

## The Adventures of Theseus

scene 1, a small fishing village some distance from Athens. A large rock centre backstage.

*(enter Theseus with his mother, Aethra)*

AETHRA Thank you Theseus for all your help building our new house.

THESEUS That's no problem, mother. I'm pleased to help.

AETHRA I really couldn't have done it without you, darling. All that heavy lifting.

THESEUS Honestly, I don't know what all the fuss is about. I mean rocks aren't that heavy are they? As long as you can get your arms round them, they're quite easy to lift.

*(enter a villager struggling to carry a large and clearly heavy sack)*

THESEUS Hello friend. Nice day.

VILLAGER Theseus. Aethra.

AETHRA Are you OK?

VILLAGER Not really. I've got to take this sack up to the village, and it is so heavy.

THESEUS *(lifting the sack easily)* What this one? *(to Aethra)* Poor man. There must be something wrong with him.

VILLAGER If only someone could help me.

THESEUS Oh, sure, no problem. I'll take it for you. *(Theseus slings the sack over his shoulder)*

VILLAGER Oh, brilliant, thanks.

*(exit villager)*

THESEUS Is there someone to look after him do you think? He must be sick or something.

AETHRA Not everyone has your strength my darling.

*(enter another villager)*

VILLAGER2 Hello Theseus.

THESEUS Hello.

VILLAGER2 I'm having terrible trouble getting the lid off this jar. I wonder if you could give me a hand.

THESEUS Oh, sure, no problem.

*(Theseus easily removes the lid)*

VILLAGER2 Thanks Theseus.

THESEUS Any time.

*(exit villager)*

THESEUS What is it with these people? Perhaps they're not getting enough iron in their diet.

AETHRA Theseus.

THESEUS Yes mother.

AETHRA Have you ever noticed that you are different to the other people round here?

THESEUS Oh sure. I mean, everyone else seems to be really into all this jangly lyre music, but I don't really like it. I much prefer techno and dubstep. Anything with a bit of a beat really. I don't think people really understand me. I'm a very complex person. I'm not that keen on fish. Sometimes I feel so alone.

AETHRA I didn't mean that. Your taste in music is your own concern, and as for fish, we've all had enough of that. Don't you ever feel that you don't belong here?

THESEUS Well, duh, of course I do.

AETHRA Theseus, I need to tell you something about your father.

THESEUS Euripedes, the travelling toga salesman from Samos? Euripedes, you pay for them?

*(there could possibly be a cymbal crash or some such at this point)*

AETHRA Yes. I haven't been entirely honest with you.

THESEUS You mean he's not from Samos?

AETHRA No. And he wasn't a travelling toga salesman either. And he wasn't called Euripedes. In fact, there wasn't even one of them. Fathers I mean. Theseus, you have two fathers.

THESEUS Two fathers? How does that work?

AETHRA It's complicated. You'll understand when you're older.

THESEUS I will?

AETHRA Maybe not. How can I explain? I was young, Theseus, and in love. With someone who turned out to be the King of Athens. And I loved him, I really did. But then this other bloke turns up, says he's the god of the sea. That's quite a chat-up line in a fishing village I can tell you. Anyway, the upshot is, they're both your father. Not that I've seen hide nor hair of either of them since you were born, nothing for your birthday, Christmas ... Theseus, are you all right dear?

THESEUS I'm sorry mother. It's just rather a lot to take in. I've grown up thinking I was abandoned by a lowly toga salesman, and now it turns out I've been abandoned by a king and a god.

*(two village maidens walk past giggling flirtatiously at Theseus)*

THESEUS Ciao bella.

AETHRA Theseus. You may be a royal demi-god but I'm still your mother.

THESEUS But don't you understand, mother, this changes everything. All my life I've thought about rewarding your selfless devotion to me by running away to find my feckless father, but I couldn't bear the idea of becoming a travelling toga salesman. And now I discover I can run away to find my feckless father and become a god of the sea.

AETHRA Don't forget, Theseus, you don't like fish.

THESEUS The King of Athens then.

*(enter villagers)*

SONG HERE *(So Long, So Long)*

AETHRA Well, if you are determined to go, I can't stop you. There is one thing you should know before you go.

THESEUS What is that mother?

AETHRA You see that big rock behind you?

THESEUS What about it mother?

AETHRA Well, just before he cruelly abandoned me, your father, Aegeus, the king of Athens, said that he had left something under that rock for you.

THESEUS For me? Really? A present! Oh goodie!

*(Theseus lifts the rock and swings it around. The villagers scatter.)*

THESEUS Presents!

*(Theseus throws the rock onto the ground, crushing a villager)*

THESEUS Look, mother, a sword. I've always wanted one of those. And a pair of old sandals.

AETHRA Aegeus said that, if you could prove you were worthy by moving the rock and retrieving these items, he would accept you in Athens as his son. Typical man. No word of thanks to me for looking after you all these years.

THESEUS Mother. I will travel to Athens to meet my father. I will give him back his sandals.

AETHRA I think he meant for you to wear them, love.

THESEUS Really? Oh. Very well. I will wear these sandals, smelly token of a father's love, and this sword, and journey to Athens to claim my rightful place as my father's son.

