

"Sharp, funny and, what's the word, numinous." **Sunday Times**



THE HELMET OF HORROR

VICTOR PELEVIN



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The Myth of Theseus and the Minotaur

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Translated from the Russian by
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Mythcellaneous

‘No one realised that the book and the labyrinth were one and the same ...’

Borges, *The Garden of Forking Paths*

According to one definition, a myth is a traditional story, usually explaining some natural or social phenomenon. According to another, it is a widely held but false belief or idea. This duality of meaning is revealing. It shows that we naturally consider stories and explanations that come from the past to be untrue – or at least we treat them with suspicion. This attitude, apart from creating new jobs in the field of intellectual journalism, gives some additional meaning to our life. The past is a quagmire of mistakes; we are here to find the truth. We know better.

The road away from myth is called ‘progress’. It is not just scientific, technical or political evolution. Progress has a spiritual constituent beautifully expressed by F. Scott Fitzgerald in *The Great Gatsby*:

[a belief] in the green light, the orgastic future that year by year recedes before us. It eluded us then, but that’s no matter – tomorrow we will run faster, stretch our arms further ... And one fine morning –

So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past.

In other words, progress is a propulsion technique where we have to constantly push ourselves away from the point we occupied a moment ago. However, this doesn’t mean that we live without myths now. It only means that we live with instant myths of soap-bubble content. They are so unreal you can’t even call them lies. Anything can become our mythology for fifteen minutes, even *Mythbusters* programme on the Discovery channel.

The foundation of this mind-set on progress is not faith, as happens with traditional cults, but the absence of it. However, the funny thing is that the concept of progress has been around for so long that now it has all the qualities of a myth. It is a traditional story that pretends to explain all natural and social phenomena. It is also a belief that is widespread and false.

Progress has brought us into these variously shaped and sized cubicles with glowing screens. But if we start to analyse this high-end glow in terms of content and structure, we will sooner or later recognise the starting point of the journey – the original myth. It might have acquired a new form, but it hasn’t changed in essence. We can argue about whether we were ceaselessly borne back into the past or relentlessly pushed forward into the future, but in fact we never moved anywhere at all.

And even this recognition is a traditional story now. A long time ago Jorge Luis Borges wrote that there are only four stories that are told and re-told: the siege of the city, the return home, the quest and the (self-) sacrifice of God. It is notable that the same story could be placed into different categories by different viewers: what is a quest/return home for Theseus is a brutal God’s sacrifice for Minotaur. Maybe there are more than just ‘four cycles’, as Borges called them, but their number is definitely finite and they are all known. We will invent nothing new. Why?

This is where we come to the third possible definition of a myth. If a mind is like a computer

perhaps myths are its shell programs: sets of rules that we follow in our world processing, mental matrices we project onto complex events to endow them with meaning. People who work in computer programming say that to write code you have to be young. It seems that the same rule applies to the cultural code. Our programs were written when the human race was young – at a stage so remote and obscure that we don't understand the programming language any more. Or, even worse, we understand it in so many different ways and on so many levels that the question 'what does it mean?' simply loses sense.

Why does the Minotaur have a bull's head? What does he think and how? Is his mind a function of his body or is his body an image in his mind? Is Theseus inside the Labyrinth? Or is the Labyrinth inside Theseus? Both? Neither?

Each answer means that you turn down a different corridor. There were many people who claimed they knew the truth. But so far nobody has returned from the Labyrinth. Have a nice walk. And if you happen to meet the Minotaur, never say 'MOOO'. It is considered highly offensive.

I shall construct a labyrinth in which I can lose myself, together with anyone who tries to find me – who said this and about what?

:-)

Organizm(-:

What's going on? Is there anyone there ...?

Romeo-y-Cohiba

I'm here.

Organizm(-:

So what's going on round here?

Romeo-y-Cohiba

Your guess is as good as mine.

Organizm(-:

Ariadne, are you there?

