

Till We Have Faces



INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF C. S. LEWIS

C. S. Lewis was born and raised in Ireland. His father was a Welsh solicitor and his mother was the daughter of an Anglican priest—Lewis’s early exposure to Christianity would influence his writing and thinking for the rest of his life. Growing up, Lewis was fascinated by mythology, particularly that of Scandinavia, Greece, and Ireland. He excelled at Latin and Greek in school and won a prestigious scholarship to Oxford University. Lewis fought in World War I while still an undergraduate, a traumatic experience that made him an atheist throughout his twenties. He ultimately graduated from Oxford with a “triple first” in English, Classics, and Philosophy, an extremely prestigious achievement both then and now. From the 1920s to the 1950s, Lewis worked as a professor at Oxford’s Magdalen College, teaching English literature. Although Lewis was an atheist for many years, in his early thirties he converted to the Anglican Church, based on his studies of classical Christian texts and his friendship with such Christian thinkers as George Macdonald and J.R.R. Tolkien. He was at first an unwilling convert, but felt that he could see no other truth. For the remainder of his life, Lewis was a vocal proponent of Christian values, authoring Christian texts such as [Mere Christianity](#), a series of short lectures on Christian values and the existence of God. During World War II, Lewis sheltered London children in his house in the English countryside, which forms the premise of his most famous book, *The Lion, The Witch, and the Wardrobe* (1949). Lewis authored six more books in his Chronicles of Narnia series and also wrote the popular Space Trilogy (1938-1945). Although his fiction made Lewis wealthy, in his later years, he also taught medieval and Renaissance literature at Cambridge University. He married the American writer Joy Davidman in 1956 so that she could live in England, and Davidman served as inspiration for the character of Orual in *Till We Have Faces*. Lewis died on the same day as the author Aldous Huxley, which was also the day of John F. Kennedy’s assassination. The Chronicles of Narnia, along with Lewis’s writings on Christianity, remain enormously popular more than half a century after his death.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The Fox’s philosophical teachings correspond to the ancient Greek school of thought called Stoicism, which was founded by Zeno of Citium in the third century BC and became predominant throughout the Greco-Roman world. Stoicism teaches that people should learn to control their emotions to avoid making destructive choices—happiness results from

accepting life as it is rather than constantly desiring something different. Stoics particularly valued logical thinking and the pursuit of truth. Furthermore, they believed that God was equivalent to Nature, and thus present throughout the universe and within everything. All people, then, result from this divine nature and are equal, without distinction based on class or nationality.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

The novel is a retelling of the classical myth of Cupid and Psyche as related in a Latin work called the *Metamorphoses*, or *The Golden Ass*, written by Lucius Apuleius Platonicus in the second century. In the original version, men worship Psyche too deeply to want to marry her, so the gods tell her father to sacrifice her on a mountain. Both of her sisters visit her at the god’s palace, and their jealousy of her leads them to convince her to look at her husband’s face (which she has been forbidden to do) with the intention of killing the beast they’re sure she’ll find in her bed. Additionally, when as a punishment Aphrodite forces Psyche to retrieve the box of beauty from the land of the dead, she stipulates that Psyche must not look inside, but curiosity gets the better of her and she opens the lid. Even so, Cupid and Venus forgive her and she’s allowed to become a goddess. Lewis writes that the most important change he made to the story was making Psyche’s palace invisible to Orual, which forces a deeper examination of her motivations. Lewis also references other classical stories, such as that of Antigone (as related in Sophocles’ play [Antigone](#)). Orual is inspired to seek out Psyche’s remains after the sacrifice by the tale of Antigone burying her dead brother even though she has been forbidden to do so. Additionally, the Fox tells Orual the story of Aphrodite and Anchises as found in the Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite, one of a number of anonymously written ancient Greek hymns. Aphrodite, the goddess of love, falls in love with Anchises while he’s herding his sheep. She seduces him in a human form and sleeps with him. When he wakes up, he realizes he’s slept with a goddess and begs her to kill him, because human-god relationships usually cause tragedy. Finally, Orual mentions a number of ancient Greek philosophers whose books the Fox acquires for the palace. When contemplating her own death, she looks to Socrates’ wisdom on the subject as portrayed in Plato’s [Phaedo](#), a dialogue between Socrates and his friends on the eve of his death.

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** *Till We Have Faces: A Myth Retold*
- **Where Written:** Cambridge, England
- **When Published:** 1956

- **Literary Period:** Modernism
- **Genre:** Fiction, Mythological novel
- **Setting:** Glome, a fantastical kingdom in a world that includes a country called the Greeklands, which corresponds to ancient Greece
- **Climax:** Orual reading her complaint to the gods and seeing herself truly for the first time
- **Point of View:** First person, from Orual's perspective

EXTRA CREDIT

A dog's name. When Lewis was four, his dog was hit by a car. Lewis insisted on being called by the dog's name, Jacksie, and those close to him called him Jack for the rest of his life.

A loyal friend. When Lewis was in the army, he and his roommate promised each other that if one of them died, the other would take care of the deceased's family. When Lewis's roommate was killed, Lewis kept his promise, looking after and living with the man's mother, Jane Moore, for the rest of her life. Lewis called Moore "mother" the entire time they lived together, but some people speculate that they may have been lovers.



PLOT SUMMARY

The novel takes place in the fantastical kingdom of Glome, situated in a world that also includes a country called the Greeklands, modeled after ancient Greece. The narrator is Orual, a princess who eventually becomes the Queen of Glome when her father, the King, dies. In her old age, Orual writes Part I to lay out all of the wrongs that the gods have done to her, hoping that a traveler will bring the book to the Greeklands, where she thinks their people's wisdom might find some answer to her questions about the gods. The gods most central to the story are **Ungit**, a goddess who corresponds to Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of love, but in Glome is represented by a rugged black stone and is essentially cruel; and her son, the god of the Grey Mountain, who lives on a mountain near Glome.

Orual's mother dies when she and her sister Redival are children. Their father, the King, buys a Greek slave whom he nicknames the Fox and assigns to teach Orual and Redival. Orual comes to love the Fox more than anyone. He teaches her Greek myths and philosophy, and he insists on rational thinking, even doubting the existence of the gods.

Before long, the King announces his engagement to the princess of a nearby kingdom. When he makes the girls wear **veils** for the wedding, Orual realizes that she is ugly. The new queen soon dies in childbirth. The King falls into a rage on the night of the birth, for the baby is a girl, and he needs a son to be his heir. He orders the Fox to work in the mines, but soon

realizes that he needs the Fox to advise him in affairs of state instead.

The baby is named Istra, which translates to Psyche in Greek, and her beauty stuns all around her. Orual and the Fox love her deeply, and Orual takes on the duty of raising her. Orual, Psyche, and the Fox all become close and constantly spend time together. This is the happiest time of Orual's life. But when Redival is caught kissing a guard, the King forces Orual and the Fox to keep constant watch over her, which ruins Orual's happiness. One day, Redival sees a woman ask Psyche to kiss her baby to make it beautiful, and she threatens to tell the Priest of Ungit about the incident, because people seem inclined to worship Psyche like a goddess.

Glome begins to struggle. The harvests are bad, the King has to put down a rebellion, and a fever spreads through the city. The Fox falls ill, but Psyche nurses him back to health. When the people hear of this, they come to the palace in a mob, demanding that she heal them. She walks through the crowd, touching each person as they kiss the very ground she walks on. The next day, she falls ill herself, but recovers. The people leave offerings for her, and Orual fears Ungit's wrath.

One day, Redival tells Orual that she has seen Psyche in the city alone, and the people are now saying that she caused the fever instead of curing it. When Psyche returns, she tells Psyche that people called her the Accursed and threw stones at her. Conditions in the kingdom continue to worsen, and the King is desperate.

The Priest of Ungit comes to the palace to talk to the King. Orual fears him. He says that Ungit only becomes angry when people act badly, and when those people are punished, all will be well. To fix the kingdom's problems, they must find the cause of Ungit's anger and sacrifice them. The King and the Fox argue against him. The Priest says that a holy divination process has told him that the Accursed is not among the commoners, the Elders, or the nobles. The King thinks the Priest will say that he's the Accursed, so he threatens to kill the Priest and his guards. Finally, the Priest reveals that Psyche must be sacrificed. Orual and the Fox beg the King not to let it happen, but he refuses to listen.

Orual goes to visit Psyche where she has been imprisoned. She finds Psyche surprisingly calm and resigned to her fate. Psyche has always dreamed about a palace on the Grey Mountain, and she feels that she has been unconsciously preparing to be given to the gods there. Orual is angry that Psyche doesn't seem to mind their parting as much as Orual does. She doubts Psyche's love for her, and they part bitterly.

Orual intends to attend Psyche's sacrifice, but instead she falls into a delirium that lasts for days. When she wakes, she finds that all of Glome's problems have ended. Orual and the Fox think it's a coincidence. Orual decides she must go to the Mountain to bury whatever's left of Psyche. While she's

wandering the palace in her grief, the captain of the guard, Bardia, convinces her to let him teach her swordsmanship as a distraction.

Eventually, Bardia agrees to go to the Mountain with Orual. They discover Psyche, alive, in a beautiful valley. Both sisters are overjoyed to see each other, and Psyche tells Orual what happened to her. She was given a drug to keep her calm, so it wasn't until she was left alone, chained to the Holy Tree, that she began to despair. But then the god of the wind appeared, lifted her out of her chains, and brought her to an incredible **palace** in the valley. Every night, she says, the god of the Mountain comes to lie with her, but she is forbidden to see his face. It becomes clear that Orual can't see the palace.

Orual and Psyche fight over whether the palace is real or a figment of Psyche's imagination. Orual feels very far away from Psyche, and begins to hate the god and Psyche's situation. She wants Psyche to run away with her, but Psyche insists that she owes her duty to her husband now. They part. Near dawn, Orual walks to the river's edge and sees a brief glimpse of the palace, but she hardly believes her own vision.

On the ride home, Orual tells Bardia Psyche's story and asks his advice. He believes in the religious explanation—Psyche's sacrifice saved Glome, and she's now the god's wife. Back in the palace, Orual tells the Fox what happened. He thinks that a runaway criminal living on the Mountain has fooled Psyche and is taking advantage of her. Orual asks the gods to send her a sign so she can know what's true, but nothing happens.

Orual decides that no matter what, something awful has control of Psyche. She returns to Psyche's valley the next day and coerces Psyche into lighting a lamp to look at her husband's **face** when he comes to her at night. Psyche at first refuses to betray her husband, but Orual stabs herself in the arm and threatens to kill Psyche and then herself. Psyche begins to almost hate Orual, but she can't have her commit suicide, so she agrees to the plan. Later that night, Orual sees the light of Psyche's lamp being revealed across the river. Suddenly a huge storm destroys the valley, and the god appears to her, sending Psyche into exile.

Orual decides to wear a veil for the rest of her life to hide her ugliness. That winter, the King breaks his leg and is taken ill. The Priest is also dying. Orual begins to act as Queen and makes an alliance with the Priest's successor, Arnom. That night, she discovers Trunia, Prince of Phars, hiding in the garden. He's been driven out of Phars because of a war with his brother for the succession, and Orual agrees to help him.

Orual proposes a duel for Trunia's life between herself and his brother, Argan. As preparations for the duel commence, Orual frees the Fox from slavery before realizing he might leave her to return to Greece, which is the last thing she wants. Eventually he decides to stay in Glome. Orual kills Argan. Trunia becomes King of Phars, and they have a strong alliance.

Meanwhile, Orual has fallen in love with Bardia, who's married. Orual is very successful as Queen and makes many positive changes in Glome. She uses her work to distract herself from her sorrows, and she buries her old self deep inside her, letting her persona as Queen take over. Even so, repeatedly thinks she hears Psyche crying outside, though she knows it's only **chains creaking in the well**. The Fox and Bardia act as excellent advisors, though the Fox eventually dies. The Queen finds her life monotonous and decides to travel to other kingdoms.

One day on her travels, Queen Orual comes upon a small temple in the woods. The priest there tells her the temple is for the goddess Istra, and the sacred story of the goddess corresponds almost exactly to Orual and Psyche's own story. In the priest of Istra's version, however, both of Istra's sisters can see her palace, and they conspire to get her away from the god because of their jealousy. The Queen is furious at the way the gods have twisted her story to put her at fault, so she decides she must write down the truth.

Part II is written some time after Orual finishes Part I. Redival's old lover comes to the palace, and the Queen learns that Redival was lonely in her childhood after Orual began to spend all her time with Psyche. Bardia dies unexpectedly and the Queen goes to visit his wife, Ansit, who accuses her of working him to death. In fact, she says, the Queen has consumed the lives of everyone around her.

Soon, the Queen must take part in a ritual at the house of Ungit. She sees a vivid face in the uncut stone, covered in blood, which supposedly is Ungit. Later, she has a dream that her father forces her to look in a mirror. Without her veil, she sees that her face is that of Ungit. That night she goes to the river, intending to drown herself, but a god's voice tells her not to jump, because she must "die before she dies."

Orual tries to mend her soul, but finds it impossible. She has a vision that she has to gather wool from giant sheep, but they trample her. Then she has one that she's walking through the desert in search of water from the land of the dead. An eagle then brings her to a giant courtroom filled with ghosts, where she must read her complaint against the gods. However, the scroll she reads instead exposes her own jealousy of the gods and possessiveness of Psyche. She sees herself truly for the first time and realizes that the gods don't interact with humans because humans don't even understand themselves.

Orual meets the Fox in his ghost form, and he brings her to a series of paintings that show the tasks Psyche has had to complete as Ungit's punishment. He explains that Psyche did her penance without distress, because Orual took on all of her pain. Finally, he leads Orual to a beautiful courtyard, where Psyche meets her upon returning from her last task. Orual sees that Psyche has become a goddess, and they are reconciled. Then the god comes to judge Orual, who is terrified and ecstatic. She hears him say that she has become Psyche, but

when she looks up, the vision ends. She dies soon after, knowing that the god is the answer to everything.



CHARACTERS

MAJOR CHARACTERS

Orual (The Queen) – Orual is the narrator of the novel. She begins as a princess of Glome, and becomes Queen at her father's death. Orual writes because she hates the gods, and in fact she is a character full of anger. In this way, she takes after her father the King, even though she hates him too. Orual is essentially defined by love and a lack thereof. Her indisputable ugliness means that others' love does not fall on her naturally, and her father's constant reminders of this ugliness lead to her strong sense of insecurity. When others do love her, she struggles to believe it, and her constant fear that their love will disappear makes her cling to it in a potentially harmful way. In other words, she becomes a very jealous person, never wanting to share her loved ones with anyone else. Ultimately, Orual realizes she has been jealous of the gods themselves for being so beautiful that they can attract the love of anyone they want, including her beloved Psyche. Her tendency towards jealousy leads Orual to harm those close to her with her possessive form of love that constantly borders on hatred. As Ansit puts it, Orual's love devours those she loves. When Orual becomes **Ungit** late in the book, it only makes more evident what she has always been—ugly inside and out, controlling and destructive through her love. Yet despite her major faults, Orual is obviously a sympathetic character, since she is the protagonist and the narrator. In fact, readers may find themselves relating to Orual almost against their will, as she suffers from failings common to anyone who's tried to love another person. In this way, the character of Orual functions to enact the central message of the novel by forcing readers to see their true selves and their faults more clearly.

Psyche (Istral) – Psyche is Orual's half-sister, the King's daughter by his second marriage. She is the most perfect and beautiful woman imaginable, inspiring comparisons to Helen of Troy and Aphrodite herself. Psyche's physical appearance corresponds to her moral perfection, both of which lead to her becoming a goddess in the end. Orual loves Psyche more than anything, wishing she could be mother, husband, and master to her, and Psyche returns her love. However, Orual's love quickly becomes destructive when Psyche is selected to be sacrificed because the people's worship of her has angered **Ungit**. Psyche doesn't fight her fate the way Orual wants her to, and Orual feels that Psyche doesn't truly love her. Similarly, when Orual finds Psyche in the valley, Psyche's happiness and independence anger Orual, who wants to be necessary to her life. Psyche wants to be loyal to her husband, but she can't bear to be responsible for Orual's suicide, so she agrees to look at his **face** as Orual demands. As a result, Psyche is exiled from

Glome and must complete a series of nearly impossible tasks set her by Ungit. Psyche also acts as a Christ figure, first healing the people of a fever and then going to a likely death chained to a tree (reminiscent of the cross) for the good of the people. To Orual, who's sure she has died, Psyche seems to rise from the dead, as Christ did. Furthermore, Psyche begins life as a human and becomes divine.

Redival – Redival is the middle sister of the royal family. She's beautiful, flirtatious, and empty-headed, but she can also be manipulative and cruel. Before Psyche's birth, she and Orual are close, and Redival then becomes jealous of Orual's love of Psyche. This, combined with Psyche's superior beauty, undoubtedly contributes to her ill-will towards her sister. Redival threatens to tell the Priest of Ungit that the people are worshiping Psyche like a goddess, and when the Priest pronounces Psyche the Accursed, Orual blames Redival. Eventually, Orual retreats from her desire to do Redival as much harm as possible, and when she becomes Queen, she marries Redival to Trunia of Phars. Orual always thinks that Redival has the upper hand in life because of her beauty, but in fact, she is far more miserable than she lets on.

The Fox – The Fox, so named by the King for his red hair, is a slave from the Greeklands who becomes the teacher of the princesses of Glome. Orual and Psyche see him as a grandfather figure and love him wholeheartedly, and he essentially raises them. The Fox practices Greek philosophy that seems to be a form of Stoicism, teaching the princesses to follow nature and reason over poetry, emotion, and myths of the gods. In fact, the Fox doubts the existence of the gods and teaches Orual to do so as well. When Orual goes to him for advice about Psyche, his is the argument of reason: Psyche's lover must be a runaway criminal who has deceived her into believing she lives in a **palace**. In this way, he counteracts Bardia's religious viewpoint. The Fox becomes the King's most trusted advisor, and goes on to advise Orual when she becomes Queen. He loves her dearly, and though she sets him free, he decides to remain in Glome for her sake rather than returning to his beloved Greeklands. Later, Orual realizes that she has consumed his life out of her selfish love when she should have urged him to follow his heart back to his home. At the end of the book, the Fox's ghost, turned to religion, guides Orual to an understanding of the gods' influence on her life and Psyche's. The Fox most represents Lewis himself, who was an atheist for many years and only unwillingly converted to Christianity when he could see no other truth.

Trom (The King) – The King is the father of Orual, Psyche, and Redival. He's a cruel, selfish man who dislikes Orual and generally ignores his other daughters, as he wants only the son he never gets. He's physically and emotionally abusive to Orual, often reminding her that her ugliness makes her practically unlovable. The King also proves himself a coward when he readily gives Psyche up for sacrifice, glad of his own safety.

When the King lies ill on his deathbed, he becomes desperately afraid of Orual, constantly telling his guards to take her away. He seems to think she's someone else, someone who wants to torture him, and it's possible that in his delirium, he perceives **Ungit** inside of her. Orual considers murdering him, but he eventually dies a natural death.

Batta – Batta acts as nurse to Orual and Redival when they're children, frightening them with stories of what an evil stepmother they'll have. Later, the King assigns her to guard Redival to keep her from getting into trouble with men, and she and Redival are the best of friends one moment and at each other's throats the next. Eventually Batta grows close with the King because she flatters him. She's a hopeless gossip, and is often cruel. Orual never likes her. Once Orual becomes Queen, she finds out that Batta has always blackmailed the other servants into giving her valuables, so she has her hanged. It seems likely that Orual hates Batta so much partly because she sees herself in Batta's cruelty and doesn't want to admit it. At one point, Psyche actually likens Orual's actions to Batta's, which angers Orual.

Bardia – Bardia starts out as the captain of the palace guard and becomes one of Queen Orual's closest advisors. He is a brave, loyal, hardworking man who always sees the good in Orual and never underestimates her strengths. He teaches her swordsmanship and never even seems to consider that her femaleness might hold her back. However, this might be in part because he doesn't really see her as a woman—he often laments the fact that she wasn't born a man. Orual is glad that he sees her as a comrade, but it hurts her that he doesn't see her as a woman as well, and she attributes this to her ugliness and lack of sexual appeal. Orual eventually falls in love with Bardia and tries to keep him near her, which ultimately results in his death from overwork. Additionally, Bardia represents the religious majority of Glome: In contrast to the Fox, he believes that Psyche's sacrifice cured Glome's troubles, and that she really is married to the god and living in his **palace**.

Ansit – Ansit is Bardia's wife. He marries her out of love, without a dowry, which other men tease him for. Orual hears that she fusses much over Bardia and Orual thinks of her as slightly ridiculous for it. Orual feels very jealous of Ansit, since she's in love with Bardia, and is quick to think ill of her. When Bardia dies, Orual goes to visit Ansit and finds that she has been jealous too, envious that Orual shared such a deep comradeship with Bardia in battle and in affairs of state. Orual is amazed and shows Ansit her **face**, despite remaining **veiled** for years, to prove that there's nothing to be jealous of. Ansit sees that Orual also loved Bardia, and they share a brief moment of connection. But Ansit also speaks to Orual frankly, telling her that she killed Bardia through overwork and has selfishly consumed the lives of everyone around her. This is one of the truest interpretations of Orual up to this point, and perhaps in her whole life. Although Ansit's words hurt Orual,

they cause her to begin reevaluating her actions and seeing how she has used those she loved, putting her on the path to ultimate self-understanding. Ansit sees the true Orual both in her physical form—her face—and in her moral composition.

The god of the Grey Mountain (the Brute/the Shadowbrute) – This character seems able to take on different forms as part of the gods' ability to flow through each other and appear in various ways. At the same time, it's possible that the Brute is only a mythical representation of the god, who's also supposed to be **Ungit**'s son and corresponds to Cupid in the Greek myth of Cupid and Psyche. In any case, Psyche is sacrificed to him with the potential to either be devoured or be married. The god becomes her lover but refuses to show his face. When Orual forces Psyche to betray him by lighting a lamp in their bedroom, he exiles her and tells Orual she will also be Psyche, which results in Orual taking on the pain of the various tasks Psyche must complete as punishment. Though Orual hates the god, once she comes to understand herself she sees that his very existence is the answer to everything. He initially exists in apparent subordination to Ungit, but when Orual expels Ungit from herself, she recognizes him as the true god. In this way, the god seems to correspond to Jesus or the God of Christianity, meaning Orual has a sort of conversion experience at the end of the book as she turns away from the Satanic Ungit and towards the Lord, as she calls him.

The Priest of Ungit – The Priest of Ungit presides over the goddess's temple and interprets her will to the King. He believes deeply in **Ungit**'s presence and power, and his faith makes Orual question the Fox's teachings to the contrary. The Priest frightens Orual with the feeling of holiness that hangs around him, caused by the bird mask he wears on his chest and the odor of sacrificial blood that follows him. Furthermore, he is the one who initiates the sacrifice of Psyche. Neither the King nor Orual likes him, but both have to pay attention to his demands. The Priest eventually dies around the same time that the King does. The Priest is also blind, a condition that carries significance in a novel that focuses often on what sight reveals or fails to reveal—Psyche's physical beauty; Orual's ugliness, concealed behind her **veil**; Psyche's **palace** in the valley. The Priest's blindness seems to exempt him from the sort of doubts that Orual has when the gods refuse to show her anything clearly. It also connects him to people's inner lives, which are where Ungit resides, more than their physical appearances.

Arnom – Arnom becomes the Priest of **Ungit** when the original Priest dies. Orual is less afraid of him, finding him less drenched in holiness and more relatable. Even before either of them comes to power, she forms an alliance with him that brings the palace and the temple into more harmonious relations during her reign. Arnom becomes a good friend, and he learns from the Fox to speak of Ungit as a symbol of nature and the fertile earth that gives life, taking away the frightening sense of mystery around Ungit that the old Priest cultivated.