AETHRA That's fine. I didn't want to go to Athens anyway.

THESEUS (*nobly*) Mother, I will never forget you.

AETHRA So you'll come back and get me?

THESEUS I grieve that I will never see you again.

AETHRA But you'll send money?

THESEUS My heart breaks at the thought of you living the rest of your days in accursed poverty. (*Aethra begins to sob*) But I must steel my heart against your plaintive cries and embark on this noble quest that is my birthright.

VILLAGER But who will work in the quarry now?

OTHER VILL. And take the lids off our jars when they get stuck?

THESEUS Villagers. I have shared your miserable existence for nineteen years. I have laboured with you in the quarry and the fields, partaken of your meagre harvest, endured the ever-present smell of fish. And now I wish to say ... good luck losers, I'm off.

(*Theseus runs off stage*)

AETHRA Theseus. You've forgotten your sword and your sandals.

(*enter Theseus sheepishly*)

AETHRA Really, you'd forget your head if it wasn't screwed on. Make sure you wrap up warm. Do you want a nice warm drink before you go? Don't talk to any strangers. And watch out for those Athenian women ...

(*the chorus moves to the front of the stage*)

CHORUS As noble Theseus bids his farewell  
Let's use the power of this humble stage  
And bid the nine Muses cast their spell  
To turn our story onto a new page.  
In this, fair Greece's mythic golden age  
We visit the courts of two mighty kings,  
King Minos of Crete, his heart full of rage,  
And Aegeus of Athens, whose heart sings  
With regret for his long-lost son and heir.  
Two courts, two kings. Come, let us take you there.

scene 2. Stage left, the court of King Aegeus of Athens. Stage right, the court of King Minos of Crete.

MINOS           How goes the war, noble Daedelus?

DAEDELUS       Your majesty, we've got them licked. The Athenians are crawling before our victorious troops.

MINOS           Excellent. I always like a bit of crawling. Especially from the Athenians. They're always so pompous. Oh, look at us, we've invented civilisation. We've invented mathematics. The square on the hypoteneuse is equal to the sum of the square of the other two sides. What does that even mean?

DAEDELUS       Well, if you have a right-angled triangle and –

MINOS           It was a rhetorical question, Daedelus.

DAEDELUS       Oh, I see. Very good. Your highness, they are asking for the terms of surrender.

MINOS           Surrender, eh? Oh I always enjoy this bit. Let's see. Something humiliating. And strangely cruel.

DAEDELUS       We could plunder the city.

MINOS           No, I've got enough plunder.

DAEDELUS       Enslave their maidens?

MINOS           Look around you, Daedelus. Do I look like I need more maidens? They're such hard work.

DAEDELUS       Kill the king and feed him to his children?

MINOS           Boring.

ARIADNE       *(looking up from her knitting)* Perhaps we could show them mercy?

MINOS           Ariadne, darling, the men are talking.

DAEDELUS       Take the captured soldiers and boil them alive in a large cauldron?

MINOS           It's so hard getting the firewood. Besides, we're already using the cauldron for those Phoenicians.

ARIADNE       Show your wisdom, father, through the character of your mercy. How would you wish to be remembered? As a great king, noble, just, and wise, whose name honours Crete through the endless ages of future time? Or as a tyrant, petty and cruel, who shames our beloved island for all eternity?

MINOS           Honestly, Ariadne, we're trying to have a conversation here. What are you doing anyway?

ARIADNE       I'm knitting woolly hats for our brave soldiers.

MINOS           Our soldiers need no woolly hats. They are kept warm by their love of Crete.

DAEDELUS Tie them all up for the vultures to peck out their eyes?

MINOS I like your style.

ARIADNE Their love of Crete will only be sullied by these cruel stratagems you are devising.

*(Minos rolls his eyes at Daedelus)*

MINOS Get us a cup of tea, will you Ariadne? Milk, two sugars.

*(Ariadne throws down her knitting in disgust and exits.)*

MINOS Women, eh?

DAEDELUS Your nastiness, it has to be said that your daughter, although naive, is most fair.

MINOS Watch it, Daedelus, none of that funny stuff all right? Now, where were we?

DAEDELUS Vultures, your richness.

MINOS Unfortunately the royal vultures have all died of bird flu.

*(meanwhile on the other side of the stage)*

AEGEUS Oh woe. Oh sorrow. Oh sorrow. Oh woe. What sorrow. What woe. What sorrow and what woe.

MEDEA Honestly, Aegeus, get a grip of yourself.

AEGEUS But Medea, darling, my heart is full of great grief and sorrow and

MEDEA Woe. Yes, you've mentioned that already.

AEGEUS Oh sorrow. Oh woe.

MEDEA Here we go again.

AEGEUS What would you have me do in the hour of our defeat?

MEDEA You know what I did when I was in spot of bother?

AEGEUS Yes I do. Seems a bit extreme to me. Anyway, I haven't got any children. Well, there was this boy, in a small fishing village somewhere. His mother was lovely. Then she ran off with Poseidon. Happy days. Not like today. Oh evil day! Oh sorrow! Oh woe!

MEDEA Here we go again.