Romeo-y-Cohiba

Who's she?

Organizm(-:

She started this thread. Seems this isn't the Internet, just looks like it. You can't link to anywhere else from here.

Romeo-y-Cohiba

xxx

Organizm(-:

Hello! If anyone can read this, please answer.

Nutcracker

I can read it.

Organizm(-:

Who posted the first message?

Nutcracker

It's been up on the board a long time.

Romeo-y-Cohiba

How can you tell? There's no date on it.

Nutcracker

I saw it three hours ago.

Organizm(-:

Attention, roll-call. There's just Nutcracker, Romeo and me here, is that right?

Romeo-y-Cohiba

That's right.

Nutcracker

At least, we're the only ones who want to join in.

Romeo-y-Cohiba

Right, so there are three of us here.

Nutcracker

But where is here exactly?

Organizm(-:

How do you mean?

Nutcracker

Quite literally. Can you describe where you are now? What is it – a room, a hall, a house? A hole in someone's xxx?

Romeo-y-Cohiba

Well I'm in a room, anyway. Or a cell, I can't tell which is more correct. Not very big. Green walls, white ceiling lamp. A bed by one wall and by the opposite wall a desk with the keyboard I'm typing on right now. The keyboard is attached rigidly to the desk. Above the desk there's an LCD screen set in

the wall behind thick glass. That's where all these letters appear. It's impossible to break, I tried already. ~~The room has two doors, one made of strange, blackish-green metal. It's locked. There's a raised section in the middle of it. The other door's made of wood, painted white, and it leads into a bathroom. It's open.~~

Organizm(-:

I've got the same as Romeo. A locked metal door with some kind of relief design on it. A hotel-style bathroom with soap, shower gel and shampoo on the shelf under the mirror. Everything in packaging marked with a strange symbol – something like a little cogwheel. So where are you, Nutcracker?

Nutcracker

In the same kind of room. I think the door's made of cast bronze. But Organizm, the symbol on the soap looks more like a star than a cogwheel. In fact it looks like the symbol they use in books for a footnote. It's even on the loo paper, every sheet.

Romeo-y-Cohiba

So we're all in the same hotel. Let's try knocking on the walls. Can you hear anything?

Organizm(-:

No.

Nutcracker

Me neither.

Organizm(-:

I'll try knocking on the door, listen.

Romeo-y-Cohiba

I can't hear a thing.

Organizm(-:

So how did we get here?

Romeo-y-Cohiba

Personally speaking, I haven't got the slightest idea. How about you, Organizm?

Organizm(-:

I just woke up here wearing this pooftah's housecoat with nothing underneath it.

Nutcracker

It's not a housecoat. It's a *chiton* – the kind of tunic the ancient Greeks used to wear, so I won't take issue with your opinion of it. I don't think they wore any underclothes either.

Romeo-y-Cohiba

It's a good job it's warm in here then.

Organizm(-:

So, maybe you remember how you got here, Nutcracker?

Nutcracker

No, I don't.

Romeo-y-Cohiba

Why have you two got such odd names – Organizm, Nutcracker?

Nutcracker

Well, why have you got such an odd name, Romeo? Is your *cohiba* really such a whopper?

Romeo-y-Cohiba

I suppose that depends whose you compare it with. And anyway, it wasn't me who invented the name. It just appears on the screen when I send a message. I'm not Romeo, I'm xxx. A professional xxx, if anyone's interested.

Organizm(-:

Porn business? Socially significant work. You and I are almost colleagues, Romeo – I'm a xxx. I used to work at xxx.com, so I'm temporarily out of a job. But there's not much danger of that for you.

Romeo-y-Cohiba

How did the porn business get mixed up in all this? And what are all these x's?

Nutcracker

That's not the first time they've appeared. It's the censor. Someone's monitoring our conversation. And he doesn't like it when we try to exchange information about who we really are. Or start swearing.

