

# *Minotaur*

By

Colin Pink

Cast: Asterius, the Minotaur.

King Minos.

Queen Pasiphae.

Ariadne, a princess.

Theseus, a hero.

Cronos, the General.

Sirus, a Servant.

Theatre Director

The people of Crete/The Athenian Tribute played by the Chorus.

Notes:

‘. . .’ in the middle of a sentence indicates hesitation, searching for the right words, at the end of a sentence indicates trailing off.

– at the end of a sentence indicates words cut off by next speaker.

Minimal set. Locations should be suggested by lighting, sound and, when needed, a few props. The production should be as fluid as possible, scenes should merge into one another with little or no interruption to the action. There should be a sense of movement running through the whole performance.

Scene 1. Outside the Royal Palace, Knossos.

Enter the Chorus, moving in a choreographed way, weaving patterns.

Each line of dialogue is spoken by a different member of the Chorus as they move to the front of the group in an interweaving movement.

Chorus. The Minotaur!

Chorus. The Minotaur.

Chorus. He's a monster.

Chorus. A disgrace.

Chorus. He shits where he eats!

Chorus. He eats where he shits.

Chorus. If you're bad he'll come and get you.

Chorus. He eats babies.

Chorus. Tears off their heads.

Chorus. It's unnatural.

Chorus. Abominable.

Chorus. Demonstrable.

Chorus. The Minotaur!

Chorus. He's a monster.

Chorus. A plague.

Chorus. A curse.

Chorus. A disgrace.

The shadow of the Minotaur looms over the Chorus and they shrink back. Lights up on the Minotaur. He sits in quiet dignity, in a pose which suggests meditation.

Minotaur It's not easy being a 'monster'. Shut off. Feared. Alone in the labyrinth.  
They wanted me to remain ignorant. But I taught myself to read. There's not much company down here – just bones. So I learn things. Books are company. I crave company. Without them I would go mad.

Chorus You can't believe a word he says.

Chorus He's a monster. [Enter Ariadne, she observes the Chorus with a look of distaste and boredom.]

Chorus A plague.

Chorus A curse!

Chorus A disgrace.

Ariadne He's my brother. [beat] It's such a bore. Who'd want to marry a girl with a brother like that?  
[The Chorus shrink back respectfully. Ariadne crosses the stage and approaches the Royal Palace, where her parents are seated, attended by the General, standing.]  
I wish something interesting would happen. Nothing ever happens to me. It's not fair.

General The people are revolting.

Queen [Looking at the Chorus.] The people are always revolting.

Minos This is no time for jokes.

Queen I wasn't joking, have you looked at them recently?

Minos Why should I look, I have better things to do.

Queen They're getting quite mangy.

General It's the crops.

Minos What about the crops?

General There aren't any.

Minos Well what the fuck am I supposed to do about it? Go out and drag a plough?

Queen They say it is a judgement of the Gods.

Minos Well at least they're not blaming me for a change.

General They demand a sacrifice.

Minos They always want sacrifices.

Queen Entertain them, my dear. Distract them.

Minos What about another war?

General Are you sure?

Minos It would take their mind off things at home.

General I wouldn't advise it.

Minos Why not?

General We haven't got over the last one.

Minos Can't we attack Athens?

Queen Oh yes, the people do so enjoy hating the Athenians. They're so much smarter than us, it's most irritating.

General But we have no excuse. Why, only this morning their tribute of seven youths and seven maidens arrived. They await your inspection.

Minos Oh goodie.

Queen And keep your hands off the girls this time.

Minos I don't know what you mean.

Queen Ha!

Minos Really my dear, you have such a suspicious mind.

Queen I caught you touching up the prettiest one last year!

Minos I was merely trying to ascertain whether they were really sending us virgins.

Queen Huh. If I catch you fucking them this year I'll . . .

Minos Yes? What? What will you do?

Queen I'll . . .

Minos May I remind you that your own record is hardly unblemished.

Queen I have always been faithful to you – in my heart.

Minos It's the other bits I'm worried about.

Queen You've fucked practically everyone at the court!

Minos I'm the king! It's expected.

Queen Rubbish.

Minos At least I confine my sexual experiments to the human race.

Queen Can't you let anything drop!

Minos I thought we'd never live it down.

Queen Anyone can make a mistake.

Minos You fucked a bull!

Queen It was dark. It could've happened to anyone.

Minos Now I've heard everything.

Ariadne Mum, Dad, this is grossing me out.

Queen Then go to your room!

Minos You shouldn't be listening to grown ups conversations. Go away and play. [Ariadne remains in her place.]

Queen You just don't understand.

Minos Too right.

Queen There are some things in life that are just . . .

Minos Yes?

Queen Just . . .

Minos What?

Queen Unavoidable.

Minos Oh, I see it all now. Silly me. It was unavoidable that you have sex with a

dirty great big white bull.

Queen It was enchanted!

Minos Huh!

Queen Poseidon enchanted the bull so that I would –

Minos Oh yes blame Poseidon.

Queen It was your own fault for pissing off Poseidon by not sacrificing the bloody bull to him like you promised.

Minos You're still a whore.

Queen Philanderer.

Minos Pervert!

Queen Weasel.

General Please! Your highnesses. There are matters of state to consider. The tribute from Athens awaits your inspection.

Minos Very well. Bring them in.

[Enter the Chorus, dressed as the Athenian youths. Among them is Theseus. They perform an elaborate and vigorous dance for the Royals. Ariadne is particularly struck by Theseus's very sexy performance. At the end the royal party applauds.]

Bravo! Bravo!

Queen Excellent, truly excellent.

Ariadne Wow.

Minos Better than the last batch, don't you think?

Queen Yes indeed.

[The royal party rise and inspect the Chorus. The King inspects the girls and the Queen and Ariadne inspect the boys.]

Minos [Gazing at one of the girls.] A fine looking lot.

Queen [Stroking the chest of one of the boys.] Yes, Indeed. [Ariadne gazes,

dumb struck at Theseus, who grins back at her. The Queen notices, to Ariadne.] Come away dear.

Minos Shame they have to be sacrificed.

Queen Yes, pity.

Minos I always think it's such a waste.

Ariadne Can I keep one of them?

Queen Really -

Minos What on earth would you do with one of them?

Ariadne He could teach me things.

Queen Certainly not.

Ariadne Please. Dad, please.

Minos Which one do you have in mind?

Queen Don't encourage her.

Ariadne That one! [She points emphatically at Theseus.]

Minos This one?

Ariadne Oh yes.

Minos He doesn't look that special to me. What about this one?

Ariadne No. Dad. That one. Didn't you see him dance?

Minos Can't say I noticed.

Queen Too busy looking at the girls.

Minos Pasiphae, I'm warning you.

Queen You can't have him, he's going to be sacrificed.

Ariadne It's not fair. I never get anything I really want.

Minos Let's not be hasty. There's no hurry. Let us indulge the girl.

Queen Huh.

Ariadne Wow, thanks Dad!

Minos You, come forward. [Theseus steps forward. Minos waves away the rest

of the Chorus, who exit.]

Theseus Yes, my Lord.

Minos What's your name.

Theseus Theseus, my Lord.

Minos Do you have any special talents?

Theseus I can sing, dance, play the lyre.

Minos Anything else.

Theseus I'm a good swordsman.

Minos Are you now. I don't think I like the sound of that.

General Haven't I heard of you?

Theseus I think not, sir.

General Theseus . . . Theseus . . . Yes, didn't you kill an inn-keeper on the road to Athens?

Theseus He tried to swindle me.

Minos I hate swindlers myself.

Theseus There was something very dodgy about the bed he was offering me. I hate it when people try to rip me off. It gets me so angry.

General So you killed him.

Theseus Only in self defence.

Minos Well, that's settled then. Let the revels continue until the hour appointed for the sacrifice. We mustn't keep the Minotaur waiting. [To Ariadne.] You can keep him until then.

Ariadne Thanks, Dad!

Queen You spoil that child.

Minos Enough. Let's eat!

[The King claps his hands. The Chorus bring on numerous platters of food which they spread before the Royal party. While the banqueting

table is being laid lights up on the Minotaur in the Labyrinth. Bones are strewn on the ground. The sound of dripping water. The Minotaur sits, as before.]