Argan of Phars – Argan is a prince of Phars, a neighboring kingdom. He and Trunia, his brother, fight a civil war over who should succeed to the throne. Argan is disliked by the people of Phars because he's known as a coward. Orual plays on this weakness when she proposes that Argan duel her for Trunia's life. Argan proves a poor swordsman, and Orual kills him, securing her own position on the throne and making Trunia King of Phars.

Trunia of Phars – Trunia is the younger prince of Phars, a neighboring kingdom. He and Argan, his brother, fight a civil war over who should succeed to the throne. When he's driven out of Phars, he turns up in Orual's garden. She fights a duel with Argan for his life, which secures Trunia's friendship for the rest of their lives. Trunia is the only man who ever flirts with Orual, because he can't see her **face** behind her **veil** and judges her beauty from her voice. This forces Orual to temporarily see herself in a different light than she's used to, and it also shows that she grossly underestimates her own potential merits and ability to attract others' love. She enjoys his attentions, but marries Redival to him instead of herself. Their son becomes her heir.

The priest of Istra – Orual comes across this priest in a small temple in the woods. He tells her the story of the goddess Istra, which is identical to the story of Orual's Psyche except for a few essential points. To Orual's frustration, the priest can't fathom that Istra's story might be real and recent. He sees it only as a symbolic myth, which is ironic since he's supposed to be the religious man, and Orual the skeptic.

The peasant woman – The peasant woman comes into the house of **Ungit** to pray when Orual is taking part in an annual ritual there. The woman finds comfort only in the rough stone of Ungit, and not in the beautiful Greek-style statue, which she thinks is too refined for someone as common as she. This reinforces the impression of Ungit as a goddess whose barbarity echoes something fundamental within people. People worship her for her connection to their own sins and primal nature, rather than for her beauty.

The judge – Orual appears before the judge in the court in the mountain when she presents her complaint against the gods. She can't tell if the judge is male or female, as it's entirely veiled in black. This **veil** connects it to Orual, suggesting that perhaps she is judging herself. This makes sense, since she need only see herself more truly to understand that her case against the gods is ridiculous.

Tarin – Tarin begins as a palace guard, but when he's caught kissing Redival, the King makes him a eunuch. At the end of the book, he comes back to Glome in a delegation from a greater kingdom where eunuchs are highly prized. He's grown fat and conceited, and he tells Orual that he pitied Redival when they were younger, because she felt lonely and abandoned when Orual began devoting all her time to Psyche. This begins to

change Orual's view of Redival and herself.

The New Queen – Psyche's mother, the King's second wife, is known only as the Queen. She comes from the kingdom of Caphad, but the alliance with Caphad proves badly chosen when it becomes clear that Caphad is losing land and wealth. As a result, the King is rough with his wife, who was weak and shy to begin with. She loves Orual and Redival like sisters rather than like children, and she dies giving birth to Psyche.

MINOR CHARACTERS

Gram – Gram is an almost silent guard whom Bardia sends along with Orual on her second trip to Psyche's valley. Orual dislikes him and wishes Bardia were with her instead. He makes her realize how much she values Bardia's advice.

Daaran – Daaran is the son of Redival and Trunia, and the heir to Orual's throne. Orual doesn't let herself love him because she wants to avoid heartache, but at the end of the book she wishes she had brought him to the palace to love him and train him.

West-wind – West-wind is the god of the wind who plucks Psyche up from the Holy Tree where she's been sacrificed and brings her to the **palace** of the god of the Mountain.

Poobi – Poobi is Orual's loyal and favorite servant. Orual eventually frees her when she becomes Queen, and some of her happiest times are spent in Poobi's company.

Ilerdia – Ilerdia is the son of Bardia and Ansit. He accompanies Orual on her travels to other kingdoms, and when Ansit accuses her of consuming his life as she did Bardia's, she bitterly considers sending him home to be a farmer instead of grooming him for greatness.

Alit – Alit is Poobi's daughter. She accompanies Orual on her travels to other kingdoms.



THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don't have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in black and white.



LOVE AND DEVOURING

This novel envisions love first and foremost as a destructive force that consumes the lives of those who feel it. **Ungit**, the major goddess worshipped in Glome, corresponds to Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of love. Whereas Aphrodite is usually imagined as a beautiful, seductive goddess, Ungit is portrayed as a cruel goddess who demands frequent blood sacrifices, and she is embodied by a chunk of

grotesque uncut rock. This symbolism shows that Ungit's dominating presence in Glome makes the destructive aspect of love particularly powerful, whether Ungit herself spreads it, or its natural presence among the people leads them to worship this side of Ungit.

When the Priest proclaims that Psyche must be sacrificed to the Shadowbrute, he suggests that when the Brute takes her, he will have sex with her and consume her, and in fact "the loving and the devouring are all the same thing" (49). Love drives the plot of the novel, mysterious and terrible in its ability to cause more pain than any other force.

Orual loves three people throughout her life: Psyche, the Fox, and Bardia. She devours all of their lives with her love, forcing Psyche to betray her husband and be banished, selfishly embracing the Fox's decision not to return home to Greece, and working Bardia to death on the battlefield and in the council room. In these instances, for love to be destructive, both parties must feel it. In other words, Orual loves all three of these people, but they also love her, and they only sacrifice themselves the way they do because of their devotion to her. Orual's love makes her selfish, as she cares more for having her beloveds near her and paying attention to her than she does for their happiness and safety. Ironically, Orual is driven to destructive actions because she believes that Psyche and Bardia don't love her as she loves them, but in fact they willingly face their own destruction for the sake of their devotion to Orual. Much of Orual's cruelty comes from a delusion that she is unloved and unlovable, probably stemming from her father's dislike of her and constant reminders of her ugliness.

Throughout the course of her life, Orual discovers different ways to love, or to interpret the idea of love. In trying to decide what to do about Psyche's apparent delusion that she's married to a god, Orual comes to believe that there is more to love than wanting to see the loved one happy. Instead, true love requires Orual to work for the moral and physical good of Psyche, her beloved. The problem is that Orual and Psyche don't agree on what is best for Psyche, and Orual never considers that she might not have the right to decide Psyche's future. In this way, she comes to devour Psyche's ideal life with her jealous love, leading to Psyche wandering the earth in banishment. As Psyche remarks, Orual comes to use her love for Psyche and Psyche's love for her as a weapon. She threatens to kill herself and does wound herself in order to coerce Psyche into betraying her husband, knowing that Psyche can't stand the thought of Orual's suicide. Even though Orual's strategy works, it also ruins the trust and love that Psyche previously felt for her sister. Orual believes that, because she has raised Psyche and loved her, Psyche belongs to her. She does not acknowledge Psyche's right to free will, instead thinking she deserves Psyche's loyalty.

Ansit finally makes Orual see the destructive nature of her love when she tells her bluntly that she worked Bardia to death.

Ansit acts as a counterexample to Orual's way of loving, as she knows that she must allow those she loves, specifically Bardia and Ilerdia, to live their lives in the way that they desire, even if it means that she sees less of them. Her love is not possessive, as Orual's is. Similarly, the Fox recognizes the need to control his love. When Orual proposes that she will battle Argan, the Fox feels terrified that she'll die. He tries to convince her not to fight, but she ignores him. He later apologizes for using his love for her as a form of coercion to pull Orual from her desired path, which is exactly what Orual did to Psyche.

Writing as a Christian, Lewis seems to distinguish between selfish, earthly love and selfless, divine love. While Orual's love is of the earthly variety, Psyche's represents the epitome of divine love. Psyche wants to help those around her, as demonstrated when she tries to heal the mob of townspeople who come to the palace gates with the fever, the sort of selfless act that Orual would never do. The truly divine nature of this kind of love is proven when Psyche is chosen to love a god as his wife, and then to become a goddess herself. From a Christian viewpoint, then, Orual can only begin to love God when she rejects the selfish love that she has felt her whole life and begins to care for Psyche in a less possessive way.



JEALOUSY

For Orual, love doesn't come without jealousy. Her jealousy stems in large part from her ugliness, which makes her very insecure about the affection that anyone shows her, because characters such as the King, Redival, and Batta have always shown their disgust at her appearance and made it clear that she will never be able to marry. Essentially, she has been taught that she is unlovable, so she more easily recognizes the ways in which people don't love her than the ways in which they do. Due to her appearance, Orual does not receive the sort of automatic love that the beautiful Psyche does. She has to work to gain the love and respect of those around her, and when she does, she doesn't want to share it with anyone else. Both of her two great loves, Psyche and Bardia, have commitments to love their partners, which to Orual means only that they can't love her.

Orual often remains blind to the love of those around her, instead telling herself that the people she loves will never love her as she loves them. Orual spends much of her adult life secretly loving Bardia and feeling jealous of his wife. No matter how much time Bardia spends serving Orual, he always goes home to his wife and children at night, and Orual sees this as proof that his family has more of his devotion than she does, that she is simply his job. However, when Bardia dies and Orual goes to visit his wife, Ansit, she discovers that Ansit has been jealous of her the whole time. Ansit believes that Orual and Bardia had a special bond due to their long hours spent in companionship on the battlefield and in the council room. For both women, their love of Bardia was marred by their jealousy

of the other, each believing that the other had Bardia's true devotion, when in fact he was devoted to each of them in different ways.

Furthermore, Orual finds out that her sister Redival, who she believed hated her and Psyche, has long craved Orual's love, which she lost when Psyche was born and Orual turned her attention away from Redival. Redival's cruelty to Psyche, which led in part to her being chosen as the sacrifice to the Shadowbrute, came from her jealousy of Psyche as Orual's most beloved sister.

By the end of the book, it becomes evident that Orual's complaint against the gods comes from her jealousy of them more than anything. The god of the Mountain has taken Psyche from Orual and given her a perfect life in a divine **palace**. The beauty and power of the gods means they can acquire the love and devotion of any humans they want, and Orual believes she can never hope to compete with them for the love of her sister. In fact, in Orual's final vision, the Fox prophesies that as the gods become more beautiful, humans will become more and more jealous of them and do all they can to keep their loved ones from giving themselves up to the divine as they should.

Although many characters are consumed by jealousy, their jealousy only ever leads them into self-torment. Rather than recognizing others' love for them, they instead convince themselves that their beloveds save their purest love for someone else. It is only ever too late that the characters come to a more accurate understanding of the fact that they were, in fact, loved. Finally, Lewis seems to argue that jealousy keeps people like Orual from loving God and becoming united with the divine.



SELF-UNDERSTANDING

The very title of the book gestures to a need to discover the essence of one's being and strip away all of the illusions about oneself before the gods

can even bother trying to communicate with mortals. Orual asks, "How can they [the gods] meet us face to face till we have faces?" (294).

For much of the book, Orual wears a **veil** which symbolizes her blindness to the effects of her own actions—she causes Psyche's misery, keeps the Fox from going home to his people, and works Bardia to an early death because she wants him near her. However, she sees only the wrongs done to her, not those she does to others. In her mind, Psyche abandons her for a god, the Fox almost leaves her to return to Greece, and Bardia keeps himself chained to an overbearing wife, viewing Orual as more man than woman. Lewis frames the very process of writing as one of examining the self and growing closer to God; as Orual records the events of her life, she begins to see herself in a new and truer light. She wonders whether her complaint against the gods is perhaps not as warranted as she thought. In fact, she

herself has been the cause of much of her suffering.

After Ansit accuses Orual of devouring the lives of those whom she loved, Orual has a dream in which her father leads her into the depths of the earth, a metaphor for the depths of her own being, and forces her to look into the **mirror** of the Pillar Room. With her veil removed, she sees that her **face** has become the face of **Ungit**. This seems to be a truer representation of herself than she has yet seen; she and Ungit merge in their tendency to consume human lives through their brutal version of love. In looking in the mirror, Orual looks into her own soul, possibly for the first time, and despises what she finds there. She tries to kill herself, but the gods don't allow it, because she has not yet come to fully understand herself and move past her faults.

When Orual is brought to the court of the gods in a vision and reads aloud a version of her complaint that makes her own jealousy and cruelty clear, she realizes that her voice sounds strange because she's hearing her true voice—and thus speaking the truth of her life. Furthermore, she finally understands that the gods have remained silent her whole life because she did not know herself. In other words, she had no face, so the gods could not waste their time interacting with a dumb, faceless mortal who did not comprehend her own words.

Lewis, whose Christian viewpoint must not be forgotten, seems to argue that to understand the self is to understand God. Orual can't commit suicide because the gods say she must "die before she dies." This seems to mean that she must leave her old self behind before her body can die, and in order to leave that self behind, she must first recognize it for what it is. The goal of human life is not so much to be perfectly good, but to recognize one's own faults. As Orual approaches self-understanding, she simultaneously approaches God, until at the end of the book, she finally dies, implying that she has fully comprehended and renounced her old, cruel self, and now can go to God in death.



EARTHLY VS. DIVINE

In writing a fundamentally Christian book that focuses on a Greek myth, Lewis manages to mix two quite different religions. In Greek mythology, the gods are almost pettily involved in human life, frequently interacting with mortals in both love and anger and even having children with them. Humans generally don't become divine unless a god particularly likes them and doesn't want to lose them to death—people don't work to gain enough merit to become divine. In Christianity, on the other hand, the faithful grow closer to God by following Jesus's example and obeying God's law. In fact, Lewis argues in his book *Mere Christianity* that God will make any believer into a god if they'll let him, though the process of becoming perfect will be painful. *Till We Have Faces*, then, seems to make use of both the Greek and

Christian visions of becoming divine. On the one hand, Psyche is naturally almost perfect enough to become divine in the Christian sense, but she clinches the deal by becoming a god's lover, a definitely Greek plot point. On the other hand, the entire book traces Orual's painful journey from earthly to divine as she mends her soul to become perfect, gesturing to Lewis's Christian view.

Throughout the book, the boundaries between human and god constantly blur, even as Orual herself tries to keep them separate by writing the testimony of a human against the gods, putting the earthly at odds with the divine. The entire book sets out Orual's complaint against the gods, which is one that humans often bring against divinity: If some divine power exists, why does it remain silent instead of guiding humans towards right and away from wrong?

Orual's predicament when she finds Psyche in the valley essentially hinges on the question of whether Psyche's experiences have been caused by divine powers or by earthly delusions. Psyche claims to be married to a god and living in a divine **palace**, but because Orual, as a mortal, can't see the palace, she believes Psyche has been tricked by a human or a beast. The gods refuse to clarify what is earthly and what divine. Although she does not acknowledge it as readily, Orual also hates the gods because both when Psyche is sacrificed and when Orual finds her in the valley, Psyche has a choice between remaining loyal to Orual and going to the gods. Both times, Psyche does not fight the gods, but goes to them readily, and Orual resents their undeniable ability to take her beloved from her, a mere human.

The gods and their priests are often positioned as enemies of the human characters. The King dreads the influence of **Ungit's** Priest in his kingdom, and the royal coffers are depleted by sacrifices to the goddess. The King threatens the Priest, human threatening divine, and Ungit demands human sacrifice. Orual begins her lifelong battle against the gods when she fights her father's decision to allow Psyche to be sacrificed to the Shadowbrute.

The Fox fights the gods in a different way—by using Greek logic to deny their existence and arguing that everything is a product of nature, of the earthly rather than of the divine. Since he raises Orual, she also doubts the gods' existence at times, although she more often worries that the Fox will stumble into trouble with his denial of the gods' power. When she's trying to decide what to do about Psyche's apparent delusion of her marriage to a god, she thinks she must discern whether Bardia's god-based explanation or the Fox's atheistic explanation is more likely true. Although she discovers the Fox is wrong because the god of the Mountain appears to her, she only hates the gods more for knowing that though they do exist, they still refuse to guide humans to the truth.

As mentioned above, the book also probes the boundaries between human and divine within individuals. According to

tradition, the royal house of Glome has divine blood. Both Psyche and Orual seem at points to become gods, or at least to embody them temporarily. When the people worship Psyche as a goddess, Ungit's wrath falls upon her, and yet Psyche later does become a goddess, as though the people have discerned some divine element in her even when she was entirely human. Orual eventually realizes that she herself is the goddess Ungit when her father forces her to look in a **mirror** in a dream. She goes into the streets without her **veil**, wondering if those who see her will worship her as Ungit. It seems unlikely that Orual has been Ungit all along; rather, Orual and Ungit have merged at some point during Orual's long history of destructive love, a characteristic which also defines Ungit.

Eventually, it becomes clear that gods and humans are hardly separate at all. Instead, all people and gods are interconnected, and their identities easily merge and flow through each other. Thus, Orual's fight against the gods has been entirely futile from the beginning, because it's impossible to entirely distinguish the gods from those whom she loves, and even from herself.



JUSTICE

The entire book is, in some sense, Orual's plea for justice, her statement of the wrongs the gods have done her. First, **Ungit** demands Psyche as a sacrifice, taking her from Orual's love to a fate Orual believes will be awful. Once Orual finds Psyche alive, she feels that the gods trick her by not allowing her to see the palace in which Psyche now lives. This tears her apart from Psyche, as she must think her sister mad. Orual appeals directly to the gods, asking them to give her a sign telling her what to do about Psyche and her supposed **palace**, but the gods give her no answer. She is forced to guess whether or not she's choosing the right course. When the god of the Mountain finally appears to her and banishes Psyche, Orual sees that she has chosen wrong. However, she blames this on the gods' refusal to guide her, not on any fault of her own.

In fact, Orual is very much to blame for Psyche's banishment. She does see the palace for herself, if only briefly, but even then she refuses to believe the vision. Furthermore, she can't accept Psyche's happiness, largely because she resents that Psyche can be happy without Orual in her life. As a result, Orual threatens and coerces Psyche into betraying her husband's trust. Orual's own jealousy of the gods, far more than the gods' silence, leads to Psyche's banishment from happiness.

In Part II, having written her story up to that point, Orual has gained perspective on her actions and begins to see them more truly, realizing that the just outcome is far different than she had thought. In a vision, she is brought to the court of the gods, the ultimate center of justice, to read the complaint that she has written throughout Part I. However, she finds herself instead reading a version of events stripped of the illusions

about herself that she has entertained for years. Instead of her complaint being rewarded with justice for the wrongs she thought were done to her, she sees that she has been the one doing wrong. She realizes that she has found justice simply by seeing herself for who she really is, and recognizes that if true justice were to be done, she would have to be punished, not the gods.

When the Fox brings Orual to be tried by the gods, he tells her that they are not just, implying that if they were, humans would be destroyed for all the wrongs they do. The gods have set Psyche tasks as punishment for betraying her husband, but the divine sense of justice means that Orual herself, instead of Psyche, has felt all of the pain that comes from having to complete the tasks. Orual has long wanted to show her devotion to her sister by taking on pain for her, offering herself up as the sacrifice to Ungit and hoping that she, too, would be forced to beg throughout the land in punishment for forcing Psyche to look upon the face of her husband. In these instances, Psyche's potential knowledge of Orual's self-sacrifice could be seen as another of Orual's desperate bids for Psyche's devotion. It is to Orual's credit that when she finds she has, in fact, suffered for Psyche, she is glad to have done it. Furthermore, although it seemed unfair for Psyche to be punished when Orual forced her to betray her husband, the revelation that Orual took on Psyche's suffering shows that the gods' justice is much fairer than previously thought.

The final component of Orual's vision is a god—who seems to be the ultimate God—coming to judge her, gesturing to the Christian idea of souls receiving judgment at their death. Orual sees that her own reflection has become that of Psyche, and the god confirms that she has become Psyche. Since Psyche acts as a Christ figure throughout the story, Orual seems to have cleansed her soul by recognizing her own sins, and at the final judgment, with her true face revealed, she is allowed to become part of a divine being.

The gods' justice seems harsh to humans, who complain of it as Orual does, and yet if humans could only see themselves truly, they would realize that the gods' justice is unnecessarily kind.



BEAUTY VS. UGLINESS

Throughout the novel, the characters' physical appearances often reflect their interior morality and goodness. However, it's difficult to say for sure whether characters' appearances are only symbols of their true beings, or whether their appearances and the way others interact with them as a result forms their interior for good or evil. Specifically, Orual is taught from an early age that her ugliness will prevent her from marrying, and that people will want to keep their distance from her. As a result, when people such as Psyche, the Fox, and Bardia do love her, she guards their love particularly jealously because she finds it so hard to believe that they really love her. Psyche, on the other hand,

receives the love of everyone around her because of her beauty, which makes it easy for her to love without jealousy. Her beauty gives her a sense of safety in others' love.

In a way, Psyche and Orual are opposites. Psyche has a perfect beauty and, by extension, moral purity. Orual, on the other hand, is regarded as monstrously ugly and has a correspondingly ugly, violent, possessive character. Orual herself associates her appearance with her interior being, as she compares her early attempts to make herself prettier with her later attempts to mend her soul to satisfy the gods. Furthermore, she hides her **face** with a **veil** when she doesn't want to acknowledge her own moral faults.

Psyche's beauty corresponds to her pure way of loving, which allows her beloveds to maintain their independence. Meanwhile, Orual's ugliness manifests itself in the extreme lengths to which she will go to keep the ones she loves under her control—her love hurts her beloveds, rather than nourishing them as Psyche's love does.

Finally, beauty becomes a marker of divinity. Psyche is regarded as a goddess at first for her physical beauty, and Orual describes the gods as so beautiful that mortals can hardly bear to look upon them. The ugly Orual remains entirely detached from the gods, unable to understand the signs they send her. As she eventually works to recognize the ugliness of her soul and make it more beautiful, however, she comes to more clearly understand the mysteries of the gods. When she ultimately purifies her soul, her physical appearance becomes correspondingly beautiful. In fact, she sees her reflection as almost identical to Psyche's. Essentially, in the book, physical beauty works as a manifestation of moral goodness and divine love.



SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **teal text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.



THE VEIL

Orual's veil represents her tendency to hide a part of her, not only from others, but also from herself. The King initially forces her to wear a veil to his wedding to hide her ugliness. Later, she decides to permanently don a veil after Psyche's exile. This act undermines the King's power over her, as she voluntarily hides her ugliness, and when he commands her to remove the veil, she refuses in her first act of defiance against him. She realizes that the veil makes her mysterious, as people must guess what it hides. Though the veil gives her power over others, it also separates her from them, representing the way she's cut herself off from human feeling after the loss of Psyche. By hiding her face, she becomes almost less human altogether. Perhaps she unconsciously tries to

imitate the gods, who seem to her to be veiled in mystery and whom she feels Psyche chose over her.

Furthermore, Orual dons her veil around the same time that she begins to bury her old self deep within her and transform herself into the Queen. The veil, then, helps her rid herself of Orual, whose **face** she wears, and become someone new. Perhaps the veil even performs some sort of transformation, because the next time Orual goes into public without her veil, she believes her face has changed into that of **Ungit**. As the face of Ungit exposes her inner, unacknowledged character, this would mean that the veil ultimately made her face into a truer representation of herself.



FACES

The outward appearance of faces in this novel generally corresponds to the characters' moral essences. Psyche's moral perfection is reflected in her stunningly beautiful face. Orual's face, on the other hand, is horribly ugly, as her moral tendencies also prove to be. Furthermore, when she sees the face of **Ungit** on herself, she begins to realize that it shows she has lived a life of devouring the people around her for her own benefit. At the same time, it's difficult to say whether the women's essential characters exist from birth or result from the responses to their physical appearances. Psyche has always been adored for her beauty, so she has no reason to hate those around her or to seek love as jealously as Orual does. Orual, on the other hand, has always been told that she's too ugly to love, and that she'll never be able to marry. This undoubtedly makes her bitter against the world and leads her to cling destructively to those who do love her, filling with jealousy whenever she perceives any threat to that love. Thus, the women's faces both influence and reflect their true moral character.

