

Perseus and Medusa

Introduction:

Gods of Mount Olympus:

We are the gods of Ancient Greece

Wise and good and strong

We are the gods – (interruption) and goddesses – of Ancient Greece

Who know right from wrong!

Athene: *My name is Athene*

I carry a spear and a hat

I am the wisest of them all

Although they won't agree about that! (Points to other gods)

Hermes: *I am Hermes,*

I'm as fast as lightning

I am the messenger

So quick, it's frightening!

Zeus: *I am Zeus, king of the gods,*

And these two are my kids.

I think I'm going to be in trouble

When they find out what I did!

Gods: *We are the gods...and goddesses....of Ancient Greece*

And we think you should look down there

There's trouble brewing that's for sure

And Zeus - you know...but do you care?

Gods leave the stage, Zeus taking longer than the others until Athene hurries him up. Scene changes to Danae's father and the Oracle.

King Acrisius of Argos: *(speaks to the audience) I am the king of Argos, a proud and important city state in Ancient Greece. My name is Acrisius (A-kris-ee-us). I am going to visit the Oracle (Or-ak-el) to find out what the future holds for my beautiful daughter Danae (Dan-ay). The Oracle is a strange and mysterious woman who speaks to the gods. Oh I do hope it will be good news!*

Approaches the Oracle's place

Oracle: *Who wishes to talk to me?*

King Acrisius of Argos: *I am King Acrisius of Argos.*

Oracle: *And what is it you wish to know?*

King Acrisius of Argos: *Will my daughter, Danae, marry someone rich? Will she become important? A queen perhaps?*

Oracle: *Whooooooooo...ohhhhhhhhhh...ahhhhhhhh (predicting noises!)*

King Acrisius of Argos: *What is it? What have the gods told you?*

Oracle: *Your daughter will marry someone very important, very important indeed and she will have a son! But be warned – this son will kill you when he grows up!!! Whooooooooo...aaaaah....and other cackly noises.*

King walks away thinking. Oracle moves off stage.

King Acrisius of Argos: (to the audience) *what am I to do? I know – if I lock her in the tallest tower, and block up all the windows and doors no-one will ever see her, let alone marry her!*

Narrator 1: *And so it was. Danae was taken to the tower and locked away. The tower had no doors, but it had one very tiny window that had been left open. Danae was very sad, but one day a bright shower of gold came through the small window. A man appeared, he had a thunderbolt in his hand and Danae knew he was a god.*

Zeus waves a gold cloth around or gold confetti thrown..

Danae: *Are you a god, for no human could enter this tower.*

Zeus: *Yes, I am a god and I wish to make you my wife. Marry me and I will make this dark prison a wonderful sunny land with many flowers.*

Bright cloths are held up instead. Danae looks around in wonder.

Zeus: *I have brought you a present wrapped in golden light – a son, whom you must name Perseus.*

Danae: *But who are you?*

Zeus: *Think of your son's name and you will know who I am!*

Zeus exits stage.

Narrator 2: *And, with those words Zeus disappeared, leaving Danae and her baby son alone...but not for long. King Acrisius heard the baby cry and ordered his soldiers to tear down the doors. When he saw Danae and her baby he had the soldiers put them into a big chest, locked the lid and had them thrown into the sea. That should sort them out he thought. But even a king should not mess with the son of a god, especially when his father is the mighty Zeus!*

Table with drawing of chest stuck across front carried on stage by the two soldiers. Danae and baby go under table. Blue cloths waved across stage in front of chest to simulate storm. Poseidon appears in the waves.

Poseidon: *I am the god Poseidon*

I rule over wind and waves

My brother is the great god Zeus

So I, his son, shall save!

Poseidon waves his trident and arms about and the 'sea' cloth calms down. A man approaches. Poseidon smiles and leaves the stage.

