

ARGUMENT.

CANTO II.

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*Introduction—Dangers of the World—Psyche conveyed by Zephyrs awakes once more in the paternal mansion—Envy of her Sisters—They plot her ruin—Inspire her with suspicion and terror—Psyche's return to the Palace of Love—Her disobedience—Love asleep—Psyche's amazement—The flight of Love—Sudden banishment of Psyche from the island of Pleasure—Her lamentations—Comforted by Love—Temple of Venus—Task imposed on Psyche conditional to her reconciliation with Venus—Psyche soothed and attended by Innocence—Psyche wandering as described in the opening of the first Canto.*

## CANTO II.

Oh happy you! who blest with present bliss  
See not with fatal prescience future tears,  
Nor the dear moment of enjoyment miss  
Through gloomy discontent, or sullen fears  
Foreboding many a storm for coming years;  
Change is the lot of all. - Ourselves with scorn  
Perhaps shall view what now so fair appears;  
And wonder whence the fancied charm was born  
Which now with vain despair from our fond grasp is torn!

Vain schemer, think not to prolong thy joy!  
 But cherish while it lasts the heavenly boon;  
 Expand thy sails! thy little bark shall fly  
 With the full tide of pleasure! though it soon  
 May feel the influence of the changeful moon,  
 It yet is thine! then let not doubts obscure  
 With cloudy vapours veil thy brilliant noon,  
 Nor let suspicion's tainted breath impure  
 Poison the favouring gale which speeds thy course  
 secure!

Oh, Psyche, happy in thine ignorance!  
 Couldst thou but shun this heart tormenting bane;  
 Be but content, nor daringly advance  
 To meet the bitter hour of threatened pain;  
 Pure spotless dove! seek thy safe nest again;  
 Let true affection shun the public eye,  
 And quit the busy circle of the vain,  
 For there the treacherous snares concealed lie;  
 Oh timely warned escape! to safe retirement fly!

Bright shone the morn ! and now its golden ray  
Dispelled the slumbers from her radiant eyes,  
Yet still in dreams her fancy seems to play,  
For lo ! she sees with rapture and surprise  
Full in her view the well-known mansion rise,  
And each loved scene of first endearment hails ;  
The air that first received her infant sighs  
With wondring ecstasy she now inhales,  
While every trembling nerve soft tenderness assails.

See from the dear pavilion, where she lay,  
Breathless she flies with scarce assured feet,  
Swift through the garden wings her eager way,  
Her mourning parents ravished eyes to greet  
With loveliest apparition strange and sweet :  
Their days of anguish all o'erpaid they deem  
By one blest hour of ecstasy so great :  
Yet doubtingly they gaze, and anxious seem  
To ask their raptured souls, " Oh, is this all a dream ?"

The wondrous tale attentively they hear,  
Repeated oft in broken words of joy,  
She in their arms embraced, while every ear  
Hangs on their Psyche's lips, and earnestly  
On her is fixed each wonder speaking eye ;  
Till the sad hour arrives which bids them part,  
And twilight darkens o'er the ruddy sky ;  
Divinely urged they let their child depart,  
Pressed with a fond embrace to each adoring heart.

Trusting that wedded to a spouse divine  
Secure is now their daughter's happiness,  
They half contentedly their child resign,  
Check the complaint, the rising sigh suppress,  
And wipe the silent drops of bitterness.  
Nor must she her departure more delay,  
But bids them now their weeping Psyche bless ;  
Then back to the pavilion bends her way  
Ere in the fading west quite sinks expiring day.

But, while her parents listen with delight,  
Her sisters hearts the Furies agitate :  
They look with envy on a lot so bright,  
And all the honours of her splendid fate,  
Scorning the meanness of their humbler state ;  
And how they best her ruin may devise  
With hidden rancour much they meditate,  
Yet still they bear themselves in artful guise,  
While 'mid the feigned caress, concealed the venom lies.