Additionally, the god's refusal to allow Psyche to see his face acts as a test of her loyalty. In Christianity, to see the face of God is portrayed as an intensely religious and euphoric experience. Orual forces Psyche to disrespect the sacredness of this act, as Psyche tries to see the god's face through deception. Faces, then, can be seen as sacred, and if the essence of a person is represented by their face, that essence, too, is sacred.

Orual ultimately realizes that the gods cannot "meet us face to face till we have faces" (294), implying that the having a face includes being conscious of one's entire self, both good and bad, and understanding one's motives and the results of one's actions. Until then, the gods will remain silent, unwilling to waste time trying to make mortals understand what they're willfully blind to.



THE MIRROR

A mirror is conventionally an instrument with which one examines one's **face**. Thus, in this book mirrors act as instruments of self-understanding, since faces represent one's true self. Orual sees the face of **Ungit** on herself when the King forces her to look in a mirror in a dream, thus confirming Ansit's accusation that she has devoured people's lives with her love as Ungit devours them. This vision in the mirror helps Orual on her way to understanding her cruel nature.

However, the mirror also functions as a symbol of Orual's supposed inability to attract love. When she proposes that she can be sacrificed instead of Psyche, the King leads her to his giant mirror and tells her that the gods want only the best, implying that her ugliness disqualifies her. When Orual becomes Queen, she gets rid of the mirror for obvious reasons—it reminds her of the King's rejection of her. This action also helps to sever her ties with the old Orual, who was dominated by the King and depressed by her ugliness. Thus, when the King makes her look in the mirror a second time, it also forces her to acknowledge the wrongs she has tried to bury deep inside her memory, which in turn have contributed to Ungit becoming so present within her that Ungit's face appears in the mirror.



THE CHAINS IN THE WELL

After Psyche's exile, Orual is haunted by the sound of the chains of the well moving in the wind, which sounds just like a girl crying in the garden. The chains act as a constant reminder of her guilt, keeping her from completely burying her old self as she tries to when she becomes Queen. She wants to forget what she did to Psyche, long refusing to acknowledge that she was at fault, but the sound of the chains is always there to dredge up the past. In fact, the chains effectively chain her to her memories of Psyche. Orual's decision to build thick stone walls around the well to muffle the sound echoes her decision to **veil her face**. In both instances, she puts up a physical barrier to hide truths about herself that she doesn't want to acknowledge.



UNGIT

Ungit represents the potential for jealous, devouring love that lies within all mortals. Although she is worshipped as a god in Glome, the Fox does not acknowledge her as one of the "true gods" at the end of the book; instead, she is "an image of the demon within" everyone (295). It's unclear whether she ever exists entirely independently of humans, or whether her essence simply lives within and works through them. Even her demand, as related by the Priest, that Psyche must be sacrificed could be

interpreted as the people's jealousy of Psyche's beauty and popularity.

The uncut hunk of stone that supposedly is Ungit herself shows that jealousy and possessive love are very primitive parts of human nature, so engrained that the people of Glome find Ungit a comforting goddess and feel that the stone makes her relatable, unlike the idealized Greek-style statue that Arnorn has made.

In a Christian context, Ungit can represent the Devil working within Orual to harm Psyche (a Christ figure) and the god of the Mountain (the Christian God). Thus, the message of the book becomes one of redemption from Satan: Though he works in all mortals, if they can recognize their own sins they can be redeemed and come to God, as Orual does.



THE PALACE ON THE MOUNTAIN

As a child, Psyche dreams of one day living in a palace on the Grey Mountain, which she later sees as a sign that she has always been destined to go there as a sacrifice. The palace additionally represents the cloud of mystery in which the gods exist, which makes up the center of Orual's accusation against them. She feels that if only they spoke more clearly to mortals, mortals wouldn't make the sorts of mistakes that anger the gods. Specifically, if they had allowed her to see Psyche's palace, she wouldn't have had to guess whether or not Psyche's story was true, and she wouldn't have made Psyche look at the god's face. The palace and its invisibility represent the conflict between mortal and divine, between provable reality and holy mystery.

Additionally, the palace represents Orual's unconscious desire to hurt Psyche. Although she tries to ignore it, Orual does in fact see the palace. She tries to convince herself it might have been the result of drowsiness or the mist, but she does see it, and willfully refuses to believe Psyche anyway. The fact that Orual never tells anyone about her vision of the palace proves that on some level, she knows she's at fault for ignoring it.



QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Houghton Mifflin Harcourt edition of *Till We Have Faces* published in 2012.

Part 1: Chapter 2 Quotes

☞ The Fox clapped his hands and sang, "Prettier than Andromeda, prettier than Helen, prettier than Aphrodite herself."

"Speak words of better omen, Grandfather," I said, though I knew he would scold and mock me for saying it. For at his words, though on that summer day the rocks were too hot to touch, it was as if a soft, cold hand had been laid on my left side, and I shivered.... I knew it is not good to talk that way about Ungit.

Related Characters: Orual (The Queen), The Fox (speaker), Psyche (Istral)

Related Themes:   

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 23

Explanation and Analysis

Psyche is still a child, and she, Orual, and the Fox are looking towards the Grey Mountain, where Psyche imagines having a palace. The Fox exclaims over Psyche's beauty. This passage presents the main conflict that leads to Psyche's sacrifice: Ungit doesn't like mortals to be considered more beautiful than she is.

Though the Fox insists that the Divine Nature isn't jealous, Andromeda, one of the mythical figures to whom he compares Psyche, suffered due to the gods' jealousy of her beauty, which bodes ill for Psyche's future. When Andromeda's mother boasted that her daughter was prettier than certain sea nymphs, the god of the ocean sent a sea monster to the coast of their country. Similarly, Ungit will send lions to terrorize Glome. An oracle tells Andromeda's father, the king, that he must sacrifice her to appease the gods, which is exactly what Psyche's father will also do. Since the Fox says Psyche is prettier than Aphrodite (the Greek form of Ungit), he essentially makes the exact fatal mistake that Andromeda's mother did in the same breath that he summons up her story.

Orual, who doesn't shun belief in the gods the way the Fox does, seems to sense Ungit's displeasure. As it later becomes evident that Orual is closely connected to Ungit; perhaps she is more sensitive to Ungit's jealousy than others would be. This scene marks only the beginning of Ungit's anger, which will tear apart all of their lives.

Part 1: Chapter 3 Quotes

☞ Her beauty, which most of them had never seen, worked on them as a terror might work. Then a low murmur, almost a sob, began; swelled, broke into the gasping cry, "A goddess, a goddess." One woman's voice rang out clear. "It is Ungit herself in mortal shape."

Related Characters: Orual (The Queen) (speaker), Psyche (Istral)

Related Themes:   

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 32

Explanation and Analysis

When the people of Glome come to the palace gates, demanding that Psyche heal them of the fever because they have heard that she healed the Fox, many of them have never seen her before. When she comes out of the palace, they are struck dumb by her beauty and hail her as a goddess. Their worship of her eventually brings Ungit's wrath down upon Psyche, as Orual fears it will.

Psyche's beauty initially affects the people in a way similar to how Orual imagines her own ugliness works, making them terrified. Furthermore, though they hail Psyche as the goddess Ungit, Orual is the one who will eventually become Ungit. Ironically, the people believe Ungit is distinguished by her beauty, but, in fact, the ugliest woman in the kingdom more truly represents her. The fact that people see in Psyche the goddess who eventually possesses Orual also connects Psyche and Orual through this divine presence, acting as an early indication of the link between the sisters that will allow them to complete Psyche's tasks together later on. As seen here, the gods flow through humans, connecting humans to one another and to the gods.

Part 1: Chapter 5 Quotes

☞ And when the Brute is Ungit it lies with the man, and when it is her son it lies with the woman. And either way there is a devouring... many different things are said... many sacred stories... many great mysteries. Some say the loving and the devouring are all the same thing. For in sacred language we say that a woman who lies with a man devours the man.

Related Characters: The Priest of Ungit (speaker), The god of the Grey Mountain (the Brute/the Shadowbrute)

Related Themes:  

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 49

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, the Priest is explaining to the King how the Great Offering works—in other words, what will happen to Psyche when they sacrifice her. Although the Fox challenges the logic of the way the Priest talks about the gods, the Priest himself feels entirely comfortable with the contradictions and mysteries that make up his religion and he doesn't believe that contradiction and mystery make faith any less true. This passage shows that the gods are not stable entities, but instead they can instead take on each other's identities or temporarily become something else. The Brute, the monster that will take the human sacrifice, seems to be an independent entity that is simultaneously either Ungit or Ungit's son. Later, a similar process allows Orual, Ungit, and Psyche to blend in and out of each other.

Furthermore, the Brute has sex with the sacrifice, but it also consumes the sacrifice, possibly through the same action. None of this makes logical sense, as the Fox would be quick to point out. But throughout the novel, loving and devouring are paired, particularly in association with Ungit. It becomes clear that Orual's love always involves a devouring of her beloved's life, since she feels the need to entirely possess anyone she loves. This sort of love is lesser than the pure love that Psyche can feel, which is also the love that the ultimate god at the end of the book demands.

☞ I, King, have dealt with the gods for three generations of men, and I know that they dazzle our eyes and flow in and out of one another like eddies on a river, and nothing that is said clearly can be said truly about them. Holy places are dark places. It is life and strength, not knowledge and words, that we get in them.

Related Characters: The Priest of Ungit (speaker), Trom (The King), The god of the Grey Mountain (the Brute/the Shadowbrute)

Related Themes: 

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 50

Explanation and Analysis

When the Priest of Ungit comes to the palace to tell the King he must sacrifice Psyche to solve Glome's problems, the Fox argues that the Priest's explanation of situation makes no logical sense. The Priest, however, has no respect for the Fox's logic, saying that logic doesn't apply to the gods. The gods deal only in mystery and contradiction, and mortals must accept a state of blindness rather than rage against the gods' mysteries. Orual essentially spends the entire book coming to accept this truth about the gods, as she always wants them to speak to her clearly so that she can understand what they expect of her.

Additionally, the Priest explains that the gods are not independent entities, but instead move through each other in a way that cannot be fully understood. Thus the Shadowbrute can be both Ungit and the god of the Mountain. Later, Orual will learn that the gods also flow through humans, as she herself becomes Ungit and thus, perhaps, the Shadowbrute.

The Fox deals only with "knowledge and words," and he later realizes that this is not enough to nourish the human soul. Instead, people need the "life and strength" that the gods can provide, even if the gods will never make sense.

a fair judgment from her reader. She admits that, in this situation, she doesn't want Psyche to be happy.

Orual's love always includes jealousy, and this passage shows her jealousy of the gods, who she feels have "come in between" her and Psyche. Psyche essentially expresses her willingness to go to the gods, which Orual sees as a diminishment of Psyche's love for her, simply because Psyche doesn't rage against anything that separates her from Orual. This scene marks only the beginning of Orual's resentment of Psyche's happiness. Though she won't acknowledge her own jealousy until the end of the book, she will eventually realize that reactions such as this one come from her jealousy of the gods' ability to have whatever mortals they want for themselves.

Part 1: Chapter 9 Quotes

☝☝ While I was in there, one of the other soldiers... came into the passage and said something to Bardia. Bardia replied, I couldn't hear what. Then he spoke louder: "Why, yes, it's a pity about her face. But she's a brave girl and honest. If a man was blind and she weren't the King's daughter, she'd make him a good wife." And that is the nearest thing to a love-speech that was ever made me.

Part 1: Chapter 7 Quotes

☝☝ Since I write this book against the gods, it is just that I should put into it whatever can be said against myself. So let me set this down: as she spoke I felt, amid all my love, a bitterness. Though the things she was saying gave her (that was plain enough) courage and comfort, I grudged her that courage and comfort. It was as if someone or something else had come in between us. If this grudging is the sin for which the gods hate me, it is one I have committed.

Related Characters: Orual (The Queen) (speaker), Psyche (Istral)

Related Themes:     

Page Number: 74-75

Explanation and Analysis

When Orual goes to visit Psyche where she has been imprisoned until her sacrifice, Psyche seems quite undisturbed by her impending doom. She even points out that she's always longed to go to the Grey Mountain and suggests that this is her fate. Orual, who by the time of writing her account is a just Queen, knows that she must be as honest as possible in telling her story in order to receive

Related Characters: Orual (The Queen) (speaker), Bardia

Related Themes:   

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 92

Explanation and Analysis

After Bardia gives Orual her first lesson in swordsmanship, she goes into the dairy to get a drink of milk and overhears this conversation. This is a painful moment for Orual. She has known from a young age that everyone agrees that she is ugly. Her father, in particular, has often insulted her appearance, making her believe that she is unlovable. Orual never actively pursues romantic love because it seems absurd to her to think anyone would give it to her. She does eventually come to love Bardia and wish she could marry him, but this is the closest she comes (not very close at all) to hearing him echo the sentiment.

Though Bardia compliments her, he also insults her very casually, saying that he would only marry her if he never had to look at her. This is the sort of sentiment that convinces Orual she will never be loved and makes her cling so jealously to anyone who does love her. His attitude here

also explains why he so often expresses a wish that she were a man: he values her character, but not her appearance. If she were a man, her appearance would matter much less, while her character would get her farther.

Part 1: Chapter 10 Quotes

☛ And he took me... and pulled me right out of the iron girdle... and carried me up into the air, far up above the ground, and whirled me away. Of course he was invisible again almost at once. I had seen him only as one sees a lightning flash. But that didn't matter. Now I knew it was he, not it, I wasn't in the least afraid of sailing along in the sky, even of turning head over heels in it.

Related Characters: Orual (The Queen) (speaker), West-wind

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 112

Explanation and Analysis

When Orual finds Psyche in the valley, Psyche tells the story of her sacrifice and how she came to be the god's lover. In this passage, she describes the god of the wind freeing her from the chains that tied her to the Holy Tree and bringing her to the god's palace. Her reaction to the god shows a faith that Orual lacks. Before the sacrifice, neither woman is entirely sure of the gods' existence, due to the Fox's atheistic teachings. However, the moment that Psyche sees West-wind she believes wholeheartedly in the gods and trusts them to keep her safe, even though she only sees West-wind for a moment before he disappears again.

Orual, on the other hand, sees Psyche's palace for only a moment before it disappears and she refuses to believe in it afterwards. The sisters' contrasting reactions to the gods' revelations display more fundamental differences. Psyche is trusting and pure of heart, happy to accept the gods' influence. Orual, by contrast, often twists her perception of reality to suit her own jealous ends and resists giving in to the gods' power over her.

Part 1: Chapter 11 Quotes

☛ For the world had broken in pieces and Psyche and I were not in the same piece. Seas, mountains, madness, death itself, could not have removed her from me to such a hopeless distance as this. Gods, and again gods, always gods... they had stolen her. They would leave us nothing. A thought pierced up through the crust of my mind like a crocus coming up in the early year. Was she not worthy of the gods? Ought they not to have her? But instantly great, choking, blinding waves of sorrow swept it away....

Related Characters: Orual (The Queen) (speaker), Psyche (Istral)

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 120-21

Explanation and Analysis

This passage occurs after Orual realizes that Psyche lives in a divine palace that Orual cannot see or feel. It seems worse to her that they should be in the same physical place but living apparently on different planes—mortal and divine—as opposed to being separated only by distance. Orual exhibits her jealousy of the gods, choosing to believe that they kidnapped Psyche rather than acknowledging that Psyche went to them more or less readily. She seems to imagine a struggle of mortals versus gods in which the gods take everything wonderful from the humans, and she hates them for their ability to draw the best people willingly to their realms.

For a moment, Orual does find herself wondering whether she's being unfair. She considers Psyche's rightful place, which, by implication, would be the one in which Psyche would be most happy. However, Orual's way of loving doesn't allow her to put her beloved's happiness before her own. Her grief at the thought of entirely losing Psyche to the gods overpowers any consideration of what would be best for Psyche.

☛ “Get up, girl,” I said. “Do you hear me? Do as you're told. Psyche, you've never disobeyed me before.”

She looked up (wetter every moment) and said, very tender in voice but hard as stone in her determination, “Dear Maia, I am a wife now. It's no longer you that I must obey.”

I learned then how one can hate those one loves. My fingers were round her wrist in an instant, my other hand on her upper arm. We were struggling.

Related Characters: Psyche (Istral), Orual (The Queen) (speaker), The god of the Grey Mountain (the Brute/the Shadowbrute)

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 126-27

Explanation and Analysis

When Orual meets Psyche in the valley, they argue about whether the palace really does exist and whether Psyche should stay there or come home with Orual. When it begins to rain, the fact that Psyche gets wet seems to Orual to prove that the palace is a figment of Psyche's imagination, since Psyche insists that they're inside, sheltered from the rain. Orual commands her to come under her cloak to stay dry, but Psyche refuses.

Though Orual technically only commands Psyche in reference to their immediate situation in the rain, her sentiment applies to their entire situation. Orual, in her position as an older sister and mother figure, believes Psyche should obey Orual's will and abandon this imagined palace. The fact that Orual becomes so enraged when Psyche declares that her allegiance has shifted to her husband, the god of the Mountain, proves the existence of the jealousy that Orual denies she feels. Orual can't stand the idea that Psyche might belong to someone else, as Orual's love makes her want to possess and control Psyche. Furthermore, Orual's love mixes dangerously with hatred, meaning that no matter how much she insists that she acts for Psyche's own good, hatred motivates her actions just as much as the love she claims to work for.

Part 1: Chapter 12 Quotes

☝☝ I must lie on the steps at the great gate of that house and make my petition. I must ask forgiveness of Psyche as well as of the god. I had dared to scold her (dared, what was worse, to try to comfort her as a child) but all the time she was far above me; herself now hardly mortal.... if what I saw was real. I was in great fear. Perhaps it was not real.... Then as I rose... the whole thing was vanished.

Related Characters: Orual (The Queen) (speaker), The god of the Grey Mountain (the Brute/the Shadowbrute), Psyche (Istral)

Related Themes:   

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 133

Explanation and Analysis

In the brief moments of the early morning during which Orual actually sees Psyche's palace, she perceives all of her mistakes and repents. She understands that Psyche is no longer under her power, but in fact is far superior to her in every respect. In effect, Orual realizes that she has offended the gods for no reason and she must make amends. However, even as Orual understands all of this, she also doubts her own perception of reality. In contrast to Psyche's immediate faith when shown a glimpse of the god West-wind, Orual isn't sure that she can trust her vision of the palace any more than she could trust its invisibility earlier. It could be a trick of the gods, or it could be her own mind fooling her. Her concerns become even more pressing when the palace vanishes.

The rest of the story actually hinges on this moment, as Orual manages to convince herself that the palace was only an illusion. Deep down, she knows it was real, but it works to her advantage to deny its existence and insist that Psyche isn't really living with a god. Though Orual complains that the gods don't speak clearly to humans, this moment shows that even when the gods do speak, the real problem lies in humans' faulty listening skills.

☝☝ I perceived now that there is a love deeper than theirs who seek only the happiness of their beloved. Would a father see his daughter happy as a whore? Would a woman see her lover happy as a coward? My hand went back to the sword. "She shall not," I thought.... However things might go, whatever the price, by her death or mine or a thousand deaths... Psyche should not—least of all, contentedly—make sport for a demon.

Related Characters: Orual (The Queen) (speaker), The god of the Grey Mountain (the Brute/the Shadowbrute), Psyche (Istral)

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 138

Explanation and Analysis

On the trip home from the valley, Bardia tells Orual that he believes Psyche is sleeping with a monster, and Orual tries to decide what to do about it. She knows that Psyche is happy in her current situation, no matter how much Orual may hate it. She doesn't often examine her way of loving, and when she does now, she consciously chooses to love in

a destructive way, thinking this the best and truest way to love.

Essentially, Orual decides that she knows what is best for Psyche, and she has a responsibility to guide Psyche towards this path even if it reduces Psyche's happiness. In fact, her sense of responsibility is so strong that she would rather kill herself or Psyche than see Psyche remain in a situation that Orual finds dishonorable. Bardia's wife, Ansit, will later expose the faults in this way of thinking, insisting that those who love must allow their beloveds to live their lives as they wish. Love is not a contract of possession as Orual wants it to be. Orual's logic here begins to push her love towards hatred.

Part 1: Chapter 13 Quotes

☝ Then I did a thing which I think few have done. I spoke to the gods myself, alone, in such words as came to me, not in a temple, and without a sacrifice. I stretched myself face downward on the floor and called upon them with my whole heart. I took back every word I had said against them. I promised anything they might ask of me, if only they would send me a sign. They gave me none. When I began there was red firelight in the room and rain on the roof; when I rose up again the fire had sunk a little lower, and the rain drummed on as before.

Related Characters: Orual (The Queen) (speaker)

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 150

Explanation and Analysis

After Orual's visit to Psyche in the valley, she struggles to figure out what she should do about the situation, since she doesn't know whether Psyche's story is the truth, or whether Psyche is being deceived. Bardia and the Fox both have opinions, but Orual doesn't know which to believe, so she asks the gods directly for guidance.

Orual's decision to speak to the gods herself, rather than through a priest or sacred rituals, is reminiscent of certain Protestant religions that encourage their followers to interpret God's word for themselves rather than having to rely on clergy for interaction with God.

This is a rare moment in which Orual turns to the gods in trust and faith rather than raging against their unfairness and cruelty. However, neither approach gets her any closer to getting divine guidance. She blames them for refusing to speak to her and letting her blunder into an unwise course

of action; she doesn't recognize, though, that even if the gods did speak to her, she wouldn't accept their words, because she can't yet face the truth of her own motivations and character.

Part 1: Chapter 14 Quotes

☝ You are indeed teaching me about kinds of love I did not know. It is like looking into a deep pit. I am not sure whether I like your kind better than hatred. Oh, Orual—to take my love for you, because you know it goes down to my very roots and cannot be diminished by any other newer love, and then to make of it a tool, a weapon, a thing of policy and mastery, an instrument of torture—I begin to think I never knew you. Whatever comes after, something that was between us dies here.

Related Characters: Psyche (Istral) (speaker), Orual (The Queen)

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 165

Explanation and Analysis

When Orual is trying to convince Psyche to look at her lover's face when he comes to her that night, Orual stabs herself in the arm to show that she feels desperate enough to kill both herself and Psyche if Psyche doesn't obey. Up until now, Psyche has mostly tried to be understanding of Orual's position, but at this point she can no longer deny that Orual does wrong.

Psyche recognizes that Orual's way of loving verges on hatred. Orual is abusing Psyche, but she can't fool Psyche into thinking that she owes Orual this act against her husband. Psyche sees that Orual is using Psyche's love for Orual to coerce Psyche into doing her bidding, since Psyche obviously doesn't want Orual to kill herself. Orual doesn't see anything wrong in this, as she believes that the outcome will be for Psyche's own good. In fact, she thinks that she's committing an act of love herself. Not until much later will she realize that for love to be true, it cannot be used to control the beloved's life.

Part 1: Chapter 15 Quotes

☞ He made it to be as if, from the beginning, I had known that Psyche's lover was a god, and as if all my doubtings, fears, guessings, debatings, questionings of Bardia, questionings of the Fox, all the rummage and business of it, had been trumped-up foolery, dust blown in my own eyes by myself. You, who read my book, judge. Was it so?

