

THESEUS

FIRST, LET'S SET THE SCENE...



Kvwo&&

KING MINOS OF CRETE HAD LEVIED A TRIBUTE - SACRIFICE OF 7 YOUTHS AND 7 MAIDENS, TO BE PAID EVERY 9 YEARS BY ATHENS ENEMY STATE

BUT WHY?



KEEP UP LADS! HE HE... THANKS!


HIS SON ANDROGEOUS HAD ENTERED THE PANATHENAIIC GAMES* AND WON... EVERYTHING!

*THE ALL-ATHENS GAMES IN HONOUR OF ATHENE

EITHER HE WAS KILLED ON HIS WAY TO MORE GAMES IN THEBES BY JEALOUS RIVAL...
LET'S YOU! SEE YOU! RUNNING! AIEEE!

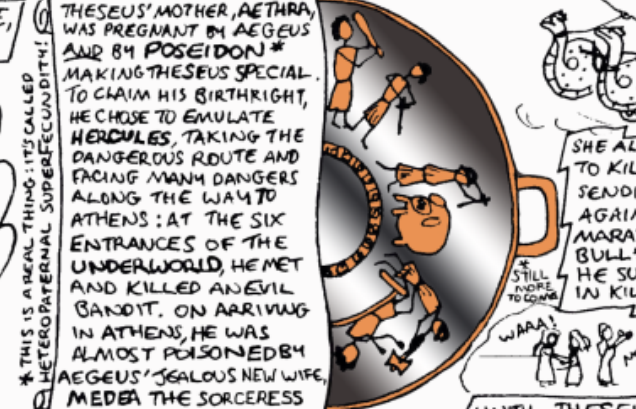
OR, IT IS SAID, KING AEGEUS OF ATHENS, OUT OF SPITE, SENT HIM UP AGAINST THE MURDEROUS MARATHONIAN BULL* WHICH HAD BEEN ON THE RAMPAGE...
*MORE ON THIS LATER... HEDIDNT COME HOME.

AT THE TIME OF THE THIRD TRIBUTE, THESEUS CAME TO ATHENS.



FATHER! MY SON!

BROUGHT UP IN TROEZEN BY HIS MOTHER (AS THE SON OF POSEIDON), HE RETURNED TO HIS TRUE HOME WEARING THE SANDALS, SWORD AND SHIELD OF HIS FATHER, AEGEUS



THESEUS' MOTHER, AETHRA, WAS PREGNANT BY AEGEUS AND BY POSEIDON* MAKING THESEUS SPECIAL. TO CLAIM HIS BIRTHRIGHT, HE CHOSE TO EMULATE HERCULES, TAKING THE DANGEROUS ROUTE AND FACING MANY DANGERS ALONG THE WAY TO ATHENS: AT THE SIX ENTRANCES OF THE UNDERWORLD, HE MET AND KILLED AN EVIL BANDIT. ON ARRIVING IN ATHENS, HE WAS ALMOST POISONED BY AEGEUS' JEALOUS NEW WIFE, MEDEA THE SORCESS

*THIS IS A REAL THING. IT'S CALLED HETERO PATERNAL SUPERFECUNDITY!



TO ASIA!

AEGEUS RECOGNISED HIS SON AS HIS HEIR...
MEDEA'S POISONED WINE CUP

SHE ALSO TRIED TO KILL HIM BY SENDING HIM AGAINST THE MARATHONIAN BULL*, BUT HE SUCCEEDED IN KILLING IT SO SHE FLED!
*STILL HOPE TO GO ON

AND ALL WAS WELL!

UNTIL THESEUS FOUND OUT ABOUT THE TRIBUTE - AND WHAT WAS GOING TO HAPPEN TO THEM.

NOW FOR AN ANALEPSIS...



*THE CONTINENT OF EUROPE WAS NAMED AFTER HER AS A REWARD!

ZEUS, KING OF GODS AND FAMOUS WOMANISER, FELL IN LOVE WITH EUROPA* DAUGHTER OF AGENOR, KING OF PHOENICIA, AND APPEARED TO HER AS A BEAUTIFUL BULL, GENTLE ENOUGH TO LET HER RIDE ON ITS BACK. THEN HE SUDDENLY SWAM OUT TO SEA, WADING ASHORE ON CRETE, WHERE HE RAVISHED HER. AS AN EAGLE. ... (HEP.)

