

THE MARRIAGE OF PSYCHE

Prelude Music

Act I

Scene 1

(In front of closed curtains)

Psyche: Your daughter's fever has broken but make sure she gets plenty of rest for the next 2 days.

Mother: We will, and we'll keep on giving her the herb tea you prepared.

Father: Princess Psyche, you are so kind to us, and we are just poor country folks.

Psyche: Well if I am to be a good queen, then I must learn to take care of my subjects.

Daughter: But you even take care of animals like the time you mended the wing of the injured owl I found.

Brother: And you helped my foolish pet mouse after he broke his foot.

Psyche: All the creatures of my kingdom are important, even the plants and animals. That reminds me, the Spring Festival of Demeter is next week and I hope you will come as my guests. Goodbye my friends.

All: Goodbye.

Scene 2

Dance of Spring

(Curtains Open)

King: Ah! Winter is over and Spring is in the air. Demeter has robed the Earth in the gorgeous colors of rebirth, all because her lovely daughter Persephone has made her yearly return from the Underworld. But Demeter is not the only one with a lovely daughter. In fact I have 3 myself. Now hear me, you noblemen. These princesses are full grown and I will now allow worthy citizens to come courting for their fair hands.

Queen: And more gorgeous maidens you've never seen. Why I think my daughters are at least as pretty as Demeter's darling. In fact my youngest, Psyche, well she's more beautiful than than even the goddess Aphrodite herself.

Psyche: Mother, you shouldn't say such things. It is not true, and you will offend the gods with such boasts.

Sister 1: It's certainly not true since I'm the most beautiful woman in the world.

Sister 2: Behave, you shameless air head.

Bacchus: Great king, I would take good care of your little sugar plum, Psyche. Certainly I am the most eligible suitor since I am the wealthiest. Yes, my little sweet peach, with your lips as luscious as grapes, you are indeed the apple of my eye.

Creon: Well, Bacchus, if eating your way to romance was possible, you'd be the victor because you're the biggest glutton around. But I believe the lady Psyche would prefer a gentleman of charm and eloquence like myself over some fat oaf.

Draco: Psyche doesn't need a pansy like you for a husband either, Creon. She needs a real man, a soldier, like me to defend her honor and beauty.

Bacchus: I must admit you're as strong as an ox, Draco, Unfortunately, you're as dumb as an ox too.

Draco: Why you lousy swine. I ought to split your overstuffed belly open as well as chop off the head of this wimp, Creon.

Creon: Oh my! I can't stand the sight of blood. (especially my own)

Bacchus: Just try it, you witless barbarian. Guards!

Captain: Shall we run him through, Lord Bacchus?

Sergeant: Or just chop out his tongue?

King: Enough of this fighting my noblemen. Quit strutting around like a bunch of vain peacocks.

Sister 1: (*aside*): Ooooo, but I like the way Draco struts.

Psyche: Put away your weapons and listen to me. All of you are worthy citizens. But I will not pick any of you. Instead at the next harvest time I will go to the temple of Apollo and I will let the priestess of Apollo choose my husband. That way the decision will be the will of the gods of Olympus.

Creon: You are as wise as you are gracious dear princess.

Queen: Shall we continue with the feast, my King?

King: By all means, more food and drink.

Bacchus: Did someone say food? Ah yes, 3 large clusters of grapes for me.

(Close Curtains)

Aphrodite: So! This queen claims her daughter, a mere human is more beautiful than me, the goddess of beauty. This is an insult these mortals will soon regret. (exit)

Music of the gods

Scene 3

Mt. Olympus

Zeus: I say, Eros, god of love, the one the Romans call Cupid, be careful with those arrows. Just a nick from one of them would make anyone fall in love with the first creature they see.

Apollo: Yes Cupid, you've put Zeus in lots of embarrassing situations after being struck by your love arrows. He's gone around dressed as a swan, as a bull, and many other silly disguises when he's fallen in love.