Romeo-y-Cohiba

Hey, you, whoever you are! I demand that you allow me to contact my family immediately! And the xxx embassy!

Nutcracker

What makes you think there's a xxx embassy here?

Romeo-y-Cohiba

There's a xxx embassy everywhere.

Nutcracker

Are you sure? What if we're in xxx?

Organizm(-:

Apparently you guys can understand each other without words. But I don't understand what the xxx embassy is, and where xxx is, if there's no xxx embassy there. And what the xxx you want it for anyway.

Monstradamus

Hi there, is it okay if I join in your discussion?

Organizm(-:

Who are you, Monstradamus?

Monstradamus

xxx. I live in xxx and I'm a xxx.

Romeo-y-Cohiba

Perhaps you ought to try something a bit more original?

Monstradamus

I've read all the messages on this thread. I'm in the same situation, the same room, the same fancy getup. And I don't remember how I got here, either.

Nutcracker

So now we are four. That's nice.

Organizm(-:

What's so nice about it?

Nutcracker

Maybe more will turn up soon. The more heads we have, the better our chances of coming up with

something.

Organizm(-:

And what if we've simply died?

Nutscracker

Don't panic! Dead people don't hang around in chat rooms.

Organizm(-:

We don't know that for a fact. Maybe that's all they can do.

Romeo-y-Cohiba

If this is the afterlife, then I for one am disappointed.

Nutscracker

Let's discuss the situation. I suggest we don't take Organizm's hypothesis about the afterlife into consideration.

Organizm(-:

Then maybe it's a dream?

Romeo-y-Cohiba

Pinch yourself. Maybe you'll wake up. I tried already, it didn't work.

Nutscracker

Right, so everybody has a bronze door. Let's try figuring out the design on that door. It's a figure like a rectangle with the upper and lower edges bent inwards and the sides bent outwards.

Organizm(-:

It looks like a bat. Or the Batman symbol.

Romeo-y-Cohiba

I reckon it's a double-headed axe.

Organizm(-:

Maybe it's just decoration, without any meaning. But Romeo saying it looks like an axe has made me think so too. The fascists used to have axes like that – or was it the ancient Romans?

Monstradamus

If it is an axe, it's much older than Rome. They used to have axes like that in Crete and ancient Egypt.

Organizm(-:

Are you a historian then, Monstradamus?

Monstradamus

No. I'm a xxx.

Organizm(-:

Hey, that's right. I forgot.

Ariadne

Hi. I'm glad I'm not the only one here.

Organizm(-:

Hi there, darling.

Romeo-y-Cohiba

Where there are boys, there have to be girls. Some funny rainbow-coloured patches of light just appeared on my walls.

Monstradamus

That's odd, I had them too. Or maybe I imagined it.

Nutcracker

Ariadne? Did you start this thread?

Ariadne

Yes. But no one answered, and I fell asleep.

Monstradamus

So why did you write that phrase about the labyrinth?

Ariadne

I was trying to remember where it came from, but I couldn't. I had the feeling it was very important.

Monstradamus

Who are you and how did you get here?

Ariadne

I'm in exactly the same situation as you.

Organizm(-:

In that case, we know all about you already. Your real name's xxx, you're xxx years old and you come from xxx.

Ariadne

I know what's going on here.

Nutcracker

How?

Ariadne

I saw it all in a dream.

Romeo-y-Cohiba

I don't think I'd exactly regard that as *bona fide* information.

Monstradamus

I wouldn't mind hearing about it, though. Tell us about it.

