

# Medusa

by Marie August and Kate McMurry

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*Note: This humorous take on the Greek myth of Medusa is the first collaboration of the mother-and-daughter writing team of Marie August and Kate McMurry. It was written in 1996 when Marie was only 11 years old. The story idea was Marie's, and Kate helped her expand on her idea and edit the story.*

Medusa was born long, long ago, at the bottom of the ocean among the people of the sea. She had pearl-white skin, long, wavy, black hair, and a beautiful singing voice. She was the pride of her family.

When Medusa was a young woman, Poseidon, god of the sea, announced that he planned to take a wife. Many sea women were brought before his throne in his palace beneath the sea, but none pleased him. He always found some flaw. Their eyes were too small, their feet too flat, or they talked too much. He began to think that he would never find the right woman.

Then one day, while he was taking his evening swim, he heard a lovely melody in the distance. He followed the enchanting sound in a trance of pleasure until he came upon a lovely sea woman, reclining on a rock at the top of the sea, singing.

It was love at first sight for Poseidon. He proposed immediately. And, of course, Medusa said, "Yes."

No one said, "No," to Poseidon.

Her family was delighted, but Medusa was very unhappy about her engagement. She didn't love Poseidon, and he was a very powerful, moody man. He frightened her.

A few days later, Medusa swam up to her favorite rock at the surface of the ocean. While she lay there sunning herself, trying not to think about her upcoming

marriage, she heard someone calling for help. A man not far from her rock was thrashing in the water, drowning. She leaped off the rock, swam toward him and towed him to shore.

“Thank you for saving me,” he said adoringly. “My name is Eustace, what’s yours?”

“I’m Medusa.”

“Will I ever see you again?”

Eustace wasn’t much to look at. But compared to Poseidon’s scorching eyes, wild, white hair and bulging muscles, a skinny man with watery blue eyes was a welcome change.

“Return here this time tomorrow. If you hear me singing, all is well, and we will meet. But if you do not hear anything, beware! Go away and never come back.”

Eustace agreed, and Medusa swam away.

Meanwhile, Poseidon had ordered a necklace of the best stones in the world from the jewelers preferred by the gods of Olympus. Athena, goddess of wisdom, happened to be standing by, placing an order for a gold breastplate, when the jewelers were putting the finishing touches to the necklace. She was fascinated and tried to buy it but was told it was for Poseidon’s future wife, the most beautiful woman on land or sea. Athena was enraged. No mortal’s beauty could match her own, and she was determined to teach Poseidon’s woman a lesson and make the matchless necklace her own.

The next evening at dusk, Medusa was sitting on her rock near the shore, fondling Poseidon’s necklace and singing when an invisible Athena flew in and hovered above her.

“How dare you think yourself beautiful and worthy of that masterpiece of a necklace!” She snatched it from Medusa’s neck, cursed her and departed as quickly as she had come.

Medusa stopped singing. Had someone said something? No one was there, and her neck ached. She reached for her throat and gasped. Poseidon’s gift was gone! But she soon realized that was the least of her worries.

Her whole body began to burn. She looked down at her hands and arms. Her skin was turning tough and brownish green, like a sea turtle, and agony stabbed the top of her head. She clutched at it and found, not glossy black tresses, but snakes. Horrible, slithering snakes!

Medusa shrieked and tried to toss the snakes away. But it was no use. They were glued tight to her scalp. She howled even louder.

Off in the distance, Eustace skipped along the beach as the sky darkened and the first stars came out, heading to the rendezvous with his beloved Medusa. He heard Medusa screeching and thought the poor thing had an awful voice. But, oh, well, she was the most beautiful woman alive, so what did a unpleasant singing voice matter?

“Medusa! Medusa!” he yelled, running toward his love, “I’m coming! I’m coming!”

Eustace was bellowing so loudly, Medusa heard him over her own screams. Thank the gods! Maybe he could help her figure out what was happening to her. She was hallucinating. She was dying. She probably ate some bad fish!

Medusa dove off the rock and swam frantically to shore. “Help, Eustace! Help!”

Eustace came tearing around the bend and heard Medusa more clearly. She wasn’t singing anymore. She was calling for help! He ran even faster.

It was getting darker, and the full moon was behind a big bank of clouds, making it hard to see clearly, but something looked different about her.

What had she done with her hair?

The two of them arrived at their meeting place at the same moment. Medusa staggered out of the water and fell into his arms weeping.

“What is it, darling?” Eustace said, patting her back. Her rough, scaly back.

What in Hades had happened to Medusa’s soft, silky skin?

“Uh, Medusa, honey?” he said as Medusa’s new hairdo slid to the side and hissed.

“Oh, Eustace,” Medusa said, lifting her writhing head, “I think I’m going crazy. I don’t know what’s happening to me.”

Just then, the moon broke through the clouds, a silver beam struck her and Eustace saw her fully for the first time. Staring into blood-red eyes in a lizard face, he choked out the words, “Medusa, you’re so ugly!” before his own face froze forever in an expression of horror.

Eustace had turned to stone. And she was definitely hideous.

Which meant she wasn’t hallucinating or crazy. Every part of her was grotesque and very real. Including the snakes.

Damn. She really hated snakes!

Medusa let go of Eustace’s cold, marble shoulders, and he toppled over, rolling toward the water. She ignored his tumbling body as she walked slowly to the sea, stepped into the waves and began swimming.

Following the moon’s path along the surface of the sea, she headed toward the end of the earth where no one would have to look upon her revolting face ever again.

As she swam, Medusa heard the echo of taunting laughter above the irritating hiss of her hair.

And wondered....

*Do these blasted snakes ever sleep?*

END