Man: *What have we here? A chest – perhaps it is full of treasure! (Rubs hands together) If I can only....get it.....open! (Heaves and pulls until finally it opens. Danae stands up holding the baby.*

Man: *In the name of the gods what have we here? I must take you to my brother the king - he'll know what to do.*

Narrator 3: *So the man took Danae and the baby to his brother's palace. His name was Polydectes (**Polly-deck-tees**) and he was an evil, selfish man although he pretended to be kind and caring. He took Danae and her baby into his palace and raised Perseus as if he was his own son. But all the time he was plotting. You see, Danae would not marry him no matter how often he asked.*

Danae: *I cannot marry you – I must look after my son as he is special, a gift from the gods. Please DO NOT ask me again!*

Narrator 4: *Many years passed and Perseus grew up into a fine young man, and still Polydectes continued to ask her to marry him. By now his evil thoughts had turned him into a nasty person and he had worked out how to force her to marry him - by getting rid of Perseus.*

Narrator 5: *Polydectes decided on a plan to get rid of Perseus. Polydectes pretended he was going to marry a daughter of a friend of his. Everybody had to bring a present, including Perseus. Polydectes pretended to be furious when*

Perseus arrived empty-handed, for he was not only very strong and brave but also very poor.

Polydectes: *What, no wedding present? Is this all the thanks I get for raising you for all these years?*

Perseus: *I don't have any money.*

Polydectes: *That's what you get from a lazy good-for-nothing.*

Perseus: *I can try to bring you any present in the world, anything- name it and I will try to find it for you.*

Polydectes walks to front and says as if to audience: *Then bring me the head of the Gorgon Medusa!!!*

Everyone gasps including Perseus. Danae runs up and says:

Danae: *You cannot mean it! That is an impossible task! No-one has ever faced the Gorgon Medusa and lived to tell the tale, let alone try to behead her. Her look turns everyone to stone!*

Polydectes: *I have spoken – I will have Medusa's head – if not, your son will be banished from this land forever!*

Perseus: *Do not worry Mother – I am sure I can do this. I will return soon with the Gorgon's head!*

Perseus leaves 'stage', Danae follows sadly. Polydectes rubs hands gleefully and laughs evilly.

THE CHORUS

We are the chorus of this play

An important part in Ancient Greek days.

We are employed, without a fuss

To keep you up to date with Perseus!

He wandered many days and nights

And suffered many scares and frights.

The Gorgon, that hideous girl

Was to be found at the end of the world.

There she lived with her sisters two

Hidden away from human view

In a deep, dark cave at the world's end

Him, alone, without a friend.

Chorus move hands towards Perseus, who walks centre stage, sits down and looks really fed up.

Perseus: *I am in despair – I have looked everywhere but cannot find the way to the ends of the earth. No-one can tell me the way but everyone tells me to turn round and go the other way, back to where I came from. If only they knew – I cannot return. **(Stands up and stretches)** I will go to the temple of Athene to pray – perhaps her wisdom will help me.*

Narrator 6: *Then suddenly a tall woman and a young man with winged sandals appeared. The man said,*

Hermes: *I am Hermes and this is my sister Athena. You are a son of Zeus and therefore our brother. We are glad to help you. We have some things that may help you in slaying Medusa. Here are my winged sandals and a sickle sword from Zeus.*

Athena: *And here are gifts from me. Use this shield to reflect the image of Medusa so you won't be turned to stone. You must find the Graeae **(gray-ay)** three women who share one eye but see many things, and get them to tell you*

how to get to the Gorgons. They will give you the cap of darkness and give you a magic bag and tell you how to get to the Gorgons' lair.

Perseus thanks them, puts on the winged sandals, takes the gifts and they exit stage in different directions.

Hermes: *Oh by the way – watch out for her very sharp claws....oh..he's gone.*

Narrator 6: *So Perseus went to the cave of the Graeae. The Graeae were strange women, there were three of them with only one eye for all three of them to use and they constantly fought over it. Perseus hid behind some bushes and watched them.*

Graeae 1: *Give me the eye!*

Graeae 2: *No it's my turn today!*

Graeae 3: *No it isn't, you had the eye yesterday – it's my turn!*

The three sisters fight over the eye – G1 grabs it and holds it up to her face.

