



The Labyrinth & The Minotaur: The Incarceration Play Project

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The Labyrinth & The Minotaur: The Incarceration Play Project was created by Wonderlust Productions and presented at Mixed Blood Theater in Minneapolis in 2020. The play was written by Alan Berks in collaboration with Carlyle Brown from the words of the incarceration community of Minnesota, directed by Leah Cooper, with choreography and puppetry by Masanari Kawahara, featuring original music by Becky Dale and Queen Drea (in collaboration with the Voices of Hope inmate choir at Shakopee), light design by Mike Grogan, movement design and props by Masanari Kawahara, costume design by Andrea Gross, and set design and technical direction by Zeb Hults. Assistant Direction by Sophie Javna. Stage Management by Kari Olk and Gabriel Peñaloza-Hernandez. The play was performed by a cast of professional artists and members of the local incarceration community. Additional information about the original production, including the full cast, credits, and thank-you's can be found at <https://wlproductions.org/incarceration>.

THE LABYRINTH AND THE MINOTAUR: THE INCARCERATION PLAY PROJECT

Script by Alan Berks

(With contributions from Carlyle Brown, Leah Cooper, lyrics by the Voices of Hope Choir at Shakopee Women's Prison, and more than 230 community members who shared their stories.)

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PLACE:

A labyrinth

TIME:

Then and now.

CHARACTERS:

Primary.

THESEUS, African-American, a hero and also a person who has transgressed from conventional expectations. Prince of a conquered people.

ARIADNE, lover of Theseus, noblewoman. Thread from the labyrinth to the outer world. Daughter of the King who conquered.

PERRY, White, male, corrections officer, from same neighborhood as Theseus. Trying to be a friend.

Magical. Mythological. Symbolic.

OMBUDSPERSON, the narrator.

KING OF CRETE, the power that benefits from the system. Someone has to be getting what they want—or what they think they want.

QUEEN OF CRETE, powers that have been complicit in the choice to punish her own family. Motivated by both love and fear of the King.

KING OF ATHENS, representing a conquered community that has accepted the system. Also, like a prosecutor, tasked with implementing laws—regardless of what they are.

ICARUS, son of Deadelus, the labyrinth designer. Inherits the system his father built and is youthful and arrogant enough to think he's the one who can fix it.

MINOTAUR, a monster. Fear, shame, violence, and evil.

THE LABYRINTH, a prison.

Chorus of realistic characters

Those who go inside (in addition to THESEUS and PERRY*):

INMATES/OFFENDERS

OFFICERS/GUARDS

EDUCATORS

NURSES
THERAPISTS
DEFENDERS

Those who are outside (in addition to ARIADNE):

CITIZENS (JENNY)
FAMILY (MARIAH)
ADMINISTRATORS
PROBATION/PAROLE OFFICERS
REFORMERS

And, **VICTIM** (who might be the same actor or simply be a clear costume-based archetype that any single person can step into. . . unfortunately)

NOTES ON READING:

*Theseus, Ariadne, and Perry should be played by actors who do not play any other roles. All other parts can be played by Chorus members who may play other roles. The total cast should be at least 17, preferably at least 25-30.

Lines labelled simply CHORUS are numbered to distinguish when a difference in voice is necessary—what kind depends on the production.

Archetypes, like INMATE, CO, etc., are numbered higher and higher in each scene to accommodate the casting of a large number of community members. Someone might play the same inmate, #24 for example, in one scene and not be any other part of the play—if that is what their life requires. Or they might play #24 in one scene and #15 in another. This can be the same inmate or a different character depending on how the casting ultimately shakes out and what makes sense for a community member's individual ability to present characters on stage. This same performer may also be a different archetype from the chorus, like a REFORMER, in a different scene. Maximum flexibility within the CHORUS makes it easier for community members to participate.

We also want to encourage people to play roles that are different from their role in real life.

Introduction: Flying a kite

The cast enters as a cast—not yet playing a role—and discover the space they're in: its boundaries, its peculiar geography—as though they don't exactly know how they came here. They acknowledge each other warily. Maybe one or two recognize each other from somewhere and feel relieved to know someone, and they connect with each other a little. Still, the whole place is kind of strange, and they are confused.

A piece of paper falls to the ground. They watch it. It lands. Then. . .

The audience hears the voice of a cast member though they may not be able to tell who says it.

OMBUDSPERSON

Introduction. Flying a kite.

CHORUS

- 1) Once upon a time,
- 2) We locked up people we were really afraid of.
- 3) Not just people we're a little mad at.

(Another piece of paper falls to the ground.)

- 4) What do you do when you're afraid? Lock em up. Lock em up.
- 5) How do you respond when you're mad?
- 6) Lock em behind bars.
- 1) Lock em up.
- 3) Who? But who? Who do you mean?

(Another piece of paper falls to the ground.)

- 2) I could easily sleep 14 hours a day without a problem.
- 3) —Another day in paradise.—
- 4) Trying to be anywhere other than here for as long as I can.

(Another piece of paper falls to the ground.)

- 5) To keep the boredom away. To keep the mistakes away.
- 6) To keep myself away.
- 1) Sleep.
- 2) Dream.
- 3) Sleep.

(4-5 more pieces of paper fall down.)

- 1) Canteen Charlie. Contraband cake. Caught a case. Send a kite.
- 2) Banana suit. Pickle suit. Cho-mo. Celly. Send a kite. Sally Port.
- 3) Thug Hugger.

(At first we hear the lingo, like a song, clearly, but then it just continues underneath the lines that follow as though a quiet mantra. Phrases can be repeated or continue but the phrase "Send a kite" should be heard every four phrases or so.

More paper falls to the ground, like snow.)

- 4) Hooch. Brew. Send a kite.
- 5) SOA. Stay of adjudication. SOI. Stay of imposition. SOE. Stay of execution. Out date. Send a kite.
- 6) "My rights are being violated according to policy # [muffled], and I am filing a grievance against your lack of ability to follow policy and appropriately do your job" —

(Repeat, quieter and quieter. Underneath. A bed and labyrinth of sound.)

- 1) Back 40. Seg. SHU. Code call. Send a kite.
- 2) "You need to contact my family ASAP and tell them they have to send me money NOW"
- 3) UA. ISR. LOP. Loss of Privileges. Send a kite.
- 4) "All you staff care about is making a buck off us prisoners, you don't really want to help us"
- 5) Smuggle Juice. Potato logs. Med window. Movement. Send a kite.
- 6) "My cellie snores and farts all night long and I can't get any rest in this shit hole - you need to get me moved to a new single cell ASAP"

(Repeat as needed underneath. Then.)

- 1) God show me a sign.
- 2) Please God, show me a sign.
- 3) God show me a sign.

- 1) I could easily sleep 14 hours a day without a problem.
- 2) Trying to be anywhere other than here for as long as I can.
- 3) Another day in Paradise.

- 1) Sleep.
- 2) Dream.
- 3) Sleep.

(Paper falls. OMBUDSPERSON steps out of the cast, to the front of the stage, and catches it or picks it up.)

OMBUDSPERSON

These are called Kites.

(Another paper falls.)

CHORUS

4) There's a hundred people and two phones and you can't get on because of the line of inmates waiting, and you don't know where your daughter is, if she's ok and you've no control and if you freak out you'll get LOPed.

5) (other voice) Loss of Privileges.

(Paper falls.)

OMBUDSPERSON

If an inmate has a complaint—

CHORUS

2) There's Level 3s out in the yard. Those are the violent offenders. I'm Level 1. I'm not going out there—ever. Never. I won't survive in the yard with Level 3s.

(Paper falls. Lingo still repeated, getting softer and softer.)

OMBUDSPERSON

Or a concern or needs medical attention or—

CHORUS

1) "I'd like to see the dentist for a cleaning/check-up, my standard 3 year wait is up this week."

2) "I'm in the hole. I'll be here for a while so I need 100 hours of cell work to continue my education for my diploma. Please get back to me. I fucked up big time."

3) You don't just talk to people. You can't stop someone in the hall and talk to people like you're not an offender—

CHORUS

4) I'd like to not be called a fucking offender. I'm a human being.

OMBUDSPERSON

They file a kite.

(Paper falls.)

OMBUDSPERSON

No one knows where the phrase comes from. It's not an acronym for anything. Some people say that it's the attitude the authorities take toward anything a prisoner has to say

CHORUS

5) Why don't you go fly a kite.

(referring to the paper)

6) They'll file a complaint over anything. There's no way to keep up.

1) (Another voice) So they start charging you \$5 a kite.

(NOTE that the chorus voices are referring to “they” sometimes as prisoners and sometimes as the authorities. The voices, at this point, are simply coming from the cast as a community of people, sometimes together and sometimes in conflict.)

2) (Another voice) Now they’ve put shackles on your thoughts too.

3) Nothing can escape the gravity inside

4) —You never win a grievance anyway.

OMBUDSPERSON

Another story is that in the early days, when inmates wanted to send a message to each other, they’d tie paper on the end of a string and then whip it over to the cell next door. So it looked like a kite. Wherever it comes from, it is now enshrined in the Department of Corrections Policy Handbook as the official way an inmate communicates with his jailers. Kite Form A for regular communication. Kite Form B for medical.

(The papers have stopped falling, the sound of lingo has finally stopped, and the cast recedes to the back of the stage to listen—*but they do not leave yet.*)

CHORUS

1) Send a kite.

2) Send a kite.

3) Send a kite.

OMBUDSPERSON

Who am I? I am the Ombudsman. A magical creature who listens to people’s complaints and when they have credible concerns, I address them as best as I can.

CHORUS

4) You can’t trust them, any of them. They all lie. They all lie all the time.

OMBUDSPERSON

The COs—CO means Corrections Officer—are afraid that I will take the side of the inmates no matter what, that I will be taken in by them.

CHORUS (conflicting voices)

5) They know how to manipulate you. It’s all they know.

4) I was talking about the COs. It’s all about power with the COs.

5) They’re the ones you can’t trust.

4) They’re the ones who lie all the time.

5) They get off on power. It’s like their drug. Cheese-burger eating glorified mall cops.

6) I don’t care what they call me.—You should hear the things they call me; pretty creative.—I got a job to do and I’m doing it.

OMBUDSPERSON

I have to navigate two opposing groups that have no reason to trust each other and try to remain a neutral party.

(Beat.)

A neutral party.

(Beat)

A neutral party, here, is

A magical creature.

How can anyone remain neutral in this labyrinth?

You're already waiting for me to say something that proves to you I don't understand. That I've already picked the wrong side. So you can dismiss this whole thing.

You definitely don't want to get caught sympathizing with some morally repugnant character, some criminal, or some criminal masquerading as a hero.

It's better to stick with the judgement you've already made

Or someone has made for you.

That's why you're sitting there instead of being up here. You've spent your whole life avoiding what's up here. You don't want to go to prison. I don't blame you at all.

But what would happen if, for a moment, you suspended what you think you already know—your judgement, your disbelief, your role, your fear—and just listened?

I don't know. I'm just asking you to try it.

You're safe here. Sit. I can assure you that: whatever you think, it will not affect what you're about to see.

So—can I tell you a story?

Not THE story of the incarceration system but A story.

(The story starts. The cast become like puppeteers behind OMBUDSPERSON illustrating the story. Perhaps shadow puppets.)

Act 1 Scene 1. Birth of the Minotaur

OMBUDSPERSON

Scene 1. Birth of the Minotaur.

Once upon a time a monster was born into our community. A monster born of deceit, betrayal, and wrongdoing

(KING OF CRETE and QUEEN OF CRETE enter. A kind of arrogant, charming male politician like Dick Cheney—so sure of himself that he's hard to resist.)

KING OF CRETE

Go ahead and say it plainly. My wife had sex with an animal and gave birth to...gave birth to a...thing.

OMBUDSPERSON

Minotaur.

KING OF CRETE

Half-man, half bull, with the head and the heart of a beast. A ravenous creature with canine teeth that rip flesh and bones to shreds. Horns like the devil, claw-like hands and cloven feet. I wanted to kill it. But my wife, the Queen of Crete, says,

QUEEN OF CRETE

No, It's my son, It's just a child. It's done nothing wrong. It's an innocent."

KING OF CRETE

Innocent? Ha.

OMBUDSPERSON

But, Sire—

KING OF CRETE

What?

OMBUDSPERSON

I thought I was telling the story.

KING OF CRETE

You are.

OMBUDSPERSON

Because, Sire, you have never actually seen the Minotaur.

KING OF CRETE

But I can imagine it. I can see in my mind his father, that bull, mounting my wife. I can hear his bays mixed with her moans. It's horrible. Trust me when I tell you, horrible. An animal.

OMBUDSPERSON

Did you anger the gods?

KING OF CRETE

What are you talking about? How dare you?!?

OMBUDSPERSON

The rumor is that the Gods struck the Queen, your wife, with this love for a bull as punishment for the King's mistakes and crimes against—

QUEEN OF CRETE

We do not entertain rumors.

KING OF CRETE

Stop right there. You're supposed to be neutral. Don't bring up irrelevant details. How dare you try to shift the blame?!

OMBUDSPERSON

Sire, I'm just telling the story with all the parts I've learned—

KING OF CRETE

I'm warning you.

(OMBUDSPERSON is silent.)

Tell them about what happened to my son.

OMBUDSPERSON

Your other son. Not the Minotaur.

KING OF CRETE

Tell them. The same bull that violated my wife

OMBUDSPERSON

accidentally—

KING OF CRETE

He murdered! My son! In the city of Athens.

OMBUDSPERSON

It was an accident.

KING OF CRETE

It was murder!

QUEEN OF CRETE

It was murder.

OMBUDSPERSON

You wanted revenge.

KING OF CRETE

I wanted justice.

QUEEN OF CRETE

My sons.

OMBUDSPERSON

So you locked the Minotaur away to hide the shame, pain, and humiliation—

KING OF CRETE

No, to keep our citizens safe from a predator! And I had the royal engineer, Daedalus, build a labyrinth to keep It in. A maze built deep underground. A place where It could roam, yet never escape.

QUEEN OF CRETE

But it grew lonely.

OMBUDSPERSON

It's cries of rage and despair, even from deep underground disturbed the city's sleep in ways they still don't fully understand. It needed taking care of. It needed to be fed.

KING OF CRETE

Yes, it was lonely and needed company. Hungry and in need of food. I sent servants into the labyrinth to feed it whatever you would expect a bull would want to eat. Those servants never found their way out.

OMBUDSPERSON

Still it had to be fed.

KING OF CRETE

Yes, it had to be fed.

OMBUDSPERSON

And why lose more loyal subjects when you can feed the beast with your enemy, the Athenians.

KING OF CRETE

The Athenians and their King were complicit in my son's murder. They let the bull that killed him roam lawlessly about their city. They are responsible. They need to be taught to respect authority, and thank the Gods I have it in my power to teach them.

OMBUDSPERSON

But sending 14 of their citizens into the Labyrinth every year to feed the Minotaur—how is that not vengeance?

KING OF CRETE

It's honoring the Rule of Law.

OMBUDSPERSON

Laws are meant to help people. Vengeance leads to tyranny—where consequences are based only on the emotions of the people who have power. The power to make other people suffer when they suffer.

KING OF CRETE

It isn't vengeance! It's retribution.. Consequences are incapacitation and deterrence. unishment leads to regret, regret leads to guilt, guilt to repentance so that it will never happen again. And no one will ever think of doing it again. That's why we have a Justice system. Tell the people what I have decreed.

(KING OF CRETE exits.)

Act 1 Scene 2: Heroes

OMBUDSPERSON
(to audience)

Scene 2: Heroes.

At first, those who are sacrificed each year by Athens are barely noticed by anyone but their immediate family. Peace is kept, and no one questions how the 14 are chosen. Any city can always spare a few of its citizens, here and there, innocent or not, before anyone starts asking hard questions. But, as the years pass, certain neighborhoods always seem to be contributing more than others. And the numbers add up. In some neighborhoods, you're looked at with suspicion if you haven't sacrificed most of your family to the Minotaur.

Enter Theseus, the Prince of Athens.

(Enter THESEUS, laughing, charming, playing with friends, acting tough. PERRY is with him.)

With his friend, Pirithious. They would play as children at school together. Theseus called him Perry.

PERRY

Theseus, come on. Be careful.

THESEUS (cocky)

You worry too much, my friend. You're always safe with me.

PERRY

But Theseus, Athens is full of stories. You messed with giants, teased your elders, fought recklessly, rebelled against—

THESEUS

What did I tell you about listening to your parents? They don't like me, yes. But they don't like you either. You know how selfish they are. It's us against the world.

OMBUDSPERSON

Theseus is a brave and cocky young man who imagines he can rule his kingdom better than his father. Free Athens from the laws of the King of Crete that shouldn't apply to him and his people. He sees himself as a hero, a rule-breaker, a fighter. And he loves, in no particular order, his people, himself, and Ariadne who, ironically, is the daughter of King Minos, the King of Crete.

(ARIADNE enters.)

Despite the comfort and privilege of her birth—or because of it—she is full of love for justice, equality, and Theseus.

(PERRY recedes into the background, watching carefully, as ARIADNE and THESEUS greet each other happily.)

When you're young and in love, you have no idea of the magnitude of the mistakes you are about to make.

ARIADNE (to THESEUS, who spins her around or dances with her, laughing)
You are crazy.

THESEUS
I'm not. I know exactly what I'm doing.

ARIADNE
No one throws a party when they're getting sent away.

THESEUS
I thought it might make my mom feel better.

ARIADNE
Your Mom will feel better if you didn't go. I will feel better. Your son will feel better.

THESEUS
My son will be proud of his father because his father fights.

ARIADNE
You should be ashamed to have killed, not proud.

THESEUS
Your father kills all the time, and no one punishes him.

ARIADNE
He does what he does for the greater good of the people.

THESEUS
And I'm doing what I have to do for *my* people. Are you with him or are you with me?

ARIADNE
I hate him. You know I do. You know what I've given up to be with you. If you love me, if you love your son, you'll follow the path that is straight and stay down. Don't make yourself a target.

THESEUS
Easy for you to say.

ARIADNE
That's how to survive. Go straight and stay down.

THESEUS
That's what we were taught, sure—and it works for you and I'm happy for you—but the straight paths are closed to us in Athens. Your father doesn't allow us to use them. We don't have the same privileges.

ARIADNE

I can beg my father to change the rules for you, Theseus. He only wants law and order. Peace and prosperity for the greatest number of people. He'll let *you* off because you are special—

THESEUS

I won't be indifferent to other people's suffering. I know what I am guilty of. I won't be guilty of selfishness.

ARIADNE

But what you're planning to do is crazy. It's impossible.

THESEUS

Do you love me?

