

Psyche and Orual

adapted from the novel, *Till We Have Faces* by C.S. Lewis

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Once upon a time, in a land far away called Glome, there lived two princess sisters, Psyche and Orual. Both were special in their own right. Psyche was beautiful and had quality about her that drew people to her. They didn't know what it was, but they just felt better in her presence. Orual was strong and a natural leader. She had a fierce warrior spirit.

Psyche's gift that drew people to her resulted in people coming from miles around, surrounding the palace just to get a glimpse of her. Just to have a moment in her presence. Orual loved her sister fiercely and resented the crowds of people laying claim on her sister. Psyche was revered and praised until a crisis hit Glome. The crops failed and there was very little food. People were scared and looking for someone to blame. They blamed Psyche and demanded that she be sent away from the kingdom. It was widely believed in the kingdom that by sending their precious Psyche away, they would appease the gods and then the crops would be bountiful again. The king, heartbroken but desiring to restore peace to the kingdom agreed to the banishment. Orual was outraged, she was furious that her sister would be sent away from her.

Psyche accepted her fate. She told her sister not to weep, not to be angry. "I have always felt a longing to go to the lands beyond Glome, beyond Grey Mountain." Orual doesn't understand. She asked "Have I made you so unhappy? What about me? Don't you love and care about me?" Psyche explained "It is not unhappiness with you or with Glome. It is a longing, a feeling coming deep from within. The feeling comes most strongly, when I am most happy. It calls to me and I don't know to where it calls me. I don't have words but somehow I know that this is all meant to be." Orual does not understand, she continued to cry and protest her sister's leaving. It did not comfort her that her sister wanted to go; in fact that made it worse. So Psyche said goodbye to her family and left the kingdom.

A number of years passed and the kingdom was again at peace and prosperity. There was food enough for everyone. Orual never stopped missing her sister and decided one day to go looking for her. Maybe she can return home now, maybe they can be together again. She went out beyond the kingdom, beyond Grey Mountain and found her sister. Psyche was more beautiful than ever. She was healthy and glowing. Psyche was glad to see her sister. Orual asked how she was and what she has been doing.

Psyche said "I found the most divine partner and we live in the most incredible palace. I have a partner who can love me just as I am. I am so happy. I feel like I have come home."

Orual didn't know how to respond. On the one hand, she was happy that her sister was happy and on the other, she was jealous and wanted her sister to come home with her.

Orual asked "Who is this Divine partner? Where is this incredible palace?"

Psyche "The palace is just over there. Don't you see it? My partner appears only at night."

Orual said "What palace, where? I see nothing. Show me your partner, bring this divine partner home to our kingdom."

Psyche said, "But I can't. You can't see the palace? It is just over there. I can't leave here."

Orual, "I guess we are not good enough for you any more. I am not good enough. What is with a partner that only comes at night? What is with a palace that only you can see? I think it is because you don't love me. You don't care. If you cared, you would show your partner and your palace. You must be ashamed of this divine partner then or ashamed of me. If you don't show him, then I will never come back, you will be as dead to me."

Psyche pleaded with her sister to understand. "He cannot leave this place. I made a vow to never reveal him. If I break my vow, then the magic will be broken. Please do not make me choose between you and him, between the home of my childhood and my new home. Please I love you and I love him. Please do not make me choose between you."

Orual did not understand and she was unrelenting. “Show him to me, bring him home to us. The kingdom is at peace, there is food aplenty, time has passed and people will be glad to see you. If you love me, if you truly love me then you will do this for me. If you don’t, then you will be as dead to me.”

On and on the sisters went back and forth. Finally Psyche could bear it no longer. Knowing that she was breaking her vow, probably ruining her own happiness and hurting her partner, she relented to her sister’s demands.

The next morning, Orual began to catch a glimpse of the palace – of its beauty and splendor. She realized how wrong she was to ask her sister to choose, but it was too late. The palace, just as she glimpsed it, began to fade away further and further. She could hear her sister weeping as she too faded away with the palace. Orual was filled with grief and remorse. She realized that her anger and jealousy resulted not only in her losing her sister but in destroying her sister’s happiness. The spell was broken, the palace faded away and with it Psyche faded away. Psyche was doomed to wander, without home or partner or her sister. Orual eventually became Queen of Glome and a great warrior for her people. Despite her position, Orual was lonely and she never forgot how much her selfishness and jealousy cost her.