

The Breath of Psyche

Screenplay for an animation film

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This was originally published as a book in March 2012
by 77 Books 69 Osbaldeston Rd London N16 7DL

www.77books.co.uk

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... it was neither I nor the world that counted, but
solely the harmony and silence that gave birth to the
love between us.

Albert Camus, Nuptials at Tipasa.

The Characters

MARIAM - the petitioner - a woman from Mali

MNEMOSYNE - the storyteller - mother of the Muses

PSYCHE the beautiful young heroine

CUPID the god of erotic love and son of Venus

VENUS the goddess of love

PANESTER Psyche's sister

DETAINDER Psyche's sister

THE KING Psyche's father

THE QUEEN Psyche's mother

THE PALACE VOICES

PAN

JUPITER

JUNO

CERES

OLD LADY

SECOND OLD LADY

THE TOWER

A Shepherd, a priest and a lame man

A reed, an ant, an eagle and a seagull

Opening Credits - Mariam leaves her house in Timbuktu. She walks out of the city and into the desert. She comes to a small Marabout and sits on a bench outside.

1. EXT. THE MARABOUT - MORNING.

(Mariam looks to the heavens and prays)

MARIAM

Dear Mnemosyne, mother of the Muses, I am Mariam, a wordsmith of the heart. I come to this prayer hut on the edge of the desert to ask for words to inspire our battle with enemies. Mother of memory, holy guardian of stories, by your liberal right hand, by your ever-joyful songs, by the secrets of your words - hear the anguish of a humble storyteller from Mali. You who are adored and worshipped among the great musicians and poets, you who are celebrated by the sounds of the rivers, heed this anguished call from a pregnant woman.

My people sit silently by as millions of our children die. We are held hostage by our religious zealots and we are forced to accept the laws of foreigners who cynically plan our ruin. How can we be strong against this foe? Our debt runs to billions and we cannot repay it. Our children are illiterate; without money, they cannot learn. They can't hear the old stories because they don't believe them.

To survive we must sell our land and resources. The Joliba, Senegal, Zambezi and the Limpopo, all our precious rivers, these have been privatised. Our stories, legends and traditions lie buried in the currents of these rivers. They cannot be owned by others. Mistress, help us, help these poor peasants

who ask why they no longer sow and why, when they sows, they do not reap and why, when they reap, they do not eat. We are empty and worthless.

(Mnemosyne appears and sits by Mariam)

MNEMOSYNE

A poet must argue for justice with dignity and humility. It's the duty of all to remember the great stories. The foreigners are also in trouble. Because of their exploitation, the world is in danger of extinction. Some are beginning to act by readjusting practices and inventing new technologies, but they do not know how to listen to the planet. If they do not create an intimate connection with all living things, their efforts will be in vain, because they will simply slip back into the old harmful ways. Take good heart and put aside fear. With your help, those who haunt you like strange visions of the night may yet, in the light of new days, change and prove contrary.

MARIAM

But I've lost my faith. I do not know how to voice my people's tribulations and avoid the danger pursuing us. Can you not save our aching spirits that have grown weary with too much labour and sorrow.

MNEMOSYNE

I will tell you a story from the time when gods inhabited the earth. It concerns a young woman, like yourself, with nothing but her love to fight the most vicious of foes. The young woman was called Psyche and she was a princess. Imagine her Mariam, lying on her divan. She is motionless, holding her breath.

2. INT. A BEDROOM IN A PALACE. MORNING

(Psyche lies as if there is no life in her.

THE VOICE OF MNEMOSYNE

The morning breeze is not strong enough to move the linen drapes. A strange stillness wraps about Psyche's gentle heart like a frozen blanket. She has experienced this before and suspects the calm will usher in sinister deeds. She prays that her fears will diminish but suspects they will not.

In recent weeks, unwelcome hallucinations and alarming visions have dogged her and the strange, heavy stillness that fills the air always precedes these disturbances. Rather than diminish with time, these intrusive apparitions have begun to impose on her with greater frequency and she can do nothing to direct or influence their crushing intensity.

They're not the stuff of dreams; they have a more ordered clarity about them with none of the trickery or shifting qualities of a dream. They come with a singular malicious purpose. In earlier days, Psyche imagined they might reveal a truth, but now she's doubtful for if there is a reason for the ominous premonitions it is beyond her knowing.

Psyche is celebrated for exceptional kindness. Her ability to respond with generous sympathy is her valued treasure, but the innocence of her actions is both her dowry and her downfall.

3. EXT. A ROCKY LANDSCAPE WITH A DEEP GORGE. DARK.

(An immense power takes possession of Psyche. Trance-like, she flies into the air. Gossamer wings adorn her body. She is no longer bound by physical laws. She is transfixed and hypnotised. She has no free

will for she is animated by another. A gruesome apparition of Despair appears and holds her in his grasp. Psyche yields to the terrors engulfing her and cowers in dread. Despair squeezes her with a fierce, piercing energy that sears her delicate heart)

THE VOICE OF MNEMOSYNE

This mortifying torture is too much for anyone, let alone one as fragile as Psyche. Her attributes of physical potency are of no benefit here, only inner strength will allow survival.

(Psyche collapses and separates from her body, leaving it to cope unsupported. She watches passively as her carcass throws itself into deep, swirling waters. Psyche calls out as the water chokes her throat, but at once it silences her cries and fills her lungs. Pulled by the undercurrents, she slips beneath the surface, sinking ever deeper, unable to gain control. Her tears dissolve in the water and she willingly embraces a stupor in which she is utterly lost. Oblivion blots out the terror, the threat departs and her body rises to the surface. Emerging, Psyche searches frantically to see if Despair waits to deliver further humiliation.

Above the water, she tries to coax her body out of its stifling tension. Her fear subsides and she reaches the bank. Psyche stands and walks off as if her willpower has returned.)

4. EXT. THE MARABOUT - MORNING.

(Mnemosyne is holding Mariam's hand)

THE VOICE OF MNEMOSYNE

Mariam, Psyche doesn't know if the terrors she experiences are self-inflicted or caused by unknown perpetrators. She doesn't know who she must fight or what form the combat will take. Your position is different. You know who your enemies are, but your daily diet of optimism is fruitless; it will never inspire the exhausted population to rise above the shrouding mists of their enduring silence. Listen to Psyche's story and see if her spirit can revive your ailing spirit. Dedicate it to the voice of your people, to their fertile revolution.

5. INT. A BEDROOM IN A PALACE. MORNING

Psyche gulps down air and flies from her room to avoid further unpleasant visions. She passes courtiers who avoid her, wearing baffled frowns.

6. INT. PALACE ROOMS OF STATE

COURTIERS

A. She has a shaky grip on reality.

B. She is far too vulnerable.

C. I hate her thin cracked voice.

B. But her beauty is ravishing.

A. All wasted in silent solitude.

C. Yes, she kills the desire she inspires.

B. How many suitors will visit the Court today?

A. All will leave without asking for her hand in marriage.

(Panester and Detainer pass by.)

COURTIERS

A. Look at her sisters. Why can't she be married to men of status, as they are.

B. Dreamers are impossible to control.

C. She'll fester if she remains unwed.

A. Her sisters inspire poets, yet Psyche has more beauty than them.

B. No man can be certain of winning Psyche.

A. None are brave enough to swim in her allure.

C. To be at the threshold of submission and lose her would be the end of contentment.

B. The modest glow of their smouldering flames could not survive the rays of her incomparable brightness.

A. Who could bare the icy cold after the extreme heat that Psyche's love promises?

7. EXT. THE MARABOUT - MORNING.

(Mnemosyne is holding Mariam's hand)

MNEMOSYNE

See how ignorant these men are? Psyche has no desire to dash hearts. It's her lack of confidence that fans flames. Any modest flush of embarrassment on her slender body sends shockwaves through all these men. She wilts under the gaze of others because she sees into their hearts and minds. She imagines that they too have a talent to read minds. She has met no man she could share her joy with. As a girl, everyone labelled her the shy one. She asked her sisters if they too felt exposed, but they told her that no one displays delicious vulnerability as she does.

8. EXT. THE STREETS OUTSIDE THE PALACE - MORNING.

(Crowds of people are talking about Psyche's breath-

taking loveliness, Her remarkable beauty and astounding grace. Thousands are on a pilgrimage to pay homage to her.)

THE VOICE OF MNEMOSYNE

See how these people come to gaze in blissful awe, to witness in person one of the great wonders of the age. So vast is Psyche's fame that some declare she's the Goddess Venus herself. They imagine Venus has descended on earth, incarnate as a mortal, so they can gawp and boast of having seen her.

(We see many people who have come to adore and worship Psyche as a divine being, offering sacrifices in her honour. Flowers are scattered in her path and banquets are held in her name.)

8. EXT. THE MARABOUT - MORNING.

(Mnemosyne is standing next to Mariam)

MNEMOSYNE

While garlands are being offered to Psyche, the shrines and temples of the true Goddess remain dishevelled, her festivals neglected and her ceremonies abandoned. Now let me show you what is happening in the land of the gods.

9. INT. VENUS'S PALACE ON MOUNT OLYMPUS - MORNING

(Venus is holding the floor at a council meeting of the gods. She can hardly contain her anger.)

VENUS

My dear friends, I have learned that a young mortal girl called Psyche is receiving tributes meant for

me. This astonishing transfer of divine honours to a mere mortal is utterly horrifying. I am Venus, Goddess of Beauty. I was born in the sea, fed on the froth of waves, nourished by their energy to increase my magnificence. I alone am the divine power of beauty on earth.

Jupiter, you promised my loveliness would shine above all rivals; now take my cause, attend to this upstart. I am the Universal Mother, the very source of the five elements. Can I be expected to share sovereignty with a mere mortal who impersonates me? Must I do nothing while my bright name, registered in the heavens, is dragged in the mud of mortals?

Juno, great Queen, do you assume that I am content to share in the sacrifices offered to this wretched flirt? Do I reign with tiny glimmers of reflected glory alone to nurture my beauty?

This cannot be! Help me make this enticing tease pay for her impudence. She cannot usurp my holy name, my good looks and my place of honour; I must take reprisals, have vengeance. She has offended by giving pleasure and can't plead innocence; both are punishable offences. I want you to help me make this loathsome nonentity wish she was the plainest mortal that ever lived.

JUPITER

My dear Venus, you have the monopoly of beauty, must you victimise Psyche who has had beauty thrust upon her. She never claimed to be a goddess and, sadly for her, her loveliness is a grave wound.

(Venus angrily rises to her full height and utters a most powerful and piercing scream of fury.)

VENUS

Only the girl's utter destruction will console me.

(Venus storms out of the chamber and cries out for Cupid, her son.)

10. INT. A ROOM IN VENUS'S PALACE

(Venus is shouting for her son.)

VENUS

Come you wretched boy. You'll not pretend you can't hear my cries of anguish.

(The embodiment of youthful beauty, the God of Love flies straight to his mother's side and offers his filial consolation.)

VENUS

Cupid, you must be my saviour. Only you have the craft to invent a reprisal that will calm my anger.

CUPID

Tell me what the problem is.

VENUS

A girl called Psyche has emptied my temples. She has silenced my worshippers and denied my supremacy. I want you to exact a terrible revenge on this vile and detestable impostor. There is not one who offers divine adorations to me any longer; they celebrate love through this slip of nothing. They look upon her to offer sacrifices and scatter flowers in her path. These are the tributes due to the Goddess of Love, not some contemptuous spoilt brat who has received

too much attention. She must be punished and you must carry out the act.

(The cheeky boy, raised in the company of his mother's raging tirades, marvels at her wild anger and finds her appalling temper a thing that only increases her stormy magnificence.)

CUPID

So, it's a young woman of incomparable beauty who has caused your anger?

VENUS

Don't imagine, boy, that she is a thing for you to savour.

CUPID

Oh, no of course not, but I can't believe I never learned of a woman whose grace and charm is so remarkable that people travel continents to catch a glimpse of her. I let you know what I think when I have set eyes upon her.

(Cupid gestures with his shoulders to indicate his indifference.).

VENUS

I'm not fooled by your display, Cupid, but I know the quality of your skills; you've often proved your craft with similar issues. The world must remember who the true Goddess of Beauty is. Take revenge on a false girl, take your arrows and strike at her heart; make her fall in love with the most miserable creature imaginable, make her desire the vilest thing

that ever lived.

(Cupid smiles; tasting the flavour of his success.)

CUPID

I have never punished a girl of exceptional beauty before, but it seems I'm about to start now. Maybe I lack the warrior instinct needed for such action.

VENUS

Don't play with me Cupid.

(they talk on.)

THE VOICE OF MNEMOSYNE

See how treacherous they are. Just like the wealthy foreigners, always finding someone to blame, someone to fight. It is clear that Cupid isn't listening to Venus. He can't strike from his imagination the picture of Psyche that Venus conjures for him. The loyalty he owes his mother can't compete with his desire. The impudent boy has no vindictive impulses, but his unpredictable yearnings makes him a danger, even to himself. His crafty display of diplomacy has been known to make judges overturn verdicts.

CUPID

Mother, believe me, Psyche's terrible humiliation is as good as fact.

(Venus conveys her gratitude with a kiss. She retires to her chambers to revive her failing splendour with precious balms and oils. Cupid, driven by desire, loses not the briefest moment to seek out the fair

delights of Psyche. He flies like a hurricane to her father's palace.)

11. EXT. PSYCHE'S GARDEN AT THE PALACE - MORNING

(Seeing Psyche seated alone in her garden, Cupid's predatory instincts erupt. He gazes on the vision of loveliness before him.

CUPID

She is the revelation confirming every fantasy I have ever conjured. Not one fibre that's alive in me fails to resonate with deep passion. My desire to have her is like a voracious yearning.

THE VOICE OF MNEMOSYNE

Despite his wiles, this tricky boy cannot read human nature. He has no ear for those he must conquer, no sense of a girl's fragile beauty and no substitute models of conduct. Psyche is too innocent to grasp that her beauty, if highly praised, will cause the envy of Venus. She is unaware of her gullibility and Venus will relish the thought of tormenting her. Both she and her son should be punished for their crimes against young virtue.

(Psyche holds her hand out to a bird, who flies to her. She strokes its feathers.)

PSYCHE

Oh my little thing, you are so fragile, yet I too am fragile. I am filled with so many dark thoughts. How I wish that wretched fate had not bestowed upon me this mixed blessing of incomparable beauty. I deplore all this empty adulation. The endless stream of

praise causes me nothing but misery.

CUPID

Ahh... she's a maiden ripe for the picking. All proud and alluring girls long to be taken. If the world marvels at her loveliness then she certainly bathes in the glory it brings.

THE VOICE OF MNEMOSYNE

Psyche longs to be in a place where she's not a tormented prisoner, where she's not captive to the fear of her visions. She sits lamenting her solitary life, languishing in a state of torpor. Fear pervades her body as the terrible calm that is the prelude to her visions again returns. More malevolent forces now will send her agitated state beyond endurable torment. She wonders why redemption never plays a rescuing part. This time the visions are not of her conjuring, they come from Venus who has gathered spiteful staff to intimidate her.

(Psyche slips into a trance.)

12. EXT. OUT AT SEA - MORNING

(The waters of the sea explode and the daughters of Nereus rise out of it from their hidden depths. Portunus, with his bristling beard, rises up along with Salita and Palemon, the driver of the Dolphin and the Trumpeters of Tryton who leap over the waters blowing heavenly noises. At their head is Venus, beautiful and angry, rallying the spirits of heaven and earth to her aid. She rises above heaving waves to plead with the heavenly powers to punish Psyche.

Psyche is floating on the waters in a giant shell, but suddenly, she's terrorised by a great tornado spinning towards her. She pleads for mercy and turns to avoid its swirling mass, but the spinning waters whisk her out of the water and deposit her into distant mountains. Here she's an exile, alone and lost in a desolate landscape.

13. EXT. PSYCHE'S GARDEN AT THE PALACE - MORNING

(Cupid sees Psyche slip forward and assumes she has fainted. He goes to her and slowly caresses her cheek. Her ghostly demeanour evaporates to reveal a blush of pink. He whispers sweet words in her ear. Cupid then flies into the state room where he finds the monarch seated with his court elders.

14. INT. THE KING'S STATE ROOM - MORNING

(The elders are discussing the possible solutions to the mystery of Psyche's unmarried state. Cupid whispers in the King's ear.

CUPID

Go to the Oracle, the wisdom of Apollo must be sought.

THE KING

I musty go to the Oracle, the wisdom of Apollo must be sought.

(The statesmen take delight in this semblance of action. Cupid smiles at his easy success.)

15. EXT. THE TEMPLE OF APOLLO - EVENING

The king offers prayers and sacrifices.

THE KING

Sacred Apollo, talk to me through your Oracle. I promise to follow your priest's advice providing it produces a husband for Psyche.

THE PRIEST

Your brief is too specific. I cannot be used as a trader of solutions.

THE KING

I'll listen patiently to your words of advice and act upon them.

(Cupid stands behind the priest placing words in his mouth. The priest talks, thinking the Oracle speaks through him.)

THE PRIEST

Because you express the need for speed, the instructions I offer must be fulfilled before the coming of the new moon. Let Psyche's body be clad in mourning weed and set apart from you. She is to be placed on the highest rock of Petteril Mount, where her husband, one not born of human seed, but a serpent, dire and as fierce as you can imagine, will find her.