ARIADNE

You know I love you more than I should.

THESEUS

Isn't that crazy too? Wasn't that impossible? Our fathers are enemies but our love is real.
We will make the impossible possible. I can destroy the system.

ARIADNE

Doesn't your father chose who to send—not mine? They must deserve it in some way. They aren't like you. No matter what mistakes you've made.

THESEUS

You've never met them. How do you know they aren't also special?

ARIADNE

Because I couldn't bear it if they were.

(Beat. This is too much to admit. This hurts both of them to admit. Beat. Then..)

THESEUS

I believe that both our fathers use the idea of the Minotaur to control people. No one has ever even seen it.

(She approaches him, soothing him.)

ARIADNE

Even if you succeed, I'm afraid you'll be changed. You won't be the Theseus I love anymore.

THESEUS

I promise you I'll always be exactly the hero I am now. . .

ARIADNE

The Theseus I love isn't a killer.

THESEUS

I'm afraid I'm not worthy of the man you think I am.

Your father gave you lots of books to read, and you think adventure is romantic and people really want to be better people.

What I have had to deal with is more complicated than books.

ARIADNE

If only you would control your anger.

THESEUS

It keeps me alive. It moves me to action.

ARIADNE

It gets you into trouble. Promise me you'll fight your anger, and I'll promise that I'll be here for you always. I'll be your thread out of the labyrinth.

THESEUS (intimate, like this is their song)

I'll tie you around my heart, and you'll keep me from getting lost.

I love you, but I don't have a choice.

ARIADNE (understanding)

Every night I'll tell our son about your strength, your compassion, your smile. All your best qualities. When you're quiet and thinking and I can see you as the leader of your people, generous and forgiving.

THESEUS

Tell him about all my qualities. Don't leave anything out. When the Minotaur is dead, we won't live with fantasies and lies any more.

(Pause. They kiss)

If you believe in me, I know I'll make it out.

ARIADNE

I want to believe in you, Theseus. I want to believe in you more than anything else in the world.

(Pause. They kiss again. PERRY clears his throat. They stop and THESEUS steps back from the vulnerability, returning to a posture of cockiness.)

PERRY

It's time to go, Theseus.

THESEUS

And you will be my bodyguard, old friend?

PERRY

We're not supposed to use the term guard. It's corrections officer.

THESEUS

You want to help, Perry. Admit it.

PERRY

Of course I'm here to help, T.

THESEUS

It'll be just like when we were kids, looking out for each other.

(THESEUS goes to hug him. PERRY nods but extracts himself from the hug, shy.)

PERRY

I don't think you're supposed to touch me anymore either, Theseus.

(THESEUS looks at him funny and laughs it off. He notices VICTIM standing in the corner, in the shadows.)

THESEUS (quietly)

Who's that?

PERRY

She's definitely not supposed to be here right now,
I think, don't look at her.

(THESEUS shudders and shrugs VICTIM off his mind. When he turns away, VICTIM disappears sadly back into the crowd.)

THESEUS (really puzzled)

Well, where's the rest of the gang? Let's go.

(And he exits. PERRY runs after him.)

PERRY

Theseus, the labyrinth has rules. You need to learn to follow them.

(They disappear behind the CHORUS.)

Act 1 Scene 3: The roles we play

OMBUDSPERSON

Scene 3. The roles we play.

TINA
Caught a case

JACK
Caught a case

LAUREL
Caught a case

OMBUDSPERSON

Over the past 50 years, the prison population has increased 700 percent.

MANNY
I didn't do nothin'

LAUREL
I did it. I was afraid.

OMBUDSPERSON

We rounded up drug addicts.

TANYA
I did too much, I woke up inside. I don't remember.

OMBUDSPERSON

Also, people with mental health issues.

PAYTON
The man I killed knew he deserved it.

OMBUDSPERSON

We passed a lot more laws then created "three strikes and you're out" sentencing.

KEVIN
I'm glad I got caught or I'd be dead.

MCKINLEY
They over-police our neighborhoods. If you're always looking, you'll find something.

OMBUDSPERSON

No need to worry about the umpire or how they call the strike zone if we assume that you and I will always bat a thousand.

MANNY
I'm afraid

TINA, JACK, LAUREL
Caught a case

KING OF ATHENS

I understand what you're saying, I've heard the criticism. I want you to know that I have, and I want to fix the problem, but I also have an ethical obligation to prosecute justice, fair and firm.

OMBUDSPERSON

The King of Athens is subordinate to Crete. He must prosecute King Minos' commands.

KING OF ATHENS

And we—the people of Athens—are, by law, responsible for the death of King Minos's son. Right or wrong, the law says so. As the King of Athens, I don't know what I can do but try to make sure that all the people who go to the labyrinth deserve it in some way. That our streets are safer when they're gone. They knew the rules as well as I. You might even say they've volunteered for it when they veered off the straight path.

(A chorus member hands him a stack of files.)

Otherwise, we'd have chaos.

(Looks at the file. Turns toward the chorus and points.)

KING OF ATHENS

You.

INMATE TELEMACHUS

I didn't do nothing. I don't want to go.

(KING OF ATHENS reads from the paper.)

KING OF ATHENS

When you were just a little kid, you started with a robbery of a senior citizen.

INMATE TELEMACHUS

Just cause you're reading it don't make it true. I helped a neighbor cause he had locked himself out of his house, and I was small enough to squeeze through the fence and get his keys. When he got robbed later, they blamed me.

KING OF ATHENS (reading)

More burglary.

INMATE TELEMACHUS

No. Listen to me. When I was a teenager, I was the only black kid at a house party where some jewelry ended up missing. They went through my stuff, never found anything, but one guy kept pointing at me so they charged me anyway.

KING OF ATHENS (reading)

Assault, grand theft, robbery.

INMATE TELEMACHUS

You won't listen to me. Now I got a record, I can't get a job. Anything happens, the cops come looking for me. I don't want this role but I'm the paper, not a person.

(He gets handed a prison uniform.)

This ain't fair.

(INMATE AJAX steps forward. Grabs a prison uniform.)

INMATE AJAX

This ain't nothing compared to my life. I'm ready to go. I was in a war, grew up in a family that wasn't mine. This won't be nothing compared to my grandmother telling me who my real parents were.

(KING OF ATHENS points to INMATE ALTHIA. Someone gives her a prison uniform too.)

INMATE ALTHIA

I was with the wrong person who forced me to do something to someone that I didn't want to do and I didn't turn that person in right away because I was scared of him, and I was angry. I just made a mistake.

(Unhappily, she takes the uniform. KING OF ATHENS points to INMATE PARIS.)

INMATE PARIS

Me? I'm in school. I have a job. I don't belong with them.

(But INMATE PARIS meekly takes the uniform.)

KING OF ATHENS

We're encountering a lot of circumstances where there are no good resolutions for anyone. No outcome is perfect, but we need to make hard decisions in support of the rule of law. The rule of law is how we've come as far as we've come. It—even with its flaws—is what ultimately protects us all.

(KING OF ATHENS references the paper again and points to INMATE ALTHIA. She's terrified.)

INMATE NIKIA

I was, I was in the back of a car, behind my mom's house. I didn't know the car was stolen. My *cousin* called the cops on me. I mean, I was sitting behind the house and then I woke up, here. I was, I am

(DEFENDER grabs a sport coat and throws it on—the sloppier kind of attire of public defenders wear as opposed to prosecutors.)

DEFENDER

She's pregnant.

KING OF ATHENS

She's a meth addict.

DEFENDER

She's been abused.

KING OF ATHENS

She needs to be held accountable for her mistakes. I don't enjoy this, but I have a job to do. I've taken an oath.

DEFENDER

She's pregnant, and she's been abused, and she didn't steal the car, she just happened to be in the car.

KING OF ATHENS

If you don't want to prosecute them—

DEFENDER

How would that be good for the community?

KING OF ATHENS

You can join them. We'll call you the Public Defender.

DEFENDER

I'll consider it an honor to speak up for people who don't have the power of the state behind them, whose voices don't get heard, who are so marginalized that they can get railroaded into agreeing to—

KING OF ATHENS

Will it be an honor to speak for him?

(Pointing at INMATE AJAX. Reading from his file.)

Multiple criminal *sexual* assaults, kidnapping, domestic assaults, domestic threats.

DEFENDER

. . . He's still a human being. . .

KING OF ATHENS

Is he?

DEFENDER

Everyone has some spark inside them. Everyone needs to be treated as though someone could love them. I'm not saying we need to do him any favors, but we need to treat everyone like human beings.

KING OF ATHENS

I'm glad you're going with them, and not me. You might give them a fighting chance.

DEFENDER

Give me the resources I need to defend them.

KING OF ATHENS

Next.

DEFENDER

Is it justice to expect me to defend them without real weapons, without a budget and— ?

KING OF ATHENS (moving on)

We need people to keep everyone in their place, to make sure they fulfill their sentence and don't run away. We need guards. Corrections Officers.

(CORRECTIONS OFFICERS steps forward.)

C.O. DIANA

I have a family to raise and there are no other good jobs in my neighborhood.
(OFFICERS are handed uniforms.)

C.O. LEONIDAS

I believe in the mission. I was trained to serve my country. There are rules; these are the consequences. My friend was kidnapped and killed by people like this, and I'm pissed. I want to make sure that what they do never happens again.

THERAPIST

I want the challenge of working with a population of clients that otherwise would be viewed as a 'throw away' by everyone else—when really, if we look at it, we are all one or two bad decisions away from being in their shoes. I enjoy the cluster fuck.

DEFENDER

What role will you play?

THERAPIST

I'm a therapist.

INMATE TELEMACHUS

How come he gets to choose his role? I want to choose my role.

INMATE ULYSSES

He's got an education, and he got no record. He's probably not dealing with foster care and abuse. He got the right skin color. He was born in the right neighborhood. You and I are cast in our roles from the moment we're born.

(He takes an INMATE uniform.)

EDUCATOR

I want to help. I want to be a part of a community where I will really matter. I believe that people can change. Here I can be part social worker helping them get resources and part teacher to people who haven't been given a chance to learn, holding them accountable too, but also recognizing that when they come back to Athens they can restart their life better.

(She's handed some kind of identifying marker of an "educator".)

INMATE AJAX

Who's she?

EDUCATOR

I'm a Teacher.

C.O. DIANA

I'm not sure any of us get to come back.

EDUCATOR

We need an optimist on the journey too.

NURSE

My husband prayed that his wife wouldn't take the nursing job but the Holy Spirit told him, "It's not up to you where she works. This is the job she is supposed to do."

It's my calling to care for this group.

(NURSE puts on the nurse outfit.)

EDUCATOR, NURSE, DEFENDER, LEONIDAS

It's a calling. A spiritual calling. A calling.

INMATES, DIANA, THERAPIST

s It's destiny. It's pre-ordained.
We can't resist.

KING OF ATHENS

And you're protecting Athens. You are being sent away because. The greater good. The rule of law. Blind justice.

OMBUDSPERSON (to KING OF ATHENS)

We're actually two short, Sir.

PERRY (running forward)

Here. Here.

(Looking at the group and it stops him.)

I know you. And you? I know—so many people I grew up with?

TELEMACHUS/ALTHIA/NIKIA)

Hey, Perry.
Pirithious!
Hey Perry.

ULYSSES

Don't join us, Perry, if you don't have to.

PERRY

This is me trying to be help to people who wound up where I could have wound up. Cause growing up was pretty shitty. ~~Domestic violence, both parents alcoholics.~~ Theseus showed me how to have some control over my life, because he cared about me, and I want to help others find that care, and control, too. This is self-healing for me.

Helping people helps me.

OMBUDSPERSON

Still one short.

KING OF ATHENS (reading)

One? Who?

(VICTIM, from last scene, steps forward here.)

KING OF ATHENS

You are. . . Who?

OMBUDSPERSON

A victim, Sir.

KING OF ATHENS (to VICTIM)

This isn't the place for you.

VICTIM

I. . . I need to confront the monster. . .

KING OF ATHENS (uncomfortable, unsure what to do)

I understand but. . . Can someone. . . Help? We'll take your statement. . . You don't have to worry. We'll take care of it. Trust us. Ok? Can you, someone, *lead her away please?*

(OMBUDSPERSON or someone else leads VICTIM away.)

Now. . . That's sad, unfortunate.

(shakes it off, buries himself in his notes, papers, and folders.)

Now. Number Fourteen is. . .

OMBUDSPERSON

Theseus.

KING OF ATHENS

What about my son?

OMBUDSPERSON

Theseus is number fourteen.

KING OF ATHENS

No, he isn't. He's my son. That's impossible.

OMBUDSPERSON

You said yourself, everyone must be held accountable for their mistakes. No one is above the law.

KING OF ATHENS

He hasn't made any mistakes.

OMBUDSPERSON

He's confessed. To murder. The mother requires justice for the death of her son.

KING OF ATHENS

That's not right. That's not possible.

(VICTIM steps forward again. KING OF ATHENS lashes out.)

—I told you to go away! I'll call you when we need you!—

(then)

Whatever he did, he had good reason. He did it for the country. Whatever he did, whatever he confessed. He's *my son*.

OMBUDSPERSON

Fourteen Athenians must be sent to the labyrinth. You made the contract. Theseus is number fourteen.

KING OF ATHENS

No, no, no, no! You're fired! I say, you're fired. Leave my sight at once! Theseus shall not go!

(KING OF ATHENS is held back by the other chorus members as he tries to attack OMBUDSPERSON—who doesn't shrink from him.)

I would never have agreed if—Only people that I have chosen carefully myself will go—That's the arrangement! This is not how this is supposed to work. I am in control here. Do you hear me? Not my son.

(THESEUS steps forward, perhaps covered in armor.)

Theseus. My son. You don't know what you're doing.
The labyrinth is not what you think it is. It's hell.

THESEUS

Pops, that is the reason why I got to go. How can you live with yourself knowing that you're banishing your own citizens to hell?

KING OF ATHENS (to THESEUS)

They deserve it—they volunteered for it—they're being paid for it!
I don't care about them the way I care about you!!

(Realizing he said that in front of them.)

Please. . . I'm sorry. . . I'll do anything. . .please. . .

(KING OF ATHENS is enveloped by the CHORUS.)

Act 1 Scene 4: Journey Begins

OMBUDSPERSON

Scene 4. The journey begins.
Together, they're packed into a ship and sent across the ocean to their fate.

(Suddenly the lights shift and we hear the sounds of locks clicking, doors slamming, creaking and creeping, heavy breathing of people, a boat on the ocean, a storm. The inmates and other cast members sprawl around the stage, approximating the crowded haphazard conditions of a county jail, while other chorus members try to play their roles among them.

Basically, it is not quiet in here; there is a generally low moan, punctuated by various groans, yells, etc.

THESEUS will have his armor and weapons stripped from him as the scene progresses.)

OMBUDSPERSON

The transport is shoddy and unsanitary. Why send your best resources somewhere from which you never expect them to return?

The journey is a shock. Often transitions are worse than destinations. Sometimes that's exactly how it's intended to be.

This is jail.

NURSE (to group, not audience)

You're seeing them at their sickest and their angriest.

OMBUDSPERSON (to audience)

We hold people in the county jail before we send them deeper in to prison.

NURSE

Everyone crammed in. They're people with mental health issues—

INMATE AJAX

Bitch.

NURSE

Lots of people in different states of addiction and withdrawal.

INMATE AJAX

Fucking do-gooder white bitch.

CHORUS (voices from the back, in withdrawal)

5) I'm going to kill myself.

6) Kill myself.

2) Kill [myself]!

- 4) Kill,
- 1) help,
- 5) kill,
- 1) help.
- 6) . . .help. . . kill myself. . . .

THESEUS

There are too many people in here. There's only supposed to be fourteen.

(THESEUS and PERRY, and others including OFFICERS and INMATES, attempt to reach out to people and help them, somehow. Crouching down to lift them up, hold them and comfort them, whatever works.)

THERAPIST

Some people have nowhere else to go.

OMBUDSPERSON

They're sent here when people don't know what else to do with them. That's all. Once we built the place, we discovered the city had more *need* for it then we knew.

NIKIA (to NURSE)

Please give me something for this pain. Please, please, please, please, please, please. . .

CHORUS

- 1) Bitch! Asshole!
- 2) WHY WON'T YOU LISTEN TO ME!
- 3) I'M GOING TO KILL MYSELF! I'M GOING TO KILL YOU!
- 4) Unreal pain. Unreal.
- 5) [underneath]. FUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUCK.

NURSE (going to INMATE PARIS)

But it's the quiet ones that you have to watch and worry about.

DEFENDER

Are you seriously helping the white person instead of all these black guys?

NURSE (trying to ignore her)

It's the quiet ones who can be really sick. They're the one's who have already succumbed to dehydration, diarrhea. Then they're dead in their bed.

DEFENDER

I can't get the nurses to help my clients no matter how hard I try. In my experience, they can be the most cruel and the most racist. Some of them don't even want to touch the inmates.

NURSE

How many of me do you see here? I'm doing the best I can. I'm in here with you, aren't I? I have to make decisions about who needs my care most urgently and whose just looking for attention and who will survive even when they are in pain. I can't help everyone—A lot of these people haven't ever gotten any medical treatment at all in their life. They're treated better here than they were on the outside.

DEFENDER

You think that makes you look good? It just makes Athens look bad.

THESEUS

We need air in here. It's too hot in here.

CHORUS

2) And the smells.

4) It's just the animal parts of people. Their farts. Their sweat. Their fear.

3) And vomit. Always stepping around vomit from the addicts.

THESEUS

The air isn't circulating. We need air.

CHORUS

1) Fear smells like. . .

PERRY

Baloney?

DIANA

Bad, stale, dry baloney?

ALTHIA

No, that's actually just baloney. They just feed us baloney sandwiches on mouldy bread.

THESEUS

We need this cleaned up.

CHORUS (sinister whispers)

2) Who is he?

4) Who does he think he is?

2) He'll learn.

5) The journey will teach him.

PERRY

Every nerve in my body is screaming, get the fuck out. Get the fuck out of here. I've made a horrible horrible mistake.

THESEUS

We can't turn back now.

DEFENDER

They want it this way so that people are more likely to agree to what is about to happen. To behave.
To plead.

No air in the summer. No blankets in the winter. I only have around 15 minutes to meet you. I try to catch you early so that I can explain to you what is about to happen.

THESEUS

And help defend us.

DEFENDER

How am I supposed to do that? If you fight against where you're going, the State will only treat you worse.

CHORUS

3) Worse?

1) How can it be worse?

DEFENDER

They have the power to flatten you, completely. Run you over.

CHORUS

2) You cooperate, they use your record against you for the rest of your life.

