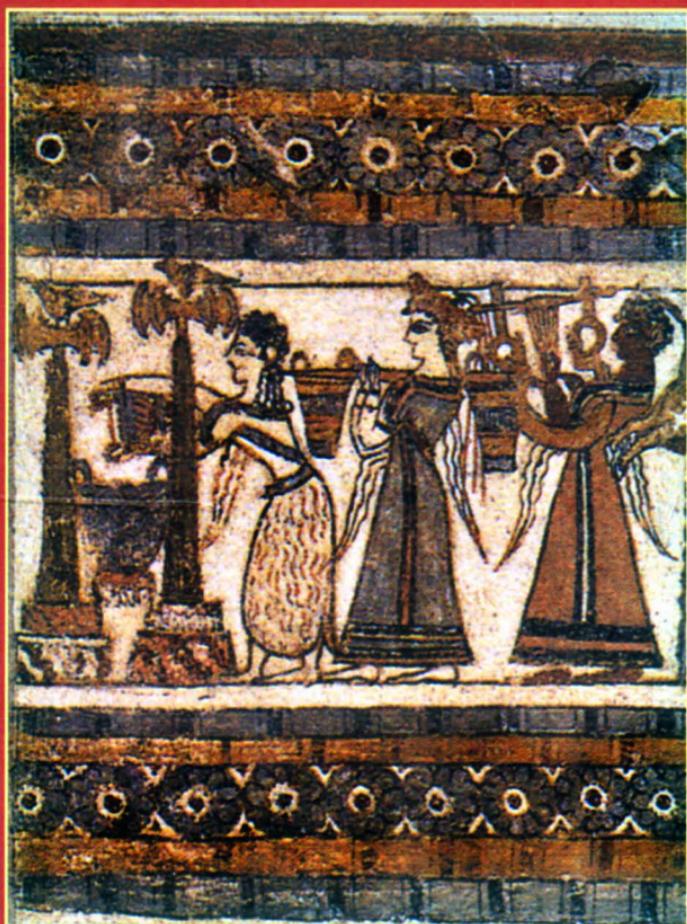


ARIADNE'S BROTHER

A NOVEL
ON THE FALL
OF BRONZE AGE CRETE

by
JOHN DEMPSEY



KALENDIS

This is a vivid tale of action and the love of life, of conflict and passionate vision and political change at the dawn of Western civilization. Ariadne –the Queen, sister, and beloved of the narrator, prince Deucalion– struggles to uphold her family’s and her people’s ways against a world of new threats and challenges, at home and abroad, in the final days of Minoan Crete.

Through its powerful characters and plot, through the natural beauties and spirituality of Aegean civilization, its eroticism, battles and catastrophes, **Ariadne’s Brother** brings together myth and four decades of fresh evidence to create new understanding of “the first major cultural turn” in Western history.

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Kalendis & Co. Ltd. Publishers
Athens 1996

Author's Note

Originally 1300 pages, this novel synthesizes 15 years' research in "Minoan" and other sources ranging from myth to archaeology to anthropology of religion, from Sir Arthur Evans to Dr. Nanno Marinatos, and it reflects total agreement with none of them. While its setting is Crete circa 1450 B.C.E., I've included certain events from around that year, as well, in the interest of a fuller portrait of Cretan hegemony. (The town of Akrotiri on present-day Santorini, for example, had been buried volcanically about a generation before this story, and the shrine at Anemospilia, Crete, even earlier: the Cretan trade-station in Rhodes, on the other hand, was destroyed probably after the fall of Cnossos.)

The early West reached a crucial turning-point in its culture during the 15th century B.C.E., and *Ariadne's Brother* constructs a "Cretan point of view" on those events, in order to bring the widely accepted traditional image of the early West (as seen for example in Mary Renault's 1958 *The King Must Die*) into closer agreement with nearly 40 more recent years of physical and cultural analysis. The text's open-ended paragraphing is simply an attempt to mimic with language certain stylistic effects of ancient Cretan art, especially a fluid interplay among subjectivities and surroundings. And while I think it a writer's trade to take chances and, inevitably, to fill gaps in the "facts" with intuitions and biases (especially as a modern man writing of women in ancient culture!), I hope the story will suggest how much human world did exist, for millennia, before the beginnings of "his-story". Whatever is good here is not mine, but Crete's.

Stoneham, Massachusetts

May 1995

most
gratefully,
to
(1a)
Donna

and in memory of Eve Helene Wilkowitz

1960-1980

l'antica fiamma...mi fu rapita...vali

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ISBN 960-219-062-0

First Edition

Cover Illustration: Detail from Agia Triada Sarcophagus, Crete 1425 B.C.

..but if any far-off state there be
dearer to Life than mortality,
the hand of the Dark hath hold thereof,
and mist is under the mist above—
So we are sick for Life, and cling
on Earth to this nameless and shining thing,
for other Life is a fountain sealed,
and the Deeps below are unrevealed
and we drift on legends forever.

—Euripides, *Hippolytos*

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ARIADNE'S
BROTHER

I

In the Lair of the Minotaur

1

The Wounding of the Beast

She was coming...

The high headland east of the harbor Amnisos stood black against a sky of rosy gold. Down here on the beach, where we of the Labyrinth waited in ceremonial array before the waking waters of the sea, the light was visibly rising now, and it was just that moment of the day when the shore-trees rouse themselves and the first birds appear from no one knows where. Our eldest priestess Perdix moved only her eyes as she took a prearranged signal from the watchers of our coast, a single lamp unveiled atop the headland, to let us know that Ariadne's ritual boat had embarked toward us; and then Perdix lifted up into the dawn the tall burnished double-axe she held, and the six other sisters along our crescent-formation raised theirs with her till their strong and braceleted arms locked out high. The sea felt calm as a pond before us, the spring morning air all but still; and scarcely a leaf stirred along the shafts of the splendid double-axes, wrapped with spirals of planetree leaf and white hyacinth.

I watched the Queen, Pasiphae, my mother, for the sign she was to give me to come forward before the people. In her short openbreasted jacket and great belted bellskirt of saffron that glowed in the dawn, she stepped

to the center of our crescent and slowly lifted her arms out toward the sea and the isle of Dia, three miles opposite the harbor. Somewhere between her lifted palms and the slopes of the isle out there, a shape on the sea like a big-hipped woman sleeping on her side, Ariadne's priestesses were plying her boat toward this shore: our mother's prayerful pause would time just right so that ritual here would peak with her daughter's arrival. Ariadne, The Very Manifest One, my sister: if it had always been both power and burden to stand as family with her before the people, this was a day for me to learn more of bearing them both; and everybody in the crowd strung along the beach had a manner of quiet excitement for her this morning, as this rite brought her one more public step toward our throne.

Under my short plain cloak the touch of the dew and the sea's cool brought a kind of memory out of my bones, an ache from just below my bottom-left rib, where a strip of proudflesh marked a wound from a raider's javelin. My whole body still felt the violence of what had happened, and its own luck, since people often died of half such a scratch. Yet I was sorry to have it today, for I still wished to see my brother Palesus as the man I'd known before the sea-battle: he stood with our father, the Minotauros, to Pasiphae's right at the head of their white-robed priests the Kouretes. To the people in the crowd around us, father and brother in their bright embroidered kilts and diadems of goldfoil looked like daemon-eyed, russet-skinned, old and young forms of the same man still. But—especially given the terrible sanctity of our father's ritual fate, not so far ahead of him now—it angered me to see my brother borrowing Minos' tempered smile, that of a man who lived in The Pres-

ence, but grafting onto it his own martial stance. He was standing there feet apart as on a ship's deck, thick arms akimbo

It was like Palesus to put forward all his nineteen years' grave intent, making sure everybody saw the strength he meant to serve them with. At the sea's edge one beheld the world of sudden indiscriminating death which he was mastering ahead of myself: he always had gone before me, from our first hunts together to the Bull Dance, and from there to the throne, which would be mine in turn. Palesus had always honored me, and lost no chance these days to recount how younger brother Deucalion had saved that island-boy Icarus from a burning merchant ship amid the battle. What was it between us, then? Fear, at what was happening to our people and the realm; my own fear, and anger about Palesus' intended solutions to these problems when the title Minotauros was wholly his. I hoped that nobody noticed the glare I suddenly felt upon my face, and spoke to the pain in my side, that surely our mothers and custom and Ariadne herself would rein him in; but it was my prayer that from The Powers I might learn more how to suffer and to shine, like these people around me

Mother turned back to me and gestured *Come, Deucalion*, and I gave myself fully to the privilege, stepping forward with the palm-decorated jar I'd borne in our procession, down from the valley of Cnossos and the Labyrinth. To the crowds of clanspeople attendant behind us I might've looked like one of the gift-bearing ancient youths painted on our walls, except that I'd been asked to dress down today for Palesus' benefit and had not even painted my eyes. When I reached her Pasiphae laid hands upon the jar and paused again, then removed

its lid; and the sick zinc smell floated up to me of blood of sacrifice, mixed with wine.

Up close I could see the laugh-lines that crinkled mother's eyes' black kohl, the golden faces of the bulls on her earrings: there was always a calm warmth to her nearness though she was quite impersonal now, and it was pleasure for the three of us to be led by her through progressively public roles. My boy's mind saw her kneading and shaping the dough of ritual barleybread and could smell the warmth of home ovens, the scent of crusts her hands had shaped: with Palesus and clergy I'd been allowed to make first offerings of the bread to Ariadne before it was shared out at our shrines, to The Dead and to our people gathered in Cnossos courtyards. But now as I entered manhood there were other things to learn and I breathed slow and deep of the heavy liquid between us, and gazed on the heads of the bulls beneath mother's hanging black curls, and my spine still bristled with the heat of those animals' lives. So much did their palpable vigor remain in this blood that it all but drowned my questions of shining and the pain at my rib. What a brother of Bull's brood had come tossing his garlanded horns before our altars in that first blue hour of this dawn, a monster of pure rippling power and stately sanctity; yet you felt the trust and even a gentleness in the bottomless calm of his body and his wild black eye

—The Dance gives Bull His chance back at us, Ariadne once confided to me, —but isn't it ludicrous somehow, a beast like that's submission to *anything*? Yes: just striding near us in processions these monsters of our mountains all but gave up Cnossian pomp for what it was. She loved the gold-work of our more brazen artisans that showed Bull bursting free of our nets and tossing His

trappers. Yet she'd never shied, either, from what our parents had called Necessity. Our mother's and her strokes with the stunning-mace and Labrys exemplified resolve before the people—evoking their consent to how The Powers had made the world by holding firm as the animal bawled and staggered and its life gushed, scalding and potent. No, there was just nothing to balm the memory of those sentient, dimming eyes, except to raise oneself up straighter upon the spine like our parents and clergy (and like my brother, after all); and to walk the world with something like Ariadne's proud pliant posture, a scion of the House of the Double Axe. The very taste of this sea air and this blood swelled my body with a wonder that all these harborworks, the ancient stone moles jutting into the waves and the lovely pink stone of the portmistress' villa, the ship-shelters and Amnisos-town climbing the shore hills had come into being through our family's migrations, and mixtures with other bloods; and surely, whatever we'd become, it had been born through these women with their grasp of Necessity and their appetite for beauty. And just as dolphins long ago had led one of our great grandmothers, Europa, here to Crete, so now before my eyes did The Powers cooperate; for Ariadne was coming, and the sea lay flat and quiet like Bull nodding down its head before the Queen

Mother now hefted the jar to her body and, keeping its painted palmtrees' power and promise of rebirth in plain sight, began to circle leftwards round our whole formation, and poured the life entrusted her. This was to call upon The Dead and The Ones To Come to do as she did, for Ariadne's sake this spring morning, and complete the greater Circle; for if there was no life for The Dead without our rites of Their memory and sustenance, neither

could there be grain or strength of children for us without Them. The Dead were (mostly) our friends among the ultimate Initiates, we were taught: learn from Them to play with those Powers in the world which we called Goddess

Almost done: as mother slowly worked one could now hear Their lips slopping greedily the spattered sand, my father Minos striking grave triple-beats upon a Kourete's bullhide drum. I watched the dawn give rising brightness to the myriad jewels and silver and richly patterned robes of our people, backed by the sea's own brightness and this gift of mild weather: mother's heavy breasts and bellskirt swayed just a little with her steps back toward me, and the priestesses honored her with a concerted lowering-and-lifting of the axes as she passed. Poor mother! As resolved as Minos to meet the end of her reign with grace. My rib had stopped throbbing and I took the jar back, raised my right hand fist-to-brow for her: we paused together, and heard the crowd take up my gesture, and then I backed away reflecting Pasiphae's quiet pleasure. I was glad to have pleased her, and glad for an ancillary role right now that left me free

Actually I had further priestly duties back at the Labyrinth before these rites were even done, but like everybody else I wanted to see Ariadne come ashore. I set the jar aside for our priests and found myself a vantage among many greetings: next I knew I was eyeing a local daughter at the crowd's eastern edge, about my age with brown curls piled up off bare shoulders, big eyes, twirling a sprig of willow on her necklace as she watched the Queen. Mmm: just to bite her a little, right where those locks hung in spirals at her ears—Phew! The Dead had Their ways of fostering new generations and it thrilled my youth that some of the House's wilder blood ran in my

veins. Still, one had to mind the soberer clans and guests around us. A Queen could marry a candlemaker if he pleased her and threw more light than a palace fop, and I could not let my brother with that stance of his keep me a boy in others' eyes. I was glad I'd not much spoken to him since the battle, glad that many people knew it

Then a hand on my shoulder: it was Glaucus, one of our parents' favored ambassadors to the islands, in his late twenties an impressively tall and traveled gentleman. Very cordial, rugged, not too condescending toward my youth—but I knew he'd been sent to bump into me lately, before his own year of duty began, as a help toward reconciling Palesus and myself. I liked him and envied his stories and his dealings with foreign queens in my father's name, but why had the House sent no one like this toward Palesus? Pasiphae in her iridescent flounces had turned seaward and now held her palms out-and-down, as the priestesses and priests chanted soothing tones. When this concluded, the Kouretes thumped their tall bullhide shields once with javelin-shafts to mark the proceedings with a keener edge; and at last mother took up the House's best white conch, and blew three long, woolly calls. Glaucus pushed back his great tangled mane of black hair: he had our strong native beak-nose, and his necklace of golden seashells rose with his chest as he smiled down at me, nodding his own anticipation.

Ariadne was coming: the salt air teased the lust in one's spirit to behold her, and many eyes searched to sight the small boat bearing her across the strait to us, from the isle's Grove Of The Trees. She was yet invisible against its blossoming dappled-green slopes, but the people along the sea's edge pressed nearer, shushing children and romping dogs and tardy relatives in the wake of the

Queen's three calls. For all the walking-songs and chatter that had followed our House's procession down here at daybreak, they now grew quieter than the sea, than the sparrows in the tamarisk trees along the head of the beach. Retired marines of ours and old matrons curled round their staves, cripples and clubfeet and people with inner ailments sat quietly under the trees behind, as they always did with their perpetual needs at the edges of public ceremony: it was sure Ariadne would call them forward, too, but of course this pious silence would last only till somebody sighted her. Glaucus (fishing again?) remarked a kind of extra apprehension, something more than the season's normal seed-time anxieties along the shore, but I took my own measure of those who'd come—the earringed well-to-do of Cnossos and nearby towns, generations of clan, harbor-hands, foreigners and farmers—to witness this improvised rite.

We'd accomplished already, that is, last moon's traditional early spring customs, broken open the stores of new wine and crop-seed, and loosed The Dead out into the world from Their ancestral burial jars, in which we ourselves would lie one day and receive the honored life we had bestowed. We had feasted Them, and labored to appease Their hungers, soothe Their angers if we could. In rites They had been shown the luminous promise in the accession of Ariadne and Palesus; and then with tar and buckthorn and switches of birch we'd pressed Them back toward Their abodes, from whence They could speak to us, and guide and reprove as intimately as anyone alive. It always needed our clergy's vintage of tact and resolve to keep Them at just the right distance—unlike Egyptians and others I'd heard of, we just shoved the old bones over in the crypts to make room for new ones,

flattering Them the while that more family was on the way. And we could look this year for Their pride and power to feed our own; for They lived through our flesh and, to do so, pushed up the barley that fed us

A good year coming, and this the sweetest time: the grain had a strong golden head to it already, the fire-red of corn poppies was splashed to extravagance on our hills, with goat's beard and thyme and oleander: finches and migrant nightingales and hoopoes roosted in the brilliant trees, the pens were full of clean-licked calves, there were plenty of women's bellies too big for the dancer's kilt and there'd been a wild rainy winter to help prune the olive trees. Not so much as a mildew on a grape-berry. But this year, since the rites, for most everybody you spoke with, there'd been something not quite well, not clear, not balanced in our midst. This year, from the sanctuaries at Cnossos to those of our mountains' peaks and caves, where our people looked for ceremony and oracle to guide them through their lives, there had been too many troubling signs—signs of *like a thunder laying up in the ground*, as someone whispered; a palpable but unintelligible anger in our midst, a malingering unappeasement. Too many rumors of village-youths' initiations and country-house funerals disrupted, let alone simpler rites that kept order in the realm, by queer garbled and sometimes violent words from the oracles, which were supposed to give peace and closure; by problems with vestments and vessels and other tools so carefully stored by our clergy, spontaneous breakages, rusts, foul smells of unknown source. We were taught that our House should never be seen one step behind the opinion of a farmer in such matters and our parents and priestesses grilled the appropriate local people, but all denied knowing the roots of these

disruptions: the worst of this so far, however, was that more than once or twice in a moon this year, the rams and goats and even bulls in some prominent rites had turned suddenly recalcitrant enroute to altar. Why had something in my priest's heart leaped up with a joy to hear such a thing? Not good, not good, our elders said, this made a debacle of authority, the animals felt something wrong and would not speak it, not even to old Perdix or Cratus, our House's Masters of the Herds. Nor were these lives that helped to sustain our world ever to be forced, any more than the Minotauros himself would be. In Crete's mountains, wild Bull was *bolynthos*: it was Bull who made *you* holy, and not otherwise. But was it not a hard place that setting free such a beast could only unbalance everything more?

