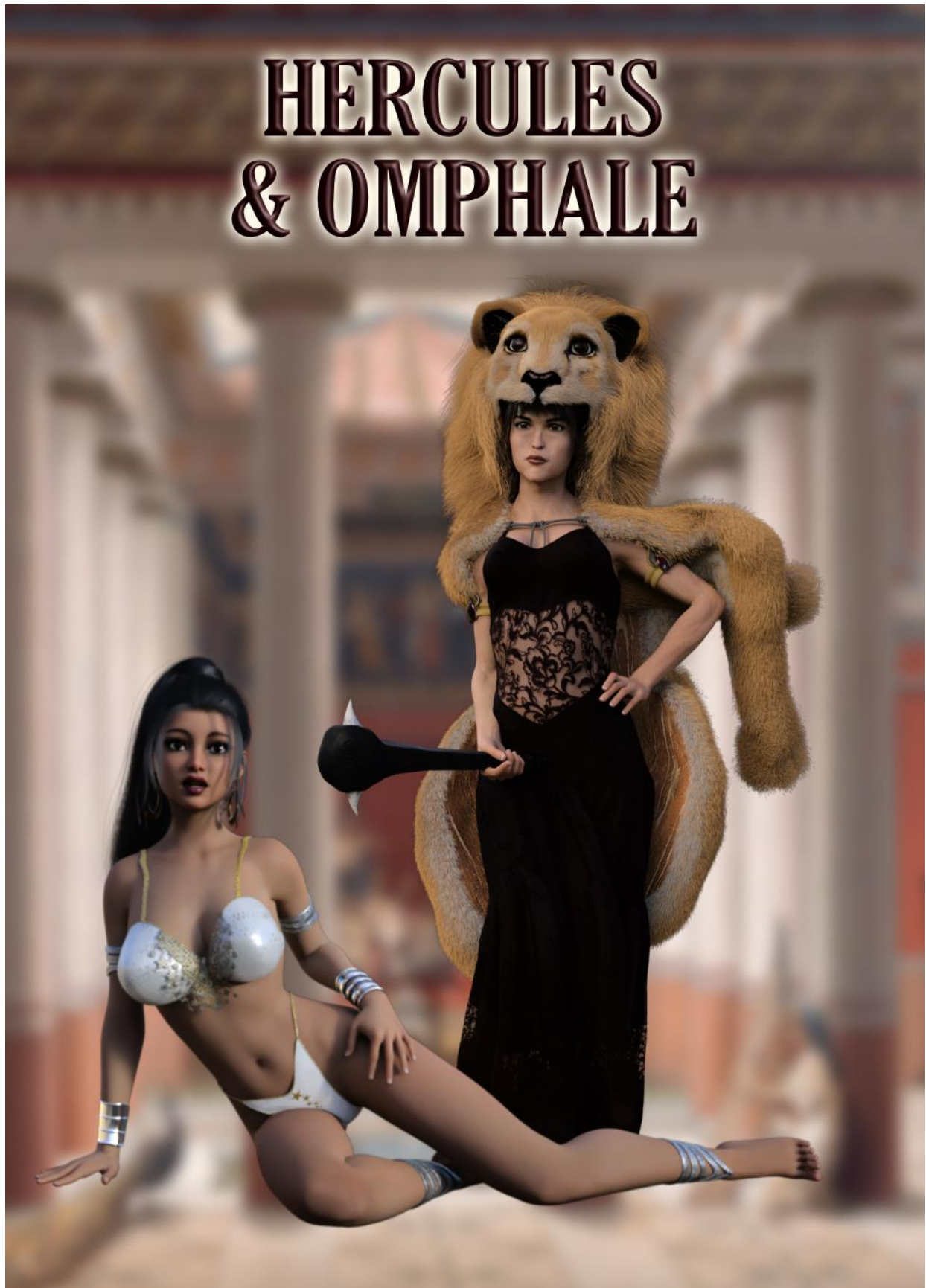


HERCULES & OMPHALE



Hercules and Omphale

By

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What does it mean to be a man? Hercules wondered. He had his arms behind his back as he tied his top on, feeling the cool, silk cups lift his soft breasts. He looked down at the abundant swell of his cleavage: the fertile hills, the shadowy valley. The man he'd once been still found pleasure in the sight, still felt himself drawn to the promise of such sweet flesh, and yet how could he not blush with shame that this bust belonged to him?

Is it to be strong? He slipped a silver bracelet over his tiny hand and onto his delicate wrist. He held up his hand, enjoying the way the light glinted off his bracelet, his painted nails. He was not strong. No. Not with these soft hands, these graceful, slender arms.



