

Theseus and the Minotaur.



Time was running out. Theseus knew he must find the hideous beast before it found the others and killed again. As he stood by the entrance to the labyrinth, Theseus' heart thundered inside his head. Through the steel grill, he could smell the stench of decaying bodies. From somewhere deep below the palace, he could hear the sound of the Minotaur; a low rumbling roar as it paced the cold stone floors. Ariadne pressed a ball of toughened string into his hands and he quickly fastened one end to the metal grill.

Moments later, Theseus was inside the great maze, pacing through the darkness with only an oil lantern to guide the way. Shadows flickered. Gripping his sword tightly, Theseus crouched down and began to pay out the ball of string as he moved forwards. Deeper and deeper he made his way into the lair, expecting at any moment to be attacked.

The sound of the Minotaur pacing in his grim den grew louder. It bellowed out of loneliness. It bellowed for all the years of desperation. Trapped by a cage made of shame and darkness, the half-man half-bull waited. Now it could smell Theseus approaching. It could hear his footsteps, almost tasting his fear; the bull licked its lips and sharpened the tips of its horns against the dank, stone walls.

Maddened by its desire for revenge, the bull rushed towards the light of Theseus' lantern, but it had lived too long underground. The light blinded its eyes. The Minotaur roared as it stumbled. Theseus stood braced, his sword held out in front of him.... One mistake, a trip towards the light.... and the Minotaur staggered towards its death. But the lantern fell and Theseus stood in the utter darkness, the great bull dying at his feet. Which way should he turn? Which of the corridors to follow? Which way back through the impenetrable darkness?

At that moment, he felt a slight tug on the string. It must be Ariadne! Holding the string tightly, Theseus began to follow where it led, back through the darkness till at last he saw the light ahead, filtering through the metal grill. He was free! Gratefully, Theseus seized Ariadne by the hand and they ran through the night streets down to the harbour.