I will tell you that Pasiphae and Minos did not consider this Crete's worst problem these days. But this out-of-sorts, undercurrent anger or unease was hardly mine alone; and as our clergy just could not articulate the ill, they'd laid requests for prudent measures before the throne. Not healthy at all, to let the Earth grow too uneasy beneath your feet

And this had brought about Ariadne's three-night journey to The Grove Of The Trees with two elder priestesses. A few years ago the radical communion offered by that place—the spot (it was said) where Mother Europa first landed and where all the symbol-trees of our sacred year grew—would have been our mother's to pursue. But in her and our grandmother Paria's eyes, Ariadne at seventeen now was ready for such a task, one precisely grave and small enough for the start of her wholly public service. And as our mothers were proverbial in the skillful management of signs and ceremony, Ariadne's

task was to become new custom as well, one that would help—beginning with her own accession—to smooth the coming transition of power in Crete.

I think I was drawn to begin with this spring day because it was the last time I saw my brother and sister alive and happy together in public. Glaucus had been right, though, that more than planting-time anxiousness had brought so many people to the harbor at sunrise: they were still straggling down the shore hills and pressing the others nearer the water; and I cannot dispense with matters that fed straight into our unease

For one thing, the end of a Great Year, and only our second Great Year at that, was upon us. Four more seasons from this spring, one more turn of The Wheel of the Year, and Minos our father was to make the Offering of his life, while our mother retired, as grandmother had, to a villa adjoining the Labyrinth. Only recently—since our Bull Dance, and the battle at sea—had I realized the enormities behind the dreadful respect which our clans rendered Minotauros' House, and how short the time had to seem to my father, who'd have held power nineteen years in all, longer than any Cretan Consort to the Queen except Paria's. No small thing for our clans to allow so much power for so long in so few hands. This new reckoning of time and highest office, you see, through a fusion of older systems under Moon and Sun, was still on trial since its adoption by our great houses. In many men's eyes the Great Year had balanced (at last) the powers of our throne, had given both sides of the distaff time to use those powers sustainedly for the realm. In earlier generations—less confident in taking from the land, or less pious, depending on whom you spoke with—the Consort had shed his blood every year. Our father was a son in the

line of that Man Who Stepped Forward: in his blood lived on that man who had first given his life as an offering consequential enough to soothe the harvest-ravaged land, and Those beneath it. That the Consort should willingly plough his life under, and do so from the height of wealth and power in our world, was the core of his grandeur, what the harpers called his great heart

But through the generations that had seen our island's powerful families rise, each with their own connections in foreign sea-trade, such a shortlived Consort had made for too much instability among our clans, too many fealties that died with the man and passed with his Queen. Again, our mothers and clergy (like our artisans) never stopped thinking how to make a thing work smoother, and this crowd today was sure sign that their work was under scrutiny. The great frescoes of Cnossos showing the processions of tribute-bearing youths from all over Crete were how we commemorated agreement on where the practical center of our realm should be: it had not been a matter of rivals killing each other over wealth, since there was plenty for all contenders off the sea—rather, the question had been how to get that wealth home and lose as few children of the clans as possible. A more efficient fleet of ships and a juster conscription-system for crewing it was still, even now, close to the matter of anger between Palesus and me, as you'll see. So, if our parents—whose potencies and skills had sustained our fields and our order through a time of near-disaster, and brought our decimated fleet back to nearly full strength—would not lack for praise next Midsummer Day, when the full Oak Moon and Sun-at-his-zenith met together above the Earth, it was for Ariadne and Palesus to prove that things would go on as they ever had, and shine. A realm of keen self-interests

watched through these quiet people along the shore, to see how the Labyrinth would meet such ends and beginnings in the presence of the ages

But you must know that of all these people here I was not the only one who, if asked to spell out the trouble under our skin, would have pointed northward (for a start) out beyond Dia, till you caught that faint white glimmering of snow that sometimes haunted our horizon. It was the sun off the shoulders of a mountain-of-fire called Velkanos, so huge and so close, a day's sail perhaps from Crete, that in good weather like this, snow or not, you could see out there in the blue the brown blotch of its crooked crater. Some people shook their fists no farther than that for their worries, blamed the unwelcome changes of a generation on that mountain's bursting into flame and thunder that long ago. It had hit our wide-open coasts with waves that had killed hundreds, smashed to kindling more than a third of our ships, civilian and military, and then for months had poured gray poison on our fields

In truth, though, this had happened more than once across the twentytwo generations since the raising of the Labyrinth. And as grandmother's conservative circles would boast, we had always rebuilt, and done the job better besides: you could ask Iris or Kudru, as leaders of our artisans the Daedalaë, what opportunity their forebears had made of the first great destruction of our House. A grander staircase there, or here new pipe laid in for household water where there'd been none, a new toilet for convenience near some prominent family's shrines—craftspeople made their life's pride of these cunning things and there were always enough earth-shakings to make this a smiled-at obsession of theirs

The difference these days was that now we had to compete with, and even defend ourselves from, a particularly irritating tribe of foreign pupils of ours: the Achaians by name, descendants of a horde of horse-driving, bearded nomads who had drifted southward a few hundred years ago into mainland, Pelasgian lands beyond the islands. Without even a word for the Great Green of the sea, as I was told. On my honor, you'd be pressed to name things of the good settled life that we had not taught them. No one in Crete would deny that our ancestors' artisans had helped to build great houses up north for these Achaians' leading families; just as we'd helped Pelasgians (first-born of the land) and others up there to build roads, drain marshes, weave cloth, cipher, whatever would bring us their trade or an easement to metals in their ground

But once these wanderers had really begun to forcibly displace, rather than settle for mixing blood with, Pelasgian clans up north—burning their great multicolored House of Lerna by the sea, for example, and replacing it with fortified Tiryns, turning villages into coerced dependencies—well, what could we do, get into a land-war up there? Our strength was in the ships crewed by our young men and women, and in the unity of our houses: that was why you could all but walk right into any of Crete's royal precincts and seaside towns. Nor had it helped for long to offer Pelasgians assistance in settling new lands and outposts for trade; for, as grandmother spun us the story, in time the scent of the sea (which is wealth) was in Achaian noses, and in a few generations they'd learned to spell Great Green, and to sail it too. And now, since our last distress beneath Velkanos and the prevailing northerlies after it laced with ash, Achaians had been boldly trailing our merchant-ships everywhere, undercutting very old al-

liances for a season's gain, carrying themselves like something a bit more than our equals: in our halls there were even reports now and then of *raids* carried out against towns of the islands and the east by their kinsmen. Young fools and bored barons looking for that brainless status born of their good-old-wandering-days

This boiled my blood as much as it did my brother's, and the promise of his posture was just what many had come a distance to see again today, especially in the wake of his actions on the sea. I looked around beside Glaucus and I knew that, while some Cretans wished the Minotaurus an even Greater Year, others who knew Egypt and parts of Canaan and the north protested that little good had come of making kings-for-life anyplace else. News, like the fact that the new Pharaoh was chiseling his mother's cartouche off their monuments, traveled fast; and we had Libyan and Canaanite refugees who'd swear to it living here besides, in flight from the glory of his Name.

Old Cratus and the clergy like him said that what it meant to be a man at all was changing and not for the better: I understood their solicitude in Glaucus' haunting me lately, as he was plainly a fellow a strong prince should learn from. He stood lankily taller than most men on this beach, had the nipped waist and powerful thighs that so pleased our painters, and a cordial presence that belied a fierce son of home: he also had gray eyes, and many knew his clan (from our eastern town Praisos) as one of the best of these *graikoi* with whom Crete had ever mixed her blood. He was like a sign of a possible future, like a scion of that group of visiting-elder Achaians also with us this morning who had placed themselves in a rank behind my father's Kouretes, tallish men with beards and hair the color of dry seagrass, or kerm-oak red. They all

wore their usual long chest-and-thigh-covering tunics with stitched-in symbols of mainland lords across the breast, solar signs, lions and white bulls and horses rampant: we'd grown up much in the presence of such men with their coming and going under tutelage agreements. And I should lie if I said there was much love lost between them and Palesus; but Glaucus was a reminder that sometimes, like his own ancestors from Aeolis in the north, such men did assimilate in Crete and found good houses. We were an ancient but decidedly mongrel race here, and even my father's blood (I mean, they *told* me he was my father) had come from the north round the same time as Glaucus', and been adopted by Mother Europa, as our saying was.

Now you can see better how our Great Year came to be, a consummation of an age of change and pressure to change, a hopefully-better balance of The Powers that turned the world. I just hoped my brother wouldn't overdo it and spoil my own reign by losing this watchful trust from our clans: in essence he wanted more ships, and more people to crew them, and to our mothers that was simply too Achaian a response. After all, by their own profession Achaian gods (personal beings in the sky!) made nothing grow, did no work, fostered no constructive skills and, for all that, styled themselves lords of women: even we with the most to gain saw the topheavy risks there. I wanted to keep Palesus' plans from making me an heir to resentment—and thus here everybody stood, to see how certain lines would be drawn

Look at them, bunched up on Minos' side of the crescent like that, standing there studying, one supposed, with arms folded or fingers to their beards. Rufous skulls, like a sun going down some dreary winter evening. Most

of them smelled like goat's butter and affected rough disdain for the pleasures of bed and bath and clean linen; wouldn't think of painting their eyes, and not a few Cretan youth were falling in with them. Very well, I admit we had little proof yet that their houses might be directly involved in these raids. People afraid to walk their own beaches. Circumstantial stuff and biased merchants, as Minos warned my brother. But I'll tell you why he and I were mad in our ways against them: because they were so lost in their own lies that they thought *we* could not discern their real opinion of our father. I won't mince about it. They most of them held the Minotauros a kind of grand fool for his so-called submission to our Queen, which showed right off what they understood of us. He tolerated the ways in which Pasiphae thought it best to instruct them, and as she elevated them, they mocked him in their souls. They no-end admired how the web of his trade (*his* trade) had worked so smoothly time out of mind, but would never say aloud how his Offering was, for them, a relic of a dreamworld, a childish sort of dark-magic game imposed by women. It was in their looks and small remarks everyplace they went here, tight, cautious, critical, as if the cow of their mothersmilk had been stalled in a countinghouse. Game! How could anybody not feel appalled to sickness and fear with the way a field looked after harvesters had ravaged it, by Necessity? And could the act of healing that, for the people's sake, tell a Man Who Stepped Forward anything but the worth of his own life? People came to our rites to learn from my parents how to die and how to live and we had no more honored part of ourselves that we could give back to The Powers, to Crete's fat fields in fearful gratitude

For those of Paria's conservative circles you did not

meet Velkanos' disaster with risk of another: they'd opposed the Great Year from the start of Paria's own reign, which brought them influence. And these signs of restless unappeasement came as no surprise to her now, for so much time without The Offering. To make herself plainer still—she was a bit of a browbeater—she had revived among some women the hanging of corn dollies from the fruit trees of Cnossos and elsewhere, chastening symbols of a legend almost nobody believed anymore, that the first One Who Stepped Forward had been a woman

But Paria and her councils had consented to the change because it was in line, at least, with the unifying changes among our great houses and their assimilative past: most had agreed on the need to keep men pacified in light of the foreign news, too. Now, though, for many, enough was enough: I could remember playing underfoot with brother and sister in the dust and spirally woodshavings as mother had redesigned our whole throne room for grander effects, adding also a substantial pillared shrine in the west wing to Achaian Poseidon. Yet Pasiphae's efforts to make the north's visiting elders and students more at home, by bringing in their blueblooded god, had put conservative clergy less than at ease in their own House. Maybe a rough tough sea-god was good for the men at the oars, but the Labyrinth's sisters and brothers did not enjoy concealing their opinion of a deity whose priests, and new money, could change him from mountaineer to sailor according to trade-winds

Nobody blamed my mother for her effort to keep the clearly dwindling respect of the mainland houses. We all meant to help with Ariadne's and Palesus' coming burdens—find out what was souring in our Egyptian and Eastern alliances, solve trade-territorial problems in

Rhodes and Sicily, keep bringing our fields and fleet back to health. I had a duty coming soon in all this that Glaucus could advise on, too: I'd get him to walk me to the city. But why should I break myself to Palesus' intentions, especially knowing what the *new man's* respect might mean when our father was no longer seen in the world?

—I must say he does look fierce and splendid as the young Bull should before the Dance, Glaucus whispered now, as people squinted into the sea's rising light to spot the boat. —Every bit the man I heard about who shipped those scribes home, eh?

I didn't ask his sources, but the travels of that news told me things. Glaucus meant my brother's first real showing-forth of himself last autumn, when he'd found that several mainland students of our ciphers had substituted nicknames for Cretans on House lists of personnel. Dingus and Barn Owl, Blackhead, and *Earthling*—we hadn't realized that this last was an Achaian pejorative

—And what do you call a man who is more than a merchant and less than a raider? I asked him with one of Palesus' jibes for the Bright Hairs. But we had no word for the answer; and when Glaucus looked at me as if to chasten, I flashed with an anger. Come on, Ariadne! Though I wasn't sure how even she could help. She had danced Bull just as bravely and wildly as her brothers in the indispensable rite that guarded Crete's throne—but she had not fought on the sea. Out there, there were *no rules*; and somehow I had let anger become the answer to the chill in my bones

Glaucus touched me then, threaded his arm along my waist and leaned in with his lanky grace, a good stylish pose for that local daughter and the bearded barons as well, who turned wonderful colors when Cretan men did

such things. Yes, look at Palesus and father, the one with his lovelock forward over the shoulder and the other dressed down like myself for his benefit today, letting the heir wear the emblematic leather codpiece over his kilt, get people used to the new king's person over time. The arm felt good around me; and oddly, just now the whole Achaian assembly raised their fist-ed right hands to their breasts in Minotauros' honor, a gesture that drew many nods from the people around us. Must've been the light that was just beginning to shift its shapes and flash on the ruffled sea, warming bodies and moods and the colors of our gathering, the heads of the double-axes: a morning breeze was astir now too and curled about our feet, like a sunwarmed snake. Pasiphae handed the conch to Palesus, and as he bellowed through it thrice—Ariadne had better get in before the surf woke up—Mother led the crowd to lift its palms out toward the sea. It was pleasure to see and feel so many hands lift that way in unison and to see the muscles of her back still so defined and symmetrical, like runes recalling festival nights when you saw what a powerful dancer she was. Some bold fellow in the crowd, a friend of Palesus' from his Bulldancing team now called out the title my brother had earned—*Leap for us, Megistos Kouros!* (Greatest of Youths!)—and he obliged the man indeed, deigning to smile with a bit of a strutting kicked-up step and his arms out high, then turning to wait Ariadne again with a bristling energy. And the whole bay before him was as blue as the base of a candle's flame and along the shore the trees were lifting and there were swaths of blossom-color climbing the green hills inland, white sea daffodil and yellow anthemis, and those garish purple-yellow ice daisies and sea-squills with tall white stems: you could wade upward into slopes of them and

pick yourself armfuls of anemone and asphodel and corn poppy bright as blood, and on the way down home leave a few bunches scattered before the brooding pillars within the cave up there on the hill, by Amnisos' seaside altars; or if the high air took you you could just keep climbing, clear to the snowline of our mountains east and west of here, whose thick white drifts were tinted luminous-pink with the dawn and looked to be hovering in the sky, like clouds you knew you could walk on if you would. The day was flawless and everything seemed to course with a deep gentle strength, like Bull at our altar this morning: a priest would predict such a day for the month that joined Willow Moon with Sun in the House of the Bull. *Soothe, Soothe*, the sea was saying