By malice urged, by ruthless envy stung,  
With secret haste to seize their prey they flew,  
Around her neck as in despair they clung ;  
Her soft complying nature well they knew,  
And trusted by delaying to undo ;  
But when they found her resolute to go,  
Their well laid stratagem they then pursue,  
And, while they bid their treacherous sorrows flow,  
Thus fright her simple heart with images of woe.

“ Oh, hapless Psyche! thoughtless of thy doom!  
“ Yet hear thy sisters who have wept for thee,  
“ Since first a victim to thy living tomb,  
“ Obedient to the oracle’s decree,  
“ Constrained we left thee to thy destiny.  
“ Since then no comfort could our woes abate;  
“ While thou wert lulled in false security  
“ We learned the secret horrors of thy fate,  
“ And heard prophetic lips thy future ills relate.

“ Yet fearing never to behold thee more,  
“ Our filial care would fain the truth conceal;  
“ But from the sages cell this ring we bore,  
“ With power each latent magic to reveal:  
“ Some hope from hence our anxious bosoms feel  
“ That we from ruin may our Psyche save,  
“ Since Heaven propitious to our pious zeal,  
“ Thee to our frequent prayers in pity gave,  
“ That warned thou yet mayest shun thy sad untimely  
grave.



“ Oh! how shall we declare the fatal truth?  
“ How wound thy tender bosom with alarms?  
“ Tell how the graces of thy blooming youth,  
“ Thy more than mortal, all-adored charms  
“ Have lain enamoured in a sorcerer’s arms?  
“ Oh, Psyche! seize on this decisive hour,  
“ Escape the mischief of impending harms!  
“ Return no more to that enchanted bower,  
“ Fly the magician’s arts, and dread his cruel power

“ If, yet reluctant to forego thy love,  
“ Thy furtive joys and solitary state,  
“ Our fond officious care thy doubts reprove,  
“ At least let some precaution guard thy fate,  
“ Nor may our warning love be prized too late;  
“ This night thyself thou mayst convince thine eyes,  
“ Hide but a lamp, and cautiously await  
“ Till in deep slumber thy magician lies,  
“ This ring shall then disclose his foul deformities.

“ That monster by the oracle foretold,  
 “ Whose cursed spells both gods and men must fear,  
 “ In his own image thou shalt then behold,  
 “ And shuddering hate what now is prized so dear ;  
 “ Yet fly not then, though loathsome he appear,  
 “ But let this dagger to his breast strike deep ;  
 “ Thy coward terrors then thou must not hear,  
 “ For if with life he rouses from that sleep  
 “ Nought then for thee remains, and we must hopeless  
     weep.”

Oh ! have you seen, when in the northern sky  
 The transient flame of lambent lightning plays,  
 In quick succession lucid streamers fly,  
 Now flashing roseate, and now milky rays,  
 While struck with awe the astonished rustics gaze ?  
 Thus o'er her cheek the fleeting signals move,  
 Now pale with fear, now glowing with the blaze  
 Of much indignant, still confiding love,  
 Now horror's lurid hue with shame's deep blushes strove.

On her cold, passive hand the ring they place,  
And hide the dagger in her folding vest;  
Pleased the effects of their dire arts to trace  
In the mute agony that swells her breast,  
Already in her future ruin blest :  
Conscious that now their poor deluded prey  
Should never taste again delight or rest,  
But sickening in suspicion's gloom decay,  
Or urged by terrors rash their treacherous will obey.

While yet irresolute with sad surprise,  
Mid doubt and love she stands in strange suspense,  
Lo ! gliding from her sisters wondering eyes  
Returning Zephyrs gently bear her thence ;  
Lost all her hopes, her joys, her confidence,  
Back to the earth her mournful eyes she threw,  
As if imploring pity and defence ;  
While bathed in tears her golden tresses flew,  
As in the breeze dispersed they caught the precious dew.

