Hercules and the Twelve Labors: A Graphic Novel

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by

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Hercules now found himself exiled to Mt. Cithaeron for his crime... and his temper.

while there, he slew a lion that had been plaguing the area - he was rewarded 50 women for 50 nights.

Later, Hercules inadvertently became involved in defending Thebes, his homeland, from King Erginus and his troops.

He proved invaluable in battle and they were victorious!

For this, Creon, King of Thebes gave Hercules a wife - Megara.

For some time, their lives were full of peace and joy as they raised a family.

Sadly, this wouldn't last.

This, Hercules, is my daughter. Please, she is yours and we are forever grateful to you.
But, in the area of Hercules’ destiny, there ruled Eurystheus, King of Mycenae. This was a king controlled not only by greed and jealousy but by Hera as well. As such, he took pleasure in commanding Hercules to demonstrate his own royal power—the more demeaning the order, the better. After an especially unpleasant command, the frustrated Hercules insulted both the king and Hera!

**AND THAT’S WHEN THE TROUBLE BEGAN…**

Hera sent a fit of blind rage upon our hero—daring him to kill his entire family and his happiness as well! Only then did he realize what he had done!

Hercules, in order for your soul to be purified, you must go to Eurystheus and endure his twelve contests… only then will you obtain the immortality granted to you by your godly birth.

Hercules then sought out the Oracle at Delphi, a known refuge to lost souls for guidance.
MUCH TO THE DELIGHT OF EURYSTHEUS AND THE CHAGrin OF HERCULES, THIS BEGAN... THE TWELVE LABORS!

HERCULES' FIRST TASK WAS TO LOCATE AND SLAY THE MASSIVE LION OF THE NEMEAN VALLEY. THE BEAST HAD BEEN A PLAGUE UPON THE VALLEY AND HAD BEEN KILLING BOTH PEOPLE AND LIVESTOCK FOR MANY TERRIFYING MONTHS.

Thus, into the countryside he went.

AFTER DAYS OF SEARCHING, HERCULES FINALLY FOUND THE GREAT LION... IN ALL HIS AWESOME POWER!

His arrow, however bounced harmlessly to the side!

With an arrow of silver Hercules released his bow.

Again, Hercules aimed and released.
Amazingly, this second silver arrow was simply brushed away like a fly!

Dumbfounded, Hercules sought another weapon... a strong club of olive wood.

Then, as quietly as possible, he approached the sleeping cat and swung with all his might!

THWACK!

This blow, meant to kill, served only to anger the lion and begin a ferocious wrestling match!
This match was not decisive and the lion retreated to its den.

...Hercules followed.

There, he attacked with his club when he could.

...And hid when he couldn't.

Finally, they grappled and a hammerlock brought death to the cat!

Using the lion's own claws—for no blade could pierce the hide—Hercules fashioned a naturally armored coat from the cat's pelt.

Despite the completion of the task, Hercules found himself banished from Mycenae upon his return. Eurystheus was petrified by Hercules' might and ability to survive such a suicide mission. So, he was forced to camp outside the city and wait for further instructions.
A Messenger, Kopreus, informed Hercules that Eurystheus wanted him to kill the Hydra of Lerna, a massive nine-headed serpent.

For this dangerous task, Hercules' half brother Iolaus joined him.

Together, they journeyed to the swamp of Lerna at the edge of the Argolic Gulf.

A nine-headed serpent is not a difficult thing to find and, soon, they did!

Ruh... Ruh... Rub his belly!?
HERCULES FIRST SHOT
A SILVER ARROW

- SNAP -

...TO NO AVAIL!

PLAN BETA THEN!

THE CLUB WAS NEXT!

BUT, WHERE ONE HEAD DIED

...TWO MORE GREW!

THEN, TO ADD TO THE PERIL,
HERA SENT A HUGE CRAB TO
FURTHER BURDEN HERCULES.

THIS DID NOT LAST!

STOMP!!

GET... AWAY... FROM ME,
BY ZEUS! YOU'RE
LIKE A CANCER!!
Eventually, our heroes found that if Iolaus seared the neck right after Hercules crushed one of the beast's heads, it would die.

This they did until each head had perished.

Once victorious, Hercules dipped each of his arrows in the poisonous innards of the Hydra—rendering them even more deadly.

Finally, Hercules and Iolaus went home.

But, the celebration did not last long.

Sorry Hercules, I'm afraid your success is unacceptable—you were to receive no help from Iolaus and, since you did, I can't recognize your completion of the job.

