

HERACLES: THE MYTHOLOGICALLY ACCURATE ADVENTURES

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Voice-over: Heracles. Immense and immortal. Son of Zeus. Greatest of the Greek heroes.

Heracles looks smug.

Voice-over: Call on line 2.

Heracles: *(unimpressed)* Yeah. *(pause)* Another tour group? Come on... oh, fine. Send them in.

2 tourists enter. They wear togas and stupid tourist hats.

Tourist 1: Hoo-ee! Look at this place!

Tourist 2: I am looking at it. Why do we have to wear these togas again?

Heracles: Because it adds to Ye Olde Ancient Greek Experience.

Tourist 2: "Ye Olde Ancient Greek?"

Heracles: The point is, back in the day everyone wore togas.

Tourist 1: Everyone?

Heracles: Trust me. My name is Heracles, and I'll be your—

Tourist 1: You mean Hercules.

Heracles: No I don't.

Tourist 2: Yes you do. We've seen the movies and TV shows, and it's pronounced "Hercules." I mean, if you're going to promote this place as "mythologically accurate" you could at least get that right.

Heracles: Listen, mortals, I am Heracles. Son of Zeus. Greatest of the—

Tourist 1: We heard the voice-over.

Heracles: My point is, when the Romans invaded Greece, they stole all the legends and changed all the names so it would look like they had a culture. *(pause)* Popular trick for world powers. Anyway, Zeus became Jupiter, Ares became Mars, and Heracles became Hercules. Then a few centuries later some jerk decided it was catchier and it stuck. But I... am Heracles. Real person here, not Kevin Sorbo.

Tourist 2: More's the pity.

Heracles: Hey.

Tourist 1: Be nice, Enid.

Heracles: I can see you people need a refresher course on something very basic, and very important... a story key to the understanding of human nature... the story—of me. We begin... with the titans. Beings of power unimaginable who ruled the universe at the dawn of time, ruled by Cronus.

Cronus enters.

Cronus: Bow to me!

Heracles: But a prophecy came...

Titan Queen bursts on.

Titan Queen: One of your children shall overthrow you!

Cronus: Crap!

Heracles: What would he do?

Cronus: Each time a child of mine is born, I'll eat it.

Titan Queen: An excellent—sorry, what?

Cronus: Simple. If I eat all of my children as soon as they're born, none of them can harm me. *(pause)* As long as they're prepared right.

Cronus and Titan Queen exit.

Heracles: But his wife hid one of the children, and snuck it down to Earth... a boy named Zeus, who one day returned to face his father!

Cronus re-enters, followed by Prometheus.

Cronus: Prometheus!

Prometheus: Yeah?

Cronus: We are under attack! Make sure the invaders don't find me!

Prometheus: No sweat.

Cronus exits, then Zeus enters, same actor as Cronus.

Zeus: I am Zeus! Here to defeat my father! Where is he hiding?

Prometheus: Second door on the left.

Zeus: Thank you!

Prometheus: No sweat. *(calls offstage)* Atlas! I'm stepping out for a minute!

Prometheus exits. Zeus pops offstage and fights himself.

Zeus: Now, to free my swallowed siblings. (*fumbles with thunderbolt*) Let's see... can opener... tweezers... magnifying glass... pen knife. Here we go... (*exits, is heard offstage*) Hold still, ya big baby... (*ripping noises*) Come, brothers and sisters! Breathe the free air!

Hera and Ares stagger on, gasping. Zeus follows.

Zeus: Welcome to the free world! Which are you?

Hera: Hera.

Ares: Ares. You must be Zeus.

Zeus: I am. Tell me, what was it like cooped up in there for so long?

Ares: Cramped.

Hera: But it did have a decent school system.

Ares: Yeah, and a real sense of community.

Hera: Well, it'd have to, wouldn't it?

Zeus: And where did you get the togas?

Hera: Cronus ate a lot of fibre.

Zeus: Come, let us beat back the Titans, so that we may rule this plane as... whatchamacallits...

Hera: Gods?

Zeus: Ooh, I like that. Now, to battle!

Exeunt omnes. Heracles returns.

Heracles: And so the Titans were banished from the world, save two: Atlas, who was sentenced to support the heavens on his shoulders, and his brother Prometheus.

Zeus and Prometheus enter.

Zeus: I wanted to thank you for your help against the other titans, Prometheus.

Prometheus: Ah, Cronus was a tool.

Zeus: But just so I know... you weren't thinking of betraying us as well, were you?

Prometheus: Me? Betray you? No chance. We're friends for life, Z!

Zeus: Good to hear.

Prometheus: Can I borrow fire?

Zeus: Why?

