

Hercules! Half man, half god! Stronger than any man in the world! He fights for the weak and is always ready to help others when they are in danger.

It is festival time in the city of Themon, and Hercules and his friend Iolaus must choose a beautiful girl to be the festival queen. But there were other beautiful young women before, and they all died after becoming the festival queen. Why did they die? And is Hera — the lover of Zeus, Hercules' father — behind it all? Why does Hera want to kill Hercules? Before all these and other questions can be answered, Hercules must fight the terrible Sea Serpent of Themon.

Hercules: The Legendary Journeys is a Studios USA television series, starring Kevin Sorbo as the famous half man, half god, Hercules. People watch each one-hour show in countries all over the world - Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, China, Greece, Hong Kong, Italy, Mexico, South Africa, Ukraine, Venezuela, and many, many more.

Holix sat on a rock above the beach and watched the white sea birds. He always came here when he could get away from his work with the horses. He looked at the rocks on the beach, near the water. Dangerous rocks.

'A serpent's teeth,' he thought.

It was not a nice thought, but Holix knew there was something out there. Everybody knew it, but nobody talked about it. Holix turned round and looked at Jax, and at the red-haired sisters, Cire and Sana.

'Be happy, Holix,' said Cire.

'Yes, don't sit there and be sad,' said Sana.

Jax was tall with black hair. 'Holix isn't sad,' he said. 'He's thinking important thoughts.'

Cire looked out at the sea. 'There's nothing out there, Holix,' she said. 'Only water.'

Holix looked at Jax, and Jax smiled.

'He's thinking about the festival,' said Cire.

'Must we talk about that?' said Jax. 'After tonight, we'll not get time to think about anything *but* the festival.'

'He's right,' thought Holix. 'For the next week I must work hard with the horses. They must be good to look at, and work well.'

He saw a small fishing boat, far away across the water. 'Is it exciting out there?' he said.

Jax laughed. 'More questions!'

'I like to know things,' said Holix. 'Tell me, what happens to the queen of the festival after everything finishes?'

Nobody answered him.

'She — she goes away,' Jax said, after a minute. 'She usually doesn't want to stay here after something as important as that.'

She usually goes off to see the world.'

'Why?' said Holix. 'It's beautiful here.'

'That's a country boy speaking,' said Sana.

Holix said nothing. He *was* a country boy, but he was good with horses. His boss knew that.

And suddenly *he* knew something. 'The people Cire and Sana work for talk to the men on the council,' he thought. 'They want one of the two girls to be Summer Queen!'

He looked across the sea again. 'Something moved out there!' he said suddenly. 'Not the boat, but

Cire looked out across the sea. 'I don't see anything.'

Holix looked again — and the boat was not there now.



Hercules worked in his mother's garden. Alcmena watched him. 'Is anything wrong, Hercules?' she said.

'Why do you ask?' he said.

'Because you're my son, and I know you,' she said. 'You're ready to move on.'

He smiled at her. 'You're right, but ...' He stopped.

'You're thinking about Hera,' she said.

'I'm waiting for Hera to try and kill me again,' he thought. 'She tried a long time ago and —'

'Forget Hera,' said his mother. But she thought, 'Hera killed his wife and children. He can never forget that. And now he doesn't speak to his father because Zeus was with a woman at the time, and did nothing to stop Hera.'

Hercules looked up and saw Iolaus come into the garden.

Iolaus said hello to Alcmena and smiled at Hercules. 'I'm going to make you a happy man, Hercules,' he said.

'Are you? How?' asked Hercules.

'Women,' said Iolaus. 'Beautiful women! We're going to be judges and choose a queen at a festival!'

Chapter 2 The Green Eyes in the Cave

The city of Themon was a kilometre from the beach, and the council offices were in a building in the city square. There were nine men on the council, and their leader was Titus Perical. But Titus wasn't in the council building today. He was in a cave behind the rocks on the beach. The cave was big and dark. Inside it were two big green eyes in the rock at the back. Titus sat in the cave and said in a tired voice, 'It's getting more and more difficult.' He waited. He could hear the sea. 'Years ago they all wanted to be the queen. Now they only want to have a good time.'

'This will be the last time,' a voice said.

Titus jumped. 'The last time?'

'The festival can go on, but the other thing finishes,' said the voice. 'But you must do the things I tell you.'

'I always do,' said Titus.

'Yes,' said the voice. 'But what about the rebels?'

'Rebels!' said Titus. 'They write words on buildings, that's all. They're nothing!'

'And the ... others?' asked the voice.

'They'll be here in a day or two,' said Titus.

'Good,' said the voice.

Titus asked, 'What about Klothon?'

'Klothon? He always does the same thing.'

'But can he do it in a different place?' asked Titus. 'Can you help me to —?'

Suddenly there was a strong wind inside the cave — and then everything was quiet again. Titus had his answer.

'No, you can't,' he thought.

He went out and began to walk along the beach. 'So who's going to die next week?' he thought. 'Who am I going to choose?' And then he saw the two beautiful young women on the beach. Two beautiful young *queenly* women.

He stopped and looked up at the sky. 'Thank you!' he said. 'Now, I must say the right words, and perhaps give them something nice.' He smiled. 'The judges can't say "we don't like your new queen", because they aren't going to live to say it.'



