

Everyone knows the famous story of Andromedia, Cassiopeia, Perseus and Pegasus, but during Fall I was famous for telling a unique version of this story so I thought I would share it here for all to enjoy. I cannot take credit for this actual story, my good friend and PhD student Dean Smith originally told this story to a group of college students at one of my Astronomy Lab observing runs I taught. I liked it so much that I have used it very successfully at star parties and planetarium shows for years.

We all know that the constellations are not real figures; they were created several thousand years ago to help people keep track of the night sky and put some order to the randomness of the stars. Credit often goes to the Greek and Roman cultures for creating the 88 constellations we see at night, but the Native American's and Chinese astronomers also added stories and figures in the sky, in fact all cultures had sky stories they shared with their peoples.

This story involves a few well-known characters some do a lot in the story others who know why they appear, maybe they felt bad at being left out of the story. Our main characters include Cassiopeia "The Queen" who was married to Cepheus "The King" the two of them ruled over a vast kingdom and were pretty happy. Cassiopeia was a beautiful Queen; in fact she was the most beautiful person in the whole kingdom. Cassiopeia and Cepheus had a daughter named Andromedia; now when she was young there were no problems, but as she grew up she began to become even more radiant than her mother, Cassiopeia. This bugged Cassiopeia enough that she began a devious plan to rid her of Andromedia.

The plan consisted of Andromedia being tricked into going out to the sea with her mother, and when she least expected it Cassiopeia chained Andromedia to a large rock in the middle of the sea, then she left her. On Cassiopeia's journey back she ran into a large nasty sea monster called Cetus. Cetus looked like a sea dragon, head of a dragon and body like a large snake, it had big pointed fangs and loved to eat things left by others on the rock. Cassiopeia told Cetus to let her live and go and eat Andromedia, she was more tasty than Cassiopeia, Cetus let Cassiopeia live while he started speeding towards the rock.

Andromedia saw this monster swimming towards her at high speed, large teeth showing, Andromedia started screaming for help. HELP! HELP! She cried, but figured her life was going to be over when all of a sudden out of the sky flew in her hero, Perseus the warrior.

Perseus was busy doing other tasks such as killing other large beasts; he had a good friend named Pegasus. Pegasus was a horse that had wings and could fly, a beautiful white horse that was totally loyal to Perseus.

Well Perseus heard the screams coming from Andromedia, he told Pegasus to dive down while he took his sharp sword out and slashed the chains holding Andromedia to the rock, then with the other hand he grabbed Andromedia up and the three of them flew away safe and sound and lived a long happy life.

For her punishment in the matter, the gods put Cassiopeia in the sky where she never could rest and catch up on beauty sleep. And as you watch her rotate around the sky she comes close to setting and being able to sleep, but never quite gets to below the horizon. The gods also wanted to allow her the honor of everyone looking at her all the time so every night you can go out and see Cassiopeia.

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Wow long story huh? Maybe you would like this one better, the kids sure do.  
By Dean Smith, Northern Sky Astronomical Society

Long ago there lived a "House" and a "W", the two were married, and they ruled over the land, the "W" was a beautiful "W", the most beautiful "W" in the entire kingdom. Well the "W" and "the house" had a daughter, "sideways V" Everyone in the kingdom thought the "sideways V" was more beautiful than her mother the "W". The "W" grew very jealous of the beauty of the "sideways V" so she tricked the "sideways V" into going to sea where the "W" chained her daughter up on a rock. The "W" then asked a "squiggle line" to come and devour her daughter the "sideways V" "Squiggle line" was a viscous thing, and started to speed towards the "sideways V" chained on a rock. The "Sideways V" started to scream for help and almost gave up hope when out of the sky flew in the "upside-down Y" flying in on a "giant Square". The "upside down Y" took his sword out and cut the chains of the Sideways V", then he picked up the "Sideways V" and they both flew off into the sunset on "the giant square".

You will have to look at a star map to fully appreciate the above story, but trust me the kids laugh their heads off when they hear this version after the original version, so please tell both if you choose to do this.