Tightening his ponytail, he slipped sparkling hoops into his ears. He could feel the weight of them tugging on his ears, feel the way they brushed against his cheeks each time he moved.

Adjusting his breasts, running his long nails through his hair, mussing it, teasing it out, he went to his dressing table, the bells at his ankles tinkling prettily. Sitting down on the stone bench before his mirror, he squirmed uncomfortably at the feeling of the cold stone against his nearly bare bottom. Looking in the mirror, he saw the face of a beautiful girl, one who looked like she could have been the sister of his mother, Alcmene. Dipping a brush in a pot of smokey ash, he began to brush it onto his long, curly lashes, his mouth dangling open. As a man, a real man, he'd loved to



watch women paint their faces, making themselves pretty for him, and he'd often teased them about the way they gaped when they did their eyes.

“Aren't you afraid a swallow might fly into your mouth?” He'd say, amused at their female habits, the way they'd moved and talked. “Why do you do that?”

“I don’t know,” the women would giggle, then plead with him. “Stop distracting me!”

It had been so important to them, painting their faces, and he’d laughed at the seriousness with which these silly, feminine creatures had pursued their little purposes.

And now here he was, with the face of his mother, opening a jar of olive oil that had been dyed a cherry red, rubbing it on his plump lips. What made a woman? He wondered, and he was sure that one of those things was making up her face as he was now doing.

He did not want to believe he was a woman now, but how could he deny the weight and thrust of his breasts, the sweet pretty of his face or even, for that matter, the soft mound between his legs?

Could he still call himself a man? Men, he’d always thought, were free, domineering, strong and courageous. Their actions defined them. And what are my actions now, he thought as he took a horsehair brush and dusted his cheeks with coral powder.

Are they the actions of a man?

He heard movement and looked back over his slender shoulder.

“Hera?” One of the other girls, Arachne, called. “It’s almost time for your dance.” Omphale had named him Hera, after his stepmother, a name she knew he hated.

“Thank you,” he called back in his high, soft voice. His dance. He’d been practicing for weeks, and it was *his* dance, made especially for him and which his Queen meant to be his signature: The Dance of Happy Maiden.

He stretched, and he thought back to how all of this had come to pass.



Chapter Two

“Autolycus!” Hercules had bellowed, his mighty club in hand. “Surrender now and face your justice!”

“Yes. I must surrender,” Autolycus had cackled. A scrawny runt of a man and a horse-thief, he had a whiney, high-pitched voice to match his character. “Right after Zeus shaves off his beard!” With that, he’d turned and run down one of the narrow streets of Tiryns, shoving aside women, children and elderly men, who toppled and fell to the dusty earth. Hercules’ blood boiled. “You are a fool and clown!” Autocycles shouted back at Hercules.

Iphitus, a friend of Hercules from their Argonaut days, put a hand on the great man’s shoulder. “Calm yourself,” he said, “you must be—”

Hercules howled like a great beast and leapt in the air, bounding over the fallen folk, rising and rising in a great arch, then landing some 100 yards away, crashing into Autocycles. Hercules pinned the man to ground.

“I surrender,” Autocycles choked out, gasping under the weight of the great man.

“Very well,” Hercules said, restraining his desire to smash the man’s skull. Rising, he took Autocycles’ hand, meaning to help him up, take him in possession and deliver him to the King for sentencing.

“Fool!” Autocycles shouted as he threw a handful of dirt into Hercules’ eyes. He began to struggle, thinking he would pull away as the blinded demi-god sought to clear his eyes, but Hercules ignored the pain, his grip only tightening on Autocycles wrist until they both heard the bone *snap*.

Crying out in pain, Autocycles looked onto Hercules’ dirt smeared face, and he saw death. “Forgive me,” he gasped. “I surrender! I surrender!”

“Too late,” Hercules whispered, lifting the runt above his head.



“Don’t!” Iphitus called.

Hercules hurled Autocycles high into the air and over the city wall. The whole crowd winced as they heard him land, making a sound like a bag of blood bursting upon the hard ground.

Iphitus climbed the wall and looked over.

“Is he dead?” Hercules called.

“Yes,” Iphitus said. “He is very dead.”

Hercules tugged on his beard. “Well, I call that a job well done. Let’s get drunk and find some winsome wenches!”

Iphitus climbed down. “I am not opposed at all to the idea of getting drunk and some good company,” he said. “Yet, and I do not mean to suggest your attitude in any way impeachable, but you did just commit murder.”

