

Heracles

And Apollo's Lyre

If you are thrown into the chasm of death, and you find out that you are a descendant of the most famous Greek hero in ancient history, don't worry! Being a demigod is fun! Of course, this is what I'm supposed to tell you. My publisher thinks it is "negative and frightening" to tell you that if you are a demigod, you are better off locking yourself in a toy chest for the rest of your life.

Hello, I am Heracles, and I never asked to plummet through a gaping chasm, fight vampire donkeys, and slice off the heads (note heads, as in plural) of a psychotic cowboy. I never wanted to be mixed up in all this nonsense on Greek gods and demigods and whatnot. But, as some old guy philosophers from the Stone Age probably said, "To get through life, you must first almost die a few times." Don't criticize me. Someone probably said it!

It all started like this:

It was a foggy San Francisco day. Large fog clouds were slithering over the Golden Gate Bridge. The clouds above us were on the verge of a downpour, taunting us. If that wasn't bad omen-y enough, large dogs were running around without a leash.

That day was not a good day. This morning, we had a surprise math quiz. Our math teacher, Mr. Charbucks, thinks these quizzes are "fun." Believe me, these quizzes are about as much fun as a hive of killer bees using your face as a meaty pin cushion.

It just gets worse. After math class, I asked Jenny (the most popular girl in school) to the winter dance. She replied, "I would rather go to the dance with a sea cucumber." While she walked away, I yelled

back, "So was that a yes?" Now that I think about it, she may have meant "No."

It does not end there. Later that day in English, Ms. Humdrum made a point in class about my "poor penmanship" and my "dull writing." I took the subtle approach: I stood on top of my desk and yelled, "WHAT DO YOU EXPECT ME TO DO WOMAN! REWRITE 'WAR AND PEACE'? I'M NOT DOING NO STINKIN' (this part of the story has been edited out for the enjoyment of the younger audience)."

I probably did earn those detentions for the next month, now that I think about it.

To top it all off, the bus that I usually take home had a few "minor miscalculations", which we all knew meant that the brakes were broken again. We all expect this to happen. That bus is, like, a gajillion years old! This meant I had to walk 2 ½ miles to get to home. Yay.

I was dreading the time when I was going to get home. My mama will tell me that she got a phone call from school, then bombard me with questions. Then she is going to take away my TV privileges, and by the time we eat dinner, she also takes away my video game privileges. It happens every month. I screamed, "I HATE LIFE!", which scared the fluffy white cat that lived on Lombard street.

That's when it happened. A rumbling sound encompassed San Francisco, and the ground trembled beneath me. It seemed like an earthquake at the time, because we get those a lot here in 'Frisco.

Except with this earthquake, I was sucked down a gaping hole in the earth. My last thoughts as I was falling to my doom? "This isn't normal."

Then I died. **THE END.**

“Hello? Anybody home?”

I woke up, but my surroundings looked like a dream. Gleaming marble pillars shone in the light of the golden sun. Beautiful women dressed in the finest silks were singing sweet melodies, while men with goat legs and horns grazed on the grass in the nourished pastures. Looked like a Disney cartoon, except there weren't any talking mice or rabbits with clothes.

“Good. You're awake.”

The man beside me shone like the sun. He had a bow and arrow, and had a smile that most celebrities would give their hip for. I didn't recognize him, but I thought I knew who he was from the boring lectures I had to sit through at school.

“Apollo?”

He smiled. “You're observant. I like you.”

“Am I dead?”

“Nope, but right now, your body is in Tartarus, the birthplace of all monsters. To most demigods, this is the equivalent of death.”

“Demigods?”

“Yes, try to keep up. Like you, demigods roam the earth, protecting mortals, going on quests, and doing favors for gods.” With these words, a sly smile crept along the corners of his mouth.

“What do you want?”

Apollo's face turned from smiley to serious, a face someone makes when they are remembering bad memories. Sternly, he said, “What I want is my Lyre.”

“Didn't you give your Lyre to Orpheus?”

“Doesn't matter! Listen, as you might know, the nine muses buried Orpheus when he died, but two things were not buried: his head, and MY Lyre. Orpheus' head landed on the island of Lesbos, but my

Lyre ended up in the river Styx, where it went down the river Phlegethon, which is the river of fire, to Tartarus.”

“What about the constellation Lyra? You threw it up into the sky where it became-”

“I KNOW WHAT THE STORIES SAY! I MAY HAVE PUT THE CONSTELLATION UP THERE, BUT THE ORIGINAL LYRE IS STILL IN TARTARUS!”

“Geez.”

“Do you want me to fry you? No? Good. Listen, your mission: GO GET MY LYRE!”

“How do I get there?”

“So many questions. Do mortals know the meaning of shush?”

I jumped off the table I was on, but before I took a few steps, I asked Apollo, “If I’m a demigod, than which Greek god am I related to? Both my parents are mortal.