'No,' Hercules told Iolaus.

'Themon's a nice place,' said Iolaus.

'Why don't you go, Hercules?' said Alcmena.

Hercules didn't answer.

'We can judge the beautiful girls, choose a queen, and be out of there before you know it,' said Iolaus.

'Oh, OK,' Hercules said after a minute.

But he wasn't happy. 'Is somebody watching me?' he thought. 'Is there some danger waiting for me there?'

The two of them walked all the next day. Iolaus talked a lot. And that night, under the trees, Hercules couldn't sleep.

'Why did they ask Iolaus?' he thought. And when he closed his eyes, he thought he heard far-away voices.

By the next afternoon Hercules was happier. But Iolaus was very quiet. 'Are you OK?' Hercules asked him.

'I slept badly,' said Iolaus, 'and I thought I heard voices.'

Hercules stopped. 'What voices?' he said.

Iolaus turned round and looked past Hercules. His hand moved to his sword. 'Their voices?' he said.

Hercules didn't turn to look at the men behind him because now there were men behind Iolaus, too.

And there was no time to talk.

Chapter 3 Bandits on the Road

The bandits had something round their heads. Hercules could only see their eyes. They wore shirts with red squares on them, and they had swords in their hands.

Hercules spoke quietly to Iolaus. 'What do you think?'

'Let's cut off some heads,' said Iolaus.

The bandits made noises, and their leader looked at Hercules. 'There are ten of

us and only two of you.'

'Listen, we have an important job to do in Themon,' said Iolaus. 'Why don't you move out of the road?'

One of the bandits laughed and said, 'You're afraid!'

Iolaus looked at him. 'It was a mistake to say that,' he said quietly. Then he ran at the five in front of him. He hit two of them with his sword, and they fell.

At the same time, Hercules ran at the leader and the other bandits. The leader jumped away, and one of the other bandits tried to cut off Hercules' head. Hercules moved quickly, took the bandit's sword away from him and hit him on the head.

'Get them!' the leader cried.

Iolaus had one bandit in front of him and one behind. They ran at him with swords in their hands, but Iolaus pushed their swords down and they hit their heads together and fell.

'Get them!' the leader cried again.

But the other bandits ran away, and the leader soon followed them.

'They weren't very good,' said Hercules.



Every day more and more people arrived in the city for the festival. Holix was very tired. He worked with the horses day and night — he wanted them to be ready.

'Take an hour off and go for a walk,' his boss told him.

'Thanks,' said Holix. 'Cire and Sana want to be Summer Queen. I'm happy for them, but ... people say, "Every seventh queen went away and never came back." Why?'

'Don't ask questions!' his boss told him.

So Holix walked down to the beach. He saw Cire sitting on a rock with her face in her hands. She looked up. 'Holix,' she said. 'Help me. I don't want to die!' And she put her arms round him and started crying.



Jax walked quickly through the north of the city. The streets were quiet here. He looked round, but could see nobody behind him. Then he went into a house. A woman sat in the far corner of a dark room. Jax could not see her face. 'Did Rotus and his men do the job?' he asked.

'No,' said the woman.

'But there were ten of them!' he said angrily.

'They had to fight two very unusual men,' she said.

'What do we do now?' he said.

'We try again,' she said. 'There's lots of time.'

'Can we stop them?' said Jax.

She laughed. 'No, we can't stop them, Jax.'

'So Hercules and Iolaus will get here, and they'll choose a Summer Queen,' said Jax. 'Then the people *aren't* going to tell Titus, "You're finished! Get out of

Themon!" But that was the plan. Right?' He was angry. 'We write clever words on buildings, and we tell people, "Titus isn't a god. Why can't we have a new council leader?" But half the people can't read and the other half don't listen ...'

'*You* listen, Jax,' she said, 'and then leave everything to me.' And for the next two hours they talked about their plans.



Cire stopped crying, but did not move her arms from Holix.

'*Why* are you going to die?' he asked.

'I got out of bed and heard them talking last night,' she said. Them — the people she worked for. She did not like them, or any of their eight children. 'They said something about a past queen. They found her the day after Titus crowned her. Well — some of her. Her foot and her leg.'

Holix found it difficult to speak. 'Perhaps ... she ...' He stopped.

'You were right,' Cire said. 'Every seven years, one festival queen goes away and she doesn't come back.'

What could he say? This was the seventh year. 'Perhaps they aren't going to choose you. No — well — yes! You're the most beautiful, and —' He stopped. His face was red.

She laughed, and put her face next to his. They sat quietly. 'There was a visitor with them,' said Cire. 'It was Titus. They didn't want Sana to be queen, so Titus said, "Money to the gods can do that." They gave him some money.' She looked at Holix. 'They want me to die, I know it! I'm going to be Summer Queen, and I'm going to die!'

Chapter 4 The Freedom Fighters

Hercules and Iolaus walked together.

'We can stop for the night soon, then start again early tomorrow,' said Hercules. 'We can be in Themon by early afternoon.'

'You talked in your sleep last night,' said Iolaus.

'I had a bad dream,' said Hercules.

'About Hera?' said Iolaus.