Some of the lifted hands were pointing now and others caught on to those: you knew any moment the women would let loose that high trill like a seabird's they loved to ululate together, the *Oh-lo-lo* and *Oh-lo-lo-lo-lo* which their mothers before them had sung for the presence of The Aridela, The Very Manifest One. And just at this instant when the shape of the crowd seemed settled and its outcry near, another large flow of people emerged from the head of Amnisos Road behind us and walked down beach in scattering bunches to join in: it was another procession, organized by one of our upland houses at Archanes—children wearing and holding flowers and riding the backs of horses seven hands high (they raised the bigger breeds on the mainland), these led along by pairs of Archanes' priests and priestesses in their usual bright identical full-length robes, cut low around the shoulders. A pretty company in Ariadne's honor, they all had over them and in their eyes the glow of the dawn they walked toward, and there now came

grandmother's carrying-chair, no less, with the yellow awnings tied back and her small gray head leaning out toward Tukato. He was Archanes' tall factotum and leading priest and even from here his hairless sensitive face looked to be at prayer that Paria close her endless conferencing awhile. Ahh: a slightest lifting and turning of heads now, a palpable shifting in the bodies as in a bank of flowers, a silent consent to join together and seek understandings for the pain. These priests and sisters, you see, and the children of many races in Archanes' charge, occupied the same place in people's sentiments here as the mountains and secret valleys above us, the matrix of our race: these were children born of Communion during our festivals of worship through the year, when all distinctions of class and gender and race dissolved in the heat of the worship of life. And everybody knew that these children *were* the ongoing story by which our own flesh had come to be; and so it was honor from close to the heart of our magic that they'd take this trouble to come down. My parents looked radiant, grandmother magpie-chipper despite her very bad joints in the morning: Tukato must've had them all sing the great lady out from her villa's courtyard of lemon trees, where the corn dollies dangled. The horses and little ones padded and soft-clopped around Paria's set-down chair, the quiet of the children's grins quite impressive for the energy rising off the sea, the bright things of ritual and the flutes and systrums many held

– *Oh-lo-lo-lo!* – *Oh-lo-lo-lo-lo...*

Was it a thousand lifted palms and voices joining that first cry? Suddenly the land was louder than the wakening surf before us as Glaucus showed me the glint of gold off

Ariadne's boat-prow, and we rocked together on our feet while the Kouretes drummed their shields in triple-time with ritual swords and received drummed answers from household instruments in the crowd. Women and daughters and little ones (laughing) kept up the ululations wave after overlapping wave, men rattled systums and stamped their feet, whistling: dogs began to run about barking again as youths blew squalls on wooden pipes, old people clapped or just enjoyed it all and the shoreline's tamarisks seemed to cast their birds aloft. It was a fine contagious cacaphony and, as we now made out the three persons and the green of a small tree aboard the boat out there, it got even wilder: brother and father each had their arms lifted out toward their respective Queens, our Achaian guests looked almost bright with a magnanimous envy and the Archanes children waved their peonies and turban-buttercups like scepters. Near the back of the company I caught sight of that lovely Phaedra, a youth of Archanes most ardent in Ariadne's service, but the boy Icarus, my boy you might say, born of my wound, was not with them today. I'd have to speak with Tukato to see if the little daemon was any more social at all and how those treatments with decoction of valerian were helping his fits. And there went our mother turning a few strong steps herself amid the priestesses' grove of lifted Labryses, clawing at the air, provoking everyone

—*Oh-lo-lo-lo-lo!* —*Oh-lo-lo-lo...*

As I glanced round I asked Glaucus if he thought getting rid of my cloak would be in taste today. He gave me the owl's eye: don't dilute your brother's potencies

—Well, I said, —when a man comes of age he just wants people to see he need not obey the women so strictly anymore.

— Especially the girls! he agreed

— *Oh-lo-lo-lo...*

Now you could see the gilded bull's horns on the boat's small wooden figurehead and the flashes of the wet paddles worked by Cleite and Diamat, and how erectly Ariadne sat in its stern with the tree in its spiral-painted planterbox beside her: her and our brother's older friends among the youth were chanting *Aridela!* and *Megistos Kouros!* clear over everybody else. How it lit my pride that they embodied titles only Bull could bestow, and now these youths' own elders joined in with phrases from earlier spring rites

— *Leap, leap at the head of thy daemons,
Kouros of all that is wet and gleaming,
and all mankind be held about
by wealth-loving Peace!*

— *And leap for us also,
for full jars and fleecy flocks,
and leap for fields of fruit
and for hives to bring increase...*

Our father's eyes shone darkly like rich stones set beneath the gold of his diadem, as he savored these favorite aspirations of his and the uproar made of them: Palesus was still holding back his best. But when Minos joined the voices and pointed at Palesus while calling out those phrases—*And leap for our cities, and leap for our seaborne ships, and leap for our young citizens!*—well, brother was Pasiphae's son for calculation. On the instant he took himself some real space within the blood-circle and the Kouretes seemed to know what to do: they trooped out in a file between Palesus and the incoming boat with rival-

rous javelins and shields raised against him, and when he'd stripped a gold ring from his left hand and displayed it, playing (like others) with minor custom, he hurled it in a confirming gesture of betrothal over their ducking heads into the sea, and the troop of them fell over flat-backwards at the force of it, groaning. The ring splashed just shy of Ariadne's boat and the Archanes little ones squealed. But then—even Glaucus shook his head a bit—why did Palesus mar things as he did? Striding back to his place triumphant, kilt and codpiece showing the muscled tops of his thighs he simply had to shake out his mane of black locks and spread his arms toward the Achaian elders with a By-your-leave, unnecessary gesture, a too-fine obeisance to all *fathers* of a sort. Many smiles; but no laughter, as our guests returned him a fist-to-breast salute.

Meantime the priestesses rowing had begun to help their bull negotiate the just-rising inshore surf: it seemed to me that our gaze returned now to what was needed. And more, as I saw my sister out there today, sitting as graceful as a young palm, left hand lifted to bless and the other holding steady the spiralled planter at her side, a kind of hollow or deep drop I'd never felt before was simply there within my chest, as sudden as a sail's belly emptied of the wind. My body rejoiced with all the others under the morning sun, she was no longer our sister or any young woman but The Aridela—yet how much larger and striking her frank brown eyes today, before all the crazy crowd! We'd been raised to know ourselves in the light of the Image of Power we called Goddess, yet somehow today all formal things were fused in a fire with my sister, and my friend, and the budding woman I knew, and I shivered, as if hearing her fine voice leading chants within

a cave. Cleite and Diamat had dressed her with just the right deference to mother: soft organdy kohl round those eyes, a flat white cap keeping her black tresses up off her neck, an organdy kilt cut as high on the hip as our brother's and chased with silver running spirals. A light tangle of loose hairs at the back of her delicate neck—my strength seemed near to a kind of swoon. I don't know: I pulled free of Glaucus and shoved my own hair back. How her strong pliant posture took the well-bred Cnosian woman's bearing to its almost swaybacked limit; the strength of her chin and her arms besides, a dancer like mother and as resolute with the stunning-mace; the same faint smile at play behind the title, love of her friends and their uproar; and something perhaps The Grove Of The Trees had given her only now, a new gravity, as if the elder sisters had shown her a sadness to be mastered, a bull to be met head-on, and tamed to the power of the tribe. There were tears on my cheeks because for me she centered the beauty of the world and a sorrow I hated was worming its way into my heart—What loss? Would she not always be near? In her I saw what I could not yet bear to live myself, a radiance born of accepting—Everything—I had to get going or there'd be trouble with mother but I longed like a lover to hear whatever she might have to say and I wished we were young and not-responsible enough again to play around a little in bed as we had a time or two, it was all confused, and in that hollow place was knowing how much her accession might well take from me

Cleite and Diamat had stopped paddling to feel out the inshore waves, and suddenly the breeze and water turned the boat broadside to the crowd, and with the rising tide's small waves relentless behind them they started

to sidle toward the sand. It could've happened to anybody, let alone that our two eldest priestesses had to be tired oarsmen, and some people smiled as if hoping this struggle deliberate; but with a few more waves they could well spill completely on the shingle and my bones seemed to leap of themselves to prevent such an omen. I had leaped once before to save that boy and Palesus and father seemed caught up in After-You glances, while the clergy held off in anxious respect. I dropped my cloak and in a moment had waded rib-deep out to them just to help bring round the prow. What did Cleite have on her face, was that a beard? But then I stopped myself from touching the gunwales because, up close now, I saw the dozens of tiny ceramic corn dollies they had hanged along the boat's sides. I could not make myself touch anything because I saw traces of what had to be moonblood streaked over the figurines, any priest knew that power could *kill*, and people were watching: I was close enough to read the paint-patterned signatures of Cretan clans' dedications on the dollies' dangling skirts, tokens of requests to fructify fields and loins all through the realm and this was nothing to trifle or play hero with. I felt I had done so with the eyes so heavy upon my back and, as I fumbled what to do now, Ariadne held her gaze beyond me to the horizons of our hills

—No! Get back! That's alright! Don't touch that! old Diamat quietly screeched down (not my favorite of the sisters, so officious about the messages in public deeds). They brought the boat to, of course, and I demonstrated how hard it was to wade in gracefully over rocks before so many, though there were some smiles and claps. Father and brother nodded along but I felt the mildest curl in my mother's lip as I passed her. Later, she said that one

might well show all the proudflesh one wished, but for the rest, one just didn't do that. *Help, mother? No, Deucalion: panic.*

Well, I went back dripping to Glaucus, who was now flanked by two of the cleaner reliable harbor-hands, Cordax and Podes, from whom one could always get the scurvier kinds of foreign news: they'd let Glaucus know that his ship had been moved down-coast to Katsambas for the day, our military port kept separate from merchant-affairs but not too far west of here. These friends kindly clapped my back as the noise died down around us, people gazed on Ariadne or fist-to-brow gave praise with eyes shut, a few dancing manically under the tamarisks: Cleite and Diamat were now lifting the planter from the drawn-up boat, then set the small fig tree in it at the head of the shingle with a space behind for The Aridela to stand. Once she stepped from the boat her stance quite deliberately seemed to rise from the planter and it would not have been far from our truth to say that she was The Tree of The Trees, as winning as the little one before her with its beneficent fivepointed leaves, its tiny green omens of food and medicine. Young Woman. I'd known only the beauty and disciplined richness that had brought her thus far toward office: the radical devotion, the callous cruelty born of it, the dreams—all that was tomorrow. Ariadne crossed the line of blood now, and lifted her palms out to the people, and her face shone forth her wishes for them; and then our mother stepped forward and laid her palms to her daughter's, welcoming, communing, completing the Circle

— Did you say they gave you things to ready for her at Cnossos? Glaucus asked; thinking of me, though he could be intrusive. Following suit the stevedore Podes let me

know that the boat I was trying to build with young Icarus was coming along very nicely, in his opinion. I halfsmiled and lifted my hand to still this, and just then my mother's head bowed deeply, her body visibly sighed, and she turned with remarkable tears on her face to the people

— *Their world—is passed away!* she half-sang in a broken lament, speaking of The Dead, and more, of the soon-to-be-so among the living in every heart, including her own: she looked at Minos as he stood with chin lifted a little too high, and then her upraised hands turned to fists in front of herself, she shook them, and beckoned Palesus forward to his Queen. Glaucus had nodded with an approving comprehension whose fullness eluded me, while a slow wave of disappointment seemed to roll through the crowd, and then its backwash showed in gestures of homage and surrender to One Who might yet help: as Palesus took Ariadne's hand, others took tight hold on hands near them. I do not know how Ariadne gave our mother those words but there they were and I wondered what else would be done to heal the restless unappeasement underneath these days: our priests told me later of the rest of the rites held here this morning. Traditional things, a ceremonial touching of the tree for all who wished it, a pouring of wine between partnered celebrants praising Goddess in each other, healing touches from clergy and Queens as the sick were called forward. Clanspeople of the countryside who'd brought down animals and first-fruits claimed those powerful dollies later, too: I had to go, but at least I'd seen my family's own gestures of resolve. Live, live! Maybe rites were all one had with which to face the oracle Ariadne had brought from The Dead, and our power was just that we produced them better than others

As Glaucus and I headed up Amnisos Road we could only hear the sing which Archanes' children offered up, and I was sorry to miss what I heard later of Cleite's wit. She'd dance-displayed herself in gaily-chosen tokens of all our clans' totem ancestors, from the feather of Maat's Egypt to the goatskin bib of Pelasgian and Libyan dress: wool for our Carian stock in the East, horns in her hair for old Europa's bull from the cities of Canaan, even a horse's mane of teased-up straw to keep Tukato's and Glaucus' northern forebears in the game. This was all to help the clans renew themselves as part of Ariadne's very flesh, as if they themselves comprised her power, which was true: most people had best-liked the beard, worn in remembrance of Pharaoh's passed-away mother Hatshepsut, Paria's contemporary who'd had to wear one to hold their throne (if you can believe that) till her boy had come of age. As a bit of shocking common knowledge here it had served to mock the very inkling that a Cretan Queen should ever let things come to that. Good! And when Cleite had backed away with all these signs, there again had stood young Ariadne, new world, new race present in her womb

— Well, I daresay nobody noticed Velkanos much behind her today, Glaucus mused as we climbed from the shore. — Oh! And who is this boy of yours, Icarus?

* * *

The harbor town fell behind us, and Glaucus, unanswerd, let himself just enjoy the walk awhile, finding us shoots of anis to chew (burst of crickets) and watching the loose play of whitethorn and willow shade over the road ahead. We crested the shore hills, passed the sunny

outdoor altars flanking the entrance to the little cave where mariners and mothers beseeched good fortune of The Powers: then we sloped down between small groves of almond trees and olives, the land either side of us beginning to spread out pleasantly into lowlying meadows of shortgrass. The hillsides were still mapped with pale straw and in these morning-quiet vales stood a few small bright two-story houses with gourd and grape arbors, fig trees and burgeoning sunflowers, most of their common yards deserted for the rites at the shore right down to the loom-frame under the shade-tree: only some sparrows were whipping about as yet but we heard cattle and goats and sheep within these borders of lowland green, and the new grass seemed to glow from beneath pale winter scrub. The sky was bright blue and you could smell black tilth and good water in the sun. Ahead the land flattened out more to a richly green plain with snowy mountains beyond east and westward, with some young barley sown here and there and wooded hillocks like natural sentinels of Cnossos-proper: we scarcely talked until far out ahead there loomed the green and rocky flanks of Mount Juktas, a mile or two beyond the head of the valley of the Labyrinth. If people had cleared and carved that whole ridge it could not have looked more like the profile of a giant gazing at the sky, stretched on his bier but dreaming new life to come: I always thought that, though the land's lush green had all but grown over and forgotten him, he was at peace, since he'd given himself to that which always wins. Priestesses said he was the land's just-right answer to the Image in the shape of Dia Isle. Day was brightening

—Hope I'm home for the Midsummer bonfires up there, Glaucus said. —These days, odds are I'll be

abroad, but I'd like to celebrate your father's reign with him. *Their world is passed away*, he echoed now with a rare sigh. —Excuse me, Prince Deucalion, but will you be speaking any further this morning? I don't think you understand yet. I'm not sure who does.

—Understand?

—Ohh, it's the secretive high-born priest today. But tell me, Glaucus went on undaunted, —when you meditate or dance The Changes up on Juktas' forehead, and groom yourself for your father's honors and powers and service, does it really *strike* you, the way Bull did when you danced Him, that your own displacement as a man is in store?

—All the clergy say I'm young to know what my father really feels, I allowed. —But our example is the heart of the office, the great heart, the Stepping Forward so that

—But whose world is passing now? said Glaucus with a down-cutting gesture. —It's yours, Deucalion, yours and mine. The world is much bigger than our Cretan ways, however many cities and islands borrow our best in everything. Forgive me, but it's not going to be enough for you to sow your life back into this land—I mean, that must be done as always, Glaucus added to be heard by the living forms around him, —but we are in trouble, and denying it is making it worse. Does it ever seem to you that that mountain-of-fire Velkanos isn't really asleep, let alone dead? I know a priestess back home in Praisos who says Velkanos is really a, what's the word, a *brutch*, a sort of embodiment or emanation of all the bad feeling around these days, the things hurting us. She says that if we'd push back, rather than be so high and hospitable in the Name of Goddess

—What else do you and my brother talk about? I said.

— Neither he, nor your parents or clergy said anything, Glaucus answered.

Which left Ariadne; and suddenly many things filled that hollow in my chest, not least of which was a pride, a gratitude that she might hold me as someone who could help in days to come. Had these especially sacral and secretive months among the women before her throne worked more on myself than on anyone, making her the image of our people's health and my soul's growth? All our lives we young men had been warned not to get in her way for anything, she'd grown up much away in the mountains *without any limits*, it was said—What did she want of me, then? And now as we walked I realized the fairly shapeless younger brother I must've been to her

A moment later all this changed to a boyish shame beside Glaucus' worldliness. Goddess, the Mother of Love within all things, and Earthbull, the molten-eyed monster beneath the ground—these understandings had seen us all through childhood, calmed fears and made us family to each other, blood-kin and commons and strangers off the sea. But The Powers which our great houses addressed and worked with—these were deeper than Goddess or Bull or any Form, and They did not care at all whether you were kind, or got killed: Goddess was simply the most complete and passionate way to express how we felt the world and it was this understanding (and the nerve to make use of it) that had given our great families power. Justice, order, duty: not a lie but a kind of universal plasticity lay behind these things and I saw how *obedient* I still was; but at least now I could sense how we were all stuck somehow, wishing neither to harm nor put limits on anybody, but nursing the need to defend ourselves with even a blind lashing-out. If necessary; and to Palesus

it was so. I looked up over the road at the greatness of our land and at the mountain that made us men who could Step Forward, and spoke her name in my heart—yet there was still the old angry sick confusion that made a *brutch* of the wound at my rib

—I just want to belong, Glaucus, I said.