One day, Eurystheus, you'll pay for this! I swear it!!

Disgusted, Hercules returned to his camp to await another task.
Eurystheus hated having Hercules so close and quickly sent word that Hercules must now catch the wild boar of Erymanthia—a land far from Mycenae.

In his travels, Hercules visited Pholus, a centaur friend, to enjoy a bottle of wine given to Pholus by Dionysus, God of the Vine.

The scent of wine brought belligerent centaurs for miles. The smell alone was so intoxicating that they attacked for just a drink!

Pholus fled, but Hercules fought!

Many a centaur fell to the might of Hercules that bloody day!

Among the injured was Chiron, a centaur god. Sadly, a poisoned arrow could not kill the immortal and would subject him to an eternity of pain and suffering instead!
When Hercules continued his journey, he found that the people of Erymanthia were more than happy to help him on his quest to rid their land of the vicious boar.

The boar, you'll find it in the mountainous forest to the north. Please take this bread in appreciation, Hercules.

Here, you'll need this extra clothing for the mountains.

Kick the hades out of that pig, sonny!

As Hercules moved up the mountains, the air got thinner.

...The weather got colder.

...The snow got deeper.

...And the footprints of the boar became more common — and huge. Footprints they were!

The boar's enormous den soon arose before Hercules with taunts and jeers, Hercules led the boar deeper into the snow, the forest, and the thin air.

Sooo weee!!

...And so did the boar.
THE CHASE WENT ON FOR DAYS.

UNTIL FINALLY, THE BOAR GREW WEARY.

WITH A SWIFT KNOCK TO THE BOAR'S HEAD, HERCULES CAPTURED, TIED, AND HAULED THE BOAR BACK HOME TO MYCENAE ON HIS SHOULDERS!

EURYSTHEUS HID INSIDE A HUGE BRONZE POT TO ESCAPE BOTH HERCULES AND THE BOAR—UNTIL THE BOAR COULD BE PROPERLY SACRIFICED.

IT WASN'T LONG UNTIL KOPRELOS ARRIVED WITH A MESSAGE. UM... YEAH... THERE'S A HIND WITH GOLDEN ANTLERS AND BRONZE HOVES IN PELOPONNESSUS THAT YOU ARE TO RETURN... ALIVE.

KOPRELOS... HOW CAN I HELP YOU?

GO AWAY!
This, Hercules packed the necessities and set out for Peloponessus.

"Stupid King... catch a deer... take out the trash... I'm the son of Zeus for Pete's sake... how dare he talk like that!" grumble grumble.

Finally, Hercules did find a trail and followed the hind for months.

"You haven't really seen it, have you?"

"No... but I've heard stories. True stories. Information about the deer was far easier to find than the doe itself."

"This is getting really, really old."

Despite Hercules' tracking ability, the deer never allowed him to get too close.

Eventually, Hercules noticed that the hind always returned to the highland, after her roams, through one certain path. This path was narrow, steep, rocky, and often quite tiring for the doe - a perfect place for Hercules to catch her.

With a pounce and some quick rope work...

... Hercules captured the hind and headed home.
THE HIND WAS EVENTUALLY RELEASED TO ROAM IN ARGOS—AND HERCULES RESTED FOR THE NEXT TEST.

NEXT, YOU'RE GOING TO THE FOOT OF MT. CYLLENE TO RID THE LAND OF THE FLOCK OF BIRDS THERE—THEY HAVE BEEN EATING PEOPLE AND POLLUTING THE WATER. GOOD LUCK, YOU'LL NEED IT.

AGAIN, HERCULES FOUND PEOPLE VERY WILLING TO AID HIM IN HIS JOURNEY—HE OFTEN RETURNED THE FAVOR BY LENDING HIS MIGHT FOR A TIME.

HOW ABOUT A TAD MORE EAST HERCULES?

WITH THE INFORMATION, THE BIRDS WERE FOUND WITH LITTLE TROUBLE.

THIS DOESN'T LOOK SO BAD.

LUCKILY, HERCULES HAD HIS INPENETRABLE LION FELT

EGAD FEATHERS... LIKE DARTS!!
HERCULES RETURNED THEIR ATTACK WITH POISONED ARROWS. HARD A BIRD DIED... THOUGH THEIR NUMBERS REMAINED ENORMOUS!

MONTHS PASSED THIS WAY UNTIL ONE DAY, HERCULES FEASTED ON A TURTLE AND HAD AN IDEA. HMM... IF I PUT SOME OF THOSE BIRD FEATHERS IN THAT SHELL, TIED IT UP, AND SHOOK IT...

