



THE MINOTAUR

BY ANNA ZIEGLER



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THE MINOTAUR was produced in a joint world premiere with Synchronicity Theatre (Rachel May, Producing Artistic Director; Lee Nowell, Managing Director), Atlanta, Georgia, on October 26, 2012, and Rorschach Theatre (Randy Baker and Jenny McConnell Frederick, Co-Artistic Directors), Washington, D.C., on January 18, 2013.

The Synchronicity Theatre production was directed by Rachel May. The cast was as follows:

MINOTAUR Tony Larkin
ARIADNE Rachel Frawley
THESEUS Brandon Partrick
PRIEST Nicholas Tecosky
RABBI Suehyla El-Attar
LAWYER Anthony Goolsby

The Rorschach Theatre production was directed by Randy Baker, the set design was by David C. Ghatan, the lighting design was by Stephanie P. Freed, the costume design was by Lauren Cucarola, the sound design was by James Bigbee Garver, and the stage manager was Hannah Blechman. The cast was as follows:

MINOTAUR David Zimmerman
ARIADNE Sara Dabney Tisdale
THESEUS Josh Sticklin
PRIEST Frank Britton
RABBI Jjana Valentiner
LAWYER Colin Smith

CHARACTERS

MINOTAUR—a young man. He should be slim, perhaps gaunt. Hungry. Edgy. Sexual. Fierce. An underlying sadness seeps through his outward cruelty and intellectual remove.

ARIADNE—a young woman. Interested in the meaning of love, and life. Intelligent. Spiky. Spunky.

THESEUS—a young man in search of adventure. He's lived rarefied air, a prep school boy who's had every advantage in the world.

PRIEST—a man; he wears a habit, and his intellectualism on his deep black sleeve. The smartest guy in the room—unless God's there, of course.

RABBI—a woman; she is incredibly warm and not afraid of anyone. She wears a tallis, and under it, billowing clothes.

LAWYER—they come in all shapes and sizes. This one is not atypical. A man in a precisely tailored suit. He is sarcastic, cynical, and to the point.

SETTING

Any time, any place.

Such people stand on their balconies at twilight and shout that the future can be changed, that thousands of futures are possible.

—Alan Lightman, *Einstein's Dreams*

We are not the owners of our instincts. But controlling them, that is civilization.

—Elie Wiesel

THE MINOTAUR

A chorus of a Rabbi, Priest, and Lawyer launch into the story. Maybe the Rabbi holds D'Aulaires' Book of Greek Myths. (Note: The chorus's need to tell the story, to do their job, is intense, but they are often in conflict about who should speak and whose version of the story is the right one.)

RABBI. And so.

PRIEST. And so.

LAWYER. And so.

RABBI. To punish the king and queen, Poseidon caused Pasiphaë to give birth to a *monster*, the Minotaur.

PRIEST. He was half-man, half-bull, and ate nothing but human flesh.

RABBI. Scary, right?

LAWYER. Revolting.

PRIEST. Such a fearful monster could not go free, and the clever Daedalus constructed for him a labyrinth under the palace. It was a maze of passageways and little rooms—

RABBI, PRIEST, and LAWYER. From which nobody could ever hope to find his way out.

LAWYER. And if you think that sounds bad—

PRIEST. It gets worse: King Minos had to wage war with the neighboring islands so he could supply the Minotaur with the prisoners of war for food.

RABBI. Theseus became the hero of all of Athens when he offered to take the place of one of the pitiful victims who was to be sent to Crete.

THESEUS. (*Entering.*) "I shall make an end of the Minotaur and we shall return safely. We sail with black sails, but we shall return with white sails as a signal of my success."

He exits and Ariadne enters.

PRIEST. King Minos also had a lovely daughter, Ariadne, as fair a maiden as eyes could see. She could not bear the thought that handsome Theseus should be sacrificed to the ugly Minotaur.

ARIADNE. And we fall in love and live happily ever after.

LAWYER. No! There's no happy ending. This isn't a fable. It's a myth. And myths end badly.

Ariadne, dejected, exits.

RABBI. Poor Ariadne. After she helps him, and falls in love with him, Theseus carries her away from Crete only to abandon her on the island of Naxos.

LAWYER. You see? I'm telling you: Life can really be a piece of shit. When I didn't pass the bar for the second time, I—

RABBI. (*Cutting him off.*) Yes. The best thing is never to be born, and if born—

RABBI, PRIEST, and LAWYER. To die quickly.

Lights up abruptly on the Minotaur.

MINOTAUR. Am I this fearsome monster, you ask? I don't know. I am and am not the Minotaur, I guess, in the way you are all everything and nothing, light and shadow, boat and mooring, wave and tide—

The lights dim abruptly on the Minotaur, cutting him off.

RABBI. Because you think you have options—

PRIEST, RABBI, and LAWYER. And really you don't... Really you're reading from a script.

RABBI. All trapped...like the Minotaur in his maze.

The lights dim and then rise to reveal Ariadne and the Minotaur playing Connect Four. Ariadne must reach through the bars of the mouth of the labyrinth in order to play.

ARIADNE. (*Taunting him.*) So, I've been thinking a lot about life. Like, what I want from it. I mean, what do you think I should do with my life? It's just...I have so many options.

He doesn't respond.

You're not talking to me again?

Long beat.

Will you at least move? We're not playing chess, after all. This is

supposed to be quick.

He sits very still. Stares at Ariadne.

