

disobedience Cupid rebukes her and vows the evil sisters shall have their just deserts. As for Psyche, her punishment shall simply be—the cruelest that a god of love can inflict—his absence.

Desolate in her fallen condition Psyche meets Pan, the most earthy representative of the power of love. He advises her not to despair but simply to have the faith and loyalty to go on loving the god of love, as this is the only way that he can be invoked to reappear. She returns to her own country.

One of her sisters, on learning that Psyche's husband was in fact a god, mad with envious desire, runs up to the mountaintop and casts herself off. But no gentle sustaining west wind comes and she crashes to her death on the rocks, which cut her to pieces, and the birds and beasts of the mountain consume her remains.

Psyche finds herself an outcast. She is turned away from the temples of Ceres and Juno, who tell her that her only hope is to reconcile herself with Venus. Venus however is enraged at Cupid's disobedience of her original edict and at his mating with a mortal. When Psyche approaches, Venus has her scourged by two servants, Anxiety and Grief, and in mockery gives her a series of impossible tests as the only means to reinstate herself.

These are:

1. to sort a huge pile of seeds in a single night;
2. to collect a skein of golden fleece from a flock of ferocious rams;
3. to fill a cup with water from the high spring that feeds the Styx, the river dividing this world from the underworld;
4. to descend into Hades and return with a box containing some of the beauty of Proserpine.

Psyche, however, succeeds in performing these tasks, with the help of others. The ants, emblematic of industry and civilization, sort the seeds for her. The simple wisdom of the riverside reeds advises her to collect the fleece from briars while the rams are asleep. The eagle, who was helped by Cupid to raise the cup-bearer Ganymede to heaven at Zeus' command, returns the favor by procuring the cupful of water for Psyche. To perform the final test Psyche ascends a tower with the intention of throwing herself from the top to her death. The tower, however, tells her that although this is a way to reach the underworld it is a way that precludes her returning. The wise tower (obviously a structure of initiation) gives her detailed advice on how to enter the underworld, find her way through its passages and tests to Proserpine, and how safely to return. Psyche follows this advice and returns with the box of Proserpine's