1) Had some marijuana in your pocket when you were 16; a dental hygienist with kids 20 years later—doesn't matter.

5) If you're a father, you might lose custody of your kids.

3) The judges and the prosecutors, the kings and nobility, don't even know what they're doing to you—what the real consequences are—half the time. They don't know what the statutes really mean when someone agrees to their deals. They don't know how the rules are implemented.

THESEUS

They know.

DEFENDER

Judges never like to be told they're wrong. They know what they think they know, and they think that's enough. They don't want to find out the rest.

CHORUS

2) That's how the system works.

1) Keep everyone in the dark.

DEFENDER

Guilty or innocent, mostly all I can do is stand by them while the worst that has ever happened to them, happens. . .

I'm sorry. . .

I'm not supposed to tell you how powerless I feel in this role.

TELEMACHUS

Why not?

DEFENDER

It's not about me. What I feel doesn't matter.

THESEUS

No. Keep letting your emotions drive what you do. It makes the system more human.

DEFENDER

How does that help you? It just makes me feel bad.

THESEUS

Our humanity is the only thing that can help make it better.

DEFENDER (to THESEUS)

You are naïve. But I'm rooting for you.

TELEMACHUS (suddenly)

I want a trial.

(General hubbub pauses for a second.)

CHORUS

- 1) A trial?
- 5) A trial?
- 2) A trial?
- 4) Can we have a trial?

OMBUDSPERSON

The court system is not the focus of our story. Though it could be.

DEFENDER

They don't have time to give you a trial now. The system would stop completely if they had to give everyone a trial. It's simply not possible.

ALTHIA (to DEFENDER)

You get paid whether there's a trial or not, don't you? Less labor, more profit. That's why you keep telling everyone to accept what's happening.

(DEFENDER visibly tries ignoring the accusation.)

CHORUS

- 1) It's true.
- 3) It's true. I gave a lawyer money,
- 2) and he didn't do shit for me. It's true.

DEFENDER (can't ignore them)

It's true for some defenders but not me!

TELEMACHUS

I'm not accepting this bullshit anymore. I'm supposed to have rights. I couldn't get a jury trial when I was a juvenile. I want to be certified as an adult. Maybe I'll get a fair shot to escape this place then.

DEFENDER

How they treat you as an adult is very different than how they treat you as a juvenile. Please trust me.

(C.O. LEONIDAS throws TELEMACHUS to the ground hard.)

C.O. LEONIDAS

Can I get help over here?

THESEUS

You don't have to treat him that way.

PERRY

Do we have to be so rough with him?

C.O. LEONIDAS (to PERRY)

Adult offenders are predators—

PERRY

But a second ago—

C.O. LEONIDAS

And they don't feed off the front of the pack. They pick the weak ones, from the back. You willing to show them your weakness, find out who they really are?

C.O. DIANA (TELEMACHUS)

The sooner you recognize that your life as you know it is over, the faster this whole experience will go.

THESEUS

Am I the only one who remembers that we shouldn't have been sent here in the first place? The system is what we're fighting, not each other.

(Everyone is now too busy playing their roles to remember. OFFICERS trying to control the INMATES, etc.)

NURSE

We'll try to get you some mental health services as soon as we can.

THESEUS

Does no one here remember?

NURSE

We have trouble hiring all the staff we need. Bureaucracy. Low pay. Bad conditions.

THESEUS

I'm Theseus. The Prince of Athens.

NURSE

Unfortunately, this is where we put people with delusions of grandeur. Mental health. For most of the people in here like you, this is how you get services.

Please take the rest of your clothes off now.

THESEUS

I am Theseus.

CHORUS

1) Whoever you are,
5) this place will definitely bring out your true personality
4) one way or another.

THESEUS

I'm the son of a king. I've come to battle the minotaur and lead us out of the labyrinth!

(They treat him like he's crazy.)

Perry?

(PERRY doesn't know what to say or how to respond while the other OFFICERS look at him and expect him to help them maintain order.)

PERRY

What if you considered that he's telling the truth. I think he's —

C.O. LEONIDAS (to PERRY)

Are you here to help or not? This is how this works.

(PERRY is frozen, near THESEUS.)

THESEUS

I am who I say I am! Listen to me.

NURSE (going to THESEUS finally)

Come here, come on, we'll try to find someone for you to talk to, eventually . . .

(NURSE, with the rest of the CHORUS, envelope THESEUS and PERRY, then the rest of the scene.)

Act 1 Scene 5: Break

When the CHORUS dissolves away, we see ARIADNE on stage alone

At first, we don't know where she is and we hear similar scary, strange noises to what we heard in Scene 4. A boat creaking, doors locking, etc., which she reacts to as though she were struggling with scary thoughts in her head.

The lights rise slowly on the transition to the sounds, and maybe movement, of a mundane office environment.

OMBUDSPERSON

Meanwhile, forgetfulness descends like a mist upon the rest of the land—as though there is no such thing as a minotaur or a labyrinth. Only those who have sacrificed their families retain some recollections of love and grief but no memories at all of magic.

Scene 5. The breakroom.

Somehow the scene becomes so much more mundane than anything that has happened before; we're in a break room. MARIAH enters. They nod at each other. Quietly drink coffee but don't talk.

JENNY, a happy, excitable person enters.

JENNY

Did you see the cop show on TV last night?

MARIAH

Nope.

JENNY

Last night, on TV, there was a murder and no one in the neighborhood came forward as a witness so the totally multicultural gang of agents had to—

MARIAH

I don't watch those shows.

JENNY

Why not?

MARIAH

They make the cops the heroes.

JENNY

You don't think cops are heroes? —They don't make the cops the heroes. They're often really flawed.

MARIAH

The only actual human beings in those shows are cops. Everyone else is a prop. They ignore the context in which stuff happens to people—except to oversimplify it for the purposes of your enjoyment.

JENNY

O you're a liberal.

MARIAH

I don't trust any politicians. I think they have too much influence in our lives—especially when they can lock people up—

JENNY

Let's not talk about politics. It's divisive.

ARIADNE (quietly)

Then why did you call her a liberal?

JENNY (to ARIADNE)

What are you doing this weekend? Anything fun?

MARIAH

I planned to wait by the phone, hoping that my husband will be able to call from prison.

JENNY

(No answer. Doesn't know what to say. Then.) Ooooo. That's why you totally hate the police.

MARIAH

I didn't say I hate the police. I said I hate television shows about the police.

JENNY

What did he do? I'm so sorry.

MARIAH

Who?

JENNY

Your husband. Did he hit you? I'm so sorry.

MARIAH

He didn't do anything.

JENNY

People don't get locked up for nothing.

ARIADNE

Lots of people who have committed crimes aren't in prison. Why is it so hard to believe that lots of people in prison didn't commit a crime?

JENNY

Don't attack me because her husband screwed up.

MARIAH

Can I attack you for not knowing what you're talking about? Can I attack you for making all kinds of assumptions about me and my life and my husband based on television shows? Because everything you see on television is true, right? You're right I shouldn't attack you for being an ignorant bitch.

JENNY

I go to church!

(MARIAH and ARIADNE laugh together. JENNY joins in awkwardly. She wants to be liked.)

MARIAH (laughing)

We all go to church.

ARIADNE

I don't go to church.

JENNY (to MARIAH)

I'm so sorry. I mean I didn't mean to offend you. . . I don't judge . . .

(to ARIADNE)

So, what about this weekend? Anything fun?

ARIADNE

Visiting my lover in prison.

JENNY

Noooo. Haha. . . You're serious. . . O . . . Um . . . Well. You two must be the only two people in the office who—you know—have that problem.

MARIAH

How would you know? And you're wrong. We put people away, hours from their family and their community, so that we never have to think about it. Hiding all the real problems with our society in these secret dungeons. Then, teach you to shame people who have been caught by a system that everyone knows is fundamentally broken. Ask the cops you love so much. They know the system's broken too. What good would it do for anyone in this office to tell you what their real experience is?

JENNY

If people have been punished it was because someone decided that they need to be held accountable.

ARIADNE

For what? And doesn't it even matter *how* they're held accountable? Don't you want to know whether the punishment is fair and just or if we're making the situation worse with the system we've created?

JENNY

No! I don't want to talk about it—Even if 10 people in prison shouldn't be, I can sleep at night knowing that one real monster won't be able to hurt me!

(MARIAH takes a step forward, menacingly.

JENNY runs out. ARIADNE giggles. MARIAH smiles at her. Laughs.)

MARIAH

Hi. Mariah. I won't hurt her. I can scare her though, right?

ARIADNE

Ariadne.

MARIAH

Don't dress like that when you go visit. I once drove two hours, and they wouldn't let me in because the CO on duty said my shirt was too sexy. I called him a pervert, and they banned me from visiting for six months. Wear a sports bra. Sweatpants are good. Sweatshirts. Baggy that cover everything. Nothing metal will get you through the metal detectors faster.

ARIADNE

I wasn't really planning on visiting. My boyfriend says he doesn't want me to see him there.

MARIAH

He's being selfish, and he's wrong. He needs you. Seeing you. Hearing your voice will give him strength. A thread.

ARIADNE

A thread to hang on to.

MARIAH

They move my husband around a lot so we try to talk on the phone as much as we can. The most likely predictor of whether he'll ever truly escape the system is the strength of the thread that connects him to his community. We know this. Which is why moving prisons far away from their communities is a crime that creates more crime.

ARIADNE

You know a lot.

MARIAH

I have to. We suffer when our families are incarcerated. We have to be informed, and organized, and we have to fight back.

ARIADNE

Why was your—

MARIAH

He's undocumented. That's all. He didn't do anything.

He's been checking in with immigration on his status for 17 years. He can't go back to his home country or he'll be killed. Then, 16 years in, they tell him that a deportation officer wants to speak with him. He says something inside him dropped and he knew. He got on the phone to his sister. "I'm going to be deported. Take care of Mariah."

I'm working 75 hours a week to make sure we can afford a good lawyer.
They want to break his spirit. That's why you've got to visit.

ARIADNE

What do you talk about?

MARIAH

We talk about the people who support and encourage us. We don't talk about the guards, we don't talk about the case, because I know they're listening even though they say they aren't. I won't let him say bad things. We talk about love.

(Beat. MARIAH takes her hand.)

You're not alone.

He's not alone.

Act 1 Scene 6: The underworld

Lights, like search lights, cross the stage as though trying to find a lost prisoner. The heavy breathing of a bull and the beginning of rhythm in the background.

ARIADNE and MARIAH disappear.

THESEUS and PERRY enter together, back to back, circling, as though trying to maintain a guarded perimeter and move cautiously through a dangerous maze.

We hear the sounds of slamming doors, locks and unlocking, general crowd noise. Voices inaudible in the distance or over a loudspeaker. Then the occasional roar of a bull.

THESEUS

Stick together. We need to stick together.

OMBUDSPERSON

Scene 6. The underworld.

PERRY

I can't see in the darkness. I can't see where we're going.

(As the lights move around them, they are forced to turn more times than they can follow or spin around corners until they are dizzy. OMBUDSPERSON steps toward the audience. Behind them, the chorus moves in a dance with THESEUS and PERRY that is an abstraction of a sally port.)

OMBUDSPERSON

In every prison, you move from our world to their world through a Sally Port. A door unlocks. You step inside. On the other side of the chamber, another door. That leads into the prison, but that you can't open yet. You wait. You have no choice. The door you entered, closes behind you. Clicks. You hear the click clearly because you can't hear anything else. You wait in silence. You can't go backward. You can't go forward. Your throat tightens up, you feel light-headed, as though you're floating—neither here nor there—waiting to cross into the other side. Into the labyrinth.

Finally, we take our first steps into uncharted territory. Only Deadelus has the full map in his head, and the King locked him in a tower so that he could never reveal its secrets. Certain people know certain corners and rooms, but, mostly, most of you, know nothing. Because no one *wants* to be here. Especially you. You don't want to know. We watch the verdict handed down, as though entertainment, then we expect the characters from the stories to cease to exist. Criminals *and* victims. Law and order. Put away. But, even better, just stopped. Like, frozen. On ice. While what we call the justice system moves on to the next ones and leaves only guards—corrections officers—behind to watch them.

Except none of them stop. They don't stop being—suffering, feeling, reacting, breathing—simply because you don't want to look at them.

When *they* enter a sally port, they have every cavity searched. Like they're livestock.

I told you that I would be neutral, a magical creature, but I'm a storyteller after all, so I also think that—even if you decide you like this place or think it works the way it should—you should know what it is.

THESEUS

Perry? Where did you go?

(C.O. LEONIDAS steps out of the chorus and whispers into PERRY's ear.)

C.O. LEONIDAS

He's not your friend.

(LEONIDAS disappears back into the chorus. PERRY isn't sure he even heard him.)

PERRY

What? —T, what did you say?

THESEUS

Stick with me.

PERRY

I'm scared.

THESEUS

Don't show your fear. We can't show our fear.

C.O. VIRGIL (stepping quickly out of the crowd before retreating)
He's not your friend.

C.O. LEONIDAS (same)

He can't be your friend. You can't trust him. He'll betray you.

(An INMATE steps out of the crowd and whispers to THESEUS in the same way.)

AJAX

He'll betray you. You can't trust him. Don't be a snitch.

(And disappears. THESEUS spins around to find where the voice came from.)

THESEUS

What? Perry? What did you say?
Perry?

(They turn another corner.)

Where are we now?

(The moving lights and moving chorus, dark shapes around the space, make it hard to see. It's frightening.)

PERRY

I don't know. I'm not sure.
I thought we were. . . But then we. . .

(An old TITAN, native american, steps out of the chorus or appears around a corner.)

TITAN #1

You are in prison of course.

THESEUS

Who are you?

TITAN #1

I am of the Native people of this land, and I have been in this labyrinth since the King decided to conquer us. In my tribe, we are OF the land, we do not own it, but the white man came and used his religion as a weapon, and private property as a weapon, with rules and laws I would never follow, as excuses to confine us. To destroy us.

(TITAN #2, African-American, steps forward.)

TITAN #2

I was brought to this country in shackles. The entire country was prison. The first police were organized to keep us captured. The entire system was built, to confine us inside it.

(TITAN #3, a missionary.)

TITAN #3

This system, though—the modern system—was built, *actually*, to be humane. Prisons would be sanctuaries where people who transgressed could meditate on their mistakes, like monks. They would be civilized and reborn in righteousness through peaceful, isolated contemplation.

Christians—Quakers—designed modern prisons to eliminate the cruelty of physical punishment. Before this, punishment was death or dismemberment or exile—which was death.

TITAN #2

Or more slavery.

TITAN #3

But! *Modern* prisons were motivated by a belief in rehabilitation—which was new. That people could change and improve and assimilate! Be rehabilitated!

TITAN #1

Your morality created the idea that a person needed to be entirely different in order to be good rather than accepting that people are both good and bad. Your morality requires that a person renounce all sin. Original sin is yours. Sin as a stain that can never be removed is your invention. Even thinking about it confines me to your labyrinth.

(OMBUDSPERSON to audience.)

OMBUDSPERSON

In 1969, 100 years after their original attempt at criminal justice reform led them to invent the modern prison, the Quakers reported, officially, that the entire effort had been a tragic, disastrous failure. Unfortunately, by then, the American system of incarceration had spread across the world.

TITAN #3

In many many cultures, the labyrinth is a sacred space where precious objects are kept.

TITAN #2

That's not the culture of white people. This place wasn't designed to rehabilitate me. Or to make me sacred. It was designed to keep me shackled.

TITAN #1

I did not need rehabilitation! Our culture is thousands of years old.

TITAN #3

Satan exists! Evil must be controlled!

TITAN #1

The White Man invented Satan.

PERRY

What about victims of crime? We need to protect them.

TITAN #2

You'll meet victims here, too. In the labyrinth, along with, and as a part of, everyone else. The labyrinth imprisons plenty of victims too.

TITAN #1

So many of the people you call criminals began as victims.

TITAN #3

You refuse to take responsibility for anything. It's always someone else's fault, the white man's fault. Anyone other than you.

TITAN #1 (to #3)

You're so afraid of your responsibility that you think simply telling the truth is an accusation.

THESEUS

You've been arguing forever, and nothing changes. Point me toward the monster, and I will finish it off once and for all.

(TITANS 1 and 2 begin to laugh.)

Where? Where is the monster?!?

(TITAN #1 AND #2 laughs at THESEUS and point at each other, then themselves, then in a variety of different directions. TITAN #3 also points in confusing directions. Overlapping.)

TITAN #1

It's me.

TITAN #3 (angry that they're laughing)

It's not me.

TITAN #2

It's me.

It's him.

It's her.

TITAN #1

It's not me. It's him. It's me. It's not me.

TITAN #3

It's him. It's him. It's her. It's her. It's not me. It's not me, I'm telling you!

(And they disappear into the labyrinth, or the chorus, and new INMATES and OFFICERS appear.)

Scene 7: Allies and enemies

OMBUDSPERSON

Scene 7. Allies and enemies.

INMATE JASON

You're here. Maybe you're the monster you're looking for.

AJAX

Are you a snitch? What are you doing with him? [referring to PERRY] He's a guard. *He's a monster.

C.O. VIRGIL

He's the monster. Don't trust him.

THESEUS

I'm a prince.

INMATE JASON

I don't see a prince.

AJAX

We'll protect you.

THESEUS

I'm not in a gang.

AJAX

If you want to stay alive, then you got to make friends, have allies, and you got to decide quick. Based on what you can see, quick. Black, white, asian, native.

JASON

Fucking Natives kicked our one of their own because he was Christian. But we're not taking him in. Not protecting Jews either.

AJAX

The whites, the white supremacists, they're the monsters, and you can tell by their skin color.

JASON

I can stop being a criminal whenever I want and melt back into society, but you'll always be a fucking animal.

(COs, including PERRY, keep the INMATES from attacking each other over that insult. THESEUS still tries to keep the peace too.)

THESEUS

This place is designed to keep us from uniting against the real enemy. Just like on the outside. We need to work together.

(Laughter. That's an over-simplification or, if its true, it isn't helpful.)

JASON

You may have had white friends on the outside, but you won't here. You'll be racist no matter what you thought on the outside.

AJAX

That's true.

(CO LEONIDAS pulls PERRY aside.)

C.O. LEONIDAS

You better figure out whose side you're on too.

PERRY

I'm here to help.

C.O. VIRGIL

You just want to make it home alive.

PERRY

We all want to make it home.

C.O. VIRGIL

Not all of us will.

C.O. DIANA

We're the ones who will always watch your back. They won't.