'Yes,' said Hercules. 'About her green eyes. They watched me from the darkness. I wanted to run away, but I couldn't. And I could hear her laughing.'

'Are we going to have problems at this festival because of her?' said Iolaus.

'No ... I don't know,' said Hercules. 'It was only a dream.'

And then somebody hit him on the head and everything went black.

Minutes later, he opened his eyes. He turned his head and saw his friend on the floor near him. Iolaus made a noise and Hercules tried to move across to him.

A voice said, 'Don't move. Your friend's OK.'

Hercules sat up. They were in a big cave, and he saw the bandits on rocks near them. He could see some of their faces now. 'They're very young,' he thought.

'Who are you?' Iolaus asked them.

'The Themon Freedom Fighters,' said one bandit.

'You're ... rebels?' said Iolaus.

'We want freedom for the people of Themon,' said the bandit. 'Freedom from Councillor Titus Perical.'

'That's right!' and 'Yes!' said the rebels.

'You tell them, Rotus!' called a small voice.

Rotus said, 'The people can't ... do things! Titus stops them. He makes things . . . difficult. It's time for him to go! Twenty years is too long to be council leader.'

'Yes!' said the rebels. 'Right! Too long!'

'You're the best, Rotus!' called the small voice.

Hercules looked at Iolaus. 'Are you OK?' he asked.

'Not too bad,' said Iolaus, 'But these people —!'

'Be careful!' cried the small voice. 'I can hear you!'

'Who *is* that?' said Iolaus.

Rotus looked at Hercules and Iolaus. 'Titus wants you at the Summer Festival. But we don't, you see. So you'll stay here and leave when the festival's finished.'

'You can't do that!' cried Iolaus.

'You're here and the festival starts in the morning,' called the small voice.

'Be quiet!' said Iolaus. 'You talk too much!'

Somebody ran across and stopped in front of Iolaus. 'You be quiet!' It was a young woman.

Iolaus's mouth fell open. 'I-I'm sorry. I didn't know —'

The rebel's face went red and she walked away.

'Venitia gets angry sometimes,' said Rotus.

'Listen,' Hercules said to Rotus. 'We're only going to choose a Summer Queen. But perhaps we can help you.'

'We don't want your help,' said Venitia.

'Why don't the people of Themon choose a different leader?' Hercules asked Rotus.

'Because things are quite good,' said the rebel. 'And people are afraid they'll get somebody worse.'

'Things *aren't* very good, Rotus,' said Venitia.

'No, they're not!' cried the other rebels.

Iolaus moved nearer to Hercules. 'We must get out of here,' he said quietly. 'I've got a plan. We take two of their horses, and go.'

'How do we get out of here?' said Hercules.

'That's your job. I thought of the horses,' said Iolaus. Then he laughed and said, 'No, I've got a plan for that, too. When I tell you, run for the door.'

'OK,' said Hercules. 'When?'

'NOW!' cried Iolaus. He jumped up and ran.

Hercules followed him, and the rebels suddenly saw them.

'Get them!' cried Rotus.

Chapter 5 Titus Perical

Six or seven horses were near the trees outside the cave. Hercules and Iolaus jumped on to the backs of two of them, then they hit the others, and the animals ran away into the trees.

Some of the rebels tried to catch their horses, but the others watched Hercules and his friend get away.

'Great!' laughed Iolaus.

'I thought you had a plan,' said Hercules.

'That was the plan,' said Iolaus.

'Run!' was the plan?'

'It worked,' said Iolaus, and laughed. 'Come on, Hercules. There are only two hours before it gets dark, and those women are waiting for us in Themon!'



They had to find the council offices and meet with Councillor Titus.

'We don't want these horses now,' said Hercules. 'Let's give them to somebody.'

He saw a young man working with some horses in a building near the road, and he went across. The young man came out, and Hercules got off his horse.

'You can have my horse,' Hercules told him.

The young man's mouth fell open. 'You ... I ...?'

'You can have him, yes,' said Hercules.

Iolaus gave the young man his horse. 'My horse, too. Tell me, how do we get to the council offices?'

The young man said something about turning right and then left, then asked suddenly, 'Are you ... Hercules?'

'You see?' Iolaus said to his friend. 'You're famous.'

'Are you going to choose the Summer Queen?' asked the young man.

'Yes,' said Iolaus. 'Now we must —'

'You're going to kill her!' the young man said angrily. And he started to hit Iolaus.

Hercules pulled him off and sat him on the floor. 'Who are you? Why did you do that?' he asked.

'My name is Holix,' said the young man. 'I'm in love with a young woman and you're going to kill her.'



Hercules and Iolaus listened to Holix's story, then walked through the streets to the council offices. It was nearly dark, but they saw ten men outside the building.

'The men of the council,' said Iolaus.

Hercules said nothing. After hearing Holix's story, he thought, 'Hera's going to do something bad to me at the Themon festival. What? Does she want me to try to help Holix's girlfriend, and then kill me? But how?'

One of the councillors turned and spoke to them. 'What do you want?' he said.

'I'm Iolaus,' said Iolaus, 'your festival judge.'

Titus Perical came to meet them. 'You're late.'

'We had ... problems with some rebels,' said Iolaus.

