

The Story of Medusa and Athena

Long, long ago there lived a beautiful **maiden** named Medusa. Medusa lived in the city of Athens in Greece and although there were many pretty girls in the city, Medusa was considered the most lovely.

Unfortunately, Medusa was very proud of her beauty and thought or spoke of little else. Each day she **boasted** of how pretty she was and each day her boasts became more **outrageous**.

On Sunday, Medusa **bragged** to the **miller** that her skin was more beautiful than fresh fallen snow. On Monday, she told the **cobbler** that her hair glowed brighter than the sun. On Tuesday, she commented to the **blacksmith's** son that her eyes were greener than the Aegean Sea. On Wednesday, she boasted to everyone at the public gardens that her lips were redder than the reddest rose.

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

Medusa's friends grew **pale**. The **priestesses** who overheard Medusa **gasped**. 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 **swift departure** of everyone else. The image she was gazing at **wavered** and suddenly, instead of her own **features**, it was the face of Athena that Medusa saw reflected back at her.

"Vain and foolish girl," Athena said angrily, "You think you are prettier than I am! I **doubt** it to be true, but even if it were -- there is more to life than beauty alone. While others work and play and learn, you do little but boast and **admire** yourself."

Then, Medusa's face changed into that of a **hideous** monster. Her hair twisted and thickened into horrible snakes that **hissed** and **fought** each other atop her head. And with that, Athena sent Medusa with her hair of snakes to live with the blind monsters -- the gorgon sisters -- at the ends of the earth, so that no **innocents** would be accidentally turned to stone at the sight of her.