THE KING

I cannot comply with your demands

THE PRIEST

Let me remind you of your vow. Even if Psyche's spouse is a creature that flies through the dark starry skies subduing everything in sight, you must

obey. He will be her husband even if he is the deadly prince of pain and darkness.

THE KING

Can you not make the Oracle's words clearer or offer me a closer interpretation of their meaning. Never in times before was such a riddle offered by Apollo.

THE PRIEST

The words are not my own, but they're plain enough. Psyche must shun the attention of all mortal men. You must now take your daughter to Petteril Mount and leave her there.

(The King, utterly devastated, leaves for home, addressing his courtiers as he goes.)

THE KING

That MY daughter is to be cast away from the civilised world is incomprehensible to ME. It is a cruel God who plays sport with a woman by throwing her such miserable circumstances.

16. INT. THE KING'S PRIVATE ROOM - EVENING

(The King and Queen are discussing their fate.)

THE QUEEN

Hear my agonised plea; grant my daughter a reprieve.

THE KING

The impending new moon must bring an end to our many tortured hours. I cannot alter the decree. I can't even delay the terrible day.

THE QUEEN

Our dearest daughter is desolate. How can she ponder an edict that's more pernicious than all her frightful reveries put together? Her visions destroyed her peace, but your actions are going to wreck her life.

(They fall into each other's arms, weeping.)

17. EXT. THE ROAD TO PETTERIL MOUNT - AFTERNOON

(Black torches are lit and a requiem is being sung. When the singing stops Psyche joins the procession. Deadly howling fills the streets, sending tears down her cheeks. She gently wipes her eyes with her veil, faces the great court and addresses the mourners.)

PSYCHE

Please cease your sad weeping. We cannot escape fate.

The entire city continues to wail at their loss. No word from Psyche can end their great lamentation.

THE QUEEN

This abysmal waste of a delicate and graceful life will be remembered forever.

(With neither strength nor inclination, the Court gentlemen lay Psyche on a stretcher that will carry her to the mountain plateau like one being buried.)

PSYCHE

My dear parents. Don't pull your hair out or beat your breasts. Know only that this is the just reward

for those who revel too much in outward appearances. Why torment your unhappy age with continual dolour? Why trouble your spirits with fears that should be mine? Why let your tears soil the faces that I should adore and worship? You see too late, the plague of envy this has generated. When I was honoured, called the new Venus, it was then you should have wept and sorrowed as though I were already dead.

Venus is behind this misery. For her the cruel punishment fits the crime. Now I'll go to the place appointed by fortune and there I will lie on that loathsome rock and meet abject fate.

(Psyche hurries those who dawdle, spurring them on to bring her to the rock with haste. The city's inhabitants walk along consumed with a sorrow way beyond their understanding. Giving up their spirit to everlasting darkness, they lay Psyche on the high hill, extinguish the torches, kiss her with tears and depart lest their wretched grief wreck their frail souls forever.)

18. EXT. ON PETTERIL MOUNT - EVENING

Psyche does not move, but, aware of the powerful magic here she frequently starts up in fright. Now and then she glimpses a shadow moving slowly across the rocks and yet no forms are present to cause them. She sits rigid, clutching her knees, fear gripping every fibre. Once the last orange glow of the sun dips out of sight she listens more intently, fearing a beast of darkness is darting about, irritable for its prey.

Her troubled spirit trembles at the sight of a

distant light. She gazes fixedly on the glow, watching as it increases in lustre, as it changes from pale splendour to a dazzling brilliancy. She sways and falls forward, a grey silhouette of forlorn anxiety. Cupid watches her closely. He's consumed with pain to see his dear maid suffer. He deems it time to rescue her.

Zephyrus, the wind, is at his side. The lovelorn boy instructs his friend to bring his prize to the palace he has prepared for her. Psyche, feeling a sudden breeze at her back, cries out in terror. Zephyrus lifts Psyche into the air and flies with her over the valley like a hawk floating on warm winds. She surrenders, not even aware that she is moving.

She speeds, thunder-like, in mid-air, and all around her lightning flashes. Zephyrus twists and turns in every direction to keep his precious cargo safe. Psyche shrieks with fear. Finally, Zephyrus gently lays Psyche to rest.

19. EXT. A GARDEN IN CUPID'S SECRET PALACE - EVENING
(In the light of a warm summer evening Psyche finds herself in an enchanted landscape. She gazes in astonishment at her setting. No bird under the sun has plumage to match this wondrous scenery. Cupid gazes at her.

The bed of sweet and fragrant flowers on which she lies is a riot of colour; purple, crimson, pure white, yellow, azure and saffron. A river flows nearby offering sweet crystal sounds. Restored, Psyche stands and follows the water through majestic wooded groves to a lake that mirrors mountain peaks.

Psyche is enchanted. As the sun sets, her luminescent glory lightens the darkness, her radiance

reflecting off a sea of silver trunks. As the brightness dims, Psyche adjusts her vision to the dwindling light and sees a subtle illumination infuse the wood. The outline of a shining edifice glows through the twilight. Pillars of gold, topped with soaring emblems carved in citrine and ivory stretch into the heavens. The walls are intricately engraved with countless images of Gods in human form.

The parapet, covered in architectural relief, is decorated with precious gems that glitter and shine like a halo. Tapestries of precious clothe line the windows and doors. Psyche is in a state of intense delight. Cupid smiles confidently. Having spared nothing to create this palatial home, he is certain that he has secured the girl's heart and won the day.)

20. INT. CUPID'S SECRET PALACE - EVENING

Psyche steps into the entrance hall and breathes in the heady scent of flowers. She hears bewitching melodies weave around the palace. They beckon her to explore further. Torches come alive uttering praise and encouragement. Psyche walks on.

THE PALACE VOICES

We blush with the light of you. We beam with the light of you. We burn with the light of you. Be not afraid of our charmed presence. Let us hearten your boldness to come waltzing in.

(Psyche enters a hall with a luminous marble floor and circled by many porphyry columns. The filigree on each capital is carved in jasper and each delicate edge is picked out in gold. Illuminated fountains

sing and jets of water rise up through beds of chrysolite and pearl. The abundance of riches needed to make such a scene is beyond mortal reach.

Psyche walks on to a second hall. Here clouds of heavy scent issue from musk, myrrh and ambergris burning in porcelain urns and silver censers. She hears deep and sombre voices coming from unseen spirits. They eulogize her virtues and confirm that the riches she marvels at and all that lies before her is at her command.)

THE PALACE VOICES

We are your servants, ready to attend on your every desire. When you are hungry, we will prepare a feast, refreshments, whatever you desire; meats, fowls, sweetmeats, preserves. We are at your service. Every meal we prepare is a veritable tribute to the cook's art. Day or night, we will serve you the clearest of waters or delicious wine the colour of liquid rubies. If you dream in your chamber of bathing in honey and scents, we will prepare this for you. We will dress you in silks and adorn you in jewels if you so desire. Here you are queen.

PSYCHE

How can I know if this is a prize awarded by the Gods? Do you come from a felicity granted by divine providence or are you from the depths of depravity?

THE PALACE VOICES

Fear not Psyche, there's no wretched beast lying in wait for you. There's no threatening ogre waiting to exact his price or his revenge. Do not imagine that this is some kind of test. Trust in us and open

yourself generously to the wonders that lie before you. Don't ask if these are visions, if it's actually happening, for there are no answers here to these kinds of question.

Keep your senses alive; believe that you know what to do. Don't stand still until you become exhausted and frustrated by too much action. Advance as the incorporeal voices direct you. Find a chamber to lie in. Explore your new domain. There's not one bedroom, but dozens to choose from and each is more elaborate, more luxurious than any you have seen before.

(Psyche wanders about the palace. She lies on her vast bed giving instructions for the precious balms and oils she wants in her bath. Each bath she steps into is prepared exactly as she has described it. Psyche's appetite for fresh experiences drives her reveries and she skips about exploring new possibilities. Sometimes her playground is her wardrobe, at others, her rich banqueting table.)

PSYCHE

I would like to know the names of a thousand divine fruits and precious cordials to test you my dear attendants. They create many new dishes for her to taste. Psyche, delighted by the game, is unconcerned that no-one appears before her. She eats little, but feeds happily on the sounds of the many harps that accompany these ethereal services. She sways to the music, entranced, unaware that the numerous harmonies issuing from the harps are weaving joyful tunes together like a collective breath of love breathing through her. Dancing to the delicious melodies with

tender expression, she surrenders her delicate frame in grateful thanks for her delivery from a life of fear. Her movement could charm the Gods.

21. INT. THE SECRET PALACE, PSYCHE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT.
Psyche sleeps lightly. When she imagines an intruder close by, she is breathless and full of foreboding. Disturbed and troubled by quiet rustling, she is startled into wakefulness.

CUPID

Fear not; I have claimed you as my wife. I gaze upon your beauty with desire, not malice. Soon you will recognise me by my sound and you will not dread being here unprotected. Tonight, I will entice you to enjoy the gentle strength of my caresses. Surely my kisses are more delicious than any you have dreamt of. Let my tenderness invite your acceptance. Let the gentle warmth of love envelop you; let it fill you with desire. Of all your dreams of passion, surely none will match ours. Offer your submission and ask nothing in return. In your heart you know this spirit is the God of Love. If your mind seeks a truth for it, silence it with your heart. This night we will enjoy the perfect consummation of our marriage.

(Cupid climbs into Psyche's bed and indulges his passion. Psyche offers him her love. As day dawns he flies off, offering no further prospects of his attention.)

22. EXT. THE PALACE ROOMS - MORNING

(Psyche chatters excitedly to the invisible ones. Eager to please, they attend to her wishes as she

glides through the ornate rooms. She burrows in over-filled wardrobes sampling the elaborate gowns. She bathes endlessly in scented oils, studies herself critically in the abundance of mirrors and in each, she's the same surpassing vision of loveliness, the same outstanding apparition.

Each night she awaits her lover with growing desire; one night in robes of saffron, emerald braids in her hair, another dressed in silk with diamonds stitched in gold thread at her neck. The multitude of servants sigh while attending upon her and when they inhale her scent. Cupid studies her progress around the palace. Her every movement is like music to his ears. Each time she stirs, her lovable step resembles the sounds of a lute and his young soul throbs. When she sings, her enchanting voice makes him blush. Her eyes are as bright as lightning. Her long lustrous lashes arouse his stormy passion.)

(The voice of Mnemosyne accompanies these scenes.)

THE VOICE OF MNEMOSYNE

Cupid is envious of Psyche's loveliness. As jealousy slowly seeps into him, he is in no doubt that loving her is a dangerous affair. If losing her would drive the heaviest heart into a loathsome grief, what would it do to his? As soon as the sky is populated by stars, Cupid and Psyche settle into hours of perfect bliss. She submits to his heavenly embrace and honours his request to ask nothing in return.

Cupid is at his lover's side every night. In his eyes, she is the light to extinguish darkness. For Psyche, each successive hour she spends with this loving husband, she is in paradise.

Though her days are lived without Cupid her passion never wanes. Like a glorious beam shining brighter than the sun, he fixes her in a dream that fills her love with radiant mystery. Psyche increases her delight with endless requests, each of them fulfilled. She suspects magic or the hand of eternal powers but living in wonderment calms her questioning mind. If ever she fears this magical existence will end, Cupid affectionately whispers in her ear. He instructs her to remain steadfast and regard her solitary life in this dream world as a virtue.

Psyche tells herself that if these rapturous visions expire this will be the time for doubt. Only if the light pales and she's rudely awakened will she perceive the need to sharpen her memory.

Dear Mariam, don't compare Psyche to those who squander the earth's riches by their voracious enjoyment of waste, don't associate her with those whose cravings mystify us. She is simply enchanted. We all need to know that life can offer us wild extravagance or gay abandonment. Love is the ideal place to forget about the debts we owe, to fulfil desire without knowing how to pay for it.

Some, offended by Cupid, would splash their faces with his blood to put an end to his crafty schemes, but not I. I won't be induced by him or any villain to take up the role of aggressor. If you must oppose offenders, Mariam, teach your people about connection not separation. Resist campaigns that drive the weak to arm themselves. Never go off in search of revenge.

23. INT. THE KING'S PALACE - DAY.

(Each day Cupid keeps an eye on events at the court of the King, Psyche's father. All at Court, the city and thereabouts know only pain and lamentation since Psyche's unhappy departure, but her sisters, Panester and Detainer, are puzzled by her mysterious fortune. Before meeting their parents, they meet to plan their pretence of comfort. Cupid watches them closely and speaks as we witness their scheming.

CUPID

These sly princesses perform a show of great dolour. They see things others don't, are suspicious when others remain innocent and are long practiced in the art of smelling a rat. They are thick with each other and yet each one deeply distrusts the other. Trained in envy, they can sense rejection before it occurs and can see an insult coming long before an executor has moved close enough to deliver it. They live lives of endless greed, insisting that others demand too much. They imagine it is their duty to be judge and jury. They are surrounded by fools and it is easy for them to read their devious plans. Most cannot recognise artful scheming if it came with a diagram.

These two are outwardly charming, yet inwardly bitter. They imagine their grasping plots go unnoticed, but I see. They even try keeping their conspiracies secret from each other. It is by these wicked strategies that they are known to each other. I must not underestimate these cunning harri-dans; they could easily disrupt my own scheming.

They practice their false sorrow, their fake consolation and their artful methods of genteel assistance. I bet there is nothing they deplore more

than being out manoeuvred and I will do exactly this.

THE VOICE OF MNEMOSYNE

Vipers' nests litter this world, Mariam. Psyche cannot possibly walk here, there are too many villains and all of them are the best in mortal and immortal trickery. Sadly, by adopting credulity with ease, Psyche has contrived her own downfall and matched her sister's obscene treachery with her foolish generosity. Their vile deceit has its counterpart in Psyche's eagerness to be deceived. She matches their injurious ability to deceive themselves. Don't allow your people to fight the oppressors, but don't allow them to be deceived. Find a way to communicate those truths that can teach hearts to make connections.

24. INT. THE SECRET PALACE, PSYCHE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT.

(Cupid and Psyche in bed together. Cupid does not allow Psyche to see him, yet she knows that anxiety is in his breath, his eyes, his hands. Intuitively, she senses that trouble is near. When she is agitated, he holds her close.)

CUPID

Attend to my words of comfort, Psyche, intimately tune your ears to what I have to say.

PSYCHE

But why do you speak in such in urgent tones?

CUPID

Because you are innocent of your sisters' scheming ways.

PSYCHE

I think you exaggerate their faults.

CUPID

Dear wife, fortune is about to terrorize you. Take extreme care. You are now in imminent danger. Your sisters have menacing plans. They head for this mountain. They have told the Court that they will verify your death, but in this, they do not act in your best interests. With weeping and wailing they feign troubled hearts to your parents, but trust me, if you hear their cries do not attempt to answer them. If you look up as they call out to you from the mountain you will bring down upon yourself utter destruction and upon me untold sorrow.

PSYCHE

I will take heed of your words.

(Psyche starts to cry.)

CUPID

Why are you lamenting my love?

PYSCHÉ

Each day you leave me and I lack human comfort. I desire some tenderness in the day. More and more this palace of pleasures is becoming my prison. I'm deprived of human conversation and I come to this bed without food, drink or music to comfort me. You come each night with your gentle embraces and you do lighten my sullen mood and stop me brooding on my adverse fate, but still I am heavy hearted.

CUPID

My dear Psyche, don't fill your day with angry tears, don't let them stay with us at night. You must do with your sisters what your heart instructs, but you will be purchasing your own destruction if you agree to do their bidding. If you persist and my words prove true, you'll think only of repenting, but it will be too late. Take my advice, you cannot guess the results.

PSYCHE

But without a family my fate is death. I must give comfort to my sisters. Do you imagine that I can live like a hermit?

CUPID

Psyche, because of my great love for you, and against my better judgement, I relent. I will ask Zephyrus to take you to the mountain top, but you must not follow their pernicious demands to ask to see my shape. If you do so, you will deprive yourself of a great and worthy estate. If your curiosity is aroused, it will be the end of all we have together.

PSYCHE

I promise, my love, to follow your advice. You have my grateful thanks. I would rather die than be separated from you. Whoever you are, I love you as if you were my own spirit or Cupid himself but please hear my plea. Could you not command Zephyrus to bring my sisters down to the valley, just as he brought me? I want them to visit me here, where I live.

(Psyche kisses his hand)

PSYCHE

You are my precious spouse, my intimate sweetheart.
Please grant me this request.

(Cupid reels in horror.)

CUPID

Your sisters will be abominably jealous of your new-found wealth. It will end in utter disaster.

PSYCHE

Oh, please my love. I know them. They are my blood.
You are my great joy, my deepest solace, my only
love.

CUPID

Stop now, I agree, but if your sisters come here you
must give them whatever their greedy eyes alight
upon. If they desire gold, jewels or trinkets, they
must have them.

PSYCHE

I will do as you say.

Psyche kisses him and the dejected Cupid departs with
a heavy heart. He is completely distraught that he's
given in to his lovely wife so readily.)