WITH THIS "RATTLE," HERCULES ROOSTED THE BIRDS FROM THE TREES AND SHOT THEM MID-FLIGHT!

WITH SEVERAL SETS OF FEATHERS, HERCULES TRAVELED HOME AND GAVE THEM TO KOPREUS.

SOON, THE BIRDS WERE GONE.
Later, wake up Hercules... your next challenge is to clean the stable of Augeus, King of Elis. Take a bath before you return, ok? Hee! Hee! Hee!

Catching a boat, Hercules found himself nearing the stable in a few days. Ogg... what is that ungodly stench?

That, my friend is where you're going! Ha! Ha! Ha!

Upon finding the stable, Hercules was both impressed by its size and repulsed by the squalor. The land was a deep swamp of ordure and the animals wallowed in their own waste.

Gak

Please take me away!

Hercules took a look at the region...

...and determined that, by using both mind and might, he could complete the task with ease.

From there, our hero met King Augeus and his son, Phyllus; they were eager to eat and talk with Zeus' son.

I see you've got an odor problem. What would you say if I offered to clean your stable for... oh... a tenth of your livestock?

I'd say you've got a deal!!

And the work began!
Next, Hercules cut off the food to the animals, forcing them to roam from the stable, while a herdsman watched over them. He then dug a channel that led downhill from the river to the high side of the stable.

Finally, he dug another channel from the low side of the barn back to a lower point of the river.

The river water rushed in, filled the barn, and was released out the other side of the stable to flow back to the river.

This process was repeated until the stable was spotless.

Augeas, feeling cheated by the case in which Hercules completed the task, refused to pay Hercules' fee and ordered him to leave.

However, Phyleus sided with Hercules and granted him a gold reward and a herald to verify the story. I am so sorry, Hercules. Please, take this along with my thanks.
HERCULES FOUND SOME TIME TO REST BACK IN MYCENAE—UNTIL KOPREUS BROUGHT NEWS THAT HE WAS TO CAPTURE THE WILD BULL RUNNING RAMPAINT ON THE ISLAND OF CRETE. AND, ONCE AGAIN, HERCULES BOARDED A BOAT TO A NEW LAND. INFORMATION WAS PLENTIFUL.

EXCUSE ME, CAPTAIN. WHAT CAN YOU TELL ME ABOUT CRETE AND THIS BULL?

OH YES, LOVELY CITY... RATHER FANATIC ABOUT BULLS THOUGH! SURE, BULLS REPRESENT POWER AND STRENGTH, BUT REALLY, THEY GO A LITTLE TOO FAR. BOY HOWDY, SOME OF THEIR BULL STORIES ARE JUST DISGUSTING!

... VERY PLENTIFUL.

IN FACT, THE BULL YOU WANT WAS A GIFT TO KING MINOS OF CRETE FROM POSEIDON. BUT, WHEN MINOS REFUSED TO SACRIFICE THE BULL TO POSEIDON, THE GOD CAUSED MINOS' WIFE TO FALL IN LOVE WITH THE BULL, AND, IF HAVING THE QUEEN SWEEP OFF HER FEET BY A BOVINE ISN'T BAD ENOUGH, THE BULL THEN WENT MAD AND BEGAN A RAMPAGE ON THE LAND.

... WHICH BRINGS US TO YOUR JOB, HUH? LAST I HEARD, THE BULL WAS LIVING NEAR THE FOOT OF MT DICTE. I WISH YOU WELL.

AFTER TAKING IN THE SIGHTS OF CRETE...

... HERCULES SOUGHT OUT THE BULL.
THE BULL WAS NOT HARD TO FIND

A TRAIL OF DESTRUCTION EARTHQUAKING FOOTSTEPS AND DEAFENING FOOTSTEPS WERE CLEAR FOR MILES!

IN THE BULL'S WAKE WERE TREES TOSSED LIKE TWIGS. BUT, IT WAS IN A CLEARING THAT HERCULES MET THE BULL

THE BULL CHARGED

...AND HERCULES DOGED WITH A JUMP OVER THE BULL!
Again and again, the bull charged. With each pass, Hercules’ dodging improved.

After days of struggle, the bull finally tired enough for Hercules to catch and tie him.

The next few weeks were spent training the bull to obey. Hercules regulated the bull’s food and gave it chamomile to calm it. Though he learned to mind Hercules, it would still attack others. Nevertheless, they returned home.