Illumined bright now shines the splendid dome,  
 Melodious accents her arrival hail :  
 But not the torches' blaze can chase the gloom,  
 And all the soothing powers of music fail ;  
 Trembling she seeks her couch with horror pale,  
 But first a lamp conceals in secret shade,  
 While unknown terrors all her soul assail.  
 Thus half their treacherous counsel is obeyed,  
 For still her gentle soul abhors the murderous blade.

And now, with softest whispers of delight,  
 Love welcomes Psyche still more fondly dear ;  
 Not unobserved, though hid in deepest night,  
 The silent anguish of her secret fear.  
 He thinks that tenderness excites the tear  
 By the late image of her parents' grief,  
 And half offended seeks in vain to cheer,  
 Yet, while he speaks, her sorrows feel relief,  
 Too soon more keen to sting from this suspension brief.

Allowed to settle on celestial eyes  
Soft Sleep exulting now exerts his sway,  
From Psyche's anxious pillow gladly flies  
To veil those orbs, whose pure and lambent ray  
The powers of heaven submissively obey.  
Trembling and breathless then she softly rose  
And seized the lamp, where it obscurely lay,  
With hand too rashly daring to disclose  
The sacred veil which hung mysterious o'er her woes.

Twice, as with agitated step she went,  
The lamp expiring shone with doubtful gleam,  
As though it warned her from her rash intent :  
And twice she paused, and on its trembling beam  
Gazed with suspended breath, while voices seem  
With murmuring sound along the roof to sigh ;  
As one just waking from a troublous dream,  
With palpitating heart and straining eye,  
Still fixed with fear remains, still thinks the danger nigh.

Oh, daring Muse! wilt thou indeed essay  
 To paint the wonders which that lamp could shew?  
 And canst thou hope in living words to say  
 The dazzling glories of that heavenly view?  
 Ah! well I ween, that if with pencil true  
 That splendid vision could be well exprest,  
 The fearful awe imprudent Psyche knew  
 Would seize with rapture every wondering breast,  
 When Love's all potent charms divinely stood confest.

All imperceptible to human touch,  
 His wings display celestial essence light,  
 The clear effulgence of the blaze is such,  
 The brilliant plumage shines so heavenly bright  
 That mortal eyes turn dazzled from the sight;  
 A youth he seems in manhood's freshest years;  
 Round his fair neck, as clinging with delight,  
 Each golden curl resplendently appears,  
 Or shades his darker brow, which grace majestic wears.

Or o'er his guileless front the ringlets bright  
Their rays of sunny lustre seem to throw,  
That front than polished ivory more white!  
His blooming cheeks with deeper blushes glow  
Than roses scattered o'er a bed of snow:  
While on his lips, distilled in balmy dews,  
(Those lips divine that even in silence know  
The heart to touch) persuasion to infuse  
Still hangs a rosy charm that never vainly sues.

The friendly curtain of indulgent sleep  
Disclosed not yet his eyes' resistless sway,  
But from their silky veil there seemed to peep  
Some brilliant glances with a softened ray,  
Which o'er his features exquisitely play,  
And all his polished limbs suffuse with light.  
Thus through some narrow space the azure day  
Sudden its cheerful rays diffusing bright,  
Wide darts its lucid beams, to gild the brow of night.

His fatal arrows and celestial bow  
 Beside the couch were negligently thrown,  
 Nor needs the god his dazzling arms, to show  
 His glorious birth, such beauty round him shone  
 As sure could spring from Beauty's self alone ;  
 The gloom which glowed o'er all of soft desire,  
 Could well proclaim him Beauty's cherished son ;  
 And Beauty's self will oft these charms admire,  
 And steal his witching smile, his glance's living fire.

Speechless with awe, in transport strangely lost  
 Long Psyche stood with fixed adoring eye ;  
 Her limbs immoveable, her senses tost  
 Between amazement, fear, and ecstasy,  
 She hangs enamoured o'er the Deity.  
 Till from her trembling hand extinguished falls  
 The fatal lamp—He starts—and suddenly  
 Tremendous thunders echo through the halls,  
 While ruin's hideous crash bursts o'er the affrighted  
 walls.