Minotaur There is something about solitude. [Pause.] It makes you think. [Pause.] I know they are afraid. I can smell it. Even down here. But why? What have I done? Other than be. Is my existence so shameful? So frightening? They cannot imagine what it is like. I want to tell them. But they run away. They see only what they've been told to see.  
[In the palace the food is served and the Royal party eats.]

Minos [Thinking aloud.] These days, whenever I see my wife, I hear the sound of snakes hissing. It can't be a good sign.

Queen [Thinking aloud.] I regret to say that the King is not a man any more. He has grown lazy – gone to seed.

[Pause.]

I wonder what I saw in him? All those years ago. He was thinner then, of course. We were all thinner then. Handsome? After a fashion? No. I cannot lie. He was never handsome, but a Kingdom weighs more than looks, and he was fit, quite [a beat] muscular. It was not hard to convince myself I loved him. At first. And now, every year, it gets harder. So hard, I do believe we have both ceased trying.

Minos You look very thoughtful my dear.

Queen Do I?

Minos Yes, you do. What thoughts are troubling that pretty head of yours?

Queen Oh I was just thinking how lucky I am to be married to you, how you are my pole star, the light that guides me.

Minos Thank you my dear.

Queen The pleasure is all mine.

Theseus Tell me King Minos, where does the Minotaur live?

General You'll find out soon enough.

Theseus I'm just curious.

Minos He has his own quarters. He lives in the Labyrinth.

Theseus And what is that?

Minos Have you heard of Daedalus

Theseus The inventor? But of course.

Minos I commissioned him to construct a series of underground chambers below the palace. That is the Labyrinth. Within those chambers resides the Minotaur.

Minotaur [The Royal party eat and drink, Theseus flirts with Ariadne while down in the Labyrinth:]  
Daedalus, father of cunning; gaoler, trickster. Why do you torture me? Though you are far away your mind ensnares me still. Am I to be forever imprisoned in your invention – the labyrinth? Hidden away. Feared and loathed. My heart beats within the monstrous constructs of your mind. Forever inventing, forever fleeing, why is your genius always used to create unworthy things for ruthless people?

General Many have entered the labyrinth but few emerge again.

Theseus I can't wait! I like a challenge.

Minos Your youthful enthusiasm is most charming.

Ariadne Oh Theseus, you're so brave.

Minos But I can't help feeling it is misplaced. Do you really think you can survive the labyrinth?

Theseus Where there's hope there's a way.

Minotaur Sometimes I hear sounds. The first time I thought I was imagining things. I thought my mind was creating sounds for company. But no, they come

from above. There are cracks, fissures, vents. The sounds move like water, trickling down those secret passage ways. The people above, in the Palace, they like to think the labyrinth is a place completely separate from themselves. But they're wrong. They're connected. Connected in all kinds of ways.

[Pause.]

I hear them talk. Their laughter. Singing. Weeping. Raised voices arguing. Muted voices plotting. I hear it all.

[Pause.]

And they can hear me.

[Pause.]

I'm the voice in their skull that keeps them awake at night.

Minos [King Minos, who is now drunk, spots Sirius crossing the banquetting hall.]

Now this man.

[Minos waves at Sirius to approach his table.]

Come here, come here. This man is a remarkable man. He may not look it. He may, in fact, look very unremarkable.

Sirus Thank you, sir.

Minos But he is, in fact, extraordinary. Why? You ask yourself. And the reason is . . . the reason is . . . you see . . . don't tell me, I'll get it . . . the reason is . . . memory.

Sirus [Smiles awkwardly.]

Minos This man. This inconspicuous. This slightly shabby servant has a skill. A memory skill. We searched [To the Queen.] did we not my dear, you remember, I'm *sure* you remember, [To the table at large.] we searched high and low, mostly low [Chuckles to himself.] for a man capable, yes capable of remembering, holding, I mean really holding, without fail, in his

head the secret, the . . . the . . . every, in fact, twist and turn of [a beat]  
the labyrinth.

[Astonished pause of the Court.]

Yes. For this servant is the only man in the Kingdom who knows his way  
in and, more importantly, his way out of the labyrinth. And why is, does,  
this man, this insignificant, this man, why do we charge him with this  
knowledge? Because . . . because it is his sacred duty to care for the . . .  
for the . . . Minotaur.

[Pause. Becoming emotional.]

And no one can say that we do not care. For we do. And this . . . man, is  
the living proof.

[The King slumps unconscious onto the table.]

General How eloquent the King is today.

Queen Thank you. I don't think his majesty will be requiring any more wine this  
evening.

General He has enough for tomorrow also.

Ariadne This is gross!

Queen [To Sirius.] Thank you, you may go. [To Ariadne.] My dear, everything is  
gross, haven't you figured that out yet?

Ariadne I'm going to my room. [Ariadne gets up.]

Queen As gross a place as I can imagine, apart from the labyrinth.

General [Laughs.]

Queen [Laughs.]

Minos [Snore.]

Ariadne Very funny Mother.

Queen I do my best.

Ariadne [Haughtily] Theseus, come with me.

Queen Not so quick.

Ariadne Daddy said I could keep him.

Queen Oh, do what you like, you will anyway.

[Exit Ariadne and Theseus.]

It looks like the party is over. Come, General, I have something to show you.

[Exiting Queen and General. To the Chorus.]

Can we do something with the King, please.

[Members of the Chorus carry off the unconscious King Minos and sweep away the banquet.]

Ariadne and Theseus walk in the palace gardens. They eye one another flirtatiously.

Ariadne My parents are the grossest parents in the whole of Crete. Do you know, I believe they still do it!

Theseus Ugh.

Ariadne Yeah, at their age. There should be a law against it, or something. They think they're cool. [Laughs.]

Theseus [Laughs.]

Ariadne It makes you want to barf. My friends don't understand. They think it's easy being a princess. They should try it some time. It's all rules and regulations. Do this, do that, don't do this, don't even think about that. It takes all the fun out of life. All the . . .

Theseus Spontaneity?

Ariadne Yeah, spontaneity.

Theseus I like to seize the moment.

Ariadne Exactly. My father is always going on about what would the people think.

Be an ambassador, all that kind of crap. Who cares anyway? Fuck the people, that's what I say.

Theseus You must follow your instincts.

Ariadne Exactly.

Theseus Do what feels right.

Ariadne You're the only one who understands me. This year I am determined to have fun. I've waited long enough. If I listened to them I'd be old and wrinkled before I did anything – and then it'd be too late. If you ask me they just don't want me to have fun because if I did they'd get jealous. I mean, look at them. All they do all day is eat and argue. What kind of life is that?

Theseus You deserve more.

Ariadne You're right.

[They enter Ariadne's room.]

This is my place.

Theseus [Looking around.] Cool.

Ariadne [Ariadne turns on the sound system and plays some House music.]

Do you like it?

Theseus Love it.

Ariadne It's the only place I can be me.

Theseus They're stifling you. You need to get away.

Ariadne Exactly. It's so boring. What's it like in Athens?

Theseus Well . . .

Ariadne Do tell me. I command you to tell me.

Theseus It's hot. And rocky. There's a lot of night-life.

Ariadne I'd love to go to the big city.

Theseus Do you like clubbing?

Ariadne Oh yes. I love it. But I have to go in secret. Father is so old fashioned.

Theseus They have great clubs in Athens –some real kicking D.J.s

Ariadne I want to go!

Theseus I bet you're a great dancer.

Ariadne [Ariadne cranks up the volume and brings up the bass while dry ice and strobe lights come on as in a real club.]

This tracks blinding.

Theseus [Theseus starts punching the air to the bass line.]

It's fierce man!

Ariadne [Ariadne pulls out two glow sticks and a bottle of water.]

Hey look what I've got!

[She starts giving it large on the dance floor. Theseus starts dancing too.]

Cool eh?

[Theseus watches Ariadne stomping around with the glow sticks with admiration.]

Theseus We should go clubbing together.

Ariadne I'd like that . . . but I'm not sure it's allowed.

Theseus Is dancing prohibited in your father's kingdom?

Ariadne Only with Athenians.

[Ariadne and Theseus laugh as they dance together.]

Theseus Excellent. They make you look very sophisticated.

Ariadne I am sophisticated. Mother says every Princess should be sophisticated.

Theseus [Moving in close.] How right she is.