C.O. LEONIDAS

Let me tell you probably the first and most valuable lesson I learned here. There was a particular young black gang banger in the segregation unit, and we liked to talk every time I'd see him. Then, one day outside segregation, I see him coming down the hallway with two other guys and as I walk by, I say, how you doing, buddy? And he exploded. *Who the hell are you? Don't you ever talk to me!* Just berated the hell out of me.

The next day, he stops and goes, *Hey. I don't mind talking to you when I'm back there, but don't front me in front of my homeys again.* And I thought, holy shit. They'll talk to you one-on-one, regular, but its different—it's different--when they get together.

C.O. VIRGIL

My first day, they just told me to sit in a chair. They were gonna let a bunch of guys out for recreation, rec, and I'm sitting there, and I'm watching the guys come out and I see a guy come out with a pillowcase, and he's putting his big radio in it, and I'm like, oooh, what the heck is he doing? And then he went over to another inmate and smashed him on the head. So there I had to go and pick up all the radio parts and there was blood everywhere. Radio parts and brains.

C.O. DIANA

Guys just stare at me and masturbate with their hands down their pants. Just stare. As I walk by. I thought law enforcement on the streets was too dangerous, but I've had three concussions already here.

C.O. LEONIDAS

It's normal for some guys to just cut themselves open. Put his hand in his stomach and pull out his entire small intestine. Blood and guts. Bile and poop, just like a waterfall coming out. A guy painting the walls with feces becomes, normal.

PERRY

Why?

C.O. DIANA

That's what you're dealing with.

C.O. VIRGIL

Boredom. Disgust. Desperation. Perversion. Even if you figured it out, no one cares.

C.O. LEONIDAS

We'll guide you through it.

PERRY

But, I don't understand. . .

(They laugh at those words, "understanding".)

CHORUS (sing-song)

- 1) Understand?
- 2) Who asked you to understand?

C.O. VIRGIL

You need to deal with where you are. Understanding is a luxury.

C.O. LEONIDAS

You can still make a positive difference.

C.O. DIANA

You need to worry about survival first.

(The sound of a bell. Everyone turns to look and freezes for a moment.)

Scene 8: Walls

LOUDSPEAKER

Movement. Open.

(They start to move again. THESEUS is confused and gets in people's way.)

OMBUDSPERSON (to audience)

They have ten minutes to get to whatever location they're supposed to be next.

Scene 8. Walls.

(PARIS pulls THESEUS aside. Parallel to how the OFFICERS pull PERRY aside.)

PARIS

Find a routine, even the details like what table you sit at lunch. Make it all the same, day after day, like Groundhog day, makes the days go by better.

THESEUS

I'm trying to get somewhere.

ALTHIA

There's nowhere to go. You want cruise control. You want to be programmed, like, this is what I gotta do, this what I'm going to do. Because in prison there's so many different rules and if you step out of bounds in one place you get in trouble so having a routine you don't really have to worry about *Am I break a rule? Am I going to do this wrong or that wrong?*

(The bell again and everyone switches directions. MUSIC and SONG is heard, as though from a distance, from the loudspeaker.)

LOUDSPEAKER

I've got walls.

I've got walls.

(CHORUS, live, joins in.)

I've got walls.

I've got walls

ALTHIA

The first time I was incarcerated, I was like 13, 14 for truancy at the time. I dropped out of school at 16, never really having to answer to anyone for anything. My mom was also an addict. The lifestyle was "do what you want, just don't be in my way." You know what I mean? And so it was like, so I was doing this whole same thing for a long time.

LOUDSPEAKER and CHORUS

I've got walls

I've got walls

(They move.)

PARIS

I became a professional sleeper. I could easily sleep 14 hours a day without a problem. A lot of depression.

ULYSSES

You're surrounded by people who have lived with trauma all their life. From the time they're 8 years old, they've already seen too much. Suicides, murders, assaults.

CHORUS

1) I'm really not that confident

I hide behind my walls

2) Metaphorical reality

Walls and walls and walls

I got walls around my heart.

I got walls around my mind.

Due to my sentence

I got walls around my time.

NIKIA

*I, for one, am counting my blessings –
somebody didn't make it.*

*All you have to do is get along,
you're just here for a minute,*

just get along with everyone, you have to smell their booboos and their farts, just get along, live and enjoy the moment because it could be worse, I could be going to seg, somebody could be whippin my butt.

ALTHIA

This time has been more eye opening in terms of what's real and what matters and this time what's important, family, you know family is family, my mom had a stroke in Dec and I wasn't there for it. Whether it's big or small, it's what's there.

*I got a family of women in here
that support me in ways no one ever did outside.
I wish someone on the outside
had taught me how to love.*

ULYSSES

This is where I got my relationship with God. There was a time I didn't care if I went to jail or not...she said I kicked her in the stomach. I don't remember much. I'm living today now where God told me thru his word...delight in me...he said if I seek his faith in his righteousness he will give me the desires of my heart.

Here I am in a house of confinement,
Dug out of fallen stars.
All because of a dream I had
and a game I carried too far.

PARIS

Now, all you got is time. Learn to play cards. You want to keep the hearts guarded. Lay out the clubs. Don't show the diamonds.

(PARIS will keep dealing. INMATES keep marching/moving and singing.)

CHORUS

3) *People say I'm heartless.
Let me tell you how wrong they are*
4) *I got dreams same as you and loneliness shakes my core.*

CHORUS <i>I got walls around my heart. I got walls around my mind. Due to my sentence I got around my time</i> <i>Walls around my heart. Walls around my mind. Due to my sentence Walls around my time</i>	ALTHIA <i>I got dreams same as you and loneliness shakes my core.</i> C.O. DIANE <i>I got dreams same as you and loneliness shakes my core.</i>
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PARIS

One-eyed jacks. Suicide kings. You'll learn that game too. Everyone of us has a story about someone killing themselves. Guy hung himself cause he didn't want to do three out of five years. One-eyed jacks, suicide kings. Royalty, just like you, maybe. Guy did it while everyone was at chow because it was quieter. Hide your hearts. The more time you do, the more you hear about people killing themselves. We all got a story.

C.O. HECTOR

I'd be a horrible inmate. You need permission to do anything. If you don't have permission, you can't do it. A younger offender, 20, had been in lockdown and was in his cell, and yard was called. He had made a dummy in his bed, rolled up blankets made it look like he was sleeping, so he could go to yard to play basketball and they caught him, so he ended up going to segregation, was looking at extra time due to an "escape". They had called an ICS because they couldn't locate him. He was in the yard playing ball. But he went to seg and later that afternoon he decided he was going to kill himself. So he had sliced open his wrists and his neck—Um, another ICS was activated and 18 responded to the scene as well as Health Services and I just remember sitting there, it—Segregation is single cell, so he was on the floor, the entire walls, everything was covered in blood and I was the first one in the doors and I had to hold his neck for like almost 45 minutes waiting for an ambulance to arrive as blood is still splattering everywhere.

... Talked to him after, he realized it wasn't the best decision, just added time. He's like, "Okay now I think my life's over" because he's done this and you know, now he has even more time and that's it. He's thinking, "I'm done. . . I'm just. . ." Instead of just facing the charges for his actions, he thinks, "I'm going to end it."

THESEUS

I am not like him. Or *anyone else.

C.O. HECTOR

Anyone can be made into a monster if you're just thinking about the worst things they've ever done.

THESEUS

I am not a monster.

PARIS

Everyone says that.

TELEMACHUS

I didn't kill no one.

NIKIA

DUI

ULYSSES

Forgery.

TELEMACHUS

I am innocent.

C.O. VIRGIL

Everyone says they're innocent.

CHORUS (multiple voices)

1) I am innocent.

2) Me too.

4) I'm innocent too.

5) I didn't do what they said.

C.O. VIRGIL

See.

C.O. HECTOR

It occurs to me that we're all guilty of something.

TELEMACHUS

The cop lied about my arrest and kept lying through the trial.

CHORUS (sarcastic)

4) Right.

6) Sure.

C.O. LEONIDAS

Police don't lie —

(Pause. They think about it, together. Then.)

C.O. HECTOR

Except. . .

C.O. LEONIDAS

Even if he did—

—Why were you in that neighborhood?

TELEMACHUS

Because I live in that neighborhood.

C.O. LEONIDAS

You must have been doing something—done something—

TELEMACHUS

Why was the cop in the neighborhood? He didn't live there.

C.O. VIRGIL

That doesn't matter now. We're here now.

THESEUS
We've got to work together—

C.O. VIRGIL
He's not listening

PARIS
He's not listening.

C.O. VIRGIL
We've simply got to make the best of the roles we've been given.

CHORUS

*I got walls around my heart
I've got walls around my mind
Due to my sentence
I got walls around my time*

ALTHIA
Find a routine.

THESEUS
Why are you accepting it?

(Then, the bell rings again. The music stops. The movement stops.)

LOUDSPEAKER
Movement closed.

(Everyone freezes, except THESEUS and PERRY.)

THESEUS (unfrozen, with PERRY)
What? What's happened?

(ARIADNE enters from CHORUS.)

Scene 9: Visitation

Scene 9.

OMBUDSPERSON

Visitation.

LOUDSPEAKER

THESEUS

Ariadne.
You shouldn't be here. It isn't safe.

ARIADNE (tentative, to a CO)

Can I— Can we. . .

(CO lays out small rug.)

PERRY (giving permission, as though conspiratorially)
You can hug for 5 seconds and kiss on the cheek when you're standing on the "hug rug".

(THESEUS is tentative.)

ARIADNE

I told my co-workers about you.

THESEUS

You shouldn't have.

ARIADNE

Turns out that I'm not the only person with a loved one inside. We just needed someone to start talking about it. You should see the look on some of the other people's faces.

(She does it.)

Part appalled, part scared, part superior, part confused. Like if a squirrel accidentally inhaled a hot pepper.

(She makes more faces. THESEUS laughs a bit.)

THESEUS

You don't seem real. You can't be here.

ARIADNE (more light-hearted faces)
. . . Or, their faces were more like a walnut developed a personality. You know, condescending but wrinkly and ridiculous.

(THESEUS laughs more.)

Junior would like to visit.

THESEUS

I don't want him to ever be inside this place.

ARIADNE

He has a father, and he needs to know his father.

THESEUS

Look what our father's have done. Look.

ARIADNE

Don't you want to see him?

THESEUS

Our fathers should have thought about the families of the people they send away.

JASON

Saturday is visiting day, and I'd look forward to it every week. I'd get up and go to work then they'd call me and I'd change clothes. And my son would come and sit on my lap. Up to three hours. Adults had to sit across from you, but my son. Could sit. On my lap. . . He'd get bored, but for me, it was something to look forward to. . .

NIKIA

I got taken from my mom back in 89. But I have a relationship with my mom now. My oldest sisters, they're in Chicago, and I have a brother in Chicago. All of us got taken away. I just got in touch with my youngest brothers...one was 4 and one was 2 mo when we got taken. I have one sister-in-law that is familiar with the incarceration system because my brother has been in – she's in contact with me. . .

AJAX

None of my family has ever made contact with me. Because my family doesn't talk to me. I know my mother would talk to me if she was still alive. My child found out that I was incarcerated by it being on the news. I don't know what she thinks but I think she probably hates me

NIKIA

If you feel loved, you will never feel alone.

(ALTHIA steps out from the chorus.)

ALTHIA

Mom?

(Her MOTHER steps out too.)

Please tell my girl I am not the crime. Don't let her hate me. I'm more than the mistake I made. Will you tell her?

(Pause.)

It means a lot to know you still love me.

(Pause.)

You don't have to love me. Just, it means a lot to know you know I exist.

MOTHER

You look OK? Can I—I can touch her?

(PERRY looks at CO. CO nods no.)

OMBUDSPERSON (to audience)

For many years, female inmates were not allowed any physical contact. At all. No touching. At all. In addition to being locked up. When they came out, if someone tried to hug them, they'd flinch. The rule has finally changed, but the lasting effect of no physical contact on humans has been well-documented. Living creatures lose their will to live.

(MOTHER reaches out but doesn't hold ALTHIA'S hand because it scares them both too much. MOTHER freezes in this desperate image)

ALTHIA

How is my girl?

(Pause.)

And then she tells me. That they met a couple in church who want to adopt. A nice couple. Stable. And even though I'm in contact with my daughter, and she's already 6 years old, they say that they can't take care of her, and when I get out they don't know if I'm going to run to the hood or what and-and-and

(Starts hyperventilating, trouble breathing)

They have to think of what's best for Mari. And—and—and

(Looks around but no one is allowed to touch her. MOTHER disappears.)

And I can't even get a hug.

(Cries out "No" in the pain of losing her daughter. CHORUS approaches but doesn't touch her.)

CHORUS

- 1) I was told that I would never see my children again,
- 2) That I didn't deserve to see them,
- 3) He is better off with me.

OMBUDSPERSON (to audience)

Twenty-five percent of women inside are pregnant or gave birth within the year. 75% of men and women are parents.

(DOULA stepping out of the chorus, gives ALTHIA a kleenex and ALTHIA disappears into CHORUS. They let her pass.)

DOULA (to everyone)

Before there was legislation, the policy was to shackle post-partum. As soon as the baby was born, we'd have to shackle to the bed and shackle for the rest of the stay in the hospital. The mother would have to get permission to go to the bathroom and change the baby's diaper. Have to leave the hospital in shackles. Most of the time, she would be in a wheel chair, and we could throw a sheet over her and you wouldn't see the chains. But one nurse was so insistent that she didn't need a wheel chair. "Nope, we're not going to bring a wheel chair." Everyone is looking at her, walking. She's sobbing. She looks like a scary person. I was there to catch her tears. Her arms were shackled to her side. I had a tissue, and I would touch the tissue to her cheek as she walked through the hospital away from her child.

I wasn't allowed to touch her except through the tissue.

PERRY

Who are you? Where did you come from? How did you get here?

DOULA

I'm a volunteer. I started to think that maybe it wasn't right that people were entering the labyrinth on my behalf. I'm a doula. Other volunteers talk, minister, teach, help people feel less alone. It's important. I can teach parenting classes, I can help. Because when a baby is born, when you see that mom connected and loving on the baby. They're just a new mom with their baby. None of the rest of this matters in that moment, and I can help protect that memory of that birth. Create a space for them. "You're here and you're safe and you're ok." You're going to get through this.

ARIADNE (to THESEUS)

You think you need to do this alone, Theseus.

But I can't do it alone.

(Pause)

There's a program where you can read a book to our son, and they'll record it so that he can hear your voice before he goes to sleep. Will you do that? There are programs here, Theseus, that maybe can help. Will you do it? It'll be like you're talking to him.

(A bell rings again. Before THESEUS can respond.)

PERRY

Visitation over.

(The song starts again. ARIADNE and MOTHER begin to be enveloped by the CHORUS.)

LOUDSPEAKER

I got walls
I got walls

I got walls
I got walls

THESEUS

Wait. . . Wait! Ariadne, come back. Wait! I do need you. Wait.

Scene 10: Dead ends

(PERRY pulls THESEUS away.)

THESEUS

What are you doing?

OMBUDSPERSON

Scene 10. Dead ends.

PERRY

We've got to keep moving. Follow me.

OMBUDSPERSON

You may want to hold the hand of the person next to you during this part. The deeper inside we go, the more you may feel lost. Don't worry. It's nothing personal. It's how the labyrinth is designed. If you get too depressed, you can file a kite. It's in your program.

C.O. VIRGIL (to PERRY)

Good job. When you teach them to follow, you make it easier for the next guy. You need to be firm, fair, and consistent.

PERRY (learning)

Firm, fair, and consistent.

Firm, fair, and consistent.

THESEUS (reaching out to PERRY)

Where are we going?

C.O. DIANA

Don't let him touch you!

PERRY (jumping)

What?

THESEUS

What?

C.O. VIRGIL (to THESEUS)

Stand back! Stand five feet back. Behind the line. I need you to stand behind the fucking line.

THESEUS

What? Where? What line? *Why?

C.O. VIRGIL

Stand behind the fucking line!

(THESEUS moves back quickly, to somewhere, unsure where.)

C.O. DIANA (to PERRY)

You train them, you teach them, to follow the rules. You don't explain the rules to him, or he'll argue with you, or he'll learn how to get around them. Compliance. Firm and fair. Fast compliance. It's for their own good. For everyone's sake.

THESEUS (trying moving away)

Perry, I don't think we should trust—

PERRY

You don't have a plan, do you, Theseus? How could you lead us in here without knowing what we were getting ourselves into.

THESEUS

I didn't say this was going to be easy—

PERRY

We're trapped, Theseus. We need to start accepting where we are. This is our world now. This is normal now.

(The Minotaur's roar, from a distance, and more creepy because of it. People hear it and move faster, more paranoid.)

THESEUS

No. No!

(The Roar is louder. Coming closer. People start moving more frantically.)

We don't have to accept this, Perry. I refuse to—

C.O. VIRGIL

Stand where I fucking told you to stand! *Stand back!

PERRY

—Why can't you follow the rules? Why are you always *so selfish*!? Why is everything always about you?!? —

C.O. VIRGIL

Do you fucking hear me? Do what I fucking tell you to do!

(Shouting, moving, confusion. Maybe even violence.)

(Flashlights here. The speakers are appearing in THESEUS and PERRY's way as though they are **walls, corners, and statues** in the hallways of the labyrinth.)

CHORUS (underneath, in the background)

- 1) Another day in paradise.
- 2) Send a kite.
- 3) What do you do when you're afraid? How do you respond when you're mad?
- 4) Cantraband cake. Celly. Send a kite.
- 5) Smuggle juice. Pickle Suit. Out date.
- 6) In the belly of the beast.

(murmurs like this continue underneath. INMATE steps out of the chorus, in THESEUS's path.)

PARIS

I had to go to work for the system so they can say they're teaching us job skills for when we're out. Pay us less than minimum wage to build the furniture in all your colleges then take out even more money for "cost of confinement". I'm doing a job I should make more money doing on the outside, then they charge me for doing it *while I'm inside*. That make any sense to you?

Training therapy dogs they took away because we liked it. In addition to being locked up, they don't ever want us to smile.

ULYSSES

This place wants to take credit for what happens to us simply because we get older. They don't want to rehabilitate you. If you were rehabilitated then they'd have to forgive you and they don't want to do that.

C.O. VIRGIL

I wound up here because I love to talk. Was volunteering for my church, ministering to the guys inside, when I was told about the CO job.

But I've spent the last eight years talking about the weather. Can't let any of them overhear anything personal that they might be able to look up and somehow get to me on the outside. Everyday I'm looking into the eyes of people who potentially want to make a victim of me. They're probably scared too but if they see weakness. . .

My partner and I are responding to a call. I didn't even see him get hit but next thing I know he's down, next to me. I get us out of there. He seems OK. Then he says something about not feeling right, and then he's dead. . . Just. . . Just. . . It just happened so quick.