*(back in Crete)*

DAEDELUS Cover them in honey and feed them to the bees?

MINOS A waste of honey.

DAEDELUS Turn them into spiders and trap them in a giant bath.

MINOS            Yes but you can't get the wizards any more. What we really need is some kind of horrible monster to terrify them with.

*(during this, enter Ariadne with tea. She gives them their tea then resumes her knitting again)*

*(a loud, bullish roar)*

MINOS            Is that my little cherub, the Minotaur? He must be hungry. You'd better get another maiden to feed to him, Daedelus.

DAEDELUS        Yes, your ruthlessness.

*(Daedelus makes to go, but stops himself)*

DAEDELUS        Do you know, I've just had a rather good idea.

*(back in Athens)*

*(enter a messenger)*

MESSENGER      Message for King Aegeus from King Minos of Crete.

AEGEUS           *(takes the scroll from the messenger)* The terms of our surrender. Perhaps he has shown us mercy, Medea. How bad can it be?

MEDEA            You seem a bit more cheerful today.

AEGEUS           Yes, well, I've had a jolly good think. It's not all doom and gloom is it? There's no point being a grumpy-guts. Look on the bright side, that's what I say.

*(Aegeus reads the scroll)*

AEGEUS           Oh sorrow! Oh woe! Oh sorrow and woe!

MEDEA            Not that again. Here, give that to me. *(begins to read)* 'I Minos, the most powerful and feared King of Crete, conqueror of Athens, winner of the All-Greece Karaoke Championship three years running' ...

AEGEUS           That was rigged. I should have won with my Mick Jagger.

MEDEA            'Proud possessor of the most impressive beard in the whole of the Mediterranean'  
...

AEGEUS           His beard is rubbish!

MEDEA            ... hereby call upon King Aegeus to surrender before my gracious majesty, on the following terms. Firstly, to proclaim in the public square in Athens that King Minos has the best beard ever' ...

AEGEUS           No!

MEDEA 'and secondly, to send to Crete the seven most courageous youths and the seven fairest maidens as tribute.'

AEGEUS Oh, that's nasty.

MEDEA Can't be helped. Anyway, they're only young people. We won't really miss them.

AEGEUS Whatever you say dear. Guards, dispose of this purveyor of sorrow and doom.

*(guards seize the messenger and drag him off stage)*

MESSENGER *(as he is dragged away)* Hey, hey, what are you doing? You can't do this. It's not my fault. I'm just the messenger. Haven't you ever heard the phrase, don't shoot the messenger?

*(offstage, the sound of a heavy blow and an impressive groan from the messenger)*

*(chorus to the front of the stage again)*

CHORUS Now let us leave the courts of troubled kings  
And journey once more down to the wild shores  
Where a youth dreams of what the morning brings.  
It is Theseus. Look. He sleeps. He snores.  
For the first time passing the night outdoors  
He tosses and turns in his thistled bed  
His heart aches for honour in hard-fought wars  
And steadies his mind for the day ahead.  
Joyous trav'ling with his sandals and sword,  
Hoping to meet his Athenian lord.

scene 3. On the road to Athens.

*(Theseus asleep at the front of the stage. The sound of birdsong as the sun rises)*

THESEUS *(waking up)* Oh, by the beard of Zeus, my back hurts. And I've got thistles in my bum. What a night. I don't think I slept at all. And I've nothing for breakfast. Oh I wish I'd never left home. It's such a long way to Athens. And my feet ache in these sandals.

*(enter Procrustes, carrying an axe)*

PROCRUSTES Hail noble traveller on the road to Athens.

THESEUS Hail to you, wizened and slightly creepy looking old man. Do you know of anywhere a weary traveller might get something for breakfast? A little prosciutto, perhaps some pecorino and a nice espresso.



PROCRUSTES I know nothing of these foods of which you speak. I eat only goat's droppings and dried twigs.

THESEUS Perhaps I'll pass on breakfast. No wonder you look so wizened.

PROCRUSTES But, noble traveller, you say you are weary.

THESEUS Oh yes. I've never slept out in the open before. It was freezing. And I couldn't get comfortable. I don't think I slept a wink all night. I'm on my way to Athens, but all I really want to do is to have a rest in a nice comfortable bed.

PROCRUSTES Then, noble traveller, you are in luck. For I have a bed.

THESEUS You do?

PROCRUSTES Oh yes. I carry it with me, for occasions such as these.

THESEUS You do?

PROCRUSTES (*eying Theseus up for size, perhaps measuring him with a tape measure*) You never know when you will meet a weary traveller. I'm on Trip Advisor you know.

THESEUS All good I hope?

PROCRUSTES No-one has complained yet.

THESEUS The signal out here in the wilderness is so bad, I'll have to take your word for it. But tell me, wrinkled yet strangely benevolent old man, where is this bed of which you speak?

PROCRUSTES I'll just have to go and get it. It's over there.

THESEUS Over there?

PROCRUSTES Yes, just off-stage. Hang on a mo and I'll bring it to you.

*(exit Procrustes)*

THESEUS How delightful. They really are so hospitable in the country. These rural types can teach us town dwellers a thing or two about generosity.