Down in the Labyrinth Sirius approaches the Minotaur's lair. It is dark, he carries a lamp and a bag.

Sirus        Minotaur! Minotaur! Come on out. Dinner is served.  
                 [Sirus drops the bag on the floor.]  
                 I swear every trip that spiral passage gets steeper.

Minotaur    You're getting old.

Sirus        Oh there you are.

Minotaur    One day you won't come.

Sirus        [Opening the bag and removing food.]  
                 Not for a long time.

Minotaur    I'll be alone.

Sirus        You needn't worry. When I'm gone someone will take over.

Minotaur    Then it will be someone else?

Sirus        Yes, someone else.

Minotaur    Are they training anyone, do you know?

Sirus        No.

Minotaur    Oh.

Sirus        I'm not quitting.

Minotaur    Good.

Sirus        D'you know something?

Minotaur    What?

Sirus        I didn't want this job when they first gave it to me.

Minotaur    Really?

Sirus        Yeah, scared see. They made out you was so fearsome like, it was  
                 taking your life into your hands getting within twenty feet of you.

Minotaur    [Laughs.]

Sirus        [Laughs.]

Sirus        Shitting myself, I was, that first time.

Minotaur    [Laughs.]

Sirus [Laughs.]

Sirus Do you remember what you said?

Minotaur No.

Sirus Got anything to read?

Minotaur [Laughs.]

Sirus Here, I brought you another book.

Minotaur Oh thank you!

Sirus Thought you'd like it.

Minotaur Yes indeed.

Sirus There's a lot of talk upstairs.

Minotaur I hear whispering.

Sirus There's plenty of that.

Minotaur I take it all is not well in the Palace.

Sirus They say your Mother, the Queen, has regular 'consultations' with General Cronos in her chamber, alone.

Minotaur Really.

Sirus Yes. Clearly she has the security of the State on her mind.

Minotaur No doubt.

Sirus And that little tyke Ariadne has only gone and fallen in love with one of the Athenian tributes.

Minotaur Oh no.

Sirus Oh yes.

Minotaur Foolish.

Sirus Of course it's just talk.

Minotaur Yes.

Sirus You know how people talk.

Minotaur Hmm.

Sirus Not enough to occupy their minds, so they make things up.

Minotaur Absolutely.

[The Minotaur eats, Sirus watches.]

In the Queen's chamber. The Queen and the General lie on the bed in post-coital chat.

Queen I do wish you'd do something.

General I thought I just had 'done something'.

Queen Not that kind of thing.

General Shame.

Queen I want action. Why are you taking so long to get rid of –

General Shh. Patience, dear Pasiphae, is a virtue.

Queen I'm fed up waiting. He gets more intolerable every day.

General All good things come to he who waits.

Queen Seize the moment.

General Timing is everything. We need the right occasion.

Queen [Pause.] Have you noticed how accident prone the King has become lately? I feel so worried about him. I wouldn't be at all surprised if he didn't have a nasty accident next time he goes hunting. Would you? It's such a dangerous business. Hunting. It could easily happen, don't you think? And him being so clumsy. Of course it would distress me deeply; but I suppose I would get over it, in time.

General You have great resilience, Pasiphae.

Queen Thank you. Fortitude is required to cope with all life's little [a beat] difficulties.

General Indeed it is.

Queen I know I can rely on your fortitude. That you have in plentiful supply. Oh you are so strong. Far stronger than I. When you hold me in your arms you make me feel like a little bird. So frail. So easily hurt.

General But birds are hard to catch.

Queen Not if the bird catcher knows how to lure the birds to his trap. What bait appeals most to their quick little bird hearts.

General And then he cages them. Lest they fly away again.

Queen But look around. What is the court but an airy and gilded cage? And who holds the key if not King Minos?

Ariadne and Theseus are alone in Ariadne's bed chamber.

Ariadne I bet you've had lots of adventures.

Theseus A few.

Ariadne Tell me about them.

Theseus Later.

Ariadne [Disappointed.] Oh.

Theseus I've learnt a few tricks in my travels. Want to see.

Ariadne Yeah!

Theseus Watch closely.

Ariadne [Theseus performs tricks with a coin in front of Ariadne. He astonishes Ariadne by making the coin disappear from his hands. Then it reappears. He makes it vanish again and this time retrieves it from behind Ariadne's ear. She laps it all up.]

Let me see! Let me see! How do you do that?

Theseus It's magic.

Ariadne No it's not.

Theseus What is it then?

Ariadne It's a trick. I want to know. Show me how you do it.

Theseus Watch carefully. Now you see it – now you don't!

Ariadne That was too quick, I wasn't ready.

Theseus Come closer. Now, watch carefully. Are you watching?

Ariadne Of course.

Theseus Ready?

Ariadne Yes.

Theseus It goes like this, and this, and [a beat] this. [Theseus kisses Ariadne as he concludes the trick.]

Ariadne I didn't quite get it. [she giggles.] I think you'll have to show me again.

Theseus It's a pleasure.  
[He performs the trick again and at the end they kiss again but for longer this time. Ariadne backs away coquettishly.]

Ariadne Aren't you a little forward for a slave?

Theseus My only slavery is to your beauty.

Ariadne Wow.

Theseus Your beauty makes me bold.

Ariadne Do you like my dress?

Theseus Each dress you wear is divine – because of what it touches.

Ariadne [Puzzled.] Oh me!

Theseus Yes. You.

Ariadne [Giggles.]

Theseus [During this speech Theseus invades her personal space.]  
Your body. That perfect little [a beat] piece [a beat] of [a beat]  
paradise [a beat] on [a beat] earth.

Ariadne Oh Theseus. You're so lovely. I simply won't be able to watch when they

throw you to the Minotaur.

Theseus I suppose it is inevitable that everyone who loves you should meet with a tragic end. Such beauty is put here on earth merely to drive us mad. To torture us with exquisite longings, to make us forget ourselves, to dwell forever -

Ariadne Theseus. Shut up. There isn't enough time for talking. I want you to show me all the things you know.

Theseus But there isn't time to –

Ariadne Just give me the highlights.

[They collapse onto Ariadne's bed.]

Next day, in the market place the Chorus of Cretan people complain about the state of the nation.

Chorus Prices!

Chorus Prices!

Chorus They go up

Chorus All the time

Chorus But never down

Chorus We're told the economy's thriving

Chorus Everything's booming

Chorus But not our bit.

Chorus But don't be down hearted

Chorus Go down the market

Chorus Take a good look

Chorus [All.] You can always buy the things you lack

Chorus Make up for that absence

Chorus The one you can't quite place  
Chorus With a purchase or two  
Chorus Or three or four  
Chorus And if you can't afford it  
Chorus There's always one who'll lend it.  
Chorus And you always have to ask yourself:  
Chorus [All.] Can you afford to be without it!

Meanwhile in the Palace the preparations for the bull leaping ceremony take place. The Director rehearses the chorus who change costumes to transform themselves into the Athenian youths. The Director sweeps in with emphatic theatrical style.

Director [Clapping his hands.]  
Places please everyone! Move along now. Hurry up. We haven't got all day.  
[The Chorus scurry around, assuming positions. The Director moves among them correcting postures.]  
Now, remember, movement and feeling. I want equal parts movement and feeling. Movement with no feeling, no good. Feeling without movement, no good. I want it all wrapped up in one lovely, exciting, vibrant bundle. [Pause.] Do you understand? Has everyone been listening?  
[The Chorus nods impatiently.]  
Now remember, you are at one with the bull, you are no longer separate entities but joined for eternity. Okay sweeties, thank you darlings. I just know this is going to be so much better than before. And one, two, three, go.  
[Loud rhythmic percussive music. The Chorus perform part of the bull

leaping dance. The Director watches for a while then strides among them clapping his hands. They stop dancing.]

Stop right there! That's enough darlings. Okay, where did we go wrong?

[Pause.] Anyone? [Pause.] Anyone at all? [Pause.] Energy! Energy levels. Where were they? Were they here? [He raises his hand above his head.] Or were they here? [He brings his hand down to his knees.] I think we all know the answer to that one. [He stalks back off the performance area.]

Now then, darlings, assume your start positions, hurry now. Let's go for it again and this time feeling, movement and lots of energy. Okay, one, two, three, go!

[The Chorus performs the dance again to the shattering music.]