We're understaffed. We work too many shifts. Maybe we should just let them kill each other. I can't leave though because of the benefits.

EDUCATOR

I'm more comfortable now with rapists and murderers.

I know the COs are worried about assaults, violence, every day. None of us want to be made victims. As an educator, I know I see my guys on their best behaviors.

But also,

My guys want to succeed. Even when no one else does, they want so badly to succeed. And I want that for them.

VICTIM

I had been in nursing school but after my son was killed, I . . . His life was gone and so was mine. I cheated on my boyfriend. I drank. Everything I was doing, ended.

(THESEUS is pushed forward toward her as though on a wave.)

How could the criminal still have a life? I tried to get permission to write him and ask him, tell him what he did to me, but he wouldn't reply.

(The CHORUS envelopes her, leaving THESEUS and PERRY there for a second to react.)

THESEUS

I didn't know her. I wasn't thinking about her. How would I know her?

PERRY

You never think about consequences.

THESEUS

I do. I did. Just not the ones they wanted me to think about.

CHORUS

2) She isn't supposed to be here.

5) How'd she get in here.

1) They built this place to keep us in *And* to keep her out

NUTRITIONIST

I'm the nutritionist. I'm responsible for keeping them fed. But my food budget is 3 dollars and 45 cents per prisoner per day. . .

I'm trying to make something healthy that can help them live healthier, served on ugly rectangular trays. If I serve meat, we can't call it steak or the politicians will say they're eating too well.

. . . No one really wants me to succeed.
Especially not if it requires spending any money to treat people like human beings.

ALTHIA

Because I am pregnant, I get supplemental food each week. It has white bread. Peanut butter. Warm milk. And 21 oranges. Maybe get a hard-boiled egg but that takes longer. 21 oranges. No one can eat 21 oranges a week. Tried using them for aroma therapy, rolling on them to massage my back.

I was raped by a CO. Well, I guess, it wasn't rape because I went along with it but I didn't want to do it. He said he'd put me back in seg if I didn't go along. So I did. I hear some of them aren't so bad, but I can't tell which ones.

But I discovered a family of women who look out for me. This place sucks, and I'm scared but also, I mean, it means a lot to know other women who give me strength.

One day, I remember, we got to go outside together. Onto the lawn and take off our shoes.
And walk in the grass in our bare feet.

CHORUS

3) We made a cookbook from canteen food.

4) You've got to try to create something normal.

1) Like no bake strawberry shortcake. As many strawberry crème cookies as you can afford,
2) vanilla wafers, peanut butter. . .

(The chorus repeats canteen foods and the prices.)

5) Normalcy.

PERRY

Normalcy. Theseus, what do you think? We just, we figure out how to live here, like normal?

ARIADNE (to THESEUS, who is confused where she is)

Don't lose the thread.

(ARIADNE is gone. ARIADNE appears again somewhere else.)

ARIADNE

You need to follow the thread.

THESEUS (turned around)

Ariadne?

(She's gone.)

(THE LOUDSPEAKER makes a horrible noise as it wakes up.)

LOUDSPEAKER

Lockdown!

(Suddenly everyone rushes in an even more chaotic pattern, and off stage.)

CHORUS

1) Damnit, I didn't get my chips from the canteen!

Scene 11: A monster sighting

OMBUDSPERSON

Scene 11. A monster sighting.

PERRY

Level three.—Level Four.

OMBUDSPERSON

The levels indicate how dangerous the system has decided an offender is.

PERRY

Maybe we're all the way up to Level Five. I've lost track.

I'm doing rounds, I'm doing my best, but the inmates keep calling me back, saying they need this or that. This other thing. I'm running to take care of this thing and that thing they say they need desperately.

THESEUS

This young kid about 20 years old is on dialysis and in the next pod over. I been keeping an eye on him. Perry, we need to help him. Perry! Perry!

PERRY

I'm running to take care of this thing and that thing they say they need. Everyone.

C.O. VIRGIL (to PERRY)

They're testing you again.

PERRY

I don't have time, Theseus.

TELEMACHUS

Help! Help me. Oooo. . .

THESEUS

Perry, remember what we've been through together.

C.O. VIRGIL

Firm, fair, and consistent. You're doing enough. You can't respond to everything they say.

TELEMACHUS

I need to get out of here!

THESEUS

It's 5 in the morning. I hear you, Kid. Hold on. Hold on. Perry!

TELEMACHUS (screaming and yelling)
My kidneys. I need to get outta here.

THESEUS
Perry! Guards! Perry!

PERRY (trying to ignore it)
I need to be firm, fair, and consistent. I can't let them take advantage of me. People always treat me like I'm not important too.

TELEMACHUS
Oooooo.

THESEUS
Bang. Bang! I've got to get your attention, but I can't get a hold of nobody. Perry, you're a guard. You're supposed to help. Help me help him.

PERRY
I can't let them take advantage.

THESEUS
He doesn't deserve this just because he made a mistake. Guilty or not.

TELEMACHUS
"Let me out—let me out!—

(pause)

Let me. . .

(quiet)

THESEUS
Buddy. . . Kid! Hey! Kid!

(silence)

. . . Kid?
. . . And I know that, he's dead.

(Silence)

PERRY
. . . hearing someone's yells and then you don't hear them no more.

(Pause)

I didn't mean to. . .
I thought I was. . .

I was trying to. . .

PERRY & THESEUS

Hearing someone's yells and then you don't hear them no more. . .
. . . is the worst thing. . .

(Beat. Breath.)

PERRY

Push it down. Move on. Make a joke. Make it funny. Anything. Don't feel it. Move on.

(PERRY tries to literally move on but THESEUS plants himself right in front of him.)

THESEUS

You! It's your fault, not mine!

(THESEUS attacks PERRY. He gets a few blows and THESEUS beats PERRY until other COs take him down, very hard. And they subdue THESEUS, violently. *Note: This entire stage direction plays out in a stylized way with THESEUS and PERRY narrating the violence rather than doing it at full speed.*)

THESEUS

When every path you take, leads to a wall. And you have no control. Your thoughts, your voice, nothing matters. No effect. Eventually, your body just reacts. If you can hurt someone, then they can't ignore you. I know I exist. I exist. I can hurt you. You can't ignore me.

PERRY

*It's what I've been waiting for. Like I feel as though I almost deserve it. It's a relief for the pain to finally arrive physically instead of constantly worrying about it.
And now I have permission to fight back.*

C.O. LEONIDAS

Some guys won't learn how to behave no matter what we try to do for them, so we have to isolate them even further for as long as it takes them to learn accountability. Segregation. It's the last tool in our tool box.

(THERAPIST helps them drag and strap THESEUS down.)

THERAPIST (to PERRY)

First time I was alone as the psychologist, I got a page and was brought to the, euphemistically called, "quiet cell". Chronic seg guy, naked, strapped to. . . Looked at him and he said, "I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm sorry" banging his head on each "I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I'm sorry." And the COs start singing.

C.O. DIANA

/C.O. LEONIDAS (to THESEUS, who is beneath them)

"Who's sorry now? Who's sorry now?"

C.O. HECTOR

Lots of these guys need more mental health services, but the therapists can't take 'em. They don't have the bed. Or it doesn't follow procedure. Whatever the reasons. Seg makes them more crazy.

THERAPIST

I must have missed the day in grad school where they told me how to deal with this.

(THESEUS is yelling, again, and they kick him.)

C.O. LEONIDAS (referring to THESEUS)

So, Doc, what do we do?

THERAPIST

Um, What do we usually do?

C.O. HECTOR

Last Doc usually gave out cigarettes, and if he quiets, gives him another cigarette. And then he'd go back upstairs.

THERAPIST (to PERRY)

This was a test. They want to see if I ask what his relationship with his mommy is. "Let's do that again," I say. They wanted to see if I was a regular guy.

(C.O. HECTOR looks at THERAPIST sadly, shakes his head)

C.O. LEONIDAS (singing)

"Who's sorry now? Who's sorry now?"

PERRY (from a dark place, very hurt, to THESEUS)

Have you ever cared about anyone but yourself, Theseus. Was I nothing more than your sidekick? You've always attacked people. You've always been a predator and a violent offender. I should never have followed.

Whatever segregation does to people. . .

You earned it. Do you hear me?!? It's not my fault. You turned me against my community.

Whatever happens to you is your fault. I did the best I could for you. Do you hear me? Didn't I? For once in your life, do you hear me?!?

Scene 12: Meet the minotaur

Spotlight on THESEUS, alone, blinking into the darkness, still groggy from the beating.

OMBUDSPERSON

After you've searched every inch of the maze, when you've crawled your way in as deep as you possibly can and you can't see any way out, then, you will—finally—stumble upon the minotaur.

I should say, here, for your safety, that some of you may not be able to watch this. You may need to step out. Please do. But also remember that some people don't have that privilege.

A kind of silence has descended that is ominous and distressing. THESEUS turns as though he hears something, though nothing has been said.

He turns again suddenly in the opposite direction, though it is still totally silent. He turns and turns again—this time trapped in a maze that is clearly just the maneuvers in his mind.

CHORUS

(Whisper)

1) Help me.

(Silence. Then, a little louder)

2) Help me.

(Silence.)

3) Help me, help me, help me.

4) HELP ME!

(Pounding builds and then dies down, peeters out sadly even. Whispers again.)

No, no, no, no, no, no.

(Quiet crying.)

OMBUDSPERSON

Scene 12. The minotaur.

The MINOTAUR appears.

MINOTAUR

Welcome to the darkness. People do bad things to themselves in here.

THESEUS

How did you get in here? Who are you?

MINOTAUR

You.

THESEUS

I'm not a monster.

(MINOTAUR laughs.)

I'm not! I'm a hero. I want to be a hero!

(MINOTAUR laughs harder.)

I want to be, good.

MINOTAUR

You want people to believe you're good, but you don't want to be good. You don't know how.

THESEUS

I can't help it. I can only be what I am. If I am not good, then it's not my fault. It's not my fault!

MINOTAUR

Lots of people live more difficult lives than you, and they don't wind up here. You must have done something to deserve it.

THESEUS

I just tried to do the right thing.

MINOTAUR

Is that why someone is dead? Is that why you hurt people?

THESEUS

It was justified! It was for my people! I was made into a murderer.

MINOTAUR

There now. That wasn't so hard to admit. You're a murderer, not a hero.

THESEUS

I didn't mean to hurt anyone.

MINOTAUR

It doesn't matter.

THESEUS

Really?

MINOTAUR

You can't bring anyone back. You can't change the past. They probably weren't particularly special anyway.

THESEUS

Is that true?

MINOTAUR

It's just a life. Who cares about another life?

THESEUS

That's right. It's not a big deal. Another life doesn't matter.

MINOTAUR

Just like your life.

THESEUS

What?

MINOTAUR

Some people's lives are important. Some people's lives are not.

THESEUS

That's not what I said.

MINOTAUR

Your life is not important, or they never would have put you here, would they? With me. They put you with me,

THESEUS

I don't understand. I don't agree. I chose to come here. Because I was trying to do something good. I think. I don't know—what are you saying?

MINOTAUR

You and I are the same. We're monsters that deserve to be locked up forever.

THESEUS

No. I'm a human being. You're a liar.

MINOTAUR

You're a liar.

THESEUS

You turn fear *into violence.

MINOTAUR

You turn fear into violence.

THESEUS and MINOTAUR

And I've come here to destroy you.

MINOTAUR

Except. I'm not even here. You're talking to yourself. No one is really here.
Only monsters.

(MINOTAUR laughs again.)

THESEUS (whispering, like the chorus was)

No, no, no, no, no, no. I'm a human being. I'm a human being. I'm a human being.

(CHORUS joins in with the whispers and the laughter in the creepiest way possible. THESEUS begins to try to "peel his skin off" in order to get at, and remove, the brain inside his head. While he does that, he also turns as though he sees something suddenly. Turns again. Again caught in the maze in his mind.

After one particular turn, ARIADNE suddenly appears.)

You shouldn't be here. It's not safe.

ARIADNE

I'm not here.

(She disappears.)

THESEUS

You're not real.

(crying)

You're gone.

(Pause. She appears again.)

ARIADNE

I am real; I'm just not physically here. The brain inside your head is not your mind. Your body is separate from your being. We can talk to each other.

THESEUS

I'm crazy.

ARIADNE

Say this with me: The choice is mine. Say it.

THESEUS

The choice is mine.

ARIADNE

Now say it again, without using your mouth.

(Beat)

What voice just spoke? Your being. And your being can be anywhere. Even when your body is in hell.

(THESEUS goes to move toward ARIADNE but the MINOTAUR gets between them or moves with him, as though a disgusting twin, or something that causes THESEUS to try to fight the MINOTAUR, to beat it back, away from ARIADNE—but he is too weak or confused and fails. Silence.

ARIADNE waits. The MINOTAUR breathes, content. THESEUS suffers.)

ARIADNE

The choice is mine.

(silence.)

THESEUS (weakly at first)

The choice is mine.

ARIADNE

The choice is mine.

THESEUS

The choice is mine.

ARIADNE

The choice *is mine.

THESEUS (*overlapping)

The choice is mine.

(beat)

The choice is mine.

(to ARIADNE)

I want you to leave me here. I want you to move on with your life.

ARIADNE

No.

THESEUS

I'm telling you. I'm ordering you. If you love me, forget me. I don't deserve you.

(MINOTAUR roars happily after THESEUS's lines.)

I'm taking responsibility for what I've done. Leave me alone.

ARIADNE

No. You're taking the easy way out.

THESEUS

Listen to me! Do what I say! Let me die here.

ARIADNE

No.

THESEUS

I'm trying to do what's right. You need to make the most of your life. Do it for me. Because I failed.

ARIADNE

No.

THESEUS/MINOTAUR

Why won't you listen to me?!?

ARIADNE

I can remember what I imagined our life would be together and blame you and hate you because it isn't what you promised me. And I can have bitterness, and resentment, in all aspects of my life, forever. — Or. I can forgive.

I can forgive you and free myself from that monster.

Our lives are intertwined and the success of our relationship is dependent on our ability to forgive. It's the only way to be human.

(MINOTAUR is breathing more weakly now.)

We are all connected in that way. We are not alone. If I abandon you, then I destroy myself. I become a monster.

I want to forgive you. I chose to forgive you. The choice is mine.

(Beat.)

THESEUS

I'm *sorry.

ARIADNE (overlapping)

Sorry. Forgive

THESEUS

Me. Please forgive me.

ARIADNE

You're a human being.

(Pause. She waits.)

THESEUS

Forgive me.

(ARIADNE is gone. VICTIM is standing in her place.)

Are you here?

(VICTIM is silent.)

THESEUS and VICTIM

How can I-

THESEUS

Ask your forgiveness?

VICTIM

Heal.

(THESEUS reaches up toward VICTIM. VICTIM doesn't move. MINOTAUR roars! THESEUS turns toward the monster slowly. VICTIM disappears. PERRY appears.)

PERRY

You've been released, Theseus.

THESEUS

What about—

C.O. DIANA

You're free to go. Don't look back. \$500. You earned from your work inside. Take it, and good luck.

THESEUS

What about the Minotaur?

PERRY

Don't talk like that, Theseus. They can still have you committed. Go.

(ARIADNE appears. He sees her.)

THESEUS

Are you real? Can I touch you?

(They embrace. The CHORUS wraps them in a thread.)

THESEUS (seeing her)
My thread. . .

PERRY
Be free. Appreciate it.

THESEUS
The choice is mine. . .

PERRY
Don't come back. Forget this place.

(Laughter from the MINOTAUR. Blackout.)

End of Act I.

ACT 2: Introduction: Dream kites

The CHORUS wanders in, in their various roles. They begin to hum together, like a musical chorus would.

OMBUDSPERSON

Introduction to Act 2.
Dream Kites.

(A kite moves across the stage.)

ULYSSES

My dream is to get outta here and *start my own barber shop

(Other kites fall or drift by.)

CHORUS

- 1) My dream is to. . .
- 2) My dream too.

JASON

My dream is to have a safe and good family. The American dream. Own a house with a fenced yard, 2 car garage with two cars to put in it, a family, a pet, and good paying job.

TELEMACHUS

And a safe room to put my money, like behind a bookshelf you push. Don't trust the banks. They're criminals.

OMBUDSPERSON

Kites. Are also like dreams. Fragile, frivolous things that we'd rather not live without. Colorful and delightful and hope. Attached to you by a tiny, almost invisible thread. And that string that holds it to you is tense and essential. Break that thread, and it's nothing. It stops being a kite. But with the world under it and the sky around it, your dream is you and inspires you all at once.

CHORUS (singing)

Starshine.

Moonlight.

Dragon flies and northern lights.

Walking in the woods with a black princess dress

Starshine

Moonlight.

Came across a creek of flowing water.

*Lakes and waves, creation of the almighty
Sat on a creek to see the beauty go by, mmmm*

ALTHIA

Hoping to see your face. But since your love was not for me, I laid by the side of the water to soak up the sun, hoping it dries my heart.

CHORUS

Miracles in monarchs as the wild geese fly.

ALTHIA

Soak up the sun and let my heart dry

CHORUS

Starshine, Moonlight

NIKIA

I really want to help troubled youth because I was once in their shoes, and I think we can relate to each other.

TELEMACHUS

I want to be my own boss though. It's kind of like that I don't listen to what other people tell me what to do. I don't work well with that. I want to have my own clothing company. Design my own clothes, do a little screen printing. That's my plan B job. And I want to own my own business, technology. Working on Computers, iPhones.

DEFENDER

We should not be trying children as adults. Whatever they've done they're still children.

TELEMACHUS

I don't need you to defend me. I don't need no one.

DEFENDER

He committed a terrible crime. *And* the crimes that were committed against him were terrible. Did he deserve to die in prison?

TELEMACHUS

I'm not going to cry. That stuff don't matter to me. You don't care about me. —Oh yeah and one more thing. I want to have a cute assistant. I'll be in my tuxedo, sittin at my desk with my feet up, eating a apple and then she just come in, hand me a phone and say "This is all fixed for you"

DEFENDER

He's a child. Can't you see that? We can still help him. Why won't anyone listen to me?

OMBUDSPERSON (to DEFENDER)

We're flying kites right now.

DEFENDER

We should not be trying children as adults!

CHORUS

*1) Today I had a dream
2) Full of freedom, peace, and possibility
Where I can be me
4) And you can be you
With no judgement between the two*

*2) There's always a future and a hope.
Healing comes when you're willing to go where you've never gone before.*

PERRY (stepping forward from the chorus)

Last night I had a dream that I was walking down the street, and I ran into a friend who asked where I had been. I told him I was locked up—I was locked up--but I'm home now, but I didn't know where home was.

