



## CUPID AND PSYCHE: PART I

### CAST

CUPID	<i>Young God of Love</i>
PSYCHE	<i>Beautiful Mortal Princess</i>
VENUS	<i>Goddess of Love and Beauty</i>
KING	<i>Psyche's Father</i>
SISTER ONE	<i>Psyche's Cruel Sister</i>
SISTER TWO	<i>Psyche's Other Cruel Sister</i>
ZEPHYR/VOICE	<i>West Wind</i>
SERVANT	<i>Invisible Servant</i>

**NARRATOR:** In a faraway, mountainous kingdom, a king had three daughters. While his eldest two were as humanly beautiful as possible, the third and youngest, Psyche, radiated with immortal glory. She seemed to be a goddess among women. Many said she was as beautiful as Venus herself. In fact, those who had once flocked to Venus's shrine began to pay homage to the mortal princess instead—and so began Psyche's troubles.

**VENUS:** (*angrily*) Cupid! Cupid!

**NARRATOR:** In the billowy halls of Olympus, the Goddess of Love paced the floor, calling for her archer son. Venus's immortal features could never lose their youthfulness, but something aged and cracked was starting to show through. The god Cupid hovered into the room.

**CUPID:** Mother! What's the matter?

**VENUS:** It's about time! I've been yelling for nearly five minutes.

**CUPID:** (*sarcastically*) Sorry to keep you waiting. I was on yet another one of your little missions.

**VENUS:** Did you shoot the arrow like I asked you?

**CUPID:** Yes, yes. She loves him, but he finds her absolutely repulsive—just like you requested.

**VENUS:** Good! I'm sending you out again—immediately. Some stupid mortal princess has been bad for business, and I want you to fix her wagon.

**CUPID:** She has a wagon?

**VENUS:** Don't be smart! You can't imagine the stress in my life. Do you have any idea what it's like to be an aging goddess of beauty?

**CUPID:** No, but I can imagine being an annoyed god of love.

**VENUS:** (*ignoring him*) There are *thousands* of women down there—all of them trying to get the better of *me!*

**CUPID:** Good grief. You look exactly the same as you did the day you were born.

**VENUS:** Precisely. Over time men grow tired of the same delicate features, porcelain skin...ruby red lips. From the moment I sprang from the sea foam, I was praised. They flocked about me—to admire my glory. “How radiant is Venus,” they said. “The sun barely compares to her glow.”

**NARRATOR:** Cupid rolled his eyes at his mother’s trip down memory lane.

**VENUS:** *Now* what do they say? Every time some ugly little sow comes along, they start praising her with, “Why she’s as glorious as Venus!” What insolence! Oh, yes, my son—men have changed. They have forgotten their goddess—but I *will* remind them and destroy anyone who gets in my way!

**CUPID:** Sooooo....did you just call me in here to rant? Or were you going to give me some details on my assignment?

**VENUS:** (*angrily*) This upstart princess whose beauty—*allegedly*—equals my own must be ruined.

**CUPID:** (*sigh*) Let me check my contract. Is this in my job description? I thought I was supposed to use my arrows to bring love, not pain.

**VENUS:** Ha! Love *is* pain. You’re bound to figure that out soon enough. Now, fly down to earth. Psyche is her name.

**CUPID:** What should I do once I find her?

**VENUS:** Cause her to fall in love with the vilest man you can find—someone completely hideous. Ha! Look for a satyr—or a shepherd. They’re usually grotesque. That

will shame her! She will be the laughing stock of her kingdom. Perfect. Perfect. And once she’s fooled away her beauty on a lowly shepherd, no one will ever speak of her again!  
(*evil laugh*)

**CUPID:** All right. He’s off. Cupid, the god of gloom and doom.

**VENUS:** (*absentmindedly*) Be careful, darling. Remember, Mother loves you.

**CUPID:** Uh-huh.

**NARRATOR:** Cupid eased quickly down through the night sky. The stars winked out at him, socketed in the dark air. Cupid considered himself to be a romantic god—more romantic than some at least—but he wondered if *he* would ever find love, real love—not the cheap stuff he doled out with his flimsy arrows. Would he ever cease to be his mother’s lackey and be worthy in his own right? The stars did not reply, and he flew on.