Minos [Enter King Minos and Sirius. Minos has a hang-over and winces at the noisy dance rehearsal.]

Why is it so damned noisy in here?

Director [Seeing the King enter waves to the dancers to stop.]

My Lord, this is indeed an honour.

Minos What's going on?

Director Just a rehearsal, my Lord. For the ceremony.

Minos What?

Director The ritual bull leaping ceremony.

Sirus They always do it at this time.

Minos Yes, I know, I know.

Director I hope we didn't disturb your highness.

Minos Do you think you could possibly do it a little more quietly?

Director Well, I suppose we could try, only –

Minos Just do it somewhere else, away with you.

[Exit Chorus and Director.]

Queen [Enter Queen in a hurry.]

There you are! Hurry up you're late for daily court reception.

Minos I'm coming, stop rushing me.

Queen Everyone is waiting.

Minos Let them wait.

Queen You made a fool of yourself last night – again.

Minos Don't go on.

Queen In front of everyone, everyone, even that Athenian slave.

Minos I thought the banquet went rather well.

Queen It did, until you started getting all sentimental about 'how we care for the Minotaur'.

Minos Well it's true.

Queen Just because something is true does not mean you should speak it.

Minos I often think about him.

Queen Oh Minos, I don't want to think about him. Don't you realise? I hate this time of year. Why do we have to make a spectacle of something so full of painful memories?

Minos The people expect it.

Queen Do you always have to do what the people expect? At what cost to us?

Minos Pasiphae, don't make a fuss. We are the Royal Family we have to perform.

Queen Well I don't like my 'part'.

Minos You are the Queen and will do what is expected of you.

Queen I can't stand this much longer. We should have got rid of it the moment it was born!

Minos Pasiphae!

Queen It would have been kinder to it and me. But oh no, you had to keep it.

Minos I couldn't let him die.

Queen And now it's just an embarrassment.

Minos He was a gift from Poseidon.

Queen Some gifts are best left unopened.

Minos One does not refuse gifts from the Gods.

Queen More like a mean joke.

Minos When he was born he was so fragile, so helpless, so . . .

Queen Bull like?

Minos He looked at me, and his eyes were so trusting.

Queen Oh God, don't start again. Pull yourself together, we have to face the public.

Minos Oh yes. Speaking of facing the public.

[Minos pulls a newspaper from Sirius's hands and waves it in front of the Queen.]

Have you seen what they're writing about me?

Queen No dear.

Minos They say I'm extravagant.

Queen So?

Minos Me! The most frugal of men.

Queen Cheap, is a better word.

Minos You're the extravagant one.

Queen Oh you're not going to go on –

Minos You cost me a fortune in clothes, jewels, and other things which I don't even –

Queen It's expensive being a Queen! Do you expect me to go around in rags?

Minos Of course not.

Queen I give value for money. I really can't see why you make a fuss. You never used to, in the old days. It's yet another sign that you don't really care for me any more. You begrudge me any little pleasure.

Minos Little pleasures! What about this bill? [Minos retrieves a bill from Sirius.]  
You just bought a boat.

Queen I need a boat. In case you hadn't noticed we are an island Kingdom.

Minos You already have three boats.

Queen Those old things. They're hardly sea worthy. Do you want me to drown?  
No, don't answer that.

Minos A little restraint, especially at this time, would be good P.R.

Queen Very well, I'll send it back. I'll put to sea in that leaky sieve you call a Royal Barge. If I drown I hope you'll be satisfied.

Minos Pasiphae, don't take it like that.

Queen And that boat is so old fashioned. I'll be the laughing stock. People will mock me as I sail by. The front's all wrong.

Minos Bow. What's wrong with it?

Queen Really, the fronts –

Minos Bows.

Queen 'Bows' are all a different shape these days, haven't you noticed?

Minos Well . . .

Queen You should get out more. When was the last time you left the palace?

Minos Can't remember.

Queen You should get some air. Go hunting. You used to like hunting.

Minos The people don't like it if I go hunting.

Queen Why ever not?

Minos It's the wild boar. Apparently they're becoming an endangered species.

Queen Well hunt something else.

Minos      It's not the same hunting other things. Not so much of a challenge.

Queen      Then ignore them. You're the boss, after all.

              [Enter General Cronos.]

General    My Lord, are you ready to see the petitioners?

Minos      Petitions? What petitions?

General    From the people, my Lord.

Minos      I looked at some only last week.

General    I'm afraid there are more this week.

Minos      Can't it wait?

General    They have already been waiting for several days, my Lord.

Minos      Well, what's a few days in these peasant's lives.

General    They are getting restless.

Minos      It's not as if they've got a lot to do.

General    Quite vocal.

Minos      All they do is sit around in the dust waiting for something to grow.

General    That's the problem. The crops are failing.

Minos      In that case clearly they're not working hard enough.

General    The farmers want a subsidy. The vintners want tax relief. The fishermen  
              —

Minos      Everybody wants something! Why doesn't someone turn up at the court  
              for once wanting to give me something? Eh?

General    Their fate rests in your hands.

Queen      Calm down and see them.

Minos      What can I do?

Queen      Make them feel better. Say something inspiring.

General    We have to do something.

Minos      It's hard thinking of something inspiring for a peasant.

Queen I'm sure if you try hard you can come up with something.

Minos I still think a war is the best solution. It never fails to distract the people from their little troubles. It'll give them something interesting to talk about in the market place other than the cost of my wife's latest acquisition or speculating about my sex life; let's give them something big to worry about. It's a wonderful solution – overnight it will become unpatriotic to criticise me.

General But what about the killing. They won't like that.

Minos But you're wrong again, they love the killing bit – provided it isn't them who gets killed. War is entertainment. Think of the wonderful epic poems it will inspire, full of vivid imagery and lots of exciting gory bits! Really. General, what do they teach at military academy these days? I must say I'm surprised at you. I would've thought you'd be all for it – a chance for glory, advancement, everything a military man craves.

General Naturally I long to serve with eager anticipation.

Minos We should draw up a list of States that have annoyed us in the last few years. Let's pick one we know we can beat easily.

General Very well, my Lord.

Minos Show in the petitioners.

Sirus [Beckons the chorus to enter.]

Chorus Oh great and noble Lord hear our plea. Across the land, from shore to shore, the crops disobey the laws of nature and spurn the seasons.

Chorus The sea refuses to give up its bounty.

Chorus The vine grows sour and the wheat all husk.

Chorus We beg your indulgence.

Minos Yes, yes, very good. You want to know what I think? It's all down to foreigners. They come over here, poison the crops, steal the fish from

our territorial waters. Well, I can tell you, I'm going to find out who's responsible and I'm going to take dynamic, bold action, whatever the cost.

Chorus [All cheer.]

Minos For too long our fine Minoan civilization has allowed foreigners to come and take advantage of our hospitality to distort our culture for their own nefarious ends. Well I can tell you, I assure you, I'm going to put a stop to it.

Chorus [The Chorus cheer and rush forward and carry Minos off stage, followed by his entourage.]

Enter Ariadne and Theseus. Theseus, bare chested, is demonstrating his sword fighting moves to Ariadne. He poses outrageously before Ariadne, who laps it all up.

Ariadne Oh Theseus, you certainly know how to handle yourself.

Theseus You never know what's coming up, Ariadne.

Ariadne Oh I can usually guess.

Theseus [Executes a particularly splendid move.]

Ariadne I love your muscles.

Theseus Have to keep fit. Back in Athens I work out in the gym every day.

Ariadne It so shows.

Theseus Ariadne?

Ariadne Yes?

Theseus This labyrinth?

Ariadne What about it?

Theseus How does one get into it?

Ariadne Getting in is easy, it's getting out that's hard.

Theseus But where is the entrance?

Ariadne It's a secret.

Theseus You can tell me.

Ariadne I don't know.

Theseus There should be no secrets between [a beat] lovers.

Ariadne It's one of the sacred mysteries. Outsiders aren't supposed to know.

Theseus I'm not an outsider.

Ariadne Why do you want to know?

Theseus I have to go there. Confront the Minotaur. Before it's too late.

Ariadne You mustn't go, it's too dangerous, you'll be killed.

Theseus If I do nothing we'll all be killed anyway. Ariadne, I can't stand around and watch my country men and women being sacrificed.

Ariadne They say it doesn't hurt.