Prometheus: No reason.

Zeus: Okay, but don't give it to anyone.

Prometheus: No sweat.

Prometheus exits. Hera slinks on.

Hera: Hello, Zeus.

Zeus: Oh, hi, Hera. How goes it?

Hera: I was just thinking about the ruling system you've set up... doesn't it seem a little arbitrary just making yourself king?

Zeus: Maybe a little... tell you what, we'll get all the gods together, and we'll each vote for our favourite person who cut everyone free from our father's stomach.

Hera: Point taken... but doesn't a king need his queen?

Zeus: I suppose he does, now that you—

Hera: I accept!

Zeus: You what now?

Hera: Can you think of someone better?

Zeus: How about Athena?

Hera: Athena? Oh. Sure, sure, if that's what you want...

Zeus: What?

Hera: Nothing, nothing...

Zeus: What's wrong with her?

Hera: Well, if the queen's the goddess of wisdom, who would you assume was the real power?

Zeus: Good point... job's yours, Hera.

Hera: Excellent! We shall rule together!

Zeus: King and queen!

Hera: Husband and wife!

Zeus: Say again?

Hera: King and queen are supposed to be married, after all.

Zeus: Um... sis... have you thought this through?

Hera: Who were you planning on marrying? One of the humans? I can't see the others accepting a lower being as queen, but it's your reign to risk.

Zeus: Fine then. By the power vested in me by... me... I pronounce us husband and wife.

Hera: You may kiss the bride.

Zeus: Ew! No!

Hera: Oh come on.

Zeus: Get off me you freak!

Zeus runs off, chased by Hera. Heracles returns.

Heracles: And so Zeus was king of the gods, and even though his treacherous sister Hera was queen, he survived many plots against him and—

Tourist appears.

Tourist: Wow! Can we see some of them?

Heracles: No.

Tourist: Why not?

Heracles: Because this is my story and I haven't even shown up yet! Now beat it!

Tourist: Fine... *(exits)*

Heracles: So here was my father, king of the gods, living in the heavens atop lofty Mount Olympus, married to his sister. It was only a matter of time before his attentions drifted down below.

Zeus enters, carrying a sack. Hera pops on after him.

Hera: Going somewhere, my sweet?

Zeus: Oh, just... down amongst the humans for a while.

Hera: Why, exactly?

Zeus: Just thought I'd—observe the humans. See how the worship's going.

Hera: Will you be long?

Zeus: Doubt it. Just a quick look around and I'll be right back.

Hera: *(suspicious)* Oh. Okay then. *(exits)*

Zeus glances around, then pulls the swan suit out of his sack and puts it on. He then struts to the other side of the stage, where Alkmene has entered.

Zeus: Hey, baby. What's happening?

Alkmene: *(turning around)* Who said that?

Zeus: Over here.

Alkmene: Oh my gods, the swan is talking to me.

Zeus: What say you and me head over to the pond and... get acquainted?

Alkmene: Now the swan is hitting on me.

Zeus: Come on! You and me! What do you say?

Alkmene: Um... how to put this gently... you're a swan. A big bird. Don't get me wrong, it's impressive you can talk, but I'm just not into—

Zeus: Hey, I'm no ordinary swan. I'm actually Zeus.

Alkmene: Pull the other one.

Zeus: No, really! I am Zeus, king of the gods, lord of the Earth, master of Olympus!

Alkmene: Funny, 'cause you sure look like a swan.

Zeus: Of course I do! If you saw me in my true divine splendour, you'd die. Like *that*.

Alkmene: Really?

Zeus: Stone dead. Swear to me.

Alkmene: But... why a swan?

Zeus: They're great! Check out this plumage! Look what I can do with my neck!

Alkmene: Still...

Zeus: Would you rather a bull? I could do a bull.

Alkmene: Why not a person? I'm just not into lower species.

Zeus: You don't see it stopping me.

Alkmene: I'm just saying, if you'd come disguised as my husband or something we'd probably already be down at the pond doing all sorts of—

Zeus: Wait one minute.

Zeus rushes off, returns without swan suit.

Zeus: Hey, baby! It is me, your husband! Let's head down to the pond and fulfill our marital obligations!

Alkmene: You're not fooling anyone.

Zeus: Do you at least believe I'm Zeus now?

Alkmene: I suppose it does make more sense than a talking bird who can shapeshift...

Zeus: Then how about we head down to the pond for some good old-fashioned worship?

Alkmene: Okay. But if anyone asks, the husband disguise worked.

Zeus: Whatever, baby.

Zeus and Alkmene rush offstage. Heracles re-enters.

