ESCAPE FROM THE MINOTAUR



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Nelson Literacy Directions

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Escape from the Minotaur

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Meet the Characters

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Exupnos

A young Greek who finds himself in the Minotaur's labyrinth.



The Minotaur

A fearsome mythological beast, half-bull and half-human.



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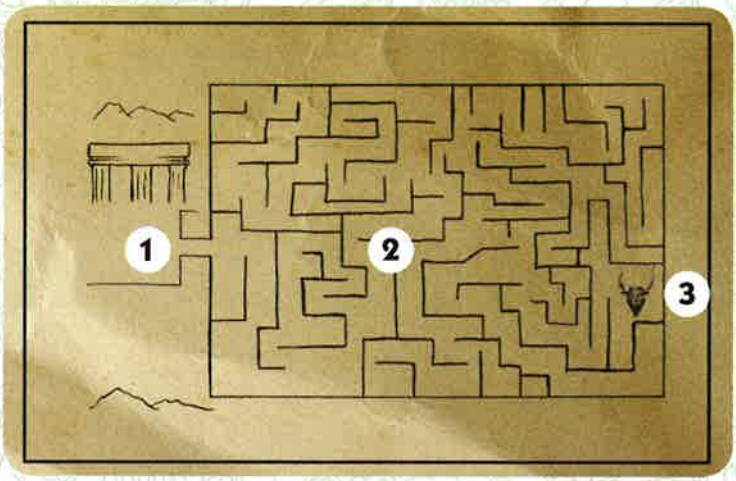
POSTCARD

Dear Reader

The legend of the Minotaur, trapped in a labyrinth beneath Knossos Palace, in Crete, is one that has been told for thousands of years. In this version, I wondered what would happen if it turned out the Minotaur was just lonely and bad-mannered, through no fault of its own. I hope you enjoy finding out what happens!

Frank Pedersen
Author

The Minotaur's Labyrinth



1. The entrance to the labyrinth
2. The labyrinth
3. The Minotaur's cavern

1 The Minotaur

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"What?" said the Minotaur, munching on a particularly crunchy foot. It spat out a mouthful of toenails and peered at me. Then it let out a loud burp and looked embarrassed. "It's the best part!"

I shook my head. Munching on people's legs as if they were crispy chicken wings was bad enough. But since I'd been thrown into the labyrinth beneath the Palace of Knossos, I'd been horrified to discover that Minotaurs were not only people-eating monsters. They had bad manners, too.

My name is Exupnos. A week ago, there'd been fourteen of us. The advert in the *Daily Athenian* paper had promised a thrilling holiday exploring the amazing maze beneath King Minos's palace here in Crete. The maze was open to the public only once a year. At the time, it had seemed like too good an opportunity to miss.



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"Tour bookings limited to fourteen places!" I read. "Seven maidens and seven young men."

Exupnos, here's a way to meet some new friends, I thought.

On Monday, I emptied out my savings urn. It was time for a holiday.

At the end of the week, fourteen of us were assembled at Piraeus harbour, a short donkey ride south of downtown Athens. Even though it was a sunny day, the captain of our galley looked up at the sky with a concerned frown.

"Tsk, tsk," he muttered. "Could get rough out there." He gazed at the Mediterranean Sea, stretching out like mirror glass to the horizon. We all looked at each other. No one wanted to start their holiday by being seasick.

"I know!" exclaimed the captain helpfully. "We'll tie you to your seats, so you don't get tossed around by the waves!"

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I, for one, was grateful that we had such a good captain. The wellbeing of his passengers was clearly important to him. He made sure that the crew tied us to the seats very thoroughly.

Once the galley attendants had checked that our ropes were securely fastened, we settled back to enjoy our trip. The hatches were firmly shut and the captain cracked a whip. Beneath the decks, we heard the crew dip their oars into the water. Our once-in-a-lifetime Cretan holiday had begun!



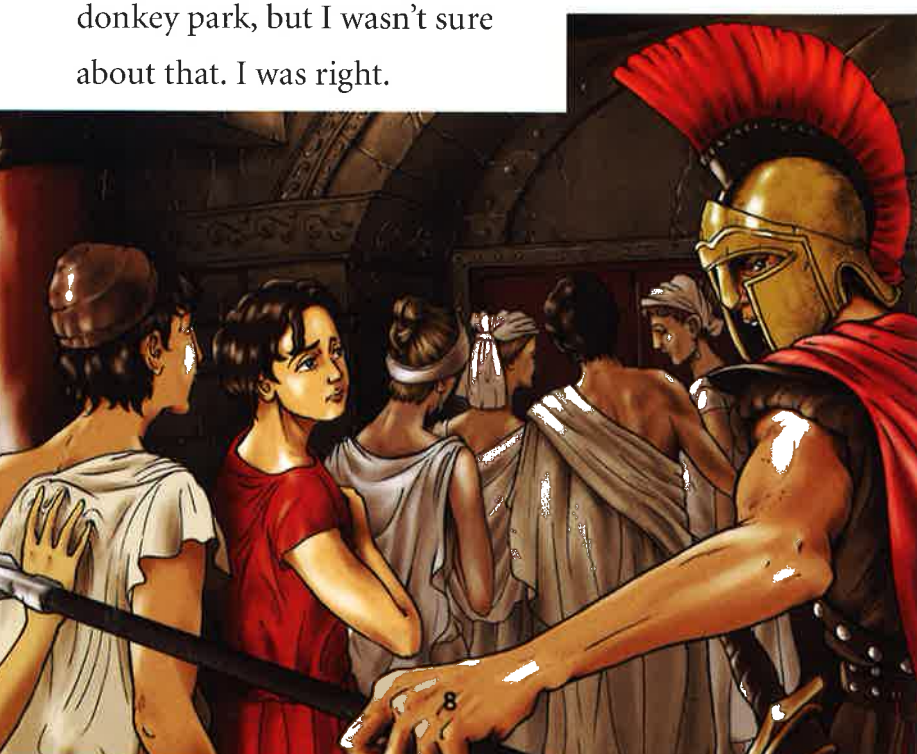
As you may have guessed, when we got off at Knossos, we quickly found out that this wasn't just a once-in-a-lifetime holiday. It was a last-in-a-lifetime holiday. Once the crew untied us, we barely had time to rub our wrists and ankles. Then we were herded off the galley and into the palace.

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No duty-free, I noticed. That was unusual.

We thought we were about to start our holiday with a tour of the palace. But before any of us could find the souvenir shop to buy postcards, things started to go downhill. Literally.

The tour guides, who seemed unusually well-armed, pushed and prodded us down a long, sloping corridor that took us further and further below ground level. One of my fellow tourists remarked that we were probably going to see the king's underground donkey park, but I wasn't sure about that. I was right.



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Finally, after about twenty minutes of descending down the corridor, we came to a heavy cypress door, carved with pictures of a gruesome monster. The creature had the head and upper torso of a fearsome bull. But its lower body was human. Above the door was a sign.

"No Entry to Labyrinth," it said. "Sacrificial Youths and Maidens Only."

I gulped. I didn't remember seeing this in the tour brochures.