Theseus Do you believe that?

Ariadne [a beat.] No.

Theseus Well then, tell me.

Ariadne But if you get in you'll never get out again. Daedalus made it so confusing.

Theseus I'll have to risk it.

Ariadne If you go I'll come with you.

Theseus Oh brave little Ariadne. You're so sweet, but you mustn't.

Ariadne I couldn't let you go alone.

Theseus This is something only I can do. I must go alone. But I need your help getting in and out again. You can help me but wait at the entrance for my return.

Ariadne But they say it's impossible.

Theseus That's just what they say to scare people off.

Ariadne I don't know. That Daedalus was frightfully clever. Why don't you stay

here with me?

Theseus There is no time. We must escape from Crete.

Ariadne Leave Crete?

Theseus Yes! Come on. You said you're bored here.

Ariadne I know but . . .

Theseus I'll take you to Athens. You'll love it. All you have to do is show me the Minotaur's lair and I'll do the rest.

Ariadne There is a way.

Theseus I knew it!

Ariadne When he built the labyrinth Daedalus gave me a ball of twine.

Theseus Twine?

Ariadne Not just any twine. Daedalus said that if I ever wanted to see my brother all I had to do was attach the end of the twine to the door, throw the ball into the mouth of the labyrinth and it would automatically roll down to the centre of the maze, where my brother lives. If you can call it a life. Then, to get out again all I had to do was follow the twine back to the entrance, rolling it back into the ball as I went. Of course, I've never used it, who'd want to visit my smelly old brother in that horrid place, but you can have it.

Theseus Wow, thanks Ariadne. Neat idea. You have to hand it to Daedalus, he thinks of everything.

Ariadne You must be careful, Theseus, my brother is very strong.

Theseus Don't worry about me, I can handle myself.

Ariadne Theseus, you won't hurt him too much, will you.

Theseus Don't worry darling. I'll make it quick.

Ariadne And afterwards, you'll take me away, won't you?

Theseus Of course I will, can't wait to get you away from here, show you what a real city is like.

Ariadne Cool. [a beat.] Daddy will be very angry.

Theseus Don't worry. By the time they find out what's happened we'll be long gone, you and me, on our way to Athens, the bright lights, good food, great music, non-stop raving.

Ariadne Oh it sounds so wonderful; I must start packing.

Theseus Don't pack too many things. We have to travel light.

Ariadne I'll only take the essentials. Just a dozen trunks.

Theseus A dozen!

Ariadne I'm not leaving all my gear behind. I had to do a lot of whining to get some of these clothes and I'm not about to leave them behind.

Theseus Just choose a few favourites.

Ariadne But it's so hard to choose, and besides, I'll need lots of outfits to go to all those parties in Athens.

Meanwhile, in the throne room, King Minos is busy playing a computer game on his playstation. A large screen displays the game, one which involves large amounts of violence.

Minos Yes! Got the brute.

Queen [Enter the Queen.]  
Minos! Have you seen Ariadne?

Minos Pasiphae, can't you see I'm busy?

Queen Just answer the question.

Minos Damn! Missed that one. What was it?

Queen Have you seen Ariadne?

Minos Not lately.

Queen Ever since that Theseus arrived I hardly see her.

Minos Have you tried her room?

Queen Of course I've tried her room.

Minos She'll be somewhere.

Queen Oh that's very reassuring. Somewhere. She could be at the bottom of the ocean for all you care.

Minos Look, Pasiphae –

Queen Anything could happen to that girl.

Minos Oh look, now you've made me miss that. I could've made the next level if you weren't interrupting all the time.

Queen She's your daughter you should know where she is.

Minos I would've thought you'd be pleased to get her out of your hair for a change.

Queen Of course I'm not pleased!

Minos Why not? After all, you two don't get on at the best of times.

Queen What on earth do you mean?

Minos You're always arguing.

Queen Nonsense. Just because we discuss things you say we're arguing.

Minos Even when you're both shouting?

Queen I haven't got time for this. I want to find her, I'm worried about her.

Minos She's probably with that Thesaurus fellow. They're both young people, they're probably off somewhere having fun.

Queen That's what I'm worried about.

Minos My dear, you have a suspicious mind.

Queen You know how sensitive she is.

Minos Sensitive? Our Ariadne?

Queen She'll only get in over her head and get hurt.

Minos Don't you think you're being over protective?

Queen No! [Exit the Queen. Minos shrugs and starts another game on his playstation.]

King Minos is intent on playing his game, which is projected onto the back wall.

Enter the Chorus of Athenian dancers. They perform their exciting dance (with much leaping about) to the crashing ritual music. Minos is oblivious to everything but the game he is playing. During the latter stages of the dance enter General Cronos who watches Minos playing his game and looks at him with contempt. At the end of the dance the dancers race across the stage with a bright red cloth trailing behind them. When they exit Minos and Cronos are no longer there instead:

The Minotaur paces up and down in the labyrinth, he is nervous and distracted. In the distance can be heard the sound of the raucous ritual dance music. Enter Sirius.

Minotaur What's that racket I keep hearing?

Sirus They're practising for the ritual bull leaping ceremony.

Minotaur Oh that.

Sirus They have a new director, and a new dance. Very [a beat] elaborate. A bit 'modern' for my taste.

Minotaur Why do they do it?

Sirus It's in your honour.

Minotaur I dread it. Dread it. Every time. Each time I pray it will cease.

Sirus The sacrifices are decreed by king Minos in your honour.

Minotaur For his pleasure.

Sirus It's . . . quite a sight.

Minotaur Do they dance well?

Sirus Yes, sometimes, yes.

Minotaur They dance and then [a beat] die.

Sirus I suppose you could put it like that.

Minotaur Why?

Sirus Why what?

Minotaur Why do they have to die? Why not just [a beat] pretend?

Sirus It's a sacrifice. If they just pretended it wouldn't be a sacrifice.

Minotaur I'd prefer a dance with no death.

Sirus What King Minos ordains, that is what is done.

Minotaur Each time I wait for the music to stop and then I know the nightmare has begun. I listen for the voices. I know they will come. Sometimes I have to wait longer and I think, yes, this time, this time it will not happen, but then I hear them, wandering through the tunnels, getting more and more hopelessly lost, their voices getting more panicky. I call to them – come, come this way, but they run in fear from my voice. The more I call them the more fearful they become. Listen to it bellow, they say, the monster must be close, run. They think I want to hurt them so they do everything they can to avoid me, but here, here is the only place in the labyrinth where there is food and water. I call to them again but am answered only with sobs. And gradually, one by one, they die: of thirst, hunger and madness. And when I think I can stand it no longer it gets worse. They turn on one another, they rend the weakest limb from limb, like a beast of the field, and devour them. For days I hear their cries, they echo around me, haunt the chambers, until they diminish, and then there is one faint voice babbling to itself, and then, nothing. And in the palace they say, see how the Minotaur has gnawed on their bones, how fearsome he must be.

Meanwhile, in the Palace, Ariadne is in her room going through her clothes. Queen Pasiphae knocks on the door.

Ariadne Who is it?

Queen It's your mother, let me in.

Ariadne Just a minute. [Ariadne hurriedly hides the dresses in her chest.]

Queen What on earth are you doing in there?

Ariadne I'm just fixing my hair.

Queen Let me in.

Ariadne Coming. [Ariadne lets Pasiphae into her room.]

Queen That's better. [Looking around suspiciously.] How's my little poppet?

Ariadne What do you want?

Queen Is that any way to talk to your mother?

Ariadne Sorry.

Queen I just want to chat. Is that too much to ask?

Ariadne Please.

Queen We need to talk.

Ariadne Yeah, sure.

Queen How are you today?

Ariadne Okay.

Queen Okay?

Ariadne Yeah 'okay'. You know. It means [a beat] okay.

Queen Is that all? A bright young thing like you should be full of the joy of life.

Look out the window, the sun is shining.

Ariadne Mother, this is Crete, the sun is always shining.

Queen The sea is calm, it isn't always calm.

Ariadne Great! I'm very pleased for you, it, whatever.

Queen We should talk.

Ariadne Yeah, whatever.

Queen Communicate.

Ariadne Okay.

Queen Preferably in utterances longer than two letters in length!

Ariadne Are you sure you're okay?

Queen I'm fine. It's you I'm worried about.

