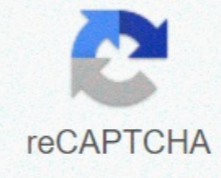




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Rick Riordan's Books The Percy Jackson Series: PERCY JACKSON AND LIGHTNING THIEF PERCY JACKSON AND THE SEA OF MONSTERS PERCY JACKSON AND THE CURSE OF TITAN PERCY JACKSON AND THE BATTLE OF THE PERCY JACKSON MAZE AND THE LATEST OLYMPIAN THE PERCY JACKSON DEMIGOD ARCHIVES AND THE GREEK GODS PERCY JACKSON AND THE GREEK HEROES FOR MORE ON PERCY JACKSON, TRY PERCY JACKSON: THE ULTIMATE GUIDE The Heroes of Olympus series: THE LOST HERO THE SON OF NEPTUNE THE MARK OF ATHENA THE BLOOD OF OLYMPUS THE DEMIGOD DIARIES The Kane Chronicles series: THE RED THE THRONE OF THE SERPENT'S SHADOW For more about the Kane Chronicles, try PYRAMID: THE KANE CHRONICLES: GUIDE Percy Jackson/Kane Adventures - THE SON OF SOBEK THE STAFF OF SERAPIS THE CROWN OF PTOLEMY www.rickriordan.co.uk 3. For Becky, who has always been my hero - R.R. 4. Introduction aspect, I'm just on it for pizza. The editor was like, "Oh, you did a great job writing about the Greek gods last year! We want you to write another book about ancient Greek heroes! It's going to be so cool!" And I was like, 'Guys, I'm dyslexic. It's hard enough for me to read books. Then I was promised a year's supply of free pepperoni pizza, plus all the blue jelly beans I could eat. I'm exhausted. I guess it's great. If you're looking to fight monsters yourself, these stories could help you avoid some common mistakes – like looking Jellyfish in the face, or buying a used mattress any given kind called Crusty. But the best reason to read about the old Greek heroes is to make yourself feel better. No matter how much you think your life sucks, these guys and girls had it worse. They totally have the short end of the heavenly mast. By the way, if you don't know me, my name is Percy Jackson. I am a modern demigod, the son of Poseidon. I've had some bad experiences in my time, but the heroes I'll tell you were the original old-school bad luck cases. They boldly go where no one had screwed up before. Let's pick twelve of them. That should be a lot. When you've just read about how miserable your lives were – what about poisonings, betrayals, mutilations, murders, psychopathic family members and meat-eating farmyard animals – you should feel better about your very existence. If this it works, then I don't know what it's going to do. So get your flaming spear. Put on your lion skin coat. Polish Shield Shield Make sure you have arrows in your quiver. We are going back about four thousand years to behold monsters, save some realms, shoot a few gods in the ass, attack the Underworld and steal loot from evil people. Then, for dessert, we will die painful tragic deaths. Ready? Sweet. Let's do this. 5. Perseus wants a hug that I had to start with this guy. After all, he is my namesake. We have different gods parents, but my mother liked the story of Perseus for one simple reason: she lives. Perseus is not cut into pieces. He is not condemned to eternal punishment. As for heroes, this guy has a happy ending. Which is not to say that his life did not suck. And he murdered a lot of people, but what are you going to do? Perseus' bad luck began before he was born. First, you have to understand that, back in the day, Greece was not a country. It was divided into a gazillion different small kingdoms. No one turned around saying "Hi, I'm Greek!" People were asking you which city-state you were in. Athens, Thebes, Sparta, Zeusville or whatever. The Greek continent was a great piece of real estate. Each city had its own king. Scattered around the Mediterranean Sea were hundreds of islands, and each of them was a separate kingdom, too. Imagine if life was like that today. Maybe you live in Manhattan. Your local king would have his own army, his own taxes, his own rules. If you broke the law in Manhattan, you could flee to Hackensack, New Jersey. The king of Hackensack could grant him asylum, and Manhattan could do nothing about it (unless, of course, the two kings become allies, in this case too). Cities would be attacking each other all the time. The King of Brooklyn might decide to go to war with Staten Island. Or the Bronx and Greenwich, Connecticut, could form a military alliance and invade Harlem. You can see how this would make life interesting. However, a city on the Greek continent was called Argos. It wasn't the largest or most powerful city, but it was a respectable size. The people who lived there were called argivas, probably because 'Argosites' would have made them sound like some kind of bacteria. The king was called Acrisius. It was an unpleasant work. If I were your king, you'd want to totally flee to Hackensack. Acrisius had a beautiful daughter named Danaë, but that wasn't good enough for him. At that time it was about children. You had to have a child to bear the family name, inherit the kingdom when you died, blah, blah, blah. Why couldn't a girl take over the kingdom? I dunno. It's stupid, but that's how it was. Acrisius kept shouting at his wife: 'Have children! I want kids!' but that didn't help. When his wife died (probably from stress), the king began to get very nervous. If he died without male descent, his younger brother, Proteus, would take over the kingdom, and they both hated each other. In desperation, Acrisius made a in the Oracle of Delphi to get his fortune read. Reading, going to the Oracle is usually what we call a bad idea. You had to take a long trip to the city of Delphi and visit this dark cave on the outskirts of town, where an evening lady sat on a three-way stool, 6. volcanic steam inhalation all day and see visions. You'd leave an expensive offer with the priests at the door. Then you could ask the Oracle a question. I'll most likely answer you with some riddle. Then you'd leave confused, terrified and poorer. But, like I said, Acrisius was desperate. He asked me, 'O Oracle, what is the deal with mine not having children? Who is supposed to take the throne and follow the family name? This time, the Oracle didn't speak in riddles. This is easy, he said in a raspy voice. 