The councillors laughed, and Titus said, 'They try to be difficult, but I don't think they are dangerous.' He began to tell them about the festival. 'You must sit with the council for dinner tomorrow evening, and then judge the young women later. Tonight you'll stay at the White Horse Hotel, but be careful, Hercules. Those rebels will know that you're in town. I don't want anything to happen to you or your friend.'

Hercules and Iolaus walked to the White Horse Hotel. When they were outside, Hercules said, 'You go on in. I must see somebody.'

Iolaus looked at his friend. 'Are you going to see Hera?'

'No, not Hera,' said Hercules. He walked down the road to the sea and waited on the rocks.



Titus did not answer the other councillors when they said, 'Goodnight'. He watched Hercules and Iolaus walk away and thought, 'Did I make a mistake?'

Somebody came up quietly behind him, and he smiled.

'Your people couldn't stop them,' he said.

A woman laughed. 'It's not important,' she said. 'I only wanted them to be late. I didn't want them to have too much time to think.' She laughed again. 'You're not very good at this, my dear.'

He tried to sound important. 'I've done it for twenty years.'

'No, my love,' she said. 'You did all the talking. I did all the other things.'

He put his arms round her. 'Is it finished? Will she ...?'

Jocasta Perical looked up into her husband's eyes. 'We must get out of here before Hera kills us,' she said quietly.

Chapter 6 Klothon

Hercules walked down through the rocks to the beach.

'Why am I doing this?' he thought. 'Because I must have help, or Hera will kill me this time.'

He walked into the sea, and suddenly it began to move round him — and then

up ... up, into a mountain of water, fifteen metres above him. He waited. Now the water had a 'head', 'arms' and 'legs'.

'Hello, Uncle Poseidon,' said Hercules.

Poseidon, god of the sea, got smaller. 'Oh, it's you, Hercules. When did I last see you? A long time ago. Come on.'

He started to move east, and Hercules followed him through the sea. 'Is Alcmena well?' asked Poseidon.

'Very well, thank you,' said Hercules.

'And your friend Iolaus?'

'Well, too, thank you,' said Hercules.

'So?' said Poseidon. 'What's wrong?'

'It's Hera,' said Hercules. 'And Themon's Summer Festival. The council asked Iolaus to be a judge, and I came with him.' Then Hercules told Poseidon about Holix, and about the Summer Queens. 'These young women go away and don't come back,' he said.

'Klothon,' said his uncle.

'What?'

'There's a serpent called Klothon,' said Poseidon. 'It moves in the sea. I see it every three or four years. We fight, but Klothon gets away. It's bad, Hercules.' He looked up at the rocks above the beach. 'They put some child up there, and she thinks, "I'm a queen!". But by morning, she's the serpent's breakfast.'

'Can't you stop it?' asked Hercules.

'No, I can't,' said Poseidon. 'And that's Hera's plan. She knows that you'll try to help the woman. But you can't, and she knows that too, but she wants you to try — and then you'll die.'

'Can I kill this serpent?' asked Hercules.

'Perhaps,' said Poseidon. 'It has a weak place under its head, \ remember that. But first you must catch it. I can't.'

'Thanks,' said Hercules.

After a minute Poseidon went back under the sea, and Hercules walked back to the beach ... Something big and dark watched him from under the water.



Iolaus sat in the White Horse Hotel with a drink in his hand. Suddenly he saw three women at another table, and walked across to them. 'Good evening,' he said, and smiled.

The women looked up. They did not smile.

'Can I sit down with you, Venitia?' he said. He did not wait for an answer, he pulled a chair across to their table.

Venitia wore a pretty dress. The woman on his left had short dark hair. The woman across the table from him had long, black hair and green eyes. She was angry.

'What do you want?' asked Venitia.

'The answers to some questions,' he said. 'What are you three doing in here? Half the city police are looking for you, but you aren't afraid.'

'We don't want to talk to you,' said the short-haired woman.

'Be quiet, Bea,' said Venitia. 'I think he knows.'

'We could kill him,' said the green-eyed woman.

'No, we can't, Zarel,' said Venitia. 'He's a judge.'

Iolaus looked at them. 'So you're *not* rebels,' he said. 'You don't want to throw out the council.'

'That's right,' said Bea.

'Bea!' cried Zarel.

'But he knows,' said Bea.

Venitia looked into Iolaus's eyes. 'Do you have a wife?' she asked suddenly.

'Venitia!' cried Zarel, and she jumped up from her chair and walked out of the hotel.

Bea got up more slowly. 'Sorry,' she said, 'but I must go after her or she'll kill somebody again.'

Iolaus waited for her to go, then looked at Venitia. "'Again'?" he said. 'Did she kill somebody before?'

'You do have a wife,' Venitia said sadly.

'Is this a dream?' thought Iolaus. He put his hand on Venitia's hand — and she smiled.

'Sorry,' she said. 'Why did I say that? I don't know. Then she said, 'Yes, she killed somebody before. But her father is rich and ... and ... and you're right about us.'

'Something's not right in this city,' said Iolaus. 'Hercules and I know that. Perhaps we can help you.'

She smiled. 'You're nice,' she said. He started to speak but she said quickly, 'OK, I'll tell you about Klothon.'

'Who's that?' asked Iolaus. 'Not who — what.' 'OK, what's that?' said Iolaus.