Ariadne I'm – how shall I put this – okay.

Queen Tell me what's troubling you.

Ariadne Nothing. I'm fine, really.

Queen Why don't we go shopping?

Ariadne No thanks.

Queen Come on, you'll enjoy it, I'll buy you that new Chiton you wanted, the short one with the sparkles.

Ariadne Leave me alone.

Queen Don't be like that. I want to talk. Have some quality time.

Ariadne Oh God.

Queen We need to talk.

Ariadne No we don't, mother.

Queen Yes we do. We have to talk about Theseus.

Ariadne Oh no. Why?

Queen I'm worried, Ariadne. Really, I am.

Ariadne I hope this isn't going to be embarrassing.

Queen I can see all the signs. A mother knows.

Ariadne Doh? What are you talking about?

Queen My dear, listen to me, I'm thinking about you.

Ariadne Everything's fine, really.

Queen I just don't want to see you getting hurt.

Ariadne I'm not.

Queen I can see you're falling for this Theseus. I'll admit he's very decorative, but you mustn't let this thing get out of hand.

Ariadne You needn't worry about me.

Queen Ariadne, listen to me. He's Minotaur meat. Don't forget it.

Ariadne Oh mother!

Queen If you won't take a hint I have to be brutal, for your own good. Ariadne, you mustn't fall in love with Theseus. It'll end in tears.

Ariadne You're just jealous!

Queen What?

Ariadne He's young and sexy and you're jealous.

Queen Nonsense. I'm only trying to –

Ariadne Bet you want him yourself. Well you can't have him, he's mine.

Queen You're getting hysterical.

Ariadne He's good in bed. Better than anyone you've had I'll bet.

Queen Ariadne, control yourself.

Ariadne You don't like to see me enjoy myself.

Queen If only you knew how ridiculous you sound.

Ariadne And Theseus loves me too.

Queen That's where you're wrong – he's just using you.

Ariadne You know nothing. He loves me. I know. I can tell.

Queen Let me be the judge of that. I have a lot more experience than you.

Ariadne No you don't. You've never been loved! Daddy never loved you, that's obvious, and do you really think all those lovers you keep taking, embarrassing everybody, really care for you?

Queen This is outrageous! How dare you speak to me like this.

Ariadne They probably have to force themselves to shag you. Bet they have to think of someone else while they're doing it to stay hard.

Queen [Slaps Ariadne hard around the face.]

Go to your room!

Ariadne I'm already in my room.

Queen Don't get smart with me.

[The Queen sweeps out of Ariadne's room.]

Back in the throne room the King is still playing on his playstation. Gradually King Minos becomes aware of the presence of General Cronos.

Minos Don't lurk. I hate lurking. What do you want?

General I just thought we'd have a little chat.

Minos I don't do 'chatting', I'm the King.

General Yes, of course, I just –

Minos Have you got the list?

General List?

Minos [Sighs.] Of States that have annoyed us.

General Oh, yes, here.

[Cronos pulls out a scroll, lets it go, as it unfolds it is very long.]

Minos [Examining the scroll.]

You've been very thorough.

General God is in the details.

Minos [Pointing at the scroll.]

Why are we pissed with them?

General Dispute over mineral rights.

Minos Oh.

General Might I make an observation?

Minos [Sigh.] What?

General You look tired.

Minos I'll manage.

General Stressed.

Minos I'm not sleeping.

General I thought so.

Minos It's not easy being King. Oh, I know I make it look easy, but it isn't. Everyone looking to you for judgements, guidance. Every problem, sooner or later, lands on my desk.

General Why don't you take a break? Spend a weekend at my country estate. Get away from it all for a bit.

Minos It's very kind of you, but I don't have the time.

General I have a large private park. We could hunt boar. Nobody would know, it's very secluded.

Minos It's very tempting Cronos, but it's just . . . I don't know . . . I don't feel like it. What with all these crises, and the bull ritual coming up, I don't think I could relax anyway. Thanks for the offer.

General Any time.

Minos Now, about this war, who would you go for?

General It's hard to say.

Minos How about the Corinthians?

General If we attack the Corinthians the Athenians would have to join in on the side of the Corinthians.

Minos Oh, good point. What about Priene?

General Possible.

Minos A quick campaign, not many losses but lots of victories, a push-over.

General Are you sure?

Minos Cronos, I don't understand you. Why the reluctance? What's keeping you? Prepare the fleet and the army. I want you to be ready to move by next week.

General Very well, my Lord.

Minos Oh, and Cronos.

General Yes, my Lord Minos.

Minos There are some nasty rumours floating around about you and Queen Pasiphae, groundless, of course.

General Of course.

Minos But you know how out of hand these things can get, it would be best if you confined yourself to martial rather than marital activities in the future.

General Will there be anything else?

Minos I think not, dismissed.

[Exit General Cronos.]

The Minotaur sits in a pool of light in the labyrinth in meditative pose with his eyes shut.

Sounds of whispering, laughing, weeping, the occasional shout, and more acidic whispering reverberates around the auditorium from all around.

The Minotaur opens his eyes and the sounds die down.

Minotaur I hear them. All their thoughts, longings, the whole cracked tune. It seeps down to this place. Drip by drip – sometimes I think I will drown in it.

[Pause.]

All that is unspoken sooner or later ends up here. And it waits. Like me it

waits, until it has an opportunity to surface.

[A wave of whispering sounds circles around the auditorium.]

Listen to their voices. How afraid. How full of hope. They convince themselves, again and again, that everything is for the best, that they are not abandoned, are more than a speck of dust, that what they did yesterday and do today will mean something.

[Pause.]

Sirus says I think too much. He's probably right.

The market place, Chorus of Cretan people mime being T.V. sets with news presenters and newspaper headlines. They make the sound of static as the T.V. sets are tuned in.

Chorus Stay tuned!

Chorus Latest breaking news.

Chorus [All.] We keep you informed 24 hours a day.

Chorus Prienians expell Minoan traders!

Chorus News of atrocities.

Chorus Is this War?

Chorus Prieneans suspected of plotting terrorist action in the streets of Knossos!

Chorus King urges calm.

Chorus General Cronos to lead expeditionary force.

Chorus Crete declares right to defend itself against Prieneian aggression.

Chorus Is this war? In depth analysis.

Chorus Stop preening Priene!

Chorus Is war inevitable?

Chorus Priene plays for time.

Chorus Ten things you never knew about Priene.

Chorus Reservists expect call up any day now.

Chorus King urges vigilance.

Chorus [All] Beware the enemy within!

Sirus nervously crosses the market place on his way to the Palace. The Chorus becomes a group of idle Cretans hanging around the market place; they talk among themselves:

Chorus So I said to her, 'cause I love ya.

Chorus Lend us a fiver.

Chorus What did she say?

Chorus I haven't got a fiver.

Chorus If you loved me you wouldn't stay out all night.

Chorus Well, if a man can't have a drink with his friends –

Chorus What kind of world is it?

Chorus 'xactly.

As Sirus enters they fall silent and watch him, eye him suspiciously and stiffen into aggressive postures.

Chorus There's another one.

Chorus Looks like a dirty Prienean to me.

Chorus Fuckin' foreigners taking over.

Chorus [Shouting across to Sirus.]

Hey, oily boy.

Chorus [All] Laughter.

[Sirus hurries along, trying to ignore them. A member of the Chorus blocks his path.]

Chorus Are you deaf? My friend spoke to you.

Sirus I'm in a hurry.

Chorus Got business have we?

Sirus I'm on my way to the Palace.

Chorus [Imitating Sirus speaking.]

"I'm on my way to the Palace."

Sirus Let me pass.

Chorus It's rude to ignore my friend. I expect you've made him angry.

Chorus Yeah.

Sirus No offence intended.

Chorus There's a funny smell around here. What is it?

[Sniffs. Several of the chorus start sniffing too, approaching Sirus as they do so.]

Seems to be coming from around here.

Chorus Yeah, smells like, piss poor Prienean to me.

Chorus Yeah.

Chorus What a stench.

[The Chorus crowds around Sirus and starts pushing him from one to the other in playground bullying style.]

Chorus Ugh, get him away from me.

Chorus Yours.

Chorus Ugh, he touched me.

Chorus Stinking Prienean scum.

Chorus Scum!

Chorus Scum!