'You'll never have children. One day your daughter Danaë will have a son. This boy will kill you and become the next king of Argos. Thank you for your offer. Have a good day. Shocked and angry, Acrisius returned home. When he arrived at the palace, his daughter came to see him. Dad, what's going on? What did the Oracle say?' She looked at Danaë - her beautiful girl with her long dark hair and lovely brown eyes. Many men had asked to marry her. Now all Acrisius could think of was prophesy. She could never allow Danaë to marry. I could never have a child. She wasn't her daughter anymore. It was his death sentence. The Oracle said you're the problem, he sentenced. You're going to betray me! You're going to see me killed! What? Danaë recoiled in shock. Never, Dad! Guards! Acrisius shouted. 'Take off that vile creature!' Danaë couldn't understand what she had done. She always tried to be kind and considerate. He loved his father, although he was afraid and angry and liked to hunt peasants in the woods with a spear and a pack of rabid dogs. Danaë always made the appropriate sacrifices to the gods. She said her prayers, ate her vegetables and did all her homework. Why did her father suddenly become so convinced she was a traitor? He has no answers. The guards took her away and locked her in the king's maximum security underground cell, a broom cupboard-sized room with a toilet, a stone slab for a bed and twelve-inch-thick bronze walls. A strongly scratched air shaft on the ceiling allowed Danaë to breathe and get some light, but on hot days the bronze cell warmed up like a hot kettle. The triple locked door had no window, only a small slot at the bottom for a food tray. King Acrisius held the only key, because he did not trust the guards. Every day, danaë had two dried biscuits and a glass of water. There is no yard time. There are no visitors. There are no Internet privileges. You may be wondering: if Acrisius was so worried about having children, why didn't he kill her? Well, my evil friend, the gods they took family murders very seriously (which is strange, since the gods basically invented family murders). If you killed your own son, Hades would make sure you have special punishment in the Underworld. The Furies would come later. The Fates would give you your life. Some major bad karma would wreck your day. However, if your child only 'accidentally' expired in an underground bronze cell... This was not strictly murder. This was more like Oops, how did this happen? 7. For months, Danaë stayed in her underground cell. There wasn't much to do except make small dolls of cookie dough, water, or talk to Mr. Toilet, so she spent most of his time praying to the gods for help. Perhaps it caught his eye because he was so nice, or because he had always made offerings to temples. Or maybe it was because Danaë was precious knockout. One day, Zeus, the lord of heaven, heard Danaë shouting his name. When you say their names, they fall apart on the right. I bet they spend a lot of time Googling themselves, too.) Zeus came down from heaven with his vision of super sharp X-rays. She saw the beautiful princess trapped in her bronze cell, lamenting her cruel fate. Dude, this is wrong, Zeus said to himself. What kind of father imprisons his own daughter so she can't fall in love or have children? (Actually, that was exactly the kind of thing Zeus could do, but whatever.) She's a little hot too, Zeus said. I think I'll pay a visit to this lady. Zeus was always doing things like this. He would fall in love with some deady girl at first sight, fall into his life like a romantic hydrogen bomb, wreck his entire existence and then return to Mount Olympus, leaving his girlfriend to raise a boy alone. But really... I'm sure his intentions were honorable. (Cough, yes, okay, Cough.) With Danaë, Zeus's only challenge was to figure out how to get into this maximum security bronze cell. He was a god, of course. He had skills. I could just open the doors, but that would scare the poor girl. Also, then I would have to kill a lot of guards, and that would be messy. Causing explosions and leaving a trail of wrapped corpses did not set the right mood for a first date. He decided it would be easier to become something small and sneak through the air vents. That would give her a lot of intimacy with the girl of her dreams. But what should it become? An ant would work. Zeus had done it once before with a different girl. But he wanted to make a good first impression, and the ants don't have much of a 'wow' factor. Decided to become something totally different – a golden shower! It dissolved into a whirlwind cloud of water, four carat gold and descended from Mount Olympus. He poured through the air shaft, filling Danaë's cell with warm, dazzling light that took her breath away. DON'T BE AFRAID, said his voice of brilliance. I'M ZEUS, LORD OF HEAVEN, YOU'RE OKAY, GIRL. DO YOU WANT TO HANG OUT? Danaë had never had a boyfriend, he is not a boyfriend of God who could become shine. Very soon – as in five or six minutes - she was madly in love. Weeks passed. Danaë stayed so calm in her cell that the guards outside grew incredibly incredibly then, one day, about nine months after the glowing incident, a guard was pushing a food tray through the slot in the door as usual when he heard a strange sound: a crying baby inside the cell. He ran to get King Acrisius, because that was the kind of thing the boss would want to know. When the king arrived there, he opened the door, stormed the cell and found Danaë cradling a newborn baby in a blanket. 'What... Acrisius scanned the cell. YDn error. No one could have entered, 8. because Acrisius had the only key, and no one could have fitted through Mr. Toilet. As... Who ...' My lord, I am Danaë, Princess of Argos. My father, King Acrisius, kicked me out. I'm asking you for protection! Polydectes' heart didn't exactly mow. But his mental gears definitely started to turn. Argos - beautiful city, I had heard of Acrisius, the old king without children. That was too good! If Polydectes married Danaë, he would become the ruler of both cities. Finally I would have two throne rooms with enough wall space to show all those filling heads I kept in storage! Princess Danaë, of course I grant you sanctuary!, she said, strong enough for all her attendees to listen. 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