Far below, the object of his pursuit, the princess Psyche was wearily returning to her room, which she shared with her two older sisters. It had been a tiring day. A crowd of would-be suitors had amassed before the palace gates early that morning, and she had spent hours being bombarded by proposal after proposal. Upon Psyche’s entrance, her two sisters looked up from their weaving.

**SISTER ONE:** (*snottily*) My, my. Look who it is—our darling little sister.

**SISTER TWO:** (*snottily*) Have you finished greeting all your admirers?

**PSYCHE:** (*tiredly*) I didn’t *ask* them to come.

**SISTER ONE:** Of course, you didn’t. That’s the beauty of it all. They’re just drawn to you—like flies to dung.

**SISTER TWO:** (*sarcastically*) It's sad to think that no one will want *us beasts* after seeing a prize such as you.

**SISTER ONE:** But think—when they take Psyche to Olympus and make her one of the goddesses, we'll be able to go visit her! What excitement!

**SISTER TWO:** A fantastic idea, sister. (*cruel laughing*)

**PSYCHE:** (*angrily*) You two are just jealous.

**SISTER ONE:** (*angrily*) Jealous of what? You being auctioned off like a piece of meat?

**SISTER TWO:** Don't think your looks will bring you happiness, dear. Father will marry you off to the first old king who offers him a good price.

**PSYCHE:** (*defensively*) He would never do that!

**SISTER ONE:** It is *you* who should envy *us*. At least we dog-faces won't be miserable the rest of our days.

**NARRATOR:** Psyche's eyes filled with tears, and she threw herself onto her bed.

**SISTER TWO:** Well, goodnight, sister. Don't cry too much, or you'll ruin those beautiful eyes of yours.

**NARRATOR:** Shortly after, Cupid entered Psyche's chambers. He had come to see this beauty for himself before he cursed her with one of his arrows. The god—invisible to human eyes—floated above her.

**CUPID:** (*to himself*) Why does she weep and hide her face?

**NARRATOR:** Psyche raised her head from the cushions to dry her eyes. At the sight of the girl's face, Cupid felt his guts tighten into a knot, and a feeling he'd never known before radiated throughout his body. At once, his mission was forgotten. His only desire was to console this gorgeous creature. He started to materialize, to make himself known, but then he remembered...

**CUPID:** (*despairingly*) I am a god. She is a mortal. We could never be together. Mother would drive her to madness—or worse.

**NARRATOR:** To his surprise Cupid felt his own heart breaking. How many times had he broken the hearts of others? Now he knew how much pain he had produced. He was suddenly sure of one thing: He could cause this lovely maiden no more hurt. He dissolved into the night, his task abandoned.

**CUPID:** (*angrily*) I won't do Mother's dirty work anymore!

**NARRATOR:** Despair coursed through him. He had seen the love of his life, but she could never be his.

**CUPID:** (*to himself*) Wait a minute! Could it work? I'll ask Apollo. He'll speak the Truth.

**NARRATOR:** The course of the young god's flight veered toward Olympus. His cousin, Apollo the God of Light, received him there, and together they hatched a brilliant scheme—one that would allow Cupid to have his love.

A week later, Psyche's father, the elderly king, burst into his children's chamber room distraught.

**KING:** (*in pain*) Woe and grief! Daughters! Come to me at once!

**NARRATOR:** As the old man fell to his knees, his three daughters ran to him.

**SISTER ONE:** (*shocked*) Father! What has happened?

**KING:** (*through tears*) The Oracle of Apollo has spoken a terrible prophecy! Jupiter, help me! I can barely utter the words.