Related Characters: Orual (The Queen) (speaker), Bardia, Psyche (Istral), The god of the Grey Mountain (the Brute/the Shadowbrute)

Related Themes:    

Page Number: 173

Explanation and Analysis

When Psyche looks at her lover's face, he destroys the valley and appears to Orual. He seems to know everything about her, and he makes it seem that she knew the truth all along and willfully denied it. As Orual is writing her complaint against the gods, the god's apparent changing of the past forms one of her accusations of wrongdoing. At the same time, the fact that she asks for the reader's judgment should make the reader really consider this question. Although she seems to expect the reader to side with her, once the god raises the question, one can see the truth in his interpretation of events.

Orual never wanted Psyche's lover to be a god, because she didn't want to give Psyche up to anyone else, much less to someone so clearly superior to Orual herself and someone who is likely, in Orual's eyes, to take up all of Psyche's love and leave Orual nothing. But Psyche would never lie to Orual, and she seemed perfectly sane. Furthermore, Orual did see the palace for a moment. This evidence probably made Orual know the truth on some level, but she made the situation seem much more complicated in her own mind so that she could find reasons to tear Psyche from her lover and have her all to herself again.

Here, the god causes Orual to come close to self-understanding, but she's so deep in denial that even when he describes her character to her, she cannot recognize the truth of the portrait. Later, Orual will realize that this is exactly why the gods don't speak to humans—even when they do, humans can't listen properly until they can see themselves truly.

Part 1: Chapter 18 Quotes

☞ “Fool!” I said to myself. “Have you not yet learned that you are that to no one? What are you to Bardia? ...His heart lies at home with his wife and her brats. If you mattered to him he'd never have let you fight. What are you to the Fox? His heart was always in the Greeklands. You were, maybe, the solace of his captivity. They say a prisoner will tame a rat. He comes to love the rat—after a fashion. But throw the door open, strike off his fetters, and how much'll he care for the rat then?”

Related Characters: Orual (The Queen) (speaker), Ansit, The Fox, Bardia

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 209

Explanation and Analysis

When Orual becomes the Queen, she frees the Fox from slavery. When she realizes that he's considering going home to the Greeklands, she feels betrayed. She can't imagine her life without the Fox, and she thought that the same was true for him.

To Orual, the fact that the Fox would consider leaving her for his homeland proves that he doesn't love her as completely as she thought. She hates that everyone could live just fine without her, as she knows she couldn't live without them. She can't understand that the Fox can love her and also have people and places he loves elsewhere. She loves him possessively, thinking that her love gives her the right to keep him from leaving. Later, she'll realize that if she loved him truly, she would have forced him to leave and seek what he was missing rather than using her love to guilt him into staying.

Furthermore, Orual thinks that if Bardia really loved her, he would have prevented her from dueling Argan, because he wouldn't have wanted to see her put in danger. To her, love means doing whatever it takes to keep the beloved at one's side, even if it doesn't make the beloved happy. In truth, Bardia supported Orual's decision to fight because he respected her abilities and knew that the duel would do her good as Queen. He allowed her to live her life as she wished, which is a much more genuine form of love than Orual's form of love.

Part 1: Chapter 20 Quotes

☞ I must now pass quickly over many years... during which the Queen of Glome had more and more a part in me and Orual had less and less. I locked Orual up or laid her asleep as best I could somewhere deep down inside me; she lay curled there. It was like being with child, but reversed; the thing I carried in me grew slowly smaller and less alive.

Related Characters: Orual (The Queen) (speaker), Psyche (Istral)

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 226

Explanation and Analysis

After Psyche's exile, Orual becomes the Queen and finds that the work of running a country beneficially distracts her from her grief at the loss of her sister. She also finds that she can become someone new as Queen and thus completely bury the old Orual, whom she thinks of as being weak and full of pain. Though she doesn't acknowledge it, the old Orual is also wracked with guilt at the role she played in ruining Psyche's life. In burying Orual inside the more noble and stoic role of the Queen, she can also deny her guilt and avoid examining the awful deeds she has committed in the name of love. Though the gods will eventually force Orual to recognize what she has done and who she really is, making herself into an entirely new person allows her to delay this painful process.

Orual likens the process of repressing her old self to a sort of inverse pregnancy. As she becomes more the Queen and less Orual, she also taps into conventionally masculine aspects of herself. She kills a man in a duel to affirm her reign and, by veiling her face, denies everyone the ability to judge her based on her appearance, which is how women are typically judged. She even feels that Bardia and the Fox work better with her because they treat her like a fellow man. It seems, then, that in exercising her masculinity, she also represses her femininity, particularly her ability to feel emotion. In trying to kill the more feminine Orual, the Queen performs the opposite of the process that is seen as the ultimate feminine one—pregnancy. Her femininity withers, and instead of growing a life, she shrinks one to nothingness.

☞ My second strength lay in my veil.... [A]s years passed and there were fewer in the city... who remembered my face, the wildest stories got about as to what that veil hid.... Some said... that it was frightful beyond endurance; a pig's, bear's, cat's or elephant's face. The best story was that I had no face at all; if you stripped off my veil you'd find emptiness. But another sort... said that I wore a veil because I was of a beauty so dazzling that if I let it be seen all men in the world would run mad; or else that Ungit was jealous of my beauty and had promised to blast me if I went bareface. The upshot of all this nonsense was that I became something very mysterious and awful.

Related Characters: Orual (The Queen) (speaker)

Related Themes:   

Related Symbols:   

Page Number: 228-29

Explanation and Analysis

Orual is discussing how her reign as Queen proceeds after she kills Argan and becomes a powerful ruler. She has begun to cover her face with a veil at all times ever since Psyche went into exile, and she finds that the veil makes her particularly mysterious, giving her a certain authority over her subjects. Before, she was simply ugly. Now the absence of certainty as to her appearance means that anything at all could be behind her veil. Even if she's still ugly, her ugliness has become mythic, giving her power in what used to be her weakness.

With her veil, the Queen puts to her own use the mysterious quality of the gods that has always so frustrated her. Ungit, particularly, has no face, as she is only an uncut rock. As a result, her followers can see her face in everything and see any face in the crevices of the rock that represents Ungit. She is not confined to being one thing. The Queen's veil gives her a similar power and suggests that she's already becoming Ungit even before she comes to truly believe that she is Ungit. However, the veil also allows comparisons between the Queen and Psyche, as some people say that the veil hides a beauty that makes the gods jealous, like Psyche's. Near the end of the novel, Orual will see that she has in part become Ungit, but has also been living Psyche's life alongside her and taking on her pain. The Queen's veil makes her into a blank slate on which her links to both Ungit and Psyche can begin to make themselves known.

☞ But the change of my quarters, and later changes (for I tried every side of the house) did no good. I discovered that there was no part of the palace from which the swinging of those chains could not be heard; at night, I mean, when the silence grows deep. It is a thing no one would have found out who was not always afraid of hearing one sound; and at the same time (that was Orual, Orual refusing to die) terribly afraid of not hearing it if for once—if possibly, at last, after ten thousand mockeries—it should be real, if Psyche had come back.

Related Characters: Orual (The Queen) (speaker), Psyche (Istral)

Related Themes:  

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 229

Explanation and Analysis

When Orual becomes Queen, she begins to be haunted by the sound of a girl crying outside, which she rationally knows is only the sound of chains creaking in the well. Part of her always hopes that it really is Psyche, returned from exile. Though she tries sleeping in all different parts of the palace, she can always hear the sound of the chains. The fact that she can't escape it suggests that the sound really comes from within her, representing the guilt that she feels at having caused Psyche's exile.

The Queen feels frightened of the sound because it forces her to consider parts of herself that she doesn't want to acknowledge—particularly her own ability to cause such harm to someone she loves. The sound also prevents her from completely killing her old self, Orual, and becoming entirely the Queen. Orual still fiercely loves Psyche and feels the pain of her loss, so as long as the sound of Psyche's crying tortures the Queen, Orual lives on within her and she must deal with the faults of her true character.

Part 1: Chapter 21 Quotes

☞ For if the true story had been like their story, no riddle would have been set me; there would have been no guessing and no guessing wrong. More than that, it's a story belonging to a different world, a world in which the gods show themselves clearly and don't torment men with glimpses, nor unveil to one what they hide from another, nor ask you to believe what contradicts your eyes and ears and nose and tongue and fingers.

Related Characters: Orual (The Queen) (speaker), Daaran, The priest of Istra

Related Themes:   

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 243-44

Explanation and Analysis

When the Queen comes upon a temple to the goddess Istra, the priest there tells her a story that almost exactly parallels her own life, with a few essential changes that anger her. In particular, Istra's sister in the story is able to see the god's palace, so when she forces Istra to betray her lover, it comes entirely from jealousy. Orual has always justified her actions with the fact that she couldn't be sure whether Psyche's story was true or whether she was under a delusion, so she objects to the priest's interpretation that Psyche's exile was due to Orual's desire to make her sister miserable.

The Queen believes that the gods have started this false version of the story to spite her. In this version, her main complaint against them, that they refuse to guide humans clearly, doesn't hold. In the story, all of the gods' mysteries that so frustrate Orual vanish. Her sense of injustice at their twisting of the truth leads her to write down her own version of the story. However, it eventually becomes clear to her that the priest's tale has a lot more truth in it than she wants to admit, as she denied what she saw in order to convince herself of a reality in which her actions were acceptable.

Part 2: Chapter 1 Quotes

☞ And so take away from him his work, which was his life... and all his glory and his great deeds? Make a child and a dotard of him? Keep him to myself at that cost? Make him so mine that he was no longer his? ...He was to live the life he thought best and fittest for a great man—not that which would most pleasure me.

Related Characters: Ansit (speaker), Orual (The Queen), Bardia

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 264

Explanation and Analysis

When Bardia dies, the Queen goes to visit his widow, Ansit.

Ansit accuses the Queen of working Bardia to death, and the Queen doesn't understand why Ansit wouldn't have told her earlier, before it was too late. Ansit explains that she had to allow Bardia to do what gave him happiness and fulfillment, even though it took him away from her.

Ansit exhibits the pure form of love that Orual cannot understand or practice. While Orual thinks love entitles her to possess and control her beloved, Ansit argues that love must allow the beloved to retain his independence. True love requires sacrifice and pain from the lover and true love aims at all times for the happiness of the beloved. Orual's way of loving reduces her beloveds to objects that she jealously guards, while Ansit's love supports Bardia in becoming more himself than he could be without her. Ansit recognizes that possessive love only makes bitterness grow between the lovers, since they cannot pursue their own desires outside of their desires within the relationship. Orual has done to Psyche exactly what Ansit has refused to do to Bardia, and it has ruined both of their lives.

☛ Oh, Queen Orual, I begin to think you know nothing of love.... Perhaps you who spring from the gods love like the gods. Like the Shadowbrute. They say the loving and the devouring are all one, don't they? ...You're full fed. Gorged with other men's lives, women's too: Bardia's, mine, the Fox's, your sister's—both your sisters'

Related Characters: Ansit (speaker), Redival, Psyche (Istral), The Fox, Bardia, The god of the Grey Mountain (the Brute/the Shadowbrute), Orual (The Queen)

Related Themes:   

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 264-65

Explanation and Analysis

When the Queen is visiting Ansit after Bardia's death, Ansit accuses her of devouring the lives of everyone she's ever loved. She speculates that, since the royal family is supposed to have divine blood, the Queen loves in a similar way to the gods. In the Great Offering in which Psyche was sacrificed, the Priest of Ungit said that the Shadowbrute would both lie with and devour Psyche, and now Ansit likens Orual's love to that of the Shadowbrute.

The Shadowbrute is linked to Ungit, who is also associated with this devouring love. Later, the Queen will see herself as Ungit due to the similar way of loving that Ansit perceives

here—in this circumstance, the Queen will also wonder if people might see her as the Shadowbrute, which confirms the truth of Ansit's accusation. Ansit forces Orual to see a part of herself that she has long denied. Orual defines herself by her love for others, so she doesn't want to acknowledge that her possessive love destroys the lives of those she loves. However, this is the essential self-realization that she must come to accept in order to fulfill the god's prophecy and become purified.

Part 2: Chapter 2 Quotes

☛☛ “Do not do it,” said the god. “You cannot escape Ungit by going to the deadlands, for she is there also. Die before you die. There is no chance after.”

“Lord, I am Ungit.”

But there was no answer.

Related Characters: The god of the Grey Mountain (the Brute/the Shadowbrute) (speaker), Orual (The Queen)

Related Themes:  

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 279

Explanation and Analysis

After the King comes to Orual in a dream and forces her to see that she has become Ungit, Orual goes to the river, intending to commit suicide to rid herself of the goddess she hates—or, more accurately, to rid herself of the part of herself that she has been forced to recognize and cannot stand. However, a god appears and tells Orual that she can't rid herself of Ungit through death. This truth suggests that Ungit makes up an integral part of all humans, but Orual especially, and that part of Orual will still exist within her even if she dies. Instead, Orual must first rid consciously herself of that cruel part of herself in order to be purified in death.

Orual doesn't yet understand all of this, and so she thinks that since she actually is Ungit, she won't be able to separate Ungit from herself. In fact, Orual does have an existence outside of Ungit, just as Ungit lives through all humans and does not depend solely on Orual for her existence. The gods flow through humans and through each other.

Additionally, Orual will later see that Psyche, too, came to

the river to kill herself. When she sees this happening, Orual says, “Do not do it,” just as the god says to her here. Since Orual and Psyche share the burden of the tasks Psyche must complete as the gods’ punishment, it seems possible that they flow through each other just as Ungit flows through Orual. Thus, the voice of the god telling Orual not to jump may also be Orual’s own voice as she tells Psyche not to jump. Though this may not make logical sense, the gods’ constant mysteries make it possible.

Part 2: Chapter 3 Quotes

☞ But to steal her love from me! ...Do you think that we mortals will find you gods easier to bear if you’re beautiful? I tell you that if that’s true we’ll find you a thousand times worse. For then (I know what beauty does) you’ll lure and entice. You’ll leave us nothing; nothing that’s worth our keeping or your taking. Those we love best—whatever’s most worth loving—those are the very ones you’ll pick out.... It would be far better for us if you were foul and ravening. We’d rather you drank their blood than stole their hearts. We’d rather they were ours and dead than yours and made immortal.

Related Characters: Orual (The Queen) (speaker), Psyche (Istral)

Related Themes:     

Page Number: 291

Explanation and Analysis

When Orual comes in a vision to the divine court in the mountains, she reads her complaint against the gods before a judge. However, she finds that what she reads isn’t what she wrote; in fact, she reads the truth of her motivations that she has concealed from herself for her entire life.

Orual’s speech here explains her jealousy and resentment of the gods when they took Psyche from her. She knows that as a mortal, she can hardly hope to compete with the gods for Psyche’s love. In fact, the more beautiful the gods are, the more mortals will hate them. Orual can’t stand the fact that Psyche was happy to go to the gods and that she was happier with her divine lover than she was with Orual. Orual would rather have retained complete possession of Psyche than have Psyche become loyal to someone else, but the gods’ beauty made this entirely impossible.

This passage also seems to have echoes of Lewis’s own conversion to Christianity. He converted reluctantly, only when he could see no other truth. Here, he suggests that people resent their loved ones’ faith because God is far

better and more fulfilling than any human can ever be.

Part 2: Chapter 4 Quotes

☞ The complaint was the answer. To have heard myself making it was to be answered.... When the time comes to you at which you will be forced at last to utter the speech which has lain at the center of your soul for years, which you have, all that time, idiot-like, been saying over and over, you’ll not talk about the joy of words. I saw well why the gods do not speak to us openly, nor let us answer. Till that word can be dug out of us, why should they hear the babble that we think we mean? How can they meet us face to face till we have faces?

Related Characters: Orual (The Queen) (speaker)

Related Themes:   

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 294

Explanation and Analysis

Once Orual has read out the truth of her motivations in her conflict with Psyche and the gods, she realizes that she actually has no accusation to make against the gods, though she has long sought justice for the wrongs she believed they did to her. Instead, she sees that she is to blame for everything that happened.

Orual’s main complaint against the gods was that they refused to guide humans clearly towards right. However, seeing herself truly for the first time, she realizes that humans are at fault for the gods’ silence. Even if the gods did try to speak to mortals (as, in fact, they have tried to speak to Orual, giving her signs such as the vision of the palace), mortals wouldn’t accept what they had to say. The gods can see the essential truth of each person that people can’t even see in themselves, and there’s no reason that gods should try to speak to the false persona that humans wear in order to keep from acknowledging their own faults.

Throughout the book, faces represent people’s true characters. Orual now realizes that she has had no face until now; in other words, she has hidden her true character from herself. She has actually denied her face in a more physical way as well, by veiling herself. Now, her veil removed, she finally sees her own face and can meet the gods. Essentially, Lewis argues that in order to find God and faith and to allow divine wisdom to be a guide, a person must first understand who they truly are.

●● Each breath I drew let into me new terror, joy, overpowering sweetness. I was pierced through and through with the arrows of it. I was being unmade. I was no one. But that's little to say; rather, Psyche, herself was, in a manner, no one. I loved her as I would once have thought it impossible to love, would have died any death for her. And yet, it was not, not now, that she really counted. Or if she counted... it was for another's sake. The earth and stars and sun, all that was or will be, existed for his sake. And he was coming. The most dreadful, the most beautiful, the only dread and beauty there is, was coming.

Related Characters: Orual (The Queen) (speaker), Psyche (Istral)

Page Number: 307

Explanation and Analysis

Orual and Psyche finally meet in Psyche's palace when she returns from completing the tasks the gods have set her as punishment. Psyche has become a goddess, and Orual has recognized all her own faults. Then the god comes to judge her, apparently to decide whether she has purified herself of the influence of Ungit and can become like Psyche, just as he prophesied when he exiled Psyche.

Orual has always seen herself as the center of the universe, interpreting anything she didn't like as a human or a god showing their dislike or lack of appreciation for her. Now, in her more purified state, she can recognize that she is nothing in comparison to the god. In fact, even Psyche, whom she reveres as perfection itself, is nothing in comparison to the god. Furthermore, Orual finally loves Psyche in a way she never has, a way that does not try to possess Psyche but instead sees her as an independent and superior being.

This scene can be described as a theophany, meaning a moment in which a god appears to a mortal. The complete ecstasy of this theophany suggests that Lewis is bringing his story into a more Christian frame at the end. Though Glome exists in a polytheistic world (meaning that there are multiple gods), Christianity is a monotheistic religion, meaning that it teaches that only one true God exists. Here, Orual seems to anticipate the appearance of a single God around whom everything in the world centers. She calls him "the only dread and beauty there is," which suggests that no other god exists. She feels complete faith and love for him. Orual experiences conversion to a monotheistic faith.



SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

PART 1: CHAPTER 1

The narrator says that she is old and alone and does not fear what the gods can do to her. Her nephew is the heir to her throne. Since all is secure, she plans to write an accusation against the gods, telling the story of everything they have done to her. However, she expects no answer from them. She is writing in Greek so that someday a traveler from the “Greeklands” might bring the story to his people, who could have some insight into it.

The writer is Orual, the daughter of the King of Glome. The city of Glome lies on the river Shennit, and near the city is the temple of **Ungit**. Beyond the temple rises the Grey Mountain. The god of the Grey Mountain is the son of Ungit, and he hates Orual (so Orual says). Ungit, a goddess represented by a faceless black stone, lives in her temple. Orual’s old teacher, the Fox, told her that Ungit was the same goddess as the Greeks’ Aphrodite.

Orual begins her story with the day her mother died. According to custom, Orual’s nurse, Batta, cuts off Orual’s hair as well as her sister Redival’s. They are outside the palace, and slave women stand around, mourning the Queen and talking. They regret that Redival’s beautiful hair must be cut, but make no such remark about Orual’s. Orual likes the feel of her bare head as she and Redival play that afternoon.

The princesses’ nurse, Batta, is a rough slave woman. She warns that as soon as the King marries a stepmother for Orual and Redival, their lives will become much harder. One day, the girls are trying to slide on ice in the yard of the palace when Batta calls them inside to the King. She won’t tell them who’s come, but promises them lots of beatings and hard work in the future.

From the outset, Orual speaks bitterly of the gods, setting up a relationship of mutual dislike. She feels that she has nothing left to lose at this point in her life. Even though she doesn’t expect that the gods will answer her complaint, she seems to anticipate some sense of justice simply from the act of writing her story. Furthermore, she implies that she rules as queen in her land.



Orual’s description of Glome establishes it as a fantastical world with connections to ancient Greece. The Fox’s equation of Ungit with Aphrodite might lead readers to expect a beautiful, seductive goddess of love, but ironically, Ungit is nothing more than a chunk of uncut rock. The reader might also wonder what leads Orual to claim the hatred of a god in such certain terms.



The story begins with a sorrowful occasion, setting the tone for the rest of the book. Even as a young child, Orual feels the effects of her ugliness and notices that people treat her beautiful sister differently. However, she isn’t yet aware that she’s ugly or that she has reason to be sad; instead, she can take pleasure in the same physical change that marks her mourning.



Between the death of Orual’s mother and the cruel temperament of their nurse, it becomes clear that Orual and Redival’s childhood has not been particularly pleasant up to this point. Batta seems to take pleasure in imagining the girls’ potential pain, even though she has little reason to believe it will come.



In the King's Pillar Room, Orual finds traders just packing up. They've sold the King a slave, a red-haired Greek man. The King tells him that once he has a prince, this man will teach him, and in the meantime, he can practice his teaching on Orual and Redival. The King says that the man should make Orual wise, since she won't be good for anything else. Orual doesn't understand, but she's heard many similar things said about her.

Before long, Orual loves her teacher, known as the Fox, more than anyone else in her life. Considering that he was captured and sold as a slave, he stays far more cheerful than Orual expected. He keeps himself happy with wise sayings and curiosity, and he learns all about the land of Glome. Orual tells him about **Ungit** and the sacrifices that the people make to her, including human sacrifices in bad years. The Fox tells Orual that Ungit corresponds to Aphrodite.

The Fox tells a Greek story of Aphrodite. The goddess fell in love with the prince Anchises, a shepherd. As she approached him, animals came to Aphrodite and left in pairs to mate. She made herself appear like a mortal woman and seduced Anchises. When Anchises woke and saw Aphrodite in her true form, he asked her to kill him. The Fox assures Orual that the story isn't real, but even so, Orual perceives that the Greeks' Aphrodite is just as terrible as Glome's **Ungit**.

The Fox is ashamed that he loves poetry, thinking it foolishness, but Orual works hard at philosophy to get the Fox to teach her poetry. He likes her more than he likes Redival, who is unkind and not interested in studying.

The sisters and the Fox usually work behind some pear trees. One day the King finds them there and announces that there will soon be a prince for the Fox to teach. He congratulates the Fox on having the chance to influence such an important person and insults the Greeklings. The Fox suggests that people are equal across lands, but the King rejects this idea.

This initial view of the King confirms Orual's unpleasant family life and gives a good sense of his overall personality. He doesn't value Orual and Redival highly enough to educate them for their own benefit—the slave is really intended to teach the son that the King so confidently anticipates despite the fact that he isn't even married at the moment. Furthermore, the King never hesitates to insult Orual's appearance.



The Fox acts as the loving family that Orual doesn't have. He also seems to understand something of the cruelty of love, as he recognizes human sacrifice as a necessary offering to both Ungit and Aphrodite. Since Orual's description of Ungit makes her seem a frightening goddess, her supposed similarity to Aphrodite may come as unexpected to readers who know Aphrodite only as the goddess of love.



The Fox's story illuminates the dangerous power of the gods, and of love. Aphrodite doesn't hesitate to trick Anchises for her own benefit. Furthermore, Anchises' reaction upon realizing what's happened is telling. He knows that humans often run into awful trouble when they get too involved with the affairs of the gods. He'd rather die immediately than suffer the consequences of sleeping with Aphrodite.



Poetry and philosophy come to represent an acceptance of the mysteries of religious life versus a stoic atheism that relies on the facts of nature. The Fox isn't inclined to teach Orual about emotions or anything similarly vague, which he will later regret.