—Belong to what? A dying thing that your silence won't help? My friend, if I thought all things doomed I'd make them shake with my heart's blood.

Glaucus was angry beyond his decorum and that made me trust him, though we'd been taught to beware the choices anyone offered us: I wanted to be useful, and that meant getting full-strength again like field and fleet, and there was yet an hour's walk ahead. Meanwhile too a goodlooking young man jounced down the eastern hillside and crossed the road before us with a string of fishes shiny in the sun, taking the shortcut home from the Kairatos River with the aunt's fresh breakfast. A year or two would find him at an oarsman's bench someplace and it would be his life first to answer for Labyrinth policies

Alright then, I told Glaucus, maybe they called this proudflesh at my rib but I was ashamed of what had happened on the sea and of why it happened. From Ariadne I'd learned early-on that not everything mother did came from perfect wisdom. Songs from boyhood in the House had told how Crete was admired from Troy to Pharos, from Gades to Babylon for putting the first of law on the sealanes—but was that what we'd done? How many mothers of slain marines and oarsmen were really choking back gall when they left offerings at the Labyrinth, and saw the Egyptian gold and the Libyan ostrich eggs and Canaanite perfumed silks? I was not my sister—only a man, and felt there was something wrong with me to

have such thoughts at all. But what I'd seen—I could not be the only one. And yes, these well-born pirates on our tails all across the seacharts, curse them, at least raiders made no pretense

—Just tell me what happened, Glaucus said touching my back again, matching my strides

But before I could speak it the memory of battle made the blood seem to drain from my arms and legs, and I felt cold, felt far from the green and the peace all around and the half-shaded road we were walking up valley: I was only wearing a kilt, boots and shawl and we didn't go into close-quarters fighting with much else on: you feel so vulnerable and that makes you battle-mad; and a living thing seems to drain from your marrow

—Weren't there some pleasantries first, Deucalion?

Yes: like receiving my sword and dagger and sealstone from my mother at the head of a crowd of royal-kindred initiates to manhood: the tension in the House when it was time to make first voyage, and knowing Palesus had been out once already and would help to command a sister-ship on patrol with us; and my father's pompous pride in his two sons and the tactfully plain small jar of blessed and scented oil for my sailor's skin that Ariadne gave. And my hollow share of the crew's courage and devotion as we'd rowed away from the land and seen even the mountains sink away into an endless rolling sea that could swallow any and all without a blink; and when the nausea had passed, beginning to learn, and loving the open dependence we had on each other on that deck of the *Talos*, that had seemed so large in port. Singing call-and-answer at night between the ships when there was no landfall, and recognizing signs in the clouds of storm and distant land in skirts of surf: sharing the pride as passing island-mer-

chanters hailed the ships of Crete, and seeing truly how it was our family that kept the tin and the copper flowing east and west, our clans that midwived this brightness and wealth-loving Peace into the world, as our song said

And on our sixth morning out (I was still counting in terms of home) I woke up and our three ships were suddenly reefing sails and heaving into spring's still-cool southwesterlies. We were out of landsight up north somewhere between Patmos and Myconos, it was a blood and honey sunrise and our prows were lunging toward a single grayblack flower of smoke on the sea ahead. Trouble; and to port I saw my brother on the deck of the Libyan ship the *Swift Queen*, beating oar-stroke time with his sword on the air, while to starboard the *Melanippe*, a ship full of Taurian women-marines was starting to outpace us as their voices took up one of those battle-songs that would curdle Bull's blood. However I'd swaggered on deck for our House's expertise and far-flung connections—these were two of our fiercest allies, purposely getting to know the next Minotauros in my brother—well, battle was about to prove how deep the bonds of blood and shared patrol could run

—Twice lively now, spread out! Follow the *Talos*! shouted Perides, our maternal uncle and commander of Crete's entire military. War had never been the Minotauros' office but I was glad father had entrusted his sons to no less a figure. Short even for a Cretan and built thick and quick, with narrow dark eyes above a well-trimmed beard, Perides strode up and down the center bridge-plank giving signals to both sides as we took the lead slot, our fifty oars beginning to outpace our sister-ships. —Where's that fellow Nyos with the long eyes? Shinny up the mast, man, and count us these carsuckers!

I was up on the high curved afterdeck between the brail-lines with Keta the steersman, afraid, caressed by winds that rumbled in my ears. Nyos called down their strength: three raiders and a burning merchanter, we'd be too late, too much sea. But Perides cursed and the *Talos'* oarsmen beat sea: this ship was old but yare and sleek-beamed and its name was known in the islands, not least for its complement of crack Cretan marines, russet wiry men with boarstooth helmets and the small very manageable shields and swords you needed for ship-to-ship fighting. Their eyes and hands were full of the experienced soldier's tricks of death and as their brothers at the oars hulled us swiftly now toward battle they mostly just sat amidships in a double-grove of planted javelins, playing knifey for their nerves or reminding the younger ones of points of what they called conversation. To port the thirty Libyans (men and women) had started to sing as one to Nut, their war-name for Goddess, putting all their black arms into it while Palesus deferred to their shamaness, who hung forward off their prow in flapping zebra-skins, hurling curses—anyway we might be too late but I knew these raiders would have no chance. You could feel that all these people, schooled to imitate the Mother fighting for Her children, would take it to the death in the honor of it: I could not think yet that transporting commodities was the bottom of our being here at all. And I waved to Palesus on the *Swift Queen*, but he was tying back his mane and his hips were cocked in a pretty stance, he looked calm as a goat on a cliffside

We lunged on, the oarsmen's discipline beautiful to see, and soon the yellow flicker of fired oils was clear and the verminous scurry of the raiders as they gutted the wreck. And then a drift of wrack and bodies passed be-

tween us to starboard. Bobbing corpses of young island men. A woman, face-down, white arms splayed out of her pink shift, bloody graymatter pooling through red hair: I know I saw one man with a huge *bite* gone from his side, the ragged white ribs

—*Miasma!* came a hideous curse-cry from the Taurians. —*Miasma!* and everybody answered their holy anger. Famous fighters now, these priestesses and their followers, in riding-britches on the amber roads or on seaduty wherever they pleased: their captain Alxiona had made a point of bragging that they were the first of us southern peoples to make war in defense of territory. True or not, they did seem never to have conciliated Aryans (whose wanderings southward our Achaian friends had shared), and now that cry, they'd seen the woman, that curse would chase you down if it took a Great Year. I saw even gruff old salty Perides shiver as he pulled off his purples and strode up-bridge to my side

—The fools! he said: he meant the bodies: they must've tried to save the mere tithe of escort by a quick early-season voyage with their goods, gotten caught by raiders with hunger-sharp wits and a bit of luck. Now we could even see them tossing metal talents and jars as they offloaded plunder to the hold of their big cog in the center: surely they'd counted us, too, and would fight it out. Seagulls shrieked on our stern, souls goading *Talos* to vengeance, and circlets of breeze ran the sea before us like steps of a giant as Perides gripped my shoulders

—Deucalion, listen. See what these thieves have done? Your father told me not to engage so many with both his calves here, but I can't let them go, these are clearly no ragtags, they're old hands. See there, how they stow all the loot on the leader's cog and he plays them off,

promising survivors a better share? Well, you watch him feed the other ships to us.

— *Miasma!*

— Hnnnyeah! Perides shivered at the cry. — Three times seals it. I could use a little knifey too, I declare. But they'll be winded once with the kill, we'll take them sure. Now listen, when we go in, I need you to keep well back here and help Keta steer us dead-on for center. Our sisters will cut inside and isolate them, see? Now you plant your shield in these bracings and hang on. Ears up for arrows, Keta! Good man! Hoy, Palesus! Take the necklace off, you peacock!

— I can fight! I stammered to his back, quite out of myself with fear.

— You'll take orders first! Weapons! Your voices now, my brothers!

It was a joke of the fleet how fond of the bathtub old Perides was: I could also feel his perfect right to kill me if I got in the way now, so I helped brace Keta's big man-shaped shield too. But my whole body was paling at the rattle-sounds of strapped-on helmets, the clinks of weapons and the sick sliding of swords from sheaths. If I believed we were serving the law then the horror would be only the day long and there'd be family to sustain me in the next world if it happened, but my body felt pale, there was no friendly crowd watching you play Bull out here, no rules: perhaps the pale and the cold meant I'd soon be like those first victims of malice I'd seen, with oozing wounds, masted with spears, it was death's violence I feared and the rising rage of these professionals

— How can they call a swordfight conversation? I blurted, and Keta put his hands over mine on the tiller, but his eyes never left Perides at the bow. We closed, and

the raiders' oarsmen were catching all kinds of crabs (as they said) trying to keep the burning wreck between *Talos* and themselves. But the wreck was sinking anyway and as their loaded cog drew back the other two ships huddled No-you-don't nearer to it. We slipped into ragged smoke, smell of pine-char and cloth and rope, and in three tongues Perides shouted for surrender. They answered in a kind of horse-rhythmed curse, as if Poseidon was their god-in-common: a rabble of murderers and graverobbers, Hittite deserters (fleeing Pharaoh, as we'd find) and cattle-thieves, some who already had the brand of Labrys, the double-axe seared into the left shoulder, showing they'd been caught once at this and had had their mercy-portion from Admiralty courts. The Taurian women answered loudest with shrieks and whistles and stamping, a sound like a mare rearing up to crush your skull and the raiders began to bunch up clumsily on their decks. Sallow faces behind all kinds of picked-up shields, some in the feather-crested helmets of slain Carian regulars out of our Eastern alliances, with curved reaping-hook swords or axes or knives only, archers behind them: their arms alone explained many a ship posted missing. We thudded past the wreck

At the snap of bowstrings Keta jerked me down, the first volley intended for us as steersmen, he said, and as arrows struck our shields I looked back at the wallowing merchanter and saw a blackhaired boy through the broken smoke. It was Icarus high up on the tilting stern—perhaps ten, his jaw working spastically but no sound—and with terror's eyes he'd climbed above the fires and death and I saw arrows stuck playfully in the wood all round him. A blindness came over me and I shouted my father's title in rage just as Perides howled

the boarding-order; and we stood together and hauled out the turn to come alongside the cog, and oars were shipped and we collided

And the sick chopping clatter and clang of weapons broke out as they all fell to it. The first deaths were branded raiders' who'd leaped right onto our marines' raised javelins, to pull them awry and embolden the others: these were dumped aside flailing like human fish and a chaos of cries went up, screams and goads over thuds of blades on oxhide, axes cracking helmets, snapping shafts: the Taurian women livid with rage with wrapped hair and breasts just leaped over their rails and hacked their way aboard the starboard enemy. The paired ships started to drift and I looked to port for Palesus but saw only his shield in the wall the Libyans formed to board their prey in one movement: the marines before me shoved and hacked forward and our deck all but emptied except for cowering oarsmen, and there lay the youth Nyos across two benches with an arrow in his left eye. Keta beside me spit, and wiped his eyes with it and clawed my shoulder. But raiders had begun to go down on three roaring clattering sides, hard bellies spilling meat, faces split like oysters, impaled on javelins they dropped all loose into the sea. Men who looked so much alike wrestling madly over the benches, grappling with oarsmen for something to hit with, a stabbed somebody doubled up in the hold—they were being crowded back to their far rails so the arrows let up and I risked a look to see the boy still perched on the swamping stern, pools of yellow fire. The fight was peaking: that vicious *clack! rattle rrinng!* of clashing blades that kept ending in screams, in mothers' names, filled the air; but some raiders with open wounds from their first fight were spent, and the Taurians had all theirs backed

up into their stern. The men against them seemed only to be warding off the scythe-strokes and some at the rear dove into the sea and never surfaced. To port it was desperate now too and some barechested raiders gambled on a leap-and-throw move just to get a blade past the press of Libyan shields; but then with only knives or in scuttling for what had dropped, they were being cut down. And from the butchery next to *Talos* I began to hear marines' voices calling on Rhea Dictynna, a name for Goddess as Judge: at that the raider captain (in a Carian crest) formed up his last defenses and then black fire-pots, weapons of pure spite sailed over the fury onto our deck, they burst and Keta shoved me flat and went down-bridge for a skin to help smother the flames. Marines and oarsmen jumped to help and I rose but they shouted *Stay Put* and Perides' orders were full of rage

—Well what can I do! I yelled and then I saw Keta take a javelin through the neck. It burst out under his locks in back and he died kick-twitching in the hold. I—couldn't believe it—I wavered—Things were bobbing on the bloody water all around our ships. A little fleet of them led to the Taurians and now I saw the last raider's head lop loose from a scythe, two sisters holding back his broken arms. The head splashed and bobbed in ripples of red. The priestess Alxiona stood up and *howled*, her stout tawny chest draped with her own blood from a neck-wound, and they were finished, mancorpses being kicked over the sides while their own crouched over the dead and the bleeding, twisting tourniquets and wailing and swinging their hair down loose over stilled faces. Years, years of grief to come for these few moments and I understood when some of them leaped and swam around behind the cog to grab at heels of the still-fighting raiders

paired with us: this, although more than once floating bodies moved a ways across the surface of themselves, floundered, stopped—sharks' work, an oarsman said later. And now the Libyans had prisoners in a flinching circle over there and I found my breath as I saw Palesus standing over the childish corpse of a Hittite with curly-toed boots. Then I lost sight of him as the Libyans rushed for their benches and turned the *Swift Queen* with its captive back toward *Talos*. I felt for the tiller—where Keta's hands had smoothed the—I wanted to impale these thieves, the way they did man-eating lions in the East

But a gull-cry came from the merchanter behind as the sea's last rush drew the fire in across the entire deck. A flame balled up, and Icarus disappeared, unmoving, down with the stern. They'd fight to the last aboard the cog with so much booty to feed their spite, these sons of Poseidon, so I breathed, and jumped, and with hatred to warm my bones I kicked deep for cover through the sea, winter-cold below the queer flicker, straining to see the ship or the boy through blue haze. Below where all warmth and light failed a gray shape emerged and shot off toward the ships' clanks and splashes: a shark, but he was gone almost before I could fear. Bodies were suspended down here too, arms up like drowsy heralds of the Night Mare

I needed to breathe, gulped air amid wrack and fire and dove again, straight down this time, forcing myself deeper with this last chance, forcing myself against that fear that wakens in the sea's upwelling darkness. My ears hurt and it was so cold that I could not follow these masses of bubbles much farther; but then the black flank of the ship was just beneath, easing down and down like a dream into oblivion and there was the boy, giving up his

last breath yet clinging to the arrowstudded stern. Why? I grabbed his wafted-up hair because my lungs were bursting and he was choking now but he let the ship go: an instant later his clutch was hurting me but he managed to kick upward and we broke through the half-burning surface. I had him, I had him! He vomited water and looked at me wildly like a beast at altar without its consent anymore: I can remember a bad intimation out of that but then the roll of the sea bore some of the fired oils right over us, we dove again and the message was forgotten in amazement and happiness and expectation of honor. We crawled just under the surface toward the grouping hulls. But then I couldn't be sure where to come up, the boats were turning, confused, so I rushed us for the largest one and we broke water near its tiller. Mistake! The last resistance was dying on the cog's afterdeck and one of them with a javelin saw us floundering, just in range—*We are his consolation!* my heart cried, and his blazing eyes smiled, and he threw

The boy's weight felt like a shield to lift but he screamed and I froze: there was not even time to kick backward and the javelin arced out and pierced the water and stuck in my left side, cracking downward against my bottom-left rib. The pain crumpled me in the water and I heaved on the shaft not believing, and then it hurt so much I could no longer move my legs, and I sank.

—Alright Glaucus? I said stopping short at the foot of a wooded rise. —That's how we keep the sea safe for imports. Answer that to the queens you must meet overseas, who tell you their Cretan protectors must be getting lazy! No doubt one of them grieves today for Icarus' mother—and Keta's clan too, and Nyos' with the long eyes

And I broke and hatred and sorrow overwhelmed me

and I put my palms to the Earth that She might take this poison from me. Oh, and had I not passively pretended to be proud of the whole thing later, brother holding my hand as they'd borne me home? Saying nothing to the eyes along the road seeking out their own kin, Palesus saying *Behold the boy our brother's wound gave life to*

—Poor body! I cried in paroxysms, jerking free of Glaucus' touch, I couldn't believe the heat of the blood inside my skull

—Come up here to this grassy spot off the road, just a moment, Glaucus beckoned. —That's it. They healed your rib well enough, but you'd better let the rest of this bleed some more. You must finish, Deucalion. Because things are even worse than you might suppose

Worse? He wouldn't say, yet, but had me lay my head in his lap as we rested in thick shady moss, facing a short view of the river's flow beneath the climbing sun. Oh, it had felt good to let this out into plain sight even to myself, and I remembered my mother once mentioning how, in her work with nobles of northern houses, they'd almost never talk with her about things inside them. Hiding it, their souls wounded too somehow, shame under bluster or coldness or manners. All of us, festering, like mountains-of-fire: boys' ears round Cnossos eager for the tale behind your proudflesh

Well, I remembered coming to aboard ship in Palesus' lap like this and thinking the javelin had been raked across me, for the pain across my whole lower chest. I pushed at the Taurian woman holding a poultice hard against the slit: they all guessed that the angle and the chipped bone had made the difference, and my brother kissed me and stayed right with me and washed me, it was the first time I'd seen his tears since his own thirteenth year and he

wore this very unbecoming broken smile as Perides brought over Icarus safe and sound. The boy made no thanks-gestures or words, just stared, twitches in his features

But of course our crew and duties were waiting, there were wounded and blood and scorch everywhere. More of our people died before midday and you could hear the souls passing in winds from their guts. We'd have buried them at sea but not this time, Palesus wanted the people at home to really see this: he was sure any families' resentments would end up feeding him support when he came to demand higher fleet appropriations, the way a parent works harder in the village fields for losing the baby—and—he was successful

— It can be a cold business, Deucalion.

