

# GREEK MYTHS RETOLD FOR CHILDREN



[www.ActivityVillage.co.uk](http://www.ActivityVillage.co.uk)

## The Story of Perseus – Part 1

Once upon a time, there were two princes, who were twins, called Acrisius and Proetus. They lived in the pretty valley of Argos, far away in Greece, surrounded by meadows and vineyards, animals, and everything they needed to live well and be happy.

Despite this, they were miserable, because they were jealous of each other. From the moment they were born, they had quarrelled and fought, and it didn't get any better when they grew up to be men. In fact, it got worse! They didn't want to share the kingdom between them, and they fought each other, so that they could have it all to themselves.

First, Acrisius drove his brother Proetus out of the kingdom. Proteus fled across the sea, married a foreign princess and found some foreign soldiers, the Cyclopes, to help him. Then, he came back with his soldiers and drove Acrisius out of the kingdom! They fought on and on, up and down the kingdom, until eventually they reached an agreement. Acrisius took Argos and one half of the kingdom, and Proetus took the other half.

But fighting with your family is never a good thing, as Acrisius was soon to find out. A prophet came to Acrisius and told him that the Gods had decided to punish him. His daughter, Danae, would give him a grandson, but the grandson would kill him!

Such news terrified Acrisius, but he still did not change his ways! He continued being cruel to his family, as he always had, by shutting his daughter Danae in a brass-lined cavern, underground, into which no one could get to save her.

Although she was locked up, the god Zeus, who was the most important of all the gods, saw Danae and loved her. Some time later, Danae gave Acrisius a grandson, as the prophet had said: a beautiful baby boy. But King Acrisius remembered what the prophet had said - that his grandson would kill him - and was merciless. He did a terrible, cruel thing. He took Danae and the baby down to the seashore and threw them into a huge chest, pushing them out to sea to be swept away!



The chest floated away and away, out to sea, for many days and nights; and all the while, Danae wept and sang to her sleeping baby. They floated out into the open sea, with nothing but the waves, sky and wind to keep them company. They floated for such a long time, in fact, that Danae became terribly hungry, until she eventually fell asleep, just like her baby.

But soon enough, she was woken by the chest grinding against something, and she realised that the air was suddenly full of sound. She looked up to see huge cliffs, which looked red in the sunset, with rocks all around her and waves lapping up against the side of the chest. She realised that the chest had come to a beach, but was still tossing back and forth in the shallow water by the shore. She shrieked for help. Hearing her scream, a tall, grand man with golden hair, wearing a cloak and big hat, came climbing over the rocks to look down at her.

This man was carrying a trident, which looked like a huge fork, for catching fish. He also had a big fish net, which he threw down over Danae and the chest, to pull it to safety.

Once he had saved her, the fisherman lifted Danae out of the chest and asked her how she had come to this shore, and why she had been in a chest. He guessed that she was a princess, and that her beautiful baby was some kind of god. But Danae was too upset to answer him and, instead, asked him her own question:

"Please will you tell me where I am and what kind of people live here?"

He told her that she had come to an island called Seriphos, his home. He introduced himself, saying he was called Dictys the fisherman, the brother of King Polydectes.

Danae begged him to help her, saying that she would happily be his servant if only he would not treat her badly. But Dictys was a very kind man, and he told her that he would take her in as his own daughter, not as a servant. For Dictys knew that the gods liked it when people were kind to each other and that good deeds and bad deeds would always catch up with everyone in the end.

So Danae and Perseus went home with Dictys, the good fisherman, and he and his wife treated her as a daughter, and the baby as a grandson, for fifteen happy years.