EUROPA HAD THREE SONS: SARPEDON, RHADA MANTHUS, AND MINOS

SHE HAD MARRIED ASTERIUS, KING OF CRETE, AND WHEN HE DIED, MINOS BECAME KING. A BOASTFUL KING.

THE GODS WILL DO WHATEVER I WANT!
(THIS IS NEVER A GOOD IDEA...)

FUN FACT: WHILE EUROPA'S BROTHERS WERE LOOKING FOR HER, THEY FOUNDED PHOENICIA AND THEBES!

MINOS BUILT AN ALTAR TO POSEIDON AND PRAYED FOR A... BULL FROM THE SEA

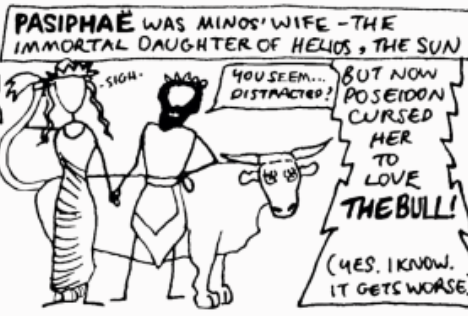
(SEE THE PATTERN?)

BUT, INSTEAD OF SACRIFICING IT TO POSEIDON AS HE SHOULD HAVE, HE LIKED IT SO MUCH THAT HE KEPT IT.

THIS WAS NOT A GOOD IDEA EITHER...

PASIPHAE WAS MINOS' WIFE - THE IMMORTAL DAUGHTER OF HELIOS, THE SUN

SIGH... YOU SEEM... DISTRACTED? BUT NOW POSEIDON CURSED HER TO LOVE THE BULL!
(YES, I KNOW. IT GETS WORSE.)



SHE FORCED THE FAMOUS ARTISAN DAEDALOS TO HELP HER FULFIL HER LUST...

SO YOU OPEN THE BACK, CLIMB INTO THE LEGS, LEAN OVER...

HE BUILT HER A MECHANICAL COW SUIT

NEXT... I'M NOT GOING TO EXPLAIN THIS. ASK A BIOLOGY TEACHER. MOOO!

AND, NINE MONTHS LATER...

MA MA? ARE YOU SERIOUS?

MINOS ALSO WENT TO DAEDALOS FOR HELP, WITH A PLAN TO REDUCE HIS SHAME:

A PRISON FOR HIS MONSTROUS, FLESH-EATING, HYBRID STEPSON -



THE LABYRINTH

THESEUS

AND THE MINOTAUR PT. 2

LET'S RUIN THE MYTH WITH ARCHAEOLOGY FOR A MINUTE...
WHY A BULL-HEADED BOY IN A MAZE (LABYRINTH) EATING ATHENIANS?

TO THE BRONZE-AGE MINOANS (NAMED AFTER MINOS), BULLS WERE SACRED, AS SEEN FROM THEIR PREVALENCE IN THEIR MYTHS.



GIANT ALTARS LOOKING LIKE BULLS' HORNS WERE FOUND AT KNOSSOS

THE FAMOUS FRESCO AT KNOSSOS SEEMS TO PORTRAY A RITUAL - OF BULL WORSHIP.



A BULL-HEAD RHETON (DRINKING CUP) WAS FOUND AT KNOSSOS
MASKS OF BULLS FOR RITUAL CEREMONIES WERE FOUND ON CYPRUS.

② LABYRINTH?



THE PALACE OF KNOSSOS WAS CLEARLY A MAZE-LIKE BUILDING.

LABRUS - 'double-head ox' - INTHOS - 'place of the'



THE LABRYS WAS USED TO REPRESENT THE FEMALE MINOAN GODDESS, AND HUNG THROUGHOUT THE PALACE.

③ THE TRIBUTE - HUMAN SACRIFICE?

AT KNOSSOS AND ANEMOSPILIA ON CRETE, CHILD AND ADULT BODIES FOUND SUGGEST 'BUTCHERING'-LIKE SACRIFICES.



IT COULD ALSO BE A METAPHOR - THESEUS OVERCOMING MINOTAUR JUST AS THE ATHENIANS LATER OVERPOWERED THE MINOANS

① BULLS? COULD THESE HAVE PRESENTED AN IDEA OF A BULL-CREATURE ON CRETE?

BACK TO THE STORY:

THESEUS WAS CONFIDENT HE COULD TAKE ON THE MINOTAUR - HE HAD ALREADY KILLED HIS FATHER - THE MARATHONIAN BULL (IT HAD ESCAPED FROM CRETE AFTER THE BIRTH OF THE MINOTAUR)

PLEASE DONT GO!

