

Medusa

μέδουσα



*One of 3 sisters called the Gorgons – daughters of the pre-Titan Immortals, Phorkys and Keto, she was the only mortal of the trio.*

The most common story or history of Medusa, claims that she had was a beautiful woman with magnificent, long hair. Not all stories agree on what happened next, except that the gods intervened. Some stories say she bragged that her beauty outshone Athena's and so was punished – given snakes for hair and all who met her gaze were turned to stone. More often I found reference to stories that include Poseidon in her troubles. It was said that when Medusa was chaste, and before being betrothed to any man, Poseidon desired her. Finding Medusa worshipping in the temple of Athena, he took her there, and Athena hid her face behind her shield. To punish Medusa for the desecration of the temple, her hair was turned to snakes and her gaze turned men to stone. Medusa was killed by Perseus as part of a quest to free his mother. He was not expected to survive but being the son of Zeus, favored by both Athena and Hermes, there was little doubt he would succeed. Taking off her head, he used it to kill a sea monster and rescue Andromeda, who was being offered as sacrifice to the monster for an offense of vanity by her mother against the Nereid (Sea Nymphs). Upon completion of his quest, Perseus offered the head of Medusa to Athena. She placed it in the center of the shield of Zeus which she carried for him, to further strike terror into the hearts of any enemy. The offspring of Medusa and Poseidon were unknown until her death – drops of blood became Pegasus the winged horse, Chrysaor with golden armour, and poisonous snakes or serpents of the desert.

I've dyed this yarn with a base of shades of gold to represent her once beautiful hair. The black painted on afterwards reflects the obvious dark and tortured change that seems to be a punishment that far outweighs the deed. In fact, I was struck by how often the theme of punishment to the proposed 'victim' of passion occurred when reading the various versions. I believe this version is another that reflects the trend of the now ancient times to remove any power women may have had. (We saw previously how Poseidon was responsible for disallowing women to vote.) The very fact that Athena, the Goddess of War turns away and hides from the attack on a worshiper in her temple leaves me wondering if the story of Vanity – where Medusa is punished for claiming to be more beautiful than Athena, is not the more accurate and original story.