*(enter Procrustes with a very short camp bed)*

PROCRUSTES Here we are kind sir.

THESEUS That really is most good of you. But it looks rather short. Do you think I will fit in it?

PROCRUSTES (*absent-mindedly swinging his axe*) Oh, you'll fit in it all right.

THESEUS Are you sure? I am quite tall for my age, everyone says so.

PROCRUSTES (*sweetly*) Why don't you try it and see?

THESEUS But really, look, it's tiny.

PROCRUSTES *(shouting)* Get in the bed!

THESEUS Rightio.

*(Theseus lays down on the bed. It is far too small for him)*

THESEUS Look, I told you. It's far too short. My legs hang right over the edge. I'm sorry, it's more uncomfortable than the floor. It was a nice thought, but I'll just get up and be on my way.

*(Theseus tries and fails to get up out of the bed)*

THESEUS I can't get up.

PROCRUSTES That's because it's a magic bed. No human can arise from it once they lay down.

THESEUS But I don't fit in it properly.

PROCRUSTES That's what the axe is for.

*(Procrustes raises the axe over his head)*

THESEUS You're going to chop off my legs?

PROCRUSTES That's right.

THESEUS I will not be writing a good review about this on Trip Advisor.

PROCRUSTES I don't care. The internet hasn't been invented yet.

THESEUS Then why did I buy this iPhone 5?

PROCRUSTES Search me.

*(Procrustes raises the axe above his head once more)*

THESEUS Wait. Why go to all this trouble with the magic bed? Why not just cut off my legs?

PROCRUSTES Every bandit needs a gimmick. It's not so easy getting noticed these days.

*(Procrustes raises his axe above his head again)*

THESEUS Wait!

PROCRUSTES What now?

THESEUS Did you say no human can arise from the bed once they have laid down?

PROCRUSTES That's right.

THESEUS But I'm not human. I'm a demi-god. My father was Poseidon, the god of the sea.

PROCRUSTES I thought I could smell fish.

*(Theseus rises from the bed just as Procrustes swings the axe down.)*

PROCRUSTES Uh-oh.

*(Whilst Procrustes is still off-balance, Theseus grabs his axe and pushes him into the bed)*

THESEUS So, decrepit and obnoxious stranger, how does it feel now?

PROCRUSTES You're right, it is very uncomfortable.

THESEUS Well, let's see if we can make you fit in it shall we?

PROCRUSTES You wouldn't hurt a defenceless old man would you?

THESEUS Yes I think I would.

*(Theseus raises the axe above his head with a manic glint in his eye)*

*(the chorus hurry to the front of the stage, to cover up the scene behind)*

CHORUS This upsetting scene of dismemberment  
Is not fitting for those with tender eyes  
Or those under eighteen. The management  
(On the advice of their lawyers) denies  
All claims for refunds. This scene complies  
With all relevant legislation, though  
It must be admitted, the old man dies.  
Justice and honour is upheld, and so  
Theseus, wiser than he was before,  
Resolves always to sleep upon the floor.

*(the chorus depart to reveal a bloodied Theseus and Procrustes laying legless upon the bed)*

THESEUS Let that be a lesson to you, legless and disgusting old man.

PROCRUSTES Don't worry, I won't be doing that again.

*(Procrustes dies)*

THESEUS It's so nice to be able to improve the morals of these simple country folk. Ah well. I had better hit the road. It's still a long way to Athens.

CHORUS So let us leave brave Theseus once more  
To travel on his long and weary road,  
Whilst we take you to the wild Cretan shore  
Where Minos, bitter Cretan king, is showed  
Athens' response to his demands. Hate sowed  
Bitter flowers in his heart, which have bloomed  
Into a forest of lies, which explode

Now from his cruel mouth, where they were entombed.  
To put it simply, so you understand,  
He is just an extremely nasty man.

scene 4. The Court of King Minos

*(enter Minos and Daedalus, attended by servants, and a messenger)*

MINOS            So, messenger, you come from Athens with news for me.

MESSENGER    Yes, I do.

DAEDELUS      Well, come on now, spit it out. There's no need to be nervous.

MESSENGER    I, er, well, um ...

MINOS           Unless it is bad news, in which case I would be very nervous indeed.

MESSENGER    Er, well, um ...

DAEDELUS      I'm not sure that is helping, your nastiness.

MINOS           Oh right. *(sweetly to the messenger)* Come now, friend, you can tell me.

MESSENGER    King Aegeus wishes it to be known that he will provide you with seven courageous youths and seven fair maidens as you demand.

MINOS           Oh very good.

MESSENGER    Although he resents the implication that maidens are only to be valued for their beauty and not their courage.

MINOS           Fair point.

DAEDELUS      As a matter of fact, we are implementing an equal opportunities policy for maidens.

MESSENGER    But –

MINOS           Yes?

MESSENGER    King Aegeus also wants it to be known that he thinks your beard is rubbish.

MINOS           My beard? Rubbish? How dare he? *(to servants)* Take this man and kill him horribly.

MESSENGER    *(as he is dragged away)* Me? I'm just the messenger. Personally, I think your beard is terrific.