Zeus: Well, I'm not the only one who has looked like a fool after being hit by Cupid's arrows. I distinctly remember that you, Apollo, fell in love with a tree.

Hermes: That's right! He got a mouthful of leaves while kissing a laurel tree.

(gods laugh)

Apollo: Oh, don't remind me of that folly.

Artemis: Though I am the goddess of the hunt, and my arrows are deadly accurate, I'll admit that even the gods fear Cupid's arrows more than mine.

Ares: Yes, Cupid's barbed shafts are about as potent as Zeus' mighty thunderbolts in their effects.

Cupid: All of you act like falling in love is a terrible thing, when it can be the greatest joy.

Hera: It can be a wonderful experience, but you are such a prankster, striking folks at such awkward times, right my dear. (grabs Zeus' ear)

Zeus: True, my queen.

Hermes: Now Cupid, you trickster, you've got to admit you played some pretty dirty practical jokes, like making someone fall in love with an ugly toothless hag, or worse still, with a braying donkey.

enter Aphrodite: Hear me Cupid, I want you to use your swift arrows to make someone suffer a horrible fate. I want them to fall in love with a loathsome monster!

Zeus: You seem filled with bitterness, Aphrodite. It does not become you as goddess of love and beauty.

Athena: Yes, Aphrodite, your anger seems to have clouded your mind with vengeance. I do not think you are making a wise decision.

Aphrodite: I have been insulted by a group of humans. The Queen of Phrygia has claimed that her daughter Psyche is more beautiful than me. Furthermore the people of that kingdom seem to agree. They no longer bring offerings to my temple and take their gifts to Psyche instead.

Demeter: That is pretty bad, but your punishment is too severe and

Aphrodite: And you will soon learn that Psyche's suitors are taking their gold, grains, and flowers to her rather than to your temple, Demeter.

Demeter: What! They're beginning to neglect me too?

Aphrodite: As well as Hera, Athena, and Artemis. (gods mutter)

Hera: We appeal to you, Zeus, chief of the Olympian council. These unruly humans must be punished.

Zeus (raises thunderbolt): Hear my decree. I will grant Aphrodite's wish to punish these humans. Now tell us your desire Aphrodite.

Aphrodite: First, I ask that Demeter strike the land with a drought so that no crops will grow. Next, I ask that when Psyche visits Apollo's temple to find out about a husband, that Apollo tell her she must be given as a bride to a terrifying creature. Finally I want Cupid to take some frightful being to the mountain top near Apollo's temple.

Poseidon: If he needs help, I will aid Cupid in finding some dreadful beast. There are many slimy monsters lurking in my sea kingdom.

Aphrodite: I don't care what the thing looks like..... just as long as it's something that even the gods will fear. And when Psyche is left on the mountain top, Cupid shall strike her with an arrow so that she falls in love with this creature.

Zeus: I think you are being too cruel Aphrodite, but I have given my word. However, as soon as Psyche is married to this fearful thing, then I want Demeter to end the drought and allow crops to flourish once more. Now depart, ye Olympians. (thunderbolt)

Curtains close

Music reprise of the gods

Act II

Scene 1

Curtains open

Sister 1: Good heavens! This is such a long, hot climb and I've forgotten to bring my large fan. Oh no, it's worse than I thought -- I've begun to sweat. Can't we stop and rest.

Bacchus: An exceptional suggestion. My feet are so sore and I could use a refreshment break.

Sister 2: What a couple of wimps you 2 are. We just stopped 15 minutes ago. It's a good thing we make this trip only once a year.

Psyche: Take heart, friend. Only a few more steps and we will reach Apollo's temple.

Queen: Look, here is the gate to the temple now.

King: Oh noble priestess of Apollo. We seek answers for 2 questions. First, what must be done to end this terrible drought? And second, who should my daughter, Princess Psyche marry?

Chimes

Queen: The priestess is not alone. Apollo, the Sun god is with her.