**SISTER TWO:** What is it? What is it?

**KING:** The Oracle has spoken. Olympus is furious. My daughter has set herself up to be as beautiful as the goddesses—an unforgiveable sin. And unless we wish our kingdom to be destroyed, we must take Psyche to the holy mountain—and—and—

**SISTER ONE:** And what, Father?

**KING:** *He* will come to her...to be her husband.

**SISTER TWO:** Who, Father? Who will come?

**KING:** A terrible beast! A winged serpent! Oh, my daughter. Forgive me. I cannot resist the will of the gods. They will destroy us if we disobey.

**NARRATOR:** Psyche saw her sisters staring at her anxiously. They were not as thrilled by this news as she had expected them to be.

**PSYCHE:** (*numbly*) Then I guess I have no choice. I must go—to be the bride of the beast.

**NARRATOR:** Dawn broke, and wailing was heard in the streets of the kingdom. Black cloths were draped from every balcony. The word had spread quickly throughout the night—the beloved princess Psyche was to be sacrificed to the gods. A solemn procession led the princess up the mountain. As for the

sacrifice herself, her spirit had left her. She prepared herself for nothingness.

**PSYCHE:** (*numbly*) At least an end will come.

**NARRATOR:** Even though everyone lamented her death, no one was brave enough to go against the will of the gods. They left her there—alone on the mountain to await her monstrous bridegroom. Psyche sat silently upon a rock and watched the black procession make its way back down the mountain path. A thin rain began to fall. She wrapped her wet robes around her and closed her eyes. A faraway sound reached her ears—wind, growing louder and louder, until it was almost upon her. Surely it must be her serpent husband come to claim his bride.

**VOICE:** (*wind whooshing*) Come.

**NARRATOR:** An unseen force lifted her from the rock and into the air. She timidly opened her eyes. Ahead the clouds had parted. Perched atop a mountain peak, shining like a jewel, was a glorious palace.

**PSYCHE:** (*gasp*) This is the home of a serpent?

**NARRATOR:** She dared to look over her shoulder. To her shock, it was no winged beast that carried her, but a bearded little man.

**PSYCHE:** You aren't a snake!

**ZEPHYR:** (*insulted*) Of course, I'm not, you dumb girl. I'm Zephyr, the West Wind.

**PSYCHE:** They told me a giant serpent was coming to take me away.

**ZEPHYR:** Don't be stupid.

**PSYCHE:** Are *you* to be my husband?

**ZEPHYR:** Good grief, no! The last thing *I* need is a wife. I'm free! Free as—well, the wind. The master of that golden hall there—he'll be your husband. He's a friend of mine, and I owe him a favor or two.

**PSYCHE:** Is *he* a winged serpent?

**ZEPHYR:** I've heard him called plenty of names but never that. Are you fixated on snakes for some reason? I'm to take you to his house, and then he'll be along shortly. You'll find the servants of the palace ready to accommodate your every need. They're not winged serpents either. They're spirits. You do know what a *spirit* is, don't you?

**PSYCHE:** (*defensively*) Yes.

**ZEPHYR:** Good. I was beginning to think you were a *complete* idiot.

**NARRATOR:** The West Wind swooped down low and set Psyche neatly upon the front step of the palace.

**ZEPHYR:** All ashore. Now, when your husband shows up, don't talk him to death with all those stupid questions of yours. If you can't say anything smart, don't say anything at all. I don't want to have to come back here when he realizes what a ninny he married. If you'll excuse me, it's hurricane season.

**NARRATOR:** The little man dissolved into a faint breeze and blew away. Psyche turned to face the palace doors. With the slightest pressure from her fingers, they swung open, and behind them stretched a long, hushed hall. An unexpected voice at her shoulder caused her to jump.