*(messenger dragged off stage by servants)*

MESSENGER    Aaargh! (*and other impressive dying noises*)

(*re-enter servants, covered in blood*)

MINOS            I am a reasonable man.

(*servants all agree*)

MINOS            I am a just and noble king.

(*servants all agree again*)

MINOS            But no-one is rude about my beard and gets away with it. Now, which one of you will volunteer to take a message to King Aegeus?

(*the servants all look at their feet*)

MINOS            Will no-one volunteer for this noble mission? Very well. (*to a servant*) Tell me, is it not true that I have the best beard in the whole of the Mediterranean?

SERVANT        Zeus himself could not grow such a beard.

MINOS            But my wife does not like it. What say you now?

SERVANT        That your wife knows nothing of such manly things.

MINOS            You dare to call my wife stupid? Kill him!

(*impressive dying noises as the servant is killed by the others*)

MINOS            (*to another servant*) What say you of my wife's opinion of my beard?

2<sup>ND</sup> SERVANT    That your wife knows much of such manly things.

MINOS            You dare to call my wife a man!

2<sup>ND</sup> SERVANT    I didn't mean that.

MINOS            Kill him!

(*more dying noises as this servant is killed by the others*)

MINOS            (*to a third servant*) And you. What say you to this beardy conundrum?

3<sup>RD</sup> SERVANT    I say your wife is wise in a wifely way, but not as subtle as you, my king. For she does not appreciate the way in which your magnificent beard strikes fear into your enemies, and thinks only of the way it drops into your soup and tickles when she kisses you.

MINOS            A cunning answer, worthy of a diplomat. You shall be my messenger. Daedelus, come help me write something really rude.

CHORUS          So must Minos with his fabulous beard

Defend the honour of his facial hair.  
How can a king be respected and feared  
If his bushy chin don't make people stare?  
But look at our hero's chin and ask where  
Is the moustache or the beard? If you please,  
Theseus is young and the young don't care  
To grow moustaches or fancy goatees.  
Grow facial hair only if you can't stop  
It being clear that you've lost it on top.

scene 5. The road to Athens, again.

THESEUS      Enough of such beard-related philosophising! I must find the way to Athens. And I am lost. Let me ask this old man for directions. Hello, gnarled old man, barely living proof that you grow from your chin what you can no longer grow on your head.

SCIRON        Hello, arrogant and smooth-chinned youth, who knows not how to display their wisdom on their chin.

THESEUS      A strange kind of wisdom that requires one to cover one's face.

SCIRON        When you get to my age you need all the help you can get. Talking of help, I have struggled to the top of this lonely and windswept cliff top, and now my feet are aching and dirty.

THESEUS      Yes, I noticed.

SCIRON        Sorry about that. It's been a very hot day. You couldn't help me wash them could you?

THESEUS      Wash your feet? That's horrible.

SCIRON        I would do it myself, but I am so old, I can't bend down.

THESEUS      Sorry, but no. You'll have to do it yourself.

SCIRON        You look hungry.

THESEUS      I am. I haven't eaten for days.

SCIRON        Wash my feet and I'll give you some food. I have some gorgonzola.

THESEUS      I've gone off cheese for some reason. Out of my way, old man. This is all too disgusting for words.

SCIRON        Wash my feet and I'll tell you the way to Athens.

THESEUS      Very well. I have no wish to throw you off this cliff, smelly as you are. And I am lost.

SCIRON            You'll have to kneel down in front of me.

*(Theseus kneels)*

SCIRON            No, not there. How about over here?

THESEUS          What, just on the edge of the cliff?

SCIRON            That's right. That is where the wind is at its strongest. You will not have to suffer the smell.

THESEUS          Good point.

SCIRON            That looks like a very fine sword you have there.

THESEUS          Yes, my father gave it to me.

SCIRON            That's nice. Perhaps you should take it off and I'll just pop it in my bag.

THESEUS          What?

SCIRON            For safekeeping. Here's a bowl of water and some soap.

THESEUS          Thanks. But now I get closer, I can see your feet are clean. What is going on, old man?

SCIRON            Yes, my feet are clean. It is this gorgonzola cheese whose foul odour carries on the air. Now I have you where I want you, I will push you to your death over the cliff and steal your sword. *(laughs evilly)*

THESEUS          Bad luck old man. You have spent too long laughing and not enough time pushing. I am Theseus, son of Aegeus the King of Athens and Poseidon, god of the sea.

SCIRON            I thought I could smell fish.

THESEUS          *(grabs the old man and holds him by his shirt over the cliff)* Prepare to die.

SCIRON            You wouldn't hurt an old man would you?

THESEUS          Hurting old men is what I do best.

SCIRON            But don't you want to know the way to Athens?

THESEUS          Is that Athens hundreds of feet below us in the valley?

SCIRON            Yes, that's right.

THESEUS          Then I'll see you there!

*(Theseus pushes Sciron off the cliff)*

*(Sciron's scream dies away. A loud thud.)*

THESEUS           Honestly, these country folk. No manners. I'll be glad to get to Athens. A higher class of people there.