Apollo: There is one answer to both questions. The drought will end as soon as Psyche is married. Psyche must be left on this mountain top, and when darkness comes she will be wedded to a creature who strikes fear even in the hearts of the gods. (Exit)

Cymbals

Sister 2: This is awful news

Queen: We can't leave Psyche here to be prey for this monster.

Psyche: Don't worry dear ones. I will gladly give up my throne or my life if it means saving my people from famine and this severe drought. Perhaps it won't be as bad as we fear. Now leave me here and pray that the Olympians will be merciful. (exit all)

Song -- Bride of the Beast

Psyche: This is strange. I should be afraid, but I'm not. There are delightful foods to eat and lovely silk clothing. This mountain top is such a cool, pleasant place. And it is so beautiful with the sun going down.

offstage Cupid: I hope you enjoy the gifts my invisible servants have left for you, Psyche.

Psyche: Who are you?

Cupid: I am your husband.

Psyche: I can't see you, but you have a kind voice.

Cupid: I am kind indeed and love you dearly, Psyche. However, you're not allowed to look at me. But if you trust me we will know happiness.

Psyche: I'm not sure why, but I do trust you. (exit)

Music

Scene 2

Sister 1: Oh no! I've broken a fingernail.

Sister 2 (hands on hips): Is that all you can think of? It's been several months since our sister was left up here as the prey for some loathsome beast. The least you could do is come up here to leave flowers in memory of her.

Psyche: My sisters!

Sister 1: It's Psyche.

Sister 2: This is marvelous! We'd thought you were dead, devoured by that horrible monster who was to be your husband.

Psyche: Well you can see that I'm not dead. And my husband is not a dreadful monster either. He's wonderful.

Sister 2: What is he like?

Psyche: He brings me presents every day -- jewelry, gorgeous clothes, and delicious foods.

Sister 1: But what does he look like?

Psyche: Well.....

Sister 1: Oh Psyche, don't tell me. You've never seen him.

Psyche: Well, no I haven't. He doesn't allow me to see him in the light.

Sister 1: Ooooo, he's probably too ashamed for you to see him. I'll bet he really is some disgusting creature with a dozen snake heads and green slimy tongues.

Psyche: No his shape and voice are too much like a human's; he can't be some ugly monster.

Sister 2: Then he's something worse, some fiend, probably a cannibal. He's just giving you nice foods so that you'll be tasty when he butchers you and cooks you up.

Here take this lamp and knife. Tonight when he's asleep sneak up on him and stab him through the heart. Remember Apollo said that even the gods fear this fellow.

Psyche: That's true.

Sister 1: After you've killed him you can return home. And if you're not back in a week, we'll send flowers, cause we'll know you were made into monster stew.

Sister 2 (shoves sister): Psyche, do as I say and kill this evil creature tonight. (exit - mumbling -- Monster stew! You numskull, don't you have enough sense not to say stuff like that!)

Psyche: I believed that my husband was wonderful, but now I'm not sure. Could he really be some sinister monster? What's that? I hear him softly snoring. I don't think I could kill him, but I'll at least look at him.

Cupid: Ow! (enters) Psyche I loved you so much, I married you and disobeyed even my mother Aphrodite. It is forbidden that gods marry humans. That's why I came only in the darkness. But you have not trusted me. You have come to burn me with hot oil and to slay me with a knife. My dear, where there is no trust, there can be no love. (exit)

Psyche: Cupid, wait! I didn't mean to burn you, but my hand trembled when I saw you. Why did I ever doubt him? There's only one thing I can do. (outstretched arms) Aphrodite, goddess of love, please help me.

chimes

Scene 3

Aphrodite (w/ folded arms): Psyche you have caused people to neglect my temple. Then you stole my son to be your husband. Now you have badly burned Cupid's shoulder. After all this you expect my help?

Psyche: Please dear goddess, I beg you aid. Speak to Cupid for me.