25. EXT. ON PETTERIL MOUNT - DAY

(Panester and Detainer arrive at the same place where
Psyche was deserted to fate. Finding no evidence,
they cry out over the far valley for Psyche to
respond to their entreaties. Psyche, a delighted
smile upon her face, calls Zephyrus to transport her

to Petteril Mount. She arrives silently and swiftly at the plateau where Panester and Detainer are waiting.

PSYCHE

I am with you, dear sisters, torment yourselves no further. Cease your weeping and wailing; as you see, I am not dead.

(The sly couple, well-practised in the art of recovery, conceal their bafflement. They embrace, kiss and hug their sister, while sharing quizzical looks and quick glances at the terrain.

PANESTER

How did you make such a sudden appearance?

DETAINDER

Are you well?

PANESTER

Are you happy?

DETAINDER

You are looking very well. Do you have a man?

PANESTER

Maybe he is a prince, or a King?

(They work patiently like skilful anglers who know by experience that speed is not the way to make a good catch. Psyche, true to her vow, reveals nothing about Cupid.)

PSYCHE

Dear sister's, your questions are beyond my ability to answer. Come look at the splendid view.

DETAINDER - aside to Panester.

She is enjoying her power to control.

PANESTER - aside to Detainer.

I've no appetite for her teasing games played at our expense. She causes great offence.

DETAINDER

Psyche, are you aware of the appalling distress of your parents. We are not blaming you, but you seem so happy and they are so miserable.

PANESTER

If you are free you must return with us. Our pledge is to discover why you were brought to this place.

DETAINDER

None believe it was the wish of the Oracle and some suggest you had a hand in it.

PSYCHE

What are you saying, I am innocent.

PANESTER

Oh, we believe you, but others are not so favourable in their judgement.

DETAINDER

There is much suspicion about and some talk of the kind of punishment you can expect if you have

misplaced their trust.

PSYCHE

Surely you know I am innocent.

(Psyche puts her head in her hands.)

PANESTER - aside to Detainer

Round one to us.

DETAINDER - aside to Panester

She's not even aware that we're on to her.

PANESTER - aside to Detainer

Innocence should be her greatest regret, but when she is in danger, she holds on to it closer than ever.

DETAINDER

Come dear Psyche, we will protect you. We would like you to take us to the place where you live.

(Psyche dries her eyes and puts on a smile.)

PSYCHE

I bet you cannot guess how you will travel to my home.

(The sister's look anxiously about. They suspect magic or some ghoulish creature to appear.)

PANESTER

Remember, our servants are nearby, ready to guard us if needs be.

(Psyche laughs and walks to the edge of the cliff.)

DETAINDER - aside to Panester
She thinks she can humiliate us.

PANESTER - aside to Detainer
She will regret her playful sport with us.

DETAINDER - aside to Panester
I want to scratch her eyes out.

PANESTER - aside to Detainer
I want to pull her hair out.

(Psyche blows on a pipe, calling Zephyrus to her side. The servant wind spirals about them. All are lifted into the air. The sisters screech with fear as if they have been thrown to the vagaries of providence. Zephyrus can hardly contain their fearful writhing and kicking.)

26. EXT. THE GARDEN TO THE SECRET PALACE - DAY

(Zephyrus places Psyche and the sisters on the ground without harm. Detainer and Panester stand and gawp at the landscape.)

ZEPHYRUS - an aside to Psyche
I have never heard so many abusive oaths of retribution and yet they are no more disturbed than feathers in the wind.

(Psyche smiles.)

27. EXT. THE MARABOUT - MORNING.

MNEMOSYNE

It's vanity that causes the frantic screaming of these false ladies. How odd that they're yellow in hue. They're a comic pair of silly wretches, just two ugly piles of pointless pain. Why do they roll their eyes and shrink from the view as though they are helpless paper sheets being introduced to a flame? Surely their fear must subside without any cause to sustain it. They gawp as if they're preparing to dart from vicious beasts, intent on gobbling them up.

Do you know, Mariam, why Psyche's world is coming apart? She has one of the gentlest of characters, yet there's not one God or Goddess prepared to listen to her and offer their help. Zephyrus will carry these idle harridans to the valley, but no-one carries Psyche's prayers on a breeze, no-one scatters her words to the other worlds so that justice can be obtained for her.

Why are those with goodness so neglected? Is it true that they must learn something or do we invent such things as lies, as skilful tricks to hide evidence of disappointment and injustice?

MARIAM

I cannot tell you.

MNEMOSYNE

Consider this; if all the mortals and immortals are traitors to Psyche's needs, is she then completely lost or are there other kinds of beneficent deity that might gather round to assist her recovery?

MARIAM

I wish I could answer you. I guess there is and it is important for me to learn of it. Is this the purpose of your tale?

MNEMOSYNE

Yes, Mariam, and a tale always helps with the healing.

28. EXT. THE GARDEN TO THE SECRET PALACE - DAY

(Panester and Detainer cannot hide their fear.)

PANESTER

Who has taught you this magic?

DETAINDER

What other kind of spells have learned since living here?

PSYCHE

Be consoled sisters. You have no need of such excessive agitation. Look about you. Do you imagine that danger lurks here, that serpents lie in wait? You are in a land of eternal spring. Look upon each other; is there not a rosy flush about your cheeks, is this not a warm bright morning in a world alive with possibility?

Gaze on the landscape and let joy hold you. Let the morning freshness envelope you, allow the fine breezes to blow on you. Walk with me through these pleasant gardens, past the silver tree trunks and sing of its wondrous praises. Listen to the crystal sounds of the river and study this building of astonishing beauty. Let the strange, delicious

melodies issuing from the rich, carved walls breathe softly into you.

Don't alert your consciousness to prepare for bewitchment. Listen, the stringed instruments call out to you, suggesting that delicate, tender love is not only possible, but also immanent. Allow the magical sounds to reach into your spirits. Permit the music to dissolve and mingle with the exotic scent of flowers refreshed by sun and dew.

(Psyche leads them into the Palace.)

28. INT. THE SECRET PALCE - MORNING

(The ridiculous harridans are sick with jealousy. They have no idea what to do with such feelings and are more concerned about keeping from each other the harsh nature of their greedy ecstasy. Walking like infants woken from a drowsy sleep, they study every stone and stroke the marble used in its construction. They can only believe that this is a fairy land. They feel compelled to buoy each other up and hide their feelings about the indulgence and poetic fantasy that surrounds them.)

DETAINER - an aside to Panester

All this is magic. How else could it appear to be the world's source of light.

PANESTER - an aside to Detainer

Psyche is a witch. It's impossible that such a dull girl can be here each day gloating over her soaring emblems.

DETAINDER

Look at the ivory on the great pillars of gold.

PANESTER

Just marvel at those walls engraved with animals and Gods.

(Psyche points to the precious gems on reliefs decorating the parapets and on textiles covering carved doorways. Their deception is always close by. They feign squeals of delight and act out displays of polite etiquette; a well-practiced art they have refined for times when they must avoid an exhibition of their desire. They hide their envy by pretending their own craftsmen could do significantly better. To relieve the pressure of envy they screw up their nostrils as they breathe the heady scent of flowers and close up their ears as they hear the exotic chords of the bewitching melodies. Psyche doesn't see them swoon at the sight of the marble floors, the porphyry columns with their filigree capitals carved in jasper, or the gold-leaf edging that highlights the decoration. Panester moans with the offence this excess imposes on her sensitivity and Detainer winces in disgust at the water jets in beds of chrysolite and pearl. Psyche lounges innocently in sumptuous silks of rainbow hues. The sisters utterly detest her, believing that she is scorning their discomfort while flaunting her role as the Queen of Love.

DETAINDER

So is this ornately decorated place your home?

PANESTER

What kind of ominous magic created it?

DETAINDER

Is the man who owns it your husband?

PANESTER

What kind of exorbitant price have you paid for this luxury?

(Psyche walks her sisters to the treasure house.)

PSYCHE

Dear sisters. I insist you take anything your hearts desire.

(The sisters can hardly move. Psyche has no idea that this exhibition of exuberant wealth causes substantial pain, but the sisters overcome their shock and start to gather up as much as they can carry. Sick with a surfeit of greed and envy, bewildered by a mixture of anger and delight their wits have now deserted them. They do not question the nature of Psyche's invisible servants and when soft disembodied voices invite them to dine, they go without a care that no shape or form can be seen. When meats, divine wines and delicacies of every conceivable kind are placed before them they are hysterical with fear that a wizard's potion is responsible for this diet of excess.)

PANESTER

Who is lord here?

DETAINER

From which estate is he from?

PANESTER

What other lands does he own?

PSYCHE

He's a man of fine stature with a flaxen beard. Now come, I will answer no more questions.

DETAINER

But where is your husband?

PSYCHE

He is out hunting in the dales and hills.

PANESTER

Will he be angry if he learns that you have given away his precious gems?

PSYCHE

It is his idea that I fill up the lap of visitors.

(Suddenly, Zephyrus blows in to whisk the defiant sisters back up the mountain.)

29. EXT. PETTERIL MOUNT - EVENING

(The sisters sit upon a rock. They are utterly baffled by the speed and timing of their flight.)

DETAINER

This can't have been a dream; the treasure we gathered up is here with us. Psyche's healthy demeanour and contented spirit is not a sign of

torture; she pays nothing for her luxuries.

PANESTER

The transforming alchemy is more impressive than a magician's art. We have no purchase on this odd place; what can we do but pick up these bags of great fortune and return home?

DETAINDER

She has affronted my good standing. What will we tell everyone? Her world indicates every sign of verifiable reality without any apparent threat attached. It's more than I can endure.

PANESTER

It's a cruel and contrary fortune. We are born of the same parents, yet we have such diverse destinies. We must now return to our difficult old husbands who make handmaidens of us.

DETAINDER

I am banished from my country and friends, while Psyche is waited upon by invisible servants, bathing daily in an abundance of treasure. She must have a God for a husband.

PANESTER

It is unfair in the extreme. She has no skill in the use of abundant riches and yet her palace reeks of them. No woman has such a quantity of jewels or this number of glittering robes.

DETAINDER

I walked on gems and trod upon gold. We must not

torture ourselves, dear sister, but we can't countenance her good fortune. If she has a husband there's none alive happier than she.

PANESTER

He will probably make her a Goddess. By our noble Hercules, such is her vain countenance already. She has voices to serve her and winds to obey her, how could she not be a Goddess?

DETAINDER

Look at me; I am a poor wretch in comparison to Psyche - married to a husband older than my father and lacking his handsome looks.

PANESTER

Look at me, married to a man with gout and balder than a coot; locked in a house all day to stop men from taking advantage of me.

DETAINDER

My husband is weaker than a child. He refuses to pay my debts and I must rub and mollify his horrid, stony fingers with oils all night long.

PANESTER

I must wrap my husband's feet in plasters and salves. Just look at these hands, once white and dainty, now corrupted by his filthy clouts.

DETAINDER

Feel the roughness of these fingers that know only the life of a servant. I must live far away from family and attend his irksome relatives.

PANESTER

Our sister was so rude to cast pathetic pieces of gold into our laps. Did you notice how proudly and arrogantly she handled us?

DETAINER

Did you notice how keen she was to flaunt her wealth? Never has she given utterance to such a presumptuous mind and got away with it.

PANESTER

When we were getting close to her murky little secrets she smiled and when she was weary of us she instructed a demon to whisk us away.

DETAINER

I am hardly of this world if I do not exact my revenge upon her sneaky greed. I am hardly a woman if I do not deprive her of this bliss.

PANESTER

We will bring about Psyche's downfall, dear sister. We will ensure that news of her good fortune never reaches the ears of our parents.

DETAINER

We will tell no-one we have seen her. News of her grave state will cause great concern and we will get everyone to vilify and blame her.

PANESTER

We will hide our treasure, tear out our hair and rip apart our clothes to verify our terrible ordeal, but now we must hastily return home.

DETAINDER

We must renew our false sorrow if we are to refresh our parent's tears. Seeing us lamenting still, will be enough to reinstate their grief.

PANESTER

No matter how the Court questions us, we will say nothing. Let us pledge to cause Psyche's destruction and suppress her repulsive pride.

DETAINDER

She will realise she has sisters, that we too are princesses, not just abject women. She will understand we are far more worthy than she.

30. INT. THE SECRET PALACE, PSYCHE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT
(Cupid is counselling Psyche in urgent tones.)

CUPID

Do you realise the perils that await you if you fail to recognise the danger that lies ahead.

PAYCHE

I cannot imagine this awfulness that you say my sisters engage in. I refuse to accept that evil fortune threatens me or that my sisters have set snares to undermine me.

(She smooths his agitation with kisses and softens his mind with caresses.)

CUPID

I gravely insist that if Panester and Detainer persuade you to look at my face and you have the

misfortune to do so, it will sever all possible future connections between us.

PSYCHE

Oh husband, you are engaging in your own wicked cunning to suit yourself. My sisters cannot be regarded as horrid hags armed with fiendish intent simply because they wish to visit me. Without evidence, I will not accept they plan my downfall, nor will I promise to cease seeing them. It is entirely reasonable that a young wife should speak with her older sisters.

CUPID

I agree with you on this last point, but I insist that you must not answer questions, other than to make simple remarks or anodyne suggestions, and on no account, are you to discuss me.

PSYCHE

Why must you hurt me when clearly, I would never jeopardise our love. By your wish, I will not talk of you, but you must trust me my dear angel, my sweet love; you must believe in me. I am, after all, carrying your child.

CUPID

Well and good. If you abide by my wishes, the tender babe couched in your loving belly will be made immortal, but if you fail you will give birth to a mortal creature.

31. EXT. THE MARABOUT - MORNING.

MNEMOSYNE

On hearing this overwhelming news, Psyche weeps tears of joy. Giving birth is magical for any mother, but to bring a divine babe into the world is ambition beyond her wildest dreams. Motherhood bestows a joyful confidence upon Psyche. As the weeks pass, she counts the days and marvels at the life inside her, but she also knows she cannot live in isolation forever.

If you were Psyche, Mariam, would you trust Cupid and bury your doubts? Is it innocence that keeps her buoyant? Or when belief brings pain, would she, like you, believe cautiously?

Why is this woman's fate with its particular failings relevant? She loves unwisely, but it is difficult to perceive the fault compared to the predictable treachery of Cupid and her sisters.

Beauty deceives; it carries an explosive charge for those with it and for those gazing upon it. It has the power to destroy reason, but should a woman with a heart of goodness, be punished?

MARIAM

I have a hint now about where this story is going. I have an idea about the questions you are asking, but I will remain silent until the end.

32. INT. THE KINGDOM OF PSYCHE'S FATHER. (Panester)

We see how the sisters perform when they arrive home. Panester wastes no time before sending out spies to gather information and summoning a local sorceress to attend her. The sorceress promises she can divine who

Psyche's God-like husband is, but in truth she is too scared to admit she has no such power. Panester demands an answer within the week.

The foolish sorceress tries to buy a little time, insisting it to be a most complex and rigorous undertaking, but the ugly sister cares nothing for her excuses and sends her on her way.

A week later she visits the sorceress in her make-believe cave. Panester observes that the woman has constructed two manikins, one to represent Psyche, the other to signify Cupid. She takes a seat and watches as the old witch draws a circle with her finger around the male manikin. It shimmers, giving off an evanescent green flame and Panester is much impressed. The sorceress, speaking gravely, demands he reveal himself. Moving now with sudden flourishes, she draws a second circle around the female doll, pouring red unguents over it. She kneels by the manikin, mumbling obscure words of magic that sound like the drone of a bee and waits, but this time nothing happens.

The apprehensive sorceress appears lost. In a drastic attempt to keep her performance alive and prove her power, she draws lines between the two circles. Again, to no avail. Panester though, is strangely impressed. She declares the sorceress has drawn the odd forms of crouching baboons and jackasses. Encouraged by this, the foolish woman begins to dance around the cave, droning horribly.

The sorceress bends to read the signs in the dust; her face white-heated, her brow beaded with sweat. She addresses Panester.

THE SORCERESS

All must fear the creature you speak of, all except you. Indeed, he is a God, but know that he tires of Psyche and even now he searches for another, one of mature mind.

(With this the sorceress appears to faint. Panester rushes to revive her. The sorceress, pretending drowsiness, claims to know nothing of the words she has spoken. Panester, caring little for memory, is delighted and pays the old woman a handsome sum.)

33. INT. THE KINGDOM OF PSYCHE'S FATHER. (Detainer)
(Detainer is similarly engaging the divination arts. She employs a man renowned for his art in prediction. When the princess visits him, he also has prepared a spectacular performance. He swathes the upper and lower part of his face with linen, leaving only the lips and eyes exposed. Taking water from a jug, he sprinkles it liberally on his head, his arms and his feet. Muttering incantations, he moves about the room, swaying gently.

As he processes, he stops now and then to face a wall, kissing it lovingly and calling out Psyche's name. With each tender kiss, he sneezes loudly. After several such incidents he starts tumbling about as though the place rocks with thunder and he utters the sounds of all the animals he knows. He holds his throat as though the air has now become smoky with curling vapours. Next, he invents a cat and strokes it before pretending he is struggling to fight off a voracious tiger.

The old man mimes his subjugation of a writhing serpent then stoops as if listening to the animal.

Suddenly his lined face displays the sign of revelation and he turns to Detainer.