I'LL BE FINE - I'LL CHANGE THE SAILS FROM BLACK TO WHITE SO YOU KNOW I'VE SURVIVED!



THESEUS MADE A PROMISE

HE PREPARED FOR THE JOURNEY:

HE OFFERED APOLLO AN OLIVE BRANCH WRAPPED IN WHITE WOOL - AS SUPPLICATION



HE BROUGHT FROM SALAMIS NAUSITHOUS (A STEERSMAN) AND PHAEAX (HELMSMAN) - THE ATHENIANS HAD NO NAVIGATION, FOR THE WAY BACK.

- THUS THEY COULD PASS AS WOMEN AND REPLACE TWO OF THE TRIBUTES - BACK UP TO HELP HIM.

HE ARRANGED FOR TWO YOUTHS TO PERFORM THEIR HAIR AND STAY OUT OF THE SUN -

* THE ANCESTOR OF THE PHAEACIANS, WHO HELP ODYSSEUS GET HOME.

GAIN THE AID OF APHRODITE



HE ALSO CONSULTED THE PYTHIA AT DELPHI:

HE BEGAN TO MAKE SACRIFICE, WHEN



APOLLO'S STORM PUNISHMENT FADED ONCE THEY MADE APPROPRIATE SACRIFICE. AT LAST, THESEUS WAS ON HIS WAY TO KNOSSOS.

ON ARRIVAL ON CRETE,



MINOS SURVEYED THE TRIBUTE AND SELECTED ONE TO... 'TRY'...

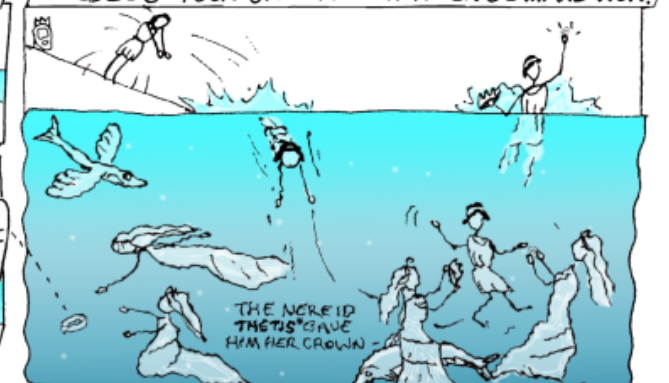
THESEUS TOLD MINOS: AS SON OF POSEIDON, HE MUST PROTECT VIRGINS FROM TYRANTS



HA! PROVE YOU'RE POSEIDON'S SON...

MINOS THREW HIS RING INTO THE SEA FOR THESEUS TO RETRIEVE.

THESEUS TOOK ON THE CHALLENGE... AND WON!



THE NEREID THETIS GAVE HIM HER CROWN -

MINOS WASN'T HAPPY.

THE TRIBUTES WERE IMPRISONED IN THE PALACE, READY TO BE SENT TO THE LABYRINTH. BUT, APHRODITE WAS ON THESEUS'S SIDE:



THE KING'S OWN DAUGHTER ARIADNE FELL FOR THESEUS PROMISING, IN EXCHANGE FOR MARRIAGE, TO HELP HIM KILL HER HALF-BROTHER, THE MINOTAUR, WITH... A BALL OF MAGIC THREAD!

DAEDALOS HAD GIVEN IT TO HER BEFORE HE HAD ESCAPED CRETE WITH HIS SON...



ONCE HE HAD BUILT THE LABYRINTH, MINOS WOULDN'T LET HIM LEAVE WITH ITS SECRETS



DAEDALOS AND ICARUS ESCAPED BY AIR... BUT ICARUS NEVER MADE IT HOME.

THE MAGIC THREAD MUST BE TIED TO THE GATE, AND IT WILL UNROLL AS IT MAKES ITS WAY THROUGH THE MAZE TO THE MINOTAUR IN HIS LAIR...



KILL THE MINOTAUR IN HIS SLEEP AND DEDICATE THE SACRIFICE TO POSEIDON!

THE PLAN WAS SET...

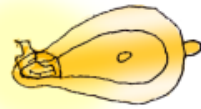
THESEUS

AND THE MINOTAUR Pt.3

THESEUS FOLLOWED THE MAGIC THREAD TO THE CENTER OF THE MAZE...



