

# CUPID AND PSYCHE

Emily C. A. Snyder

© 2014

*Excerpt*

## ACT FOUR

### SCENE 2

*(Olympus' crown. CUPID and PSYCHE lie entwined, CUPID'S face obscured by light, or cloth, or an upcast arm. Music plays. And in the dawn, PSYCHE stirs.)*

*(She smiles to find his arm wrapped around her still. She traces the muscles; delighting at the touch, the sight. Hesitates when her fingers reach his face. She swallows, considering whether she dares disturb the universe...before wrapping herself in him again and then, quietly, to us:)*

**PSYCHE.**

There was—one moment—wordless  
Where touch, and sound, and smell, shape, form, taste—  
And touch again, were one; all things that I  
Have in a cage of well-wrought words ensnared,  
Yea, mocked! And thought all things of sense  
My senseless slaves. But in this sightless cell  
With touch made manifest; not touching, no—  
But to be touched; tasting without tongues,  
Yet there were tongues, aye, and two of them!,  
That had no use for words; yet there were words  
That in their groaning pealed out like a prayer  
And all that holy prayer was only: “He,  
    ...and I, and he, and I, and He.”  
I should hate him. Sith!, I have cause, Reason  
That cries out for his blood, and were I man  
I should have borne a breastplate on my heart,  
Not bared my breasts for him to seize my heart;  
Ta'en up arms, not laid me down in his;  
Thrust through spear—and kept my legs well-crossed.  
If he had been clumsy, I could hate him.  
If rude, hasty, thoughtless, rough, I'd thank him  
And return him blow for blow! But he—O, *he*—  
There is no other word but Tender. And I,  
Who will not kneel, am worshipped by my God.  
This was nothing else but holy. And wholly  
Am I His.

*(Silence. CUPID stirs, and:)*

**CUPID.** How is't with thee, my wife?  
You're trembling. Have I harmed thee, love?

*(PSYCHE turns her head. She will not look at him again.)*

**PSYCHE.** No.  
The winds are cold, the world is stone. I'm mortal,  
And not made for bliss.

**CUPID.** Then come back to my arms.

**PSYCHE.** I'll weary them, my lord. I am not light,  
Nor lightly was I won. You'll pardon me,  
I'll go.

**CUPID.** I beg you, stay.

**PSYCHE.** Then I'll return!  
But only, mind, because you begged me to.

**CUPID.** And if I had commanded thee?

**PSYCHE.** You chained me  
With a ring of gold. I must obey.

**CUPID.** Then I command you: kiss me.

**PSYCHE.** *Aye. And yet,*  
I've had enough of kisses that both cloud  
*And* clear the mind. Therefore I'll kiss thee—Still:  
I dare not kiss, for when we touch, my skin  
Becomes like wax, my will likewise, that yields  
And bends to thee. I will not kiss you! But,  
As we are married, we may do more than kiss.

**CUPID.** I will not war with you.

**PSYCHE.** You have no need! I make war on myself!

**CUPID.** Then kiss me.

**PSYCHE.** Aye.

**CUPID.** And answer me—

**PSYCHE.** Employ my lips for kissing, and they cannot answer you.

**CUPID.** Then tell me first—

**PSYCHE.** I'd rather kiss you.

**CUPID.** No. (*Stopping her.*)  
Do you—love me, Psyche?

**PSYCHE.** What a word to speak in marriage! Love you?  
No.

**CUPID.** O. Like me, then?

**PSYCHE.** Liking must have looking,  
And as I will not look, I do not like.  
Nor will I dare to ask if you love—

**CUPID.** Yes.

**PSYCHE.** So you must say! For you are bound to Love,  
By nature and by name. You have no choice!  
Nor had you any choice in choosing me.

**CUPID.** I'm freely bound, and in that binding, free.  
Nor are you blind; your husband's here. Then look!

**PSYCHE.** I dare not.

**CUPID.** Why?

**PSYCHE.** I read it in a book.

**CUPID.** Psyche...

**PSYCHE.** *"Semele was best-beloved of Zeus,  
Who thought it good to woo her like a bird.  
She longed to look on him, and for her pains:  
Exploded. Her son became the god of Drink,  
And thus we see the ill-effects of looking."*