THE OLD MAN

The God you spoke of now awaits your return.
He saw you when you visited his palace and Psyche
can't compare with your fine charms.

(Detainer, proud and delighted, pays him well.)

34. INT. THE SECRET PALACE, PSYCHE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT
(Cupid and Psyche in the bed.)

CUPID

Behold, dear Psyche, the day is upon us and the
extreme case I talked of must now be tried. The
enemies of your blood are armed against us. They have
pitched their camp, set their host in array and now
briskly march towards us.

PSYCHE

Husband, you have proof of my faithfulness and I will
persevere in the same manner. You have no need to
fear my failure. Now be my dearest love and command
your dear wind Zephyrus to bring them to me as he did
before.

CUPID

Your sisters have drawn their swords ready to slay
you. With great force, we are assailed this day.
Dearest Psyche, take pity on yourself and on me, save
your dear husband and this infant in your belly from
the ensuing, terrible danger.

PSYCHE

I pray you by these beautiful hairs, by these round cheeks, delicate and tender, by your pleasant hot breast, whose shape and face I shall learn at length by the child in my belly, support me and grant the fruit of my desire.

CUPID

Refuse to look at them and block your ears. It is their immense hatred and breach of sisterly amity that causes them to come like sirens to these mountains. Promise me that you will not yield to their piteous and lamentable cries.

PSYCHE

Husband; refresh your dear spouse with joy. I am bound and linked to you forever and ever.

I do not esteem to see your visage and figure and I do not regard the night and its darkness with fear; you my dearest are my only light.

35. INT. THE KINGDOM OF PSYCHE'S FATHER.

MNEMOSYNE - voice over action.

Before long, those pestilent and wicked furies breathing out their serpentine poison are taking ship to bring about their iniquitous enterprises. They do not inform their parents about their voyage and they keep from each other their desperate ambition to win Psyche's husband.

Pretending their mission is a shared enterprise to belittle the proud Psyche, they travel to the rock where she was left to the whims of fate. They vilify her and study each other for clues of the other's

intentions, but neither can add certainty to their suspicion of deception. First Detainer is about to call out to the wind, then Panester is. Neither makes a sound and both make-believe they're scanning the valley. As soon as one saunters to the mountain edge so does the other. They play cat and mouse like this until both leap rashly over the edge.

Zephyrus, entirely against his will, obeys the divine commandment to catch the wretched pair mid-flight and deposit them in the valley. Each briefly straightens her skirt and tidies her hair before running in great haste toward the palace. Without knocking, they fly straight in. Not caring about calling out to indicate their presence, they dart about, trying to find Psyche in the hope they'll locate her prized husband.

Between adoring themselves in mirrors, both check the progress the other makes. There is little chance one will find her before the other. Nothing distracts them; not even the gentle lilting of the ethereal voices. Unannounced, they burst in upon Psyche in her bedroom.

Psyche greets her sisters and they embrace their prey. They thank her for the treasure she gave and then reel at the sight of her belly.

PANESTER

Oh, my dearest sister, you know you are now no more a child, but a mother. Oh, what great joy you bear in your much-honoured belly.

DETAINDER

What a comfort it will be to the entire house.
Happy we shall be to see this cherished infant

nourished amongst such a wealth of treasure.

PANESTER

If the babe is anything like his parents, there's a young God or Goddess on the way and we'll be the most gracious aunts you can imagine.

(They attempt to win Psyche over, but they're weary with travel. As soon as they're sitting in her comfortable chairs, they fall fast asleep. Psyche commands the invisible attendants to play enchanted music in the hope that it might suppress the wickedness of her two sisters.

Some sing and others play instruments, their gentle harmonies and delicious modulations exploring the bounds of magical jurisdiction. The iniquity of these cursed women is not suppressed by these dulcet sounds. Unaffected, they snore loudly and shout in fits and starts.

When the two harridans awake, Psyche invites them to join her in the parlour where all kind of meats and delicacies have been prepared. After tasting each and every morsel the vile sisters continue working their treasons and encourage Psyche to talk about her husband.)

DETAINDER

What parentage is he, what name does he use?

(Psyche rides the stormy words like a seabird riding warm air currents. As her confidence increases, she inadvertently reveals a description of Cupid very different to the one she had invented on their last visit.)

PSYCHE

He's a quiet man, not given to large company. He's a merchant and a man of middle age. His beard is nicely interspersed with grey hairs.

(Realising she has made a momentous mistake she hastily fills their laps with jewellery and gold, instructing Zephyrus to bear them away.)

36. EXT. PETTERIL MOUNT - EVENING

DETAINER

I am filled with doubt and suspicion, my dear sister; what's your informed opinion of our Psyche's double description of her husband?

PANESTER

Doubtful, like you, my dear; first he's a young man of flourishing years with a flaxen beard, then he's a quiet man, half grey with age.

DETAINER

Quite; we can only conclude that either this cursed little queen has invented a lie, or she has never seen the shape of her husband.

PANESTER

If she has never seen him, then we can only conclude that she is in fact married to some God and has a young God in her happy belly.

DETAINER

But if she is to have a divine babe, it will be a disaster for us. If this bizarre fortune comes to the

ears of our mother, we will be exposed.

37. INT. THE KINGDOM OF PSYCHE'S FATHER.

MNEMOSYNE - voice over action.

The sisters return to their parents with renewed lies and well-practiced wiles to prop up their ambition to make Psyche pay for their envy. The dizzying illusion of their charge is doubly complex for they must pretend cheerful union while making plans for alternative aspirations. By day they walk on thin ice, overly inflamed, relying only on obstinate objectivity. Nights, beyond their control, they spend in terror.

Being well accomplished at deception, they triumph. Had they failed in these tasks they'd have lost the only partner they've ever known. They visit their old parents, reveal Psyche's existence, confirm her mortal danger and return to the mountain, before questions arise.

Zephyrus again carries them to the valley and, as they stand upon the threshold, they rub their eyelids to display the extent of their weeping. Psyche welcomes her sisters and showers them with kisses. Armed with questions, they cannot wait to use their ugly ammunition against her. Ignoring polite etiquette, courteous preambles and news of their parents' wellbeing, the sisters instantly commence their pitiable lying.

PANESTER

Do you imagine you can remain ignorant of the evil around you; pretending happiness at home with no proper regard for your peril?

DETAINER

We are taking great care that no harm should befall you and, being credibly informed, we must tell you of the knowledge we possess.

PANESTER

There is a great serpent full of deadly poison that lies with you every night. He will surely devour you with his ravenous gaping throat.

DETAINER

Do you not remember the Oracle of Apollo?
He pronounced that you would be married to a dire and fierce serpent and it is true, you are.

PANESTER

Many of the inhabitants nearby have spoken of seeing him. Those who hunt in the local area affirm that they saw him here only yesterday.

DETAINER

Others returning from pasture speak of him swimming in the river. They say you will not be pampered with amorous intentions for long.

PANESTER

You are by no means the first to be seduced.
There are many who fear that when the time of delivery approaches, he will devour you both.

DETAINER

Both you and your child will be lost. Please understand the great danger you are in.
Accept the view of your sisters and act now.

PANESTER

We care for your safety. We promised our parents that we would save you from this despicable monster and your certain death.

DETAINER

Can you not be content to live with us or is it your preference to remain with a serpent that will swallow you into the gulf of his vile belly?

PANESTER

Can you possibly claim to enjoy this dismal solitary life, engaged in bizarre conversations with absent, disembodied voices, surely not?

DETAINER

How can you prefer your love for this serpent and reject your caring family? Are you so truly obsessed with servile and odious pleasures?

PANESTER

Look at your wan and sallow countenance; you are too ill to walk. The freshness of your grief must be clouding your ability to think.

PSYCHE

Enough. I cannot reject love so easily. You must realise he loves me and asks only that I love him in return. I must do this.

DETAINER

But death is your wooer. Your heart is but newly widowed; this pain will not last. Your fate is our fate. We'll help you fight his wiles.

PSYCHE

No. My life will be endless days of weeping.
Bring me those who saw a serpent. Let them persuade
me they were truly talking truth.

PANESTER

We will, but remember, you have never seen the shape
of your husband. How will you know how to judge the
honesty of their comments?

PSYCHE

Simply, my husband can't abide the light of day, but
yet I hear his gentle voice each night. It is only
his form that is uncertain to me.

DETAINER

You do not know where he comes from, where he goes to
in the day? Then it is true and this confirms our
worst fears; he is truly a beast.

PSYCHE

I admit that I fear to see him; for he menaces and
threatens great evil will befall me if I try to spy
on him to discover his nature and shape.

PANESTER

Follow our advice, dear sister and you will heartily
thank us for our kindness towards you. Believe us; we
have a remedy for this danger.

DETAINER

Trust us; we have no fear of peril or danger.
We will show you the best way to save your dear life
and avoid the pending catastrophe.

PANESTER

Before he comes tonight, have a secret burning lamp with oil hidden under part of the hanging in your chamber. With this you will see him.

DETAINDER

Place this sharp razor under the pillow of your bed. Practice sleeping with it before he comes, for you must not arouse his eager suspicions.

PANESTER

When he comes to bed, kiss him softly and tell him how agreeably the day proceeded. Only when he is soundly asleep can you commence.

DETAINDER

Arise secretly and with bare feet go and take the lamp. With razor in hand, you must take a look at the creature that sleeps in your bed.

PANESTER

If, as we predict, he is a monster, then, with valiant force, you must cut off the head of this poisonous serpent and finally end your woes.

DETAINDER

We will assist you once he is dead and marry you to some comely man. Now we must leave. If you comprehend your task, call Zephyrus.

PANESTER

We must make haste with our departure as we too are in danger, dear sister. Call the wind; we will return as soon as the task is complete.

38. INT. THE SECRET PALACE - EVENING

MNEMOSYNE - voice over action.

Psyche's mind, driven by these dreadful revelations, heaves as in a convulsive sea. Frantically she tries to resist their counsel. She cannot clarify her doubts, make sense of the diverse opinions, nor imagine spending life without looking once upon her husband.

Close to motherhood, she must crave family recognition; how can she give birth to a divine child yet walk alone in an isolated desert? She imagines action and then not. She feels bold; next she is full of fear. She mistrusts her sisters; then she is moved by their concern. She believes in their appalling visions and yet loves her husband. All this while she moves ever closer towards their wicked objective.

Cupid comes. Fervently he embraces Psyche, his lovemaking more passionate than ever and it is midnight before he falls into a deep sleep.

Psyche, though feeble in body and mind, is now acutely aware of the cruelty of her fate. Reluctantly she gathers the razor and the lamp. She sidles toward the bed with her fraudulent objects. She stares, open mouthed. Before her the meekest of all beasts sleeps peacefully. The lamp increases its light for joy of seeing Him and the razor turns its edge. There is no monster or serpent here, only splendid Deity.

Her mind stumbles and her countenance pales. She falls trembling to her knees, wishing she could turn back the time and begin again. Greatly moved by the sight of her husband and intensely fearful of acting out this wilful enterprise, her trembling hand drops the razor.

None can behold the beauty of Cupid's divine visage without knowing that it is he who lies before them. Psyche's heart beats ever louder. She gazes at his golden locks that yield such sweet savour, at his neck whiter than milk, at his vivid purple cheeks, his fine ruby lips.

As the plume of feathers strewn across his shoulders trembles this way and that, she is filled with tenderness, consumed with love. She strokes his body, delighting in its smooth softness, observing how the brightness of his skin makes the lamp glow dark by comparison.

PSYCHE

Your mother will be honoured to gaze upon the wondrous grandchild that lies in here. Will you invite her to bestow her merciful blessing? Maybe you will introduce me to the Gods of the immortal realm and teach your son how to put your prized bow and arrows to good use?

(Moving to the foot of the bed where Cupid's weapons lie, she takes from his quiver one of the loving arrows and carelessly pricks herself. Blood flows profusely from her finger. Of her own accord, she has added love upon love for the exceptionally fine God that lies before her. Psyche, her love for Cupid overflowing now, embraces and kisses him a thousand gentle times, taking extreme care not to wake him.

In a state of adoration and confusion, Psyche tips the lamp. One drop of burning oil trickles out and lands on Cupid's cherished shoulder. He flinches; his unconscious self, unaware of causality, imagines he has been bitten by some irritating insect. Psyche

rebukes the lamp.

PSYCHE

Oh, rash and bold lamp, are you so envious of my passion that you must intervene? It is most audacious of you to burn the God of all fire. He invented you so that you might allow every lover greater joy by lighting the pleasure of fiery nights and now you have wounded him.

(Cupid awakes with a troubled heart; he knows the moment he most feared has come. As he touches his shoulder it is clear this is no bite.)

CUPID

What is this malevolent fire that sears my skin, bites into my flesh and grows more pernicious the more it consumes my tender young body? By all heaven, why do you kneel over me with a lamp in your hand, my precious wife, and what is this razor that lies upon the covers? Psyche, you have broken your promise and your faith. The pain from the oil is killing me. I must fly from here. Pray do not hold so fast.

(Even at a great height she holds him, until the God spins round and she falls. Cupid follows her down, captures her and clasps her close. Lovingly he places her on the top of a Cypress tree. Psyche, recovering, gazes at him tenderly, but a storm of anger flows from Cupid's lips.

CUPID

Psyche; despite the instruction of my mother to marry you to a man of miserable condition, I arrived from

heaven to care and protect you. I even wounded myself with my weapons to have you as my spouse. Am I such a beast that you should try to cut off my head with a razor?

I loved you well, submitted to your will and advised you to reject the false counsel of those cursed aides and counsellors you call sisters. They will be rewarded for their pains, but your punishment will be my absence. He takes one last cherishing glance at the beautiful Psyche.

39. EXT. THE NATURAL WORLD - EVENING

MNEMOSYNE - voice over action.

Weeping and lamenting, Psyche casts her eyes after Cupid until he is far from sight. Without him she is desolate, frantic, utterly forlorn. Psyche can't survive with the entire mortal and immortal realms stacked against her; now only the unseen spheres of intelligence can help her. She might console herself with age-old tales, but it is far better to make connection with the healing rhythms of the landscape she inhabits.

Psyche, the personification of beauty, the exceptional princess, is abjured by all but the natural world, and so must seek nature's help. It will be crucial for her to listen to stories from other forms of life on earth. Only they can coach her in the delicate art of survival.

Nature's not a fragile void. Can she tune her sensitivity to perceive that a weakness results when the true nature of a thing is ignored? Will she now learn that the great imagination is pre-eminently in things out there, not within her and use this

perception to make decisions?

She must begin to sense that many things can act as a vessel for soul; a river and a tree can ease a tortured mind as well as words or ideas. Will she make herself available to the world and allow it to teach her that it is filled with all manner of significant imaginative resonance?

A place is not only a physical location, matter is not just a convenient filling for supposedly harmonious but empty forms; it has meaning. She must begin to see that the objects of nature in all their many guises are containers for some essential form of breath-containing life.

If Psyche can follow the teaching of the wind, it will show her that the physical realm is not the hollow, insubstantial place some claim. She recalls the ruinous visions she had tried to banish; the dark, ugly head of Despair, the ominous calm, the blackness that filled the air.

It was instinct that had caused her to jump into the river to save her skin, but she may yet see those baffling, sinister visions as premonitions. Again, Psyche propels herself into the water. This time it understands her anguish and her misery at the loss of her beloved husband.

The river, in honour of Cupid who frequently bathed in its waters, raises young Psyche out and places her on the bank among the herbs.

(Psyche cannot picture where she is. She has faced so many dire tragedies in such swift succession, she lies trapped and restrained. Pan, the ancient, rustic God, sits by the river embracing the Goddess Canna as she watches over her herd of goats feeding on the

grass. He sees instantly Psyche's sorrow and knows the reason for her bewildered look, her grief and abject misery. He makes her a cosy bed. Pan directs Canna to tune her songs and pipes and then he addresses Psyche in lyrical tones sweeter than music itself. The princess hears.

PAN

I am a rustic herdsman, but by reason of my old age I have expertise in very many things, including that which wise men call divination. I perceive by your uncertain breath, your pale hues, your sobbing sighs and your watery eyes that you are greatly in love and yet rejected. Please listen carefully. You must cease this attempt to kill yourself and you must conclude your weeping. You cannot sit still any longer. Think only of adoring the great God Cupid and one day you shall win his dear affection on account of your service to him. Trust me.

(At this, Psyche swoons and falls into a deep sleep, but the God of shepherds has the urge to instruct her further and he continues to speak.)

PAN

Dear Psyche, may the oblivion of cares and all other in this life, save that hidden piping and singing that comes from Canna's gathered companions, pillow and aid your drowsy head. You wander through a maze where every kind of music washes over you. Behold, before you is a garden, golden with the light of lamps that hang in great profusion from many branches.

Before you, ripe pomegranates, quince, apples

and pears are yours to eat. Lie here on this bank that we have piled with purple cushions and allow your limbs to recover and relax. Believe you're clad in the richest figured silks, fringed like the ends of clouds round the sun. When you wake, you will not recall the many confused hours that preceded this fine sleep.