'You must leave before they crown the festival queen, or Klothon's going to kill you,' said Venitia.

Chapter 7 Holix in Danger

Next morning, Iolaus spoke to Hercules at the hotel.

'When you went out last night, I saw three women from the bandit's cave in here and talked to them,' he said. 'They're *not* rebels, but somebody pays them to be rebels.'

'Who?' said Hercules.

'They don't know, but perhaps Rotus does,' said Iolaus. 'He gives the money to

them.'

'Perhaps it's Titus Perical,' said Hercules. 'Perhaps it's his plan to stay leader.'

'Venitia thinks that, too,' said Iolaus. 'And she says that there's a serpent. It kills people.'

'Klothon,' said Hercules.

'You know?' said Iolaus.

'Poseidon told me,' said Hercules.

'She said something more,' said Iolaus. 'What was it? I can't remember.'

'I want to go and talk to Holix again,' said Hercules. 'Come on.'

But when they arrived, Holix had some people with him — Rotus and eight of his bandits! They hit Holix and threw him out into the road. Hercules and Iolaus saw this happen.

'Now I remember,' said Iolaus. 'Venitia said, "Some of the bandits aren't playing games this year."'

'Holix?' called Hercules.

'Hercules,' Holix said weakly. He could not move.

Rotus's men turned to face Hercules and Iolaus, their swords ready, but stopped when they saw that Hercules and his friend did not run away. Rotus cried 'Get them!' from the back. Hercules hit one of the rebels on the head, then threw him into the others. Three of them went down. A big man pushed his sword at Iolaus, but Iolaus moved away quickly and hit the big man on the head. The big man fell on the road. Then Iolaus moved away from a smaller rebel and pushed him to the road. Then he hit *him* on the head.

'There's only two of them!' cried Rotus. 'Get them!'

'Why don't you help?' called one of the rebels. Then Hercules put his hands round the rebel's face and pushed and pulled — pushed and pulled. 'Stop!' cried the rebel. And Hercules said, 'OK' and hit him on the head.

Iolaus laughed and took the rebel's sword. He turned to see three others run at him. With a sword in each hand, Iolaus fought hard. One rebel ran away, but the other two pushed Iolaus down on the road.

'Hercules!' cried Iolaus.

Hercules pulled a long-haired rebel to him, then threw the rebel on to the two near Iolaus. The three rebels fell together — and Iolaus got up.

Hercules started to move to him — but Rotus hit him on the head with something hard — a rock, perhaps — and he went down. For a minute he couldn't hear anything. He waited for Rotus to hit him again, but nothing happened.

Then somebody put an arm round him and helped him to sit up. He looked and saw a dark-haired young woman.

'I'm Bea,' she said.

'Thank you, Bea,' he said. 'Where's Iolaus?'

Iolaus sat a metre or two away, and a young woman was with him. 'I'm here,

Hercules,' he said. 'This is Venitia.'

'Where are the rebels?' asked Hercules.

'Some people saw the fight and called for help,' said Venitia. 'Rotus heard them and he and his men ran.'

Some minutes later, Hercules carried Holix to their hotel. 'He can sleep in my room for an hour or two,' he said.

'I'll stay with him,' said Bea. 'And I'll send somebody to tell his girlfriend.'

'OK,' said Iolaus. He turned to Hercules. 'Now what?'

'Now we go to the crowning place,' said Hercules.

'I'll come with you,' said Venitia. 'I know the quickest road.'

Chapter 8 Cire is Afraid

'Is this the place?' asked Iolaus.

It was a few metres of grass above the rocks and the beach. Nothing more. It was early in the afternoon and a cold wind came in from the sea. Hercules looked down at the beach. Iolaus stood next to him.

'Hera,' Hercules said after a minute. 'She's near.'

Iolaus looked at the sky. 'It's getting darker,' he said. 'Is something going to ...?'

'Yes ... something ...' Hercules turned and looked at Venitia. Then, suddenly, he put a hand on her arm. 'You're Titus's daughter. Am I right?'

'What?' cried Iolaus.

'Look at her eyes, and her mouth,' said Hercules. 'They're Titus's eyes and mouth. She's his daughter.'

'Yes, and I'm not a good rebel,' she said.

'Does he know?' said Iolaus.

'No,' said Venitia.

'You helped us back there,' said Hercules. 'What happened between you and your friends, and Rotus?'

She did not speak for a minute or two, but then she said, 'It was OK at the beginning, then something happened and it was all different. There's a man — Jax. He's Holix's friend. He tells us, "Do this, do that." But somebody tells him first.'

'Your father?' said Iolaus.

'Yes, I think so,' said Venitia. 'But then Rotus wanted us to fight people. I didn't like it, but he said, "Do it, or I'll kill you!"'

Hercules was quiet for a minute. He looked down at the rocks. 'What brings Hera here?' he said. 'There must be something. Perhaps a place ... Iolaus, stay here and look.' He looked at Venitia. 'What's Rotus's plan for the festival? Something bad, I know. But what? We must know.'

'I'll go back and talk to the others,' she said.

Hercules went back to the White Horse with her, and went quickly to his room. He pushed open the door — and stopped. A woman stood next to the bed. She had a knife in her hand.