CHORUS            So Theseus, taking care not to slip,  
Descends the steep and rocky mountain path.  
Passing Sciron's body, asks 'enjoy your trip?'  
But Sciron's battered body cannot laugh,  
His limbs are broken, his head split in half  
Upon the mountain's unforgiving rocks.  
His bag spills its secrets – bread, a carafe  
Of wine, a book, and several pairs of socks.  
Marvelling at Sciron's duplicity,  
Theseus takes the bread to eat for tea.

THESEUS           Well, he doesn't need it any more does he?

HALF CHORUS     And so the sun –

OTHER HALF                                 Wait a mo, do we need  
To go through the whole of another verse?  
We're getting bored.

CHORUS 1   And I've got kids to feed.

CHORUS 2           There's something on telly.

OTHER HALF   And what is worse,  
We're holding things up. Bloody hell.

HALF CHORUS   Don't curse!

OTHER HALF     Sorry, but we are.

HALF CHORUS   Yes, OK, OK  
But we're helping that lot there to immerse  
Themselves in the drama.

OTHER HALF   No we're not, say  
What you've got to say then we can go home.

HALF CHORUS     Theseus reaches Athens, cold, alone ...

CHORUS 1           Right, that's it, we're all done, now off we go.

CHORUS 3           But we haven't finished yet.

CHORUS 4           We need a rhyme for 'go'.

CHORUS 2           Don't worry about it.

*(exit Chorus, muttering)*



Scene 6. The court of King Aegeus.

*(it is dark. We hear Theseus' voice)*

THESEUS Hello? Hello? Is there anybody there? *(he bumps into something)* Ow!

*(the lights come on. We see Aegeus and Medea in their nightclothes. Medea holds a frying pan)*

AEGEUS Who's there? We haven't got anything to steal you know. The Cretans have taken it all.

MEDEA It's a burglar. Get him.

*(Aegeus runs at Theseus, who wrestles him to the ground)*

AEGEUS You wouldn't hurt an old man would you?

THESEUS You don't want to know.

MEDEA Get him Aegeus!

AEGEUS I'm trying Medea darling.

THESEUS Are you Aegeus? King of Athens?

AEGEUS Yes.

*(Theseus embraces him)*

THESEUS Daddy! I've missed you so much.

*(Medea creeps up behind Theseus with a frying pan and hits him on the head. Theseus falls down)*

AEGEUS What did you do that for? I was just about to knock him out.

MEDEA Whatever. Right, let's kill him.

AEGEUS Wait. Do you see his sword? And his sandals? I left those under a rock many years ago as a present to my son.

MEDEA Your child maintenance arrangements are no concern of mine.

AEGEUS Medea, he's my long-lost boy. My own flesh and blood. You can't kill him.

MEDEA *(raising the frying pan)* Never stopped me before.

AEGEUS *(pushing Medea out of the way)* Theseus. My son.

*(enter assorted servants to witness this touching reunion)*

THESEUS *(still woozy)* Daddy, is that you?

AEGEUS My darling boy. Did you pick up that rock? You must be so strong.

MEDEA (*running at Theseus with the frying pan*) Not as strong as all that.

(*Theseus grabs the frying pan from Medea and snaps it in half*)

(*gasps of astonishment from the crowd*)

AEGEUS That's my boy.

SERVANT 1 You couldn't get the lid off this jar could you?

AEGEUS Enough. This is my son, Theseus, prince of Athens.

THESEUS I've dreamed of this moment for so long. You're sure you're not a travelling toga salesman from Samos?

AEGEUS What?

THESEUS Doesn't matter. Oh father, I'm so happy.

AEGEUS Alas, you visit our court at a time of great sorrow.

THESEUS What no presents?

AEGEUS In the morning, we say farewell to our most courageous youths and our fairest maidens.

THESEUS Why, are they off to Ibiza?

AEGEUS They go as hostages to King Minos of Crete. We fear we may never see them again.

THESEUS Oh dear that really is awful.

AEGEUS If only some brave and strong hero would turn up and save us all.

THESEUS I can see that would be really handy.

AEGEUS Perhaps by volunteering to take the place of one of these courageous youths.

THESEUS Golly, wouldn't that be great.

MEDEA (*to Theseus*) He means you, you fool.

THESEUS Me?

AEGEUS My son! Are you volunteering?

THESEUS Well, I –

AEGEUS I don't know how I can accept such a noble offer.

THESEUS Oh well, never mind.

AEGEUS But for the sake of Athens, I must.

THESEUS Are you sure?

AEGEUS Yes. Very sure.

AEGEUS *(turning to the seven youths and seven maidens)* But which one of these courageous youths can you replace?

YOUTH 1 I'm not very courageous.

YOUTH 2 I'm a real coward I am.

YOUTH 3 Me too.

YOUTH 4 I'm scared of spiders. etc.

AEGEUS I will choose this one. The only one who has not asked to remain.

YOUTH 5 But I want to go.

AEGEUS Are you sure? You won't come back you know.

YOUTH 5 I am not scared of the Cretans.

AEGEUS Oh, OK then *(turning to Medea)* Completely mad that one. Probably best he goes. *(to one of the youths)* You will stay.

YOUTH 6 Oh thank you, your majesty. Thank you.

