

Cupid

Well, despite the cover shown here, Cupid wasn't originally envisioned to symbolize X-rated motels! Rather, he was invented to sell Valentine's Day cards...*or was he?*

In Greek mythology, Eros was the god of love in all its manifestations. According to some legends, he was one of the oldest of the gods, born from Chaos but personifying harmony. In most stories, he was the son of Aphrodite and Ares and was represented as a winged youth armed with bow and arrows. In Roman myth, under the name Cupid or Amor, he was the naked infant son and companion of Venus.

There is a very interesting story about Cupid and his mortal bride Psyche in Roman mythology. Venus was jealous of the beauty of Psyche and ordered Cupid to punish the mortal. But instead, Cupid fell deeply in love with her. He took her as his wife, but as a mortal she was forbidden to look at him.

Psyche was happy until her sisters persuaded her to look at Cupid. As soon as Psyche looked at Cupid, Cupid punished her by leaving her. Their lovely castle and gardens vanished too. Psyche found herself alone in an open field with no signs of other beings or Cupid. As she wandered trying to find her love, she came upon the temple of Venus. Wishing to destroy her, the goddess of love gave Psyche a series of tasks, each harder and more dangerous than the last.

For her last task Psyche was given a little box and told to take it to the underworld. She was told to get some of the beauty of Proserpine, the wife of Pluto, and put it in the box. During her trip she was given tips on avoiding the dangers of the realm of the dead. She was also warned not to open the box. But Temptation overcame Psyche and she opened the box. But instead of finding beauty, she found deadly slumber.

Cupid found her lifeless on the ground. He gathered the deadly sleep from her body and put it back in the box. Cupid forgave her, as did Venus. The gods, moved by Psyche's love for Cupid made her a goddess. *[Ahhhh! I love a good ending!]*

In reading Greek or Roman mythology, Cupid was pictured as being just as whimsical in his actions as the other gods, but he wasn't pictured as the mischievous little imp that we tend to see him as today. I assume that was a later addition to his character, one stemming from fairly recent times.

Today, Cupid and his arrows have become the one of the most popular of love signs (second only to the heart), and love is most frequently depicted by two hearts pierced by an arrow...Cupid's arrow...and that's how we came to picture the heart with an arrow through it.

And, as usual, it's all to be seen in matchcovers. All you have to know...is the story behind what you're looking at.