“It’s not the first time,” Hercules said, going to a rain barrel, washing his face and then his hands.

“You don’t seem concerned.”

“Why would I be concerned? I am Hercules, son of Zeus.”

The goddess Hera, watching from the heights of Mount Olympus, smiled. “Perhaps not for much longer!”

For a time, it seemed Hercules’ arrogance was not misplaced. He went about his adventures and had forgotten all about the horse thief he’d reduced to a splat.

Drunk and rowdy, Hercules had found himself wrestling with Cygnus, son of Ares, in the streets of Athens outside the Temple to Apollo. “When will you learn?” Hercules had said as he locked his arms around Cygnus

neck and began to choke him out. "Worthy opponent though you may be, I am more a man than you will ever be."

Cygnus, seeing he'd been bested, tapped out. Hercules let him go, giving him a shove and sending him face first into the dirt. "You got lucky," Cygnus said, rubbing his neck.

"Best of three?" Hercules laughed. He loved fighting, especially against men like Cygnus, who imagined themselves his equal. Beating down another man, dominating him, it was a high like no other.

"Once I have caught my breath, I will—"

"Hercules!" A woman had shouted.

Turning, Hercules saw a phalanx of soldiers, their bronze armor glittering in the sun. "Hippolyta?" Hercules had said, confused as he looked upon the tall, broad-shouldered queen of the Amazons, her stoic women warriors arrayed behind her, faces cold and fierce.

"You are ordered to accompany us to Delphi to face judgment from the Oracle Xenochlle for the murder Autocycles."

Hercules hesitated. "Ordered? Who dares order me?"

"Olympus," Hippolyta said.

"And I was having so much fun."

"Well, the fun's over. Come along."

Hercules fell in with the Amazons and, sidling up to Hippolyta, whispered, "Why don't you come by my tent tonight?"

"Why, so you can try and kill me again?"

"It was but a flesh wound and a misunderstanding."

"All the same," Hippolyta, who had been visited by Hera and given word of her plans. "You are my prisoner."

“That doesn’t mean we can’t be lovers. We should let nature take its course. You are a woman. I am a man.”

Hippolyta smiled. “I look forward to your sentencing.”

And so it was Hercules found himself standing before the Oracle, surrounded by Amazons. Hera, too, had come, but disguised as one of the hooded Oracles. Hercules could not help but notice that Queen Omphale of Lydia was there as well, surrounded by her retinue. He had heard legend of her great beauty and was not disappointed.

“The things I would like to do to that body,” he thought, drinking in her fine form. The Queen noticed and smiled, plucking at her hair.

“Let us get right to the sentencing,” The Oracle had said, sitting upon her throne. “For your crimes, Hercules, I do sentence you to serve Queen Omphale for the period of one year.”

“Is that all?” Hercules laughed, once more letting his eyes roam over the Queen’s body. No doubt the queen would long to enjoy his—

“Do NOT look at me!” Omphale shouted, getting to her feet and striding imperiously over to Hercules as one of her shoulders slammed the flat of a spear against the back of his knee and sent him collapsing to the ground.

Hercules’ eyes blazed, but the Oracle shouted, “Obey the Gods! She is now your master!”

Hercules gritted his teeth.

“Give me your club and your lion’s mane cloak!”

Hercules handed over his club, his cloak. He glanced about. Hippolyta and her Amazons were smirking. One of Omphale’s assistants draped his cloak over the queen’s shoulders. “Look at me!” Omphale shouted, putting on a deeper, masculine voice as she waved Hercules’ club in the air.

“Hahaha! I’m the man now! Put on your dress!”

“What?” Hercules said as one of Omphale’s girls came forward, holding a silken dress toward him. Holding it up, he saw it was identical to the dresses worn by the queen’s serving girls. “Why?”

“Because for the next year, you will be one of my *girls*,” Omphale said, giggling. “For the next year, you will live and work as a serving girl.”



Hercules frowned. “So, that’s how it’s going to be?” He said. There was nothing for it. He had no choice, and he slipped into his dress, chagrined, embarrassed, but determined not to let his shame show. One of Omphale’s girls pulled his hair back. He planted a hand on his hip in a mockery of Omphale’s feminine pose and said, “How do I look?”

“Pretty!” Omphale said, laughing, throwing his club over her shoulder.
“You’re going to make such a perfect girl.”

The woman around him all laughed now, though not Hera. She had a tight, angry smile on her face and whispered, “This is only the beginning.”