Graeae 1: *I see a shape, behind the bushes, look sisters*

The 3Gs start passing the eye around looking towards Perseus – he jumps out and grabs the eye from them.

Graeae 2: *Give us our eye stranger!*

Perseus: *Tell me the way to the gorgon's cave or I will throw your eye to the crows.*

All the Gs start shrieking.

Graeae 3: *Tell him sisters or we will be left in darkness for ever!*

Narrator 7: *The sisters gave him a map that showed the way to the ends of the earth and gave him, after much groaning and complaining, the cap of darkness. He put on his winged sandals and flew into the air.*

Graeae 1: *Our eye, give us back our eye!*

Graeae 2: *You promised, you promised!*

Graeae 3: *Where is it? Give it back!*

Perseus: *Here sisters – catch it!*

Narrator 7: *And he threw it into the air. The sisters heard it land and scrambled on the ground to get to it. (pause while sisters try to find the eye, find it blow it clean – one holds it and leads the others off stage) Perseus now began the last part of his journey – the most dangerous part - the journey to the Gorgon's cave!*

Perseus mimes flying through the air. Cloth wavers carry 'clouds' past Perseus as he stands on stage block.

Chorus: *Three sisters dwelt in a deep dark cave,
And really were badly behaved.
Two were immortal and lived forever
Not too scary and not too clever.
But the third was mortal and her skill
Was giving bad looks that could really kill.
The cave would give us all the blues
As it was full of human statues.
Many had tried and many had failed
To kill the Gorgon or put her in jail
And now was Perseus's turn alone
To chop off her head and take it home.*

Narrator 8: *The Gorgons were three sisters. They were originally very beautiful but Medusa had angered Athene so much with showing off how beautiful they were that Athene changed Medusa into a hideous monster with huge teeth and protruding tongue, claws in place of hands, snakes in place of tresses, large wings, and a look that would turn anyone into stone.*

Perseus (calm at first but then panicking): *The two immortal sisters are asleep among the rocks. I will use the cap of darkness to sneak past them. Medusa must be in the cave....oh, what if I look at her, what if she sees me first, what if the cap doesn't work.....oh, what am I to do?*

Athene (walking up beside him): *Hold up your shield Perseus and I will guide you.*

The two make their way past the sisters who snore loudly. Athene calms Perseus and reminds him to hold up his shield.

Perseus: *Athene – did Medusa do this to them?*

Athene: *She did – but will no more.*

Statue actors each take turns to act out in mime how they froze in their positions as the two approach them. She leads him near the Medusa and stands back.

Medusa: *Stupid fool – why are you here? Do you really think you can hurt ME? Look into my eyes, long and deep –And be prepared to scream your last scream!!!!*

Narrator 9: *Perseus held his shiny shield towards her face and turned his head away. **PAUSE** Medusa reared up ready to strike but caught sight of her own fearsome reflection in the polished metal. **PAUSE** She screamed – just once – then turned to stone. **PAUSE** Quickly Perseus took her head and put it into the magic bag.*

Medusa and Perseus act this out. At the end he lays the shield over her head and takes a bag with a medusa football in it and shows the bag to the audience! Ball contents never to be shown to the audience!

Medusa Sister 1: *Sister did you hear that scream!*

Medusa Sister 2: *Our sister is in danger!*

Perseus is chased by the sisters but ‘flies into the air’, waves to them and cloud carriers return. He looks down and sees something below.

Perseus: *What is this I see – a maiden tied to a rock and a sea monster about to attack her. This is a job for Perseus!*

Sets off Superman style. Mimes landing – Andromeda, mother and father walk onto stage left. Sea monster enters stage right (the two soldiers carrying a monster cut out).

Freeze frame.