Cold? Then what do you call it when we bring home only twelve of twenty prisoners? Palesus made them all swim out and take what was left of those civilians and our own people back from the sharks. Our cracks with dead friends and lovers, well, some of them turned away with a shame but Palesus came close to letting the others make targets of the captured. To just stand there while someone is—bitten to pieces—and all the way home he was hopping ship to ship, as if the contingent were his little island-realm. New procedure, he announces: from now on in cases like this half the copper or any spoils will be shared by the clans of our own dead, and the remainder halved between the Labyrinth and the primary victims' houses, if anyone shows to identify. I don't know. It was the blasphemous *elan*—he had the raiders' ships in tow and each of them tied to a talent so they could fondle what they'd murdered for, as he put it. Then he personally tore their holds apart and he found some waterpots

painted with that stiff clumsy bird you can hardly tell is an eagle, and others with marching soldiers on them, that style they call an artistic advance up north. Showed these all around as if he had Achaia dead-to-rights trying to destabilize the whole web of our trade. And *Hold that!* he shouts because our people were throwing raider-weapons over the sides. *Where's that Hittite's knife*, he says. *The second one I killed, he had a blade made of Arr-yan.*

—Iron? That stuff will turn anything, even bronze, Deucalion. Your brother was flame, for how his kin had been hurt

—But he kept it, I said. —You know it's forbidden to keep battle trophies like that. Even Perides objected, it's bad magic. And Palesus says, *Do you see that blueblooded bird on the pots? Do you know what that implies? My mother herself will cleanse this knife, and then we're going to clip some wings with it!* The time was right: he got three ships' worth of cheers. And she did cleanse it for him, Glaucus. He had the taste not to wear it at the shore this morning, but I'm sure he'll be showing it around when he goes north this moon. My mother is sending him because our Pelasgian cousins near a place called Athens say that the silver mines that we opened there long ago are in some kind of jeopardy. I didn't hear the rest but, you see, he'll be up there to demonstrate their continuing connections with us. And between his spirits and this iron knife—it can all get out of control

—And was justice done the raiders? Glaucus asked, trying to steady things

—Depending on whom you ask. We didn't capture any repeat offenders for the blood field, and if the times aren't skewed enough, some of the other twelve visited their Poseidon in that west wing shrine my mother added,

to thank *him* for the mercy of just a branding. I will have that so-called god out of here, when my day comes.

I had never spoken this last before but some part of me was glad for it: as we got up, composed ourselves and descended the hillock to the road again, a memory seemed to reach me, of something the I in this body at least had not done—saying *Yes, in the oldest days this was how we learned to play with the gods, for reasons: Dare, dare to live these things you feel.* And I felt lighter and stronger and pleasantly warier now, even excited to recall who had kept Glaucus coming after me; and to try to show more poise I offhandedly asked what he'd meant by *even worse*, as we trod between ruts of wagons along the road. Before he answered, though, Glaucus remarked the smaller ruts and hoofprints of a chariot's passage at our feet: together we mused how, in general, only old officers like Perides had the toleration of our horse-priests to ride such a thing. On the mainland with their bigger-bred horses, such a contraption meant status: here it was but convenience, to speed older leaders toward Katsambas if need be

—Which is what they said at first overseas, too, he ended. —Well, Deucalion, I understand that you sit in on all the councils you can, so I'm sure you've heard the complaints against that petty king Kokalos in Sicily, trying to squeeze us now for passage of our own shipments of tin from the Balearics. If I know your brother that won't go on much longer. First, of course, he'll have to deal with complaints from Trianda in Rhodes, about the Achaian settlers horning in close to our station there. Then we have a caste of upstart priests of that mouse-oracle Apollo trying to take over half the year's rites up north at Delphi, which would make me laugh except that

they've got Achaian priestesses to shill right along and help the conservative local folk accept the change. I know, this is old news, but the point is, why take over a major oracle unless you've got bigger things coming which later you'll want to justify through its good name? Why is this new Pharaoh, mind you the one who's purging his mother's very afterlife, why is he trying to deal direct with Achaia now and cut out the middleman, ourselves? As if we don't know this. It's hardly that Achaian shipping is more dependable! No, it's for something in *here* they want to change, everywhere they can, Glaucus said tapping his temple, and suddenly his color darkened

— Do you realize that today in the holy city of the Hittites they'll chop your head off for questioning His Grace? That Pharaoh can cut the nipples off a disrespectful concubine? No wonder they hate him in Pharos and the Delta towns. I thought it was all pretty stories my mother told me of how your ancestors left the Delta when that Menes-king started hammering people into slave-armies. Now I listen better. May I say that I like you for what you suffer in your heart.

— You're as angry as I am, or was, I said

— Yes, because I don't know what to do, what to suggest except that you back your brother up, and not despicably submit to what's going on everywhere. Listen, you can either deal with your guilt about power or get ready to lose it, my friend. If my loyalty to the House makes me unkind, well, you understand.

Aye. Enough sycophants around, native merchants greedy to exploit instabilities, foreign exiles eager to fatten themselves in Cretan clover. Some of them I knew: a blue-eyed half-Pelasgian boy named Orneus, come here with his mother, trying hard to disown her old-style piety

and find out who his father was, just dying to page for some local priest or prince. Meanwhile he was learning our ciphers (nicknames too?) and watching chariots pass with big dreams in his eyes. Another one in Tukato's charge was a Hurrian youth whom friends here called Razorclam, come here on a merchanter from the Pharaoh-devastated East, a worshipper of horses; but this boy, if he shared the Archanes priests' love of women's attire as part of worship, would not yet make the sacrifice which alone could sanctify the practice as a life-choice. I could not blame his hesitation but the women here did not appreciate his use of Tukato's patience for the pleasure of his loins. And Icarus? Why wouldn't he help us return him to his island-kin? Tukato was sure the boy's spasms were real but he was an asocial pest at times, unless we kept him busy in Iris' or Kudru's craftshops or at the boat we were building together. Here he could get the tools and training of which most people only dreamed; and he knew there was hiding-space inside our own delight with healing him

—Then tell me the worst of all you know, Glaucus. If I'm to help the House—you know my mother has assigned me to work with a new trader coming here soon from Achaian Pylos, and

—Yes, she mentioned that, it's to get his folk's purple basalt flowing in here steadily, so the shops can use it to make those ghastly, over-grand fruit-kraters that sell to Egyptian nobles, Glaucus grimly grinned. —You'll do fine if you don't expect much civility. But alright, Deucalion. You know that the Lion King of Mykenai, High Lord of all Achaians as he styles himself, can scarcely keep all the lesser mainland houses from pillaging each other unless there are more interesting targets someplace else. There's

no depth of lineage, no web of custom to hold anybody back with these wanderers—just as Egypt says about outsiders like us, eh? But put that map into your mind that your grandmother wove into the throne room tapestry. Ever hear of Athens, across the bay from Mykenai? Well, you see, there's been an age of uneasy blood between those two kingdoms. And also between them is a strip of land called the Isthmus, a sort of brutch of their own, which by mutual neglect became so lawless that neither trade nor travelers could use the road across it.

—I remember, I said. —And that's why our shipping-station on an island near there did so well. Aegina, it's called. It seems strange to say this, but don't tell me that Mykenai and this Athens have actually cooperated?

—That's where it's worse than you think. We still haven't got much detail, but just last moon, some apparent princeling from a minor barony got together a force, and drove his way from Mykenai's side of the Isthmus clear to Athens, and opened the road. But losses in shipping-business are not the problem. You see, the king of Athens, or rather the present conqueror of its citadel, has no children because of a curse from Goddess, which means of course that the women around him think he's worthless. As a devotee of Poseidon he returns the compliment, but all this goes to make him believe that the princeling who cleared the Isthmus Road is some long-lost sprout of wild oat. If only it was just a loss of shipping-tithes! You see, the arrival in Athens of this princeling's force was just what the old king needed to get rid of all the Pelasgian women's hopefuls around his throne. He didn't lose any time, and the fact is, now we're going to lose the silver mines up there at Laurium. This king of Athens and his gloriously convenient heir are

killing everybody who might ever recall that Cretans dug those mines first, and pulling women off public councils wherever they can get away with it. I haven't digested half the implications but I've yet to think of a good one. Killing our cousins, taming down women's powers and putting up a full-time Goddess of War—you can buy a lot of new-style loyalty with those mines.

—Not to mention that Mykenai and this Athens, together

—Exactly. They hate each other but together they hate us like brothers of the lion-pride. Why, because we shave? Because we like to look good? Palesus is the type they really scorn, a refined young man but as rugged as themselves.

—My brother knows this?

—Your parents were proud to confirm many things he's discovered for himself, including things from that voyage of yours. And I don't blame you for that look, Deucalion, but Ariadne—well, try to understand, they want you as a kind of counterweight here, they know how you are.

—Really? How am I?

—You're as brave as your brother, as Bull well knows, Sweet Wine, Glaucus said, including my name's affectionate meaning in his firmness. —But to your family you're a priest first. You notice that your brother hasn't rushed to find a War Leader to replace old Perides. Palesus may try to fuse that office with the throne, which if I may say so will place him right in the trend these days behind Pharaoh. You, though, could balance that, out of your own nature, or even formally undo his changes later. That's one of the beauties of our kingship, isn't it, that nobody gets too dug-in. If I were you I'd be proud for the

way your sister looks down the road for you. She is a woman! And rather a mystery herself, Glaucus smiled now, — whose unfolding we all await.

We walked. Yes, brother and sister each had their ways of promising that tomorrow would follow from yesterday; and what Palesus might try to force, Ariadne would seek through custom to ensure. From behind the scenes, where I preferred to work, I could help or hinder both; but in any case we all well-knew that mother's and grandmother's relations would virtually rule the House from outside it some years yet. Just how the clans wanted things, an overlap of experienced hands on the tiller: likewise, they'd approved keeping *hieros gamos*, the sacred marriage within the House this time

And you'd done your share of ensuring certain things: too young for your times and ambition, like Hatshepsut's son after all, you'd been only twelve when sister and brother began their Bull Dance for claiming the throne if they could, and you foresaw that with near-twenty years till the next Dance for High Office, time would condemn you to losing your own competition to the young: no man in his thirties could hold off youth like Palesus. They'd planned the priest's life for you but it was the throne you wanted, seeing how much freer father's life was above the Kouretes' endless rounds of hunting and bloody sacrifice: so you'd told them you were a king's son and you would not live to be just some extraneous fop of the House, and the big words had caused enough talk for them to let the Dance make a lesson of you, at least. And you never imagined that with omnipotent parents it would be your blood making sacred the circle of the arena's sands, not until the Day had come and you were out in front of Bull before five thousand people and the throne, brother and sister just too good at playing Him for the score of

cousins and hopefuls-to-the-clergy, yourself almost ridiculous for your size and age among your rivals. Now you had to excel, or live as a true fool the rest of your days, it was all different here, Bull cared no more for your family status than for anything else about you except how you acted in terror of death—and you saw the blood-splashing holes He'd gored in people's ribs, heard the arms and femurs breaking as He tossed and trampled the fallen, you and the others jostling for position before the horns to shine with maneuvers, or just outlast the others till their share of terror betrayed them out of the Dance. And then? You saw that you might help sister or brother get killed by competing against them, you turned all you had against the others and then Bull had turned on you, alone to one side with a quick wheel-about: somehow you held your ground, and more, charged Him because at least death was peace if you failed, you seized the horns rising upward to kill you and in slipping off halfway-over you found your hands holding on athwart His backbone—later they called it a flying handstand but all you'd wanted was to keep behind those skull-smashing hooves. And despite your clumsy fall that moment of lucky poised mastery had done something more for the crowd and throne than your death of itself might have; and so they'd appropriated the prodigy and declared you brother's Heir from that day, another sign of the deep strength of youth in the House of Labrys clan. It was a future as sure as one could be

—But I hope I won't confuse you, Deucalion, if I advise you to speak with your brother again, publicly too, and give him all you can of what he needs from you. We probably can't stop this flood everywhere, but if we don't hold our own, the Labyrinth will have to deal with more than a few resentful clanspeople.

—Yes, I answered with a deep breath, to fetch me more of the deeper calm this walk had bestowed. The trees swirled their leaves a little in a light breeze, the ancient trees, living loom of the world—but as I looked up to measure my heart by that eternal peace in which Mount Juktas dreamed, there was something wanting. I liked the glow out of Glaucus' russet face and body, the strong strides of a man who faced up to all he could, and turned it to the service of his people.

* * *

Ten days later my brother embarked for what was fast becoming Athenian territory on the mainland. Pasiphae and Minos gave him a civilian ship and careful instructions: he was to council with and hearten Pelasgian cousin-clans there, and do no more than lodge protest in Athens for their treatment and the seizure of the mines. Mention the shipments of tin that sail on the goodwill between our houses, Palesus was told, and see what new trade-terms they offer: they might take the mines now but, even if silver was more valuable than gold, no one could win a battle with silver swords. He also had permission to show the iron knife, a ploy to make our feelings more considerable

He couldn't wait to go. Palesus' fusion of power and beauty was real but he was precariously heady with the mission, full-ready to make himself remembered when they later spoke the name *Minotauros* up north. And when I did come to speak with him, more than once, he was already living in some other realm, launching into speeches about the world's fresh need to know that we were the Cretans, ancient masters of the seas and all

things civilized, that we'd thrive as our ancestors did and would match the manhood of all comers. On and on—after phrases like that last one I wondered was he hurting in secret somewhere for our shared years of slighting glances from Achaian guests. I thought so. If to his best friends he already was a man's man, I saw looks among even them on that day he embarked, for to everybody's surprise he had himself driven to Amnisos in a chariot. I was embarrassed for the sight of him streak-ing along so erect and utterly on-show behind two little native ponies. But he was my brother, my future king, and like Glaucus and Ariadne I tried to see him from years ahead, when we'd be glad his strength was ours

Then on the last morning of this fifth month's Willow Moon, word came to the Labyrinth that my trader-guest, one Cadimmetes of Pylos, had beached with his first cargo of purple basalt and awaited reception at Amnisos villa. While my mother found an available priestess and priest to escort me with a measure of pomp, my father fussed over my clothes and tried to put something of the predator about me, lending me his best leopard-spotted trouserskirt and tying in my dagger with a rope of gold, keeping me barechested to show my rib and giving my eyes a little flash of evil with black kohl. I should also look like a man who could make others rich, he said, so he made sure I donned gold armrings, a necklace of that deep blue-purple lapis that traveled a year before it saw the sea, another of silver with a Labrys suspended, and a high-crowned priest's cap with a lily-braided brim. As he admired his own youth in me my mother came back with Cratus and Cleite: it would help to keep our dealings in the sphere of religious practice, she said, for after all, if there were no benefits to it we could simply welcome the man with his own Achaian kin

here. *Offer to begin your business with a moment at the mariners' cave*, she suggested.

Cratus and Cleite agreed as we walked seaward down the valley, especially because the wind had shifted the day before and was blowing hot dry blasts from the south now, coming clear across the sea and down our mountains still as baking-hot as its source in the Libyan deserts, and in each gust were a hundred flies and a shower of irritating sand. Some springs, Crete was spared this, but not this year: in Egypt they called it The Breath of The Ass, after one of their fourfooted gods who devoured all green things, and everywhere it hit there were short tempers and unusual crimes before the courts. We felt ourselves shoved along the usually-pleasant road by hot dry gusts, the trees rattled with it and the flies were ceaseless at us: the very ocean looked out-of-sorts, its waves flattened out and running backwards away from the shore with every Breath. Cratus cursed himself for wearing his quilted and tasselled jerkin, it clung to his back and caught the sand: Cleite's carefully-set strands of gems were all but lost in her thick black hair as the wind tore at it, and wrapped her bellskirt round her legs. I decided to hurry our guest a bit toward Cnossos' indoor amenities, while the cave's quiet coolth might soothe a man salty with voyage.