What? Do I have something on my face?

All of a sudden he growls at her ferociously. She jumps.

Why'd you do that?

MINOTAUR. I don't know.

ARIADNE. You're trying to scare me?

MINOTAUR. Of course not.

ARIADNE. Do you want to talk?

MINOTAUR. About what?

ARIADNE. Anything. Your day?

MINOTAUR. *(With false, exaggerated eagerness.)* Okay, let's talk about my day!

ARIADNE. Really?

MINOTAUR. No.

ARIADNE. Oh.

MINOTAUR. Don't I repulse you? Doesn't the idea that if I were to escape right now I'd have no choice but to eat you, repel you?

I mean, why do you visit me here, under the palace, in this prison into which I was born and from which I will never escape? I mean, look around you—

She doesn't.

Do it!

She reluctantly looks around her.

It's dark, isn't it? So dark it almost obscures things. But not quite. Not dark enough—

ARIADNE. You think it's so much better where I live?

MINOTAUR. I know it is.

ARIADNE. It's not. It's disgusting. To live a life filled with death. The smell is everywhere... The wailing of the prisoners is everywhere— on my pillow, streaming in my window with the first light of day, lodged beneath my tongue and in my teeth. Sometimes I can't see straight, there's so much death in my way.

MINOTAUR. Poor Ariadne...

ARIADNE. Don't do that.

MINOTAUR. Don't do what?

ARIADNE. You know.

MINOTAUR. Nope. I might eat minds, but I can't read them.

ARIADNE. That's not funny.

MINOTAUR. Connect Four.

ARIADNE. Damn it!

MINOTAUR. I win again. How does that make you feel? That I always win. That you never beat me. That, try as you might, I master you in every task. In every way.

ARIADNE. Don't say that.

She begins to leave.

MINOTAUR. (*Quietly.*) Don't leave.

She looks back at him, with longing, then exits.

PRIEST. Days, months, years it goes on, much the same.

RABBI. Ariadne is eleven and fourteen and twenty-one. She is everything all at once and so is her brother—the moment of birth *within* the moment when he realized he would die—everything within itself, a memory that contains the future.

PRIEST. The past, the future, the present...

LAWYER, PRIEST, and RABBI. Our story.

RABBI. Takes place on the island of Crete, where once there was a despot, King Minos.

LAWYER. He was of the warring despotic variety, the kind of despot who made those on neighboring islands fear the appearance of sails in the distance. Sails were never a good sign.

RABBI. King Minos had an endless appetite for war. For conquer and the spoils of it all. For coming home red-cheeked and bedecked with the jewels of another land. Boxes of iPhones, Prada handbags, the firstborn daughters of firstborn daughters.

PRIEST. But it wasn't his fault. Not really.

LAWYER. Really, Queen Pasiphaë was to blame.

RABBI. Of course it was her fault. It's always the woman's fault, all the way back to Adam and Eve.

LAWYER. It was *her* passion. Her lack of restraint. She created the problem. Literally.

PRIEST. The Minotaur, that is.

RABBI, PRIEST, and LAWYER. She created the Minotaur.

The lights shift to reveal Ariadne and the Minotaur playing Connect Four. Ariadne must reach through the bars of the mouth of the labyrinth in order to play. (Note: In this version of the scene, Ariadne and the Minotaur are searching more hopefully for connection, having given up the pretense of and power grabs of the first iteration of the scene.)

ARIADNE. (*Genuinely.*) So, I've been thinking a lot about life. Like, what I want from it. I mean, what do you think I should do with my life? It's just...I have so many options.

He doesn't respond.

You're not talking to me again?

Long beat.

Will you at least move? We're not playing chess, after all. This is supposed to be quick.

He sits very still. Stares at Ariadne.

What? Do I have something on my face?

A more half-hearted growl.

Why'd you do that?

MINOTAUR. I don't know.

ARIADNE. You're trying to scare me?

MINOTAUR. Of course not.

ARIADNE. Do you want to talk?

MINOTAUR. About what?

ARIADNE. Anything. Your day?

MINOTAUR. (*Genuinely, with hope.*) Okay, let's talk about my day.

ARIADNE. Really?

MINOTAUR. (*Dejected, realizing there's really nothing to say.*) No.

THE MINOTAUR

by Anna Ziegler

4 men, 2 women

A present-day version of a classic Greek myth, THE MINOTAUR is a contemporary take on love, honor, and human connection. With refreshing originality and wit, it explores how we break out of history in order to shape new stories for ourselves.

"...the show comes at you with an intelligent mix of classicism and whimsy..."
—The Washington Post

"...terrific, complex... [THE MINOTAUR] is extraordinarily ambitious... the heady concepts of desire, self-control, and fate make it an absorbing and inventive work."
—The Washingtonian

"...humanity and thoughtfulness shine through the darkness. THE MINOTAUR hooks you."
—Dallas Voice

"...a play that pushes through and breaks the boundaries of the kind of storytelling we'd come to expect."
—The Dallas Morning News

"...90 minutes [of] ripe moments of raw emotion, well-timed zingers, topical modern references, and a world of deeply insightful relatable elements...make this one of the most unique retellings in modern theatre. ...this riveting new work is simply impressive beyond compare." —DCMetroTheaterArts.com

"...quirky, thoughtful and entertaining... THE MINOTAUR achieves the rare trifecta of being touching, intelligent, and enjoyable." —DCTheatreScene.com

Also by Anna Ziegler

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