Eurystheus, of course, was horrified by the bull and released it near Marathon. He then devised a new challenge.

Hercules, you are to capture the horses of Diomedes, King of Bistonia. Return them alive and... he, he... be careful.

Please don’t cover your mouth, your majesty—I can’t understand you.
Hercules began his journey and spoke to many people.

"Bloodthirsty steeds!" "They're extremely ill-tempered!"

"Troughs of bronze!" "Beautiful, beautiful horses!"

"Diomedes feeds prisoners to his horses!" "Chains of iron!"

"Learning, very much!"

In the meantime, Hercules devised a plan: First, he'd allow himself to be captured, and, when they went to feed him to the horses, he'd attack Diomedes.

Far into the countryside, Hercules was captured and taken to the king.

Surprisingly, Diomedes gave him food and wine... lot's of wine.
Pretending to drink and be intoxicated, Hercules was led to a balcony overlooking the corral of man-eating horses.

There, a quick Diomedes tried to push Hercules to his death!

Once Diomedes fell, his horses attacked and his people fled in fear.

...he failed!
Now that they were satiated, Hercules was able to joke the horses to Diomedes' Chariot.

This, he drove home.

Eurystheus preserved the horses, but it wasn't long before a new test was devised.

Sweetie, remember when I told you about the Amazons?

Well, how would you like to have the golden jeweled belt of their queen, Hippolyte?

Thus, Hercules found himself seeking Amazons. But, first, he stopped in Athens.

...To visit an old friend.

Theseus, you ol' dog! How ya been?!

Wow! Great to see you, Herc! Oo... oo... good grip!

HA HA

After choosing 450 of Athens' finest along with nine ships to accompany them, the journey began.

So, Theseus, I got this Amazon gig going on now... don't suppose you and some of your boys would want to join in?

Are you serious? That would be the greatest thing since wheeled chariots! Of course we'll go, by Zeus!
Upon landing at Cappadocia, the adventurer's moved silently towards the Amazon village. Their plan relied on the element of surprise.

A scout brought news from his exploration...

Hercules, the village is just half a day away... and half the Amazons are gone on a raid!

Their security is even lax from inactivity!

Oh yes, this will work out just fine.

At dawn, the men attacked the Amazon village with a shout of "nike!" meaning "victory" in Greek.

Hold it right there, lady!

Men!

Most were captured easily and those that fled were quickly killed.

Queen Hippolyte did escape, but soon came back to trade her jeweled belt for the freedom of her captured sister.

As a twist, theseUS grew smitten with Hippolyte. They were wed and returned to Athens, while Hercules took the belt to Mycenae.

I give them six months.
Eurystheus' daughter loved the belt though he repaid the deed by assigning yet another task to Hercules. He was now to steal the great cattle of Geryon, a grandson of Oceanus, the god of water. Hercules then had to buy himself passage on a Phoenician ship. Here he learned much about Geryon.

Excuse me, sir, I'm trying to find Geryon. Could you maybe...

Geryon? Oh yeah, he's got, like three bodies joined at the waist, a horrible guard, Eurytion, and a vicious two-headed dog named Orthrus to protect his cattle. No one really knows where he is—"where the sun sets" is my closest guess.

Hercules travelled for months—farther away from home than he'd ever been. Finally, he found the cattle...

That's when Orthrus attacked!

The brother of Cerberus was a powerful foe. But...

...Hercules' lion pelt protected him, and his club brought death to the hound!
Orthrus' howls brought Eurytion.

Thanks to the pelt, the dispute was short.

Hercules took Eurytion's horse and herded the cattle towards home. But, after days of following them, Geryon caught up to them.

Geryon, I'm just following Erystheus' orders. Leave me be, and I'll let you live.

Geryon, though, paid no heed and threw six spears simultaneously... and with perfect aim!

Once again, the pelt saved Hercules!

It was then that Hercules slew Geryon with a poisoned arrow. Going home, though, he was forced to box the wicked King Eryx of Sicily to regain a lost bull found on his land.

Hercules triumphed!
The king, using his royal authority, claimed the victory must be two out of three—he won round two. With the score tied, Hercules noticed that Erax used his whole body to get more force behind his punches. This, Hercules did in round three with great success.

Hercules' blows killed the king and he returned home.

The eleventh contest—to retrieve three apples of Hesperides came without delay.

Thus, Hercules set out with Iolaus at his side.

Like many travellers near Delphi, they were attacked by Cycno, a hideous son of Ares, god of war. Here, Ares was actually driving Cycno's chariot. Since Hercules had sworn to rid the world of monsters, he resisted the beastly rogues. Hercules and Cycno both leapt from their chariots!