ARIADNE (stepping out)

I have a dream of a place that doesn't have a prison system because everyone has equal opportunities to live a good life.

EDUCATOR

I dreamed Mr. A was running around my classroom painting students' fingernails & they were sleeping and would wake up surprised & he'd run around laughing and looking mischievous & silly, like crawling and sneaking. . .

CHORUS

*Today I have a dream
A dream to see our children redeemed*

ALTHIA

*From all the pain and shame
Of going the wrong way
Of going astray*

ALTHIA

I dream of seeing my kids again and being a positive influence on their life instead of ruining their life, like I feel like I've done so far. Everyone tells me I'll never see them again but I dream that I can earn my way back into their life, and they'll be happy I did, that I was there for them, and they knew I loved them, and they loved me.

CHORUS

I'll be in their future and

*I'll show them love.
Change comes when you're willing to do
What you've never done before*

CHORUS

*I used to be in prison
I used to be in chains
I used to have no rhythm
But guess what? Things change*

ULYSSES

I dreamed I didn't get Life.

(The VICTIM steps forward. A Kite falls to the ground. The CHORUS makes space for VICTIM. VICTIM picks up the Kite.)

VICTIM

There's something that happens when you have a tragedy like this—when you lose anyone you love—you find out who your friends are. People don't know how to act, and they look at you like you have an incurable and highly contagious disease. You end up feeling very alone and then you stop talking about it because you don't want to be responsible for someone else's reaction.

It's the same kind of isolation that I imagine a person who committed the crime goes through. It's very similar how isolated we are. I don't think anybody else realizes that, this loneliness and isolation that you feel.

So I wrote Theseus a letter

(The Kite she holds is the letter.)

because I wish to know how he plans to live his life. I think he has to live a good life because he owes me my son. —No. That's not a pure sentiment. I can't say that to him. He can't live up to that. He can't replace my son.

—I just have this dream that *I'm not holding this pain for other people anymore.*

(She lets go of the Kite and IT FLOATS BACK UP IN THE AIR.

CHORUS watches it. Like their hopes are attached to it.)

Scene 1: Theseus has escaped.

Then, KING & QUEEN OF CRETE enters, irate, and the CHORUS scatters.

OMBUDSPERSON

Theseus has escaped. Act 2. Scene 1.

KING OF CRETE

Theseus has escaped from the labyrinth.

OMBUDSPERSON

Sire, he was released according to the terms of his incarceration.

KING OF CRETE

He's stolen my daughter.

QUEEN OF CRETE

She fell in love with him.

KING OF CRETE

He cannot be allowed to return to Athens with her.

OMBUDSPERSON

Where else would he go?

KING OF CRETE

He cannot be allowed to associate with the same people who contributed to his past behavior. He cannot be allowed to vote. He cannot be allowed—

OMBUDSPERSON

But the thread that will keep him sane is the community and a sense that he is a part of it.

KING OF CRETE

I am the King, and I must protect society when monsters are released into it. My daughter must be made aware of the damage he will continue to do if he is allowed to believe that he isn't a deviant.

OMBUDSPERSON

Are you protecting society or are you angry at your daughter's disobedience?

KING OF CRETE

Why do you insist on asking questions like that?

OMBUDSPERSON

My job is to be a neutral party who—

KING OF CRETE

You're a liar, and an idiot. Everyone has something at stake here, even you. You know that a person who has spent time in the labyrinth is never the same. You would watch your step around him too. Don't pretend you wouldn't.

OMBUDSPERSON

You don't know what kind of people leave the labyrinth; you just keep insisting you do. Like the Minotaur, you never meet them.

KING OF CRETE

I know what kind of person steals a daughter.

QUEEN OF CRETE

Was she really stolen?

OMBUDSPERSON

Or did she leave you willingly?

KING OF CRETE

How dare you blame me!

OMBUDSPERSON

Questions are not accusations.

KING OF CRETE

In addition to being locked up, ex-inmates must have less rights than others. The smell of their sin forever poisons our air. Tell the people what I have decreed! For their own safety. Tell them!

Eventually, my daughter will understand—whether she likes it or not—that I am looking out for the safety of all—but especially her.

Scene 2: Naxos

THESEUS and ARIADNE enter with SON, seemingly a happy family.

OMBUDSPERSON

Lovers, when they reunite, briefly feel as though they form an island, away from the troubles of civilization.

ARIADNE (to THESEUS)

You're a free man.

OMBUDSPERSON

Scene 2, Act 2. Naxos. An island between Crete and Athens.

The Kite that was floating up, gently comes back down near Theseus.

SON plucks it from the air but THESEUS takes it from him quickly. THESEUS reads it. His mood changes.

VICTIM is still on stage, in a corner, watching.

ARIADNE

What are you looking at?

THESEUS

I don't know.

(He puts the letter away. He turns to his son.)

Come over here, Buddy.

(His son hides behind ARIADNE because he is afraid of THESEUS's sudden dark mood.)

ARIADNE

He loves you.

THESEUS

He's afraid of me.

ARIADNE (to CHILD)

Show your Daddy you love him.

(CHILD runs away, off. They look at each other.)

THESEUS

Everything is harder than I thought it would be. I thought we'd be happy.

ARIADNE

We are happy. I'm happy you're home.

THESEUS

You're tense all the time. You're afraid that I might lose my temper. You act like you don't know me. You care more about the kid than you do about me.

ARIADNE (approaching him)

You have to be patient. You have to learn how to be patient.

THESEUS

It's taken me years to get free. What more can I learn about patience? I dreamed about what it would be like. I was told that if I behaved. . . But freedom ain't free.

ARIADNE

If you can find a good job and—

THESEUS

I'm trying—

ARIADNE

I know.

THESEUS

You don't understand. All the limitations that they put on me, all the places I'm supposed to go, check in, must be on time, and then be somewhere else. Then you want me to make you happy—

ARIADNE

Yes, I do. I want to feel like we're in this together.

THESEUS (almost losing his temper)

Like we're in this together?

(Holding on, bitterly)

. . . Inside the guys say that you don't lose your girl, you just lose your turn.

ARIADNE

Why would you say that to me?

THESEUS

I thought it was funny. You find yourself laughing at things that probably aren't so funny, when you're inside.

ARIADNE

I'm here. I am here. I am your thread.

(They kiss. He pulls away.)

THESEUS

I just can't ... need you too much. It isn't safe to need you. That's what I learned in prison. It's in my bones now. You can't trust anyone. You have to take care of yourself.

ARIADNE

That's not how we love.

THESEUS

I'm not sure I know how to love anymore. Maybe I never did.

ARIADNE

(She goes to touch him again and he pulls away.)

ARIADNE

We can start by taking care of our family.

THESEUS

Like your father took care of you? Like my father took care of me? A lot of times I think I had a better family inside than outside. That I shouldn't be trusted with a family on the outside.

(The child runs back on stage, hugs him around the legs. He stops talking—shocked. Then the kid runs off again.

Calmness.)

ARIADNE

Change happens. Be patient.

(Theseus pulls out the VICTIM's letter and looks at it again.)

ARIADNE

What is that?

THESEUS

A reminder.

ARIADNE

Of what?

THESEUS

The monster. The labyrinth. The mission.

(VICTIM steps forward. THESEUS hands the letter to ARIADNE who reads it as the VICTIM speaks.)

VICTIM

I'm just going to write you a letter. I'm probably not supposed to write you a letter. We don't have to talk about what happened. I just want to know you. I just want to know your story. If you ever want to have that conversation, write me. The friendship I offer you is unconditional. I want to be in your corner.

(ARIADNE shakes her head, "No." Cries a little. THESEUS and ARIADNE stand separate from each other.)

ARIADNE

I want *to forget* the way we were when we were younger. How dare she? You've been rehabilitated. Why won't she let us forget the past?

THESEUS

I can't.

I can't, I can't. . . I'm sorry.

Scene 3: Reformers

REFORMER 1 steps out of the chorus.

REFORMER 1

Theseus.

REFORMER 2 also steps of the chorus.

REFORMER 2

Theseus. We need you.

THESEUS

I need to feel like my life is more than just checking a box. Especially since I made it out.

OMBUDSPERSON

Scene 3. Act 2. Theseus and Ariadne are not alone on their island. The system has been in place for so long that thousands and thousands who have managed to momentarily wiggle free of the labyrinth live on this almost invisible island between hell and home.

REFORMER 3 also steps out.

REFORMER 3

You've seen the monster. We need your help now more than ever.

CHORUS (haunting voices in the background, like ghosts)

- 1) Help us.
- 2) Help
- 3) Don't leave us here, Theseus.
- 4) Help.
- 5) Save us. Remember us. Help us.

TELEMACHUS (like a ghost)

Remember me.

ARIADNE

Leave us alone! Leave Theseus alone.

THESEUS

I remember.

REFORMER 1

You need to bring us all with you on your journey home.

ARIADNE

No. No one helps anyone. Everyone lives their own life. Theseus, you have a son who needs to be the most important person in the world to you right now.

REFORMER 1

You can't go home without taking all of us with you. You won't ever be able to relax. No one will ever be able to relax knowing that the Minotaur still exists.

OMBUDSPERSON

Scene 3, Act 2. Reformers.

ARIADNE

Please, my love, who are you listening to? Theseus . . .

(ARIADNE is enveloped by the chorus. THESEUS stays, listening. REFORMERS take center stage.)

. . . theseus. . .

REFORMER 1

I was a Defender when I realized that the system was the problem, and that even defending people was contributing to its injustice. One in four people have a criminal record. *But four in four people have a criminal past.* We are all criminals. You just didn't get caught. I'm an abolitionist.

REFORMER 2

No, no, not abolition. Some of us don't have that privilege. Crime is a real problem in my neighborhood. But the incarceration system is adding to the problem, not helping. We need common-sense reform to eliminate the racism and violence in the system and that the system perpetuates. I have family members inside. I am a thread, *and* I am a reformer too. The practical kind.

REFORMER 3

This is where the lord has called me to be.

CHORUS

3) It's a calling.

1) Who is that?

5) A spiritual calling—

2) Another reformer. How many reformers are there?

REFORMER 1

O, god, don't bring religion into it.

REFORMER 3

Religion is *why* we must reform the system. We are all god's creatures. Even the least among us. My church work is what brings me, and others like me, here now. My god is a god of second chances.

REFORMER 1

That's so condescending. So patriarchal. Religions benefit from the system. They harvest souls from it.

REFORMER 2

If churches can help now, then I don't care what they've done in the past. We don't have time for ideology. We need solutions. Churches are important organizers in our communities. We need churches to raise awareness, to bring people together.

CHORUS

- 1) Where are we going?
- 2) Which path do we take?
- 3) Where are we?
- 4) What direction?
- 5) Theseus? Theseus? Theseus!

(THESEUS looks around, unsure what to do.)

Scene 4: The roles we play, revisited.

(C.O. LEONIDAS steps out of the chorus.)

C.O. LEONIDAS (to REFORMERS)

Listening to you will just get us all even more lost.

REFORMER 1

-- You don't know me. Many of us have been inside. --

C.O. LEONIDAS

I know all about your type. You make my job more dangerous.

OMBUDSPERSON

Act 2, Scene 4: The roles we play, revisited.

ULYSSESS

I'ma be free. I'm a free man. As soon as I get home, I'm buying an old 88 Lincoln and new white shoes and driving around the city, old school. I hope it rains so I can wash away the past.

C.O. DIANA

You're a felon. You're an ex-offender. You're not a free man.

REFORMER 3

Bankers aren't bankers if they no longer work in banks. You're not a CO if you quit your job. Why must felons always play this one role?

REFORMER 1 (to C.O. LEONIDAS)

You're just angry you're not a cop, that your role is unimportant, that you're not the center of attention.

C.O. LEONIDAS

Cops are cowards compared to us. They wake up each day and have to look for criminals. I wake up each day and go to exactly where the criminals are.

I have to be hard every second of every day. I can never let my guard down. I've suffered concussions, been attacked from behind by these animals, and I keep coming back knowing that can easily happen again. Because I do my job.

REFORMER 3

You're not a free man either.

C.O. VIRGIL

Maybe. But I've vested. Great benefits. Better shifts. All I think about is retiring in 20.

PERRY

I don't want to play a role where my retirement depends on the suffering of other people.

(to OMBUDSPERSON)

Can I get a new role?

C.O. LEONIDAS

Lots a' the people we guard deserve what has happened to them. You know they deserve it.

PERRY

But doing this job is poisoning me.

REFORMER 1 (to C.O. LEONIDAS)

Listen to your own.

THESEUS (to REFORMER 1)

Why are you even talking to the COs?

C.O. DIANA (to PERRY)

Some of them are even grateful for the chance to get their act together. You're helping the ones who want to be helped.

REFORMER 2

But there are other ways. In other countries, detention isn't torture. People live prepared from day one to be what they will be when they are released. Isolation is punishment enough. They don't have to live in dungeons and labyrinths. If we can reform the system, make it about re-entry, which 90% of the prisoners will do, then everyone will benefit—including COs.

PERRY (to C.O. LEONIDAS)

They make good points.

C.O. LEONIDAS

In a war, you're either with the people who have watched your back, or you're against us.

PERRY

Even outside? It's war?

THESEUS

You expect me, now that I am finally out, to care about the people who hurt me on the inside.

PERRY

I did what I had to do, Theseus.

THESEUS

Your role was to help us. Not let people die.

PERRY

Didn't I have a right to be safe too?

THESEUS

So you looked out for yourself while others suffered.

PERRY

You didn't have any *responsibility* to keep people safe, did you, Theseus? You don't know what responsibility feels like.

REFORMER 3

If we say the problem is the system, then we have to forgive ALL the people who have been trapped inside it.

C.O. LEONIDAS

I'm not asking for forgiveness.

THESEUS

I'm not forgiving.

REFORMER 1

If everyone *refuses* to play the roles they've been given—If we go on strike--

C.O. LEONIDAS

You're nothing but a naïve thug hugger.

PERRY

Why not? Why can't we change the system?

C.O. LEONIDAS

Because monsters are real! --

C.O. DIANA

-- We can't make prisons into art colonies, you Granola-Crunching snowflakes!

REFORMER 2

I'm not advocating for abolition.

REFORMER 1

I am.

REFORMER 2

But I'm not. There are a series of concrete actions we can take. This isn't fantasy. Some are already being done. I want to have a conversation with everyone at the table.

REFORMER 1

Moderate reforms are not enough. We need to look at the totality of laws we've created to railroad people into this system.

EDUCATOR (stepping out from the chorus, to DIANA)
There's a difference between art colonies and art programs. If we're trying to rehabilitate--

C.O. LEONIDAS
I'm not sitting at the table as though I am the equal of murderers and rapists and child molesters.

REFORMER 3
But you know that only a small percentage of the people inside are truly irredeemable. You know it.

C.O. DIANA
You act as though they're the heroes.

C.O. LEONIDAS
—We're the heroes, we're protecting society from the worst—

REFORMER 3
No one, including you, is just one thing. Can we find a way to—

C.O. LEONIDAS
I am just sick and tired of the way we've been represented. Whenever you tell stories, you always try to make the role of corrections officer into the villain.

PERRY
How would you tell the story?
On our best days, nothing happens. That's all we're doing. Nothing. I need what I do in life to have some purpose, don't you? To mean something positive.

REFORMER 3
Everyone needs purpose in life. Inmates too. And ex-inmates.

C.O. LEONIDAS
But people who are incarcerated in the Labyrinth have hurt people.

REFORMER 1
Hurt people, hurt people. We need to break the cycle. We need to see people not as the roles we've assigned because of accidents of birth and skin color and history but as human beings who can be truly free.

Scene 5: The designer

(ICARUS enters, pushing his way through the chorus. He's an administrator, a bureaucrat, he's got lots of papers and more files in his hands.)

ICARUS

Excuse me. Pardon me. I think I can help. I have some ideas on what we can do. I mean I really know I can help. I think I know how to fix this whole thing. Excuse me. Excuse me.

CHORUS

- 1) Who are you?
- 2) Who are they?
- 5) Is this another reformer?

THESEUS

Who are you?

ICARUS

Deadelus's son. Icarus.

OMBUDSPERSON

The administration. Scene—

CHORUS

- 4) Deadelus's son?!?! The son of the labyrinth designer? You're an adult.
- 5) How long has this journey taken? (Where are we now?)
- 6) How long have we been here? (Where are we?)

OMBUDSPERSON

Scene 5: The designer

CHORUS

- 1) Where's Deadelus?
- 2) I got old.
- 3) Old. . . older. . . old.

ICARUS

The King put us in a tower.

C.O. LEONIDAS (disgusted)

You're from The Tower.

EDUCATOR (disgusted)

The Central Office. The Tower.

THERAPIST (disgusted)

The bear that sets the trap. The Central Office.

ICARUS

Listen, I'm not an outside reformer. I'm an administrator. But I have new ideas.

First, I'm proud to announce to you that I've convinced the King to build an official Department of Labyrinth Administration. DLA. So you won't have to make it up as you go along. We'll manage the labyrinth in a more evidence-based way. We'll get more resources. . . You see. Department of Labyrinth. .

. . . That's not a good name, is it? Let's talk about this.
How about Designed Opportunity for. . . D. O. . . Designed Opportunity for Monster Elimination. Yes? D.O.M.E! Use that one. . . Until we think of a better one. . . Uh. . . Department Overseeing Communities. DOC? The DOC.

The DOC. That'll work.

Um—Defined—

C.O. VIRGIL

I got reprimanded last week for calling them inmates even though you sent a memo the week before saying that we're going back to calling them inmates and not offenders. It was "convicts" once. I'm supposed to keep up? I got other problems. You make a bunch a rules. You change a bunch a rules. Every week. Every hour. Meanwhile, I'm afraid for my life.

ICARUS

We're working to find the combinations of policies that work best. That work. It's a very interesting puzzle, when you think about it, the balance of competing interests and conflicts. You can see the labyrinth as a kind of, well, puzzle, yes, in a way. For example—you don't want people to give up. You want them to believe that if they keep moving, they may find their way out. But you never want them to find their way out without you so you have to—

C.O. DIANA

You don't have any experience inside—or you totally have forgotten it—but you presume to tell us how we're supposed to manage this place? All that moving around just builds up energy. That has to explode.

C.O. LEONIDAS

You need to listen to us more.

ALTHIA

This is about us. Prisoners. Listen to us.

NURSE/
EDUCATOR/THERAPIST

Listen to us.

Listen to me.

Listen. Listen. Listen.

EDUCATOR

Every roadblock I hit is because of you.

THERAPIST

Every roadblock I hit—

EDUCATOR

Not the inmates or the COs. You.