Dread horror seizes on her sinking heart,  
A mortal chillness shudders at her breast,  
Her soul shrinks fainting from death's icy dart,  
The groan scarce uttered dies but half exprest,  
And down she sinks in deadly swoon opprest :  
But when at length, awaking from her trance,  
The terrors of her fate stand all confest,  
In vain she casts around her timid glance,  
The rudely frowning scenes her former joys enhance.

No traces of those joys, alas, remain !  
A desert solitude alone appears.  
No verdant shade relieves the sandy plain,  
The wide spread waste no gentle fountain cheers,  
One barren face the dreary prospect wears ;  
Nought through the vast horizon meets her eye  
To calm the dismal tumult of her fears,  
No trace of human habitation nigh,  
A sandy wild beneath, above a threatening sky.

The mists of morn yet chill the gloomy air,  
And heavily obscure the clouded skies ;  
In the mute anguish of a fixed despair  
Still on the ground immoveable she lies ;  
At length, with lifted hands and streaming eyes,  
Her mournful prayers invoke offended Love,  
“ Oh, let me hear thy voice once more,” she cries,  
“ In death at least thy pity let me move,  
“ And death, if but forgiven, a kind relief will prove.

“ For what can life to thy lost Psyche give,  
“ What can it offer but a gloomy void ?  
“ Why thus abandoned should I wish to live ?  
“ To mourn the pleasure which I once enjoyed,  
“ The bliss my own rash folly hath destroyed ;  
“ Of all my soul most prized, or held most dear,  
“ Nought but the sad remembrance doth abide,  
“ And late repentance of my impious fear ;  
“ Remorse and vain regret what living soul can bear !

“ Oh, art thou then indeed for ever gone!  
“ And art thou heedless of thy Psyche’s woe!  
“ From these fond arms for ever art thou flown,  
“ And unregarded must my sorrows flow!  
“ Ah! why too happy did I ever know  
“ The rapturous charms thy tenderness inspires?  
“ Ah! why did thy affections stoop so low?  
“ Why kindle in a mortal breast such fires,  
“ Or with celestial love inflame such rash desires?

“ Abandoned thus for ever by thy love,  
“ No greater punishment I now can bear,  
“ From fate no farther malice can I prove;  
“ Not all the horrors of this desert drear,  
“ Nor death itself can now excite a fear;  
“ The peopled earth a solitude as vast  
“ To this despairing heart would now appear;  
“ Here then, my transient joys for ever past,  
“ Let thine expiring bride thy pardon gain at last!”

Now prostrate on the bare unfriendly ground,  
 She waits her doom in silent agony ;  
 When lo ! the well known soft celestial sound  
 She hears once more with breathless ecstasy,  
 “ Oh ! yet too dearly loved ! Lost Psyche ! Why  
 “ With cruel fate wouldst thou unite thy power,  
 “ And force me thus thine arms adored to fly ?  
 “ Yet cheer thy drooping soul, some happier hour  
 “ Thy banished steps may lead back to thy lover’s  
     bower.

“ Though angry Venus we no more can shun,  
 “ Appease that anger and I yet am thine !  
 “ Lo ! where her temple glitters to the sun ;  
 “ With humble penitence approach her shrine,  
 “ Perhaps to pity she may yet incline ;  
 “ But should her cruel wrath these hopes deceive,  
 “ And thou, alas ! must never more be mine,  
 “ Yet shall thy lover ne’er his Psyche leave,  
 “ But, if the fates allow, unseen thy woes relieve.