The giants clashed!
But a spear to the neck of Cycnus ended the fight...temporarily!

My son! You killed my son!!

Ares attacked!!

Then, Iolaus returned home with Cycnus' armor as a prize for the victory.

Good luck, my friend.

Hercules travelled on—only to meet Prometheus, a giant in distress.

Athena intervened and warned Ares that he would not win this fight—He fled with a wounded leg.

Prometheus had been chained to a cliff and cursed with an eagle to forever feast on his liver as punishment from the gods for giving fire to man.
Hercules slew the eagle with a poison arrow. He then spoke with Prometheus.

I know of your quest Hercules and I'll help you if you can just find a god to give up immortality for me - it's the only way I'll be freed.

I'll do my best, big guy.

After journeying for weeks, Hercules found Atlas supporting the sky.

I'd appreciate the help.

Well, I guess I owe you for saving my brother... if you'll hold this sky thing for a while, I'll be happy to go into the garden of the Hesperides. They are my daughters and I'm sure that they'll give me three apples.

He found Iris, a messenger of the gods, and asked her to find Chiron - forever tormented by his poison arrow wound - and ask him to sacrifice his immortality to save the giant. Chiron was happy to end his own suffering - Prometheus was free!
Hercules shouldered the sky—though it seemed to take Atlas a long, long time to return. Where is that guy?!

Meanwhile... so then I asked this "olive-head" to hold the sky up while I get the apples! Oh man... he didn't! What if he drops it? Oo... I'd better hurry.

Later... much later. You look tired, little man. Why not let me deliver these apples... as a favor of course? Well... o.k. just for a second.

Uhm... sure, I'd be very thankful. But, could you hold the sky for a second while I pad my back?

Abandoning Atlas, Hercules returned home with the apples.

Hey! Get back here you little punk!!

Surprisingly, Eurystheus let Hercules keep the apples and rest several days. This concerned our hero.

Hmmm... odd.
The twelfth and final test came from the king and required Hercules to capture Cerberus, the three-headed watchdog of the river Styx in the land of the dead. To enter Hades, Hercules had to first sacrifice a black bull at the gate in Tapharum. This he did.

Inside Hades, our hero found hundreds of souls waiting to cross the Styx to the land of the dead. Then, Cerberus caught the scent of Hercules, a living soul—the dog attacked!

Hanging planned ahead, Hercules had brought a drugged honey cake to appease the dog. Soon, Cerberus was sleeping soundly.

Then, Hercules awaited Charon to ferry him across the Styx. In return, he gave Charon the customary gold coin. Please, I need to talk with Pluto. It's extremely important. Ooo...gold. Fat lot of good that'll do me down here. Thanks a lot. How can I refuse the son of Zeus?
Once across, Hercules found Theseus imprisoned alive as punishment for entering Hades to seize a bride for a friend. Our hero took this to heart when he approached Pluto to explain his situation.

It's far too dangerous to take Cerberus to the top— I mean... he's kind of bad with kids if you know what I mean. Or, let's make it a little friendly bet— if I'm successful and return Cerberus, you let myself and Theseus free. If I fail, you get to keep both of us.

Intrigued by the wager, Pluto agreed.

But, by the time Hercules crossed the Styx, Cerberus had woken up!

If it were up to me, you could just keep that hutt— smells worse than these dead folk.

Again, Hercules and the dog clashed. Eventually, Hercules knocked Cerberus unconscious with his club. They then proceeded back to Hygenae.
ONLY BY COVERING CERBEROS' LIGHT-SENSITIVE EYES, COULD THE DOG TOLERATE THE SUN. AND, ONLY BY THREATENING SHIP CAPTAINS COULD THEY GAIN PASSAGE HOME BY BOAT. EVEN SO, IT WASN'T LONG BEFORE THEY NEARED MYCENAE.

HERCULES, STOP! DO NOT COME ANY CLOSER... PLEASE! EURYSTHEUS WANTS YOU TO RETURN CERBERUS... NOW! DO THAT AND YOU'RE FREE!!

JUST... JUST KEEP THE DOG THERE!

UPON RETURNING THE DOG, BOTH HERCULES AND THESEUS REMAINED FREE.

OUR HERO THEN WENT ON TO SURVIVE MANY, MANY MORE EXPLOITS. ALL OF WHICH, HOWEVER, FALL OUTSIDE THE REALM OF THIS STORY. END
Bibliography


