

The Twelve Tasks of Heracles



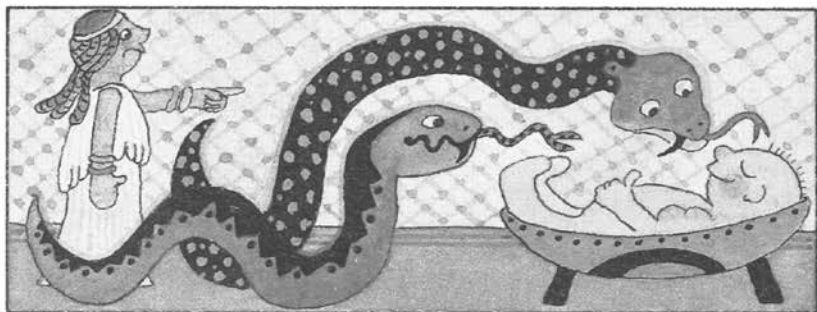
Part One

The Story of Heracles



Heracles was born in Ancient Greece. He was the son of a mortal woman named Alcmene and the great god, Zeus. He was a tough, merry little baby, loved by almost everyone. Only Hera, Zeus's wife, hated him as he reminded her that her husband was not always entirely faithful.

One night, in a fit of jealousy, Hera sent two snakes to kill baby Heracles as he slept



in his cradle made out of an upturned shield. Heracles watched the deadly serpents as they crept under his bedroom door and slithered across the floor. As the snakes lifted their heads to strike Heracles, he grabbed them both by the neck and strangled them – he was just ten months old!

“No trouble,” he gurgled, waving the snakes about as if they were mere toys.

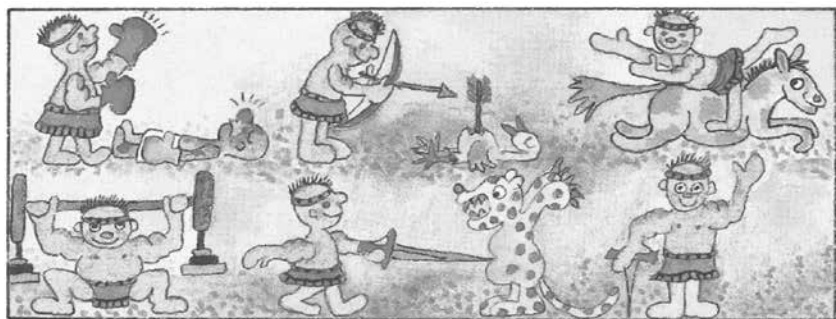
Hera was furious



that her plan had come to nothing. She decided that the best thing to do would be to ignore Heracles.



“I’ll just pretend he doesn’t exist, the horrid little brat,” she snarled.



As Heracles grew up, he became stronger and stronger. Not only was he a match for any wild beast, but he was also learned and wise. He married the woman he loved and

they had many children.

“How many was it at the last count, dear?” he would teasingly say to his wife.



It seemed that Heracles's life was blessed, which did not please Hera, who was unable to resist keeping a jealous eye on him. She would look down from Mount Olympus, see his smiling face and scowl with displeasure.

“This happiness has gone on long enough!” snapped Hera one day. “It must end – once and for all!”

That night, Hera cast a cruel spell on Heracles. He rose from his bed and – as though in a dream – he lashed out with his sword, slaying imaginary enemies. Only when

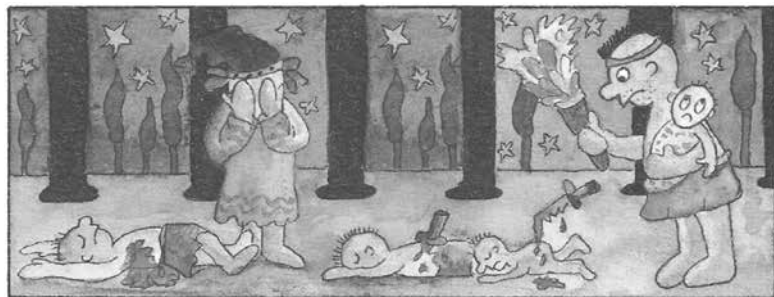


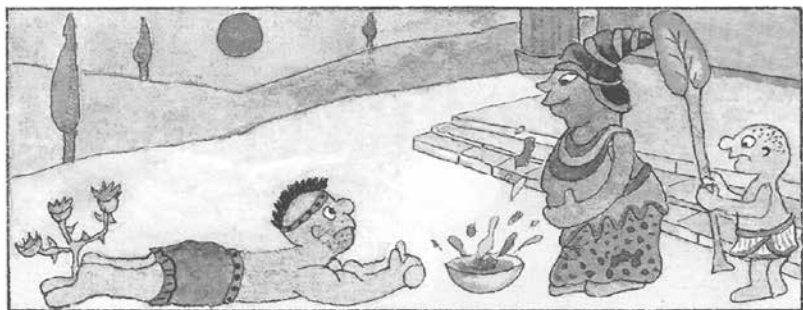
he woke, did he see that he had killed his own children.

His wife could not believe her beloved
Heracles could do such a thing.

“Get out of here, you murderer!” she yelled.

Heracles was heartbroken and went to the





temple to seek forgiveness. The priestess told him that he could only make amends by serving his old enemy, King Eurystheus of Mycenae.

“You must do twelve tasks for Eurystheus, then the gods will forgive you,” she said.