

Medusa

Many years ago, there was a beautiful woman called Medusa who lived in a place called Athens in Greece. Every single day, Medusa boasted about herself, saying to other people that she was the prettiest out of everyone in the whole wide world.

On Sunday, Medusa told the miller that her skin was more beautiful than fresh white snow. On Monday, she babbled to the cobbler that her hair was brighter than the sun. On Tuesday, she commented to the blacksmith's son that her eyes were greener than Aegean Sea. On Wednesday, she boasted to the public that her lips were redder than the reddest rose in the world.

When Medusa wasn't busy, she would boast about herself while looking in a mirror. She thought she was the prettiest woman in the whole wide world: she truly admired herself!

On and on Medusa went about her beauty to anyone and everyone who stopped long enough to hear her. Until one day, for the first time, Medusa and her friends went to the Parthenon, which was the biggest temple in Greece. It celebrated the goddess of wisdom and beauty – Athena.

Medusa saw a statue of Athena and she whispered, "Whoever created this statue did do a good job... but it would look better if it were me!"

When Medusa reached the altar, she sighed happily and said, "My, this is a beautiful temple. It is a shame it is wasted on Athena for I am much prettier than she is, perhaps one day people will build an even grander temple to my beauty."

Worried, Medusa's friend grew pale. The priestesses heard what Medusa said and they gasped. The news spread quickly through the whole temple and everyone started to leave. Everyone knew Athena would get angry if anyone compared her to someone else.

Before long the temple was empty of everyone except Medusa, who was so busy gazing proudly at her reflection in the large bronze doors that she hadn't noticed the fast departure of everyone else. While Medusa was gazing, the figure changed. The figure changed into the goddess Athena.

"Vain and foolish girl!" Athena shouted angrily, "You think you are prettier than me? While other people are working, playing or learning, you just boast about yourself. Medusa, there is more to life than beauty alone!"

Medusa tried to point out that her beauty was an inspiration to those around her and that she made their lives better by simply looking so lovely, but Athena silenced her with an angry wave.

"Nonsense," yelled Athena. "One day beauty will fade away. But I will make it fade away now and all your loveliness will be gone forever."

When Athena uttered those words, Medusa turned into a terrible monster. Her hair thickened into hissing snakes and her face was grotesque.

"Do you understand what you have done? Now anyone who looks in your eyes will now turn into stone!" snapped Athena. "Even you, Medusa, should you seek your reflection, will turn to rock the moment you see your face."

Athena then sent Medusa with her hair of snakes to live with the blind monsters, the gorgon sisters, at the end of the earth, so that no innocent people would be turned to stone at the sight of her by accident. She dwelt in the caves of a remote island and wallowed in her own misery for the rest of her days, bitter for the curse she had been given.

However, she was now confronted by those who wished to hunt her as a prize. Any visitors brave enough to try to find her would have to walk past statues of stone – the remains of those who had been foolish enough to try before them and paralysed by her gaze.