You may be dimly aware that some evil has recently befallen you, but these tyrannies will disappoint recognition as though a potent drug has charmed you into a lasting forgetfulness. The only thing you will remember is the name of your husband, Cupid, and you will call out his name until you have no voice left and no more power in your heavenly body to utter it. It is in this condition that you will begin your tireless wandering through many lands and other worlds. Though many hardships will hamper your journey, you will in time flourish.

40. EXT. THE NATURAL WORLD - MORNING

MNEMOSYNE - voice over action.

After such an amount of turmoil, Psyche is even now only at the starting point, at the first place where everything can truly begin afresh. The most beautiful woman in the world is not only despised and vulnerable to every known danger, but life is to get more difficult for her. This mother to be, a solitary beggar in a hostile landscape, totally exposed, utterly confused, bewildered by all, is on the very lowest rung. She is without any resources and can't imagine how she'll be brave enough to start life again, how she'll manage to live it as a mere pauper.

She has nothing from her past, is without any

idea how she will nurture the offspring she is carrying and has no means of feeding herself. Of course, her child will not starve; it'll grow in that place, deep within, where she too must exist and from where she must learn to grow. Psyche must live in her bones, deep inside her body where the memories and the stories lie in wait to be called upon to promote connections.

This is how the world began. This is the place where hope resides; the profound region, well below that place where despair can operate. Here, everything that is subject to anticipation fails, because it's pure nature, where virtue can thrive and submission is the only working rule. Psyche's breath knows this and her breath is never without hope. It is the will of Psyche's breath that knows how to support expectation.

41. EXT. THE NATURAL WORLD - MORNING

MNEMOSYNE - voice over action.

After travelling for days, Psyche discovers herself in the city where Panester lives. When she realises this, she sends a messenger to her sister requesting an invitation to the palace. Panester, both alarmed and intrigued, instructs the messenger to bring her immediately to the court. They embrace and Panester asks if she has yet discovered the identity of her husband. Psyche, innocent still, reminds her sister that it was she who insisted she kill the vile beast that was feigning to be her husband. Panester, lost for words, can't wait to hear Psyche's news.

PSYCHE

As soon as I brought forth the lamp to catch a glimpse of his shape, I perceived that he was none other than the son of Venus. Yes, it was Cupid himself who was lying with me in bed. Then, being stricken with great pleasure and desirous to embrace him, I could not contain my delight. As fortune would have it, the oil of the lamp spilled and landed on his shoulder. This caused him to wake and, seeing that I was armed with fire and weapons, he berated me, asking how I could dare to undertake such a great mischief on one so gentle and kind as he.

He said that I must depart from him and take only those things that I brought with me. As you well know I came with nothing. After this he commanded Zephyrus to carry me away.

PANESTER

Do you think Cupid would place me in his felicity and take me as his wife.

PSYCHE

How is it you can think such a thing? He is hardly looking around for my replacement.

PANESTER

Rude girl, how can you say so much? He must have seen me when I visited your palace. Are you saying that you deserve him and I don't?

PSYCHE

But you're married; consider your husband.

PANESTER

I think it is best if you visit Detainer and see if you can live with her.

MNEMOSYNE - voice over action.

The foul woman, pierced with the prick of carnal desire and wicked envy, runs quickly to her husband. Feigning she has received word of the death of her parents, she instantly makes arrangements to be transported back to Petteril Mount, that podium where Psyche's fateful journey began. On the following day, she arrives on the high plateau. Full of certainty that a contrary wind is blowing, she decides it is Zephyrus and cries out to Cupid to bring her to his blissful palace.

She declares she has wasted no time in coming to his loving arms and casts herself headlong from the mountain. She lands unrecognised in the valley far below, neither alive nor dead. The various parts of her body are torn among the rocks while birds of prey and wild beasts devour what is left. Those who contribute nothing in this world, leave nothing behind.

43. EXT. THE NATURAL WORLD - MORNING

(Psyche wanders across the landscape until she comes to the city where Detainer holds court. On seeing her sister, she repeats the story she told Panester. Detainer behaves exactly as her sister did. She makes excuses about urgent news, runs to her husband, flies to the fateful rock, and topples from it just as Panester had done.)

43. EXT. THE NATURAL WORLD - MORNING

MNEMOSYNE - voice over action.

Psyche hears news of her sisters from a beggar and, knowing it's no longer her duty to protect others from their fate, she wastes one thought on them before forgetting about them entirely. True to the prediction of the Shepherd God, Psyche travels through various lands seeking sight or news of her precious husband. She can learn nothing of him, but still she persists.

44. INT. THE PALACE OF VENUS - MORNING

MNEMOSYNE - voice over action.

Cupid has retreated to his mother's private chamber. He has lain prostrate for days, bewailing the end of love and the wound caused by the oil from the burning lamp.

45. EXT. A SPA BY THE SEA

MNEMOSYNE - voice over action.

Venus is not at the palace; she is enjoying the sea air and reinvigorating her worn beauty in the spas and springs renowned for rejuvenating the damaged bodies and spirits of Gods. She is bathing in the ocean when she finally receives news of her son. A timid seagull in her employ that has been posted near her tentatively approaches to deliver his missive.

SEAGULL

Madam, I have urgent information to impart. Your son has been badly burned and he is in danger of death.

There are many about who speak evil of your family and blame it on you. Worse still, there are common words in the mouth of every person that your son does nothing but visit a harlot in the mountain, a woman, they claim, who now bears his child.

The mortals say that you do nothing but riot lasciviously in the sea. They have now become ungracious to you. They're no longer pleasant or gentle, but spread uncivil, monstrous lies. It's worse yet. They claim that marriages are no longer a bed of amity or suited for love of procreation, but a place that is full of envy, ravaged by dispute and discordant debate.

VENUS

I'll soon see to his abominable treachery. Now tell me gentle creature, what she is, this harlot who haunts the mountain. What is her name, this she-wolf who troubles Cupid so intently? Is she of the Nymphs, of the great number of Goddesses, of the company of the Muses or of the mystery of the Graces? Are there qualities in her that raise her above pitiable mortals?

SEAGULL

Dear Mother of Beauty, I know not what she is, but she answers to the name of Psyche.
What, my sworn enemy, the usurper of my beauty? She who Cupid was sent to punish?

VENUS

What did my stupid son think? That I was a mistress of harlots by whose introduction he could become acquainted with a maid who commandeers my name and

fakes my virtues? I shall have his feathers for a pillow and count not the loss. Come, courtiers, we must leave this ocean retreat and return to my chamber where Cupid lies on my bed mortally wounded.

46. INT. PALACE OF VENUS, CUPID'S BEDROOM - AFTERNOON
(Cupid is lying in his bed. Venus bursts into the bedroom.)

VENUS

Is this an honest thing you have done Cupid? Is this how you honour your parents? If you are wounded then I'll wound you more. How can you possibly reason this vast injustice? You have violated and broken a commandment of your mother and sovereign mistress. Your task was to vex my enemy with loathsome love, yet you wilfully employ the opposite strategy.

Your flesh is far too tender, your years unripe, and you have with too licentious an appetite embraced my most mortal foe. Can it be true that this pathetic mortal girl bears your child? No, don't attempt to explain, I need no hideous lies; please spare me that. Must I soon be her mother then? I cannot believe you would give me such a daughter to nurse my grandchild.

Don't presume I act on idle gossip; the whole world knows this. You trivial boy, you varlet without an ounce of suitable reverence, you deduce incorrectly that you're worthy of me. So, let me tell you, my excellent buffoon, that by reason of my age, I am not now able to give birth to another son, but if I could there is no doubt that he would be far worthier than you.

Don't insult me with clever observations about

the time it would take to make a grown man. I intend to ensure that you are in no doubt whatsoever of the extent of my displeasure. I shall adopt one of my servants and give him these wings, this fire, this bow and these arrows, and all other furniture given to you, which you are determined to use so badly. And I will not stop there, wretched creature. Hear this. I will take back all talents given to you by your father for the magnanimous and noble purpose of regenerating amorous love.

It is without doubt that you were wrongly brought up and poorly instructed in your youth. Your hands are now too eager, your practices too sharp and too self-centred. You forget who you are and you constantly offend the ancients, especially me, your loving mother. You have pierced me with your darts and you have condemned me as an old widow.

You have too little regard for your valiant and invincible father and, to anger me more, you have been amorous with many other harlots and wenches besides this thing called Psyche. I can't bear to utter her name. Now you hear this. I am going to cause your repentance by detailing your every trick with this upstart. To this terrible point I am now completely driven.

What do I care if you know who the villains are, that they lie in pieces scattered over the mountain? I can still seek retribution even if the criminals are wrecks upon jagged rocks. Be assured I shall seek the counsel of every poor rustic woman; every woman who has ever been rejected by love and enquire of them what the worst punishment should be.

What delightful tortures they'll invent for you and after listening to their retribution I'll ask

Sobriety to conjure suitable chastisements for you even though she's my sworn adversary. I will invite her to correct you most sharply, take away your quiver, deprive you of your arrows, straighten your bow, quench your fire and subdue your body with horrid punishment. Never imagine you've been punished enough. Never will you return to your old ways. If your heart is in tatters and your body is being eaten alive by this wound, you can still suffer more.

Many will applaud a tough penalty for the God of passion and I suspect mortals will fare well enough without naughty imps like you among them, concocting infatuations with arrows. Oh, I can add more deformities yet. I could cut off every last lock of your flowing hair, oh yes, those fine locks that I dressed and made to glitter like gold in sunlight. After that I could clip your wings, those fine gossamer extensions that I helped you to grow. Only then, Cupid, will I stop to consider if I have revenged myself upon you sufficiently.

(Venus departs to her chamber.)

47. INT. A CHAMBER IN THE PALACE OF VENUS - AFTERNOON
(Juno and Ceres, hearing Venus raging about her chamber in a great fury, come to her side and demand to know the cause of her anger.)

VENUS

It would have been better had you listened to my lamentations earlier, when I spoke of the coming danger. It's too late for action now. All the wretchedness I prophesised has come to pass, but I'll tell you what you can do. You can seek out one whose

pitiful name is Psyche. She is a vagabond who runs about the country. You are not ignorant of my son, the brute, and can imagine what he has done to offend me. I am ashamed to reveal the detail, but I am sure you can presume all when I say, its business as usual for my defiant son, Cupid.

CERES

How can we mitigate your ire dear Venus. Tell us more about what has transpired.)

JUNO

How has your son so offended that you should so greatly accuse his love and blame him by reason that he is amorous with such felicity?

CERES

Have you forgotten his years? There is still much about him that's youthful. Why should you seek the death of her, whom he fancies?

JUNO

It's not the amorous nature of him that I decry, but the hurt he has inflicted on me. And think not that this young harlot is an innocent thing.

CERES

We most humbly entreat you to pardon his fault if he spent his nights with a maiden. Do you not realise that he is still a young man?

JUNO

You're his mother and all regard you as a kind Goddess. Must you continually search out his

dalliance? Will you always blame his luxury?

CERES

Will you bridle his love until he is an old man? Will you reprehend your own art and delights after you've placed him in a disgraced orbit?

JUNO

What God could endure your eagerness to disperse your seed of love in every place and make restraint the norm behind your door?

CERES

It is certain that your actions will be the cause of timidity and suppression for the youthful dames who inhabit the public places of love.

VENUS

Oh don't seek to pacify me and excuse Cupid. You live in fear of his fateful darts and shafts of love. You are trifling with me, taunting me for my injuries. I am off to the sea.

(Venus departs from them.)

48. EXT. THE NATURAL WORLD - MORNING

MNEMOSYNE - voice over action.

It's hyperbole to say Psyche seeks Cupid, for she wanders aimlessly, manifestly hoping that the eye of providence will facilitate her quest. Her mind struts through the future of her days, down the ladder of all time, a gossamer seed blown about before a single breath of hope.

There are times when she fantasises about just resolution and others when she reduces hope to a fervent prayer that her babe will be saved. In a lighter phase she imagines Cupid, faintly appeased by her amiable flattery, taking mercy on her and listening to her continual prayers. In the worst frame of mind, the one she most inhabits, he rejects her servile presence and it is absolute despair that directs her lonely days.

She exacts homage from no-one and her child brings sickness to her stomach. Conversations she has, but only with the grass she lies upon. Such behaviour is often mistaken for madness, but with hostility so prevalent, any form of contact invites a form of healing for Psyche. Don't suspect she is losing her mind; she will easily defend herself, claiming nature speaks to her, offering her wise and valuable advice.

The reeds by the river scan the horizon on her behalf and whistle sounds that she can easily translate into the facts that help her survival. As the God of shepherds predicted, it is in this manner that Psyche discovers friendliness and some kind of familial attachment in the world. One morning, an uncommon optimism about her, Psyche spies a church on top of a hill and imagines her husband and master rests there. Moved by her wilful breath, she undertakes the painful journey.

(The temple is neglected. There are sheaves of corn in heaps, old rusty blades and withered garlands. Reeds of barley and hooks and scythes have been tossed aside. Sickles, along with other reaping instruments lie in a disordered state on the floor as

though they were cast down by the hands of labourers. Resting among the corn, she slips into a deep reverie and when she wakes, still exhausted, she feels affronted by the surrounding muddle. Thinking it an offence to neglect or condemn the temple of any God, she soon gathers up the various items and gives them a form of order.

PSYCHE

I can tell you my dear corn, it is better to get the favour and benevolence of all the Gods, rather than switch and change with the wind.

(Ceres, seeing the princess busy and respectful in her chapel calls out to the obliging maid.)

CERES

My dear Psyche, I know you are needful of mercy.

(Psyche, strokes the corn, listening intently.)

CERES

Venus is searching for you everywhere. She's intent upon exacting her revenge on you. She has ambition to punish you grievously, yet you neglect your safety and are more in mind to be here caring for the order of my temple.

(Ceres appears before her and Psyche falls on her knees and waters the feet of the beneficent Goddess with her tears. Wiping the ground with her hair and with great weeping and lamentation she pleads to Ceres to do all in her power to grant her a pardon.)

PSYCHE

Oh great and holy Goddess, I pray by the most joyful ceremonies of your harvest, by the best secrets of your sacred and honoured Sacrifice. I pray by the flying chariots of your dragons, by the tillage of the ground of Sicily which you invented, and by the marriage of Proserpina. I pray by your daughter and all the mysteries within the temple of Eleusis in the land of Athens, take pity on me, your servant Psyche. Allow me to hide away for a few days among these sheaves of corn until the ire of the great Goddess Venus is past and I am out of danger.

CERES

Dear Psyche, believe me when I say that I am moved by your prayers and tears, and that I desire with all my heart to support you, but...

(Suddenly Ceres sees that Psyche is with child and her words dry in her mouth. She feels that her tears will flow and fights to stop herself.)

PSYCHE

Pray then give me what I need the most. Surely you will let me stay until I am refreshed from my great labour, my long, exhausting travels.

CERES

If I allow you to hide here, I will increase the displeasure of my cousin. I have made a treaty of peace with her, an ancient promise of amity. I dare not break it. My advice is that you soon depart from here. I will at least refrain from giving the Goddess news of your whereabouts. I beg you to know that in

other circumstances I would gladly allow you to abide and remain in my temple, for I do cherish your gracefulness.

(Ceres departs and Psyche falls asleep.

48. EXT. THE NATURAL WORLD - MORNING

(Psyche awakens, picks up her weary body and stumbles out of the temple, a forlorn outcast.)

MNEMOSYNE - voice over action.

Now, contrary to all she hoped, she's doubly afflicted with sorrow. After a whole day coming down the mountain, Psyche sleeps in the shade of a tree and does not wake until the following day when the sun is high in the sky.

(Seeing the shadow of a head lengthening on the wall before her, she starts up and gazes appalled as it fills and darkens the wall. As Psyche leaps up the shadow disappears. She imagines she frightened an unsuspected animal or is some unknown beast engaged in stalking her. A cackled voice tells her not to fear. Psyche turns and sees an old woman bent under the weight of the pile of withies she is carrying. The woman smiles; Psyche doesn't question her goodness, or what kind of messenger she might be, so desperate is she for solicitude. The old woman unties a cloth bag, takes out a package containing bread and meat and hands it to Psyche.

OLD WOMAN

Eat this and listen to my counsel. If you walk in that direction you'll come to the fast-flowing brook

where you can drink and refresh your forehead with its lovely coolness. Like you I'm a wanderer and must continue, but I will see you again, rest assured. With this, she lifts her stack of withies and drifts on.

(The bread and meat are fresh and after this much-needed sustenance, Psyche looks for the brook to drink, wash and cool her weary body.

49. EXT. THE NATURAL WORLD - EVENING

(On the bank of the brook Psyche sees a second old woman, much like the first. She sits like a beggar requesting alms, her hand outstretched. A broad smile cracks across her face.)

SECOND OLD WOMAN

Maybe not tonight, maybe not tomorrow night, but you'll have the key to the mystery before long. Know there is too much fear. Don't heed it. Fear is what paralyzes you. Stay ahead of it; it costs you nothing. We'll keep you in view.

(The woman stands up and walks awkwardly away from Psyche, who imagines a whistling sound in the air long after she has disappeared. Psyche, her womb heavy, must move slowly. While she rests on a hill, she spies a Temple standing within a forest in a far-off valley. The Temple looks fair and, having no desire to pass a place where hope might direct her, she journeys the difficult path to its sacred door. The trees are adorned with precious riches and vestments and prayers engraved with letters of gold are hanging on the many fresh branches. The columns

bear the name of Juno, to whom the Temple is dedicated. In these dark days she is happy to seek the pardon of any Goddess. She enters within and kneels down before the altar, embracing it with her hands. As tears fill her eyes, she wipes them away and prays.