'Hercules, no!' Holix cried from the bed, before Hercules could jump at her. 'It's OK.'

'Hercules?' said the woman. She put down the knife.

'Yes,' said Holix. 'This is Hercules.' He sat up in the bed. 'This is Cire,' he told Hercules.

'I ran away from my boss and his family,' she said. 'I was afraid.' She told Hercules her story, then began to cry.

'You aren't going to die,' Hercules told her. 'But you must go back.'

'What?' cried Cire. 'Go back? Why?'

'Because then I can help you,' said Hercules. 'Listen, this isn't about you, it's about me. The plan is for me to die, not you. But it's not going to happen.'



Iolaus walked along the beach to the tallest of the dangerous rocks. Suddenly, he looked up and saw a large sea bird fly down at him! Iolaus moved quickly and hit the bird with his sword. Then two more came at him — and two more! He fought them with his sword, but more flew at him. He started to run to the rocks ... and found a cave!

Iolaus ran inside. It was dark, but the birds didn't follow him into the cave. 'So *this* is Hera's place!' he thought. 'I must go and tell Hercules.'



'... and that's my plan.' Hercules stopped talking and looked at Holix and Cire.

'It's not going to work,' said Cire. 'We'll all die.' 'I don't think I can walk, Hercules,' said Holix. He looked lovingly at Cire. 'But for her, I can do anything.' Cire started to cry.

The door opened suddenly and Iolaus ran in. 'Hercules, I found it!' he cried.



Rotus looked at the dead man on the grass outside the rebels' cave. It was Jax. 'He was too friendly with Titus,' said Rotus. 'I had to kill him.'

'Hercules will be angry,' said one of the rebels.

'Hercules is no problem,' said Rotus.

The other rebels didn't answer.

'Remember the plan,' Rotus said when they were all on their horses. They followed him away from the cave.



Cire's boss was angry with her, and his wife wanted to kill her. But Sana said to them, 'The council are waiting.' And the two sisters went to their room and started to get ready.

'Where were you?' Sana asked Cire.

Cire didn't answer.



Venitia couldn't find the rebels, and there was nobody to talk to. Her mother was at the festival, her father was with the council, and Iolaus was with Hercules.

She put on her festival dress. 'Everything is going wrong!' she thought. 'I don't want to be a rebel, and Iolaus is always talking about serpents and bad gods! He doesn't *look* at me! And I'm late for the festival, too.'

Chapter 9 Titus Tells All

There were hundreds of people in the square. The rich people sat nearest the council building. Hercules and Iolaus sat at a big table outside the doors of the council rooms.

Everybody's looking at us,' said Iolaus.

'Eat your food,' said Hercules. Jocasta Perical sat near him, but did not speak to him. Venitia sat next to Iolaus.

'How much time before ...?' Iolaus asked him.

'I don't know,' said Hercules. He saw somebody come and say something in Jocasta's ear, and her face went white. She got up quickly and took Titus with her.

Hercules waited for Titus and Jocasta to get to the council office doors, then he jumped up and followed them. He heard Jocasta say, 'They found him by the cave. The other men weren't there.'

Titus saw Hercules and put a hand on Jocasta's arm. 'Hercules!' he said, and smiled. 'Let's sit down and —'

'What did Hera say to you?' asked Hercules.

'What — what are you talking about?' said Titus.

Jocasta tried to leave, but Hercules stopped her. 'You know,' he said.

Suddenly, Titus was tired and old. He spoke quietly. 'Hera said, "I'm going to tell you to do things. Do them, or I'll kill your wife and daughter, and everybody in the city."'

'Don't be angry with him, Hercules,' said Jocasta. 'Titus is a good man. He's good for Themon.'

'And the rebels?' asked Hercules.

'I started them,' said Jocasta. 'Titus didn't know about them before this year.'

Hercules looked at them. 'Now I understand! You,' he told Titus, '*couldn't* stop. But you —' to Jocasta, 'you *wanted* him to stop. You don't want him to be council leader next year. Right?'

Jocasta smiled. 'That's right. We planned to leave tomorrow night.'

'We have a small place,' said Titus, sadly. 'Near the mountains. No sea birds. Nobody to ask me to do things.' He looked at Hercules. 'What happens now? Hera ...?'

'She wants me, Titus,' said Hercules. 'She told you to ask Iolaus to come here because she knows I usually go to places with him. She'll do anything to get me. She'll kill everybody in this city'

'But we can't stop the festival,' said Titus. 'All these people ... the gods will be ... What are you *doing* about it? You're here, but you're doing nothing!'

'We've got a plan,' said Hercules.

'How can we help?' asked Jocasta.

'Do the usual things,' he said. 'Nothing more.'

He went back to the table, and they followed him.

'I'm right,' he thought. 'I know I'm right. But am I ready?'

Chapter 10 The New Summer Queen

It was time. Titus Perical got up from his chair and began to speak to the people of Themon. In front of him was a line of five young women, and Titus smiled at them.

Hercules looked at them. It was easy to see Cire and her sister, with their red hair. They were in the centre of the line.

Titus talked about the women's beauty, and about the important job of Summer Queen. Then he stood in front of each young woman, and talked about her and her family.

