

**THE VERY PLEASANT &
DELECTABLE TALE OF
CUPID AND PSYCHE**

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The Very Pleasant & Delectable Tale of Cupid and Psyche by Lucius Apuleius & Walter Pater

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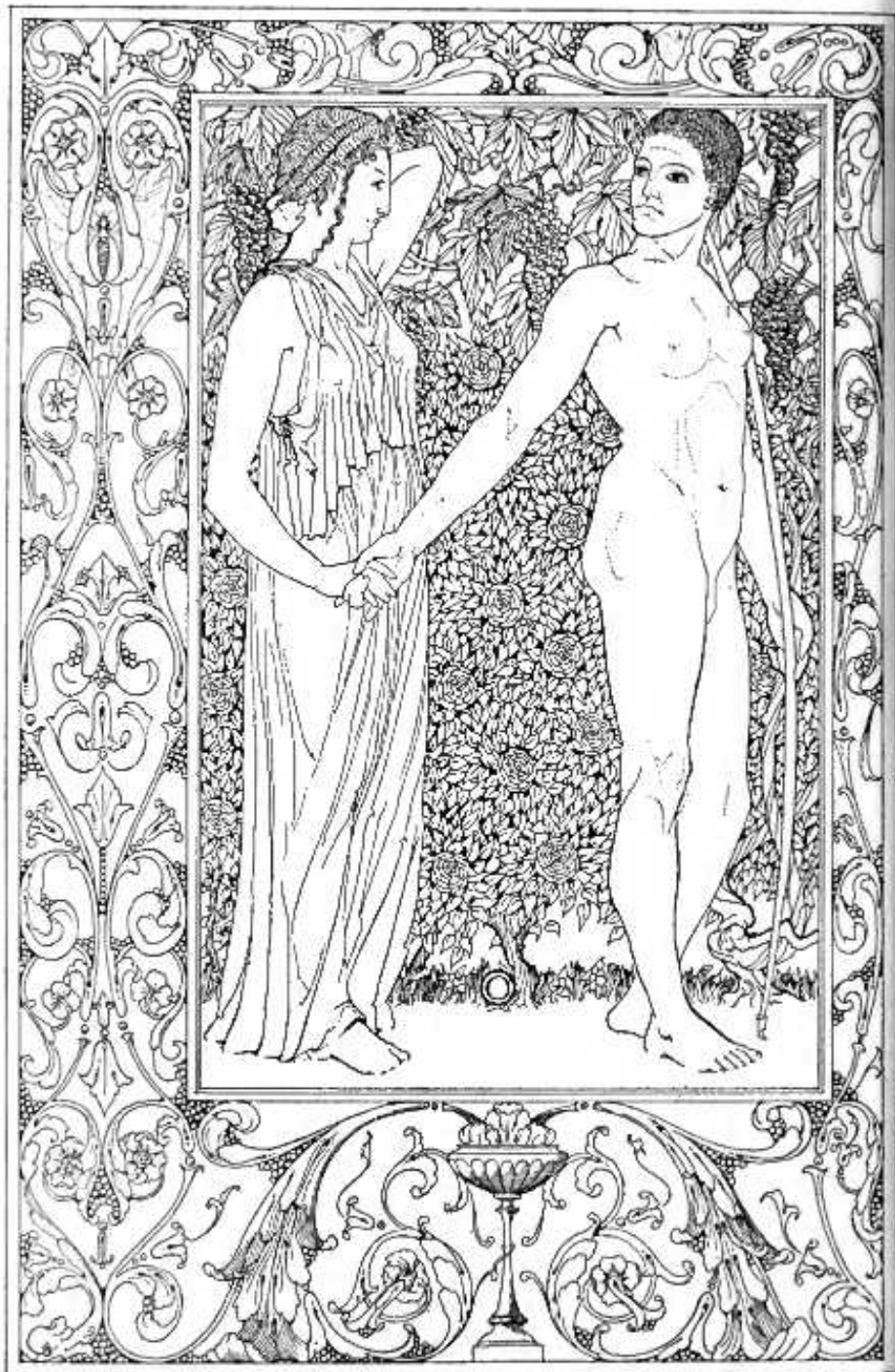
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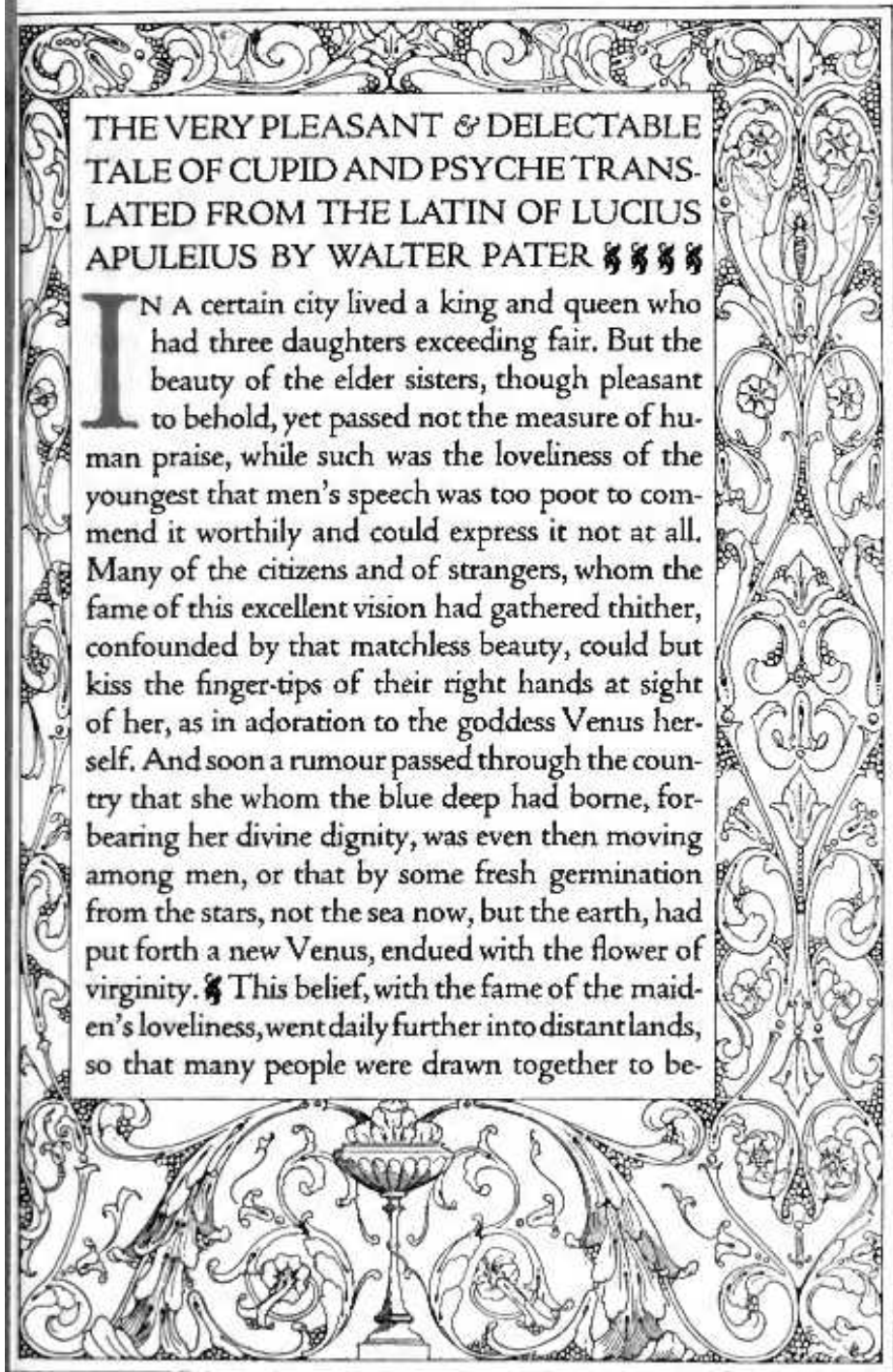
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LUCIUS APULEIUS & WALTER PATER