**SERVANT:** Welcome, mistress.

**NARRATOR:** Seeing only air to her side, she waited for the voice to speak again.

**SERVANT:** We are here—though you cannot see us. We are the spirits of the house. We serve the master—your husband.

**PSYCHE:** (*confused*) How...nice to meet you.

**SERVANT:** The master has commanded us to give to you whatever you may require.

**PSYCHE:** I see. Tell me, what kind of being is he?

**SERVANT:** Oh, he is the kindest of masters.

**PSYCHE:** Can you tell me what he looks like?

**SERVANT:** As we are invisible to you, *he* is invisible to us. His goodness is all that we see.

**PSYCHE:** Oh.

**SERVANT:** Is there anything you desire?

**PSYCHE:** Well, yes. I guess I could use a bath. And perhaps some dinner?

**SERVANT:** It is already prepared. The master will arrive tonight...in darkness.

**NARRATOR:** Psyche quickly acclimated herself to her otherworldly surroundings. The voices spoke calmly to her, and objects floated of their own accord—lifted by invisible hands.

**PSYCHE:** (*to herself*) Is this really happening? Or did I go mad back there on the mountaintop, and this is all a hallucination?

**SERVANT:** Your chamber is prepared. The master will arrive shortly.

**NARRATOR:** As night fell, the phantom servants guided her to the sleeping chambers. There she lay down to await her mysterious husband. Sleep, as if another spell of the house, overcame her.

She awoke much later. The room was pitch black, and she felt that someone or *something* was very near.

**PSYCHE:** (*frightened*) Who is there?

**CUPID:** (*lovingly*) Your husband.

**NARRATOR:** Psyche started as the voice spoke in her ear. She felt his touch upon her arm.

**CUPID:** Do not be afraid.

**PSYCHE:** Show yourself!

**CUPID:** (*sadly*) I cannot.

**PSYCHE:** I don't understand. If you don't want me to be afraid, then you should show yourself. I have left my home and my family to come here, and yet I'm forbidden to see my husband's face?

**CUPID:** You can never gaze upon me, Psyche. Your love is all I desire, and you would never truly love me if you were to see my true nature.

**PSYCHE:** How can you know that? Not knowing is worse than any appearance could be!

**CUPID:** I shall keep you here, and we shall spend each night as husband and wife. But when the day comes, I must be gone from your sight.

**PSYCHE:** (*angrily*) It's unfair! If you make me a prisoner here, you must at least give me some right—

**CUPID:** This is the way that it must be. You must learn to live with this curse as I have. Trust me, Psyche.

**NARRATOR:** So Psyche's life began its mysterious routine. She would spend her days idly, always attended by the spirits of the house.

In the blackness of midnight, her husband would return to her and caress her in that hour but then disappear by the dawn. By some other enchantment, even as they touched, she could never tell his real form. It shifted beneath her fingers, refusing to be identified.

Her husband loved her true enough, and over time, the absence of his appearance ceased to concern her. Whatever her husband truly was, giant serpent or bodiless spirit, Psyche quickly grew to return his love.

Although Psyche had her nightly companion, her days were lonely affairs. She often thought of the father and two sisters she had left behind.

**PSYCHE:** Husband, can I ask you a question?

**CUPID:** What is it, my love?

**PSYCHE:** I miss my family. Other wives have their families over for a visit. I would like to do the same.

**CUPID:** You are not like other wives.

**PSYCHE:** But they're my family. I miss them. Surely you can understand. I need some human companionship.

**CUPID:** It's not a good idea, Psyche, but, because I love you, I will have Zephyr bring them here. They may only stay for a day, and then they must return home.

**PSYCHE:** Thank you! Oh, thank you!

**NARRATOR:** The next day Psyche waited on the front step of the palace anxiously. At last she saw Zephyr approaching from afar—bearing three bodies in his arms.

**SISTER ONE & TWO:** Ahhhhh!

**ZEPHYR:** Be quiet already! I never thought I'd be missing the annoying questions of your sister!

**PSYCHE:** Zephyr, please be careful! They're my family.

**ZEPHYR:** I can see the family resemblance. I told the fools that everything would be okay. I've been at this for thousands of years, and I've never dropped anyone yet—unless it was on purpose.

**NARRATOR:** The West Wind deposited Psyche's family in a heap before her feet.

**ZEPHYR:** Good riddance! And tell your husband that Zephyr's maximum occupancy is one! I about pulled something hauling these three!