Hercules heard a noise behind him and looked round. He saw one of the doors of the council rooms begin to open.

'Who's that behind the doors?' he thought. 'All the councillors are out here.' He put a hand on his friend's arm. 'Iolaus,' he said quietly, and stood up.

'Now?' said Iolaus. 'But the women aren't —'

Hercules moved quickly back to the doors. Now Iolaus saw them opening slowly. He smiled at Hercules and said, 'OK!' very quietly.

Hercules pushed the doors — hard!

There were cries of 'Aaagh!' and 'Oooh!' when the doors closed, and more cries when Hercules pulled them open again, and he and Iolaus went inside.

They saw three rebels on the floor, and Rotus with his mouth open saying, 'What — who —?' Iolaus ran at the rebels with his sword and Hercules jumped on Rotus, and the rebel leader fell. Then somebody hit Hercules on the back, and he turned and saw an angry woman with long black hair. It was Zarel. He put a hand on her head and pushed her down on the floor. 'Don't move, my friend,' he told her, 'or I'll kill you!' She did not move.

Iolaus fought two rebels with his sword. 'Hercules!' he called. But Hercules walked across to Rotus and put a foot on the rebel leader's back.

Iolaus moved quickly and one of the rebel's swords went into the door. Iolaus kicked him to the floor. The other rebel started to move away, but saw Hercules. He

turned again — and Iolaus hit him hard, and he went down.

Iolaus went across to Hercules. 'Why didn't you help me?' he said.

Hercules smiled and looked down at Rotus. 'I didn't want him to get away,' he said.

'Why must I do all the hard work, and you get the easy jobs?' said Iolaus.

Hercules laughed, then said, 'Get some of the police to take Rotus and the others away. Then we can go back to the festival.'

Jocasta came in. She looked at Rotus. 'You killed Jax!' she said, angrily.

'He was bad,' said Rotus. 'And you're bad, too.'

Titus came in. He looked at his wife, and at the rebels on the floor. 'What - ?' he began.

'The rebels are finished,' said Hercules.

'But this is only the beginning,' said Iolaus.

Some minutes later, Titus's men arrived and took Rotus and the other rebels away. Hercules and Iolaus went back to their table with Titus and Jocasta.

'Tell me,' Hercules said to Titus. 'Why did you say, "Yes" to Hera - that she could take the festival queen?'

'Jocasta and I have nothing, Hercules,' said Titus. 'The city pays for our house, for everything. I knew this was the last time, and I looked at the things we had, all the things we didn't have ... and I was afraid. We had very little.'

'Hercules, we haven't got much time,' said Iolaus.

'Your plan?' said Titus.

'Yes,' said Hercules. 'Titus, you must *not* choose a new queen. Do you understand? *Don't choose a queen!*'

Titus walked away. He asked the five young women to stand in a line and look out at the people. Everybody started to get excited. Then Titus asked Iolaus and Hercules to come and stand next to him. The people got more excited than before.

Hercules looked at the sky. It was black.

Iolaus walked slowly up and down the line. He looked at each of the young women. The wind was strong now, and Hercules pushed his hair back off his face. He looked across at Iolaus and said the word 'Now' with his mouth, but made no sound.

Iolaus smiled and put a hand on Cire's arm. She began to move away from him, but Hercules put his hand in hers. 'Don't be afraid,' he said. 'Everything will be OK.'

Everybody was excited, and there was noise of voices all round the square. Titus put the festival crown on Cire's head, then Iolaus took her hand and together they walked into the centre of the square. Hercules followed them, and people threw flowers and began to sing happily.

'Come on, Holix!' thought Hercules. 'It's time —'

Then he heard a noise at the south of the square, and a big white horse pushed

through the people. A man in black from head to foot was on the horse's back.

Suddenly, everybody was quiet and afraid. They saw the man in black pull Cire up on to the back of the horse and turn the animal round.

'Be quick, Holix!' thought Hercules.

Holix gave a cry, and the horse pushed through the people again. Holix got across the square, but his horse suddenly stopped, kicked out its front legs, stood up on its back legs — and Holix fell off.

The police ran across to Holix before he could get up. Two policemen got the horse, and one helped Cire to get off the animal. There was nothing Hercules could do.

The people thought all this was something new and exciting for the festival. Something planned by Titus. Titus smiled, turned to Jocasta and said something, so that they thought they were right.

Soon after, Cire was back on the horse, and Titus told the judges and some of his men, 'Take the queen to her place above the rocks.' But before they went, he asked Hercules, 'What happened to your plan?'

'The boy fell off the horse,' said Hercules.

'Hera will get me for this!' cried Titus. 'Her place —'

'I know!' said Hercules. 'Iolaus found it this morning.'

Titus was tired, and he walked sadly away.

Hercules was angry. 'Klothos is waiting,' he thought. 'Before the sun comes up tomorrow, one of us will be dead.'

Chapter 11 Fight to the Finish

The wind was very strong now. People in the city went quickly into shops or back to their houses. The sky was dark, and it started to rain.

Hercules could hear the noise of the sea. He saw it move up across the beach, on to the grass, and over to the road.

'The city's in danger!' thought Hercules.