Chorus Scum!

Chorus [All] Scum!

[Leader of the Chorus spits on Sirius, who manages to wriggle away from them and flee.]

Chorus And don't let us see you 'round here again.

Chorus Fucking cunt stepped on my foot.

Chorus Bastard, you should've nudded him.

Chorus Are you sure you haven't got a fiver?

The Queens room. The Queen paces up and down in front of General Cronos.

Queen He really said that?

General Yes. As clear a warning as there could be.

Queen I can see there isn't going to be time for subtlety. We must act sooner rather than later.

General The war gives Minos a wonderful excuse to get me out of the way.

Queen Yes, yes, he's more cunning than I thought.

General What shall we do?

Queen All is not lost dear Cronos. We shall just have to be bolder than before.

General What?

Queen Let's do something dramatic, make a statement.

General Pasiphae? What do you have in mind?

Queen He can't send you away until after the ceremony.

General It is now being dedicated to 'Victory'

Queen How very appropriate. I feel this year's ceremony may be full of surprises.

General Are you suggesting? –

Queen     There will be an extra sacrifice this year. One not listed on the programme.

General    Risky.

Queen     Don't let me down, Cronos.

General    Of course not –

Queen     If you love me you will do it, before everyone, and prove that Minos is no more, it is Cronos who shall rule.

General    Yes.

Queen     You are so bold, so powerful, my hero.

General    Our love shall be baptised in the tyrants blood.

Queen     God you turn me on, Cronos, I love a man who knows what he wants and knows how to get it.

General    Our love inspires me. For your esteem I would slay a hundred men, march to the ends of the earth –

Queen     It will not be necessary to go so far.

General    But what if we fail?

Queen     We will not fail. Make these gentle arms into a strong anvil to smite the one who stands in our path.

General    I fear not for myself but what might happen to you.

Queen     We must follow our resolve. Remember, do not let 'I dare not' wait upon 'I would'. To achieve greatness we must take great risks. Screw your courage to the sticking place, feel the tension, the power that quivers within the bow, and unleash it at your enemy.

General    Your words are worth an army.

Ariadne and Theseus are in Ariadne's room. Theseus hold up before his face the ball of twine, gazing at it as if it was a crystal ball.

Theseus It looks so [a beat] ordinary.

Ariadne All the better to go unnoticed.

Theseus Amazing. You have to hand it to Daedalus, he's a crafty old nerd.

Ariadne The twine will lead you to the Minotaur but it is your skill that must slay the monster.

Theseus [Theseus pulls out his sword and begins to polish it.]  
This little darling has never let me down before.

Ariadne Oh Theseus, I shall be so worried. I never want you out of my sight. Hold me. It's too hard, I don't want you to go.

Theseus It has to be done.

Ariadne I don't want you to leave me, not for an instant, I only feel safe when you're around.

Theseus It's all right, Ariadne. I always win, I'm a hero, I have to win, it's what I'm for. When I get back we'll be together forever. You and me.

Ariadne Promise?

Theseus 'Course I promise. What sort of guy do you take me for?

Ariadne I couldn't bear it if you left me.

Theseus Well it ain't gonna happen so you needn't worry.

Ariadne When are you going to do it?

Theseus As soon as the dance begins we'll sneak away. By the time it ends it'll all be over. We'll be on a boat heading for Athens before Minos knows what's happened.

Ariadne Oh Theseus, you will be careful?

Theseus Don't worry about me, darling.  
[Theseus pulls Ariadne towards him and kisses her deeply.]  
How about some of that good lovin'?

Sirus and the Minotaur in the labyrinth, they sit and play chess, hunched over the board like the figures in the famous vase painting by Exekias of Ajax and Achilles. Brief tableaux.

Sirus        Sometimes I think you're better off down here.

Minotaur    Huh?

Sirus        You should see the state of them up there. Always fighting. And for what? Nothing.

Minotaur    We all inhabit our own prisons.

Sirus        It's getting dangerous on the streets. There's an ugly mob about. I almost got stopped on my way to the palace.

Minotaur    Everybody blames everyone else for the thing they most fear inside themselves.

Sirus        I don't know about that, but there was a lot of shoving going on.

Minotaur    Did they scare you?

Sirus        I have to be careful. I was born here but my grandfather was from Priene. They're targetting foreigners.

Minotaur    You're not foreign.

Sirus        I am now.

Minotaur    Because of your grandfather?

Sirus        Because of the way I look. They can tell I'm not 'native' Minoan.

Minotaur    They're fools.

Sirus        Maybe, but a fools kick is still a kick.

Minotaur    True. Perhaps you should invite them down to visit me here.

Sirus        [Laughs.]

Minotaur    Your move.

Sirus I can't concentrate.

Minotaur It's the end game.

Sirus I never like end games. Too tense. I think I'll resign.

Minotaur And spoil the fun?

Sirus You win.

Minotaur No, I lose.

Sirus Sometimes I don't understand a word you say.

Minotaur I am destined to lose. The day I was conceived the Gods had decided.

Sirus Don't talk like that.

Minotaur It will either happen today or on the eleventh of May.

Sirus What? What will happen?

Minotaur The endgame will end.

Sirus I'm not playing for that long. I've got work to do.

Minotaur Every day I become more weary. I drag myself around the labyrinth – to what purpose? I curse the day Pasiphae bore me. How ironic that a moment's passion can engender a life-time of agony.

Sirus [A beat.] Let's have another game.

Theseus is having a secret meeting with the Chorus of Athenian youths. They all huddle around him.

Theseus Right. Does everyone know what they've got to do?

Chorus You're cutting it fine.

Theseus It's the only way to do it.

Chorus We're right behind you.

Theseus Remember, make the dance good, keep them enthralled.

Chorus Sure thing.

Theseus Make it last as long as you can, I need as much time as you can give me.

Chorus You got it.

Chorus What about that spoilt bitch Ariadne?

Theseus Don't worry about her.

Chorus Can you trust her?

Chorus She looks like a flake to me.

Theseus Of course I can trust her, got her eating out of the palm of my hand. I've worked the Theseus magic on her.

Chorus [Chuckling.] Cool.

Chorus Do we have to take her with us?

Theseus Don't be stupid. She's our insurance for a safe passage out of Cretan waters. But don't worry, once she's no longer any use to us I'll dump her for the filthy little Minoan bitch she is.

General Cronos and Queen Pasiphae talk in a corridor.

Queen Remember, when you strike, strike swiftly and surely.

General Fear not, my aim is true.

Queen Your cue is the climax of the dance. As the King rises to accept their tribute – that is when you strike.

General I long for that moment.

Queen Dear Cronos, be true to your destiny and be great.

General With this arm I shall free us from our slavery.

Minos [Enter King Minos, accompanied by Sirius, Ariadne and Theseus.]

Oh there you are. Cronos, are you showing off your muscles again?

General I was merely explaining to Queen Pasiphae how we will crush the Prienean resistance.

Minos Yes, quite right. But we don't have time for that now, the dance is about to begin. It is an important moment.

Queen Indeed it is.

Minos Gather round. Pasiphae, this is a dignified occasion.

Queen Have I ever let you down?

Minos Let's not go into distasteful topics at this time.

Sirus Are you ready, my Lords?

Minos We are.

Sirus The Athenian tributes await your pleasure.

Minos Onward.

The Royal party enters the banqueting hall to the sound of trumpets. They seat themselves on a dais. King Minos addresses the crowd, i.e. the Chorus/audience.

Minos Friends, citizens, loyal subjects. This is indeed a fine occasion. At times like these I am reminded of the true greatness that is Crete. Minoan culture – the finest in the world – is respected and yes, sadly, envied, around the world. Small wonder it is that envious souls should covet that which is rightfully ours. But we know that one Minoan is worth a hundred foreigners.

[Pause.]

But enough of these sober thoughts. Now is a time for rejoicing. Let us reaffirm our faith in all we hold dear, and dedicate these our sacrifices to the continued world domination of the Minoan way, truth, liberty, commerce, you know it makes sense.

[Cheering from the Chorus. Polite applause from the Royal party. Minos silences the applause with a gesture.]

Let the celebrations begin.

[Enter the Chorus of Athenian youths, led by the Director, who bows extravagantly before the King, who acknowledges him while the dancers parade around the stage.]