Ariadne

I saw this old city. I mean, really ancient. The kind they must have built thousands and thousands of years ago. It was really beautiful there. Roads paved with big, flat stones, stone walls covered with living curtains of some climbing plant with pale-pink flowers. The doors and windows of all the houses were locked, but all the time I had the feeling I was being watched by someone. I wandered round the streets for ages, but I didn't meet anyone. And then on the crossroads up ahead of me I kept catching sight of a dwarf dressed in grey rags and a strange hat with a wide brim and a round crown. Every time I spotted him, he instantly darted round a corner, as though he could feel my gaze on his back. It happened lots of times, over and over again. Soon I realised he wasn't hiding from me, it was just that the rhythm of his movement was linked with the rhythm of mine so I couldn't see him for more than those few seconds. Only don't ask me how I realised it, in a dream everything has its own logic. I began trying to adjust to the rhythm, trying to get a better look at the dwarf. By choosing broad, straight streets, I could keep him in my field of vision for longer. But most of the streets were narrow and crooked – the way they linked up made a genuine labyrinth. I realised there were actually two dwarves, but it was easy to confuse the second one with the first. He was dressed in exactly the same way, in some old rags, only the brim of his hat was bent up on one side. Gradually I became certain there was someone else with them as well, but no matter how hard I tried, I couldn't see the

third person. Sometimes I could just catch a glimpse of the edge of his dark cloak from round a corner. I guessed I needed to find the way to the main street – it would be long and wide and I would be able to see all of them ...

Romeo-y-Cohiba

What's the point of us listening to all this?

Monstradamus

Please, don't interrupt. What happened after that, Ariadne?

Ariadne

After that I made my way to the main street. There was a long line of palm trees in tubs along the middle of it. I remember that what was most astonishing was that there were yellow leaves everywhere, it was autumn, and then here were these palm trees.

Nutcracker

You started off with pink flowers. Now suddenly it's autumn, with yellow leaves.

Ariadne

Yes, autumn set in while I was following the dwarf. I thought he must have done that on purpose to spoil my mood and prevent me catching up with him. There was no one in the main street. I came to a large square with a fountain with bronze statues standing in it. From their style I thought they must be just as ancient as the city, but their subjects were more like something from a Japanese cartoon film – naked teenagers being strangled by tentacles twined around their bodies. Or snakes ...

Nutcracker

What have Japanese cartoons got to do with anything?

Isolda

She's talking about *mangas*, young girls who are raped by demons with their tentacles. It's a persistent theme in Japanese virtual porn.

Monstradamus

It's an expression of the repressed subconscious frustration resulting from defeat in the Second World War. The schoolgirl raped in these cartoons symbolises the Japanese national spirit, and the monster that sprouts these multiple phallic tentacles represents the modern western-style corporate economy.

Nutcracker

Or maybe they're just octopuses?

Monstradamus

Octopuses? How original. I'd never have thought of that.

Organizm(-:

Hey, who is this Isolde? Someone new?

IsoldA

Yes.

Romeo-y-Cohiba

Welcome to our little world, Isolde. We're very pleased to meet you.

IsoldA

Thank you, Romeo.

Organizm(-:

Are you pretty?

Romeo-y-Cohiba

Get a grip, Organism.

Nutscracker

Isolde, can you add anything to the sum of our experience?

IsoldA

No.

Monstradamus

Then, if no one has any objections, Ariadne can continue.

Ariadne

I realised I had to go over to the fountain and then I would see both dwarves. Only don't ask me how realised it; it was suddenly clear, that's all. When I reached the fountain I turned my back to it and leaned against the wall. Opposite me there was a building with a colonnade – a massive, depressing building with ugly superstructures on the roof. It occurred to me somehow that a long time ago it had been burnt down, and nothing was left but the stone skeleton, and since then a lot of attempts had been made to repair it and restore it to life. But you could still see the traces of the catastrophe through the restoration work and the paint, and you could tell the building was dead and empty ...

Romeo-y-Cohiba

I'd say we need an entire committee of psychiatrists for this spiel. Or we could ask Monstradamus, he's got a good handle on this stuff. What was that phrase he used – corporate frustration?

Monstradamus

Romeo, please, be patient just a moment longer.