Heracles: Yeah. ‘Cause the story of your conception is so romantic. Anyway, news got to my father...

Heracles exits. Zeus enters, as well as Hermes. Zeus rushes over to Hermes.

Zeus: Hermes! Have you heard?

Hermes: Heard what?

Zeus: I’m going to have a son!

Hermes: Hera?

Zeus: Mortal.

Hermes: Do the swan thing?

Zeus: Husband.

Hermes: Nice.

Hera enters.

Hera: Hello.

Hermes: Hera! Guess what? Zeus is gonna be a father!

Hera: News to me, husband.

Zeus: Hermes!

Hermes: Oh, come on. I’m the messenger of the gods. You had to know that was gonna happen.

Zeus: Right. The actual reason I told you was so that you could deliver a prophecy for me.

Hermes: *(producing scroll/pad)* Shoot.

Zeus: Let it be known that on this day, a child shall be born, and all who worship me shall bow before him, for he shall be master of all he surveys!

Hera sneaks off.

Hermes: *(writing)* Child... shall... be...

Zeus: If you won’t learn shorthand, you could at least drop the calligraphy.

Hermes: Hey, it’s a message from the gods. People expect a certain quality. Born... and...

Zeus: Could you just finish it before my son reaches manhood?

Hermes: Yelling’s not getting this done any faster.

Zeus: Hermes...

Hermes: Fine, fine, I’m going, I’m going... *(exits)*

Zeus: Excellent. Now all the people of Earth shall bow before—

Hera bursts on with baby.

Hera: Eurystheus, grandson of Theseus!

Zeus: What the Hades?

Hera: Your prophecy said it would be a child born today, right? Well, that's Eurystheus.

Zeus: But... but my son is...

Hera: Oh, him, yeah. There was a delay. Seems the divine midwives couldn't make it, because they were busy with Eurystheus here... it was tricky, on account of him not being due for two months and all.

Zeus: You had him delivered prematurely just to screw up my son's destiny.

Hera: Little bit.

Zeus: I knew it!

Hera: Oopsies.

Zeus: Just because I fathered a baby out of wedlock with a mortal woman . . . I forgot where I was going with this, but shame on you.

Hera: I said oopsies.

Zeus: This is why nobody likes you. It's because of things like this.

Both exit. Heracles enters with a rattle and a sign reading "eight months later."

Heracles: *(to offstage)* Why do I have to—

Heracles turns to the audience, sighs, and holds up the sign. He then sits and begins shaking the rattle.

Heracles: *(irritably)* Goo. Goo goo. Ge ga. *(to audience)* Yeah I know. Just run with it, okay?

Hera sneaks on from the opposite side. She is carrying two small rubber snakes. Zeus comes in behind her.

Zeus: What are you doing?

Hera: *(hiding snakes)* Nothing.

Zeus: Doesn't look like nothing.

Hera: Well . . . er . . . Where have you been all day?

Zeus: Just . . . swanning around.

Hera: I know what you mean when you say that.

Zeus: *(under his breath)* Dammit. *(normal)* Still . . . still, that's not the point. What have you got behind your back?

Hera: Nothing. *(holds hand out)* See?

Zeus: What about the other hand?

Hera: *(switches snakes, holds out other hand)* Nothing.

Zeus: What are you, Goddess of Being Four? Let me see both.

Hera: Of course, I – can you believe what Aphrodite's wearing? If you can call it wearing . . .

Zeus: *(spinning)* Where? Where?

Hera tosses the snakes offstage. At the same time two pool noodle snakes land on Heracles.

Zeus: I don't see her any -- *(sees Heracles)* Did you just throw those poisonous snakes at my boy?

Hera: I may have.

Heracles wrestles the snakes.

Zeus: Why must you have this hostility for my –

Hera: Half-mortal bastard love-child?

Zeus: Right. But what about his twin brother?

Hera: Sorry, Half-mortal bastard love-children.

Zeus: No, only one of them's mine. They're half-brothers.

Hera: Half-twin brothers? How does that work?

Zeus: Interesting question. You see . . . oh hang on . . .

Heracles tosses down the snakes triumphantly and does victory poses.

Hera: Blast!

Zeus: That's my boy!

Hera: I'll get you next time! *(Zeus glares)* I mean . . . good for him. *(Exits)*

Zeus exits, Heracles tosses the snakes aside.

Heracles: And so, with the defeat of the serpents, I performed my first big heroic act! And gave my brother an inferiority complex that would haunt him throughout his life. Ah, well, omelettes, eggs, you know how it goes. Despite this glaring evidence of who my real father was, my step-father did his best to raise me as his own. Still, I could be a difficult child, always getting into scrapes and shenanigans . . .