Apollo smiled (I am beginning to hate that smile) and said, “First, look to the symbol on your vest. Second, take this cool medallion. Has a lightning bolt on it. Latest fashion on Olympus.”

I was having a case of level 10 confusion, but I didn’t ask any questions, because I am polite in that way. Also, he teleported me to my doom before I could complain.

I woke up. Good thing too, because 2 weird teenagers were standing above me, and they looked like they were massaged by a steamroller.

“AAAHHHHH!!!”

“He’s alive.”

“AAAHHHHH!!!”

“And annoying.”

“Who are you?”

One of the teens above me was a boy, had black scraggy hair, brown eyes, and a bronze sword. The other one was a girl, had long blond hair, strikingly gray eyes, and a fearsome dagger.

The boy warmly said, "I am Percy Jackson, and this is Annabeth Chase. Welcome to Tartarus."

"I am Heracles Loughran. I am on a mission from Apollo, so I need you to step aside."

The one named Annabeth frowned, and ordered, "If you are on a mission, then you could use our help. We have gone on missions before, plus we know a thing or 2 on battling monsters. We will go with you."

I shrugged. "If you must."

It wasn't long before we met our "welcoming committee."

Annabeth, Percy and I were walking along the river bank of the Phlegethon, when we met a group of cheerleaders. Not so bad, except these cheerleaders had vampire teeth and donkey legs. Did I mention donkey legs?

"This is my first time up against monsters, so excuse me for asking, but WHAT IS WITH THOSE CHEERLEADERS?"

Annabeth grimaced. "Those are empousai, the Greek version of vampires. That one up in front is Kelli. We have some history together."

Kelli turned toward us, and I realized that she had a serpent's tongue. A SERPENT'S TONGUE!

"I suppose we need to eliminate them?", I inquired.

"Yes," Percy said, "We should."

I didn't have a weapon, but I remembered what Apollo had said. Simultaneously, I touched the lion on my vest and ripped off my medallion.

A flash blinded me for a second, but when my vision returned, I was draped in a golden lion skin cloak, and a bronze sword was in my hand, cackling with lightning and unstable energy.

Kelli and her band of demented freaks attempted to run away in fear, but my sword blasted them with a bolt of lightning. Instantly, the empousai evaporated into dust. Annabeth and Percy stared at me with shock. My lion skin cloak and my sword shrank back into a vest and a medallion.

“Th-that was *the* Nemean lion skin, wh-which means-”

“Yes, this means that I am the last known descendant of the great Greek hero Hercules/Heracles, therefore making me a descendant of Zeus. Now, let’s get going. My editor is only giving me 2,000 words.”

So, to please the editor, we went off into the depths of Tartarus.

Since Kelli wasn’t a ray of sunshine, we met another one of Tartarus’ unique peoples. We were once again walking along the Phlegethon, when we were greeted by the psychotic cowboy I mentioned.

Geryon wasn’t much of a looker. He had heads, and human legs (always a plus). The thing is, he had six legs. And three chests. And three heads. Yah. Creepy. If that wasn’t enough, he had a creepy moustache. A **BUSHY ONE!**

“Well, well,” said Geryon, “What do we have here?”

“Nothing that concerns you, creepo.”, I snarled.

“Oh, but it does concern me. You see, I have what you are searching for.” With these words, Mr. Bush-stache held up a smaller version of a harp: it was Apollo’s golden Lyre.

“I will kill you for that Lyre.” My lion skin cloak and my electro-sword popped into attack position. I pointed my sword menacingly at Geryon’s neck(s?).

“Wait.”, cautioned Annabeth. I saw the problem: Geryon had three chests. Three chests=three hearts. If I impale one of his chests, the other three will keep him alive.

“Idea,” said Percy, “If we attack all of his chests at once, won’t he die?”

“Correct”, said Annabeth malevolently.

“Uh-oh.”, said Geryon.

Uh-oh was right. We sliced Geryon in thirds, and- (wait, you know what? It’s too gruesome for the little kiddies, and I promised my editor no gruesome details. Sorry).

We went on our way, and I had Apollo’s Lyre in my hand. The golden aura of the Lyre activated the Lion skin cloak, which looked EPIC, by the way. The Lyre was golden (obviously), and was as warm as Apollo’s smile. We were casually walking on a steep cliff, when we heard the cries of battle.

We found a wide, barren valley. Well, barren except for the millions of deadly monsters with deadly weapons. At the end of the valley, an elevator (?) was guarded by a GINORMOUS immortal, which I guessed was the fleshy version of Tartarus.

Percy turned to Annabeth and I. “What do we do now?”

Annabeth turned to me. “We’ve come this far.”

I smiled, with Apollo’s Lyre spreading warmth through my veins. “Why stop the party,” I said, “when the fun hasn’t even begun?”

The End

(For reals)