—Oh dear, what is all this now? Cratus said as we reached the head of the harbor road: a crowd had gathered just to the right of the villa, where the cart-path passed its red-pillared porch. Though it didn't look like trouble there was none of the usual stir for my family's presence. Most of the people were children and youths with little to do but watch port curiosities: many I knew from days when Icarus and I came down. But some adults and harbor-hands were paying close heed to something

too. There went Icarus himself threading the group's far side with his dirty kilt and boy's potbelly, and now I saw our chief artisans Iris and Kudru coming up beach to me, after their inspection of the basalt offloaded already to an ox-drawn cart. When they hailed us and rendered fist-to-brow salutes most of the crowd noticed, and followed the gesture, and parted; and there stood my guest Cadimmetes, a portly man scarcely bigger than me with a red beard and loose white tunic, and a small brown Egyptian man stood with him. It looked as if together they'd been regaling the crowd with all they shared in the arts of horse-and-chariot, for right in their midst was a full rig of Cretan make with two ponies in the traces: together my guests abandoned the crowd to make proper native salutes, and as a hot gust raked over us all, the stevedore Podes came before me with Iris and Kudru at his back

— Good day Deucalion! Podes said briskly, with habit's innocent disregard of the fact that I was no more the boy wanting queer foreign tales. — Old Cordax and some of the fellows here heard you were coming, and I have a cousin who drives Admiral Perides about, so we thought we'd send over to Katsambas for him and this rig—just between us, you know sir, to help you impress your guests. It's a big one and the three of you can ride straight to the city, just like your brother, right sir? Ohh, he sang on, — I tell you, they're already amazed at how light-built it is, the rails of wild figwood and everything, they know all about the art back where they're from. Make them at home a bit, right sir, for the business?

— But they're *not* at home, man, Iris put in ahead of me with some contempt: she was a plump and delicate woman of thirty who'd come to the House four years ago from our western White Mountains, all Cretan blood

with dark goatish eyes, and we all knew her as a real daemon of the shops, which is to say an inspiration. This was because, while she excelled her training as a fresco-painter, Iris made it her place to speak plainly the views of her colleagues, whatever the throne might think: I could hardly scold Podes for improvising (he was second cousin to a former Cnossian priest), but Iris was right, and I was beginning to appreciate more the people our parents placed around themselves. Glaucus and I had had a fine supper with Iris before his set-sail for the islands and there was yet good feeling from it in her eyes, despite the words.

They're not at home. No; and bless old Cratus and Cleite for letting me learn on my own here, but what to do? I liked the stylish skimpy cut of Iris' smokeblue kilt, her deep olive skin with a golden bellychain that romped when she walked, her dark mop of kinky curls and the headband of bright cropped feathers at her brow, a fashion from Cyprus. Where was I? Kudru the older jeweler stood behind her keeping his squinty cragged face deliberately oblivious through the royal pause, watching the shore trees

—Is it good working stone, Kudru? I asked and he gave me a strong pouting nod as Iris stirred on her feet

—Don't tell me you promised them this in my name, Podes.

—I—Well, we—I mean, your brother—We all thought
—We mustn't be arguing in their faces, blast it, Cleite said. —And where were Cratus and myself supposed to ride, Podes, with the rock? I agree with Iris, Deucalion. And I don't think Tukato's people or most anybody will appreciate both the Queen's sons swimming with the tide. Cursed flies, get off!

– Can we just proceed with this? said Cratus as another gust raked us, and I smarted under Cleite’s brusque assessment

– Yes, Cratus, announce me and introduce us. Podes, Iris, Kudru, thank you. Bring Icarus to see me after he visits you next, if you will.

– He’s very gifted. A pleasure sir, Kudru answered with a subtle ushering of Iris out of our path: she went because she knew I’d heard, and now as Podes backed uncertainly away she and Kudru reentered the villa of Creusa the mistress of the port, maybe thinking they’d find Icarus stuffing his face in there. Iris: she’d seemed troubled as anyone by these signs of foreign collusion. With her skills, though, she’d never lack for patrons

– and brother to The Aridela, and second-born son to the throne of Crete, Prince Deucalion, Cratus concluded to our guests: I spread my arms gently with palms outward, smiled, bowing lightly as he added his and Cleite’s introductions. The children and others lingering to watch all this looked graver than perhaps they should have: why? Another prince welcoming more of these white-skinned bulls from the sea. Without looking I seemed to feel the presence of Velkanos in the distance beyond Dia

The Egyptian, named Payare, agent to the lord of Heliopolis and his traveler in spices and beans, spoke a good Cretan full of wonderful flourishes for so proud a young heir: he named his mother and father and the totems of his house, too, bowed his tanned shaven head after holding my eyes well (my father had taught me to watch for that). Over his forty years’ bony grace he wore a long linen robe dyed light brown, and this was the color of his teeth too. His easy civility I’d seen most in Egyptians from their seacoast: they did not much like the ocean but

in busy ports there was too much diversity for people to get crazy with the conqueror's heat. Payare reached for a touch of my hand and when he'd had it he unobtrusively fingered a disk of their sun-god hung round his neck. So he was aware that our kingship had the ancient death within it still: considering what I'd heard of the stigmas growing up round it overseas, it was pleasure he'd acknowledge my existence. A wizened man who lost sleep mainly over business

—And we are honored to meet our new partner in trade Cadimmetes, I said. —Welcome sir. We hope this weather didn't strain your crew or your comfort, but we can offer to help that as you wish.

—Thank you, he answered, blue eyes looking up quickly from the chestnut ponies, and then from Cratus to Cleite to the ponies again. —I am first factotum to the baron of Pylos. I bear his regard, and the finest stone Messenia has to offer. Whoa there. Our business will make the trip pay I'm sure.

Even the little ones' eyes swung to me for the differences felt in these men. Well, he seemed alright for an Achaian. Maybe no one in his house looked the lord in the face: our painters on loan in the East said there were such places. Cadimmetes' red furze of a beard was pointed at the chin in their elders' style, adding quaintness to his burly breadth: his golden hairclasp, and white tunic stitched with a grayblue stallion rampant with a startled dove above it, made him a bright figure next to Payare. Clean tasselled porpoise-skin boots with grommets of ivory: a heavy black belt sagged under his waist but he bore not so much as a dagger on show. I didn't like his chest's blunt heraldry but he seemed just another narrow-eyed baron's traveler, no real shoulders, fair skin

— We hope it will, too, Cleite offered smoothly smiling but at the same instant Cadimmetes had gone back to discussing the ponies with Payare. Most mainland folk scorned this little breed but some part of both fellows was in love with all forms of horse, surely a good sign: Cadimmetes scarcely noticed the hot winds tearing down the shore hills, a fly roamed his temple at will

— Yes, we were just showing your people the workmanship here, look at this jointing, of horn no less, he said to the curious dubiety around him

— How interesting, Cratus said from his distance next to Cleite. — Well! Let us signal the oxen behind us and be on our way, we have a morning's walk to the city

— Walk? Oh, the three of us can ride this beauty. Meaning the prince here, Deucalion is it? And Payare of course. This is my heart's blood back home, driving, my friend. I even invest in the big breeds. Won't you, uh, allow me the honor, prince? That harbor-slave of yours gave the impression

— Slave! Cleite broke in to correct him: I think she was angry thrice-over now, and our people could see it. But just as she and Cadimmetes began to fix each other in their gazes and the latter looked surprised to have to deal with her at all, the world around us seemed to fall still. Gulls poised on the air but were not fishing. Down beach, a dog scratched vainly in sand and stuck its head in the hole, barked and dug again: another leaped and snapped at air, the ponies stamped in place and in a moment the sailors and stevedores about us caught this too. There was a silence like that between crest and crash of a wave, and then a hot Breath blew down the hills, and up came a rumble, a long earthmuffled roar

The entire curve of coastline from western Katsambas

to the headland was vibrating, rumbling louder than it did with winter sea pounding the shore, and I reached first toward Cleite but she drew back her hands and spread her feet, eyes down, palms out to soak it up. Some people and children clutched and knocked on the villa's red pillars while others stepped fearfully back from the house as the Earth's black voice beneath us grew to one long rumble of thunder, growing louder still: Iris and Kudru came rushing out with Icarus and others and so much disorder began to startle the ponies, then the children in their turn—birds and shoremen had started to scream in their ways and both Cadimmetes and Payare showed some fear as everything erupted. I was worried for my House with how long and how bad this might become, and then as a certain *sway* took my body I had to laugh, What else could go wrong right off today? And that was when we all saw the very ground ripple, a shock beneath the sand shot out of the shingle and humped the whole beach, *boom!* right under us and disappeared beyond the tree line, rousting sparrows out of the crowns. Then the temblor's rumbling dulled, and died away; and a gust hit us with hot sand, and the ocean was laving the shore

People shouted again with relief, and the children took up each other's wails and cries: Cadimmetes seemed no man to let Cleite's anger seem the cause of the shock, and had done very well keeping the ponies from bolting—better indeed than Cleite and Iris and others at calming the little ones' cacaphony this time. *It's alive, so it moves!* they were trying, and *That's the big Bull we can learn to dance, see?* No good though; and in fact I saw how many jumping children were looking right at the blue-eyed horse-master man with their fear

— May I suggest we all move away from the shore this instant, Deucalion, said Cratus over the crying (he was old enough to remember why one should). — Come then, Cleite, we'll see the cargo to the custom house ourselves. Our prince will graciously see you to the city as you wish, he informed my guests

— But wait! called Iris now with two little ones at her legs: Cleite herself was fast in the grip of another three of them. — Deucalion, Prince Deucalion, why don't you tell us that story we heard from Glaucus the other night? Remember our big friend with the ocean-colored eyes, children? Oh, listen to the prince now, he'll tell you how a very scary thing that happened to some ponies came out alright, there there! Deucalion, please

Oh, fish heads! It was perfect Iris to thrust her message through against all odds. But if I was going to ride—Was I? To help with this might counter any talk down here later. The trouble was, this tale was a fresh bit of news out of Pharaoh's tramlings through the cities of the East, from a battle-place Glaucus had called Kadesh, and it was not going to be flattering to either guest. Still, that part of me that had liked to hear of Bull breaking loose was just too tempted, I wanted to show I could calm things at least as Cadimmetes had; and they both wore their patience plainly as I excused myself

— Who hears me! I began with a clap, and between the gesture, my clothes and the women's dragging, I was surrounded in a moment. — This is a story from the far red land of our mother Europa, where the sun is born. And out there, let's see, there is a city, called Kadesh. And in the realm of Kadesh live the people who know, beyond all others, these creatures we call the ponies. Did you ever see a pony before today? Don't the holy ones of

Archanes have a whole herd up there that we can visit? So! These people of Kadesh know all about the ponies. And one day, here came the great, big king of another land. And he marched over to Kadesh with all his nasty friends in a big long line, and he wanted some ponies. He likes to have the ponies pull his wagons so his friends can win all the fights! No, stay now, this is a *good* story! So! The big king was pounding, and pounding on the doors of Kadesh. I want ponies! he said. And I want all boy-ponies too, because they're better for my wagons! But No, No, the pony-people inside of Kadesh said. You put a nasty bit in our little ponies' mouths. You don't love them the way the holy priests and priestesses do. You make them look silly, pulling your wagons with spikes and things all over and through the corn, so go away! No ponies for you! Well, who *dared* to say No Ponies to this great big king of another land? My, he scared everybody, with the way he liked to stand up big stones with pictures on them to tell everybody what people he made his slaves. Why, he even rubbed his mother's name off the—Well! Was he angry at Kadesh! No ponies! So! He went back to his big long line of his nasty friends and he got up in his spikey wagon. And he said, *Let's take* these Kadesh people and *all* the ponies! *Readaayy!* But! *Voom!* the big door of the city flew open! And who came out? Who came galloping out? It was the mother of all the ponies in Kadesh! A mare! And she was a big-eyed mare and she went galloping galloping round and round and let all the boy-ponies smell her heat, and all the boy-ponies got so confused? and Which way? Which way? they said because they loved the mare! The ponies forgot all about the big angry king and pulled his wagons every old way! Did he look silly? What do you think?

—Is that the end? smiled one little girl picking sand from her eye.

—Yes. For now. So you see? It's alright. What a crazy old Bull we have here, I'm glad we have our own ways to help, like in the story! We must be going.

—You touched Glaucus' telling, Iris smiled with multi-valent satisfaction: she and Kudru and Cleite took a gathering down to the basalt for another look. I tried to let some of my own smile fade now, for no, my guests hadn't missed a thing; but if Payare showed good manners in ignoring my own poor ones, Cadimmetes' face was a solemn invulnerability. And now I'd be alone with them

No use pretending I hadn't meant to draw some kind of line. Considering the tale's real end, I'd gone easy: Glaucus said that some officer'd had the wit to slash open the mare's belly, tossed her cut-off tail before his king, and then they'd sacked the place. Wouldn't think of trading for them. *Idiot*: one who will not be ruled: new word for the new man

—Send her on, Cordax! I called down beach. —We'll hang close!

—Oh, our pace will be double the wagon's my friend, said Cadimmetes gathering the reins; so I ungracefully asked him to go slowly. Somehow I'd imagined I might walk alongside, but that would look even worse

—Are there robbers? Payare wondered with a look to my dagger

—Of course not! No, no. I just feel that—people might like to ask you about the stock you gentlemen come to trade.

Payare, unconvinced, mounted up into the car and then I took my place at Cadimmetes' right hand: he snapped the reins.

We started trundling inland, and did leave the wagon a bit behind, but I'd let us roll up-road till we reached the altars and the cave, that'd be alright. We weren't too heavy for the ponies and I liked the pounding of their hooves, the gay meetings of their heads and their muscled buttocks' jouncing: Cadimmetes praised their high step to Payare. I made some talk on what these things meant to our Admiral Perides, of whom they might've heard. But—it made me feel unwell not having my feet on the ground while I was moving. And maybe because, in our tradition, the Green God Who fed the crops with His life belonged to the farmers and the commons, I started to feel like another land's lord, too high-up and fast to talk with anybody, empty as the road was just now. We rattled along and climbed the hill toward the cave. Hot blasts struck our faces and the ponies' backs grew sweated already: it made me feel like a dull old man but I did not enjoy this

With a touch of my hand I got Cadimmetes to stop and wait the wagon a bit at the altars: instantly he warned me never to do that as he was driving, though he complied. Then I mentioned that we might bless our business in this time-honored cave to our right, which was known to bring very good luck to everyone from pregnant women to marines—my fault I guessed, but Cadimmetes scowled as he looked back for the wagon

—Can it be like this all year? Payare gently exclaimed.
—Such a pure whiteness in those mountains ahead, and so many different flowers, running all together down to such a blue! What an unfortunate wind. But thank you, young man, I made The Gods safe-voyage thanks at our beaching today.

—How wise is it to go down in there when Poseidon Earthshaker is stamping his hooves, Cadimmetes in-

quired. — I'm afraid I don't come a voyage anywhere to play with that.

Then he added with his first deliberate blue-eyed stare:

— And if I say so, those places spook me. They're full of bats' dung and ooze and bad air like a toothless old lady. The important thing here is, it would be better for the horses to keep onward now.

— Very kind of you though, this man Payare told me across our driver's vantage before I could respond. — We like to find this in a trading partner. Tell us, what is your great temple like?

We. Us. They were confusing me and I did not know what to do with a kind of violence already in our midst: Cadimmetes and I were afoul of each other and I needed to make this work to prove myself—quickly I asked The Powers to help us begin again. Deep breath of my land: a little brightness flowed through me, and I spread my arms demonstratively wide

— Sirs, we are standing in it.

— Oh. I understand, said polite Payare. — There comes our business along behind now, young man. Yes, your kingdom is as splendid as travelers say, he added and Cadimmetes flicked the reins as lightly as he smiled upon the road.

I liked Spice and Beans, though not to trust. And if I had given my share of offense, well, I'd have said already there was something being delivered *through* Cadimmetes, he just didn't seem to feel anything strongly enough himself to be insulting our people and shrines. We rolled down through the almond and olive groves in the shore hills' lee and began passing houses and their bright fields, moving up valley and (as he'd said) doing

what felt good to the horses: woods and open lowland gave way to more houses and common yards and gardens, weavers' shacks, wells and little orchards with dropping blossoms, and we rolled by people with yoked jars or waterpails, kilted boys switching mules stacked with kindling. Everybody noticed our passing and a clutch of old fellows stood up with hails from their game of draughts in the morning shade: after moments like that I was more relaxed about appearances and now there lay just a mile or two of open valley between us and Cnossos. It now seemed the Breath's hot lashings were at rest: home ground for me, sun-shot, sea-aired, lush

— We noticed that monument ahead from offshore, how long did that take your builders' corps? That is scale, Cadimmetes, said Payare gazing ahead above the road and I told him that truly we hadn't moved a stone up there, it was magic of the land

— I'll wager your priestesses keep it cropped as clean as goats would, Cadimmetes said with some of the glare-within-a-smile he'd had for Cleite. — Why? To keep men cowed by their death, of course, like old granny with the windingsheet.

What was this, then? Riling me with some game

— Well, in a simple sort of understanding, I said slowly, — Mount Juktas could evoke the man like Talos, say, meaning the giant people call our military. *He Who Consents To Suffer*. Or he's the hero who Steps Forward and harrows the place some people call Hell, where souls who've lost their way malingers. As a priest I can tell you that in the oldest stories, that was a woman, but nobody here will bother forcing you to honor any of it. Can you understand? If not, try to ignore it and show us what else you have to offer besides rocks.

