

Moral Minority. She was always trying to improve the standards up there, trying to keep the neighborhood from going downhill. She was also C.E.O. of the Evelyn Woods School of Speed Revenge. Well, somebody had to be punished for defiling her temple.

Poseidon had connections—he was Zeus's brother. Athena couldn't touch him. But poor Medusa had no connections at all, so she had to bear the full brunt of Athena's wrath. Athena knew just how to put some serious hurtin' on a woman. She took away her beauty—all of it. She made Medusa the ugliest woman who ever lived.

Did you ask me how ugly she was? I really don't have words bad enough to describe it, but this will give you some idea:

They say she had bulging red eyes that glowed in the dark, enormous teeth that looked like fangs, and a huge tongue that hung out of her mouth, over her chin, past her knees, all the way down to her feet. It dragged along between her legs when she walked. And her breath? Well, considering all the garbage her tongue picked up, it smelled like a dog had died in her mouth.

Let's not forget about her hair! Her hair wasn't just stringy. Athena gave her snakes for hair! Dozens of self-willed little strands, each one of them curling and coiling and hissing and going its own way. You think you have bad-hair days? She couldn't do a thing with that mess on her head. She tried it all—mousse, gel, hot rollers, curling irons, perms. Nothing worked!

As for the rest of Medusa's body, Athena gave her hard, scaly skin like a lizard, wings like a bat, and claws like a vulture. Truly, she was the ugliest woman in the world.

But the worst part was what the ugliness did to her social life. Oh, at first there was a brief period when she was something of a celebrity. Stories about her were splashed across the



MEDUSA

Did you ever hear the sad story of Medusa? She was the ugliest woman who ever lived. Why, she was so ugly ... she was so-o-o-o ugly ... "How ugly was she?" you ask. She was so ugly, if you looked her right in the face, you'd be turned to stone.

Yes, indeed, hers was a real sad story. Because, you see, she hadn't always been ugly. She started out with the looks of a goddess, so naturally she attracted lots of gods. Unfortunately, she got herself involved in one too many "dangerous liaisons," if you know what I mean. The last one was a fatal attraction. It was with Poseidon.

You've heard of Poseidon, the god of the sea, the one who ran around with a pitchfork in his hand, seaweed in his hair, and his particles a-dangling. Poseidon and Medusa rendezvoused one night in the nearest empty building they could find and had themselves a wild Olympic party. It turned out that the empty building was a temple of the goddess Athena, and when Athena heard about it, she was fit to be tied.

You see, Athena was the leader of the Mount Olympus

front page of the *National Enquirer*. You'd hear people in line at the grocery store say, "Whoeee, look at that—a story about 'The Ugliest Woman in the World.' Yessirree-bob, I want to see her in the flesh if it's the last thing I do." And if they did... it was.

Because nobody could look directly at Medusa and live to tell about it. One glance and you'd turn to stone. So, of course, nobody wanted to have her around anymore. Here she was, the original party girl, and now she couldn't draw flies at a picnic.

Her neighbors got up a petition to throw her out of town. There was nothing for her to do but pack up and go off to live in some desolate place where nobody would have to look at her. The gods allowed her two unattractive gorgon sisters to go along with her for company. (Did you ever notice how beautiful heroines, even formerly beautiful heroines, always have two nasty and unattractive sisters?) The three of them found a desert island and planned to spend the rest of their miserable days there.

Now right about here in a story like this you usually hear about a handsome young man—a prince, a hero—who chances upon the hapless maiden and changes her life. Yep, this story has a handsome young man, a prince and a hero, in fact. He chanced upon Medusa and changed her life. The truth is, she lost her head over him.

The name of this hero was Perseus. He began life not as a mere mortal, but as the son of Zeus. That meant he was only semi-mortal, and he was fated to do great things.