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THE VERY PLEASANT & DELECTABLE
TALE OF CUPID AND PSYCHE TRANSLATED
FROM THE LATIN OF LUCIUS
APULEIUS BY WALTER PATER ¶¶¶¶

IN A certain city lived a king and queen who had three daughters exceeding fair. But the beauty of the elder sisters, though pleasant to behold, yet passed not the measure of human praise, while such was the loveliness of the youngest that men's speech was too poor to commend it worthily and could express it not at all. Many of the citizens and of strangers, whom the fame of this excellent vision had gathered thither, confounded by that matchless beauty, could but kiss the finger-tips of their right hands at sight of her, as in adoration to the goddess Venus herself. And soon a rumour passed through the country that she whom the blue deep had borne, forbearing her divine dignity, was even then moving among men, or that by some fresh germination from the stars, not the sea now, but the earth, had put forth a new Venus, endued with the flower of virginity. ¶ This belief, with the fame of the maiden's loveliness, went daily further into distant lands, so that many people were drawn together to be-

Cupid hold that glorious model of the age. Men sailed
& no longer to Paphos, to Cnidus or Cythera, to the
Psyche presence of the goddess Venus: her sacred rites
were neglected, her images stood uncrowned, the
cold ashes were left to disfigure her forsaken al-
tars. It was to a maiden that men's prayers were
offered, to a human countenance they looked, in
propitiating so great a godhead: when the girl went
forth in the morning they strewed flowers on her
way, and the victims proper to that unseen goddess
were presented as she passed along. This convey-
ance of divine worship to a mortal kindled mean-
time the anger of the true Venus. "Lo! now, the
ancient parent of nature," she cried, "the fountain
of all elements! Behold me, Venus, benign mother
of the world, sharing my honours with a mortal
maiden, while my name, built up in heaven, is pro-
faned by the mean things of earth! Shall a per-
ishable woman bear my image about with her?
In vain did the shepherd of Ida prefer me! Yet
shall she have little joy, whosoever she be, of her
usurped and unlawful loveliness!" Thereupon she
called to her that winged, bold boy, of evil ways,
who wanders armed by night through men's houses,
spoiling their marriages; & stirring yet more by her

speech his inborn wantonness, she led him to the city, and showed him Psyche as she walked. § "I pray thee," she said, "give thy mother a full revenge. Let this maid become the slave of an unworthy love." Then, embracing him closely, she departed to the shore and took her throne upon the crest of the wave. And lo! at her unuttered will, her ocean-servants are in waiting: the daughters of Nereus are there singing their song, and Portunus, and Salacia, and the tiny charioteer of the dolphin, with a host of Tritons leaping through the billows. And one blows softly through his sounding sea-shell, another spreads a silken web against the sun, a third presents the mirror to the eyes of his mistress, while the others swim side by side below, drawing her chariot. Such was the escort of Venus as she went upon the sea. § Psyche meantime, aware of her loveliness, had no fruit thereof. All people regarded and admired, but none sought her in marriage. It was but as on the finished work of the craftsman that they gazed upon that divine likeness. Her sisters, less fair than she, were happily wedded. She, even as a widow, sitting at home, wept over her desolation, hating in her heart the beauty in which all men

Cupid were pleased. ¶ And the king, supposing the gods
& were angry, inquired of the oracle of Apollo, and
Psyche Apollo answered him thus: "Let the damsel be
placed on the top of a certain mountain, adorned
as for the bed of marriage & of death. Look not
for a son-in-law of mortal birth; but for that evil
serpent-thing, by reason of whom even the gods
tremble and the shadows of Styx are afraid." ¶ So
the king returned home and made known the or-
acle to his wife. For many days she lamented, but
at last the fulfilment of the divine precept is ur-
gent upon her, and the company make ready to
conduct the maiden to her deadly bridal. And
now the nuptial torch gathers dark smoke and
ashes: the pleasant sound of the pipe is changed
into a cry: the marriage hymn concludes in a sor-
rowful wailing: below her yellow wedding-veil the
bride shook away her tears; insomuch that the
whole city was afflicted together at the ill-luck of
the stricken house. ¶ But the mandate of the god
impelled the hapless Psyche to her fate, and, these
solemnities being ended, the funeral of the living
soul goes forth, all the people following. Psyche,
bitterly weeping, assists not at her marriage but
at her own obsequies, and while the parents hesi-

tate to accomplish a thing so unholy the daughter cries to them: "Wherefore torment your luckless age by long weeping? This was the prize of my extraordinary beauty! When all people celebrated us with divine honours, and in one voice named the New Venus, it was then ye should have wept for me as one dead. Now at last I understand that that one name of Venus has been my ruin. Lead me and set me upon the appointed place. I am in haste to submit to that well-omened marriage, to behold that goodly spouse. Why delay the coming of him who was born for the destruction of the whole world?" ¶ She was silent, and with firm step went on the way. And they proceeded to the appointed place on a steep mountain, and left there the maiden alone, and took their way homewards dejectedly. The wretched parents, in their close-shut house, yielded themselves to perpetual night; while to Psyche, fearful and trembling and weeping sore upon the mountain-top, comes the gentle Zephyrus. He lifts her mildly, and, with vesture afloat on either side, bears her by his own soft breathing over the windings of the hills, and sets her lightly among the flowers in the bosom of a valley below. ¶ Psyche, in

Cupid

&

Psyche

Cupid those delicate grassy places, lying sweetly on her
& dewy bed, rested from the agitation of her soul
Psyche and arose in peace. And lo! a grove of mighty
trees, with a fount of water, clear as glass, in the
midst; and hard by the water, a dwelling-place,
built not by human hands but by some divine
cunning. One recognized, even at the entering, the
delightful hostelry of a god. Golden pillars sus-
tained the roof, arched most curiously in cedar-
wood and ivory. The walls were hidden under
wrought silver:—all tame and woodland creatures
leaping forward to the visitor's gaze. Wonderful
indeed was the craftsman, divine or half-divine,
who by the subtlety of his art had breathed so
wild a soul into the silver! The very pavement
was distinct with pictures in goodly stones. In the
glow of its precious metal the house is its own
daylight, having no need of the sun. Well might
it seem a place fashioned for the conversation of
gods with men! ¶ *Psyche*, drawn forward by the
delight of it, came near, and, her courage growing,
stood within the doorway. One by one, she ad-
mired the beautiful things she saw; and, most
wonderful of all! no lock, no chain, nor living
guardian protected that great treasure-house. But