Chorus: *It seems there cannot be a play
Where love does not have its way
Where boy meets girl, without a doubt
But do they fight, or scream or shout?
No – they look at each other so soppyly
And instantly behave quite stupidly.
She stands and giggles and twists her hair
And all he can do is stand and stare.
Mouth wide open, brain switched off,
Struggling to speak and not to cough.
But will this play keep to the rule?
Will these two be star crossed fools?
Well yes – but first a rescue will occur
Because a monster wants to eat her!*

Andromeda's Mother: *It's all my fault! I am Queen Cassiopeia (Cass-ee-oh-pay-ah) and I boasted that my daughter was more beautiful than Poseidon's daughters, the sea nymphs. Now see what he has sent to punish my foolishness.*

Andromeda's Father: *I am King Cepheus (Seff-us). Save her and we will reward you with whatever you desire – yes, even our daughter's hand in marriage – if you will only save her life.*

Narrator 10: *The king and queen stood back, and Perseus returned to the cliff by the sea. Soon the sea monster appeared and raced toward shore to devour his victim. Perseus, made invisible by the cap of darkness, used Hermes' winged sandals to flit about the monster's head, darting in every few seconds to stab or cut it with the diamond-edged sword.*

Mime this scene – monster, carried by two soldiers first shows head from behind curtain then appears on the stage and scene is acted out. Monster crawls off stage to die!

The king and queen give Andromeda to Perseus and the couple fly away – repeat cloud sequence.

Andromeda: *Where are we going?*

Perseus: *I have to deliver a wedding present!*

Andromeda: *Who is getting married?*

Perseus: *No-one – if I have anything to do with it!*

They land and act out what the next narrator says.

Narrator 11: *Perseus presented himself at court and announced to the king that he had completed his quest and had brought him the head of the gorgon Medusa. King Polydectes was certain this had to be a hoax, and said so to the bold young man.*

King Polydectes: *What rubbish is this – no-one has ever entered the lair of the Gorgons and returned. You are a liar! You just ran away and hid outside the city wall!*

Perseus: *When you see what I have in this bag your majesty, you will never call me a liar again!*

Narrator 11: *In a single moment, Perseus turned his own face away, yanked the gorgon's head out of the bag, and held it before Polydectes' face. The king and all his court were immediately turned to stone. **Andromeda and Danae make very pronounced face covering/turning away movements, hiding the bag and contents from the audience's view.***

Narrator 12: *And now our story is almost at an end. But what of Danae's father? Did the Oracle's prediction come true? Did Perseus, son of Danae, kill King Acrisius? Perhaps the Chorus should have the final word?*

Chorus: And of his granddad, King Acrisius?
 Did Perseus kill him without a fuss?
 Did he find him, cruel, old fellow
 And punish him for Danae's sorrow?
 Well – one day while taking part in sport
 He threw a discus harder than he thought
 It flew high and long and full
 And hit an old man right in the skull!
 Perseus rushed to the old man's aid
 'Have I killed him?' Perseus bayed.
 'Who is he, please, I need to know.
 Even now life ebbs and flows.'
 'He's King Acrisius, we cannot lie'
 'In that case leave him to die!
 And now I will take from him his crown
 And me and Andromeda will rule this town.'

Gods (approaching audience):**Athene:**

And now the question of what's in the bag!
Is it the head of a hideous hag?
Do the snakes writhe or do they sleep?
Shall we open up and take a peep?

Hermes:

Should we such a secret tell?
Perhaps again it will cast its spell.
Will one glance inside turn you
Into a schoolchild sized statue?

Zeus:

Should we risk your mums and dads?
Really that would be very bad.
Should we risk all of the teachers?
And turn them into stony creatures?

Poseidon:

Open the bag and just reach within
And hope you don't jump out of your skin!
Put your hand in and fiddle about
Then hold it tight and pull it out!

ALL the cast say:

Hideous hag, we think not at all
In fact it's just – an ordinary football!

THE END