At this point, all seems to be going well for the King. He's quite powerful and has no reason to accept any philosophy, such as the Fox's Greek Stoicism, that says other people are equal to him. The Fox's cosmopolitanism seems far too radical for barbaric Glome.



The King has become engaged to a princess of Caphad, a powerful kingdom. The fact that the king of Caphad seeks a marriage with a poor kingdom such as Glome shows that Caphad is in trouble, but the King ignores this. There are grand preparations for the wedding, including a new royal bed that is supposed to bring about male heirs. As the day approaches, animals are slaughtered and cooking begins.

The King decides that the Fox must teach Orual, Redival, and other noble girls to sing a Greek bridal hymn, even though none of them speak Greek. As they're learning, the King brings the Priest of Ungit to hear the song. Orual is frightened by the smell of the Priest, a holy smell of the bodily fluids involved in sacrifice. She associates the smell with **Ungit**. The Priest also wears an alarming bird's head mask on his chest. The Priest asks whether the girls will wear **veils**, and the King assures him that they will, particularly to hide Orual's **face**. Finally, Orual understands that she is ugly.

Orual worries that her stepmother will be particularly cruel to her because of her ugliness. When the wedding comes and she's singing the Greek hymn, she can only think of all the stories she's been told of evil stepmothers. The bride is small and veiled. When the wedding party enters the wedding chamber and the bride takes off the **veil**, Orual sees that the new queen is terrified. She realizes how frightening her father looks. The girls take off the new Queen's clothing and leave her in the bed.

PART 1: CHAPTER 2

The new Queen survives less than a year. She becomes pregnant, and the King is ecstatic, sacrificing to **Ungit** frequently. Once, Orual overhears the King tell his wife that her father has cheated him by not revealing that Caphad was doing poorly. The Queen is homesick and ill, but affectionate to the princesses in the way of a sister.

On the night the new Queen gives birth, superstition dictates that no one go to sleep. They sit in the great hall, the Priest of Ungit performing ceremonies around a fire. Orual is afraid, but the Fox tells her not to fear anything related to nature. She falls asleep, and when she wakes up, she hears women wailing. The King has left the hall, and there has been a sacrifice.

It begins to become evident that the King isn't a great ruler, since he ignores the warning signs of problems in order to satisfy his burning desire for a wife and a son. His need for a son seems almost obsessive, as he's willing to try anything to get one. This preoccupation undoubtedly influences Orual's sense of self-worth, since she's not good enough for her father.



Beginning with this description of the priest, Orual consistently uses the word "holy" to describe the disgusting smells, shadowy darkness, and frightening mysteries that she associates with the gods. As "holy" is usually seen as a positive word, her negative take on it represents the stark differences between Glome's barbaric religion and modern Christianity. Additionally, this scene marks the beginning of Orual's consciousness of her ugliness, which makes her feel she will never be loved.



As soon as Orual becomes aware of her ugliness, she begins to fear others' hatred of her as a result, showing that her appearance affects her deeply. Orual first sees the power of a veil here. As long as her stepmother is veiled, she seems forbidding, but Orual learns that the veil conceals only the woman's own terror. Furthermore, this wedding night can only leave Orual a negative impression of sexual relations, which might make her fear more for Psyche when she goes to the Mountain.



The Queen is an object of pity rather than a mother figure for Orual. The King makes no attempt to disguise the fact that he married her for the power advantages it would give him, and he's already disappointed in the results of the marriage.



Religion and reason conflict in the different reactions of the Priest and the Fox to the birth. While the Priest engages in mysterious rituals that frighten Orual, the Fox insists that birth is a natural and explainable process that need not induce fear. When Orual wakes up, the wailing and the sacrifice suggest that the Queen has died.



Orual has the wild idea to visit the new Queen. As the Fox tries to stop her, the King comes out of the Queen's chamber in a dangerous rage. He calls for wine, but the slave who brings it slips in blood from the sacrifice and drops the wine. The King immediately stabs and kills him.

The King tells the Priest of Ungit that he must repay what the King has sacrificed to **Ungit**, suggesting that he might instead kill the Priest and destroy Ungit's stone. The Priest warns that Ungit will punish the King's descendants. The King asks who killed the slave, and then suddenly screams about having only female children. He shakes Orual and throws her from him, then attacks the Fox, ordering him to go work in the mines.

The King throws everyone out of the hall. Orual begs the Fox to run away, but he says he's too old. Orual insists that she'll go with him and take the blame. The Fox says that the plan wouldn't work; instead, he must kill himself. Orual worries that those who commit suicide will be punished in the land of the dead, but the Fox assures her that there is no land of the dead. Orual thinks that some part of the Fox must believe in the gods, though, because he's shaking.

They then hear horses and see that messengers from the kingdom of Phars have arrived. The Fox is called to the palace, and when he and Orual go to the Pillar Room, it is crowded with strangers. The King sends Orual away. Although he sounds less angry, she is terrified for the Fox for the rest of the day. Batta shaves Orual's head along with Redival's and confirms that the new Queen has died. The baby, a girl, lives. Orual thinks of her cut hair as a sacrifice for the Fox's impending doom.

Later, the Fox comes to tell Orual that he won't be sent to the mines. He has just bargained well with the King of Phars, and Orual's father has decided he needs the Fox as an advisor, particularly because of his way with words.

The King names his baby daughter Istra. Orual knows that in Greek, the name is Psyche. There are babies all over the palace who belong to the slaves or are the King's illegitimate children. Although the King sometimes threatens to kill the children, he actually respects the male slaves who get women pregnant. Orual goes to see Psyche and finds her a beautiful, quiet baby. The Fox likens her to Helen of Troy.

The King has already been revealed as unkind, but this scene proves that anger can completely unhinge him. There is no justice in the slave's death. The King is violent and too self-centered to even consider the slave as a person.



The King's anger exposes his hatred and frustration with the world. His feeling of powerlessness over his lack of male children leads him to take power in the immediate situation in every way he can, demonstrating dominance over the Priest, Orual, and the Fox. He once again makes Orual seem entirely worthless. Additionally, the Priest speaks of Ungit as a vengeful goddess, which is how Orual sees her for the rest of her life.



Orual displays her true, selfless love of the Fox as well as her deep-seated fear of her father. Despite the Fox's rational teachings, she still fully believes in the religion she's grown up with. The fact that the Fox might actually believe in the gods despite his insistence to the contrary suggests that there's some primal human fear of the gods that can't entirely be wiped away by philosophy.



Many changes happen at the palace in quick succession. Orual experiences fear for the Fox at her father's hands (which echoes her later fear for Psyche). As she will with Psyche, she wants to experience some pain or loss to be in sympathy with the Fox as he's in danger, even though cutting her hair won't actually help him.



The Fox uses his wits to get himself out of danger and into a position of power in the palace that he will hold for the rest of his life. Orual sees the practical value of quick, reasoned thinking.



The King's attitude towards the children and the slaves in the palace demonstrates, once again, his cruelty and the value he places on masculinity. He doesn't seem to care much more about Psyche than about these slave children, and his threat to kill them foreshadows his later willingness to sacrifice Psyche. The Fox's comparison of her to Helen of Troy suggests future trouble, since Helen's beauty inspired the jealousy of the gods and caused the Trojan War.



Orual takes on the raising of Psyche, finding her a nurse and having both of them constantly in her chamber. The Fox warns her not to work herself too hard, but Orual doesn't see it as work. She is always laughing and gazing at Psyche. The Fox loves Psyche, too, and acts like a grandfather to her. Orual, Psyche, and the Fox are always together, and with the King's mind elsewhere, Redival stays away from the trio.

Psyche's beauty is natural and astonishing once an onlooker leaves her presence. She seems to be the ideal woman, and she makes everything around her beautiful. For a while, the world seems wonderful to Orual, and she devotes herself entirely to Psyche, wanting to love her in every possible way.

The King now completely trusts the Fox, who often brings Orual and Psyche to a hilltop where they can see all across Glome and the Grey Mountain. Psyche loves the Mountain and dreams of one day marrying a great king who will build her a **palace** on top. The Fox says she is more beautiful than Aphrodite, but Orual thinks that his words are bad luck, seeming to feel a coldness in the summer air. The Fox tells her that the divine nature is not jealous, but Orual is not comforted.

PART 1: CHAPTER 3

One night Batta hears Redival and Tarin, a guardsman, kissing beneath her window. She alerts the King, who surprises the couple and has Tarin made into a eunuch. The King blames Orual and the Fox for not keeping Redival out of trouble, and commands them to never let her out of their sight, saying that Orual's **face** will surely scare all men away. Forced to stay with Orual and the Fox, Redival grows irritable. She even gets angry with Psyche, and when she hits Psyche one day, Orual attacks Redival. Orual's happy time has ended.

The next year is a bad one for Glome. The harvest is poor and the King fails in his attempts to remarry. One day, Psyche and Redival wander off through the gardens while Orual and the Fox are studying philosophy. When they return, Redival mocks Psyche, calling her a goddess, and goads her into admitting that a woman asked Psyche to kiss her child because she believed that Psyche's beauty would make the baby beautiful. When Psyche kissed the baby, the woman made worshipful gestures.

Though Orual hasn't had a strong mother figure in her life, she becomes one to Psyche. She completely dedicates her life to Psyche, and she and the Fox become the loving family that Orual never had. Although Orual doesn't find out until later, Redival feels rejected by and jealous of Orual's attention.



Orual's description of Psyche's beauty as natural connects it to the Fox's philosophy of God as nature, rather than to Glome's conception of the gods as dark and strange. This is the happiest time of Orual's life, but already her love is rather obsessive.



Psyche's attraction to the Grey Mountain and desire for a palace there makes it seem that she fated to marry the god who lives there. Even when she and Orual are perfectly happy together, Psyche is already looking off towards this imagined future, away from Orual. Orual's fear of the gods intensifies, particularly in relation to their potential jealousy of Psyche. The seeds of Psyche's sacrifice are planted in this scene.



Orual hasn't been particularly fond of Redival for a while now, but this incident begins to truly turn them away from each other. Orual unwillingly becomes Redival's jailer, angering Redival and making her lash out against Psyche. In fact, Redival is jealous of Orual's love for Psyche, but Orual doesn't realize this. She demonstrates a quick turn to violence almost reminiscent of her father. Once again, the King cruelly tells Orual she's repulsive to men.



The beginning of a dark time for Glome coincides with the people beginning to worship Psyche as a goddess due to her beauty, suggesting the two could be connected. This incident again demonstrates Redival's dislike of Psyche, which may stem from her jealousy of both Psyche's beauty and Orual's love. Before Psyche was born, Redival was considered the beautiful one.



Orual discovers that Psyche has had similar encounters in the past, and she fears that the gods will be jealous. The Fox assures her that the sort of gods who could be jealous only exist in poets' imaginations. Redival makes jabs at Psyche and the Fox and ponders **Ungit's** opinion, then threatens to tell the Priest of Ungit what has happened. She commands Orual to give her a certain necklace, and Orual, frightened, doesn't hesitate to do so. Redival orders the Fox to use his great influence with the King to get her a husband.

The next year, there is a rebellion. Tarin's father allies himself with strong noblemen, and the King himself rides into battle against them. Many people are killed, and it weakens the King's position in Glome. There's also another bad harvest, and a fever spreads. The Fox falls ill and the King forces Orual to do the Fox's work. She finds she doesn't mind the work, and her father comes to respect her a bit more. Further, she discovers that Glome is in a bad state.

Psyche nurses the Fox back to health, getting angry if anyone tries to stop her. Gossip carries the story of her nursing to the people, and they begin to believe that she can cure the fever with her very touch. The people of the city come to the palace gate, demanding that Psyche come to heal them. When they begin to get violent, the King says she must go out to them, and she is willing.

Dressed in finery, Psyche goes out the palace gates, and the people fall silent and kneel in response to her beauty. They begin to say she is a goddess, and one woman says she is **Ungit**. For hours, Psyche walks through the crowd, touching everyone as they kiss her feet and the ground where she walks. As Psyche becomes pale, Orual worries she will die, but the King says the people will kill them if Psyche stops.

The next day, Psyche falls ill with the fever, talking in her delirium of her imagined **palace** on the Grey Mountain. When she recovers, she is even more beautiful, and more mature. Some of the townspeople die and some don't, but the people leave offerings for Psyche outside the palace. Orual worries that **Ungit** will be angry, but the Fox assures her that the Priest of Ungit is ill, too, and can't do anything.

In light of later events, the Fox seems quite naïve here, believing that nothing bad will come of Psyche being treated as a goddess. Redival is far more conscious of the possible backlash, but her jealousy makes her blackmail those who love Psyche (but not Psyche herself). She wants Orual and the Fox to provide her with things that reinforce her own beauty and ability to be loved, which Psyche makes her doubt.



Glome begins to encounter grave difficulties that will anger the people. Orual, however, finds she has a talent for affairs of state. This is in contrast to her father, who she can tell hasn't been managing the kingdom well at all. Her relationship with the King begins to shift. Even if he still dislikes her and she still fears him, they find a footing on which they can work together.



Psyche proves herself pure of heart in her determination to heal the Fox. News of her healing and knowledge of her beauty combine to give her divine powers in the eyes of the superstitious people. However, they're looking for practical results and demonstrate their willingness to resort to violence, even against their superiors.



This grand display of worship gives the gods more reason than ever for jealousy of Psyche, particularly since some people begin to think she might actually be Ungit. This proves that they imagine Ungit as beautiful and pure, despite Orual's later conception of her as grotesque and cruel—this contradiction that love has two faces. Additionally, this scene already associates Psyche-as-goddess with potentially fatal consequences.



Whether Psyche fell ill through divine intervention or not, the illness resulted directly from her time playing the goddess. Her fever dreams of the palace seem to be another consequence of her playing goddess, which foreshadows her sacrifice to the god of the Mountain. Though there's no proof that Psyche actually healed anyone, she continues to receive worship.



Redival suddenly begins going to the house of **Ungit** frequently to make offerings. Orual assumes she's praying for a husband and trying to get away from her family. She tells Redival not to speak to anyone, but Redival assures her that no one cares about her now that they've seen Psyche.

As people begin to consider Psyche a goddess, Redival reacts against it, instead becoming more dedicated to Ungit. Orual only cares about Redival as a potential danger to Psyche. Redival displays her bitterness at being completely ignored due to Psyche's superior beauty.



PART 1: CHAPTER 4

Orual has known little about the people until now. Their love of Psyche comforts her somewhat; even if **Ungit** might be angry, the Priest of Ungit would probably not attack Psyche through mortal means, because he would risk angering the people. But now that their demands have been met once, the people return to the palace gates, demanding corn. The King gives them some, but they associate his lack of sons with the lack of a harvest. The King has one of his guards shoot someone who speaks up, and the mob runs away. Even the palace has little food.

Orual's ignorance of the people shows how separate the social classes of Glome are. The people are suffering, and the King has little power, giving in to the people's demands to a certain extent and then exhibiting his violent personality. In truth, he's frightened of the mob. He knows how powerless he really is, and he hates being reminded of his failure to have a son. The general lack of fertility in the land connects to Ungit, who is essentially a fertility goddess.



The King decides he no longer needs Orual to help with affairs of state, and one day she finds Redival returning with Batta from visiting the house of **Ungit**. Redival makes fun of Psyche being regarded as a goddess and reveals that she saw her alone in the city. Orual replies that Psyche will come to no harm, as the people love her, but Batta says the fever has gotten worse. Now the people are saying Psyche spread it rather than cured it.

Redival and Batta, both of whom Orual already despises, bring the first news of Psyche's change in fortune. If the people ever seemed like they might have the power to perceive some essential truth about Psyche, their switch counteracts it. They're sure she has strong powers, but can't decide whether they're for good or evil.



Orual watches the city, waiting for Psyche to return, and the city begins to look like an enemy. When Psyche comes home, she pulls Orual to her chamber and asks why the people are calling her "the Accursed." She tells Orual that she went into the city to visit her old nurse, who she heard was stricken with the fever. Psyche thought perhaps her hands could cure her. When Orual tells her off, Psyche seems older than before. On her way back to the palace, she says, a boy spat at her. She heard men calling her the Accursed, and they threw stones at her. Psyche doesn't understand what she's done wrong.

The change in Psyche that began with the fever continues here. She isn't sure whether she really has divine powers, but she seems to think it's possible. However, she remains modest, using these powers only to help others. Orual begins to see that she can't control Psyche the way she did when Psyche was younger. Psyche has begun to make her own decisions, which Orual will fight for much of the book. Furthermore, the people have turned dangerous. Ungit can be both good and evil, and the people seem to see evil in Psyche where they previously saw good.



Orual is angry at the people and insists the King must know. Psyche soothes her, saying she looks like the King when she gets angry. Orual is hurt, but they have dinner together and are happy. Even now, the gods haven't taken Orual's memory of that night from her.

Psyche first perceives Orual's similarity to the King, which will haunt Orual for many years. Orual hates the King but has many of his worst personality traits within her.



As the days pass, the river dries up, animals die, and lions come to steal sheep. The King needs Orual's help again, for there are conflicts with the neighboring kingdoms. He alternates between hitting Orual and the Fox and begging for their help. Luckily, the fever leaves the palace.

The Priest of Ungit has had a long fight with the fever, but he recovers. A week later, he comes to the palace with a host of armed guards from the house of **Ungit**. Orual thinks there might be a fight, and almost hopes for it. The Priest has two temple girls with him, who wear wigs and have their **faces** painted. They accompany him into the palace, and the King bars the doors behind them. The Priest comes to the Pillar Room, where he has to catch his breath. The room smells of old age, oils, and Ungit—in other words, holy.

PART 1: CHAPTER 5

The King offers the Priest of Ungit wine, but he's under a vow not to eat or drink until he has delivered his message. The Priest reveals that he has met with representatives of the people in the house of **Ungit** to decide what they should say to the King. The King begins to show signs of anger. The Priest lists the people's complaints, including the King's own lack of sons. The King argues that Ungit should fix that problem, considering how many sacrifices he's made to her.

Orual feels afraid of the Priest of Ungit, who now says that **Ungit** only gets angry for a reason, and when she does, something must be done to satisfy her. The Priest has served three generations of kings. Once, the King of Essur overthrew Glome because a man had committed incest. When the man was punished, Essur was driven out. Another time, a woman cursed the god of the Mountain, bringing floods. When she was punished, the floods subsided. Now Ungit is angrier than ever, and the secret council has decided that they have to find the Accursed to make things right. This means human sacrifice.

The King offers to give them the next thief captured, but the Priest of Ungit specifies that they must find the Accursed to die in the Great Offering. He reveals that the Brute, a monster, has been seen, although the King hasn't heard this. The Priest mentions that he hears more than the King, and he has heard of humans taking the place of the gods. Orual immediately blames Redival. The King doesn't believe that the Brute is real, but the Priest says that a shepherd on the Grey Mountain saw him in the light of a torch he was using to attack a lion.

Glome's situation is only worsening, to a potentially unnatural degree. The King again demonstrates his uncontrollable temper that particularly flares when he feels powerless. This has the effect of estranging the exact people who are trying to help him.



The fact that the Priest has his own guards shows that power is very divided in Glome—Ungit and the palace, the two seats of power, could potentially battle each other. The temple girls seem to be prostitutes, adding to the sense of religious barbarism around Ungit and associating her with lust as well as love. The arrival of the Priest is undoubtedly foreboding, especially as he demonstrates the power of Ungit to take over a room with scent.



The Priest shows his power in the kingdom, and the King clearly takes the council that the Priest organized as an implicit threat to the crown. The King seems to view human-god interactions as market transactions. If he pays Ungit enough sacrifices, he expects a return on his investment. This attitude requires the King to think of himself as being on Ungit's level, not as a supplicant who can only hope for the goddess's mercy.



The Priest tells a history of the gods' direct interaction with the mortal world. In these cases, the gods act as a justice system—when a mortal does something wrong, the gods punish the person. However, the gods' justice is not really just, as they punish the entire kingdom for the sins of one person. This practice gives the society the responsibility of policing people's personal lives. The group punishment and demand for human sacrifice make Ungit—or at least the man supposedly speaking for her—seem barbaric.



This scene forces the reader to question in what type of fictional world Glome exists. Does this world include the supernatural (in which case the Priest could be telling the truth) or is the Priest mistaken or lying? The King's disbelief indicates that the supernatural isn't a normal element of everyday life. In any case, Orual's fears about Psyche are coming true, and she's sure that Redival has spoken to the Priest, even though anyone in Glome could have seen the worship of Psyche.



The Fox asks to speak and suggests that the shepherd simply saw the shadow of the lion. The Priest of Ungit brushes him off, replying that even if the Brute is a shadow, that doesn't make him any less dangerous. If he comes into the city, the people will revolt and kill those in the palace.

The King asks how to make the Great Offering. The Priest of Ungit explains that the victim is given to the Brute, who is either **Ungit** or Ungit's son, or both. The victim is brought up the Grey Mountain and bound to the Holy Tree. The victim must be perfect, because he or she becomes the Brute's spouse. The victim lies with the Brute, but is also devoured by him, perhaps at the same time. Thus, no average or lowly person can be the sacrifice.

The Fox asks to speak again and argues that the Priest of Ungit's words make no sense. The Priest is contradicting himself—the Accursed is supposed to be both the worst person and the best person. Orual doesn't believe the Fox will help in this situation. In his exasperation, he has forgotten to find the most effective argument. The Priest replies that Greek logic won't solve Glome's problems. He calls the Fox a coward for letting himself be captured in battle rather than dying, and says that the gods will never speak clearly enough for Greeks to understand. Knowledge of the gods is always murky and never logical.

The Fox seems hurt by the Priest of Ungit calling him a coward. Orual would like to kill the Priest and make the Fox king, but she can tell that the Priest's argument is succeeding. The King asks what the next step is. The Priest says he has cast the holy lots, and they told him the Accursed was not among the common people, nor among the Elders, nor among the nobles. The King begins to get angry, and when the Priest says the Accursed is in the palace, he cries treason and calls for Bardia, the captain of the guards.

The King orders Bardia to kill the temple guards waiting outside. Bardia is skeptical, and the Priest of Ungit tells the King that all of Glome is ready to fight, and even the palace guards won't fight **Ungit**. The King reminds Bardia of a time he saved Bardia in battle, but Bardia says that if the King and the gods are in conflict, he won't fight the gods. The King insults him and sends him away.

The Priest is entirely comfortable with the mysteries of the gods. He's sure that the Brute is real, and what form he takes is completely irrelevant. The Fox's logic slides off this type of blind faith in an argument.



The Priest continues to show his comfort with the ambiguous stories of the gods. Nothing in his account of the sacrifice is clear—who is the Brute, really? What actually happens to the victim? To the Priest, contradicting facts can exist simultaneously and be true despite their contradictions. This is the state of blindness in which the gods keep mortals, and against which Orual fights throughout Part I.



Orual perceives that the Fox's argument won't work against the Priest. To the Fox, logic orders the world; to the Priest, logic makes no difference when used against the gods' endless mysteries, mysteries that are, by definition, beyond logic. The Priest sees this logic/mystery distinction as also a distinction between Greece and Glome. Understanding the gods means opening oneself to contradiction and partial knowledge, which the Greeks will never do.



Orual's desire to kill the Priest shows her similarity to her father, who will soon threaten to do just this. It also shows her willingness to take drastic action to protect those she loves. The Priest has used a fortune-telling device to discover the Accursed, further bringing supernatural elements into the equation. The King begins to think that the entire story is just a plot to have him killed so the Priest can take power.



The King's temper gets the better of him, and he resorts to violence. This ends up making him look even weaker, since his intention to kill the Priest's guards fails with the Priest watching the entire exchange. Bardia shows his wise, contemplative nature and his healthy fear of the gods. This scene also demonstrates the people's respect of Ungit.



