its shoulder.

Theseus lay on the floor, splattered in blood, unsure whether it was his own or not. Footsteps drew near - yet they were not those of the Minotaur. Alexandra held out her hand to Theseus. He took it.

"I take it the beast took flight. Are you wounded?" She asked. Theseus did not reply.

"Listen to me, Theseus. You are going to hunt down the Minotaur and finish it off. Do you hear me?" she said stubbornly.

Theseus, who was propped up against the wall, simply shook his head, and panted that he had no strength or fight left in him. He looked up to Alexandra, who he saw had golden, glowing palms. At this moment he knew Alexandra was no simple mortal, daughter of a carpenter and seamstress.

"My name is Athena, daughter of Zeus, and you, Theseus of Athens, will slay the Minotaur." she said, her strong voice echoed throughout the labyrinth. Theseus was in a state of shock, even more so, when he felt a surge of power course through his veins, stronger than anything he had felt before. He knew at this point he was ready.

The Minotaur would not live to see another day...

With Athena's blessing of valour, determination and strength, he prowled the labyrinth, searching for the dreaded beast.

Yet the dreaded beast was the first to find him.
The Minotaur lunged violently, seeking to end what it started.
Theseus clutched at the horns before they could pierce his torso.
The creature was now in Theseus' grasp, and Theseus could feel
it's abrupt change of emotions... it was fearful...
For a moment Theseus hesitated, feeling a sense of pity, for
these emotions seemed almost...human to him...
This moment of hesitation was all the Minotaur needed. With a
roar it lunged again, yet missed Theseus and it's horns became
stuck in the wall. Theseus' pity had vanished. He pulled his
dagger out of the beast's shoulder. It let out a howl.

Theseus raised the shining blade high...
Blood splattered everywhere.
The Minotaur was no more.

The ship bobbed calmly up and down on the sapphire seas. As
Ariadne and Theseus sailed away from Crete, the island no more
than a line on the horizon. Ariadne smiled at Theseus.

"Thank you for letting me come back with you to Athens." she
said softly.

"It is I who should be thanking you. You kept faith in me, and
held the string for the long hours I was in the labyrinth. Taking
you away from the tyranny and punishment of King Minos is
what any man of honour would do. I made a promise, after all.
You needn't thank me." Theseus replied. Ariadne blushed.

Little did she know it wouldn't be long before he broke the
promise that felt so meaningful to her.

She fell into a content sleep.

Yet she awoke to see the boat departing... without her...

Her heart broke that very moment. She let the tears fall... until she heard someone speak behind her.

“Why do you cry so, for a mortal?” the voice asked her.

Yet that is another tale.

Theseus had learned by now not to pity, or to question the integrity of the gods. He continued on with a cold heart...

Jubilation filled him at the sight of his beloved home town.

His voyage was over!

At the top of the cliff overlooking the sea, King Aegeus found himself facing the most horrible pain... his heart screamed in agony. He was beyond the stage of tears and he couldn't control himself. He now understood the torture and torment of grief.

The black sails fluttered on the horizon. As Aegeus envisioned a limp, lifeless Theseus, he came to the conclusion that a life filled with the sting of his son's death wasn't one worth living.

Without thinking twice, he flung himself off the cliff, welcoming death's embrace...

Theseus only briefly saw a figure plummeting down the cliff side...

Then realised he had forgotten to swap the flags.

Guilt and sadness overwhelmed his jubilation.

Was this the happily ever after he envisioned?