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Cupid and Psyche

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Mythcon 51: The Mythic, the Fantastic, and the Alien
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SHADOWING

by
David Sparenberg

Speak into your darkness. Do not be afraid of the echo when it returns to you. Are you sleepless because you have heard yourself weeping? There is so much still to be learned by playing with the games of shadows. Evolution is a mystery not soon to be mastered. And the wand of time is not skillfully in our hands.

Sometimes those who ascend the stairs of knowing seem small and on their knees, and their lips are silent. But how utterly disarming when a robin sings or leaf flutters and you follow the beauty in the eyes of the humble. Suddenly it is as if they are looking at God! Yet they appear no more in stature than children, bowing in a halo of smile.

What a long way more we have to travel and it seems as if we have not enough words even to depict twilight. Yet in the darkness names well up from the secret ancestral caverns of the soul and a person stays awake, cradled in nakedness, listening.

Breath separates silence as black keys of the unknown play like passing spirits on the bone white keys of life. When you are through with restlessness and fear save a small, innocent prayer for midnight. There, on the ribbon of dreams, know yourself blessed if the resonance rebounds and is your own; twice blessed if the sound of sighing that returns belongs to another.

Cupid and Psyche

(for C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien)

by
Nancy Enright

Love as a god or monster?
Who can say – when it's hidden,
High upon the mountain, closed to everyone,
Except the ones inside it.
She can love him but cannot see him,
Has to trust that he's as beautiful as he sometimes seems to be,
But all her past tells her he can't be,
All the lovers who didn't love her, only her beauty;

The years when her sisters married and she lived lonely,
Admired, courted, never loved;
The prophecy she would marry a monster, not a man.
He wants her close, but not too close, not close enough to see his face.
But even this brings joy.

Until her sisters come to her and point out what is wrong –
Should she stay with a man – if he even is a man –
A serpent, slayer, monster – waiting to kill her and her unborn child?
Take a knife and a lamp, they say, look at his face, free yourself from his tyranny.
Their true face of jealousy, fear, and even some love,
Hidden like Cupid's, beneath a mask of pure, protective sisterly concern.

Suspicion cannot live with love, Cupid tells her,
as her lamp's oil wakens him, as she stands over him, looking at the wings, the golden curls,
the face of Love.
Then Love leaves her for a while, abandons her,
Psyche's tasks determined by the cruel goddess,
Her husband's mother.

Love and the Soul – strange bedfellows, but
It doesn't end like this.
At last, in the court of the gods, Cupid renders Psyche immortal –
And they are always one,
Their daughter, once born, named Pleasure,
Her mother's pain transformed to joy in her.

Forgiveness for them all, even the sisters,
Immortality, endless fidelity,
Suffering redeemed and healed ---
A fairy tale, a dream?
Or... an echo of *evangelium* in a pagan myth –
Ancient, dark, and beautiful,
conveying something deeper than itself.¹

¹ This poem is based on the story of Cupid and Psyche, told by Lucius Apuleius in late classical times, and retold by C. S. Lewis in modern times, in his book *Till We Have Faces*. As the author states, the poem "is not meant to be a literal summary of either Apuleius' version or Lewis', but a bringing together of images from both. "