When Bardia leaves, the King takes out his dagger and puts it to the Priest of Ungit's ribs, threatening to kill him. Orual is impressed by the Priest's calm. Not moving, he tells the King that, even if the King kills him, the Great Offering will still have to be made, because he is speaking **Ungit's** will. In fact, he'll haunt the King in death. The Fox has taught Orual that the Priest only works for his own power in the kingdom, but now she sees that he truly believes his words, and Orual herself believes that Ungit is against them.

The King throws himself back to his chair. The Priest finally reveals that the lots said the King isn't the Accursed, and Orual is ashamed to see the King's relief. She thought he was fighting for Psyche, but, in fact, he has only been defending himself the whole time. The Priest proclaims that Psyche is the Accursed. The King pretends to be sad, but Orual can tell he doesn't mean it. Orual weeps and begs at his feet, but he throws her away from him. He screams at her for being an interfering woman, saying he has enough to deal with already. Orual can't move, but she hears the King and the Priest calmly planning how to keep Psyche prisoner until the sacrifice. Orual loses consciousness.

PART 1: CHAPTER 6

Orual wakes to the King and the Fox lifting her into a chair. The King is surprisingly gentle, and he tips wine into her mouth, telling her that, as a woman, she shouldn't have spoken against him. He seems ashamed, and Orual thinks him weak. He says that the sacrifice has to be made, and the Fox was just telling him that it's done even in the Greeklands. The Fox interjects that when a Greek king sacrificed his daughter, it brought murder and madness to his family.

Orual says the King must do something to stop the sacrifice, and he reveals that it will happen the next day. Orual almost faints again, feeling that everything would be fine if there were more time. The King asks what they would do if they were in his place. The Fox replies that he would try to delay the sacrifice however he could, and then offer the King of Phars the crown itself if he would save Psyche. He would lose his own life to save her. He suggests that they fight, since it would be better to die that way than sacrifice one's daughter.

The King says that his counselors are supposed to tell him how to strengthen his position as king, but the Fox has just told him to give up his kingship. The Fox replies that he forgot the King's own safety was the only thing that mattered. Orual knows it's his way of insulting the King, but the King doesn't notice.

This is a somewhat transformative moment for Orual. She's always been torn between her native religion and the Fox's logical teachings. Here, she can see the Priest's complete faith in Ungit, and it convinces her. The Priest's composure and confidence make a vivid contrast with the King's desperate anger, and it only adds to the sense of the King's powerlessness.



Orual always wants to sacrifice herself for those she loves, so the King's relief at his own salvation seems completely despicable to her. It's likely that he agrees more readily to give Psyche up because he initially thought he was the target. Orual's love will show itself in a variety of ways throughout the book, but her need to fight for Psyche here is one of the purest, most selfless incarnations of it.



Now that the King no longer has to prove his power to the Priest, he can afford to be gentle to Orual. She sees right through him, realizing how weak he is. He doesn't care about Psyche, and he's grasping at anything possible to justify his decision to let her be sacrificed. The Fox's story of the Greek king in a similar situation suggests that the future will likely hold only trouble for the royal family, but the King will see only what he wants to.



The Fox believes love and loyalty are far more important than power. He would rather lose everything than allow Psyche to be killed without a fight. The Priest has just insulted the Fox's bravery, but the Fox exhibits strength of character miles above anything the King has shown. Furthermore, the Fox feels the complete horror of a father essentially killing his daughter, to which the King seems immune.



The King once again proves that he only considers his own position of power, rather than morality or love. The Fox, always mild-mannered, can't keep from expressing his contempt for his master, who isn't even smart enough to notice.



Orual argues that it will shame their house if the King lets a girl die to save him, but he only threatens to beat her again. He says that Psyche is *his* girl, and he has the right to do with her as he likes. He thinks that Orual must have some hidden motive for defending Psyche, since there's no reason an ugly girl should defend a beautiful one. He says he deserves pity, but he has to sacrifice his daughter to save the kingdom—one person dying to save many.

Orual makes an argument that she believes will play to the King's concerns about his honor and masculinity, but instead he interprets his fatherhood as giving him complete possession of Psyche. He has a very petty view of women. He can't even imagine that Orual might love Psyche; since he only sees women as their outer appearances, he assumes women only see themselves as such, too, and so he imagines they are governed purely by jealousy.



Orual stands and asks that she be sacrificed in Psyche's place. The King then leads her to a huge **mirror** on the other side of the room. It's much clearer than any other mirror in the palace, but Orual has never looked in it. Now, the King forces her to look at herself. He says that **Ungit** demands the best, so she doesn't want Orual. He sends her away.

No matter what Orual does later, her willingness to die in Psyche's place does her love credit. The King seems to take pleasure in Orual's pain. He gives Psyche up because he doesn't care about her, but he refuses to even do Orual the honor of sacrificing her, because she's not even pretty enough to die.



Outside the Pillar Room, Orual finds the palace slaves gossiping and an animal sacrifice happening outside. It smells like holiness. She meets Redival, who is worried that they'll all be sacrificed. Orual swears that if she ever has the power, she'll kill Redival. Redival seeks comfort, but Orual leaves her. She blames Redival for spreading word about Psyche to the house of **Ungit**. Even if Redival is sorry now, Orual knows she won't be sad for long.

Despite Orual's hatred of the King, she acts just like him when she threatens to kill Redival. Redival also proves to be her father's daughter, as she fears that she'll be sacrificed along with Psyche. It's possible, however, that Redival feels her insignificance painfully and almost craves the love and beauty that would make her worthy of sacrifice along with her sister.



Orual is injured from the King's beatings, but she goes to the room where Psyche has been imprisoned. Bardia is guarding the door and says he can't let Orual in, even when she protests. Though his face is kind, Orual hates him in that moment. She goes to the King's chamber and takes a sword, which she brings back to Psyche's prison. She attacks Bardia, but she has never even held a sword before. He disarms her easily, and her helplessness makes her cry.

While the King becomes violent in his hatred and fear for himself, Orual's violence stems mostly from her love of Psyche. She loves and fears for Psyche to a point of complete desperation. Even though Bardia refuses to let Orual into the room, it's clear that he's a good man forced to obey cruel orders.



Bardia praises Orual's effort with the sword, expressing regret that she's not a man. She wishes he had killed her. Her weeping makes Bardia almost cry himself, and he decides to let her in, saying that he would die if it would save Psyche. Even though he's captain of the guard, he wouldn't let anyone else guard her door, in case he could comfort her somehow. He makes Orual promise to leave the room when he knocks on the door. She swears on his sword and enters.

Orual and Bardia are connected even in this initial interaction by their mutual desire to die for Psyche's sake. Bardia exhibits the unfailing loyalty that Orual will value all her life. Furthermore, their relationship begins with Bardia wishing Orual were a man, a sentiment that he'll repeat often and that she finds discouraging. She can never be enough as a woman due to her ugliness.



PART 1: CHAPTER 7

There is only one small, high window in the room where Psyche is held. She sits on a bed with a lamp, and Orual throws herself upon her. Psyche comforts Orual and worries about her injuries. This strikes Orual as painfully different from their usual relationship. Psyche knows what she's thinking and calls her "Maia," the name she called Orual when she was little. Orual says she wishes she could take Psyche's place. Psyche forces Orual to tell what the King did to her, though Orual says the King is nothing to them.

Psyche smiles and sits tall, frightening Orual. Psyche reminds her sister that the Fox always told them to pity the bad people around them who do not know good from bad. Orual doesn't want her to talk that way. Psyche wants her to promise not to kill herself, for the Fox's sake. Though Psyche feels the King is a stranger to her, she asks Orual to give him whatever message would be polite and proper. Orual urges her to curse Redival, but Psyche pities her instead, telling Orual to give her any of Psyche's jewelry that Orual doesn't care about.

Orual weeps in Psyche's lap, wishing Psyche would cry in hers instead. Psyche says that because they have divine blood, they must be brave. She admits that the only thing she fears is that there might be no god of the Mountain or Shadowbrute, and she might just die of exposure. This thought makes her cry, and Orual feels better being able to be miserable with her.

When Psyche calms down, she says that the Priest of Ungit has visited her. She wonders if the Fox's view of the world might be faulty. He calls the world a city, but Psyche wonders what must be outside the city, providing nourishment and danger. Orual says the gods are ruining their lives, but agrees that the Fox is wrong. He thinks that there aren't gods, or that they're superior to humans, but in fact they are real and horrible. Psyche suggests that the gods' actions might not be what they seem, and she wonders how she will marry a god.

Though Orual has acted as a parent to Psyche, their positions are reversed here; Psyche tries to make Orual feel safe, despite the fact that Psyche is the one about to die. Aware that Orual feels uncomfortable with the situation, Psyche calls her "Maia" to recall better times when Orual was the one making Psyche feel safe. Ironically, even this gesture reinforces their current, reversed positions.



Psyche isn't reacting at all in the way that Orual wanted or expected. Orual's pain and anger clash with Psyche's calm forgiveness, and Orual doesn't understand how Psyche can accept her fate so easily. Psyche seems to be above all human conflict, adding to the image of her as divinely good. Additionally, Psyche wants Orual to endure her lasting pain in order to help the Fox, a kind of selfless love that doesn't come easily to Orual.



Orual's love shows its selfishness when she's glad to see Psyche's pain. It comforts her to see that her sister isn't entirely fine with being sacrificed. Though Orual fears the gods above almost everything, Psyche fears their absence. She wants to have a divine encounter even if it results in her death.



Both Orual and Psyche are affected by the Priest's obvious faith in the gods. Though they've never completely accepted the Fox's atheist worldview, they doubt it even more in light of recent events. True to their natures, the princesses see the gods differently: Orual is convinced they're brutally antagonistic to humans, but Psyche believes the gods may have good motives for what they do. These differing views tell more about the women's approaches to the world than anything about the gods.



Even though Orual would die for Psyche, she feels angry with her for being so calm and seeming not to mind saying goodbye to Orual. Orual insists that Psyche is being murdered. As narrator, Orual recognizes that she should have encouraged Psyche to imagine she would wed a god, rather than be eaten by a Brute, but she can't help raising the worst possibilities. Psyche says she does realize she'll probably die, but being eaten and marrying the god might somehow be the same thing. There's so much unknown. Orual doesn't think marrying the Brute would be any better than being eaten by it. Psyche insists they shouldn't fear death, and there might even be an afterlife.

Desperately, Orual asks whether Psyche even cares that she's leaving Orual behind, and wonders if she ever loved her. Psyche insists that Orual and the Fox were the only people she's been able to love. Orual will follow Psyche into death soon enough, Psyche says; besides, even if Psyche could live, she would only have been married to a king, perhaps one like their father, and so dying and being married are, in fact, similar. Every change in life is like a death, and this might be the best way to go. The happiest time of her life is already over, she says.

Psyche admits, to Orual's dismay, that she has always almost wanted death. Orual thinks this means that she has not made Psyche happy, but Psyche insists that she wanted death most when she was most happy, looking at the Grey Mountain with Orual and the Fox. Everything seemed to be calling to her to go somewhere else, but she didn't know where. Orual feels that she has been losing Psyche for a long time. Psyche's perspective is comforting to her, but Orual doesn't quite want Psyche to be comforted. She admits this is a sin.

Psyche points out that she's going to the Mountain, where she always dreamed of a **palace**. The gods have chosen her for their sacrifice, and she has been preparing for it her whole life, longing to go to the Mountain and find the source of beauty. Although Orual calls her cruel for saying such things, Psyche says she feels like she's going home to her lover, the god of the Mountain. She asks Orual to wish her well, but instead Orual says that Psyche has never loved her, and she has become as cruel as the gods. Just as Psyche begins to cry, Bardia knocks. To spare the feelings of those who have had similar experiences, Orual does not write of their last embrace.

Orual wants to make Psyche see the situation as she does, foreshadowing the impending split in their views of Psyche's situation on the Mountain and Orual's determination to force Psyche to see things her way. Though Orual has come here to comfort Psyche, she instead finds herself trying to shock Psyche out of her comfort, which is not particularly kind. Psyche proves herself open to the mysteries and contradictions of the gods, while Orual refuses to consider them.



Orual sees Psyche's calm acceptance of her fate as proof that she doesn't love Orual enough to mind leaving her. However, Psyche seems to see her sacrifice as just another change in life, and if this change hadn't come, another would have, to the same essential effect. Whenever a change comes, the person one has been before the change dies, and another form lives on. Orual will long struggle to accept the loss of the old Psyche who metaphorically dies at this change.



Psyche feels that her true place in life is somewhere far from Glome, where she anticipates some great happiness. If every change in life is a small death of the former self, it seems that the greatest death would be to change from mortal to divine, which Psyche will eventually do. Thus, she here anticipates the great happiness that will come to her when she becomes a goddess on the Grey Mountain. Orual, on the other hand, wants to keep Psyche near her at any cost.



The sacrifice begins to seem fated for good, rather than evil. Psyche is almost eager for it, feeling it to be the culmination of all her desires. As the palace will come to represent the boundary between human and divine, Psyche's anticipation of it indicates she has always been close to the divine. Orual, however, cannot see beyond the bounds of her own pain. She thinks that since Psyche has some dreams that don't include her, Psyche must not love her at all. For Orual, love is all or nothing, and she thinks she has discovered that, with Psyche, it is nothing after all.



PART 1: CHAPTER 8

Outside Psyche's prison chamber, Orual begins to feel her injuries. She plans to go to the Mountain with Psyche and perhaps even set her free once everyone else leaves. If a Shadowbrute really does come, she'll kill it. She finds a slave who tells her that the sacrificial procession will leave the next morning before dawn. She goes to her room and orders food brought, but she can't eat when it comes. She drinks a little and is so tired she can hardly remember what's wrong. She falls into a deep sleep.

When Orual's servants wake her, she screams because all of her injuries have become stiff and painful. The servants tell her not to get up, particularly since the King has forbidden her to watch the sacrifice. When one woman asks if she should bring Batta, Orual almost hits her, but regrets it. The servants dress Orual and give her wine, and then they hear temple music outside.

At Orual's command, her women drag her painfully to the top of the staircase, where she can see into the great hall. It's packed with guards and nobles, and it seems many sacrifices have already been made to the gods. Outside, she hears singing and the noise of a large crowd. Orual struggles to see Psyche, but it's worse when she does. She's been made to look like a temple girl, with **face** paint and a wig. Her eyes look strange. Orual almost admires the gods' talent for torture; they make Psyche's father kill her, make Orual say goodbye over and over, and paint her until she looks ugly. Orual falls and is carried to her bed.

Orual lies sick and delirious for many days. The gods have the most power over humans in dreams, she says, and the best way to avoid the gods is to always focus on some kind of work and never to love. In Orual's hallucinations, she imagines that Psyche is her enemy, excluding her from children's games or stealing an imagined husband away from her on her wedding night. Other, vaguer dreams are more violent. When Orual begins to recover, the dreams stop but leave a sense that Psyche has done her wrong. Finally she remembers that Psyche never wanted to hurt her, although she does resent the fact that Psyche talked so much about other people in their last moments together.

Orual has hardly registered the fact that Psyche almost wants to go to the Mountain and experience whatever the sacrifice will entail. Orual believes she knows what is best for Psyche, and she'll take whatever drastic action is necessary to save her from her fate.



Orual's emotional pain also manifests itself as physical pain—both have been inflicted more or less by her father. Even as he hurts her like this, she acts like him when she almost hits her servant for no reason. As shown here, Orual's servants are good to her and seem to love her, though she hardly recognizes it.



If Psyche's natural beauty represents the beauty and purity of her way of loving, the costuming of the temple girls represents crude lust. Thus, making Psyche look like a temple girl not only mars the physical beauty that Orual so adores, but it also conceals Psyche's moral goodness and makes her into an object for the Brute to take as he likes. Orual takes this transformation as evidence that the gods ruin everything they touch.



Much of what Orual blames on the gods she will eventually realize is her own fault—it comes from a dark part of her that she refuses to acknowledge. These dreams, then, rather than being the gods' torture, expose truths about Orual's unconscious self that she doesn't want to see. After hearing Psyche speak so calmly of leaving Orual, Orual does see Psyche as a strange enemy who must be conquered and brought back under Orual's power. She's terribly jealous that Psyche can love or even think about anyone other than Orual.



Orual becomes aware of a pleasant sound and finds the Fox sitting next to her. He tells her the sound is rain. Orual's injuries have healed, but she is very weak, which she finds a comfort because it keeps her from feeling strong emotions. She's glad of the loving care of her women and the Fox, who tell her of changes in the kingdom. The drought has ended, the fever has left, and the animals are returning. Furthermore, the people now adore the King. When Psyche was sacrificed, he grieved very publicly but said he had to let it happen for the people's sake. The Fox insists that the King's emotion was genuine in the moment.

The King of Phars has named his third son, Argan, as his heir, which has angered the second son, Trunia. Trunia and his followers are rebelling, so Phars is in civil war and is no longer a threat to Glome. One day Orual asks the Fox whether he still believes that **Ungit** doesn't exist. Orual thinks the changes in Glome immediately after Psyche's sacrifice prove she does, but the Fox insists it was a coincidence. Orual reminds him he doesn't believe in coincidence, and he clarifies that he means everything in nature is connected and influenced by events that happened long before.

Orual says that if only the sacrifice had been delayed a few days, Glome's fortune would have changed on its own and Psyche wouldn't have died. The Fox finds comfort in the fact that Psyche went to her fate bravely, but he is still overcome with grief. The next day, he blames his emotions on finding philosophy too late in life. Psyche knew how to bear with grace the loss of what she loved, and she had all the virtues possible. He likens her to Iphigenia and Antigone, tragic Greek heroines. Orual knows the stories of these women well, but she asks the Fox to tell them again to comfort both of them.

The next day, Orual tells the Fox that it's too late for her to be Iphigenia, but she can still be Antigone, who buried her dead brother even when she was forbidden to. Orual intends to go to the Mountain and see if there's anything left of Psyche that she can burn or bury. The Fox approves of the idea, but says Orual must do it soon, before it snows.

PART 1: CHAPTER 9

Before long, Orual is well enough to be up and about, but she hides this from the King so that he won't make her do work for him. The King speaks as though he loved Psyche very much, and now he's left with the two daughters he hates.

The world has changed so much for Orual that even what wakes her—the rain—is the supposed result of Psyche's sacrifice. Everything that the Priest took as a sign of Ungit's anger has been remedied, and Glome's problems have come to an end—magically, it seems, because of the sacrifice. The Priest seems to have been right. No matter what the Fox says, the King comes across as a hypocrite, feeling love only when it suits him for his own powerful ends.



Even affairs outside of Glome have turned to their benefit since Psyche's sacrifice. The gods' influence seems obvious to Orual, but the Fox insists on maintaining his atheist viewpoint. He manages to reason away the situation using his Stoic philosophy, which teaches that the whole world is linked together like a spider web. According to him, the changes in Glome were already on their way before Psyche was sacrificed.



Orual takes the Fox's viewpoint to its logical conclusion—Psyche died for nothing at all. The Fox's Stoicism makes him believe that passionate emotions weaken logic and should be avoided, and yet they seem to be more powerful than logic in this situation. As the gods are associated with emotion, it seems that the Fox's logical atheism is shaken, no matter what he says. Like Psyche, Iphigenia is sacrificed to the gods by her father. In some versions of the story, Iphigenia does not actually die, which would be comforting to Orual.



Orual has lost her chance to die in her sister's place, but she can still follow Antigone's brave example by giving Psyche a proper burial. This goal means that Orual feels entirely sure Psyche has died. She ignores the possibility that Psyche has been married to the Brute, perhaps because this seems worse than death to her.



The King changes the past to soothe his own guilt, much as Orual herself will do to hide the destructiveness of her way of loving. Still, Orual receives only abuse from her father.



Orual plans for her journey to the Mountain. She doesn't know how to ride a horse, so she'll have to walk; and since she doesn't know the way, it'll take a long time. She'll have to spend a night on the Mountain. She puts the journey off because she doesn't know what she'll do afterwards. It seems that once she has dealt with Psyche's remains, the part of her life with Psyche in it will be entirely gone. She can anticipate only a dark, empty future.

One day, Orual sits in a doorway near the guards' quarters. Seeing a fly crawling up the door, she thinks her life is like the fly's mindless progress. Bardia appears and tells her that he, too, has felt the depression she feels. Only fighting in wars made him better. She proved she had a natural talent for fighting when she attacked him outside Psyche's door, and he offers to teach her how to use a sword. Orual doesn't see why she should learn unless he would kill her with the sword, but Bardia insists.

Bardia equips Orual with a shield and tells her to use it as a weapon. He gives her a sword and shows her how to hold it and how to stand. He teaches her for half an hour, and it's so difficult that she can't think about anything else. Bardia compliments her work. When the lesson is over, Orual goes across to the dairy to drink some milk. She overhears Bardia tell another guard that it's too bad Orual is ugly, but if a man were blind she would be a good wife. This is the closest Orual ever comes to having someone declare their love for her.

Orual takes lessons from Bardia every day, and it makes her feel better, although she still grieves. She tells him about her plan to go to the Mountain, and he offers to go in her place. When Orual insists she'll go, he offers to go with her to give guidance and protection. They'll ride one horse together. Orual worries that the King will keep him from going, but Bardia tells her that the King understands soldiers much better than he does women, of whom he's almost afraid.

Six days later, Orual and Bardia set off early in the morning. Only the Fox and Orual's servants know of their journey. Orual wears a sword at Bardia's insistence, and they share a horse. The city is quiet. They pass the house of **Ungit**, which is built with huge stones in an oval shape. No one knows how the stones got there. The roof is domed, so that the building looks like a slug. The shape is supposed to resemble the egg or womb that created the world, and in the spring, the Priest of Ungit ceremonially battles his way out of the temple to birth the new year.

Orual's life has been linked so closely to Psyche's that she can't fathom living without her. At the moment, even the prospect of giving Psyche's body its last rites seems like a sturdy connection to Psyche. Once Orual has done this, Psyche's absence will be complete. Orual feels deeply depressed.



Orual feels entirely lost and purposeless in her grief, and is even somewhat suicidal. Bardia will be the one to show her the benefits of hard work as a distraction from her mind, which she will make use of for the rest of her life. Neither Bardia nor Orual seems to see any obstacle to swordplay in the fact that Orual is a woman, though it's certainly not conventional for women to fight in Glome.



Psyche and the Fox are the only people who have truly been kind to Orual up until now, but at this point Bardia becomes another faithful friend. As kind as he may be, he's still affected by Orual's ugliness. The fact that Orual has never come closer to a declaration of love than Bardia's cold appraisal gives her reason for her clinging, jealous love. When love is so hard for her to find, she will closely guard any she receives.



Just as Orual and Bardia both wanted to be able to die in Psyche's place, now they both want to give her a proper burial, showing that their loyalty follows similar lines that will make them a close pair for life. Orual has long feared her father, and Bardia's insight is the first indication she has that he might actually fear her as well. This fear will become more apparent later.



The resemblance of Ungit's temple to an egg or a womb shows that she is first and foremost a fertility goddess. The fact that the Priest must fight his way out of this womb contradicts the conventional view of a womb as a safe place and suggests that Ungit jealously keeps her worshipers by her, so that they must fight to escape her clutches. This view will later resonate with Orual's own way of controlling those who love her.



Orual feels better once they pass the house of **Ungit**. She has never been this way before, and she sees dawn coming. They pass the road by which Psyche was taken, but they take a shorter way, riding up to a ridge. On top of the ridge, there is warm sunlight. The Mountain sits across a huge valley, looking hardly real. Orual can see all the way to the sea, and all is still.