PSYCHE

Oh dear spouse and sister of the great God Jupiter, you who are adored and worshipped at the great temples of Samos, hear my plea. You who are worshipped at high Carthage, who came from heaven by the lion and who is celebrated by all the rivers, accept my prayers.

You, the wife of the great God, the Goddess of Goddesses; all the eastern world venerates you and the entire world calls you fair Lucina. I beseech you to be my advocate, I plead with you to help me in my tribulations. Deliver me from the great danger which now pursues me. Save my aching spirit, weary from labour and sorrow. You give succour to pregnant women; none can have a better claim on your justice.

(Juno, hearing Psyche's prayers, appears to her in the finest regalia. She wipes away the young woman's tears and gently strokes her hand.)

JUNO

Psyche, your claim is true. I would gladly help you, but I cannot act contrary to the wishes of my daughter-in-law, Venus, Goddess of Love. I love her as my child and by the law I am forbidden to retain any servant fugitive against the will of her legal Mistress.

PSYCHE

So you, Juno, you will cast me off just as your sister, Ceres has done. Will you, like she, keep my location unknown to the angry Goddess?

JUNO

I will, just as we both know how to keep our changing forms from those with spying eyes for fault and too much vile anger to see sense.

50. EXT. THE NATURAL WORLD - MORNING

(Psyche awakens, picks up her weary body and stumbles out of the temple, a forlorn outcast.)

MNEMOSYNE - voice over action.

Left without hope of discovering that place where her husband resides, Psyche reasons that any action she undertakes will be futile. When prayers come to no avail with the high Goddesses, then there is no comfort or remedy left that will ease affliction or induce solace.

She knows only these facts. She doesn't know what to do, where to go or in what cavernous hole she can hide to avoid the fury of Venus. She reasons that she may as well take good heart and present herself with humility before this Goddess whose anger she has wrought. It also occurs to her that he whom she seeks might be in his mother's house and her only recourse is to pray to Venus in her Temple. Because no other alternative springs to mind, Psyche prepares to face her dangerous and formidable foe on her own sacred ground.

51. EXT. A MARABOUT IN THE DESERT - MORNING

MNEMOSYNE

So my dear Mariam, when Cupid offered the word marriage, did blood rush to your face in anger? Psyche never swore an oath to him. It is the mind that makes an oath, only intention gives form to words. It is counsel and the soul's careful reason that shapes a pledge, for without judgement to set limits to the deed, no vow can be said to have force enough to have come into existence.

Imagine Psyche, her flesh wasted and hanging from her bones, her colour lacking the tint of blood and with the chill of iced water about it. She's a picture of utter weariness and misery. She can neither weep nor speak. If her eyes cannot form tears, if her tongue cannot form words and her heart is frozen with a cold frost, what use is she for either love or punishment?

But if these trials are really Psyche's destiny, the fault can't be Cupid's. Her willingness to be deceived is a counterpart to his deceit. She must surely see that she has deceived herself. She didn't envisage Cupid could hurt her and she did nothing to deserve it, but now she must accept a world where trust and security can only come from a thing as fickle as the wind.

She can't imagine Cupid will save her. If he saw her now, going about the world beating her breasts and tearing her hair out, he would insist he had never before set eyes on her. Will Cupid fear her frantic need to remain his? Will he demand she forget his pledge? Will the Goddess cease reprisals if she's truly such a dismal wretch?

So, does this tale raise you anger? Yes. But keep your anger yet. There is worse. Much worse.

(Mariam is shocked, by this and shakes her head.)

52. EXT. A SPA BY THE SEA - MORNING

MNEMOSYNE - a voice over the action

Venus, weary of searching for Psyche by sea and land, returns to heaven to command her servants to prepare her ceremonial chariot. Her husband, Vulcan gave her this chariot as a wedding present. Finely wrought; neither silver nor gold can be compared to its brightness.

The four white pigeons, who guide the chariot with great diligence, are being prepared when Venus enters to take charge of her transport. Sparrows fly about, chirping with joy and many other birds sing adorably in pleasure and delight at the arrival of the great Goddess. The amiable birds fear neither eagle nor hawk, or other ravenous fowl of the air, for Venus is their protector and famed for her punishments. The clouds separate and the heavens open to receive Venus at the palace of Jupiter.

53. INT. THE PALACE OF JUPITER - MORNING

(With proud demeanour, Venus states her petition.)

VENUS

My most honoured Jupiter, I wish to have Mercury in my service.

JUPITER

Dear Venus, I know your cause. Act prudently and yes,

I willingly consent to your request.

(He calls for Mercury to attend him and instructs him to accompany Venus. The goddess flies from Heaven with the swift God at her side.)

54. INT. THE PALACE OF VENUS - AFTERNOON

VENUS

Oh my brother, you who were born in Arcadia, you know well that I, your sister, rely on you to carry out the most complex of my enterprises.

(Mercury spreads forth his arms to show that he is hers and will do her bidding. Venus smiles, appreciating the cunning game she's invented.)

VENUS

Certainly, you know how long I have sought this elusive girl; it's beyond humiliation, so now I have no option but to seek your help. I want you to sound your trumpet and declare to the world that there is a reward for any with information that conveys where Psyche hides. Execute this precisely. Whoever attempts to detain this girl wittingly, against my will, shall find no defence by any means or any excuse.

(Venus has created a fine seductive mood in her palace and uses all her charms on Mercury. He agrees to execute her instructions to the letter. When Mercury accepts the mission, she hands him a written accusation of libel, naming Psyche as the perpetrator of crimes against her. the business of her accusing

publication complete, she returns to her lodgings, directing Mercury to proceed with the matter hastily. We see the God proclaim throughout the world that whoever has news of a servant of Venus by the name of Psyche must bring word to him. The reward for this service is seven lovable kisses from Venus herself. Every man alive is inflamed with a desire to search out Psyche.)

55. EXT. A MARABOUT IN THE DESERT - MORNING

MNEMOSYNE

Where is Cupid, now he's needed? If the wound Psyche caused him has healed, he must surely fly to assist in her recovery. No hot oil burns her skin, but a spear pierces her heart. He has no need of arrows to hurt Psyche; he can wound her from a distance. What would he do to one he hated when he abuses Psyche who he claims to love with such destructive force?

Willingly Psyche gave Cupid the priceless gift a maiden gives only once and her submission included her body and her love. Now she has a woman's right to seek retribution against him. It would have been better had she ceased her kindness sooner, but it is her fate to be found unwise, without counsel or insight. Innocent, like a pitiable vagabond, she travels the land.

What use is she to the immortal folk? She is without desire, doesn't dress her hair or find pleasure in garments. She enjoys nothing, yet she forgives the wretched imp who tricked her. What is her magnanimity? It is not driven by infatuation, as her love was; no, it is a pious need for unswerving devotion, a pressing need to work unstintingly for

life, even for Cupid.

And still his mother, the wicked monster, is intent on taking away her life and her hope. It is certain that Psyche regrets her deed, so she should be forgiven, not burdened with guilt. What's a girl like her going to do with a razor? Kill? Never. She sheds tears that come from a faithful heart. The crime was simple, she wanted Cupid and she loved unwisely, but Cupid caused it.

56. EXT. THE NATURAL WORLD - MORNING

MNEMOSYNE - a voice over the action.

Psyche arrives in the city of Amalysis. Once there she hears Mercury's proclamation and knows that she must leave. There is no doubt in her mind that Venus' promise of seven kisses to the man who can confirm her whereabouts will quickly produce an abundance of men interested in her capture.

Psyche, not wishing to be caught anywhere but in the temple of Venus, hurries away. She climbs up into the hills where she discovers a Temple dedicated to Venus. The door lies off its hinges, leaves are blowing into the deserted sanctuary and there are signs of disregard and neglect everywhere she looks. Psyche hardly has time to utter her first prayer when a servant of Venus, a swarthy maiden called Custom, shrieks in a raucous voice.

CUSTOM

Wicked harlot; now at last you shall know that you have a mistress who is far above you. I am instructed by Venus to haul you to her palace. What surprise you show, do you make yourself ignorant, as though you

didn't know the great many efforts, we undertook to search you out? I am glad you have come into my hands, for I shall delight in taking you to the gulf of Hell. I am going to witness your pain with pleasure.

Your punishment for such disgraceful conduct will be a lesson to the world. None will ever think to set themselves above Venus again.

(Custom pulls Psyche from the temple by her hair, throws her into a chariot and with great speed brings her to the Goddess of Beauty.)

57. INT. THE PALACE OF VENUS - EVENING

(Venus eyes Psyche carefully. She smiles, nods her head and bites roughly at her lip, as all wicked persons are accustomed to do before igniting. Psyche shifts as if about to speak, but Venus raises her hand in censure, mocking her as the ridiculous substitute for the Goddess of Love.

VENUS

No doubt you imagined that the occasion of your visit to this place would be to see your husband, not to receive appalling punishment. You deserve reprisal because your husband is in danger of death and I know of no-one who doesn't believe that you are the cause of it. Imagine having that piece of notoriety added to your list of accomplishments. I will not try to list the great reasons I have to punish you.

You may rest assured that I have absolutely no intention of treating you like a daughter. In my eyes you are a witch. Where are my maidens?

(Sorrow and Sadness come at her bidding and as Venus delivers Psyche to them, she instructs the maidens to injure and torment her cruelly. Delighting in her own words, Venus lets forth a hideous screech that could be mistaken for the laugh of a woman possessed by demons.)

VENUS

When you have fulfilled my commandment, after you have piteously scourged her with rods and whips, then drag her back here. We shall see what elegant skills she has left for conversation then, but I suspect the tongue she used for sweet talking the world is exhausted.

PSYCHE

Goddess, I appreciate that anger is your first response, but what reasons have you to receive such obvious enjoyment from inflicting pain? I was innocent enough to be easily duped, but it seems that I was the victim of everyone else within my orbit. To beat me for this is unjust. The beating I receive will also be a beating for your grandchild, whether you accept it or not. Think of the pain your grandchild will suffer.

VENUS

Ha, she thinks that because of her great belly, which she has by playing the whore, she will move me to pity and make me a grandmother. Do you imagine I am happy - in the flourishing time of all my age - to be called a grandmother to the child of an abject mortal, a vile harlot? Do you imagine, as a prize for all you've done, that you will be accredited with the

title, stepdaughter of Venus, the Goddess of Love?

PSYCHE

I don't know what to imagine. I gave myself into your hands because I didn't want to give you the irksome task of kissing a mere mortal.

VENUS

Oh, did you? How kind. You weren't caught by my servant then? How is it that women of your kind need to be responsible for every action?

PSYCHE

I am responsible for very little, only for myself and this child I bear. I cannot imagine why you refuse it the rightful name of grandchild.

VENUS

If a marriage occurs between unequal persons, in a field without witnesses, without the willing consent of parents, then it's surely illegitimate. This child you are responsible for will be born a bastard; that is if we are generous enough to tolerate you living long enough to deliver it.

(With these words Venus leaps upon the face of Psyche and, tearing at her apparel, takes her by the hair and dashes her head upon the ground.)

VENUS

Dear Sorrow, dear Sadness, I think I will have the pleasure of dealing with this harlot myself. I'm in need of the great satisfaction it'll bring.

(The maidens transport Psyche to a storeroom where a great quantity of wheat, barley, poppy seed, peas and lintels lie in complete disarray. Venus mixes them all up together in a heap.

VENUS

You evil-favoured girl, you seem unable to get the grace of a lover by any other means than by your diligent and painful service, therefore, I will determine the full extent of this fine skill. You're to divide this pile of grains one from another and arrange them into separate piles. And, so you don't think the trial is all too easy, ensure that you have it done before nightfall.

(Venus screeches an appalling laugh for all to hear and, leaving Psyche to her appointed task, she locks the door and goes to a place where a great banquet has been prepared in her honour. Psyche does not begin the chore of separating the grains, it being a thing that's impossible to achieve. Astounded by the cruel behaviour and mean demands of Venus, she weeps in misery. A little ant, taking pity on Psyche's immense difficulty and labour, runs hither and thither. Cursing the injustice of the Goddess of Love, she vows revenge on her insulting behaviour.

AN ANT

Come my dear friends, my quick sons of the ground, mothers of all things, take mercy on this poor maid. Cupid is in danger and he has high regard for her. Gather now to assist her.

(Soon one ant after another arrives and with all

diligence they begin dissevering and dividing the grain. After they've put each kind in order they run away in haste, fearing to be caught.

Having drunk too much, Venus returns from the banquet wearing a garland of roses. When she spies what Psyche has achieved, she spits out her sadistic anger.

VENUS

This has not been achieved by your labour, but by my mischievous boy who you've tricked and caused to become amorous of you. Attend on me Sorrow and thrash this awful girl severely. Afterwards give her a morsel of brown bread and see that my son, Cupid is closed fast in the surest chamber of the house. I don't want him engaging in further wanton dalliance with her.

58. INT. THE PALACE OF VENUS - MORNING

(Venus visits Psyche and gives her another impossible trial to accomplish.)

VENUS

Do you see the forest, extending the length of the river? Golden sheep graze there, roaming freely. I command you to cut the wool from their golden fleeces and bring it here to me.

59. EXT. THE NATURAL WORLD - MORNING

(Psyche sets out, determined to throw herself into the river. As she approaches the bank a green reed, inspired by his love for all things, speaks to her with gracious tune and melody.)

A REED

Oh dear, kind Psyche, I beg you, please don't trouble or pollute my water by your death and take care not to go anywhere near the terrible golden sheep until the heat of the sun is cooler. When the sun is at the zenith, the sheep are most dreadful and furious. They have sharp horns, stony foreheads and have great gaping throats. They are armed only for destruction. Until they have refreshed themselves in this river, you must hide here by me, under this great plain tree. As soon as their time of great fury is past, you may wander into their field. Only go among the thickets and bushes under the wood side, here and there you can gather pieces of their golden fleece, which you shall find hanging in locks upon the tangled briers.

(Once the great fury of the sheep has abated, Psyche gathers up the locks, puts them in her apron and takes them to Venus.)

60. INT. THE PALACE OF VENUS - MORNING

VENUS

The success of this labour does not please me. You have still not given me the proper evidence of your skills. She growls. For certain that wretched son of mine has assisted you. So, as it is certain that this is not your doing, I must prove that you are not so stout, as good at courage or as singularly practical as you want me to assume. In this test, failure will mean the death of you.

From the top of that great hill water runs out with a black and deadly colour. These waters nourish

the floods of the Styx. I charge you to go there and bring me a vessel of that water.

(Menacing her severely, Venus gives Psyche a bottle of crystal. The princess does not take the journey to the mountain to fetch water; she takes it in the hope of ending to her short life.)

61. EXT. A WATERFALL BY THE MOUNTAIN - MORNING

(Psyche arrives at the ridge of the mountain and sees a great rock gushing out thunderous fountains of blackened water. She knows it is useless for her to attempt the trial. The shrieking blackness is born downward over rocks and ravines to the dark valley far below. On each side, great dragons stretch out long, bloody necks, searching for intruders. They never stop to rest, terrifying, corrupt, watchful, always an eye on the river should any try to approach. The waters cry out in fearsome tones. "Away, away, fly or be slain".

Psyche stands utterly rigid, as if she has been transformed into stone. Present in body, she is absent in spirit and sense. The peril here is so great, even the ability to weep is beyond her. The royal bird of great Jupiter, the eagle, sees her and, landing on a rock, he addresses the bewildered princess.

THE EAGLE

Dear maid, I am the royal bird of great Jupiter. You are surely a simple woman, without experience, if you think you can manage to dip up any drop of this dreadful water. Please assure yourself that you will never be able to get close to it, but I am determined

to help you. There was a time when Cupid's dart assisted me in bringing the boy Ganymede up to the heavens to serve as butler. I am certain that Jupiter would want me to return the favour to Cupid's dear wife. The Gods themselves fear the very sight of this place, so let me assist you.

(Psyche hands him the bottle without a thought and the valiant bird plunges into the loathsome valley. The majestic eagle hovers high above the river, then dives abruptly down to the water and fills the flask. Taking his escape midway between the many dragons. He returns and offers Psyche the flask.

Amazed at the support that comes from such unlikely quarters, Psyche places a grateful hand on the eagle's wing and returns to Venus with a bottle that's full and a heart that's empty.

62. INT. THE PALACE OF VENUS - MORNING

(The Goddess is not appeased. She terrorizes Psyche with cruel threats calling her the very description of a witch and an enchantress.

VENUS

Before long I will set you a truly impossible task. That which you have accomplished is not what we expect mortals to achieve, so beware; the next commission I set you will undeniably put an end to your long run of incredible luck.

(Venus leaves Psyche alone. When she returns, she holds a small box in her hands.)

VENUS

She hands it to Psyche. You must take this precious casket to Hell.

(The look of horror and confusion on Psyche's face clearly indicates her misery.)