ICARUS

You don't understand what I've inherited. It's grown so complex, and political. I didn't engineer it. My father did.

THESEUS

Fathers again.

PERRY

Our fathers. Again.

ICARUS

Everyday, I hear from all sides how you all want something from me that I can't give you. I turn this way or that way, and I'm stymied by a hundred different policies or laws or politicians. And we know it's a bad system but every time we try to change it, "We've always done it that way" is what *YOU* say—even when it isn't working and no one knows why! "We've always done it that way" and so nothing changes.

CHORUS

1) O, it's our fault? You want to blame us now?

ICARUS

No. No, no. I'm sorry. I'm not saying it's your fault, but you make it hard to fix.

COS/INMATES/EDUCATOR//THERAPIST (not in unison)

You're safe in your tower. You're not inside the labyrinth.

ICARUS

I'm not safe! The King put us in the tower because he doesn't trust us! We're also trapped. He could eliminate us at any moment—erase us--and then the chaos would return.

CHORUS

3) When did the chaos leave?

5) Did I miss that?

6) What does he think is happening inside?

4) And outside.

ICARUS (shouting)

At least I'm trying to make the system work.

(The CHORUS boos and hisses at him.)

I may have more authority than you! But I have less control!

(THE REFORMERS try to get in between them but just join the shouting. The CHORUS moves and tugs and pulls in different directions toward different ideas. COS and INMATES and Others pulling away against each other or uniting against a common enemy and then coming apart again. *Movement*. THESEUS and PERRY are often in the center of this pushing and pulling.)

REFORMER 1

The problem can't be fixed inside the system; we need solutions that are outside the system.

REFORMER 3

We need to look at the communities that we've marginalized. If we look at early childhood education, then we can help before they ever get to the labyrinth.

REFORMER 2

Sentencing reform. Probation reform. Procedural justice. People who have come out can help others like them. Restorative justice.

CHORUS

I need money on my books.

I need to feel safe.

I need action.

REFORMER 1

We need to it burn down and start again.

CHORUS

Yes!

No!

Yes!

Yes!

No!

REFORMER 2

You don't know how terrible that would be! You don't have to live with the consequences!

(From somewhere, the MINOTAUR punctuates their shouting with a loud roar and ominous laughter. Lots of laughter. As they turn to look where it has come from, they grow silent.)

REFORMER 1

We can't pretend that the labyrinth is a place separate from us. It keeps getting bigger and moving closer and closer. And I'm afraid we'll all find ourselves trapped in it eventually. Or we're already there.

(Pause, again.)

C.O. LEONIDAS

That's something you've said that I agree with.

OMBUDSPERSON (to CHORUS)

If I may.

(Pause.)

I was telling a story . . .

(Silence.)

I could continue.

PERRY

How many more people will get hurt?

OMBUDSPERSON

I don't know.

We're in the middle of it.

We can only try to go forward somehow.

(They give him space.)

REFORMER 1

I got my eye on you.

C.O. LEONIDAS (to OMBUDSPERSON)

We're watching you.

PERRY (to OMBUDSPERSON)

Please. . .

If you can help us. . .

(OMBUDSPERSON comes forward toward audience.)

OMBUDSPERSON (to AUDIENCE)

Theseus escapes from the labyrinth—

ALTHIA

I told you. We get second chances.

THERAPIST (aside, about OMBUDSPERSON, not seeing the

audience)

Who's he talking to? Is he crazy too?

OMBUDSPERSON

But, of course, that isn't the end of his story.

C.O. LEONIDAS

He'll be back inside. Most of them come back inside.

ICARUS

Why do you got to act like that's what you want?

Scene 6: Re-entry

OMBUDSPERSON

Act 2. Scene 6. Re-entry.

After finding his way out of the labyrinth and resting briefly on the island of Naxos, Theseus begins the journey back across the ocean to freedom.

The going can be as dangerous as the coming.

Lights shift. The SOUND of a storm on an ocean and frantic voices.

Suddenly, the Chorus comes forward as though an ocean and as though they are growing sea sick from the way it rocks back and forth. They rush forward like a wave and shake then envelope THESEUS. When they pull back, like the wave in an ocean, they deposit ALTHIA at the front of the stage.

ALTHIA

I got thrown in Seg the day before I'm out just cause a CO wanted to remind me that he could.

(Like a wave, they come forward and take her while depositing JASON.)

JASON

On the day I get out, I'm up at 2 am, watching the guards switch, waiting. Everything was so vivid, the colors, the freeway. The cars had all changed. They looked like pods. I just want a fresh start.

(Another wave. Another inmate.)

PARIS

In prison, I learned how to make meth 5 different ways. I learned how to launder money. I didn't learn the simplest rules about how to live in the regular world. Cell phones? Even when you're supposed to walk at a cross-walk scares me. I feel like Rip Van Winkle. And what do I do with all this time. I'm used to people telling me when to go and for how long.

(Another wave. THESEUS is left behind. In the background the chorus sways back and forth.)

THESEUS

I go to the grocery store because Ariadne asked me to pick up new toothpaste. I'm looking at a whole shelf of toothpaste. A wall of shampoo. In the canteen, there was only one of everything. There are too many choices.

I think I'm going to be sick.

(The CHORUS pulls back to reveal a CO is also in this wave. THESEUS stays in the middle, swaying, sickly. The CHORUS also sways faster.)

C.O. HECTOR

When I'm in a store, I can't even handle the small talk that a clerk wants to make with me. Just ring up my purchase. Don't look at me. Don't talk to me. I expect compliance. Firm, fast, and quiet. All the time. I clench up. Like I can't handle regular human interaction anymore.

(The CHORUS/WAVE takes him back. THESEUS fumbles with his cell phone. ARIADNE answers in the breakroom.)

THESEUS

Baby. . .

ARIADNE

You can't call me every hour.

THESEUS

I'm having a panic attack.

ARIADNE

It's ok. I love you. You can go home.

THESEUS

I don't know where that is.

ARIADNE

Tell someone our address—it's on your phone—and they'll help.

THESEUS

They'll think I'm weak.

ARIADNE

They'll help you.

THESEUS

I'm a felon. They won't help me.

(The ocean rocks harder.)

I think I'm going to be sick. I'm going to *be sick.

HEPHAESTUS

I'm going *to be sick and crash.

AJAX

I was released on ISR. Intensive Supervised Release. I called my PO, probation officer, and I'm saying I think there's something wrong. I need to maybe go out and walk around the block. When you're on ISR you can't go anywhere. In prison you can at least walk around the yard.

"Hey Bart, man, I'm not feeling good. I just need to walk around the block."

“No, don’t leave the house.”

I just go anyway. The next thing I know, there’s like five cop cars and three plain clothes and they’ve all got guns on me.

“Get on the ground!”

All I remember is “Can you all just kill me right now?” They put me in the car, handcuff me, throw me on the ground. I just tell them, “I want to die.”

Back to jail. Put me in my cell, so I can just go to sleep.

PARIS

We’re going to crash!

(And the CHORUS crashes into the front of the stage, over all the INMATES on stage. Blackout.)

Scene 7: Break, again

In the darkness, the sounds of the ocean crashing change to the sounds of the labyrinth in Act 1, and then they resolve into those mundane sounds of an office again.

Lights up on ARIADNE who is staring sadly at her phone (because THESEUS has hung up on her). She pulls a flask of liquor out of her purse and pours it into her coffee.

OMBUDSPERSON

Scene 7

(KING OF CRETE enters, to watch this scene from on high. No QUEEN.)

KING OF CRETE

My daughter.

OMBUDSPERSON

Ariadne

KING OF CRETE

My daughter.

OMBUDSPERSON

In the breakroom.

KING OF CRETE

Did nothing wrong. Hurt no one. She shouldn't even be in this story.

(ARIADNE takes a sip from the flask before putting it away. MARIAH enters. Sits with her.)

ARIADNE

I miss you.

MARIAH

I'm still here for you.

ARIADNE

But, you're happy. Your lawyer got your husband out, and things are working out but me and Theseus can't seem to connect. . . I'm sorry. I'm glad you're happy. I just—I feel alone. I miss how you understood me.

(JENNY enters suddenly.)

JENNY

O my god!

MARIAH (expecting bad things from JENNY)

O my god.

JENNY

I had no idea how racist everyone is!

ARIADNE

What?

JENNY

I mean, I was just listening to Jack in accounting talking about how black people complain too much about police brutality and criminal justice reform and if blacks want to stay out of prison, they should just should just stay of trouble. I mean, can you believe it?

(Pause.)

MARIAH

I thought that you thought. . . The same way.

JENNY

But I got educated. Woke. I heard all of these stories on NPR about how unfair the criminal justice system is and systemic racism and how young black men get caught in the system, the new Jim Crow, and then I listened to a bunch of podcasts and [chanting] ban the box! Ban the box! Ban the box!

MARIAH

So you're comfortable working with an ex-inmate?

JENNY

Well, it depends on what they did of course.

MARIAH

But "ban the box" means that employees can't ask about criminal records on applications.

JENNY

But they ask during the interview. And they should of course. Or they do a background check. It'd be negligent not to.

MARIAH

And what about when renting apartments.

JENNY

If I have a renter with great credit and no criminal record why would I choose to rent to the person with no credit and a criminal record?

MARIAH

How do you think we dismantle systemic racism?

JENNY

I don't know.

. . . I don't know.

(She starts crying.)

That's what's so upsetting. I mean someone needs to figure it out. I feel so powerless now that I know how awful we've treated certain communities. And I'm grateful too for my privileges. O my. And my children. Thank god they haven't had to suffer like those poor babies in poor communities. It's awful. It's just awful.

I feel so terrible. What should I do?

(JENNY and MARIAH don't answer her because a) they don't have an answer and b) why should they have to answer.)

Can't you see how terrible I feel?

(Silence. The following is sincere.)

I learned how cash bail criminalizes poverty because if you're too poor to post bail then you wind up in jail even before a trial. Innocent until proven guilty is only for people with money. Even if someone stays in jail for only a day or two, they may lose their job and then everything is worse than it was before, and I heard about this program where you just go and post bail for people who need it, no questions asked. So I did that. Twice. And the second time, the clerk who took the money told me what crime he had been accused of committing. . . Domestic violence. . . What if I was helping a person get out of jail so that they could go back and hurt another woman again? What if I was doing that?

What if I did the wrong thing?

(MARIAH is actually moved by JENNY's efforts and moves away from ARIADNE to actually comfort JENNY.)

MARIAH

What if you did the right thing?

JENNY

But what if I did the wrong thing?

MARIAH

At least you're trying to be a part of the solution. If it was easy, it would be solved. And one gesture isn't necessarily going to make everything perfect. There are few perfect gestures in this world. But hey. Heeey. I'm proud of you. I'm amazed honestly. Come on. I didn't think you had it in you.

(And MARIAH leads JENNY out, leaving ARIADNE alone in the break room. Silence. Quiet. Sadness. KING OF CRETE approaches ARIADNE cautiously, almost tenderly.)

OMBUDSPERSON

In the crossing home from the labyrinth, Theseus somehow leaves Ariadne behind, alone, on an island.

She gives him a thread but gets lost herself. Does he forget? Does he do it on purpose? Does he think its for her own good? Is he incapable of seeing her after what he's been through?

Whatever the reason, Ariadne becomes a sacrifice to Dionysis—

(ARIADNE pours more liquor into her coffee.)

The god of wine and chaos.

(KING OF CRETE, her father, approaches ARIADNE from the opposite side as the OMBUDSPERSON. Her child, his grandchild, has been trailing behind him.)

ARIADNE

Daddy?

KING OF CRETE

I told you Theseus wasn't worthy of you. I've dealt with the Athenians for years, and I knew they couldn't be trusted. My darling daughter, I wish you had listened to me.

ARIADNE

No. . . I don't think that's. . .

KING OF CRETE

Let them wander through the labyrinth forever while we enjoy the hard won comforts that we deserve. I only have your best interests at heart. I fought, and conquered, for you to have everything.

ARIADNE

What comfort? When you know you rule over an unjust world? It all tastes like dust.

KING OF CRETE

You're depressed. You can find you the right medication.

ARIADNE

No. It can't continue. . . Can it? Daddy?

OMBUDSPERSON (trying to intervene, respectfully)

Sire—

KING OF CRETE (ignoring him, deliberately)

If not for yourself, then for your child. My grandchild. Do you want to see him suffer too?

(The BOY runs into her arms, and she embraces him.)

ARIADNE (crying)

. . . I'm sorry. I'm so sorry.

(Crying.)

KING OF CRETE

Good. . . Good. . . You just let me take care of everything now

(KING OF CRETE leads her away, leaving the OMBUDSPERSON on stage alone, watching them.
Sad.)

Scene 8: My Brother's Keeper

OMBUDSPERSON

. . . Scene 8. . .

THESEUS bursts on stage, frantic, with a flashlight, searching.

THESEUS

Ariadne! Ariadne? Where are you? Ariadne!!

The lights shift again as though we are back in the labyrinth. And THESEUS is forced to confront the fact that he doesn't know where he has arrived.

The MINOTAUR roars in the distance.

What happened?

(Sees OMBUDSPERSON. Shines the flashlight at him.)

Where am I? Where'd she go? Answer me: *Where are we?*

(More creepy sounds from the MINOTAUR.)

OMBUDSPERSON (to AUDIENCE)

While we weren't looking, the labyrinth grew under our feet, the way moss does, or disease, spreading and expanding its walls until its hard to know whether you're inside or out.

Scene 8. My Brother's Keeper

(THESEUS sends the flashlight around the room again and lands on PERRY.)

Also called, Probation.

PERRY

I got a promotion. A transfer. A new role.

THESEUS

You're still here.

PERRY

I'm your probation officer.

(They move together again, circling, like in Act 1, but this time facing each other, as though in battle, instead of back to back. PERRY keeps trying to get THESEUS to stop or go in a different direction. Sometimes, we hear the MINOTAUR's footsteps or heavy breathing underneath the scene.)

THESEUS

You gonna bust me on a technicality? Send me back cause you smell pot?

You're doing the King's business for him. Don't you see he's the only one who is getting what he wants.

(THESEUS shines his light on another PROBATION OFFICER who steps out of the CHORUS.)

PROBATION OFFICER 1

We're trying to get the judges to see that sometimes the terms they set aren't fair, that people are being released only to be set up to fail. We're trying to make sure that human beings aren't being asked to do things they can't do.

PERRY

Why aren't you grateful that I'm here at all, that I keep trying to care.

THESEUS

I don't want you here. Get out of my way. I need to find Ariadne.

PERRY

You need to work on yourself. We all need to focus on ourselves.

THESEUS

Sounds like you. Let other people die.

PERRY

We have to accept that other people are responsible for their own choices.

THESEUS

Why would I ever listen to you?

PERRY

You don't have a choice.

THESEUS

Do I have a choice or not? Am I responsible for consequences or not? Are you on my side or not?

You change the answer to those questions as it suits you. I envy your privilege. I resent your platitudes.

PERRY

I'm following you into the worst neighborhoods, the only places you can find jobs and apartments, at 1 or 2 in the morning to make sure that you are where you say you are. I'm here. No partner, no gun, no back-up of any kind. If I make a mistake, if I let my guard down, I'm dead.

(Another PROBATION OFFICER steps out of the CHORUS.)

PROBATION OFFICER 2

We've had deaths, suicides. Had a probation officer beaten to death. Couldn't find him. He was a John Doe at a hospital.

PERRY

What privilege?

THESEUS

How do you think I feel being the person you're checking on. You think the bullets that might hit you won't do anything to me?

PO 2 (to PERRY)

Train yourself not to expect good days.

(As THESEUS moves, his lights shines on ALTHIA, stepping out of the chorus.)

ALTHIA

The first time I was incarcerated, I was like 13, 14 for truancy at the time. You know, it's like, I'm 29. Now I'm 29, holy crap I'm getting old, I dropped out of school at 16, never really having to answer to anyone for anything. My Mom was also. The lifestyle was "do what you want, just don't be in my way." You know what I mean? And so it was like, so I was doing this whole same thing *for a long time*. And it's like, what people don't see is that--I was just like, so hard wired, like to just keep going on the same path. It's so hard to do something different, even when it's right there in front of you.

(As THESEUS and PERRY move around, they encounter more people trapped here.)

PO 2

I sleep for three hours and then my job begins at 7 in the morning when I check my messages to find out if anything I missed has gone wrong overnight.

It won't matter whether we did everything right with someone. It won't matter if they were considered low risk when we released them. If something went wrong—they might have raped someone or killed someone, they might have, though rarely, or they might have just got high and stole a car that they crashed—I'll have to justify every plan I've ever had without regard for the basic unpredictability of human behavior. I'll get called out by my bosses, the media, the politicians.

NIKIA

People say that they believe in second chances, but when it matters, they don't want to take the chance. I try to be honest about where I've been, and they're nice, sympathetic like, "Ah, my god is the god of second chances," they say. They say they understand. But then, but then--when it matters--they won't let me in the door. Or they hire me, I do the job, I show up on time, but the background check comes back and then they say they got to let me go.

I just, I met better people probably in prison than in the streets, more loyal.

AJAX

I'm homeless. It's easier.

PO 1

He has multiple mental health diagnosis. If we can find him the right combination of medications--

AJAX

You don't even want to look at me. Look at me. Look at me!

(And then retreating quietly into himself.)

. . . look at me. . .

(and then, scary again)

Look at me!!!

PERRY

Before I go to bed, I make sure my doors are locked. I check three times. I sit in the corner of any restaurant in public because I know I need to see every entrance and exit. Every time I've been on a date, I've been convinced by the way they talk that they were inside too. If I had daughters, I would never let them date. I know too much about the darkness, and I'm living in it with you.

THESEUS

We didn't escape the labyrinth, Perry.

PERRY

Because you're the Minotaur.

THESEUS

And you're the one trying to kill me.

(They face each other directly but the CHORUS shifts in tone.)

PO 1

People need a chance, people at one point were your neighbors, somebody's grandpa, somebody's son, somebody's daughter, somebody's sister, that is a person that needs the same fundamental rights and supports as everyone else. People think everyone in prison are bad people. Sometimes they are in a bad place at a bad time and some bad things happen. I've had the privilege of meeting people who have done terrible things who are incredible and I'd have no problem sharing an apartment with.

PO 2

A guy I worked with, family was big in gangster disciples, even did documentary on his father. In prison for murder. Read his file—worst person in the world. First thing he said when we met was "I'm just tired," Been doing this too long. "Want to change." We hear that story all the time, so, you know, we'll see. But from first day, did everything. Got a job, got a house.

I just couldn't match that file and this person.