Orual struggles because she feels inclined to be happy and must tell herself all the reasons she shouldn't be. The view makes her feel that she could wander the world, and the life around her makes the world seem much better than she thought it could be. She almost can't even believe she's ugly. As they continue on, she tells herself she can't feel this way as she's about to bury Psyche, because it makes it seem that she doesn't love her. She knows too much of the world's evil for the scenery to make her think it's beautiful. The gods always make humans think everything is wonderful before they send more pain.

When they reach the last ridge before the Mountain itself, it's very cold. A dark, forbidding valley lies below them, and the Mountain rises in towers of black stone. Orual no longer has to battle happiness. Bardia points out the Holy Tree. They descend into the valley on foot and climb towards the Tree. Orual fears that she won't find Psyche's remains. When they reach the Tree, they find chains hanging from it, but nothing else.

Bardia says that the god must have taken Psyche, because no animal would have been able to get her whole body out of the chains, and it would have left some remains. Orual feels that her journey was in vain, but suggests that they look around. Eventually Bardia calls her over to show her a ruby he's found, one that Psyche wore to her sacrifice.

Orual insists that they keep searching in this direction. Bardia wants her to stay behind because no one has ever been to the other side of this ridge, and they're very close to the dangerous, holy part of the Mountain. Orual wants Bardia to stay behind, since the gods can't hurt her more than they already have, but they agree to go together. Bardia goes back to get the horse, and they continue on carefully.

Orual thinks she can escape Ungit's power by leaving her physical territory, for she doesn't realize that Ungit's influence lies within herself. This journey takes Orual beyond where she has gone before, and she finds that the world is more beautiful than she thought.



Just as Orual couldn't accept Psyche's calm in the face of her death, she can't accept her own happiness while traveling to bury Psyche. Orual seems to think that her love—and thus, her grief—must completely consume her for it to be real. Allowing any positive emotion in will make her doubt her own devotion, and her devotion to Psyche is just about the only thing she can take pride in. She thinks everything must be black or white: She knows the world is awful, so there can be nothing good to find in it at all.



The Mountain seems to hold some dark power. Significantly, Orual is more frightened by the idea of not finding Psyche's bones than of finding them, though their absence could indicate that Psyche is still alive. Orual would rather be able to reestablish control of Psyche's body than not know what has happened to her.



Bardia believes they have found proof that Psyche has undergone some interaction with the gods, but Orual feels only her own sense of misdirection, rather than any wonder at what Psyche might have experienced.



Though Orual and Bardia have different attitudes towards the gods, they agree that the gods are dangerous to humans, and holy places should be avoided if at all possible. Additionally, Orual and Bardia show themselves to be on equal footing in terms of heroism, as each tries to protect the other. This will be a trend throughout their relationship.



They find themselves at the top of a steep slope leading into a gorgeous, green valley. As they descend, it gets warm. Bardia wonders if this is the god's valley. At the bottom, Orual is about to drink from a stream when she hears two people cry out and looks up to see Psyche standing on the other side.

This valley, apparently divine, contrasts deeply with the barren landscape of the valley they have just come through, which seems to lie on the edge of mortal territory. The difference is one between the ignorance and blindness of humans and the life-giving power of the gods.



PART 1: CHAPTER 10

Orual laughs and cries with joy until Bardia warns her that it could be Psyche's ghost, but then he exclaims that she is a goddess. Orual feels no fear of Psyche. Psyche is dressed in rags but seems healthy and happy. She says she has longed for Orual to come. She can't let Bardia cross the stream, but he doesn't want to anyway, as he's afraid. Psyche shows Orual where she can cross. When Psyche gives Orual her hand to help her onto the bank, Orual thinks how strong Psyche is.

The stream seems to be the final barrier between the human world and that of the gods. Furthermore, there seems to be some power that Psyche must obey, since she isn't allowed to have Bardia cross the water. The contrast between Psyche's rags and her cheerful demeanor might be read as the first sign that Orual cannot see the divine world truly.



For a minute the sisters are in a confusion of happiness. They sit down together, and, seeing that Orual is short of breath, Psyche brings her some berries in a leaf and spring water in her hands. She speaks of these refreshments as a banquet and wine. Orual asks how Psyche has been surviving and what they'll do now. Psyche says they should just be happy, and Orual admits that she could almost forgive the gods and Redival. Psyche says all of their fears are over and offers to tell her story.

At this point, Psyche's grand way of speaking about the berries and the water doesn't induce any confusion, as she simply seems to be pretending in order to emphasize the loveliness of their surroundings and their joy at being reunited. However, it will later become clear that Psyche actually sees Orual eating from a banquet and drinking wine.



When Psyche was taken from the palace, she was in a foggy state of mind due to a drug she had been made to drink. The paint on her **face** was stiff, so she hardly felt it was her own face, or herself being sacrificed. She saw Orual, but couldn't wave. It all felt like a dream, and in a way, it was. She felt nothing as she was carried on the litter above the crowd. She slowly became more alert on the journey, but when she tried to tell the people they were making a mistake, she couldn't speak clearly. The Priest of Ungit ordered that she be given more of the drug.

The use of a drug to keep Psyche sedated during the ceremony of her sacrifice adds to the sense of deception that Orual feels surrounds Ungit. Furthermore, it confirms Orual's impression that Psyche wasn't herself when she was sacrificed. The Priest made her into a symbol and an object rather than allowing the people to see her as the beautiful, kind woman she is.



The next thing she knew, she was being chained to the Tree. She saw the King lamenting her fate, and it seemed that he saw her for the first time. She just wanted everyone to go away so that she could cry, for she was now very frightened, but she wanted to be brave. Orual interrupts to beg that she hurry so they can plan for the future and get to safety, but Psyche insists that they are safe, and she is home.

The Fox told Orual that the King genuinely felt sorrow at the moment of Psyche's sacrifice, and Psyche seems to back up this observation, suggesting that the King may not have realized the true significance of the sacrifice until it was too late to turn back. Psyche's insistence that she's home reinforces the sense that all is not as it seems to Orual.



When everyone finally left Psyche at the Tree, all was still and she was thirsty. She realized that she couldn't sit down, and she began to cry. She prayed that something would happen soon. A while later, cattle came and gathered around her, and then a lynx sniffed around her and put its forepaws on her before leaving. She tried to cheer herself up with her fantasy of a **palace** on the Mountain, but she couldn't believe it at all. Orual is glad Psyche let this go, because it made her seem strange and distant.

The only thing that comforted Psyche was a vague thought of the Fox's philosophy about the divine mixed with the Priest of Ungit's words about sacrifice. It came from deep inside her. Suddenly the weather changed. It got cloudy and the wind picked up, and she knew it was going to rain. She then knew that the gods existed, and her sacrifice was making it rain. The wind became wild, and as she felt that it was lifting her, she saw the god of the wind, West-wind.

Psyche assures Orual that she was awake. West-wind was in a human shape, but as different from a person as a healthy person is from a leper. Orual doesn't understand, but Psyche assures her that she'll see the gods for herself. When she saw West-wind, she was ashamed of her human shape, even though she couldn't help being who she was. West-wind pulled Psyche out of the chains without hurting her and carried her into the air. She only saw him for a moment before he became invisible again, but she wasn't afraid.

Orual thinks it all must have been a dream, but Psyche insists that everything *before* the sacrifice feels more like a dream now. When West-wind set her down and she got her bearings, she saw a great house before her that looked like nothing she had ever imagined. She says she'll show Orual around it in a moment. She immediately knew it belonged to a god, and, although she didn't want to go inside, a voice told her to enter, calling it her house, and calling her the bride of the god.

Psyche was afraid and ashamed, but went inside. She heard women's voices welcoming her, and though she could see no one, she followed the voices. They brought her to a table with food. She figured that if they called her their mistress, she had to act as such, but was afraid they might be mocking her. She couldn't see the spirits' hands, but when they gave her a cup, she could feel them. They gave her a bath, and she felt shy of taking off her clothes. Orual doesn't understand, because the spirits were women, but Psyche clarifies that the shame was of being mortal. After the bath, the spirits dressed her, gave her a banquet, and put her to bed. Then the god came.

The animals treat Psyche strangely, neither as predator nor as prey, and thus not really as human. This indicates that she's on the border between earthly and divine. Orual's relief that Psyche gave up her idea of a palace is ironic and tragic in light of the fact that they're actually in Psyche's palace right at this moment, but Orual doesn't realize it.



Psyche seems to feel some sense of true faith through a mixture of two ideologies that are not entirely true. Significantly, this faith comes fundamentally from within herself, and thus from self-knowledge. Additionally, it coincides with proof that the gods exist, both in the rain and in the appearance of West-wind himself.



Even Psyche, the most beautiful person in Glome and beyond, feels ashamed of her appearance when compared to a god. Psyche sees West-wind only briefly, but she never doubts what she has seen or that what she has seen proves the existence of the gods. Thus, her faith is much stronger than Orual's, who will see Psyche's palace only for a brief moment, but will refuse to take this glimpse as proof of its existence.



Psyche's past life in Glome turning to unreality is exactly what Orual fears, as she wants Psyche to cling to that life with her over everything else, as Orual herself does. Psyche exhibits some of the same fear of holy places that Orual and Bardia have expressed, even though she has always dreamed of exactly what's happening to her—having a beautiful palace on the Mountain.



Psyche's experience of shame in the face of the divine suggests that humans are innately sinful; even an exceptional human recognizes her own failings in the presence of gods. Orual's difficulty understanding this shame gestures to her lifelong difficulty recognizing her own failings, as well as her dislike of the gods. If she doesn't respect the gods, she isn't going to feel ashamed of herself under their gaze.



Orual bursts out that if all Psyche says is true, everything she's believed is false. She wants to see the **palace**. Psyche agrees, but when Orual asks if it's far away, Psyche is confused. Orual likens her **face** to that of a child who mistakes a stranger for its mother. Both women become frightened, and when Orual asks again how far the palace is, Psyche cries out that they are standing at the gate.

This is a horrible moment in which the sisters recognize the chasm that has opened between them. Their perceptions of reality don't match up. It's almost worse that Psyche has been discussing the palace under the assumption that Orual was admiring it in front of her; their entire interaction up until now has been proceeding under false pretenses.



PART 1: CHAPTER 11

Orual and Psyche stand like enemies about to fight, watching each other. Orual is trying to write the truth, because she's getting to her major complaint against the gods, but remembering these moments too often has made them less distinct. She first thinks that Psyche is mad, and she says that they must leave this terrible place. A Greek would ridicule her for believing in the **palace**, Orual says, but in Glome, the gods are closer to mortals. She feels like everything is becoming uncertain.

While it's entirely possible that time has blurred Orual's memories, it's also quite possible that she's struggling to tell the truth because, through the process of writing her story, she begins to see her own actions differently. She is unsure of reality both in the moment with Psyche and in trying to recount it. As mortal and divine seem to merge, everything becomes unstable.



Psyche thinks that Orual does see the **palace**, and Orual becomes angry like her father the King. She screams at Psyche to stop saying that there's a palace. Psyche tries to make her touch it. Orual insists that Psyche is pretending, but she doesn't entirely believe her own words. She shakes Psyche, who flings her away. Psyche points out that Orual tasted the wine she gave her, and took the cup. Orual says that Psyche gave her water cupped in her hands, and that she simply went along with Psyche's game of pretending it was wine.

It frightens Orual and Psyche to doubt reality and their trust in one another. Their fear makes them cruel. The issue of the palace begins to split them apart from their old closeness, and Orual will blame the gods for putting this between them. Furthermore, although Orual wouldn't admit it, she might also be jealous that Psyche can see a divine structure that she herself can't, perhaps by some failing of her own.



Psyche then becomes sad and understands that Orual truly can't see the **palace**. Psyche's complete belief almost convinces Orual, and she realizes there might be many things in the valley that she can't see. For years after, she dreams that she is in some place she knows well, but everything she touches feels different than the object she sees. These dreams all come from this moment of believing in the palace without seeing it.

Orual almost comes to accept the divine mysteries that the Priest spoke of; believing in the invisible palace in front of her requires nothing more than blind faith in a divine power. However, this state of belief is extremely disorienting and frightening, as shown by the dreams that it causes.



Orual feels horrible grief at this new distance between herself and Psyche. For a moment she thinks that the gods should have Psyche because she is worthy of them, but then she only wants Psyche to come back to her. Psyche holds her, and then they sit and Psyche tries to comfort Orual. Orual allows the love in Psyche's voice to comfort her. Psyche says that the god might help Orual see the **palace**.

Despite the presence of the divine, Orual still cares first and foremost about her relationship with Psyche; she really only cares about the gods' influence as it pertains to Psyche. Orual comes close to a purer form of love when she wonders whether Psyche really should be with the gods, but she quickly reverts to her possessive type of love.



Orual had forgotten about the god, and now she begins to hate him as Psyche talks of him like she's a young wife. When Psyche reminds Orual that the god is her husband, Orual becomes angry again. She remembers her first reaction, that Psyche must be mad. She feels she can breathe more easily then, and demands that Psyche show her the god and the **palace**.

Psyche admits that she has not seen the god, because he only comes to her in darkness. She's forbidden to bring light into their bedchamber because she can't see his **face** or know his name. Orual sees joy in her eyes and insists that Psyche is speaking nonsense. She doesn't mean to lie, but she's imagining things due to fear and loneliness. Psyche points out that if she were imagining everything, she wouldn't have been able to survive this whole time. Orual has to admit that Psyche looks incredibly healthy. She even seems taller.

Psyche again assures Orual that the god will make everything all right, but Orual snarls that she hates it all. Unsure at first what she means, she realizes that she hates whatever it is that comes to Psyche at night, and the suffocating holiness of the gods. She begins to cry again, telling Psyche that she seems far away. Orual wants Psyche to return to the mortal world where they were happy together. Psyche replies that she is now a wife with a home. Orual realizes that Psyche likes her situation and tells her she should have been one of **Ungit's** girls, living in darkness among the holy rituals.

Orual reiterates her desire for Psyche to return to her, but Psyche insists that Orual must come to her instead. Orual can't decide whether or not Psyche is mad. This is the moment for the gods to speak, she writes, if they want happiness for the women. Instead, it starts to rain. Orual tells Psyche to come under her cloak, but Psyche says it's impossible for her to get wet, since they're sitting inside. Orual can see the rain on Psyche's cheeks, and watching Psyche getting wet convinces Orual that Psyche is mad. She insists that Psyche must come home with her, or else she will die in the oncoming winter. Psyche resigns herself to the fact that they can't see the same thing. Bardia, who might judge which of them sees reality, can't cross the river.

Orual commands Psyche to obey her. Psyche says that she now must obey her husband. Orual begins to hate Psyche and tries to drag her away, intending to hide Psyche in Bardia's house until she comes to her senses. But Psyche is stronger. When they stop wrestling, they are scratched, Orual is crying, and the rain has stopped.

Orual's jealous love takes a firmer grip of her, such that she must hate any stranger of whom Psyche speaks with adoration. Perversely, she's even relieved at the thought that Psyche is mad, because this means she can be brought to her senses and somehow made to not love the god.



Again, Psyche's faith contrasts starkly with Orual's. It makes no difference to Psyche that she hasn't seen the god; she knows that all he says is true and fully trusts in his goodness. Orual not only doesn't have faith in the god, but also doesn't even have faith in Psyche. In fact, her jealousy makes her stubbornly ignore everything that logically points to Psyche's story as the truth.



Orual doesn't want the god to make everything alright, because that would only magnify Psyche's adoration of him and show that she no longer needs Orual when she has a god looking out for her. The divine world has taken hold of Psyche, and so Orual hates it in her jealousy. Orual's comparison of Psyche to Ungit's girls shows that she can't yet perceive the difference between Ungit and the god of the Mountain, a difference between lustful or devouring love and pure, selfless love.



Orual wants Psyche to give up her newly divine existence, an essentially selfish desire. Orual's main complaint against the gods is that they won't guide humans clearly, and this is one of the moments in which she feels like they fail her. Instead, the rain makes the sisters' divergent realities more vivid, and the weather's obvious effect on Psyche makes Orual surer than ever of Psyche's madness. To believe Psyche would require Orual to disbelieve the evidence of her own eyes, and Orual lives so wholly within herself that she could never do this.



Orual's attempt to command Psyche shows that she feels some sense of ownership over Psyche, an attitude that can't exist in the type of ideal love that Psyche practices. Orual also demonstrates that her way of loving turns easily to hate and harms both parties involved.



Psyche regrets Orual's anger and wishes they could have feasted together, but she knows that Orual would not have tasted the food. She has promised to send Orual away before sunset. However, she wants Orual to return as soon as possible. In the meantime, she'll figure out how to help Orual see the **palace**. Orual is helpless and lets Psyche lead her back to the river. She promises to return if she can get out of the King's house. Psyche predicts that the King won't be much trouble in the next few days.

Once Orual has crossed the river, she begs again for Psyche to come with her. Psyche says that she can't because she's now a wife, but everything will be wonderful soon. She goes back into the valley, and Orual calls into the twilight for Bardia.

Psyche's love shows its purity. Even though Orual has treated her awfully, Psyche maintains an admirable sense of empathy and can only hope to find a way to help Orual. Though Orual hardly notices Psyche's prediction about the King, it will prove accurate, which indicates that Psyche has access to some supernatural knowledge.



Despite the invisible palace and the presence of the gods, everything boils down to Orual's desire to be with Psyche and possess her fully. Psyche denies her fulfillment one last time by reminding Orual that her worst nightmare has come true—Psyche owes her love to someone else now.



PART 1: CHAPTER 12

Bardia comes to Orual, but she can't talk about what has happened. Bardia says that they'll have to stay where they are for the night, even though it's too close to the gods. Orual follows him to a campfire, and he brings out delicious food. She takes pleasure in her mortal needs and doesn't think of divine wonders. Bardia suggests that they should lie back to back for warmth, since he's nothing more than a dog to her. She agrees, but is surprised he's suggested it. She doesn't know yet that men hardly see an ugly woman as a woman at all.

Bardia falls asleep quickly but would awaken at any sign of danger. Orual can't sleep at all due to discomfort and worry. Before dawn, she creeps down to the river for a drink. When she looks up, she sees a huge **palace**, incredibly beautiful and entirely dark. Somewhere inside, she thinks, something holds Psyche in its arms, and Orual wonders if it will punish her. She knows she must cross the river and ask forgiveness for being angry with Psyche, whom she now sees is almost a goddess. She is frightened and watches for any change in the palace. As she rises to her feet, the palace dissolves into mist.

On the Glome side of the river, in the company of the very human Bardia, Orual can appreciate what it is to be mortal rather than trying to pull Psyche back from the confusing presence of the divine. Bardia treats Orual like a male companion, an attitude that he will often take. Though Orual doesn't yet understand that this is a result of her ugliness, she will later become bothered by his blindness to her femininity.



The vision of the palace is the sign that Orual has been waiting for—and will continue to wait for, since she refuses to take it as a sign. In the moment that she sees the palace, she believes in the gods and in Psyche's version of reality. However, even from within her faith, she still focuses on Psyche being kept from her, imagining the god possessing her. While the vision lasts, she can see some of her own wrongs. However, the palace's disappearance changes everything.



Orual asks the reader to judge. She wonders if the moment she saw the **palace** is evidence against her or against the gods. The gods might say it was a sign, but she thinks a sign that is also a riddle is useless. It's possible that she truly did see the palace, but it's also possible that, being half asleep and looking through mist, she imagined it. She thinks it unfair for the gods to only send a sign that can't be proven—they should speak plainly. Orual returns to Bardia but does not tell him what she saw. In fact, she has never told anyone.

They begin their journey home through wind and rain. When they stop for lunch, Orual tells Bardia everything, but leaves out her glimpse of the **palace**. In response, Bardia says that he tries to stay out of the way of the gods by acting piously. Orual asks whether he thinks Psyche is mad or the palace is real, and Bardia is sure she isn't mad, but he's hesitant to offer any advice. He insists that he can't doubt Psyche's word about her lover. When Orual asks what sort of lover would keep his **face** hidden, Bardia admits that it must be something awful, also pointing out that it's called the Brute.

Orual has already guessed what Bardia put into words, but it's still a shock to hear it. She knows that Bardia feels very certain of the situation, and she thinks that everyone in Glome would agree with him. Psyche was given to the Shadowbrute, and it ended Glome's problems. Something godlike and disgusting is using Psyche. For the rest of the journey Orual accepts this story, and it seems clear that any other possibility was just something she imagined to comfort herself.

Orual touches her sword hilt. Before the sacrifice, she swore that she would kill Psyche rather than let a monster have her. Now she swears it again and cries. Doubting herself, she wonders why she should interfere when Psyche is happy. But as they approach the house of **Ungit**, Orual realizes that there is a deeper way to love than only seeking happiness for the loved one. A father does not want his daughter to be a prostitute, and a woman does not want her beloved to be a coward, even if they would be happy as such. Orual strengthens her resolve to remove Psyche from the Brute. As they enter the city, Bardia says that Orual must enter the palace by a back entrance to avoid the King's notice.

The vision might seem like obvious evidence that Orual has been in the wrong, but Orual so stubbornly refuses to give up her perspective that she doesn't take it as such. On the one hand, the palace does support Psyche's story, but on the other, its disappearance only makes another mystery she can't understand. The gods have sent their sign, but still Orual wants them to be clearer. She doesn't realize that no matter how clearly they speak, she'll still try to twist their will to please herself. The fact that she never tells anyone of the vision suggests that she knows that the palace is compelling evidence that she is wrong.



Bardia's viewpoint represents the general religious beliefs of the people of Glome—the gods exist, and their power should be feared. This perspective essentially leads him to support Psyche's version of reality, though he does worry about what Psyche can't see. In this book, faces speak truths about those who wear them, so anyone who hides their face must be hiding a dark truth about themselves. Ironically, Orual will soon veil her own face for this very reason.



The fact that Orual so readily accepts Bardia's perspective shows that she has little ability to think logically and independently in her current state of emotional turmoil, and also that she is happy to accept any story that will cast her in a good light for hating Psyche's lover. If the lover is a monster, she can take Psyche from him without feeling guilty about it.



Orual is fully willing to allow her love to destroy Psyche, almost seeming to find a perverse pleasure in the idea of killing Psyche to save her from a monster. In death, Psyche could be forever Orual's. Orual wouldn't have to worry about Psyche's freewill leading her to other loves. Orual convinces herself that she acts nobly by seeking what is morally right for Psyche, rather than what makes her happy. Significantly, she is near the house of Ungit at this point—this strengthens the association of this devouring, hateful sort of love with Ungit.



PART 1: CHAPTER 13

When Orual reaches her chamber, the Fox is waiting for her, and she tells him Psyche is alive. She bathes and eats, and then welcomes him to her table. He is overjoyed at her news of Psyche's well-being. She then goes on to tell him the whole story, watching his face darken. The Fox assumes Psyche is mad, and begins to speak of how to cure her. Orual admits that Psyche seemed perfectly sane in conversation. She asks whether there's any chance something can exist if she can't see it, using the example of a soul. The Fox, however, merely thinks she hasn't understood his teachings and might be mad herself.

Orual considers telling the Fox about her vision of the **palace**, but decides he wouldn't take it seriously. She suggests that Psyche's lover might also be a delusion, but the Fox argues that someone must have freed her because she has been eating. In no way does he think it could be a god; instead, he believes it must be a criminal living on the Mountain. Orual can't stand the thought, but the Fox assures her that Psyche isn't aware of the truth—the man must be tricking her. The Fox's explanation seems clearly correct to Orual, just as Bardia's did before.