AEGEUS There's no need to grovel. Theseus, you will sail to Crete in a ship with black sails. Should you succeed in your mission, change the sails to white when you return and I will know that you live.

THESEUS That sounds really complicated. Can you run that past me again? I should warn you, my memory is terrible.

AEGEUS We have no time to waste. We must catch the tide. Down to the harbour to say our sad goodbyes!

*(enter one member of the chorus to a jazz backing, wearing shades)*

CHORUS 1 So me and the other cats from the chorus were having a little talk, you dig, and we decided it was just too much of a drag, man, to make this stuff scan, to make it rhyme all the time, it's a crime to lock up our creativity in a prison of rhythm, it's not very cool, we're not at school, we're not fools, we don't need rules, we just want to be free like the birds in the sky. Right on. So anyway, Theseus and the others sail across the sea to Crete, dig, where this heavy dude, Minos, is waiting for them.

MINOS I am not heavy!

CHORUS 1 Relax, man, it's just a figure of speech.

*(exit Chorus 1)*

scene 7. The Court of King Minos.

MINOS            Are these the Athenian prisoners?

DAEDELUS        They are you heaviness.

MINOS            Don't you start.

ARIADNE        *(looking at Theseus)* By all that is good and holy in this world, I feel the sting of Cupid's arrow pierce me in my heart.

*(during the following, Ariadne and Theseus exchange flirtatious looks)*

MINOS            What? What is she talking about, Daedelus?

DAEDELUS        Cupid is a Roman god, your cleverness, usually portrayed as a chubby youth with a bow and arrow.

MINOS            Who are the Romans?

DAEDELUS        The Romans will rise to power in the Mediterranean area in about a thousand years' time, eventually developing the largest empire in the classical world. Your daughter's mention of Cupid is what is known as an anachronism, from the Greek actually ...

MINOS            Daedelus I have no idea what you are talking about. But it looks like my daughter has the hots for that Athenian there.

DAEDELUS        The hots? Oh, yes, I see.

MINOS            Ariadne, stop it this instant.

ARIADNE        But father, do we really have to sacrifice these Athenians to the Minotaur? They are so brave and well-proportioned.

MINOS            Yes, we do. No-one, not even the King of Athens, is rude about my beard and gets away with it.

*(a loud bull-like roar)*

MINOS            Besides, the Minotaur is getting hungry.

ARIADNE        *(bursting into tears)* Oh, father, you are so cruel.

MINOS            Thank you.

DAEDELUS        *(taking Ariadne aside)* Come, now, fair Ariadne. Let me comfort you.

MINOS *(to the Athenians)* Noble youths of Athens. Welcome to Crete, an island of approximately eight thousand square kilometres surrounded in the north by the Cretan Sea and in the south by the Liviko Sea. We have a rich and varied culture, and are known around the world for our hospitality. Now prepare to die. I have constructed in this palace a most fiendish maze, a labyrinth. Within that labyrinth is a terrible monster, half bull, half man, who is ever hungry for human flesh. You will wander this labyrinth until one by one you are killed and eaten by the Minotaur.

THESEUS We are not afraid.

YOUTH 1 Speak for yourself.

MINOS If you are not afraid, then you must be stupid. The Minotaur is really quite scary.

THESEUS I can beat the Minotaur in a fight.

MINOS Even if you can, you will never find your way out of the labyrinth. You will wander in the darkness forever. *(Minos laughs evilly)*

*(another bull-like roar from off-stage. The Athenians whimper)*

DAEDELUS *(with Ariadne at the front of the stage)* Why do you cry, fair Ariadne? I will look after you.

ARIADNE I know. *(begins to cry even more)*

DAEDELUS But Ariadne, I love you. I would do anything for you.

ARIADNE Really? Anything?

DAEDELUS Anything. All you need to do is ask.

ARIADNE In that case, could you give this to Theseus?

DAEDELUS A ball of wool?

ARIADNE Yes. tell him to tie it to the gates of the labyrinth and unwind it as he walks so he will not get lost.

DAEDELUS Never! Theseus is my rival for your love. Why would I help him?

ARIADNE *(flashing her eyes at Daedelus)* Oh please.

DAEDELUS Oh, go on then. Give me the wool.

*(Daedelus walks over to Theseus)*

DAEDELUS Here.

THESEUS What's this?

DAEDELUS It's a ball of wool.

THESEUS That's very kind, but I'm not very good at knitting.

DAEDELUS You fool. It's not for knitting with. Tie it to the gates of the labyrinth and unwind it as you wander through the maze. When you need to get out, you can follow the wool back to the exit.

THESEUS Oh wow. That's really clever. Thank you!

DAEDELUS Don't thank me. Thank her. (*Daedelus indicates Ariadne who waves at Theseus*)

THESEUS Who is she?

DAEDELUS She is Ariadne, the daughter of King Minos.

THESEUS I will be sure to thank her when I emerge from the labyrinth.

DAEDELUS I wouldn't get your hopes up too much. The Minotaur is really strong.

THESEUS Yes, but look, I have my sword hidden under my cloak.

DAEDELUS But that's not fair. I better tell the King about that.