Ariadne

Suddenly I noticed one of the dwarves standing beside me – the one with the side of his hat bent up. I didn't see how he got there. He was really close to me, but I couldn't see his face under the hat. I remember he was wearing medieval-style pointed shoes in red and white stripes. He began speaking without raising his head, and what he said was very strange. He said the master he served was the creator of everything I saw around me, and a great many other things too. The way I understood it, the master of his was not a man. Or not just a man. His name was Asterisk ...

Monstradamus

Are you sure you heard correctly?

Ariadne

I think so. The way the dwarf explained it, Asterisk is some boundlessly and infinitely powerful being. I asked whether he didn't mean God, and he said that God was merely Asterisk's errand boy. I asked how that was possible. The dwarf told me not even to try to understand. He said it was a great mystery and repeated this several times. I asked him what was the correct name to use for someone who is mightier than God. Any name you like, the dwarf replied – the word 'Asterisk', or any other that can be spoken – they're no more than loose dust covers, they make no difference at all. That was what he said, honestly ...

Romeo-y-Cohiba

What absolute gibberish.

Ariadne

The way I understood it, Asterisk is angry with people because at some time in the past they killed him. Or because they will kill him at some time in the future – the dwarf expressed himself in such a complicated manner, you could take his meaning any way at all. Since that time – or until that time – people have to pay tribute to Asterisk by sending him people to join in his games and die in his arena. Like us, for instance ...

Nutcracker

Well, there you go then.

Ariadne

But the dwarf said there was no need to be upset, because the people Asterisk sacrifices to himself have already been born, and dying in the arena is the common fate that nobody escapes. I tried to ask in that case what was the point of the sacrificial tribute, but the dwarf began getting nervous and said 'Look, he's coming, now you can see him for yourself.' I looked up. Two figures had appeared in front of the burnt-out building. Striding along solemnly in front was a dwarf holding a flag with the Merrill Lynch symbol on it – you remember it, they have that jolly little bull – and the inscription 'Be Bullish!' But I didn't feel like laughing at all, the figure following it looked so terrifying. I don't even know what to call him. He wasn't like a man. He was absolutely massive, and I thought for a moment he was a monstrously overgrown mushroom with a big cap of blackish-green metal. Then I took a closer look at him. He was wearing a long loose robe that reached right down to the ground, dark-coloured and not particularly clean either, but not the same kind of tattered rags as the dwarves. And on his head he had a bronze helmet, like a gladiator's mask – a headpiece with a wide brim and a plate with holes in it where the face would be. There were two horns on the helmet ...

Monstradamus

Like a bull's horns?

Ariadne

They were much more massive and they didn't stick out to the sides, they ran backwards, merging into the helmet to form a single block. If I could compare them with anything, they looked a lot like the silencers of a bronze motorbike, curving along the rim of the headpiece with the round crown. There were lots of little rods and tubes on the helmet as well, all made of bronze, and they linked all its different parts together, so the whole thing looked a bit like an antique rocket engine.

Nutcracker

Did he say anything?

Ariadne

No, I didn't see him for very long. I only had just enough time to think the two dwarves were dressed so strangely because they were trying to look like him. Beside him they looked absolutely tiny. And there seemed to be something wistful or sad and lonely about him, like someone who'd been banished by the emperor. Or just the opposite, as though he was an emperor who had been left all alone because he had banished everyone else.

Monstradamus

Is that how the dream ended?

Ariadne

I didn't see Asterisk again. Suddenly the dwarf and I were somewhere else, on one of the little streets facing an old wooden door with a handle in the form of a ring set through the head of a bull. The dwarf knocked on the door with the ring and it opened. Inside there was a small room. From where we were standing all we could see was a bed with a man sleeping on it, a tall man with a moustache and a mol

beside his nose. The dwarf muttered that we were in the wrong place, led me to a different door and opened it in the same way. The room behind it looked the same, but it was empty. The dwarf raised his finger and asked, 'I shall construct a labyrinth in which I can lose myself, together with anyone who tries to find me – who said this and about what?' I started thinking about it – in the dream I almost knew the answer. Then suddenly he pushed me inside and slammed the door shut.