VENUS

Your assignment is to take this to Proserpina. You are to ask her to place a little of her own beauty in it, just enough to keep me going for a day. You know where she lives, I presume? She doesn't give up her beauty lightly, so you must tell her that I have consumed a great quantity of my own beauty because my dear son, Cupid has been horrendously wounded.

Whether she will or not depends entirely upon her mood, not upon the cause, but try to return without the box being filled and I will make you wish you had remained with Proserpina. The Theatre of the Gods begins next week, so this is not a journey of dalliance and gazing about. If I do not have my beauty by then my vengeful wrath will know no bounds. Now go!

63. EXT. THE NATURAL WORLD - MORNING

(Psyche stumbles along without any idea how she can find the skills to enter such an awesome domain. A passing shepherd calls out.

SHEPHERD

Seeing you stumbling along, any might think you were compelled to go to the very gulf and furies of Hell itself.

PSYCHE

Ha, this is just the start of my undertaking.

(The fellow laughs)

SHEPHERD

Well, I wish you luck. I recommend the mountain there as the surest way of reaching the awful realm.

(Psyche finds the effort of climbing a great misery.)

64. EXT. A TOWER ON THE MOUNTAIN - AFTERNOON

(Next to a precipitous fall, Psyche leans over the edge and contemplates throwing herself over the edge. Suddenly she hears a voice on the wind.)

THE TOWER

What brings one such as you to this sad and lonely place?

(Psyche exhausted and bewildered, falters at the voice. To her right lies an old tower covered in ivy. Beautiful and sombre, it seems almost to be a living thing. She moves slowly towards it, wondering if someone or something is within. The old ruin is still and empty, save a beautiful gossamer butterfly fluttering about its outer walls. She looks through a broken window and hears a faint insistent whistling from within.)

MNEMOSYNE - a voice over action

The more intently Psyche listens, the more her hearing becomes acute. She imagines that the wind blowing through the tower's fabric is turning the

ruin into a supernatural voice box. For Psyche, delicately holding on to whatever loose threads are still connected, this ancient ruin is an active, breathing construction and it is offering that wisdom known to the wind. A soft voice speaks.

THE TOWER

What is your direction?

I seek Hell, but tell me, who or what are you?

I am not a tower, as you imagine, made with stone and mortar, I am truly a harp of sorts. My days are spent with poetry and music. If you would like to hear my inspiration, I may find words to connect you to the insights of nature and give you advice to lift your spirits

PSYCHE

Lift my spirits? I doubt I would recognise my spirit, lifted or otherwise. I am threatened by Venus herself. The Goddess regards me as her enemy and it is her demand that I go to Hell.

THE TOWER

Oh, poor miser, is this why you wish to slay yourself? Why yield to this final peril? Once your spirit is separated from your body, you shall surely go to Hell and never return again. You are soul and mind and breath and life; these are all the forces within you. There are many things you can do to challenge the ire of Venus if you know how to activate them wisely.

You must have angered her greatly. Was it your beauty? I wish I had eyes to enjoy it. So now you must travel to Hades to stay alive and somehow, you

must discover how to get there.

PSYCHE

Venus has given me this box; demanding that I ask Proserpina to fill it with beauty. Once this is achieved, I must return to Venus and I must complete the assignment before the new moon.

THE TOWER

Time is a complex issue, but in Hell it doesn't exist. You need not be in a hurry there. Now listen. There is a city called Lacedaemon, not far from here, first you must go to this place. Enquire for the hill Tenarus. There you will find a hole leading to Hell, even to the Palace of Pluto. But take heed, you cannot think of going to that land of darkness empty handed.

You must take with you two sops sodden in the flour of barley and honey and two old pennies, which you must carry in your mouth; that's a penny for going in and a penny for coming out.

(Psyche stares hard in the direction of the voice and from her silence the tower realises that she knows nothing of the endeavour she is being forced to embark upon. He lets out a low sigh.)

THE TOWER

My poor, innocent woman, there is much I must tell you. I will act as your guide. When you have reached the base of Tenarus Hill, you must go in the direction that looks darkest. It is neither up nor down, neither rocky nor smooth. Moss covers everything and there is an insidious dampness. Only

by the dark alone will you know the direction.

Remember this. Don't imagine that your heart will fail before you get there. It is difficult, but you have no reason to fear. Even the robbers among its many inhabitants take no benefit from robbing. You must stay alert and you must look out for tricks. Attend closely. When you've passed a good part of that way, you'll see a lame mule carrying wood and a lame fellow driving him.

The fellow will ask you to pick up the sticks that have fallen from the mule but pass on and do nothing. Don't ask me why. You can forget why. Only your wits will get you through this. Your intention is all that matters. Eventually you will come to the River Styx, where Charon is the ferryman. He must be paid or he refuses to carry any soul across the river in his boat.

You might take note that avarice reigns, even among the dead. Neither Charon nor Pluto do any work for nothing. If a poor man wishes to pass over and has no money, he must swim. The water is freezing, none succeed unless they take the boat, but no mercy is shown to those who are penniless. You must pay and Charon must receive it from your mouth.

An old woman will give you the two pennies. She is given to sitting beside rivers in the guise and pose of a beggar. She's your guardian and has most certainly been kind to you before. There is also another old woman, one who walks about these lands carrying withies; she is also a guardian and she'll give you the two sops sodden in the flour of barley and honey.

Sitting in Charon's boat you will be aware of an old man struggling to swim in the icy river. He will

relentlessly wave his deadly hands, pleading with you to take him into the boat. You must pay no regard to his piteous shrieks. No matter how much he cries out, you must ignore him. This, it seems, is not a skill you learned in life, but now is the time to learn it.

When you've passed over the Styx you will see many old women spinning. They'll ask for your help, but do not consent. They are counterfeit. These waifs have been placed there by Venus. Their baits and traps are designed to make you drop one of your sops. Keeping your sops safe is not a simple matter; if you lose one, you'll never return to the world again, that's certain.

Now you must rest. No danger can come to you while you're sleeping. No dreams will come to infuriate your spirit and no intrusive apparitions will rile you and cause you fear. Remember, nothing will demand that you exert physical energy on this sinister mission. When you are awake, be alert and most importantly, you must never let fear get the better of you.

(Psyche falls asleep.)

65. EXT. A TOWER ON THE MOUNTAIN - MORNING

THE TOWER

Good morning fair maid. Do you remember me? I am the breath of the wind. If you can hear my words of instruction then know that the breeze imparts wisdom. Listen, remember, relate; do this and you'll travel many worlds. As you are about to enter the gates of Hell, a hideous dog with three heads will hurtle out of nowhere, gnashing his teeth, trying to frighten

the life out of you. This monster is Cerberus.

The task of capturing Cerberus alive, without using weapons, was the final labour assigned to Heracles by King Eurystheus. It was the most dangerous and difficult of his missions. The mission was given to him when Eurystheus discounted the two previous errands Heracles had completed, believing he had received help. Venus believes this of you. Prove her wrong.

Cerberus barks continuously at the many souls trying to enter Hell. He is an awful sight and his bark is horrifying, but it cannot harm you. Fear is the only thing that will undermine you. Cerberus lies, day and night, before the gate of Proserpina, protecting the realm of Pluto with great diligence. If you give him one of your sops, you can have access to the underworld.

Once past him, you will come to the Palace of Proserpina. She will welcome you in and she will attempt to entertain you by offering a fine array of her best delicacies, meats and wines. You must remain outside, sit on the ground, refuse her victuals and tasty cuisine and ask only for brown bread; in this way you will be able to make your request known to her.

It doesn't matter how you speak to her, there is no code of address and no formal etiquette. Be rude and brusque, for polite visitors are easily fooled. Be true to yourself and have no fear. When you have received her beauty into your box, don't delay one second. Don't even stop long enough to thank her. Imagine it is yours and she has stolen it. Nothing else works.

On your return, you must appease the rage of the

ever-watchful Cerberus by throwing him the sop. Keep in your mouth the penny that the covetous Charon will quickly snatch from you. Make certain that you come back into the world the same way that you left. All powers must obey this law, including the evil ones and it has been so since the beginning of all time.

Above all things you must not look in the box. Move heaven and earth to eliminate your curiosity about the treasure that lies within. The divine beauty it contains is not for you. You may think that you will not be so moved, as having too much beauty has already been the cause of your many tribulations, but don't doubt that temptation is never very far away.

Don't imagine you'll not do it because you've made up your mind against it. One can act instinctively for good or bad. How to invite generous intuition is your great assignment.

(This wisdom is the last word from the tower.)

PSYCHE

Thank you, my dear breath of the wind, blowing through this tower. Thank you, dear tower, for your tuition and insight.

66. EXT. THE NATURAL WORLD - MORNING

MNEMOSYNE - a voice over action

Trusting now to fate, for what else can she do, Psyche moves across the landscape in the direction of Lacedaemon. Seeing her pregnant belly, many along the way stop to help her. Psyche retains a pleasing demeanour and keeps secret the trial she is about to

face. With all her heart, she wants to condemn the unjust mission and would do anything to avoid it.

What prays most on her mind is the revelation that Venus might employ all kind of trickery to distract her and engage the aid of any number of devilish creatures to bring about her failure. If viscous phantoms from Hell monopolise her deliberations, she fights the despondency with optimistic thoughts about the pleasure Venus will receive from Proserpina's box of beauty.

Uncertain of Lacedaemon's direction, Psyche asks the way from those who appear friendly. They all direct her straight on, saying it's not far to go, but she never reaches the fabled city. Before each hill, she wills it to appear. Gazing through the shimmering waves of heat rising from the rocky plain, she can think she sees it in the tricky light, but each time she's misled. Psyche strains her eyes in a desperate effort to separate illusion from reality. First the city is there and then the view is devoid of anything but rock. The mirages are unfathomable to her.

Whenever she sees the image more clearly, she fears the hand of a powerful sorceress plotting her demise. She knows very well that Venus can easily work false imagery for her eye. She boosts her resolve, but the shape-changing landscape fills her with fear as do the many shadows that cross her path. The old woman carrying withies is a welcoming presence.

AN OLD WOMAN

Fear not. These visions are not designed to act as siren to your innocent sailor. If you are looking for

Lacedaemon you have passed it and Tenarus Hill is up there ahead of you. Take this bag. In it are the sops sodden in the flour of barley and honey with which you must feed Cerberus. Look out for the brook and the beggar woman who will give you the coins.

You will reach the brook soon, but don't veer from the bank looking for the woman. It will take you off course. Anticipation can lead you astray. Don't be fooled; keep straight on track. Believe that the Fates have you in view and that the hill of Tenarus is before you. Don't be afraid. If you see a spring bubbling beneath you or a hole in the ground, know Hell is near.

(Suddenly Psyche is frozen to the spot, amazed that water could appear so abruptly at her feet. With great speed it rushes, escaping down the valley, desperately trying to pull her with it. She stands fast, gazing longingly, wishing it would transport her from this baleful place. Unexpectedly she sees the second old woman sitting beside her, her hand extended, begging.

SECOND OLD WOMAN

I met a man today who told me I would meet the most beautiful of women. Perhaps he is a silly ass. I took him for an intelligent fellow. Take these coins. Once you are beside the Styx put the first in your mouth. Having Charon's hand close to your face is not a thing you will enjoy, but this is the only way he will take it.

(The old woman and the spring disappear. All that is left is a dark gaping hole. Intuitively, Psyche steps

into it. As she steps forward, the breeze and the sun are no more.

67. EXT. THE UNDERWORLD - NIGHT

(Having passed over into an unexpectedly cold and damp Hell, Psyche walks on in the dark. Every moment she expects and dreads the appearance of the lame man and his mule.

THE LAME MAN

A favour from you, dear woman, I am not wealthy enough to lose a single stick and yet this mule of mine continually drops them. Pick them up for me and return them to his back?

(Psyche ignores the request and runs from him. It's not difficult to stay in the darkness for the land is flatter here. She keeps to the appointed route and hears the Styx before she sees it. No gentle flowing river this. The very sight of it makes her shiver. She keeps walking, but the ground is now a mass of jagged black rocks. Nothing else lines the bank of the vile Styx.

Expecting every moment to see a place where the ferry might be boarded, Psyche places a coin between her lips in readiness, yet she is anything but ready. She stays alert, but each step is taken with reluctance. She tries not to fear the aggressive currents, nor allow the foul smell of decay that rises from the river to pollute her poor nostrils.

Suddenly she is pushed from behind, she falls forward into the darkness and lands sprawled on an upturned boat. Terrified, she steadies herself and looks about, but she see no-one.

The boat swings violently, throwing her to one side. As it slowly turns, the loathsome face of Charon rises up. The fetid smell of his breath and his rank sneezes are beyond abomination. He grabs the coin from Psyche's mouth and shoves the boat onto the water. Impatiently he waits for her to board, but the thought of being near his putrid body fills her with desolation.

Psyche cannot step into the boat; she stares fearfully at the opposite bank. Haunted by the hostile, forbidding presence of Despair, she senses he is close. Then she feels his icy touch. Psyche freezes and remains fixed until an old man in the river gestures a frenzied arm at her. He pleads with her to pull him out and Psyche, desperate, flings herself into Charon's boat.

Only such a fiend and the abysmal threat of Despair could have persuaded her to dive into the craft, but on landing she cracks her head and now has a torturing pain to contend with.

With anguished eyes Psyche turns to look back to the place where Despair had stood, but he has gone. As the boat hits the far bank, Psyche scrambles frantically for the blackened shore. She lies on the bank of the Styx coughing, her eyes full of water and her head fit to burst. The river and Charon have horribly contaminated her, but she struggles to her feet and walks on.

Now the spinning women plead for help with the most pitiful cries. Psyche ignores them, but they become vindictive. They are spinning pain itself, feeling every fibre they produce. No matter how hideously they plead she does not help them escape the machines that have captured them, she runs,

covering her ears, knowing she can't save them from their fate.

Now the giant gates are before her. They lie half open, inviting and filling with trepidation any who expect to pass within. Cerberus, the size of a horse, flies out from behind them. Psyche is mesmerised by the heads thrashing about in all directions, each a cavernous trap, a fang and saliva-filled nightmare that could end her life in seconds. She is agonised by panic.

The barking from all three mouths deafens, cracking apart the decaying, ugly quiet that pervades the place. His speed shocks and he is at her face before her hand can find the sop. How she takes it from her pocket and throws it into the dog's jaws she'll never know and how it disappears so unexpectedly into one of the animal's despicable mouths is unfathomable.

Once fed, Cerberus ambles away contentedly, his hysterical job done, but Psyche shakes with fear for a considerable time. She does not see Pluto and Proserpina's edifice standing nearby.

Two minutes beyond the gates is a dark palatial mansion, hardly visible in the gloom. Psyche glimpses Proserpina standing on the steps, beckoning her forward into the palace. She walks closer to ensure her voice is heard and asks the Goddess if she may sit in her grounds. Proserpina runs strenuously at her, pleading with her visitor to enter her chamber.

The princess sits on the ground, attempting a casual pose while servants of the dark Goddess deliver delicious hampers of food so lavishly prepared, they would grace any royal table.

Psyche asks for coarse bread, but the Goddess ignores her, complimenting her instead on her fine complexion. Psyche allows her to chatter on until she hears the advice the tower gave.

Act naturally and come straight to the point.
Psyche addresses Proserpina.)

PSYCHE

I have been sent by Venus who asks if you would fill this box with your beauty. She's in great need of it.

(No sooner is the sentence out than Proserpina takes the box, breathes into it and returns it. She starts chattering about a banquet and the grand festival she is hosting this evening. Psyche wants to ask if her request has been granted, but she cannot delay. She leaps to her feet and runs towards the gates. She has not a second to contemplate her state of readiness.

Without anticipating the loathsome keepers, she throws her second sop at the hideous dog and places the last coin in her mouth, oblivious to the pathetic pleas of the weaving women. Psyche snarls at the man who begs to be taken on board just as Charon snarled when ripping the coin from her lips.

68. EXT. DREAMING OF THE NATURAL WORLD - DAY/NIGHT

MNEMOSYNE - a voice over action

Once across the Styx our young heroine hurries homeward, her task now complete. Psyche, ecstatic, imagines she is travelling in space, past transient stars towards a place where she feels at one with the Universe. Life on Earth is unexpectedly changing rapidly.

New winds sigh from the mountains, clearing mists that have mustered in the valleys, gently refreshing waters that have long stagnated in hidden brooks. Many secret wells flow again.

Rain washes the land and soaks the vegetation, filling the air with fresh green scents. The sea becomes as calm and clear as a mirror and the birds, perched in their trees, pipe merry songs.

A second fragrance, richer than the first, issues from the garland of roses that crowns Psyche's head. It fills every garden with bright sunlight and bathes them in the rich hues of vermillion.

The breath of Pan resonates across the bright blue oceans, filling the air with a sweet music that multiplies with endless variations from mountainous terrains to boundless deserts.

Psyche grows miraculously tall and sings; her magical voice reverberating across continents, resounding through a million hearts. All who hear the echoing sounds talk of a new dawn.

Love springs into the air; the world is excited at the prospect of starting anew. Timid smiles rise up on the faces of children like a blessing, an offering or a promise of gentle devotion.

Golden sunsets flame in the western skies and adventurers return to their ancient homelands. Poetry, like a kiss, is on every lip; the joy of passion informing every action, every song.