“ Stronger than I, they now forbid my stay ;  
“ Psyche beloved, adieu !” Scarce can she hear  
The last faint words, which gently melt away ;  
And now more faint the dying sounds appear,  
Borne to a distance from her longing ear ;  
Yet still attentively she stands unmoved,  
To catch those accents which her soul could cheer,  
That soothing voice which had so sweetly proved  
That still his tender heart offending Psyche loved !

And now the joyous sun had cleared the sky,  
The mist dispelled revealed the splendid fane ;  
A palmy grove majestically high  
Screens the fair building from the desert plain ;  
Of alabaster white and free from stain  
Mid the tall trees the tapering columns rose ;  
Thither, with fainting steps, and weary pain,  
Obedient to the voice at length she goes,  
And at the threshold seeks protection and repose.

Round the soft scene immortal roses bloom,  
 While lucid myrtles in the breezes play ;  
 No savage beast did ever yet presume  
 With foot impure within the grove to stray,  
 And far from hence flies every bird of prey ;  
 Thus, mid the sandy Garamantian wild,  
 When Macedonia's lord pursued his way,  
 The sacred temple of great Ammon smiled,  
 And green encircling shades the long fatigue beguiled :

With awe that fearfully her doom awaits  
 Still at the portal Psyche timid lies,  
 When lo ! advancing from the hallowed gates  
 Trembling she views with reverential eyes  
 An aged priest. A myrtle bough supplies  
 A wand, and roses bind his snowy brows :  
 “ Bear hence thy feet profane (he sternly cries)  
 “ Thy longer stay the goddess disallows,  
 “ Fly, nor her fiercer wrath too daringly arouse !”

His pure white robe imploringly she held,  
 And, bathed in tears, embraced his sacred knees ;  
 Her mournful charms relenting he beheld,  
 And melting pity in his eye she sees ;  
 “ Hope not (he cries) the goddess to appease,  
 “ Retire at awful distance from her shrine,  
 “ But seek the refuge of those sheltering trees,  
 “ And now thy soul with humble awe incline  
 “ To hear her sacred will, and mark the words divine.”

“ Presumptuous Psyche ! whose aspiring soul  
 “ The God of Love has dared to arrogate ;  
 “ Rival of Venus ! whose supreme control  
 “ Is now asserted by all ruling fate,  
 “ No suppliant tears her vengeance shall abate  
 “ Till thou hast raised an altar to her power,  
 “ Where perfect happiness, in lonely state,  
 “ Has fixed her temple in secluded bower,  
 “ By foot impure of man untrodden to this hour !

“ And on the altar must thou place an urn  
“ Filled from immortal Beauty’s sacred spring,  
“ Which foul deformity to grace can turn,  
“ And back to fond affection’s eyes can bring  
“ The charms which fleeting fled on transient wing ;  
“ Snatched from the rugged steep where first they rise,  
“ Dark rocks their crystal source o’ershadowing,  
“ Let their clear water sparkle to the skies  
“ Where cloudless lustre beams which happiness supplies !

“ To Venus thus for ever reconciled,  
“ (This one atonement all her wrath disarms,)  
“ From thy loved Cupid then no more exiled  
“ There shalt thou, free from sorrow and alarms,  
“ Enjoy for ever his celestial charms.  
“ But never shalt thou taste a pure repose,  
“ Nor ever meet thy lover’s circling arms,  
“ Till, all subdued that shall thy steps oppose,  
“ Thy perils there shall end, escaped from all thy foes.”



With meek submissive woe she heard her doom,  
 Nor to the holy minister replied ;  
 But in the myrtle grove's mysterious gloom  
 She silently retired her grief to hide.  
 Hopeless to tread the waste without a guide,  
 All unrefreshed and faint from toil she lies :  
 When lo ! her present wants are all supplied,  
 Sent by the hand of Love a turtle flies,  
 And sets delicious food before her wondering eyes.

Cheered by the favouring omen, softer tears  
 Relieve her bosom from its cruel weight :  
 She blames the sad despondence of her fears,  
 When still protected by a power so great,  
 His tenderness her toils will mitigate.  
 Then with renewed strength at length she goes,  
 Hoping to find some skilled in secret fate,  
 Some learned sage who haply might disclose  
 Where lay that blissful bower the end of all her woes.