Monstradamus

What happened after that?

Ariadne

The push woke me up and I found myself in the room I am in now. Then I sat down at the desk with the screen and typed in that question. I was afraid I might forget it. But I can still hear it in my head now.

Monstradamus

Is it the same room as you entered in the dream?

Ariadne

It's hard to say. It's just as small.

Romeo-y-Cohiba

And who was the man with the mole beside his nose?

Ariadne

I don't know. I'd never seen him before.

Romeo-y-Cohiba

Can you describe him in more detail? Exactly where was this mole of his?

Ariadne

Between the side of the nostril and the cheek. He had a horseshoe moustache too. And he was absolutely bald. Big. I definitely remember that his arm was lying on the pillow and it had a tattoo on it, an anchor with a dollar sign twisted round it. I thought it might be a yacht club symbol. A pretty moth-eaten type really.

Romeo-y-Cohiba

Well thanks a lot, sweetheart.

Nutcracker

I suspect someone might just have recognised himself. Right, Romeo?

Romeo-y-Cohiba

No one's ever called me a moth-eaten type before. But I do have a tattoo like that on my arm.

Nutcracker

So does anyone have any ideas?

Organizm(-:

I don't get it, are we seriously discussing someone's dream?

UGLI 666

I think ...

Nutcracker

New members, please introduce yourselves to the group straightaway. What do you think?

UGLI 666

The Lord sent her that vision to make us repent.

Romeo-y-Cohiba

That's just great. We've been locked up in here, and we have to repent? Repent for what?

UGLI 666

What we were locked up for.

Romeo-y-Cohiba

And what were we locked up for?

UGLI 666

Each of us for his own reason. For it is said: 'There is no man that shall live without sin, though his life be but a single day.'

Organizm(-:

Ugly, what sex are you?

UGLI 666

That's of no relevance.

Organizm(-:

Is he/she really serious?

Monstradamus

I think he/she means what he/she says.

UGLI 666

I'm female, since it interests you so very much. My name's xxx, I'm a xxx by profession and a xxx by education, but by vocation I've always been a xxx. I've read everything already. And I have nothing interesting to add. As for whether I'm being serious or not, you can be quite sure I always mean what I say.

Organizm(-:

Tell me, Ugly, did you invent your views to match your name or was your name invented to match your views?

UGLI 666

My name's for my sins. And so is yours.

Organizm(-:

But do you know what 'UGLI' really means? It's not from the word 'ugly' as you probably thought. It's 'Universal Gate for Logic Implementation'. A universal logic element, I remember that from school. So if you chose your views to match your name you were looking in the wrong place altogether.

Monstradamus

We were talking about Ariadne's dream. It has been suggested that she was shown it specially and it contains information for everyone.

Romeo-y-Cohiba

What does that mean – shown it specially? This isn't a cinema. And if the information's for everyone then why was it shown to Ariadne?

Organizm(-:

You'll get a showing too, don't be in such a hurry.

Romeo-y-Cohiba

You think that monster in the bronze helmet really is walking about outside our doors?

UGLI 666

You don't have to take everything so literally. In the dream the door was made of wood, with a bull's head. But in here it's made of bronze, with an infernal symbol. Dreams are metaphorical.

IsoldA

Ariadne saw Romeo in her dream and when she described him he recognised himself. What kind of metaphor is that?

Romeo-y-Cohiba

Who says I recognised myself? It was just a couple of details that matched.

IsoldA

But what kind of details? There can't be many tattoos like that. An anchor with a dollar sign.

Romeo-y-Cohiba

Let's introduce a bit of clarity here. I actually do have a tattoo on my arm, just above the wrist. It's a fountain of oil, gushing up through a dollar sign. From upside down it looks a bit like an anchor. That's all. I don't know what tattoo she saw. And my yacht club symbol is nothing like that.