**CUPID.** I am not Zeus.

**PSYCHE.** No! Or else by this time now  
Your jealous wife'd turn me to a cow!

**CUPID.** You think too much.

**PSYCHE.** Then come and kiss me, Husband,  
I'll damp my thoughts to lose myself in thee.

**CUPID.** I'd rather have you find me, love.

**PSYCHE.** (*Clutching his waist.*) And so I have.

**CUPID.** Not this.

**PSYCHE.** What, then? I'm married to the god of Love,  
And he is celibate?

**CUPID.** Not so!

**PSYCHE.** Then kiss me.

**CUPID.** Aye. So you will look on me.

**PSYCHE.** —Get off.

**CUPID.** What more have we to hide?

**PSYCHE.** Not I, for shame.

**CUPID.** Shame you to look on me?

**PSYCHE.** To *touch* you, no.

**CUPID.** To look. To see.

**PSYCHE.** To taste. To smell. To own, need, want, desire, *take*—

**CUPID.** I pray you, Psyche, beg you, love, to look.  
Look on me, love—*look*, Psyche, turn and Look  
At me. I am no thunder god to ruin thee,  
No damnèd king to drag thee down to Hell;  
I am—I know not what I am...but I—  
Am thine. Thine, thine, and only thine. And *thou*  
Alone can tell me what I am. Thou, Wife,  
Who buried and baptized me, who murdered  
And remade me; You, who called *me*: “Husband.”

Who claimed Me as your Husband! Branded “Husband”  
On my Heart; birthed me “Husband,”—still-born,  
Malformed, orphaned, widowed Husband, unless You  
Will be my Wife. Then, Psyche, look on me?  
For Husband am I none but for my Bride;  
Nor Cupid am I none, but for my Psyche.  
I am *because* We Are. Is this not strange?

**PSYCHE.** You ask too much of me.

**CUPID.** I ask for all yourself.

**PSYCHE.** It is too much!  
You love me more than I have loved myself;  
Claim more of me than I have means to give;  
And now would make me other than I am?  
I’ll none.  
No “Wife,” though willing will I be your slave;  
“Beloved,” none—though bondsman may I be.  
No “We” or “Us,” for one and one make Two:  
Not *we*, but I. Not this—but me *from* you.  
Cannot this satisfy? Cannot *we*—that is,  
Cannot you and I...

**CUPID.** You want too little.  
Have you no idea who woos you, Wife?  
Whose name is used in prayers and supplications  
From the anguished roar of martyrdom,  
To the suckling cry of the sparrows’ song?  
Whose name is used in careless blasphemies  
For those who “love” a mouldy lump of cheese,  
When I—I! Who am older than the stars,  
More ancient than the grinning, lanthorn fish,  
Antique when Time lay mewling in his crib,  
Whose merest whistle causes Zeus to flee!,  
Who have ruined nations with an apple.  
I! Who *never* took a mortal to his bed,  
Although, I grant, your kind I stooped to tickle  
Once or twice...

*I!—*

The god of Love, who brought you to Olympus,  
Where Orion’s stars shine brighter than on earth,  
And if you op’ed your eyes, you’d see them, dancing.  
You can catch them when they fall. They melt  
Into your skin and make you shine. O—sweet...  
If thou couldst see the marble sky at sunset,

Here, *here*, where none before but gods could brush  
The rosy heel of Dawn's cloud-covered foot.  
Here, here, my impossible Bride!, have I—  
Defying all the laws that gods and men have made,  
Defying she who made me, defying—yea,  
Rebelling 'gainst what I have been, what you  
So right mistrust—have I brought you. But you...  
I see.  
I ask too much. I pray you: Pardon me.

*(CUPID withdraws. PSYCHE remains still, eyes screwed shut. 'Til—)*

**PSYCHE.** Husband?

**CUPID.** Yes?

**PSYCHE.** Stand you behind me?

**CUPID.** Aye.

**PSYCHE.** That's well.

*(Breath. First one eye, then the other, PSYCHE squints at her surroundings.)*

**PSYCHE.** O! You said the stars were brighter.

**CUPID.** When it's night.

**PSYCHE.** I cannot see the ground. Is far to fall from...Heaven?

**CUPID.** Aye.

**PSYCHE.** And if I fell?

**CUPID.** I'd follow you.

**PSYCHE.** Without your wings?

**CUPID.** I'd fetch them. Will you fall?

**PSYCHE.** I fear I might. Give me your hand.

**CUPID.** I will.

**PSYCHE.** Beside me, and in shadow—or I'll none!

*(CUPID obliges. Breath. Air. Starlight, and:)*

**PSYCHE.** I will not love you.

**CUPID.** I will not love you less.

**PSYCHE.** ...I do not hate you.

**CUPID.** I love you all the more.

**PSYCHE.** What star, Husband, is that?