THESEUS Listen, mister, you breathe one word of this to anyone, and I'll turn you into a kebab, understand?

MINOS It is time, noble Athenians, to enter the labyrinth!

(*the Athenians are herded towards the entrance to the labyrinth*)

MINOS Goodbye, Athenians. See you in the underworld! (*evil laugh again*)

(*the Athenians are pushed through the gates*)

scene 8. Inside the Labyrinth

(*the Athenians cower and whimper inside the gates*)

THESEUS (*brandishing the ball of wool*) Do not fear, fellow Athenians, I will save you.

YOUTH 3 With a ball of wool? There's a monster out there, mate. What are you going to do, knit it a jumper?

THESEUS Don't worry, I have my sword too. I'm going to tie this wool to the gates here and venture into the labyrinth to slay the Minotaur. You all wait here. I'll be back soon!

(*Theseus ties the wool to the gate and ventures into the labyrinth, sword drawn. Bull-like roars*)

(*The Minotaur appears behind Theseus, taps him on the shoulder. Theseus turns round, but the Minotaur keeps behind him as he does so. This could happen several times until the Minotaur stays put and roars at Theseus as he turns to face him. There is a fight. Theseus finally manages to wrestle the Minotaur to the ground and runs his sword through him. The Minotaur dies with a loud roar.*)

*(back with the Athenians)*

YOUTH 4        What is taking him so long?

YOUTH 5        I don't know. But it is so cold in here.

YOUTH 6        Perhaps the Minotaur got him.

YOUTH 7        Oh no, what will we do then?

*(Theseus returns, carrying the Minotaur's head)*

THESEUS        Fear not, my friends. I have killed the Minotaur.

YOUTHS         Hooray!

THESEUS        *(leaning through the gates)* Coo-ee.

*(enter Minos)*

MINOS          What are you doing hanging around by the gate? Get into the labyrinth you cowardly lot and let the Minotaur kill you.

THESEUS        I'm afraid the Minotaur won't be killing any one any more. *(holds up the Minotaur's head)*

*(Minos gasps)*

MINOS          Never mind. You may have killed the Minotaur, but I shall never unlock the gates to let you out of the labyrinth.

THESEUS        Nice try. Did I mention how strong I am?

*(Theseus pulls the gates open. Minos cowers)*

MINOS          Don't hurt me! Please! Mummy!

*(enter Daedelus and Ariadne)*

THESEUS        *(to Minos)* Now I will kill you too.

MINOS          You wouldn't hurt a defenceless old man would you?

THESEUS        Why do people keep asking me that?

ARIADNE        Stop, fair Theseus.

THESEUS        Ciao bella.

ARIADNE        Ciao. But I didn't give you the means to escape from the labyrinth just so you could keep on killing. Forgive him. Please.

THESEUS        Forgive him? But he's horrible.

ARIADNE Yes he is. But if you kill him, then the Cretans will attack Athens once more, and more and more youths will die who have to be avenged. Forgive him and break the cycle once and for all!

THESEUS Why has no-one thought of that before? You're pretty smart. And beautiful.

ARIADNE (*simpering*) Thanks.

THESEUS I'm the son of the King of Athens you know.

ARIADNE I know.

DAEDELUS (*kneeling*) And what about me?

THESEUS I'll kill you instead.

ARIADNE No! Forgive him too.

THESEUS OK. I forgive you.

DAEDELUS Thank you, your nobleness. Take me with you back to Athens.

(*Theseus looks at Ariadne who shakes her head*)

THESEUS Sorry, no can do.

DAEDELUS But how shall I leave this accursed island?

ARIADNE Why don't you fly?

DAEDELUS But easyjet doesn't come here.

ARIADNE Oh well, I'm sure you'll think of something.

THESEUS Athenians, to the boats. Let us return to Athens!

YOUTHS Hooray!

(*exit Athenians, cheering*)

MINOS This is all your fault Daedelus.

DAEDELUS My fault?

MINOS Of course your fault. You fool. I'll get you for this.

(*exit Daedelus pursued by Minos*)

(*enter Chorus*)

CHORUS And so order is restored to the world  
And the Athenian lads and lasses  
Return to the ships. The sails are unfurled –



Oi you! Yes you, take off those sunglasses,  
You don't need them any more. Time passes  
As the ships sail back across the sea.  
Theseus prepares to meet the masses  
Who wait on the cliff tops expectantly,  
Hoping to glimpse as they return.  
But wait. There is one more lesson to learn.

scene 9. On board the ship with the black sails

THESEUS        That all turned out pretty well didn't it?

ARIADNE        It couldn't be better. The sun is shining, and these huge black sails are full, carrying us back to Athens, where a hero's welcome awaits.

THESEUS        Yes. But I'm sure there is something I forgot to do. Now what could it be?

ARIADNE        I can see the crowds on the cliff tops. And is that your father standing on the edge of the cliff? He looks upset. I wonder why that could be.

YOUTH 7        Theseus, what shall we do with these white sails? They are getting in the way.

THESEUS        White sails? Oh no!

*(a scream from Aegeus as he jumps to his death)*

THESEUS        Well, I guess that makes me king.

EVERYONE       Hooray!

END