

Literature: Prose 1

Ariadne's Story

Background to the story

This story takes place when King Minos was the King of Crete. His daughter, Ariadne, was in love with a young man called Enarus, but her father thought he was not a suitable¹ husband. King Minos sent Enarus away from Crete. Ariadne was very unhappy, she wanted to find a way to escape from Crete so that she could find Enarus.

King Minos was the strongest king in the world. Every year, the King of Athens had to send him a gift of fourteen young men and women to take part in the bullfights. When they died in the bullfights, King Minos gave their bodies to the Minotaur to eat. The Minotaur was a very frightening monster that lived in the Labyrinth below the king's palace. It had the head of a bull and the body of a man.

In this story, Ariadne tells how a young prince from Athens called Theseus fought a dangerous white bull.

Chapter 2 Messages and dreams

The next morning there were crowds and crowds of people at the bullring when I arrived. Everyone wanted to watch Theseus's fight with the white bull. I made my way to the special seats where all the important people sat, high above the crowd. My father smiled when he saw me, and he waved at the crowd. Then he sat down and the fight began. Theseus came into the bullring and bowed to my father.

Then the white bull came in. It was big and very angry. Theseus danced very quickly and cleverly around the animal. He was never far from the bull's horns, but it couldn't catch him. In the end, it became very tired. At that moment Theseus jumped up and over the bull's horns, and killed it with his knife. Everyone shouted and roared². 'Theseus! Theseus!'



My father jumped up. He was just as excited as the ordinary people.

The crowds stopped shouting when they saw my father on his feet. Theseus bowed to him.

'Well done Theseus!' said my father. 'Because you have pleased me, I'll give you what you ask for. What will it be? A hundred gold pieces?'

Theseus looked up at my father.

'I don't want gold, great king,' he answered.

'Then what do you want?' asked Minos, surprised.

'Freedom,' said Theseus, 'for me and for all those who have come with me from Athens, freedom not to die in the Labyrinth. We want to go home alive. I also ask for freedom in the future for young people from Athens to live long lives and never to meet the Minotaur!'

Chapter 3 Escape plans

My father was very angry with Theseus. None of the bullfighters ever asked for freedom. They all knew that they had to die in the Labyrinth. The Minotaur had to eat, and my father could not break his promise to the gods.

'Because you have asked this thing,' Minos said to Theseus, 'you have made our gods angry. You must go to the Minotaur at once. You have until midday to say goodbye to your friends, and then my servants will take you to the Labyrinth.'

The crowds were silent. Theseus walked past the dead bull with his head high. He was going back to the cage under the bullring where they kept all the bullfighters before they went to fight the bulls. Like everyone there, I was sorry that he had to die. Then suddenly I thought of something. Theseus needed to leave Crete and so did I. Perhaps we could help each other. How could I save³ him from the monster?

From *Ariadne's Story*, by Joyce Hannam, Dominoes Readers.

Glossary

- 1 suitable** – something that is right for a situation
- 2 roar** – to make a loud noise like a lion or other animal
- 3 save** – to take someone out of danger