



**EROS AND
PSYCHE**

THAT'S RIGHT



**TWAS I THAT SET THE HOUSE
ABLAZE!**

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SUMMARY

- A king and queen have three daughters.
- All three of the girls are attractive, but one of them is absolutely gorgeous – Psyche.
- Can guess who got mad about this?
 - Yup, that's right – Aphrodite.
- The goddess of love gets kind of hateful and orders her son, Eros (a.k.a. Cupid), to go and punish Psyche by making her fall in love with the ugliest thing around.
- Eros sneaks into Psyche's bedroom to do his mother's bidding, but when he sees how beautiful Psyche is, he gets all distracted and pricks himself with his own arrow.
- Eros falls instantly in love with Psyche and leaves without doing what his mother told him to do.

SUMMARY

- Getting worried that they've made some god angry, Psyche's parents decide to go consult the oracle of Apollo about their daughter's future.
- The oracle tells them that Psyche is destined to marry a guy who lives on a mountain.
- Psyche's parents are instructed to leave her on a mountain to await her husband.
- So, Psyche is chilling on top of the mountain.
- Zephyrus, the west wind, comes and lifts her, carrying the princess gently from the mountaintop down to an amazing castle and goes inside.
- She hears voices that tell her that the palace is her new home.

SUMMARY

- Her husband-to-be comes to her that night in the darkness of her bedroom, so she can't see what he looks like. He tells her that she is not ready to see what he looks like.
- She's cool with that for a while, but eventually she gets lonely since he only comes at night and because there are no other humans around.
- Psyche's invisible husband allows her sisters come and visit her.
 - Zephyrus floats them down.
- Psyche's sisters get super-jealous about her incredibly posh lifestyle. They start interrogating her about who her husband is.
- At first, Psyche lies and says he's busy all day hunting in the mountains. They don't buy it, though, and keep pumping her for information.
- The jealous sisters remind Psyche of the prophecy that she would marry a monster
- Upset, Psyche sends them away.

SUMMARY

- However, later that night she lights a lamp and sees that her husband is none other than Eros.
- Psyche is blown away by how ridiculously handsome her husband is. She's so distracted that she lets a drop of oil fall and burns his skin.
- Eros wakes up and sees his wife standing there with the lamp.
- Furious, he flies out the window, telling Psyche that she'll never see him again.
- The beautiful palace disappears and Psyche is left all alone.
- Some say that Psyche was turned into an owl or a bat.
- Others say that Eros forgave Psyche.

THEME: LOVE

- When you've got a story in which Eros, the god of desire and love, falls in love, you can bet that romance is going to be a major theme. Of course, it wouldn't be much of a story if Eros and Psyche just fell in love and everything was immediately happy ever after. When Psyche shows distrust in Eros and gets a glimpse of what he looks like against his wishes, Eros abandons her, showing that love cannot survive if there is no trust between two people.

Questions About Love

- How does Psyche and Eros's love grow over the course of the story?
- What other kinds of love besides romantic are seen in the story?
- Think about the way Eros is characterized in the story. What might this depiction be saying about the nature of love itself?

THEME: BETRAYAL

- Psyche promises her new husband, Eros, that she'll never try to see what he looks like. Each night when he comes to her in bed, she's supposed to entertain him and then go to sleep without ever getting a peek at her lover. Psyche's jealous sisters eventually convince her that she's got to get a look at the dude she's sleeping with, and so Psyche breaks her word to Eros.
- On one level, this is betrayal. Psyche promises to do one thing, and then she does another. Is Eros's request really reasonable, though? Is it OK to expect a human being to live that way?

Questions About Betrayal

- In what ways does Eros betray his mother, Aphrodite?

PSYCHE

- The fantastically beautiful Psyche is the Greco-Roman goddess of the soul. She is often shown as having butterfly wings, which makes a lot of sense, since her name not only means "soul" in Greek, but also "butterfly."

Too pretty for Aphrodite

- Psyche's overwhelming beauty ends up being both a curse and a blessing. Because of it, jealous Aphrodite puts Psyche through all kinds of turmoil. However, without her smokin' good looks, Psyche would never have ended up marrying Aphrodite's son, Eros, and Psyche never would have become a goddess.

Curiosity killed the cat

- Psyche has an extra helping of curiosity. And her curiosity leads to big problems.
- The first trouble that arises in Psyche's life is totally out of her control: she can't help how pretty she is, or that Aphrodite is insecure and jealous. Psyche's second problem, though, is within her control. She allows her curiosity to get the best of her and looks at her husband by lamplight, even though she's promised not to. She knows she shouldn't do it, but she does it anyway.

EROS

- Usually, when Eros, god of love and desire, pops up in a story, he wreaks havoc by making other people fall in love.
- The mischievous little god is famous for causing tons of trouble with his magic passion-inducing arrows.
- however, we see the tables turned. It's Eros's life that is turned upside down when his own arrow stings him, causing him to fall in love with the stunningly beautiful mortal girl, Psyche.
- He's even so smitten with Psyche that he goes against the wishes of his mommy dearest (Aphrodite), which is pretty much unheard of in most other stories.

APHRODITE

- Aphrodite may be the goddess of beauty and love, but in the story of “Eros and Psyche,” she gets downright ugly and hateful.
- Aphrodite sends her son Eros to punish the girl. The tables are turned on Aphrodite, however, when Eros himself falls in love with the Psyche. The *last* thing Aphrodite wants is a gorgeous daughter-in-law.

WHERE WE SEE IT TODAY

- The earliest version of the story of “Eros and Psyche” that's still around today was originally written down by a Roman guy named Apuleius sometime during the 2nd century AD.
- Even though Apuleius's spin on the tale is the earliest one that's still extant (still around), that doesn't mean that he was the first to write it down. There's no telling how much ancient literature has been lost to history.
- Also, it's pretty clear that Apuleius didn't just make the story of “Eros and Psyche” up on his own. More than likely, it was a myth or folktale that had been told in many different ways for many different years by many different people. The basic idea of the story still pops up all over the place in lots of different forms. For example, “Beauty and the Beast” has many similarities to the tale “Eros and Psyche.”