

CUPID AND PSYCHE

Gods fell in love with mortals more often than they seemed to fall in love with each other. Out of all the women in the world, Cupid, god of desire and affection, chose a young human woman named Psyche to be his wife. This romance did not please Cupid's mother Aphrodite, goddess of love. Aphrodite did not approve of any woman stealing away her son's affections, especially one that was mortal.

So Aphrodite decided to give Psyche a series of seemingly impossible tests to prove her unworthiness. First, she made Psyche sort through tiny grains of barley, millet, poppy seeds, lentils and beans in only one night. It was a humanely impossible task, but luckily some ants pitied Psyche and did the job for her. In much the same way, Psyche passed her next two trials. A reed gave her tips on how to catch golden fleece, and an eagle helped her retrieve water from the River Styx.

However, Psyche ran into deadly trouble with her fourth and final test. Aphrodite commanded her to travel to the Underworld and obtain a portion of Persephone's beauty. Psyche bravely did as she was told, quickly stealing away a small piece of Persephone's beauty without anyone noticing. But then doubt began to creep into Psyche's mind. She realized that even if she passed all of Aphrodite's tests, she would never be beautiful enough to please her immortal husband and mother-in-law. Psyche decided to take some of Persephone's beauty for herself, but as soon as she did, she fell into a deep and coma-like sleep.

Aphrodite was delighted by this turn of events, but Cupid was devastated. Against his mother's wishes, he turned to his grandfather, the almighty Zeus, for aid. Zeus took pity on his lovesick grandson and brought the sleeping Psyche up to Mount Olympus, the home of the gods. He gave her a special drink made out of ambrosia that granted the drinker immortality. Psyche woke up to find her relieved husband smiling down at her. The reunited couple lived happily ever after ... forever.

Comprehension Questions

1. What were the two reasons Aphrodite disapproved of Cupid's relationship with Psyche?
2. Did Aphrodite intend for Psyche to pass any of her tests?
3. Why did the ants help Psyche?
4. Why did Zeus agree to let Psyche become immortal?