At this Payare fairly exploded in congratulatory laughter, repeating looks of supportive wonder to me and a kind of *See? I told you* amusement to his friend with the reins: Cadimmetes kept to his own blithe smile as I pointed him leftwards away from the custom house road and along the base of the high wooded ridge east of Cnossos itself. And then their eyes began to fill with the Labyrinth's visible rooftops, its alabaster glints and crimson pillars, one set of huge white stately gypsum horns just showing above and behind a brake of male and female cypress trees. Good: we were there: I wanted my home to drop the bellies from both their sails, and I hardly felt anymore what I had lost, to be making my home a tool of anger

—What is that, a town inside the town? said Payare.

—Ohh, my

—I don't believe it. A town all one building? You hardly notice it from—I don't believe it, Cadimmetes echoed

He must've expected to sight a walled-up citadel as at home, but the Labyrinth's northern approach ahead of us lay open and level with these meadows, only a few fine white houses and the custom house branch of the road between the narrowing and steeper sides of Cnossos valley. Now before they could speak again our path dipped downward between the Labyrinth's east bastions and the banks of the Kairatos River, sliding along seaward to our left: the cypress trees were fewer along this side and I leaned back subtly to let their eyes climb

A white stairway wide as two people and with terraces staggered along its climb led upward from the road in zigzag flights, through gardens of lilies and blue anemone and red corn poppies: the stairs' layout spared one the

steepness of the hill on this side, and the Labyrinth was looming above us now, the high east bastion's white alabaster facades crowning the stairs with an entrance halfway up the hill. Above this doorway's lintel of red-painted wood rose four upper stories overlooking the gardens: these were built right into the hillside and each story had a porch upheld by crimson pillars, cypress-wood with their tapered ends down in night-blue pediments. My family's apartments were over here for the morning sun but I declined to say anything so personal: it was hitting them all at once, the white and multicolored massiveness of the place with its trimmings of greens and yellows and russets, with its *glowing* even where the sunshine had moved on, and either side of those stacked porches the long white colonnades and verandahs loomed over us, tier upon tier receding upward with the hill in a kind of crazy-roofed complex that seemed to keep shifting its angles and shadows before your eyes, vines and creepers overspreading walls of limestone laced with wooden beams so that the walls could play when the Earth moved. Here and there little balconies jutted out over secret stairways: birds shot in and out of the lightwells; and the edge of every receding roof was decked with a row of stylized Bull's horns, painted red or white or black in alternating pattern. We'd passed house staff with laundry and baskets down near the stair-landings' catchbasins, seen a few of the Daedalaë talking in the gardens, the colored concentric circles on their foreheads showing them to be architects and their initiates: people moved in the high outer corridors, priestesses at morning prayer-walks, men watering potted palms. With their doings, with the birds, the shadows and colors and the erratic collidings of the planes of the roofs and staggered porches, the whole

building seemed to be moving even as it thrust itself up from the hill's green bushy feet: my guests looked full of confounded questions but now we were clopping down close to the turn across the stream

—I advise you to slow down as you cross this bridge. Then turn right, I said with eyes-front. —Your lodgings will be up there on the left of the main inland road. I'll see you there and arrange your audience.

—Makes you—dizzy to look at it, Cadimmetes said as Payare loosed a little laugh, trying to take the whole place in

We rumbled across the alder footbridge to the south side of the Labyrinth, and trotted up wide paved causeway that came out of our inland hills, paralleled the stream called Vlychias along the south gardens, and led one straight up into the west courtyard entrances: as you came round that turn the building swung itself into fuller view. This side of the hill was also steep: broad white irregular shifting tiers of red-pillared rooms and corridors and horn-decked roofs, a lightwell there, a stairway: doors at ground level stood open to freshen the halls of this south wing with the morning scents of the gardens sloping down to the sunny stream. From the Labyrinth's southwest corner (where you climbed a pillared portico up to the courtyards) a long open corridor ran parallel with the stream and causeway, and within its columns you could glimpse halfshaded figures of tribute-bearing Cre-tans along its walls: at its end halfway across the building the corridor turned north and led into the central courtyard, invisible to us, but from here you got the best sense of how this crazy-roofed complex of joined buildings was not unlike ourselves and our hybrid history. Opalescence of limestone and gypsum, half-overgrown with creepers

and flowering plants: smokes rising from shrine-altars within, and kilns and workshops: partridges perched on the tips of rooftop horns: even to me it looked impenetrable yet open, hoary and thriving, fearsome and a place where humans were the aim of its amenities. As I dismounted the light on it changed, a shimmer of whiteness

—My, *lords!* Payare said. —If you know what I—it has this savage—it's *luminous*. How many rooms?

—Counting storage and shrines and all? About fifteen hundred, I think.

Payare laughed with pleasure as Cadimmetes dismounted and went straight for the ponies' heads to settle and thank them in his way: The Breath resumed and came hard and hot down the hills, sand ticked our ears and faces. Then with more charmed exclamations Payare turned to look over the Guest House behind us and remarked how its front walk's slabs of light pink schist seemed to mimic the swirling shade beneath the trees: he had Cadimmetes take in its stone drinking trough and footbath fed by a pipe, too, but his friend said watering the ponies should wait a bit. Trying still, I went and joined him a moment to stroke and pat the creatures, who snorted and chuffed and shook their sweated chestnut barrels. They liked Cadimmetes' hands: such a different feeling from him with them close by. Again, he scarcely noticed the wind and flies at all and even sang them strophes of some Achaian song I'd never heard

By now it seemed things might still go alright: this was one of the buildings my mother'd had Iris and the Daedalaë redecorate and its gaeity was a help as I showed them in. In the east room there was a gaming board and dining furniture, the scent of golden-drop flowers and, on the walls, a fresco of partridges dancing

round the arrival of a kingly hoopoe: the west chamber held the sunken pool where you could sit on a gypsum bench and bathe your traveler's feet as you looked on the Labyrinth through woodsashed windows full of sun. I knew the walls in here as Iris' own work: she'd surrounded the pool with a moving maze of marsh reeds, pintail ducks at their games, wild sprays of copper and blue butterflies, and some of these flew right up along the stairs to my guests' sleeping quarters. It all seemed to please them enough. Yet, for the first time, I felt something of a stranger myself, as the house staff's hospitality seemed to verge upon the servile. They always offered to clean guests' clothing, draw baths, show them how to work a toilet, fetch favored foods; but as they even offered complaints about the wind some part of me knew how these things were really received

—Welcome then, gentlemen, I lied as we stood together a moment back outside on the crazypaved walkway facing the Labyrinth. —When you've rested yourselves, follow this causeway up past the portico there and you'll come to the west courtyard. Have a seat, enjoy the traffic, and I will arrange your audience. And we'll spoon you right through procedures, we've pruned our House staff recently, and—Well sirs, good morning.

—Thank you, Payare smiled with a courtly half-bow.

—Uh—if it is a fair question, said Cadimmetes preening the point of his beard, eyes to mine again, —why is my lord's business being handled by a boy?

And as I wondered what to do, and felt my right hand move toward my belt, he said to a wincing Payare:

—At least I *think* he's a boy! Is it those pretty painted eyes, or is it those lovelocks under the little hat. You'd never guess this one is building ships to save his life. Oh

no, forgive me that's the other fellow, what's his name, Androgeus?

For all this, one could not deny the man some courage: I stood in shock as he laid that name for *Earthling* on my brother, and Payare carefully fussed with a fly and made weak movements back up the walk. But what truly stuttered my breath was the mention of building ships: he was doing more with what he knew than any merchant in his senses should, and I just didn't know how to answer the fact that here was more than some personal matter. So I took the most cautious tack against the boil in my blood and, breaking off our stare (he looked so blithe!), turned back up the causeway away from the Labyrinth portico and away from making their wishes my first concern. I knew a fine place to pass a fine morning out of the wind

Just round the turn of the inland road a white cluster of buildings stood within a brake of poplars, with higher willow trees between the back gardens and the river: this we called the House of the Horae for the many kinds of learning and pleasure our women fostered here, women neither of royal blood nor priestesses but of all ages and with gifts of great public worth. A young woman named Tallay (Woman of Rain) welcomed me in under the lintel's three painted hierodules dancing *The Circle*: she was a newcomer from Lasithi up in our eastern mountains, with crowblack hair, broad birthing hips and pendulous bare breasts, a smile in whose light you might well measure your own tranquility. I heard music from a tortoise-shell lyre out back and another woman singing: Tallay saw me sit at a front-room table though, and brought out a loaf and some dipping oil and wine. I remembered watching her dance one night at a rite in the Labyrinth,

her selfcontained joy, her heavy slow-motion, how she liked peeking through her woven-together fingers at her watchers and then would turn back inward: she saw I was in some state of my own and stayed cordially untalkative, we fed each other bits of bread and played draughts awhile. She won every round. And the wind blew through the house and I could smell rivermud and the weird secret medicines and jellies they concocted here: a corner-shelf held stacks of Egyptian papyri in flats and scrolls, prayerbooks and histories they'd taught my father to read, and near the back was a big sorting-table with jars full of all the grains and seed they studied and crossbred, sacks of night-picked herbs and a candlemaker's clutter about its feet. It was terrible feeling so far from where my body sat and the light of her smile (she won again) made it worse. I might ask her to read to me but from what, *The Struggles of Osiris with Set*, or *The Book of The Dead* ? *I have not been a man of anger*, it said, *I have not judged hastily*

The walls were bright with dolphins and scenes of villagers at dances round a huge tree under the moon, with blue fire shooting off people's fingers: birdfeeders with suet busied the sills, snake-tubes whose dishes of clay held honeyed milk. A gust brought the smell of glue for making instruments and I remembered another night here when they'd promised to teach us the stars up on their roof but it had clouded over and the whole house got drunk instead: Ariadne had been there, wrapped likewise in the arms of this spirit whose gift was forgetfulness, laughing, hanging off my shoulder

— *For I have a Word that I shall tell thee*
A matter that I shall declare to thee

*It is the Word of the Tree
And the Whisper of the Stone...*

—Lovely melody, out of Byblos I think, Tallay said of the harper out back

—I hate everything, I answered as she collected her winning toss again. —It's not as if we haven't shoved around our share of islanders in our time. But do you know whom I hate most of all?

And as she stared at me, in through the garden door came one of our high-ranking Achaian guests of these days, a rufous-pated man named Elphenor who thought he was Goddess' gift to our House accountants, showing them ways all the time to refine our ciphers. His faked shock before my brother over that list of his juniors' nicknames. No hail, no greeting: his blank blue eyes were all his regard (another of those who affected to honor my father), and I gave it right back to him from my seat. As he went to the front window to sun himself and studied the hill of the Labyrinth Tallay smiled equitably between us

—Enough draughts then, you always win. I'd better go

—I think you should, said Elphenor out the window.

—There seems to be

—What did you say to me? I demanded: he looked over quickly and Tallay's hands paused above the table

—Sir? I mean, there seems to be some commotion over at your House.

I went straight outside: yes, three heavy twists of black smoke were rising above the rooftops on the hill, a summons to bring all clergy to some grave business. There was no drum or other alarm but from here you could glimpse flights of the east garden stairs and a dozen people were scurrying down for their houses along the river,

messengers, craftshop staff: then I saw one of Ariadne's younger attendants (who'd always had eyes for my brother) fairly staggering along the Labyrinth's south corridor, she looked to be tearing at her hair till she came to a large potted aloe near the turn—and she shoved it over. What? The crash startled birds from the garden below. Already I was trying not to run along the wind-raked causeway, the chariot and ponies were gone, no guests about: now a halfdozen heralds in white kilts and boots and diadems jogged down the west portico in a group headed for the inland roads, bound for Phaestos and other southern towns. So there'd been some royal council I'd missed and here came its instant dispatch, some matter one had best not flash hill-to-hill using sunlight and polished gold. Here came the man Hippeus with them, a horsethighed olive man of twenty, but that couldn't be sweat on his face yet

—I'm so sorry sir! he said passing me with the brutalized look of the others: he was crying. —You're wanted in the throne room, *right now*. Rhea, Rhea Dictynna! he shouted to quicken his whole group's pace against the hot wind

Invoking Justice, like a marine in sea-battle? Truly it was all my family had taught me that I kept myself at a walk now, over the stream, up the slabbed portico and into the bright cool hallways of the first south stairs—Had someone dropped dead? Since Hippeus would not speak it, I prepared myself, but there was some shame to be had for my morning from the tall slender princes of townships painted along the corridor to my left. Their calm light-smiling grace, their lovelocks, the gifts and tribute they bore; the sway of their long formal kilts that touched the right knee, and the musicians and clergy standing with

upraised palms closest to that Great Lady holding forth Her double-axes—Who could touch this? I stepped round the broken-spiralled shards and bleeding aloe, a stranger again, for if brother and I had made ourselves like them in a hundred major processions, well, when had we ever lived their life? In our hands today was the power of the ancient unity they expressed and I pushed away a despair

What! As I turned left for the daylit central court I saw bodies sprawled facedown on its sunny white slabs in a chaos of directions: I slowed, and listened, and drew myself up before stepping out of the hall. Cedar-smoke climbed from three tripods ahead, a matter of Justice, yes, and its char-smell harshened the scents of flowers in planters and palm and the green of vines that climbed the court's high inner porches. The prostrate were house-staff and a few clergy shaking with tears but, except for a few shocked faces up above on the pillared balconies, all who might speak seemed fled, or still out in the valley and town on clergy's business. How I feared the pity in the faces up there! To my right was the great turning stair to our upper and lower-level quarters, to my left the solemn chambers of the pillar crypts, where blood ran in sacrifice to The Powers. I passed the strong triple-pillared shrine with its crown of nineteen horns built into the west facade and the stair to the upper banqueting halls, keeping my eyes on the four dolmen-doorways of the throne room: a little round stone kernos lay by the doors, decked with grape-berries and votive clay oxen all sprinkled with corn mole. Spring offerings had been going on and now a violent loyalty surged my heart with purple blood

And inside there, quite disconsolate on the sunken anteroom's stone benches sat old Diamat and another elder

priest of ours, Auxo—just facing each other in dumb vigil before the sealed-up throne room doors until they saw me

– Minotauros! Blessed Be! they both said; and then I knew. For the title without first name had been my brother's alone. They knew what they'd told me and my face felt hot and melting as if of wax: Auxo opened one throne room door and as I hesitated the draw of air moved the indigo tapestry hung upon the north wall to my right, grandmother's work, the lands and isles of the world we knew in stitches of gold, with a silver star for each trade-station in our web. Minoa. Minotauros. Me. What me? I physically dizzied to realize that whole peoples soon would speak of my person within that name; and mine the power of the death it carried

And Ariadne

In the close blood-crimson chamber before me, that flickered with only two lamps' light, sat my mother on the throne, silent with hands on her bellskirted lap: her large wet eyes turned to me, and she rose on the dais taller than the palm tree painted to shade Her Presence on the wall behind. For one small moment she seemed to waver between familiar warmth and throne-impersonality: in her swollen eyes was the death she had asked of no few others, now come home. She opened her arms to me and my father stood up as I approached her: he'd been seated on the stone bench seven paces across from mother, at the edge of the sunken chamber beneath the room's lightwell, from which The Very Manifest One arose in ritual showings-forth. Minos' eyes looked both exhausted and glinting-wild with rage, and for the first time we saw each other in the way only our kings could; but it was for both our hard-set jaws to tremble now, and he touched

my back as my mother stepped down and gathered me. Grandmother Paria was the only other here, seated silent facing the doors against a gryphon painted couchant on the inner wall, her silver hair like a small dimmed moon in these shadows, in all this stillness

— It seems you are a wine for drinking young after all, she said; and if I was longing to disappear at my mother's breast, those words were a merciless stabbing-pain, for they spoke the nineteen years off my life-thread this day. I opened my eyes and saw, behind the wavy-backed white throne with its graven moon and sun symbols, the simple landscape painted on the wall: just green hills, a river flowing through them, just the world we all knew. Utterly changed. And no more together, my brother? No more races out on the rainy winter roads with a pack of cousins and envious friends? No more go down together to badger the ships in with rarities of Nin-Eveh?

— Your Queen, my mother offered, holding me at the shoulders, — is out in the precincts for now, to try and keep order as this news spreads. People won't want to worsen her grief. The fools off your brother's ship couldn't bring it to me first, alone!

— Ohh, we'll show them what killing is! my father exclaimed behind me. — Tell him then! Tell him what happened! And I'll tell him what we'll do about it, he ended with a sound half-laughter, half-growl so that my hackles rose

My brother had done all a civilian ship could to make impressive beaching at Athens' harbor, even borrowing escort-ships from our station at Aegina, the very people about to lose good trade to the Isthmus Road. And with his iron knife at his hip he'd sent no more than a herald to the king of Athens, to say that he was passing through

the country to visit important kin at Laurium, and that soon he'd pay a visit to Athens' citadel. But by the time he'd got there the burgeoned rumor of a royal Cretan presence had made him seem a foreign army on the land: he never made it to their citadel even to council with this king and his heir: a javelin had struck through his back in the midst of their marketplace, and only dread of Crete and a kind of public shame had let his escort and crew get out of there. First volley for the steersman

—Murdered him mother! I cried at last. —Did they bring him—Can I see

—Ohh, you can imagine the honorable rites he got from their hands, they all but chased the crew into the sea, won't you tell him? my father yelled. —I'll give them stuff for their songs, I'll top their valleys with proud corpses! Rivers will run black, I swear my son! *Houloi, Houloi*, what killing is! And you, Great Lady, sending builders over there, welcoming scribes and barons, these two-legged ticks, shipping painters everywhere—and where are we now? *Houloi*

—Stop it! Control yourself! my mother commanded him. —You old gull, do you still think nothing but the open sea and my brother's marines will protect us forever? Why *do* you think the island is sick with anger? We've discussed all this. But my dear Sweet Wine, we have a response. The details we were discussing when you arrived. I rejoice that you're safe. Did your duty go well?