Psyche, her valiant and exhausting mission almost complete, staggers back the way she came. She is in no hurry and there is no lame man with a lame mule to demand assistance.

She follows her intuition, anticipates nothing and avoids fear. She has no idea how she can return

to the land of the living, but she had no idea how to get to the land of the dead either.

She trusts that the same kind of magic that transported her from the mortal world will also transport her back again. She remembers it as a sudden transformation, so she remains alert.

There are no signs displaying the way and no visible geography or devices to gauge it by. She makes for the high ground and takes in the vast panorama that is spread out before her.

On top of one of the hills she spies a tower that stands in a ruinous state. Certain it is the tower that is companion to the wind, her heartiness increases and her spirit sings with gladness.

She runs toward it, feeling the faint breath of the breeze getting stronger as she approaches. She touches its walls lovingly and waits for the words of the tower to assist and revitalise her.

On a windowsill a butterfly rests; its wings folded. A tiny crack between door and jamb reveals a bright shaft of light. Psyche gently steps up to the threshold and peers through.

A draught of air whistles through the opening. She pushes the door open and steps in. When she closes the door, she is again in the mortal world, breathing in the sky and sunlight.

69. EXT. THE NATURAL WORLD - MORNING

MNEMOSYNE - a voice over action

Psyche's exhaustion turns to tiredness and she sleeps sweetly, hardly moving a muscle. When she wakes, she gazes towards the sunrise and reflects upon her fearlessness and her success.

She hopes her trial is complete. She thinks of Cupid for the first time in weeks and wonders if Venus will find it within her to embrace her son's bride. Now she can think about pleasure.

(She gazes proudly at the box of beauty she has retrieved, knowing that the beauty demanded by Venus is contained within. Idly, she runs her fingernail between the box and the lid. Creating the slightest of cracks, she instantly falls into an infernal and deadly sleep. A blast of air gusts swiftly from the tower, but it is too late, the contents of the box have invaded her. With her entire body frozen, she lies on the ground, a sleeping corpse.)

70. EXT. A MARABOUT IN THE DESERT - MORNING

MARIAM

By all that I hold dear I swear you will break my heart. What kind of tail is this? Please tell me all will be right. Please tell that her reward is not oblivion.

MNEMOSYNE

Fear not. This is not yet the end.

MARIAM

Did Psyche have any idea what caused her to open the box and jeopardise her happiness? Why did her fingernail lift the lid? Was it to glimpse its contents, to steal a little beauty for herself, a reward for her efforts, something to attract Cupid with?

MNEMOSYNE

Wait dear Mariam. But as for your question, we will never know what made her open the box. I will continue.

71. EXT. THE NATURAL WORLD - MORNING

MNEMOSYNE - a voice over action

The tower, recognising that only Cupid can save Psyche, dispatches the iridescent butterfly from its own windowsill to the sill where Cupid stands contemplating the brooding sky.

Cupid, healed of his wound and malady, is ready for action. He instantly recognises the butterfly and realises that it would not be with him now if Psyche were not in mortal danger.

Love spurs him on. He descends from the window, down the vines and off in search of his arrows and wings. He finds them in the storeroom where Psyche was held captive.

Once regaled in his finery, recharged by the power of his wings and armed with his sacred weapons, Cupid flees to find Psyche, caring nothing for the injunctions of his mother.

He smothers his precious muse with kisses and tenderly erases the spell from her body. Deftly he returns the beauty to the casket and gently awakens Psyche with the tip of a new arrow.

CUPID

Oh, my most beautiful, cherished wife, you will never know how close you came to oblivion.

PSYCHE

Oh, my most beautiful husband, now I will tell you how close you are to remaining a boy. You're not a man just because I am with child. Venus will not recognise our offspring until you convince your immortal relations to recognise your manhood and accept our love. If they flatly refuse to give us their consent, if the marriage of Heaven and Earth is beyond them, then it is beyond you and me to facilitate it. I have tried everything my realm allows.

There are things I have learned that you have yet to harness. When the voices on the breeze speak, I listen, when I must have ambition, I advance by using my will. You must learn this. You follow your heart, but now you must speak your mind, have the will to become a man, find the honesty to declare me as your wedded wife and declare that our love must be honoured.

CUPID

I am in no doubt what I must do, Psyche. I am more in love with you, my dear wife, than I am fearsome of the displeasure of my Mother. Be without fear, I will rally the Gods to our cause.

(Cupid lifts his treasured wife up to the skies and transports her to the chambers of Venus.)

72. EXT. THE PALACE OF VENUS - EVENING

(The Goddess is too shocked to move or speak, but eventually she manages a stuttering speech.)

VENUS

You come here, a proud triumphant woman, curtseying to me, the Goddess of Beauty, to present the box I gave you? Hand it to me. I doubt there's beauty in it; it must be a trick.

(As the box opens, a translucent cloud issues forth, instantly causing a diaphanous shimmer of radiant splendour to rise up in Venus like a blush triggered by an inflated compliment. It lasts no longer than a flattering remark and Venus rapidly turns upon Psyche, screaming.

VENUS

If Cupid has had a hand in your success your trial must be counted a failure.

(Psyche remains silent.)

VENUS

No doubt, you little wretch, you were hoping the refreshing fragrance out of the box would soothe my tortured state, but I will disabuse you of this fantastical notion.

73. EXT. THE SECRET PALACE - EVENING

MNEMOSYNE - a voice over action

Cupid has heard quite enough. Again, he lifts Psyche, this time to take her to the palace he built for her. This cleverly secured haven is not susceptible to his mother's prying eyes.

Psyche is delighted to be back in the palace. She's tranquil now for the first time in ages.

Physically restored and confident in her faith of Cupid, she settles in to attend to her babe.

74. EXT. MOUNT OLYMPUS - EVENING

MNEMOSYNE - a voice over action

Like the wind, Cupid pierces into the heavens and bursts in upon Jupiter to declare his cause. Jupiter, taken by surprise, first embraces his son and then listens closely to his entreaties.

CUPID

Dear Father, you know about the recent events concerning me and no doubt you are privy to the reasons that give rise to the extraordinary state of agitation and discord amongst us all.

If I cannot persuade you to accept my love of Psyche, if our marriage is unacceptable to you and you have no determination to support us, then we simply cannot make our union work.

We don't know why we've been thrown into an orbit of true love, but we accept our fate in the best of faith and we will do everything possible to make our marriage a triumphant alliance.

JUPITER

My well-beloved son, you have not given me the reverence and honour that is due to me. Your haste with these eager words has spoiled my concentration and wounded my old breast.

Your attitude unbalances the manner in which the law and the order of the Elements and Planets are disposed. You have offended me with your continual assaults against protocol.

You oppose the laws of heaven and the utility of the public weal. You have transformed my divine beauty into an endless circus of vile serpents, savage beasts and birds of prey.

Be that as it may, I still remember my modesty and this I must do, for it was I who nourished you. I am prepared to support all that you desire, for I truly perceive your case is just.

We must in future times, rid ourselves of all spiteful and envious persons, be they Gods or mortals, and we must henceforth recognise when beauty is beneficial and when it is not.

When beauty wields too great a power to do anything other than harm, we must formally put an end to it. I will bestow benefits to all those who pledge allegiance to this cause.

If you declare honestly that you will honour Psyche and support her children through all possible trials, I will show this woman, your wife, the same love she shows towards me.

(Cupid embraces his father Jupiter, with great affection. The celebrated God commands Mercury to call all to his counsel.)

JUPITER

Give all the Gods notice that if any celestial power fails to make an appearance tomorrow, they will be fined such an amount of currency that the charge will make them eternally poor.

That should provoke sufficient panic among the Gods and Goddesses to ensure that the High Theatre is full by the time I speak my mind on the most sacred subject of marriage.

75. INT. JUPITER'S COUNCIL CHAMBER - MORNING

(All the Gods are assembled.)

JUPITER

Dear Gods, registered in the book of Muses and honoured since time began, here stands Cupid whom I nourished with my own hands. The raging flames he showed during his first youth were of such heat that I could only think it prudent to bridle and restrain his actions.

Despite my efforts, he is still defamed in every place for his adulterous living, but now a fair woman has arrived to change his errant ways. We must agree on a radical exception to the laws that we have so far kept, by accepting that Cupid is in love with a mortal woman.

It is my command that he be allowed to marry her and my decree that all existing accusations against him and her are hereby null and void. He has chosen a woman who loves him well, so it is my intention to allow them both to live happily together according to their pleasure.

Venus, dear Goddess, I entreat you not to take this decision as a slight against your name. You must not fear that it will dishonour you. Your progeny and your estate will receive great honour, so do not imagine this mortal marriage can only leave you in poor regard.

The marriage is just, lawful and legitimate by civil law and it will be blessed by me, so it can only be accepted by all and without exception. Go now Mercury, fly post-haste to earth and bring Psyche to the Palace of Heaven so that I might introduce her to the waiting assembly.

Do not be astounded, my fellow Gods. I realise you could never have imagined that a mere mortal would be raised up to be with the Gods.

First, I will tell you what I know of Psyche, of the extraordinary qualities she possesses, even though this may be too much for you to take in. The extent which her union with nature has developed is so great that any choice of words I make will only strike you as exaggeration.

One of Psyche's important accomplishments is to accept responsibility without giving up her truly compassionate sense of connectedness. Having reconciled intuition and will, Psyche has developed such a keen skill in listening she can engage in dialogue with a lazy breeze.

It is not an easy task to forge these qualities into a single personality without support of any kind or indeed with endless interference. Cupid is inspired by her example. He has now tempered his desires, subjected them to proper ambition and is mindful of his every action.

Psyche also possesses extraordinary beauty, but this isn't to be the cause of her esteem, she is honoured for living without spite and envy. She will be known as the Goddess of Bountiful Harmony and be admired for the unification of complex dualities while valuing difference. Her skill for inspiring unlikely conjunctions is a marriage and her marriage to Cupid is its manifestation. This is to be our new beginning.

(Mercury arrives and announces Psyche. They all rise to welcome her, discovering her more splendid than any imagination could conjure. Mercury is carrying

her baby daughter and Cupid rushes to take the tiny babe in his arms. He kisses the infant and then kisses his bride. He's exalted by the opportunity to confirm her right to be there and to have a host's right to bid this fair wild-flower welcome to his land. Psyche walks gracefully to the dais and stands before Jupiter, Cupid's father. The God holds up the cup containing the prize of immortality.

JUPITER

Before all you Gods who have gathered here, I ceremoniously lift this cup with both my hands and offer it to Psyche to drink well and join us.

(He hands the cup to Psyche.)

Drink from this chalice Psyche to the very end, so that you may become immortal and live in holy union with Cupid in eternal matrimony.

MNEMOSYNE - voice over action

No God has witnessed such a ritual before this. The consequences are unknown and the eager anticipation is monumental, even for Jupiter.

(Psyche wipes a tear, takes the cup, drinks and returns it. With a smile of grateful thanks, she displays the quality she has to soften hearts. Cupid joins them, the proudest of fathers. He returns the babe to Psyche, who lifts the infant and presents it to the Assembly with a prayer.)

PSYCHE

Acts of reconciliation and connection require

devotion. The reward for fidelity is pleasure. I pray you to accept this child we call Pleasure.

(There's a new assurance in Psyche now and all recognise it in her poise as she breathes into Pleasure the breath of life that is hers to give. The ecstatic applause of the entire Assembly indicates that the ceremony has in some way washed them clean and rejuvenated them. Venus beams for all heaven to see. Reconciled by the wise words of Jupiter and the ritual of Pleasure's baptism, her orbit is realigned. She joins her son and daughter-in-law on the dais and kisses them both. Psyche watches in disbelief as Venus takes her granddaughter. Venus address the assembly.)

VENUS

I can hardly believe that I fought against this dear babe. I will make amends and honour her by practicing the unification of complex dualities while valuing difference. Henceforth I will be Pleasures greatest champion.

(Jupiter applauds and addresses the Assembly.)

JUPITER

It is our custom to hold a marriage feast and, when reconciliation demands it, to hold the dance festival, known to us as The Spring. Tomorrow, my dear Goddesses, it is your task to perform the dance of reconciliation. As for tonight, a majestic banquet has been prepared.

I invoke our Muses, the very embodiment and sponsors of our poetic art, to inspire us. Come, most

revered Melete, Aoide and Mnemosyne. I call upon you to lead us in our celebrations. Juno, take my arm, walk me to the marriage feast that has been so sumptuously arranged.

76. INT. JUPITER'S DINING HALL - EVENING

(All the Gods assembled IN THE HALL. The designers have decked the hall with roses and other bright flowers offering colour and fresh scents to honour this glorious occasion. When all are seated Jupiter addresses them.)

JUPITER

Ganymede, my boy, fill the thirsty cup of your master. Bacchus, gather up your valued aides and serve this company with their every wish. Tonight, we shall drink the finest Nectar, the very best wine of the Gods and thank the stars that we have been granted a new lease of life.

Psyche, your loving spouse, Cupid, wishes that you remain in his arms forever. I concur and lift this cup to promise you my undying love.

Cupid, I'll do everything in my power to make manifest the love you have shown me. I lift this cup and promise you loyally my undying love.

Until the world disappears in a haze of light, none should forget Cupid's marriage to Psyche or Psyche's elevation to the realm of Goddess.

(During the wedding supper, the Goddesses Satirus and Paniscus play on their pipes and Apollo tunes pleasantly to the golden harp. The Muses, Euterpe and Polyhymnia sing out gentle harmonies to please devoted ears, while Calliope and Erato recite epic

and lyric poetry.)

MNEMOSYNE - voice over action

See Mariam, when they dance, they all move as one, gliding to the same spirit that pageants enjoyed in ancient days when dance was a vital force. It's Venus who leads The Spring, the dance of reconciliation. By custom, Gods perform with regulation and Goddesses with pandemonium.

Her dance honours the Muses for providing a key to the good life and for skilfully promoting prosperity, friendship and artistic imagination.

(Venus invites Psyche to the floor. Psyche starts the dance with an expression of turmoil and credibly converts it to a state of harmony.)

MNEMOSYNE - voice over action

Her movements display an extraordinary skill in improvisation and an exceptional finesse at retrieving complexity.

(All eyes are upon her.)

MNEMOSYNE - voice over action

For the first time the gathered pantheon of immortals recognise how well a dancer can express the conjunction of body and spirit. All is read from the beauty of her gestures; dance alone takes care of meaning. Not a single deity doubts that a new era has begun. Psyche takes to the stage to sing her song. The hush of anticipation that fills the hall is filling their hearts.

PSYCHE

This is a song
To give my bride's heart
This is a song
To melt a man's heart
This is a song
To calm a child's heart

I sing to my lover's eyes
To the goal of our love
To the whole of our love
To the soul of our love

I sing to my children's eyes
To the spark in them
To the dance in them
To the love in them

This is a song
To give my bride's heart
This is a song
To melt a man's heart
This is a song
To calm a child's heart

(The entire assembly are on their feet, applauding. Psyche catches a glimpse of Cupid and blows a kiss from her fingertips in his direction. She radiates her love. Cupid, thunderstruck, flies to her and holds her close. The applause continues.)

MNEMOSYNE - voice over action

See Cupid - see how he gears his heartbeat and feels his breath wafting through Psyche's hair. Psyche is

lifting her heart to his. Their whispers are like liquid gold and Psyche is overcome at the thought that she will now live free of those delusions that subjugated her youth.

The immortals, enthralled by Psyche's voice, heard the timeless breath of birds, flowers, waves and winds. In future, they will bathe in the memory of her beguiling melodies, knowing that this is how the world rejuvenates and fills its heart.

77. EXT. A MARABOUT IN THE DESERT. EVENING
(Mariam is crying tears of joy.)

MNEMOSYNE

Dear Mariam, I give you this story. There's no tale in the entire world that bears freight equal to its precious cargo. Keep it close to you. This tale will not win your battles; poets can't petition rulers, make them listen to beautiful words or demand they put humanity first, but you can keep its meaning alive. Each day there are more people fighting to save the planet. Each day there are more people standing up against the injustice of consumerism. Let your stories, your songs and your dance be part of this rebellion and help revitalise broken spirits.

The ancients created this story because they wanted people to have a sense of Psyche's spirit; they wanted the world to listen and make connections with each other. Realising the importance of Psyche's ability to make use of connection was a brief flowering. They failed to sustain this vision. Even the warning that we should not over-emphasise beauty was ignored. Her particular legacy is now silent; her promise a deserted dream. Vicious noise continues to

rule and you we can't begin to teach the fine art of listening. But the real tragedy would be to let the old stories die; they're the first step away from silent acceptance, it's the place where rebuilding starts.

You must never imagine you are alone in this, Mariam. Invite the strange, delicious, melodious music issuing from your own land to breathe softly into you. Many may come to you to learn where meaning lies. Tell them how death will soon come to us all if the real nature of life on our planet is ignored. If the all-consuming lack of love continues to flourish, you are all dead. This planet, your world, is rapidly tumbling down and you now need the sympathetic connection of the old stories to assist you to communicate this. Stay on the edge of the desert. Talk to your own great filmmakers like Abderrahmane Sissako; see if he wants to make a film of it. Maybe Walt Disney will make a film of it. Maybe it will win a score of Oscars. You can be the start, Mariam. Take me with you in your heart.

THE END