Aphrodite: Well, since I am obliged to hear the prayers of those who appeal in the name of love, I will speak to Cupid. But first you must accomplish several tasks. First separate this large bag of millet and poppy seeds into 2 piles by dawn. (exit)

Psyche: Well here's one black seed, and there's a white one. Here's another black one. Oh, what am I thinking. There's millions of these black and white seeds mixed together. I can never get them sorted before dawn. I'm lost. (lays down)

Prelude to Song of the Mice

Cheeps: Look, Psyche's in a troubled sleep.

Peeper: Now's the chance for us to repay her for all the kindness she's shown to animals.

Whiskers: Yes, she's even made sure that we mice get bread crumbs and bits of cheese.

Stubby: Now let's separate these seeds into two piles. We're experts at handling little things like seeds.

Cheeps: And experts at eating little things. How about eating the black poppy seeds and leaving the white ones?

Peeper: Hush up, you ridiculous rodent! You heard Aphrodite, she told Psyche to separate them by morning, not eat them. Now let's get to work.

Song of the Mice

(mice exit)

Aphrodite: Good morning Psyche. I must admit that I am surprised to see you've finished sorting by dawn.

Psyche: Not half as surprised as I am.

Aphrodite: Here is your next task. Take this box to the land of the dead. Ask Persephone, Queen of the Underworld, to send me some of her beauty in it. If you succeed I will speak to Cupid on your behalf.

Psyche: Thank you, Aphrodite. I'm not sure how I will succeed with all the obstacles in the Underworld. But I will try my best if it means I might be reunited with my beloved Cupid. (exit)

Aphrodite: I'm not sure how you will succeed either, dear child. The dangers in the Underworld are terrifying. There is the deadly River Styx to cross. And the gate to Hades is guarded by Cerberus, the vicious 3 headed dog. Even if Psyche managed to get there, how in the world could Queen Persephone put some of her beauty in a box? Psyche is indeed a lovely human with kindness to match. I fear I've been too harsh in my anger. I must talk with Cupid and Zeus immediately. (exit)

(Curtains)

Music

(Curtains open)

Scene 4

Zeus: Goodness, Mt. Olympus has been as gloomy as a tomb ever since Cupid started moping over that woman. How long are you going to mourn over her Cupid, after all she's only a human.

Cupid: But a rare human indeed, mighty Zeus. Although my burn has healed, my heart still feels wounded.

enter Aphrodite: Cupid and great Zeus, please help me. My anger and jealousy have blinded me and now I repent of my cruelty. First, Cupid you need to know that Psyche never intended to harm you. But the terrible prophecy of Apollo and the wagging tongues of her sister scared her into believing that you were a monster. Secondly, I have cruelly punished her by sending her on an errand to the Underworld. Please aid me to undo the deadly fate that awaits her there.

Zeus: Speedy Hermes, go to the rescue of this maiden. And you go too, Cupid. Hurry to save your wife. (exit both)

Zeus continues: There is one problem Aphrodite. You know that it is forbidden that an Olympian god and a human be married. How shall we handle this?

Aphrodite: Lord Zeus, if Psyche is allowed to drink from the ambrosia, the nectar of the gods she too will become immortal. Let her join us as a goddess on Mt. Olympus.

Zeus: A splendid idea. Look here comes the lovely couple now. Fair Psyche, we have agreed to honor your marriage to Cupid. Furthermore we shall give you the cup of ambrosia so that you will never die.

Psyche: This is marvelous. It exceeds my wildest dreams, but first I had better finish my task.

Aphrodite: What? This is unbelievable. Could Persephone actually send some of her beauty in a box?

Psyche: She and I agreed that you were by far the most beautiful being of the universe, Aphrodite. But Persephone is goddess of the spring and sends this beauty to you. (presents rose)

Aphrodite: Come my favored daughter, and you too my son. Let us all taste of the nectar from the cup of life. (curtains)