Sartrik

xxx me, a xxx sailor.

Nutcracker

New members, once again, please introduce yourselves.

Sartrik

I'm absolutely xxx. My entire body aches.

Monstradamus

Have you been beaten up, or what?

Sartrik

I feel sick. Is there any beer to be had around here?

Monstradamus

I doubt it. Did you overdo it yesterday then?

Sartrik

Something of the sort.

Nutcracker

How did you end up in here?

Sartrik

I don't remember a thing.

Romeo-y-Cohiba

Leave the man alone, let him get his head together. But can this dream of Ariadne's be interpreted scientifically? Seems to me Monstradamus knows about that kind of thing.

Monstradamus

What does 'interpreted scientifically' mean?

Romeo-y-Cohiba

Well, for instance, this Asterisk is tall, with a big helmet. That symbolises the male sexual organ in a state of erection.

Organizm(-:

And the two dwarves symbolise the balls, do they?

Nutcracker

Cool it, Romeo. Sometimes a *cohiba*'s just a cigar.

Isolda

Could you talk about that separately somehow?

UGLI 666

I second that motion.

Organizm(-:

Unfortunately we can't just go out into the corridor.

Romeo-y-Cohiba

You didn't answer the question, Monstradamus. Can the dream be analysed?

Monstradamus

If you're thinking of penis symbolism, then I've got nothing to add to what Nutcracker said. But I do have a few observations along an entirely different line. I can share them if you're interested.

Nutcracker

Of course we're interested.

Monstradamus

In the first place, the names. Has anyone any guesses on that score?

UGLI 666

Names of demons from hell.

Monstradamus

The soap, the toilet paper and other items in the bathroom are all marked with something that looks like the symbol for indicating a footnote – a little star. It's called an asterisk, which is also the name of the character Ariadne dreamed about. It sounds a lot like 'Asterius'.

UGLI 666

What's 'Asterius'?

Monstradamus

'Starry' in Latin. Asterius, the son of Minos and Parsiphae. The half-man, half-animal from Crete. Better known as the Minotaur.

Sartrik

That one on the 'Remy Martin' bottle?

Organizm(-:

No, the 'Remy Martin' beast is a Cyclops. The Minotaur is a freak with a bull's head.

Sartrik

God, I feel really sick.

Monstradamus

Now for that double axe on the door. In Greek it's called a 'labros'. That's where we get the word 'Labyrinth', the place where the Minotaur lived. Some accounts say it was a beautiful palace with lots of corridors and rooms, according to others it was a foul-smelling cave with numerous branches plunged in eternal darkness. Or it could be that people from different cultures had different impressions of the same place.

IsoldA

But what has an axe got to do with a labyrinth?

Monstradamus

They find them in Crete. Where the labyrinth was. That's all I know.

UGLI 666

Maybe the Minotaur was killed with an axe like that?

Monstradamus

Let me go on with the names. As well as Asterius and Asterisk, it's hard not to notice another coincidence. It was Ariadne who dreamed about him. That was the name of the Minotaur's sister. And it was also Ariadne who started this thread with the question about the labyrinth.

IsoldA

It's a very common name. I had a lotion for dry skin called 'Ariadne's Milk'.

Romeo-y-Cohiba

Names and coincidences are all very well. But what I don't understand is – what are we going to do?

Monstradamus

Well, what can we do? Wait for Theseus, who will lead us out of the labyrinth. And hope the joke doesn't go too far.

UGLI 666

Does it seem like a joke to you?

Monstradamus

Well, I'd say our hosts certainly seem to have a sense of humour.

Romeo-y-Cohiba

I haven't laughed even once yet.

Nutcracker

Monster's right. There's definitely humour in all of this, only it's infernal humour. Forcing serious people like us to call each other by idiotic names. Dressing us in ancient Greek *chitons* and making us sit at these screens. And then the Internet we end up in has about as much to do with the real one as we do with Ancient Greece.

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