**PSYCHE:** Thank you, Zephyr.

**ZEPHYR:** (*grumble, grumble*)

**NARRATOR:** As the little old man disappeared, Psyche helped her sisters and father to their feet.

**KING:** I can't believe it! Psyche, you're alive! We were walking in the garden, and the

mightiest wind caught us up into the air. We thought we were dead!

**NARRATOR:** Her father paused.

**KING:** But wait a minute. Are we dead? Is this...

**PSYCHE:** (*overjoyed*) No, father. This is where I have lived these many months! I asked for the West Wind to bring you here for a visit. I'm so glad to see you all again.

**NARRATOR:** Psyche led them into the glittering passageways of the palace. Her frazzled sisters eyed the luxury of her home with jealousy.

**PSYCHE:** We'll have a feast to celebrate your visit!

**SISTER ONE:** A feast? *Who* will prepare it?

**PSYCHE:** The servants, of course.

**SISTER TWO:** Servants? I see no servants.

**PSYCHE:** Well, It's complicated. There are many servants here. I can't even say how many—only you can't actually see them.

**SISTER ONE:** (*in disbelief*) Hmmmm. You can't see them?

**SISTER TWO:** (*snickering*) That is a problem.

**PSYCHE:** No, you don't understand. Please. Don't think I'm crazy. I'm really not.

**SISTER ONE:** Is your husband here...or is he invisible as well?

**PSYCHE:** (*hurt*) You're mocking me now.

**KING:** Psyche, look at this from our point of view. This is all so strange. We thought we would never see you again, but here you are in this mysterious palace where everything seems to be under a spell.

**PSYCHE:** I can't explain it either, Father.

**SISTER TWO:** What about your husband? Perhaps he can explain it to us.

**PSYCHE:** I'm afraid that's out of the question.

**SISTER ONE:** Out of the question? Psyche, dear. We're not afraid. Bring the beast forward. We're dying to meet him.

**SISTER TWO:** We're sure his hideousness must have been exaggerated.

**PSYCHE:** He's not hideous. I mean—

**SISTER ONE:** If he's not hideous, then there can be no objection to his meeting us.

**PSYCHE:** It's just that—

**SISTER TWO:** Psyche, we're *not* judgmental people. If your husband is ugly, just come out and say it.

**PSYCHE:** I—I just don't know.

**KING:** What do you mean, my dear?

**NARRATOR:** Her answer came in a rush of sobs.

**PSYCHE:** (*crying*) I have never seen him—and I can never see him. He comes at night, and I cannot look upon his face. Oh heaven! I *am* married to a beast.

**NARRATOR:** The two sisters looked at one another slyly as they moved to Psyche's side to comfort her.

**SISTER ONE:** (*soothingly*) Such pain, sweet one. He is causing you so much pain.

**SISTER TWO:** What a stupid rule! Not seeing your own husband! How can he do this to you?

**PSYCHE:** Oh, it's not so bad. I just—

**SISTER ONE:** Not so bad? It's a crime!

**SISTER TWO:** He *must* be hiding something.

**PSYCHE:** No, he's kind—and gentle.

**SISTER ONE:** That's what he wants you to think.

**SISTER TWO:** There is only one way to make this agony stop, sweet sister.

**SISTER ONE:** End the mystery.

**SISTER TWO:** Yes. You must look upon his face.

**PSYCHE:** No, I cannot. I have sworn not to. I will be banished.

**SISTER ONE:** How could he banish one who loves him so deeply? It's obviously a trick to keep you in ignorance.

**PSYCHE:** No.

**SISTER TWO:** If he is a beast, you must escape immediately.

**PSYCHE:** But how can I?



**NARRATOR:** Her sister pulled a gleaming knife from the folds of her cloak.

**SISTER ONE:** The world is a dangerous place. I carry one of these with me always. Now I give it to you—my beloved sister. It may save you from your fate.