No technical violation. Everybody gets one. You can't not get one. But him? Not one.

Made it a year without having an issue. Unheard of. Last day on probation, starts crying, made it, "30 years in, but I made it out. Done." I'm crying. Done.

Occasionally I'd see him, had a wife, a kid from former marriage. Life was perfect. He'd stop in and say, "This is where I'm at." All good.

ALTHIA

My Child Protection Services worker, stuck by my side, tho, encouraged me. When I met with him and my daughter there was no shame in that room. Shame I held in my heart always, but no, it was pretty amazing to not feel that for a second. He just listened. Didn't tell me what to do--Maybe he did, he did, but didn't come off as an authoritative, directive, you order me kind of way. He talked to me like I was a human being, like he wasn't better than me, like a normal person would talk to someone.

PO 1

But the press never wants to talk about the good stuff. I got a list of guys who graduated from culinary school. No, no, when they call, you just want another homicide.

EDUCATOR

It's inspirational for me to see guys moving forward. You know the mistakes that they made, we all make mistakes, some of them are bigger than others. I thought they would all be successful, that they all wouldn't come back to prison. But unfortunately that's not the case. Two guys that were kind of the natural leaders in my class. One is back inside and the other has his own business, very successful looking to hire people as they get out. It's human beings, is what we have to recognize.

(VICTIM steps forward so that THESEUS can see her. THESEUS steps toward her.)

PERRY

Talking to the victim of your crimes would be a violation of your parole, Theseus.

THESEUS

I'm sorry but.

(to VICTIM)

I am sorry. And, thank you for your bravery.

VICTIM

I didn't have a choice.

THESEUS

You did.

Thank you.

PERRY

Theseus, do not victimize this person again.

THESEUS (to PERRY)

She has a case against me, but she wants to forgive me

PERRY

I'm warning you--

(The MINOTAUR's shadow looms above them, as though ready to attack, when the KING OF ATHENS stumbles across the stage, in a daze, and the mood in the room changes again.)

KING OF ATHENS

Has anyone seen my son?
Have you seen my son?
He promised me that he'd come home.

THESEUS

Dad?

KING OF ATHENS (ignores him)

I lost my son. My son is gone.

THESEUS

Dad, look at me. I'm here. I haven't changed that much. Have I? I have a child now, your grandchild.
Dad?

KING OF ATHENS

I lost my son.

THESEUS

Dad? I'm right here.
I need your help. To win Ariadne back. To believe that I can. Succeed.
We need your help.
We can change.

(KING OF ATHENS pauses and looks deeply at THESEUS. Pause.)

KING OF ATHENS

I'm sorry.

(THESEUS thinks for a moment he is apologizing but then--)

I can't recognize anyone anymore. I can't see. Justice is blind. I'm blind.

(KING OF ATHENS wanders away. THESEUS is silent, devastated.)

AJAX

Can't say I'm sad to see him suffering. Wish it was worse.

C.O. LEONIDAS (about KING OF ATHENS)

Thought nothing would touch him. But it did.

(ICARUS steps forward.)

ICARUS

Excuse me.

(Everyone turns toward him. He talks to THESEUS.)

It's time.

(No one knows what ICARUS means. . . KING OF CRETE also becomes visible in the background, overseeing the scene.)

THESEUS

. . . For what?

ICARUS

Um. . .

(ICARUS looks at KING, and at OMBUDSPERSON.)

Um. . . Well. . . You see. . . It's time . . . for. . .

OMBUDSPERSON

Scene 3, the roles we play. . .

(Stunned silence, and then.)

Fourteen Athenians must be sent to the labyrinth. . . Every year. . .

(Any CHORUS re-appears from off stage, with the same affect as in the beginning of the play—looking around as though in community—except this time, outraged.)

CHORUS (overlapping)

What?

No.

You're fucking—He's fucking kidding.
kidding.

You're insane.

He's insane. I'm not going through that again.

No way.

He's been insane this whole time.

What?!?

ICARUS

Every year, we have to choose—

OMBUDSPERSON

It's how peace is kept. It's the law.

ICARUS

And since, he [referring to KING OF ATHENS] is no longer capable of making decisions. . .

OMBUDSPERSON

You're the new King of Athens, Theseus. You get to choose.

Scene 9: True Darkness

THESEUS

I don't want to choose.

KING OF CRETE

It's the law. When we let you out of the labyrinth, you promised never to break the law again.

THESEUS

Fuck you.

ICARUS

You can make sure that only the worst of the worst goes.

REFORMER 2

You can make it different, Theseus. You can make it work.

NIKIA (really really desperate and sad, breaking)

Please don't pick me, please don't pick me, I don't want to go back, I can't go back, please don't pick me.

ICARUS

We have more volunteers. Spiritual people. People who's conscience moves them to sacrifice. Like the Doula. You have lots better options now.

OMBUDSPERSON

Or you could get revenge.

(Pointing to PERRY)

You can send him back as an inmate.

KING OF CRETE

Fourteen people will be sent whether or not you pick. The only difference will be whether your people love you or not. Are you going to prove you are a leader and protect them? Or are you going to be soft on crime? Are you going to risk letting the Minotaur escape?

THESEUS

The labyrinth doesn't keep the Minotaur in; it just keeps us from facing it. The Minotaur is the poison in our mind that fills us with hatred and fear.

(to CRETE, directly.)

And it works for you. It's your son. Fear and hatred distract from laws that do not uphold the dignity of all human beings. We need to reject this system because it makes us all monsters.

(to everyone)

We need to rise up and fight the King—

KING OF CRETE

Enough!

How dare you suggest that I profit from a system that we all created together. You may have forgotten where this all started, but I can't. It's easy for you to make me the enemy because I am the one who has to fight crime.

And that is what this is about-- Criminals. Crime. Bad people. Predators.

If I didn't keep my subjects safe, I wouldn't be King anymore. We wouldn't be a kingdom anymore. More people would suffer. The weak among us would suffer the worst. Why do you refuse to learn, Theseus?

I did what I was supposed to do. What my subjects wanted me to do.

(The QUEEN OF CRETE appears with ARIADNE a little behind her. Perhaps they are holding hands and trying to give each other strength.)

QUEEN OF CRETE

May I speak?

THESEUS

Ariadne.

KING OF CRETE

Darling, please. Take Ariadne home. I will keep you safe. *I promise. Don't worry.

QUEEN OF CRETE

I'd like to speak for myself. For once.

I didn't have sex with a bull.

My husband convinced me that we needed to keep up appearances in order to keep the peace. What would the subjects say if we didn't come up with a story to explain how our very own child grew into what he became? I shouldn't have gone along.

I didn't have sex with a bull. I made love to my husband, and the gods punished us for his sins with a son that we didn't know how to raise.

I let him build the labyrinth. I agreed to it because I thought it was the only option.

I still don't know.

I'm just saying that the Minotaur is our son. We made him. He is ours.

KING OF CRETE

That's not true. That's not true! Deadelus can tell you. He built a contraption so that you could satiate your lust with a monster!—Deadelus! Where is Deadelus?

ICARUS

Deadulus, my father, who was a brilliant engineer, who only wanted to do good for the world--you locked away in a tower, forever running through the designs of the labyrinth in his head, until he lost his mind.

KING OF CRETE (to OMBUDSPERSON)

Well, YOU know the story.

OMBUDSPERSON

I do.

KING OF CRETE

Tell them. Tell them the truth. Was there a bull? Is there a Minotaur?

OMBUDSPERSON

There is. Half-man, half-beast.

KING OF CRETE

See. People say I'm lying because it lets them off the hook. They don't have to face reality.

OMBUDSPERSON

Something scary was hidden. But, *I think*, we do have to face it.

KING OF CRETE

No one asked you to have opinions!

THESEUS

If we want to continue to believe in heroes, we will face it.

(Does ARIADNE react to this in some noticeable way? Some way that doesn't magically make her all healed but changes the mood, noticeably?)

The chorus surrounds the King differently now. Everyone else in the cast has probably wondered onstage now too, in same way.)

KING OF CRETE

They don't want to face it. Even if I knew what we could do differently, they wouldn't let me fix it.

(The chorus doesn't know who "they" are. KING OF CRETE means the audience.)

If I'm not tough on crime, they'll find someone else who will be. For all the children that they don't know how to raise!

(To THESEUS, as though he will understand that leadership is a burden.)

They want someone else to take their responsibility away! So they don't have to think about it. Ask them! It's what THEY want! Ask them!

(Finally, the chorus understands. It's the audience, in the seats in the theater. The CAST, CHORUS, EVERYONE all look out and wait.

Note that there are members of the chorus now sitting in seats in the audience, who will say these lines. It needs to be people who can change out of the jumpsuits into street clothes, I think.

The lights rise, a little, on the audience but this somehow creates more shadows. More minotaurs. Before the moment gets too uncomfortable for the audience, CITIZEN 1 speaks.)

CITIZEN 1

. . . Wait a minute. . .

(referring to OMBUDSPERSON)

She told us we'd be safe. That we wouldn't be asked to take a position in this story. I trusted what she told me.

OMBUDSPERSON

The King gets to change the rules.

(THESEUS, with the CHORUS behind him, begins to make his case.)

THESEUS

You can't count on his consistency. You can never really be safe in a world with his labyrinth in it.

(The shadow of the MINOTAUR appears out in the audience and freaks out the CITIZEN/cast plants.)

CITIZEN 2

I've never committed a crime. I'm not guilty of anything. Stay away from me.

(The MINOTAUR breaths heavily. CITIZEN 2 points at TELEMACHUS.)

He's guilty. Him! Get him.

PO 1

No, you're confusing him with someone else.

CITIZEN 2

No I'm not! Or maybe it was you--

(refusing to consider she might have pointed at the wrong person)

No. I meant him. I can tell by looking at him. Both of you! All of you!

(The MINOTAUR's roar gets closer and louder and CITIZEN 3 screams. The shift in focus gives CITIZEN 2 a chance to disappear.)

CITIZEN 3

Did you hear that? Lock them both up before the monster gets free! Lock em up! Lock em up.

(Noticing CITIZEN 2 is gone.)

Where'd she go? What happened? Lock 'em up! Look what you've done.

(The shadows freak CITIZEN 3 out.)

THESEUS

I understand that your fear is real. Very real. There are a lot of things to be afraid of. None of us want to be made a victim. ***But, we can't continue to practice human sacrifice—because that's what it is—human sacrifice at the altar of your fear.*** if we can look past our first fearful reactions, we can see so many more paths forward.

CITIZEN 1

If you didn't want to be sent to the labyrinth, you shouldn't have committed the crime. It's that simple, right?

CITIZEN 4 (rising)

What story have you been watching? The system is full of unconscious and embedded biases. You can't use the conclusions it draws about people to prove that they're bad people.

THESEUS

I've done bad things. I admit it. I think we've all done bad things. But I know we have the people and the ideas to build a better system of Repair than the one we have now. Every inch, every brick in the labyrinth has been categorized, identified, labeled, and tagged. We may actually have more ability to change this system than anything else in our world.

(We hear the MINOTAUR laugh, and it freaks CITIZENS out more.)

CITIZEN 1

What do *you want from me?

MINOTAUR

What do you want from me?

CITIZEN 1

Stop it. Stop it.

I'm afraid that my *children aren't safe in this world.

MINOTAUR

Children aren't safe in this world. Children aren't safe in this world.

CITIZEN 1 (to THESEUS, back out of the theater)

What should we do? I'll do what you tell me to do. I will. I swear. Please, just make it stop.

CITIZEN 3

I won't listen to you. My children won't step off the straight path. That's all. Not my children. You can't have them.

THESEUS

What if we designed the system that we would want for all our children?

CITIZEN 3

I can't be responsible for the whole world.

(MINOTAUR's heavy breathing)

CITIZEN 4

But maybe we can imagine our own children, or brother, or neighbors, inside the system, and we would change how we designed it.

CITIZEN 3

My brother could use a good smack in the face.

MINOTAUR (laughing)

A good smack in the face!

CITIZEN 4

Does that mean everyone should be smacked in the face? Would you design the same system for every person? Use your head.

CITIZEN 3

How bout I crack your head?

(It's very dark. The Minotaur snarls around them. They snarl too as they speak.)

THESEUS (trying to diffuse the situation)

Please, please. Let's talk. None of us have all the answers. Please.

CITIZEN 3

I have friends who are police, and I'm tired of hearing the criticism.

CITIZEN 4

Who's talking about the police, Idiot? No one's been talking about the police? Are you even listening?

CITIZEN 3 (to CITIZEN 4)

You're the one who's attacking people with your language. Maybe you're the monster. If anything happens here, I'm warning you that I'll know who to blame.

CITIZEN 4

Now you're threatening me? Small-minded, ignorant, arrogant--

CITIZEN 3 (threatening)

Someone has to teach you a lesson!

CITIZEN 4

That's not how people learn anything! You don't teach anyone anything through threats, you just force them to follow your stupid rules and—

(It's very ugly and, literally, very dark. The MINOTAUR is loudly underscoring their fight with growls and repeating their lines, etc. CITIZEN 3 and 4 are in each other's faces—growling like the minotaur.)

THESEUS

Please, please stop. If we keep behaving like this, Athens will be destroyed! *And the Minotaur will win.

CHORUS (from somewhere, like a whisper?)

Burn it down. Burn it down. Burn it all down!

MINOTAUR

Burn! Burn! Burn!

NURSE (over the noise)

-- Only faith can help us now!

(That creates a momentary quiet.)

CITIZEN 4

I don't understand how you see God in any of this.

(The lights have gone down except for a crack somewhere in the theater. That crack begins to glow and grow as NURSE talks. As the lights rise, the MINOTAUR and all its shadows, disappear.)

NURSE

Please. I don't put my *behavior* in the hands of god. I try as hard as I can to do the right thing here on earth but I believe that only Faith can show us how to heal. Everyone is living in god's light ~~and god's land and part of god's plan.~~ Whatever god is to you. Everyone. We must forgive each other. We must look to answers that are greater than any one individual can find.

OMBUDSPERSON (as narrator, to audience)

The advantages of a journey into total darkness is that your eyes, if you allow it, may become more sensitive to points of light. . .

The people who are willing to try.

NURSE

You don't need to believe in God. You need to believe. Faith requires that you believe: Because we are all human, we can also be better humans.

(A breath. The light rises more--Slowly, as though catching breathe. The CHORUS turns back to THESEUS but THESEUS makes space for the victim.)

Scene 10

(The VICTIM steps toward him. She holds some kind of "talking stick" perhaps.)

VICTIM

Vengeance didn't give me my life back or my son's life back.

(She passes the stick to THESEUS, and he will pass it to PERRY, who will pass it on. *Note to Leah, I'm not sure the audience will understand this "talking stick" idea. Cut it if you don't think they will.*)

THESEUS (to VICTIM)

You didn't deserve what happened to you. I'm sorry that the choices I made changed your life forever. I didn't mean for those to be the consequences. I didn't understand what a life really was worth, what it meant, until I had a kid of my own.

I'm so sorry. Nothing can ever make it right.

(PERRY steps forward.)

PERRY

Theseus. . .

(What is he going to talk about?)

THESEUS

What I did affected you too, Perry. I'm sorry.

PERRY (a catch in his throat, finally)

It did.

I wanted so much to follow you, Theseus. To believe in you. It affected me in ways that I can barely understand.

REFORMER 2

It affected a lot of people. It always does.

(ARIADNE and THESEUS look at each other, but from far away from each other. Beat.)

PO 1

Corrections is just the silent, neglected partner in the public health business. People who come to us aren't just our problem to fix. We've been ignoring the community problems that people come from and are going home to.

NIKIA

In treatment, I learned how to see the consequences of my actions. In that community, people hear the worst things about me but don't run away. In community, they can tell me when my behavior is affecting our relationship, and my relationship with others. It's in community that I can be held accountable.

It was isolation and loneliness that fed my bad behavior in the first place. And made the consequences harder to address.

As they talk, the chorus behind humming, “What I want to tell you/What keeps me going”, made by composer Andrea Reynolds AKA Queen Drea and the women at Shakopee prison. It has a gospel, call-and-response feel to it.

THESEUS

If we continue to send 14 Athenians into the Labyrinth each year, no matter the reason, then we continue to make it impossible for Athens to succeed. Punishment doesn’t deter crime at the community level. It eventually causes it.

Athens is Crete. Crete is everywhere. There is here. Now. You don’t keep these problems away when you send people away to a labyrinth. Eventually, eventually, you’ll see its effects on everyone.

ICARUS

No.

No.

It’s already affecting everyone. One in four people have a criminal record. *One in FOUR*. And that doesn’t even include the people who work in the system.

THESEUS

Who feed the beast.

ICARUS

Who are fed to it.

THESEUS

We can’t keep amputating people from our communities and believe that we’re not crippling ourselves. We will face the minotaur together. We will all go, together.

. . . tell the people what I have decreed.

(OMBUSPERSON steps forward. Sincerely.)

OMBUDSPERSON (speaking)

. . . What I want to tell you is. . .

(As though finding it hard to continue, overcome with the emotion of stating her opinion and being vulnerable herself.)

Once upon a time. . .

What I want to tell you. . .

(chorus begins to hum)

These are the voices of real people trapped inside the labyrinth in Minnesota, right now.

(We hear the recording of singers in Shakopee Prison's Voices of Hope choir. Then the chorus joins in live on stage.)

CHORUS

*What I want to tell you is/what I want to tell you
—I want to tell you—
What I want to tell you is/what I want to tell you
—I want to tell you—*

*The world is a cold place
People are hopelessly seeking
Temporary fixes to dull the pain
But I have faith, yes I got faith*

*What I want to tell you is/what I want to tell you
—I want to tell you—
What I want to tell you is/what I want to tell you
—I want to tell you—*

CHORUS

*What I want to tell you is/what I want to tell you
—I want to tell you—
What I want to tell you is/what I want to tell you
—I want to tell you—*

*Sometimes I feel broken inside
I don't want to die. I want to live
You can't blame yourself for things that have happened
Heal, grow and become amazingly resilient.*

*What I want to tell you is/what I want to tell you
—I want to tell you—
What I want to tell you is/what I want to tell you
—I want to tell you—*

*What keeps me going
What keeps me going
What keeps me going*

*One day I'll hold you again
(What keeps me going)*

*I am destined to be more
(What keeps me going)*

God has my back

(What keeps me going)

My beautiful children keep me going
(What keeps me going)

My eye is on the prize
(What keeps me going)

It's time to get my life. (What keeps me going)
It's time to get my life. (What keeps me going)
IT'S TIME TO GET MY LIFE. (What keeps me going)

(The singing gets louder until finally the singing reaches a crescendo and ends and the LIGHTS
GO TO BLACK.)

THE END.