WHERE HE FOUND THE MINOTAUR...



THEN THESEUS FOLLOWED THE THREAD BACK OUT OF THE LABYRINTH.

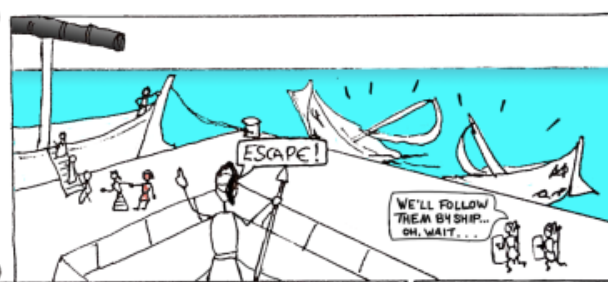
ARIADNE SAW THE BLOOD,



AND LED HIM AND THE TRIBUTES TO THE HARBOUR.



THE FEMINE YOUTHS HAD ALREADY KILLED THE TRIBUTE GUARDS AND RESCUED THE VICTIMS!

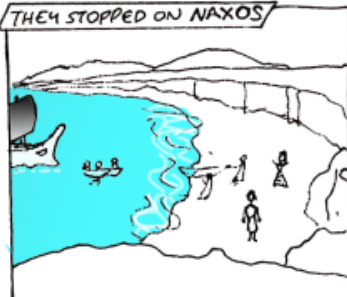


THEY MADE IT TO THE SHIP, WHERE NAUSITHOUS AND PHAEAX WERE WAITING...

AND THEY PUT HOLES IN THE MINOAN SHIPS!



ANCIENT GREEK SAILORS WOULD ALWAYS KEEP LAND IN SIGHT, 'HOPPING' FROM ONE ISLAND TO ANOTHER



TO GET FOOD AND REST.

THE GODS TOLD ME TO DO IT.



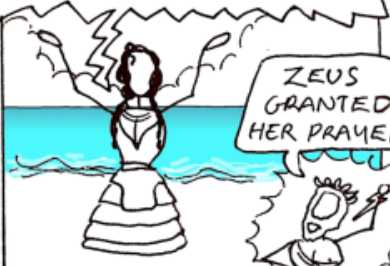
THEN, THESEUS ABANDONED ARIADNE WHILE SHE SLEPT!



BUT WHY?

PERHAPS THE SCANDAL OF HER ARRIVAL IN ATHENS WOULD HAVE BEEN TOO MUCH? PERHAPS THESEUS HAD MET AEGLE* WHOM HE FELL IN LOVE WITH? WHATEVER HIS REASON, ARIADNE WAS NOT HAPPY.

OH ZEUS LABRANDEUS! GRANT ME VENGEANCE!



*FURIOUS AND RAGING!

ZEUS GRANTED HER PRAYER

THEN DIONYSUS MARRIED HER, WITH MAENADS AND SATYRS ATTENDING.



SHE BORE HIM MANY CHILDREN AND, LATER, BECAME IMMORTAL.

MEANWHILE, ON DELOS...



ZEUS' PROMISE TO THE SCORNED ARIADNE WAS COMING TRUE...

*THE CRAB DANCE; 'LABYRINTHINE' PATTERNS MEANT TO HAVE ORIGINATED AFTER THESEUS' SUCCESS IN THE MAZE.

...AND CAME INTO EFFECT ON THE APPROACH INTO ATHENS...



...WHERE AEGEUS WAS WAITING ON THE ACROPOLIS FOR NEWS OF HIS SON

NOTE: IN SOME VERSIONS, AEGEUS THREW HIMSELF INTO THE SEA - WHICH WAS NAMED THE AEGEAN AFTER HIM.



AFTER MAKING PIOUS SACRIFICE TO APOLLO FOR SAFE HOMECOMING, THESEUS ARRIVED TOO LATE.



THESEUS BECAME KING OF ATHENS*. HE THEN UNIFIED ALL OF ATTICA, INTRODUCING THE ΟΥ ΒΟΛΚ ΙΣΜΟΣ (LIVING - TOGETHER) AND FREEING ATTICA FROM CRETAN RULE. THE MYTH OF HIS KILLING OF THE MINOTAUR REMAINS A POTENT REMINDER OF ATHENS' SUCCESS.

*AFTER KILLING ALL OF HIS COMPETITION!

THE END (BUT NOT OF THESEUS...)