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Theseus and the Minotaur

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A long time ago, a little boy named Theseus lived at the foot of a high mountain on the southern coast of the Greek mainland. The little boy was sent there with his mother by his father Aegeus, king of Athens, when he was born. Only when the boy was strong enough to lift a rock was he allowed to come to Athens. Aegeus had hidden his old sword and sandals under it.

When Theseus turned eighteen, he proved strong enough to lift the stone and set out with the sandals and sword for Athens to visit his father, King Aegeus. During the journey, the boy encountered monsters, robbers and thieves, but he managed to defeat them all. There was a lot of talk about him. The people began to see him as the bravest hero in the land.

In the meantime, King Aegeus had married Medea and together they had had a son named Medos. With the arrival of the strong and publicly adored Theseus, Medea worried that Medos would no longer be heir to the throne, but that the people would choose Theseus. Therefore, she made an attempt to poison the boy, which failed. Immediately afterwards she disappeared with her son Medos, something which Aegeus was very happy about.

One day Aegeus told his son that the mighty king Milos had built a labyrinth under his castle on the island of Crete. In that labyrinth lived a Minotaur, a creature that was shaped part human and part bull. The labyrinth consisted of hundreds of corridors. Every person who went in had never come out. Years ago, the island of Crete was at war with the city of Athens, killing many Athenians brutally. Peace would come on the condition that Athens send seven young men and seven virgins every year to be devoured by the hideous creature. This was now the third year that the city had been filled with parental grief and fear that one of their children would be taken.



Theseus proposed to be the seventh young man, so that he had the chance to kill the Minotaur. Aegeus could not stop him, so he prepared a ship for his

departure to the island of Crete. In parting, Aegeus said to his son, "As you see, the ship sails with black sails. When you come back, use the white sails so I know you're still alive. I will be on the lookout every day from the rock."

And so the ship set sail and the crew reached the castle of Milos. There Theseus became acquainted with the ruthless king and his daughter Ariadne. The king was cruel and mean, but his daughter, however, was gentle and lovely. She threw herself at her father's feet and begged him to release all the captives, especially the handsome Theseus.



"Don't be such a fool!" Milos yelled at her. "These are affairs of state, you don't understand any of it! Let me do my business and don't interfere!"

Then the boys and girls were put in jail to be taken to the labyrinth the next morning. Theseus did not sleep that night. Ariadne got him out of prison and wanted to help him escape. But Theseus said that he had come to kill the Minotaur to rid the city of Athens from this terrible monster. So she gave him his sword and led him to the labyrinth. There he could defeat the creature with his sword. She gave him a silk thread, the end of which he had to hold on to. She would hold the other end and thus Theseus would find the way back out of the labyrinth.

In the middle of the labyrinth, Theseus saw the Minotaur: a terrible creature that came towards him like a mad bull. A great battle between sword and horns ensued and in the end it was Theseus who defeated the Minotaur.

Ariadne was still outside waiting for Theseus, and thanks to the silken thread Theseus had managed to hold onto throughout the fight, he found his way back out of the labyrinth.

"You must now quickly fetch the prisoners and sail away," said Ariadne. "My father will avenge the Minotaur's death. Go quickly!" Theseus wanted to take Ariadne with him, but she wanted to stay with her father. "I know you think he's a bad person, but I think he'll forgive me - his only child - in the long run and I'm pretty sure that at some point he'll also like the fact that he doesn't have to sacrifice anymore innocent children to the Minotaur."

So Theseus and the other boys and girls went back to the ship where they set sail for Athens. But in his haste Theseus had forgotten to exchange the black sails for the white ones.

When the king, standing on the cliff, saw that the ship had set its black sails, he thought that his beloved son Theseus had died, and in despair and sorrow he

plunged from the cliff into the sea.

This was very painful and sad news for Theseus, who when he stepped ashore immediately became king of the whole land. He had his mother come to Athens and he followed her advice in matters of state and thus managed to become a very good king for the country and he was very much loved by the people.

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