—Oh yes of course, business first! We can make basalt sling-stones! my father mocked through his tears, and I grew more afraid for the way his lifelong tempered bearing seemed smashed to pieces before my eyes. Always his own death before him, now he scarcely seemed to know what to do with his hands

—Minos, my mother said with a deep breath. — We hurt just as much as you. May we inform our son of our intentions now, or shall we ask you to leave the room? Go and sit beside your father.

I did so: he'd leaned forward palms to brow, and before I touched his back I felt the heat of his body. A coiled barely-latent resentment for what *She Who Shines for All* had led us to with her Achaian policies, her ways with their lords in her private chambers. We all sat a moment more in the heart of the House's numb silence. And as I searched that unremarkable landscape behind mother once more for I knew not what, I realized that for all our idols of Goddess, we ourselves were all She knew of existence: we were the order, and I felt myself forgive mother's swift proceedings where, as yet, my father could not

Minos had wanted to cut this sheeptown Athens right out of the seachart tapestry and let the Lion King of Mykenai across their Isthmus choke in trying to swallow the mainland whole. Use their nature against them, since (in his view) conquest was the only way they had to keep their men loyal: then the foreign queens Glaucus dealt with would wake up and commit themselves to the drawing of a Crete-centered line against them. But considering how many lives would be lost or unforeseeably changed for so much uncertainty, my mother recounted, perhaps we should seek the cure deeper in the wound

—And that was when your grandmother recalled the embassy from Ugarit yesterday, my mother continued. —As you know, Pharaoh seeks our consent to land his soldiers there in northern Syria, to cut off the Hittite retreat. The point

—*Pharaoh is a god by whose dealings one lives*, my father mocked at the diplomatic wind we heard at times,

— *the father and mother of all men, alone by himself, without equal, overthrowing the vile enemy as Amon-Ra commands.*

— Your grandmother's point was, my mother went on with effort, — that for every city of the East in Pharaoh's grasp now, he takes the Baal's child into his own house. Not so much as hostages as pupils, and after a time standing at his door, they go back, well, educated, if puppets. We all seemed to agree this is an advance on the usual slaughter, and royal governors. Perhaps his mother taught him a few things after all. And so, as we hear this old Aegeus of Athens has a son now, and since it's imperative that we respond to this assault on our very family, we mean to have Perides pull us together a force never seen before. We'll bring this Aegeus a promise of a war he won't live to forget or hear their bards on, play off his clinging to life and throne, and then mercifully offer to school his son for a term.

A bluff? It was like a Canaanite tale I'd heard from a harper once, about a prince named Kret whose beloved woman had been kidnapped. He'd marshalled his thousands and surrounded her captors with sure annihilation, knowing in his heart, though, that their love was not really worth so many other lives. Still, the bluff had worked, and he got her back. In a dark city of the East

And what would bring Palesus back? Kill, kill!

— But clans and clergy like it or not, I myself am going to lead this, my father said. — I will have the life of the man who threw on my son's back. One year to my thread! Then let it be the one that makes all the difference to my children. I swear, Deucalion, I'll pull this realm together and hand Ariadne and you—Do you know there are mercenaries we can get from the East that are seven feet tall? Yes, yes, and you're going to see them! We'll make

Athens an example for Mykenai, and oh it will be rich! Their songs tell how giants *built* their citadels, it seems only right to have giants take them down!

He wiped his face and squeezed my knee with a laugh, but for all else this day, this shocked me. My father, Consort, High Priest as War Leader—as if no matter what we did the tide was sweeping a world out from under us; and my rage grew nonetheless as I scratched sand from my irritated ears

—And Ariadne approves this? I asked the room.

—We'd better dispatch more heralds today if we want this moon to help us as we've planned, my father continued, and they started listing allies to call upon

They were not listening: I was yet the counterweight in their eyes, not king-to-be: I tried to tell them what hints of collusion I'd got from my guests, but they scarcely heard that either. And my brother was dead. I would have torn out my last hair to change it, and nothing would, ever, nothing: I had seen Bull kill people and ships kill them and disease and accident and age and I felt as if I were the mountain-of-fire that could take no more without its due: a *bluff*: would Palesus let that do for me? Was this the answer to the anger beneath our Earth? The pain and loss of confidence our family would endure now; and the insults his body must've borne, his body whose fierceness I'd feared; the black sparkle of his eyes as he'd teased Ariadne across our tables—no, it was too much

—Where are you going, Sweet Wine? You've not heard everything

To get me my consolation

At the back of the throne room was a sanctuary chamber and I went in there and turned right for the access-hall to our royal storage crypts. It was narrow and cold and

poorly lit because of all the stored oils but I knew these ways as well as Ariadne and you could get out this way without interference from people on the court. Voices called my name but I nearly laughed as I drew the bronze-studded door and bolted it from behind, and ran the long storage corridor. All the fruits of our web were down here, a good hall to walk and feast on memory, smelling the lemon and peppermint, almond and pitch and pine, dry oats of the provender stores, sacred vestments and vessels, spikenard: it was like a ship's hold and it brought everything back up into my heart, and I was crying and I wanted to kill. Perides was hardened and so gruff because of his endless violent sea-duty but not even the few bluebloods in our Admiralty had dared to nickname him—What did they call me then, the cowards! Androgeus! Palesus Minotauros! I ran harder to dry my eyes, get battle-mad, I had to do this, it was my brother and he'd have made sure they knew *him* both sides of that Isthmus! Find that furze-face, jump his back like a panther and knife his neck open. I drew my dagger on the run and in moments was down at the back end of the wing's pillar crypts, and smelled the zinc-sharp blood that people poured to The Mother, or to The Powers, or to blind Necessity—well, whatever one's understanding, was this not in harmony with such an appetite? The Earth-gutters so black and greasy with it so they had to be flushed with wine-vinegar

I kept making turns till I reached the south corridor. Not a soul among the pillars: through the reception hall: out to the brighter floors by which you reached the west court. Painted scenes of Bull with His dancers would back me as I came out and I looked at my knife again to keep myself hard and mad: this was a new kind of knife, shorter and ground more for cutting than for thrusts, to give a

wound of warning first. He'd had his! A hawk was tearing up my heart with grinding talons

By the west porch's crimson pillar I stopped and looked up the raised-stone walkway that led northward along the Labyrinth's west facades. The tree-lined courtyard spread out spaciouly beneath three tiers of windows, below which the building's walls turned at recesses and up its whole length ran a short stone bench where people could sit. Ariadne had always liked it there, letting the strange things of the world come to her. No, no! The trees out here rattled and swirled in sand-shot heat, *It's something in here (tap of temple) they want changed*

Where was she? I stepped out farther and beyond the altars set along the walkway, saw that a mob was gathering round the Labyrinth wall's deepest recess: white goats, dogs, an oblivious peahen roamed behind them, pets and stock abandoned for something better just now. My stomach told me I would find—A dozen monkeys strained to scatter against their common chain while master someone joined in the shouting crowd: it bristled with people's pruning hooks and staves, vicious voices. What had been *laying up in the ground* was come forth and the wind had come just in time to marry it

I stepped off the raised ritual walkway, looking to kill a man after all, and saw gossip-brothers and sisters of Pale-sus' circles heading over before me, surely seeing the knife in bereaved brother's hand. Gathering to watch. Look at them all: a black man with a white reef heron flapping on his arm, linguists of the House, craftspeople, gardeners, merchants of Eastern houses in gaudy gold earrings, local farmhands. A shepherd's voice bleat mockery in the tongue of his moony-faced flock and the whole mob laughed, weapons rattled like bones. I, to han-

dle this? An elderly man down from his house on the western valley-side stood alone amid the sand-blasts and flies on the court's far edge, in a tattered rag of a shawl to say: Despair

Show them they have a king still! Turn the tide! Now through the shifting bodies I glimpsed white helmets: so guards were holding people back from someone, surely some foreigner, they had a standing order, and I knew it was him because now I saw Iris and Kudru on the steps of the House of the Artisans beyond the court, and Payare was with them. Well, horse-master, your knack for making friends didn't run very deep

One voice shouted a broken *Megistos Kouros!* and now the crowd opened to me, they'd been pressing but not too hard against the guards' crescent-formation of lowered javelin-shafts. He was cornered in the recess, cursed as the common foe, cowering bent-kneed up on the little running-bench: the blankfaced guards made way for me, good, and now Cadimmetes saw me and wailed and the crowd raged at him again

—Cut him a new breech! —In the back, in the back!
—Scum of Asia! —Raid before trade!

—I had nothing to do with it, I told you! Please! Minos! I was only supposed to—Don't, boy! Guards, hold him back! I can explain!

—Shrikes! —Scoop his eyes out! —Cut his testicles off for me, I want to poison my nephew's garden! —Kill the Blue-Eyes! —Revenge, Minotauros!

Suddenly a long white bolt of liquid splashed down over Cadimmetes from a window above: some winesteward's contribution of what smelled like vinegar. No, no mercy as he wiped his stinging eyes: the mob pressed in closer as I drove my dark pretty eyes into him. I owed him

this, surely, for my brother: who had delivered remission of tax when the fields had been thin as old men's hair; come to people's village festivals, tasted their head-cheeses and raki, brought them shares of foreign barter; flowered their daughters with royal seed

Cadimmetes had turned away and I told him to face me but he wouldn't so I went up and grabbed him by the big belt and he screamed: I jerked him down from the bench and he let his older man's bulk fall, on his back at my feet. The crowd had fallen near-silent and I thought I'd go mad in this cursed wind; and yet, if I fought to *be* our ancestors, soothe Their anger, *be* my brother's own hardness on the sea, this *I* was only alone on the court, in the sun of a day like any other, and I fought with secret shame, rage, and helpless grief

– Pray if you know how, you turd of a horse. Do you see this? Where are your insults now? Pray, I said, pray to your Zeus Skyfather or Poseidon or whatever useless blueblood you're pushing this moon! See what color your blood comes out!

The man saw no hope for himself: even his ship's crew were keeping a wise low profile just now. It was all he could do to beg *No*: I raised the knife and tried my best at one of those bloodcurdling Taurian yells, inarticulate protest that I was not a soul who'd lost its way. And down that cataract of voice the knife

– Deucalion!

Oh, too good, the mare out of Kadesh: watching from somewhere all along. A stillness fell upon the crowd and I flashed with contempt, did they think a tree had spoken? The guards' white boarstoath helmets turned rightwards, pointing her out across the courtyard through parting bodies. I set my teeth

– Deucalion, hold!

– Don't boy! I'm sorry! I prayed to Demeter once!
Truly now! Oh gods

– Kill him! – Blasphemy! – Pelasgian blood cries out!
– For Delphi! – The bloodfield!

Where had she been? Letting it go this far as a sop for the public wounds? Clearly these people had been angry long enough to make a war now and have done; and, generations under the Minotauros, few thought very highly of what foreigners called the scapegoat, it brought to mind other old sacred ways under assault and made The God a limping slave of others' burdens. If we all killed an Achaian named Cadimmetes today, he'd only be known as the first. But—What she was to us cast shame before her as she swiftly crossed the court, keeping her steps to the raised-stone path across the flags. My Queen, my Queen, I couldn't believe this had come about as I watched her approaching, dressed for rite of sunset not far off: she looked so grave in the high formal tiara with her black hair out loose to her shoulders, her tresses sharpened the purposefulness of her features and there was the broad bronze Labrys pendant at her plexus, backed with red lacings of the bodice beneath her breasts. Flawless iconic stateliness blent with the daughter we all knew. And what resentment I'd been hiding! Spirals, signs of life-upon-life trimmed her everywhere and her long red-chevroned bellskirt's flounces kicked out with her paces; but then a bad gust of wind hit us all and, as she winced and reached for her headpiece, I saw that she too was full-vulnerable and I was no longer quite her priest or adorant. More like a rival, an intimate antagonist blind to himself, to tomorrow—Yet what was this Great Year about after all? The will to push it some and

find out was no more than our great Dead had done. All my life *little brother*, till today

—Get up! I told Cadimmetes and when he did I shoved him away from me, he stumbled and panted leaning back over the bench. Look at him, soft as cheese

—I call you to *maat* now, leave him alone! Ariadne said thrusting herself to the center of things. —Deucalion, do not do this, she said looking slightly downward into my eyes with her clear, hard brown ones, and it seemed everybody could see she was too much for the prince

—Why don't you ask this Horsewind about his insults to our brother? To all of us? Do you think we can't read that stitchwork on you, friend?

—Nice clothes he has! —An embassy from the sky!
—Stick him!

With controlled disdain Ariadne looked on these people who'd seized on my answer-back to her.

—Then don't shy from your hatred, she said. —It's the healthiest part of you right now.

—Oh Lady! Cadimmetes cried. —Don't let—It's just—I was only supposed to sound him out a little, just sound him out

—Well now! I said looking upwards, then menacing him at the bench's foot: how odd to be flattered thus, *and* enraged, that he should even speak to her. But Ariadne just kept staring at me, weaving round and round her silken will

—Stop it! I told her, unable to think how she saw no Necessity here

—Let Iasu take him! —Heal us! —I brought no clay votives!

—Then you belong in other lands, where slaves fashion their masters! she answered with an anger that fright-

ened many and they palpably moved back, hid their eyes. *Whose Face is a burning wind*: yes, they'd seen her swing the mace, her teeth at flesh, all knew that her power was waxing and that she did not fear it

— Deucalion—*Minotauros*, she said. — If he dies—Listen! All of you know the childish stories that we hear they tell of us Cretans, in his land! Kill this man, and you yourselves will make those lies into truth, that our Bull devoured him. What would you have

— They have to fear us! There's nothing else! the world cried through me, and now Ariadne, interrupted, shocked at my ferocity, and stricken by these words in public from a kinsman, held her eyes very steadily on me, just as I had kept myself from panic-running awhile ago. And—idiot—I wished I could take all this back somehow, not lose her before we ever came together, but now was the moment to declare myself and I would not live in my own contempt

— Come here Icarus! she called suddenly: he'd been sitting up at the bench's last turn by the northern precincts with a green young gecko in his hands and at her call (aware of this all along) he was up and running down the bench

I thought of the arrows stuck so playfully round him in the stern of his people's ship. Of his mother's pooling brains. Of the contorted corpses of Nyos and Keta, death-masks with friends' names: cruelty had branded both our brains

— Stop it! I don't care!

— Please! Cadimmetes cried

— And what will we tell him after? she asked: it was that simple, but her tremulousness said she was improvising, mother's style of seizing events at hand

— And who's that you're holding, Icarus? she asked as he climbed between the wall and the crowd into her presence, half-plowing past the gaping Cadimmetes. Icarus gave her a fist-to-brow hail with the gecko

— It's a lizard, he smiled with half a spasm at his mouth.

— What kind, Icarus?

— Kind! A good one!

— Gecko. Say *gecko*. What will you do with him?

— Play, he said, eyes full of her. — Does it please us?

— Yes, oh, yes, she wavered. — Then what?

— Eat him! and Icarus' mobile haunted face revealed a stark unhappiness

But somehow, Ariadne managed to laugh, and then just a few people joined her, and then a few started to cry, and these turned away. Timing, sentiment, something had broken, she'd taken away the blind satisfaction, yet others around us hardened the more for that, and me with them

— But Mother Dia sent him from under the stones to visit you, she kept on, squatting to Icarus' eye-level.

— She might miss him, miss him, and be unhappy

I missed this *him* too, and tomorrow seemed to be something years away: not yet brave enough to look up at Mount Juktas, I forced my steps to do what Achaians would respect. And I knew now that she was going to let me, it was all in my hands, this was her answer to my hope for her regard—*Choose*.

— Will Deucalion hurt the Blue-Eyes?

The trees knew: loom of the world

For I have a Word that I shall tell thee

Our brother now lived nowhere but in our blood. I put the gravest look I could muster on this boy

— You say, Icarus.

He nodded

Cadimmetes screamed and I stabbed him to the hilt in his right shoulder. As he fell back and crumpled it pulled itself out and dropped blood at my feet: the crowd had made sounds of shock and I was glad, and empty

— Now you have sounded me! I told him, a hollowness about my ears

— More! Icarus said. — Deucalion, give the knife?

Ariadne shot up to full height, with her features set hard and blank as ever we'd seen them. Not a look at me: most of those who'd backed away had returned to the guards' leveled shafts, and now she lowered her eyes, looking more sad than publicly grave, and spread her palms out earthward, opening a chant like the one often sung to calm the sea. The stones of the court would not accept the blood. And as I wondered what this was going to cost, Icarus offered his gecko for the knife in my hand: I told him to put the fool animal down. It cocked a speckled head, blinked; then took a few steps toward the bench, near the boots of panting Cadimmetes.