**PSYCHE:** You can't be serious. He's my husband.

**SISTER TWO:** What kind of husband? An animal who keeps you in a cage?

**PSYCHE:** He loves me!

**SISTER TWO:** What a way to show it!

**SISTER ONE:** Look. If he is a man, then you may live your life happily. But if he *is* a monster, you must kill him—and flee—before he does the same to you.

**PSYCHE:** (*weakly*) I can't!

**SISTER ONE:** Don't shame our family, sister. I will have no blood-relation of mine being the concubine of a demon. Do you want that for yourself?

**NARRATOR:** Psyche shook her head in sorrow.

**KING:** It's for the best, dear. Come home to us. I miss our walks in the garden.

**NARRATOR:** By the time Zephyr returned to carry her family back to their kingdom, cold resolve had frozen Psyche's heart. She must see her husband's face—at any cost.

**ZEPHYR:** (*grunting*) Have you gotten heavier since this morning? That's it. No more favors. I don't care what the little jerk does to me.

Zephyr is getting out of the transportation business.

(*whooshing sound*)

**SISTER TWO:** (*yelling*) Remember, Psyche, the truth will set you free!

**SISTER ONE:** (*yelling*) Good luck!

**NARRATOR:** With the knife gripped tightly in her hand and a tear rolling down her cheek, Psyche bade her family goodbye. Once they had disappeared over the mountaintops, Psyche went to her chamber and perched on the edge of her bed. She stared at the little lamp that had always sat on the bedside table yet had never been lit. Her knuckles grew white around the knife handle. Tonight would be the night. The sun finished its journey across the sky, and darkness engulfed her.

**CUPID:** Psyche, my love.

**NARRATOR:** He was there—her phantom mate. When she finally felt that he had succumbed to sleep, she stood and took the lamp in her trembling hands. She lit its flame and, holding her blade ready to strike, turned its light upon the form of her lover. What she saw caused her to gasp. Gracefully asleep in the half-empty bed was the most perfect youth she had ever seen. Golden curls built around the handsome features of a god—his eyes closed in the serene sleep of love.

**PSYCHE:** Oh, forgive me, my darling.

**NARRATOR:** As she moved to snuff her lamp, a tiny bit of oil fell from it and landed upon his perfect shoulder. His golden lashes flew open. His eyes moved from knife, to lamp, to Psyche.

**CUPID:** (*shocked*) Psyche! What are you doing?

**NARRATOR:** Psyche's weapon fell from her hand.

**CUPID:** (*hurt*) Is this all I mean to you? I told you never to look! Why did you not trust me? You betrayed me.

**PSYCHE:** I—

**CUPID:** (*growing angry*) What if I had been a beast? Would you have driven the knife through my heart?

**PSYCHE:** No! It's not like that!

**CUPID:** (*enraged*) Silence! You have broken our agreement! The spell is undone! This palace will fade away, and you will be alone once again! But I suppose that is what you want, isn't it?

**PSYCHE:** No!

**CUPID:** Foolish girl. Love cannot live where there is no trust. You have ruined the one thing in life that has brought me true happiness. Go back to your people. I can bear the sight of you no longer!

**PSYCHE:** Wait. I can undo it.

**NARRATOR:** He turned away.

**CUPID:** There is nothing you can do now. Go back to your mortal world, and forget that you once loved Cupid, the immortal son of Venus, the doomed god of love.

**NARRATOR:** With these words the lamp snuffed out—and the world with it. Psyche wailed and clutched blindly at nothing. Cupid was gone.

It may have been hours or seconds before the shining chariot of the sun rose above the peaks, but on the barren mountaintop no golden walls reflected its radiance. The palace was gone—evaporated. And where it had once stood, sat a broken girl—her face hot with tears.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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1. Are Psyche's sisters typical siblings? Explain.
2. Are Cupid's restrictions on Psyche fair? Explain.
3. Cupid has played many love-tricks on others throughout the ages. Does he deserve to have love for himself? Explain.
4. How is Venus's characterization ironic?
5. What has this story said about love so far?