He walked on, and saw three of Titus's men — they had Cire. 'Help!' she cried. She tried to get away from them but they were too strong.

'Hercules!' called Iolaus. 'They won't listen!'

Hercules pulled one man off her. 'Let her go!'

'I can't!' said the man. 'They'll kill me!'

But suddenly, all three men turned and ran.

'Hercules, look!' cried Iolaus.

Hercules turned ... *and saw the green eyes of Klothos.*

He ran and stood by Cire, and Iolaus came and stood next to him. They were only three metres from the rocks, and the serpent's head was above them.

Iolaus had his sword in his hand.

'Don't move!' Hercules told Iolaus and Cire.

He could see the teeth in the serpent's mouth, and the white place under it. 'Its weak place!' thought Hercules. Then he looked down and saw the serpent's feet on the beach.

'Get back!' cried Iolaus.

Hercules moved back quickly — and the serpent's head came down past him — fast!

Next Klothon went for Iolaus, and Iolaus hit it with his sword. The serpent made an angry noise.

'Iolaus!' called Hercules. 'Get it to come after you!'

Iolaus started to call the serpent, and to dance about in front of it. Klothon angrily tried to get him, but Iolaus fell down on the grass and put his arms over his head.

Hercules quickly ran across to the serpent, jumped on to its ear — and pulled! He stayed on the ear for half a minute, then jumped off and cried, 'Iolaus, run for the trees!' He ran to the trees, and pulled Cire with him. Iolaus followed.

'Why doesn't it come up from the beach?' said Iolaus.

'The sea is pulling it back,' said Cire. She looked at them. 'Wait a minute. Hercules, you can't...!' She didn't finish.

'Follow me,' Hercules told his friend. Then he turned to Cire and told her his plan.

'But I can't —!' she began.

'You can,' said Hercules, quietly.

Iolaus was tired of waiting. 'Let's go,' he said.

Cire walked away to their left.

Klothon tried to get her, but she was too far from the beach. She didn't jump or run back. Suddenly she ran *to* the serpent, and under its mouth. The serpent's head went up, and she cried out to it. 'Come on! Come on!'

Hercules and Iolaus moved in. It was now or never! The sea came angrily over the rocks ... Klothon's head went up ... Hercules and Iolaus ran in and jumped on the serpent's ear ... and pulled! Down ... down ...

Hercules could see its big green eye. But he and Iolaus were too heavy for it. Its head went down — on to a tall, thin rock — *and the rock cut through the serpent's weak place*. Klothon cried out. 'Aaaaaagh!'

Then Hercules fell... down ... down ... and hit his head. His eyes closed.

Iolaus fell on the beach, but was quickly up again.

He ran to the cave. He saw the green eyes inside.

Five minutes later, he was back outside again ... and saw a small 'mountain' of sea in front of him.

Chapter 12 Time to Go Home

A voice said, 'Open your eyes, Hercules.'

Hercules opened them. Everything was quiet on the beach, and the sky was blue again. He looked up ... and saw Poseidon. He remembered everything then, and looked round for Iolaus. He saw his friend sleeping on the beach near him.

'Iolaus is a good man,' said Poseidon. 'He broke up everything in Hera's cave, and that stopped the wind and rain.'

Hercules looked at the rocks. Klothon was not there.

'I left its head,' said Poseidon. 'So people will know.'

Hercules saw the people then, above him on the grass. 'Where's Cire?' he asked.

'Sleeping under the trees,' said Poseidon.

Hercules looked at his uncle, 'I stopped Klothon. Right? It couldn't get up the rocks because you stopped it. Then I fell and you caught me. What did I hit my head on?'

'On my head,' said Poseidon, and smiled.

'Hera will be angry with you,' said Hercules.

'She doesn't like me,' said Poseidon. 'But she'll be angrier with you — you got away from her again.'

Hercules smiled. 'Thank you, uncle,' he said.



Hercules, Iolaus and Cire walked back to Themon later. There were no windows in some of the houses, and trees were down across the road. 'Hera's wind,' thought Hercules.

Jocasta was happy to see them at Titus's house. She put her arms round them, then took them to a room at the back. Titus was in bed, his eyes shut.

He opened them. 'Wh—what happened?' he asked.

'Everything's OK,' said Hercules. 'It's finished.'

Titus tried to laugh, but couldn't. 'Sorry,' he said. 'I —'

'It was Hera from the beginning,' said Hercules. 'You couldn't fight her.'

Titus shut his eyes again and went to sleep.

They followed Jocasta past one of the other rooms, and saw Holix and Cire. 'They're going to live with us,' said Jocasta. 'They'll have a little house. Holix is good with horses.'

'But he can't stay on them!' said Iolaus.

Hercules laughed, and Jocasta thanked them again at the door. 'We'll come back when Titus is better,' said Hercules. He and Iolaus started to walk away down the street.

'Let's get something to eat and get out of this place,' said Iolaus.

'What about all those beautiful women?' asked Hercules. 'They're all waiting to hear your stories.' He smiled.

'Hercules, I want to —'

But then a voice from inside the Pericals' house called his name. A nice voice.

A loving voice. A *small* voice. 'lolaus

'I - er - I'll catch up with you later,' said lolaus, and ran off. Hercules laughed and walked on. It was time to go home.