And as she went, behold, with hovering flight  
 The dove preceded still her doubtful way ;  
 Its spotless plumage of the purest white,  
 Which shone resplendent in the blaze of day,  
 Could even in darkest gloom a light display ;  
 Of heavenly birth, when first to mortals given  
 Named Innocence. But ah ! too short its stay ;  
 By ravenous birds it fearfully was driven  
 Back to reside with Love, a denizen of heaven.

Now through the trackless wild, o'er many a mile  
 The messenger of Cupid led the fair,  
 And cheered with hope her solitary toil,  
 Till now a brighter face the prospects wear,  
 Past are the sandy wastes and deserts bare,  
 And many a verdant hill, and grassy dale,  
 And trace, that mortal culture might declare,  
 And many a wild wood dark, and joyous vale  
 Appeared her soul to sooth, could soothing scenes avail.

But other fears her timid soul distress,  
Mid strangers unprotected and alone,  
The desert wilderness alarmed her less  
Than cities, thus unfriended and unknown;  
But where the path was all by moss o'ergrown,  
There still she chose her solitary way,  
Where'er her faithful Dove before had flown  
Fearful of nought she might securely stray,  
For still his care supplied the wants of every day.

And still she entered every sacred grove  
And homage paid to each divinity,  
But chief the altar of almighty Love  
Weeping embraced with fond imploring eye;  
To every oracle her hopes apply,  
Instructions for her dangerous path to gain:  
Exclaiming oft, with a desponding sigh,  
“ Ah! how through all such dangers, toil and pain,  
“ Shall Psyche's helpless steps their object e'er attain!”

And now remote from every peopled town  
 One sultry day a cooling bower she found :  
 There, as I whilom sung, she laid her down,  
 Where rich profusion of gay flowers around  
 Had decked with artless shew the sloping ground ;  
 There the wild rose and modest violet grow,  
 There all thy charms, Narcissus ! still abound :  
 There wrapt in verdure fragrant lilies blow,  
 Lilies that love the vale, and hide their bells of snow.

Thy flowers, Adonis ! bright vermilion shew ;  
 Still for his love the yellow Crocus pines ;  
 There, while indignant blushes seem to glow,  
 Beloved by Phœbus his Acanthus shines ;  
 Reseda still her drooping head reclines  
 With faithful homage to his golden rays,  
 And, though mid clouds their lustre he resigns,  
 An image of the constant heart displays,  
 While silent still she turns her fond pursuing gaze.

And every sweet that Spring with fairy hands  
Scatters in thy green path, enchanting May!  
And every flowering shrub there clustering stands  
As though they wooed her to a short delay,  
Yielding a charm to sooth her weary way;  
Soft was the tufted moss, and sweet the breeze,  
With lulling sound the murmuring waters play,  
With lulling sound from all the rustling trees  
The fragrant gale invites to cool refreshing ease.

There as she sought repose, her sorrowing heart  
Recalled her absent love with bitter sighs;  
Regret had deeply fixed the poisoned dart,  
Which ever rankling in her bosom lies;  
In vain she seeks to close her weary eyes,  
Those eyes still swim incessantly in tears,  
Hope in her cheerless bosom fading dies,  
Distracted by a thousand cruel fears,  
While banished from his love for ever she appears.

Oh ! thou best comforter of that sad heart  
 Whom fortune's spite assails ; come, gentle Sleep,  
 The weary mourner sooth ! for well the art  
 Thou knowest in soft forgetfulness to steep  
 The eyes which sorrow taught to watch and weep ;  
 Let blissful visions now her spirits cheer,  
 Or lull her cares to peace in slumbers deep,  
 Till from fatigue refreshed and anxious fear  
 Hope like the morning star once more shall re-appear.