Queen My hopes are with you General Cronos.

General Why thank you your majesty.

Queen I wish you God's speed with all your endeavours.

General And I, for my part, do dedicate them to you.

The Athenian tribute begin their dance to loud percussive ritual music. All look on, enthralled, as the dance is performed. Theseus and Ariadne sneak away. The dance continues with spectacular acrobatics. The dancers swirl around the stage unfurling long red banners and race across the stage and the scene changes to the labyrinth. The royal party has vanished, instead, Theseus moves cautiously through the labyrinth, his sword at the ready. The Minotaur sits cross legged on the floor in a contemplative pose, somewhat like a Zen master.

Minotaur You must be Theseus.

Theseus [Startled at being addressed by the 'monster'.]

Minotaur I've been expecting you.

Theseus Get back.

Minotaur What took you so long?

Theseus Stand and fight.

Minotaur Why?

Theseus Why? What kind of question is that?

Minotaur You came all this way to visit me so why should I fight you?

Theseus We're enemies.

Minotaur We've never met.

Theseus Makes no difference.

Minotaur Oh, I see. Tell me, is it harder to hate an 'enemy' you've never seen or, I don't know, perhaps it's easier.

Theseus Don't think you can put me off by talking. I won't let down my guard.

Minotaur Yes, talking never did much good, did it. Perhaps we should just sit here and think.

Theseus Think?

Minotaur Yes, Theseus, you know, the thing that is supposed to precede action.

Theseus [Thrusts his sword in front of the Minotaur.] Ha!

Minotaur Yes, very good, I'm sure.

Theseus [Executing flashy sword play before the Minotaur.] Ha! Ha! Ha!

Minotaur Bravo, very good, would you like a drink?

Theseus Don't give me that hospitality crap.

Minotaur I take it that's a 'no' then? I would've thought you'd be thirsty after your journey.

Theseus Yes, blood thirsty.

[Theseus lunges towards the Minotaur who does not flinch.]

Ha!

[Pause. Theseus, his sword quivering before the Minotaur's throat, is bewildered by the Minotaur's lack of reaction.]

Minotaur Go on.

Theseus [Pulls back his sword.]

You're spoiling everything.

Minotaur Am I?

Theseus You bloody know you are.

Minotaur Dear, dear.

Theseus You're supposed to fight.

Minotaur I'm afraid you've been listening to too many stories.

Theseus If you won't fight it takes all the fun out of it.

Minotaur Sorry.

Theseus Look, I'm a hero, I do great deeds, I need opposition, without it I can't be a hero.

Minotaur Shame. [Pause.] Perhaps there's something else you could do?

Theseus Just stay out of my life.

Minotaur Then you stay out of mine.

Theseus Can't be done. I'm on a quest, it's my destiny.

Minotaur Does it make you happy?

Theseus What?

Minotaur Your [a beat] destiny.

Theseus Don't talk crap.

Minotaur I just wondered.

Theseus It's not a question of 'happy', it's fate, innit.

Minotaur Oh.

Theseus Look, don't play dumb with me. If you won't fight it won't be the same, will it. It'd be like . . . instead of - 'Bold Theseus slays the fearsome Minotaur! Life and death struggle results in another amazing feat for hero Theseus' it'd be, 'Theseus and Minotaur have a bit of a chat over a cup of tea till Theseus stabs Minotaur to death in unprovoked homicidal attack' – see the difference?

Minotaur Not really.

Theseus Well it makes a difference to me.

Minotaur But no one will know. The victor writes the history. It is their version becomes the 'truth'.

Theseus Good point.

Minotaur If you win, whatever you tell people, that is what they will believe.

Theseus Yeah. You're smarter than you look.

Minotaur Thank you.

Theseus In which case I suppose there's not much point in talking.

[Without warning Theseus thrusts his sword repeatedly into the Minotaur in a very brutal way. Grunting with the exertion of stabbing the Minotaur as he says:]

You put up one hell of a struggle old mate. It was touch and go for quite a while, but in the end, as usual, good triumphs over evil.

[Theseus steps back and looks at the Minotaur sprawled on the floor in a pool of blood, gurgling noises slopping from his mouth.]

Same old story, eh. The people lap it up, they love it, gives 'em a nice warm feeling. It's nice to know the world's a safe place, innit.

[The Minotaur drags himself along the floor in his death agony. Theseus cleans off his sword on the Minotaur's cloak.]

Well. I'd love to stay and chat for a while, but I must be going, got a boat waiting. And by the way, 'case you were wondering, that sister of yours, she really is as stupid as she looks, one dumb fuck, and not even a good shag.

[Exit Theseus. The Minotaur crawls into a corner to die.]

The dancers reappear swirling their red banners across the stage. As the banners subside the Royal party is once again seated on the dias, enjoying the dance. The dance continues with more acrobatic displays.

Minos [The King rises to his feet and begins applauding.]

Bravo! Bravo! Truly wonderful.

General [The general begins to stand, grasping his sword as he does so.]

Sirus [Spots the general reaching for his sword, guesses what is about to happen and pushes King Minos out of the way.]

General [Lunges with his sword but misses the King due to the quick action of Sirus. The Chorus of dancers scream and run out of the room.]

Minos [Leaps to his feet, grabs a sword and Minos and the General have a sword fight at the end of which Minos fatally wounds General Cronos who falls at his feet.]

Minos [To Sirus.] Well done.

Sirus It was nothing.

Minos [To Cronos.] You're a fool Cronos.

General It was all for love.

Minos Love of power.

General No, love of –

Queen [To Cronos.] You traitor! How could you repay our faith in you in this way?

General Pasiphae?

Queen Don't you dare speak to me with your traitors tongue.

[The Queen takes out a dagger and slits the General's throat.]

Minos Really, my dear, I wish you wouldn't be so hasty.

Queen He tried to kill you!

Minos Yes, I noticed, but I would have liked to have a word with him before he died.

Queen He never had anything to say anyway. He was always hopelessly lacking in conversation.

Minos [Looking around.] Where is Ariadne, and that fellow Theseus?

[Enter a member of the Chorus as one of the Cretan people.]

Chorus My Lord.

Minos Yes, what is it?

Chorus There is a great commotion at the docks.

Minos What now?

Chorus The Athenians are escaping in one of the boats and have scuppered the fleet.

Minos Call out the guard – stop those Athenians!

[At this point a deafening bellow of agony reverberates around the auditorium.]

My God, what's that?

Sirus The Minotaur!

Minos Take me to him.

Sirus leads Minos into the labyrinth where they discover the Minotaur lying in a pool of blood.

Sirus Oh no.

Minos Asterius?

Minotaur [Raises his head.] Who calls me by my name.

Minos It is I, Minos.

[Minos crouches down and cradles the dying Minotaur in his arms.]

Minotaur Nobody calls me by my name.

Minos Easy, easy.

Minotaur It has been a long day.

Minos Who did this?

Minotaur A true hero.

Minos      Who?

Minotaur   They call him, Theseus.

Minos      A curse on his house.

Minotaur   He has freed me.

Minos      Asterius . . .

Minotaur   I waited, I waited, so long –

Minos      Hush now. [To Sirius.] Leave us.

Sirus      But, my Lord –

Minos      I said leave us.

Sirus      But you don't understand –

Minos      Leave us to our grief.

Sirus      But Lord Minos –

Minos      Go. Away!

Sirus      Very well. [Exiting.] If you need me – .

Minos      Go. [To Minotaur.] Noble Asterius – for so long I kept you hidden away.  
I feared to see you. But now I realise my fear was a phantom, cast by my  
own mind.

Minotaur   But now you have come for me.

Minos      Yes.

Minotaur   I've waited so long - but I knew you would come.

Minos      You were a gift I didn't recognise.

Minotaur   Are you going to bring me out into the light?

Minos      Yes, Asterius. Into the light.

Minotaur   We are [a beat] always [a beat] waiting for something. We think [a  
beat] we know. But when it happens [a beat] still we are not [a beat]  
prepared. . .

[He dies. King Minos cradles the dead Minotaur in his arms and weeps

as the light begins to fade.]

Minos [Pause.] Sirius? [Pause.] Sirius? [Pause.] The way, Sirius. [Pause.]  
Which is the way? [Blackout at this point.] Sirius? [Pause.] Sirius?  
[Pause.] Sirius!

The End