Hercules was the greatest of the mythological Greek heroes. He was the illegitimate son of Zeus (king of the gods) and Alcmene (a mortal). Zeus was married to Hera, the goddess of marriage. She greatly resented her husband's illegitimate son. Because of this resentment, Hera tried her best to make Hercules' life miserable. For instance, when Hercules was only an infant, Hera sent two snakes to kill him. Even as a baby, Hercules was much stronger than these snakes and strangled them both to death! Years later, when Hercules had a family of his own, Hera was STILL angry at him. So, she cursed Hercules, causing him to go mad and murder his family. When Hercules recovered his sanity, he was overflowing with regret. To atone for his sins, the oracle at Delphi told Hercules to serve King Eurystheus and perform twelve labors for him.

The First Labor

Hercules' first labor was to kill a lion, which had been ravaging the lands. Because lion's hide was impenetrable, Hercules' arrow bounced off its hide and fell to the ground when he tried to shoot it. As a result, Hercules had to strangle the lion to death to kill it.

The Second Labor

For his second labor, Hercules was ordered to kill a Hydra, which was a nine-headed monster. This beast was so deadly, its breath could kill! Hercules tried cutting off its heads, but when one head was cut off, two more grew in its place! To prevent this, Hercules' nephew, Iolaus burned the place where the severed head was before it could grow back. He did this until only the center head remained and he could chop it off and defeat the beast.

The Third Labor

Hercules needed to capture a swift-footed deer with golden horns for his third labor. Hercules did not want to harm this animal, so he chased it for an entire year until it collapsed from exhaustion and he was able to tie it up.

The Fourth Labor

Hercules then needed to capture a boar that lived on the slopes of Mount Erymanthus. The boar was very ferocious, but Hercules was able to drive it out from its hiding place. He chased it into a snow drift where the boar sank from its own weight. Hercules then bound it in chains.

The Fifth Labor

Hercules was commanded to clean filthy stables in one day for his fifth labor. This was an enormous task, since the stables hadn't been cleaned in ages and they housed the largest animal herd in all of Greece! To complete this task, he diverted two rivers, making them flow through the openings he made in the opposing sides of each stable wall.