The Fox can't think of what to do, and Orual despairs as to how she'll escape back to the Mountain. The Fox reveals that lions have been sighted again, far from the city, and the King is going on a hunt. Orual assumes the King is angry, but the Fox says that, in fact, he's very eager to go. In any case, he'll be gone for a few days, and he's leaving the next morning. They must act while he's gone.

The Fox points out that Psyche will get pregnant soon, which makes Orual want to torture Psyche's lover to death. She suggests they could hide Psyche in Bardia's house. When the Fox says that Bardia is too afraid of the gods to take her in, Orual defends his bravery. However, the Fox argues that Bardia's wife (Ansit) controls him, and she wouldn't allow it. Bardia married her for her beauty, and Orual thinks she must be horrible. The Fox says that they must get Psyche out of Glome so that no one can find her to sacrifice her again.

Orual can't think how to convince Psyche to leave the Mountain besides using force, but the Fox points out that they have no force to use. They sit silently while a servant plays a game of beads. Finally, Orual says she must somehow convince Psyche of the truth, and then they can make a plan together, even if it means they leave Glome to wander the world.

Even though Orual believed that Psyche was mad just the evening before, she now finds herself defending Psyche's sanity and looking for a way that Psyche could be telling the truth. She's under the influence of Bardia's belief in the gods, but she also can't quite shake the fact that she saw the palace for herself. Her questions about the existence of things beyond sight gesture to this experience—did she briefly see something that exists outside of human perception?



The Fox sifts reality from fantasy through logical reasoning. Certain parts of Psyche's story must be true, but not all of them. He finds earthly explanations for everything about the story that Psyche explains as divine. Orual is just as willing to accept the Fox's explanation as she was to accept Bardia's, even though they're essentially opposites; one is based on divine powers and one on simple human acts.



If the lions that were originally terrorizing Glome were sent by the gods in their anger, it seems these lions might also be the result of divine intervention. Since Psyche predicted that the King wouldn't bother Orual for a few days, however, Orual doesn't think of this.



Orual again exhibits violent tendencies. She also begins to show signs of having feelings for Bardia, simply through caring so much about his wife at a time when she's almost completely consumed by thoughts of Psyche. It must hurt that Bardia married Ansit for her beauty when Orual knows she has none of that. Ironically, Orual seems to judge Ansit for controlling Bardia, when she herself always controls the people she loves.



Orual's first impulse is to physically force Psyche into doing her bidding, which echoes the King's methods that she hates. In truth, the way she ends up getting Psyche to obey her is closer to force than it is to any form of convincing.



Orual says she feels responsible for Psyche, and she will do anything to get her away from the man who has trapped her. If Orual has to, she claims, she'll kill Psyche. The Fox is horrified. He tells her that her love is overruled by her anger and pride. The Fox loves Psyche as much as Orual does, but Psyche's current life is better than what Orual suggests. To nature, marriage is simply sex. Orual cannot see Psyche's lover as anything better than filth, but the Fox, as a slave, sees it differently.

Orual insists that the Fox doesn't understand everything, and he readily agrees. He doesn't believe the royal house has divine blood, because he thinks that everyone has divine blood. Everyone has a god inside them, and all are joined.

The Fox is tired, and must go to bed. He says they will continue talking in the morning. Orual lets him go, but feels he has failed her in a way that men always do, for they're never entirely invested in anything, and they're easily distracted. She feels that no one but she really cares about Psyche. She must make a plan herself. She must guess the answer to the riddle, and when she has guessed wrong, everyone will punish her for it.

Orual then does something unconventional. She speaks to the gods herself, in her own room, without a sacrifice. She begs them to send her a sign, but nothing happens. So she decides she has to act the very next day. She sleeps for a few hours, but her mind's torment wakes her. She goes to the window and thinks.

She sees clearly now. Though she has believed both Bardia and the Fox, one must be wrong. If the beliefs of Glome are correct, then Bardia is correct. If Greek philosophy is correct, then the Fox's theory is correct. Orual herself has been raised to believe both sets of beliefs partially, and she won't be able to choose one. But she realizes that this doesn't matter, because both men think that something bad has control of Psyche. Orual herself is the only one who ever imagined that Psyche's husband might be something good, but the fact that the husband forbids Psyche to see his face makes this impossible.

Orual often returns to the idea of killing Psyche, as though it almost appeals to her to possess her sister so fully. The Fox tries to help Orual see the situation outside of the conventions of her society, which would say that Psyche is being sexually ruined by a degenerate commoner. However, Orual was just as upset when she believed Psyche's lover was divine. This contradiction suggests that the identity of Psyche's lover isn't the problem.



The Fox doesn't recognize the distinction between human and divine that occupies Orual. Human and divine are one; thus, the gods don't exist as independent entities.



Orual faces her situation with a dangerous single-minded obsession that prevents her from making rational decisions. It's convenient for her to believe that the Fox doesn't care as much as she does about Psyche, because that allows her to take full responsibility for her sister and play the hero. At the same time, she almost believes she will fail and she wants to suffer to prove her love.



Orual's decision to speak to the gods herself gestures to certain Protestant denominations that encourage worshipers to speak to God without the interference of clergy. This moment is another failure for which Orual holds the gods responsible, as they refuse to guide her to the right action.



Orual straddles two faiths, which means that neither one can completely satisfy her. She decides that the truth isn't as important as she thought. Orual completely disregards her own instincts in favor of the men's opinions, forgetting that her thoughts are influenced by her vision of the palace, while the men are judging based off a half-truth.



Orual must get Psyche away. Suddenly she remembers how happy Psyche looked in the valley, and she again feels tempted to let her remain happy and not cause her pain. Part of Orual thinks that she doesn't understand everything that's happening, but another part of her feels responsible for Psyche and thinks she must act accordingly. Psyche is only a child, and therefore she must obey. Orual becomes determined to act today, as long as Bardia can come with her. She's bothered by the idea of his wife keeping him back. She lies down to wait for morning.

Even as Orual drives stubbornly towards Psyche's destruction, she constantly doubts herself, allowing a purer love to shine through, though it continues to be overwhelmed by possessive love. Orual's concerns for Psyche's wellbeing might be legitimate, but she refuses to allow Psyche control of her own life. It seems the only thing that can distract Orual is her jealousy of Bardia's wife.



PART 1: CHAPTER 14

When Orual hears the hunting party preparing to leave, she gets ready for her journey. She brings an urn, a lamp, some oil, and a band of linen like those that bridesmaids in Glome wear. She eats, and when the hunting party is gone, she goes to the Pillar Room and sends for Bardia. She thinks the whole palace feels freer since the King is gone.

Orual's inclusion of the band of linen signifies her intention to play the very opposite of the role of bridesmaid—instead of helping to join Psyche to her lover, she seeks to separate them. Additionally, this is her first taste of how much better her life would be without the King.



Bardia comes, and Orual tells him she's going back to the Mountain. He says he can't accompany her because he's been left to guard the palace, but he offers to send a guard named Gram with her. Gram will keep any secret, as he hardly speaks anyway, and he's loyal to Bardia. Bardia calls him and tells him to wait with a horse at the road into the city. Orual asks for a dagger, and though Bardia finds this strange, he gives her one. Orual bids him farewell, which confuses him, as it implies she'll be gone a while.

Bardia generally acts as a stabilizing influence on Orual, so the fact that he can't go to the Mountain with her increases the chances that she'll act recklessly. Although Bardia wanted her to wear a sword on their first trip, her desire for a dagger seems strange since it would only be used for an intimate struggle, rather than to fend off animals and the like. Furthermore, Orual doesn't seem sure she'll survive her journey—at least not as the person she is now.



Orual meets Gram outside the palace, and he puts her on his horse. Their journey is entirely different from the one with Bardia. Gram hardly speaks, and it rains the whole time. It's almost evening when they reach the valley. The weather finally clears. Orual tells Gram not to cross the river or come to her unless she calls him.

Orual was actually happy the last time she made this trip. Now she's on a quest to ruin her sister's happiness, and the world doesn't seem so shiny any more. The entirely different atmosphere doesn't bode well.



Orual feels very sure about her task. She crosses the river and calls for Psyche, who comes immediately. The sisters look like two **faces** of love—Psyche joyful, Orual the bearer of pain. Psyche points out that she correctly predicted that the King wouldn't keep Orual from returning. Orual had forgotten she said this, but she refuses to start doubting her path now.

The two faces of love that Orual recognizes in herself and Psyche at this point actually apply to them throughout most of the book. Orual will eventually become Ungit, and the beginning of this transformation is made evident here in an almost physical way. She also remains willfully blind to anything that might change her mind.



The two women sit down, and Psyche remarks on Orual's angry expression. Orual asks her not to be critical, because they have serious matters to discuss. She says she has tried to act as all the family that Psyche has. If anyone will tell Psyche what's right for her, it has to be Orual. Psyche assures Orual that she loves Orual and everyone else all the more because she's married. Orual says she doesn't doubt Psyche's love.

Orual says that people sometimes have to hurt the ones they love, and that she's about to hurt Psyche, but Psyche is too young to make her own decisions. Psyche insists that her husband guides her now. Orual, disturbed, asks who her husband is, and Psyche replies that he's the god of the Mountain. Orual asks what kind of god would keep his **face** hidden. Nothing that is beautiful or honest hides, she says, so Psyche must be the bride of either the Brute or of some criminal mortal.

Psyche is silent. When Orual tries to comfort her, Psyche says she is angry, but she manages to forgive Orual, knowing that she means well. If Orual really loves her, she'll stop thinking this way about Psyche's husband. Orual insists that the two wisest men they know, the Fox and Bardia, agree with each other and with her about the situation. Psyche is upset that Orual has told them the story. Orual says that Psyche's husband has fooled her so well that she doesn't see what's in plain sight.

Psyche is surprised that the Fox even believes in the Brute. Orual didn't say he did, but she doesn't correct Psyche. Instead, Orual says that neither he, nor Bardia, nor she herself believes that Psyche's husband is a god or that her **palace** exists. All the people of Glome would agree with them. Psyche insists it doesn't matter, because she herself knows the truth. Orual asks how Psyche can be so sure, if she's never seen her husband. Psyche says she hesitates to answer because Orual is a virgin.

Orual says that if Psyche is so sure of herself, she shouldn't be afraid to test her claim. Orual shows her the lamp she has brought and proposes that Psyche look at her husband in his sleep. When Psyche refuses, Orual uses this as proof that she isn't sure he's a god. Psyche, however, says that she can't look because the god has forbidden it. Orual reiterates that forbidding this proves deception.

Orual doesn't acknowledge that anger against Psyche and her lover is driving her just as much as her love for Psyche is. Psyche seems to perceive that the real issue centers around her love for Orual. However, it makes no difference to Orual if Psyche loves her more because of her marriage. The fact remains that Psyche loves someone in addition to Orual, someone completely outside of Orual's life.



Orual recognizes the negative side of love, insisting that it's necessary. She often longs nostalgically for the past days of Psyche's childhood, and here she tries to force that childhood back onto Psyche, hating the idea that anyone could take her place in Psyche's life. Her insistence that honest beings let themselves be seen implies that when she decides to veil herself later, some part of her recognizes her own dishonesty.



In contrast to Orual and the King, Psyche controls her anger well and never resorts to violence. She asserts her way of loving, which allows the beloved to live her desired life without interference. Orual, on the other hand, resorts to half-truths about the Fox and Bardia to convince Psyche that she's right, indicating that her interpretation of circumstances isn't nearly as certain as she wants to believe it is.



Orual allows Psyche to believe clear falsehoods, further weakening her position as a bearer of goodwill. Though Orual has struggled deeply to figure out what she believes the truth to be, she presents her argument to Psyche as something about which she feels entirely confident. The fact that Orual is a virgin and Psyche isn't makes Orual's fantasy of controlling Psyche like a child seem foolish.



Orual doesn't understand the power of trust or the dread that Psyche feels at betraying the trust of her husband. On the other hand, Psyche has no way to explain why her husband has forbidden her to see his face. As this question is never clearly answered, it seems likely that this condition of the marriage is simply a test of Psyche's trust and faith.



Psyche says that Orual doesn't know much about love. Orual retorts that if Psyche wants to talk about her kind of love, she should talk to Redival or **Ungit's** girls. Orual's love is different. Psyche is sad to hear Orual talk this way, and Orual feels surprised to see again that she can't control Psyche anymore. Orual accuses Psyche of fearing the test, since people usually want to disprove anything bad said about their beloveds. Psyche clarifies that she is ashamed to disobey her husband, but Orual says he must be awful to be angry with her for breaking such a ridiculous order. Psyche has faith that a god has good reason for what he does.

The sun is setting, and Orual's time is running out. She commands Psyche to obey her, but Psyche tells her that she no longer has to do so. Orual says she'll kill herself, and she stabs her dagger through her arm. Psyche is amazed, but bandages the wound calmly enough. Orual tells her she did it to prove she means what she says. Psyche must swear to look at her husband's **face** that very night, or else Orual will kill Psyche and then herself.

Psyche says that Orual only has power over her through the threat of suicide, not murder. She looks like a man betrayed by his lover. She says that Orual's love is almost like hatred, and she's using Psyche's love for her as a tool of coercion. Psyche is very unhappy and feels that something has forever changed between them. Orual insists that they will both die unless Psyche swears to do as Orual asks.

Psyche will only swear because she has faith that her husband will be more understanding than Orual is; she trusts that he will forgive her. Orual points out that he won't know Psyche has seen his **face**. Psyche looks at her scornfully, and Orual thinks that everything about her has come from Orual's teaching. Psyche says she won't hide anything from her husband. She loved Orual, she says, and though she now seems like a stranger, Psyche can't have her die.

Orual wants to take everything back, but instead she offers her dagger for Psyche to swear on. Psyche says her happiness might be destroyed by sunrise, but Orual has forced her to this point. She takes the oath and Orual bursts into tears. Psyche sends her away, telling her to live the life she has just saved. Orual feels afraid of Psyche and crosses the river as the sun sets.

This exchange is ironic, because Orual accuses Psyche of loving only through lust, which she associates with Ungit. However, Orual will later realize that her own devouring way of loving was far more similar to Ungit's than Psyche's was, showing how little Orual understands herself at this point. Psyche confirms that she has faith in the gods' wisdom, while Orual doesn't respect them enough to blindly believe they have good reason for what they do. Orual wants them to explain themselves to humans.



Orual tries more and more desperately to assert her power over Psyche, finally resorting to violence like the King does. However, she commits physical violence against herself, which allows her to feel like she's sacrificing herself to save Psyche. In reality, the crueler violence she commits is the emotional violence against Psyche. She uses Psyche's love for her as a weapon.



Psyche exhibits the selflessness that defines her, but she's not a fool. She recognizes that Orual's love is damaging and cruel, and she can no longer accept it in this awful form. Psyche's perception and honesty contrasts with Orual's self-deception and lies, and Orual's stubbornness drives her on, unthinking.



Psyche again shows her admirable moral goodness. If Orual will force her to betray her husband once, she won't betray him again by keeping the first betrayal a secret. Orual still tries to convince herself that Psyche belongs to her, but Psyche pointedly puts her love for Orual into the past tense. In trying to keep all of Psyche's love for herself, Orual has lost what she had.



Even though Orual begins to recognize her mistakes, her stubbornness drives her on to her own destruction. Psyche allows her no illusions, clearly blaming Orual for most likely ruining her life. Orual has technically achieved what she meant to, but nothing is going as she wanted it to. Psyche is sacrificing herself again, this time for Orual's sake, when Orual wanted to be the heroic one this time.



PART 1: CHAPTER 15

Orual faints after she crosses the river. When she comes to, she drinks water and realizes that she left her food with Psyche. She wishes Bardia were there with her instead of Gram. She waits by the river, hoping to see the lamp when Psyche lights it and covers it. Then she'll see it again when Psyche looks at her husband's **face**. She anticipates that Psyche will then come to her in distress, and she'll comfort her.

However, Orual can't help fearing that she might have done wrong. She imagines Psyche lost and in despair, all because of Orual. Orual often has the urge to cross the river and tell Psyche not to go through with her promise. Throughout all these thoughts, Orual can't forget Psyche's apparent hatred of her. Orual doesn't understand how Psyche can hate her when Orual has just wounded herself out of love for Psyche.

Orual sees the first lighting of the lamp. It gets very cold and her arm is painful. She realizes she might die as a result of this night. She imagines Psyche mourning her death, and everyone else showing their love for her now that she's dead. Finally, she sees the lamplight again, very bright.

Suddenly there's a loud voice that terrifies Orual because it's immortal. She hears weeping, and her heart breaks. It all happens quickly, and then lightning flashes through the valley, illuminating falling trees. Through the thunder, the rocky cliffs of the Mountain begin to crack apart, and the river rapidly floods as torrential rains fall. Orual thinks this means she was right—Psyche's husband is something horrible that is now enraged. Even if it kills them both, Psyche will know the truth and not be angry with Orual. If they can't escape together, they can die together.

Orual is about to try to cross the stream when a light that looks like lightning appears and lasts. At the middle of it is a humanlike figure, vague in her memory. She can only look at the **face** for a moment, because its beauty is too overpowering. He looks at her with complete rejection, knowing everything about her. He makes it seem as though she has known the truth about him from the beginning, and only doubted it to deceive herself. Orual asks the reader to judge whether this is the true past, or whether the god has changed it.

Bardia comforted Orual the last time she returned from talking with Psyche, but this time there is no comfort from what she's done. With everything practically ruined, her only hope is that she'll be right. If Psyche really has been deceived, Orual might be able to salvage their relationship. Her desire to comfort Psyche is reminiscent of the night before the sacrifice.



Despite her stubborn refusal to let anything turn her aside from her original plan, Orual does not, in fact, feel entirely sure that her conclusion about the situation was correct. Furthermore, Orual hasn't yet learned anything about love. She truly believes that wounding herself to make Psyche do her bidding was an act of pure love, and that Psyche should see it as such.



Orual's imaginings expose her selfishness. She wants only to be loved and to be allowed to sacrifice herself to prove her own love. It doesn't matter to her that this scenario would hurt Psyche deeply. These dreams also show a deep loneliness within Orual.



Orual has awakened the rage of the god. Even in this moment, she clings to the self-deception that began when she denied her own vision of the palace. Instead of realizing that Psyche might have been right, she tells herself that she was right. She hasn't angered the god; she's angered a monster. However, her world is falling down around her ears, both literally and metaphorically, and she won't be able to deny it for long.



Orual will later realize that the god's version of the past is, in fact, the truth—she has deceived herself for her own ends. At this point in the story, though, she doesn't even understand herself well enough to be able to recognize the truth when the god shows it to her. As a result, the experience only turns her even further against the gods, since she blames them for changing the past to hurt her. The god's incredible beauty signifies his purity and truth.



Everything else is silent as the god speaks in a voice without anger. He says that Psyche must go into exile, and Orual will know herself and see what she does, and will also “be Psyche.” The voice and the light disappear, and Orual hears terrible weeping. Even if her worst enemy were weeping like that, she would try to help her, but she knows it’s Psyche. As Orual gets to her feet, the sound moves to the end of the valley. Orual can’t find her way across the river.

When dawn comes, the valley is completely ruined. Orual calls for Psyche again and again, but she knows that Psyche has gone into exile. Orual finds Gram, who asks no questions. They begin their journey home. Now that Orual knows the gods hate her, she waits at every moment for them to kill her. She wonders if they might turn her into an animal instead. However, she isn’t afraid. She sees everything around her as her enemy. She thinks that the god’s words mean she’ll also have to wander the world, like Psyche. She’s glad to share Psyche’s punishment. She wonders what she’ll tell Bardia and the Fox.

PART 1: CHAPTER 16

Orual enters the palace through the back and finds that the King is still away. She creeps to her room, realizing that she’s avoiding the Fox. She’s eating when he arrives and asks where she’s been. She tells him she was at the Mountain, but hides her wound from him, knowing he wouldn’t approve of her coercing Psyche the way she did. She accidentally reveals her anger with him for going to sleep rather than helping her plan Psyche’s rescue.

Orual tells the Fox only that a storm flooded the valley and she heard Psyche leaving Glome. Eventually he forces her to admit to her plan with the lamp. He is dismayed, saying that Psyche’s outlaw lover was sure to wake and punish her. Orual can’t see why she didn’t think of this, and wonders whether she actually believed Psyche’s lover was a criminal.

The Fox asks how Orual convinced Psyche to go through with the plan. Orual knows that if she admits that she told Psyche that the Fox and Bardia agreed about her lover, the Fox will see it as a lie. It seemed different when she was talking to Psyche. Orual simply says she spoke with Psyche. The Fox can tell she has a secret, but he decides not to try to get it out of her, since that would only ruin their relationship. The Fox will love her no matter what. Orual thinks he’s much kinder than Psyche. She never tells Bardia what happened to Psyche.

While Psyche’s punishment seems pretty straightforward, Orual’s is cryptic. In fact, Orual doesn’t even understand herself well enough at this point to realize that she doesn’t understand herself. It speaks to the depths of her cruelty that the god thinks it an appropriate punishment for her to recognize what she has really done. She also can’t yet know that she will “be Psyche” by taking on all of the anguish that Psyche feels.



The ruined valley reflects the ruin that Orual has made of her life and Psyche’s. As usual, Orual seeks punishment. However, the very fact that she welcomes it indicates that it wouldn’t be a true punishment. In fact, being denied the opportunity to die for Psyche’s sake, being forced to live on without her, knowing that she ruined Psyche’s happiness, is a far better punishment. But facing the prospect of death and welcoming it also puts Orual in a position where she feels she has little to lose, making her bolder as she begins her path to the crown.



The fact that Orual finds herself hiding from the Fox indicates not only that she knows he wouldn’t approve of what she’s done, but also that she doesn’t feel she can defend her actions well. Strangely, Orual seems calmer than she has in a while, perhaps because she has succeeded in breaking apart Psyche’s relationship with the god, despite the consequences.



The Fox immediately finds a major flaw in Orual’s plan that she should have seen from the beginning if her beliefs and her motives were really what she told herself they were. Thus, she’s already forced to start questioning herself, just as the god’s punishment dictated.



Forced to see her actions through the Fox’s eyes, Orual begins to recognize that she wasn’t acting entirely rationally or truthfully in the valley. The Fox acts as a model of the kind of pure love Orual lacks when he says he won’t force Orual to tell her secret. He loves Orual too much to try to coerce her, whereas Orual thought her love for Psyche was reason enough to justify coercion.



That night, Orual decides to **veil** her **face** forever. When she was a child, she didn't realize she was ugly. For a while after, she thought she could be prettier if she put enough effort into it. Finally, she decides that no one will see her face again.

The King comes home a week later drunk and in a bad mood. A few days later, he sends for Orual and the Fox. He orders Orual to take off her **veil**, but she doesn't fear him anymore after seeing the god. She feels powerful because she can see his **face**, but he can't see hers. When he asks whether she's opposing him, she admits that she is. He dismisses her defiance as women's talk. From then on, Orual never submits to him again. She forces him to release herself and the Fox from the task of watching Redival, and he gives this job to Batta instead. Batta has grown close with the King, for she flatters him. She and Redival are friends one moment and enemies the next.

Orual waits for the gods to kill her, and she's almost disappointed to find that she continues to live her same old life. She makes Psyche's room look as it did in their happy days. When she finds a hymn to the god of the Mountain, she burns it to destroy that part of Psyche. She also burns the clothes that Psyche wore in the last year. Finally, she seals the door and decides she must never think about Psyche except the way she was in childhood. She doesn't want to hear others speak of her.

Orual often asks the Fox about science and politics, wanting concrete knowledge. She also continues her swordsmanship lessons with Bardia, and improves quickly. She wants to build her strength of mind and body in order to drive her feminine parts away. Sometimes at night, she gives in to her despair about Psyche and weeps, wondering where she is, but afterwards she becomes stony again. Bardia teaches her to ride a horse and begins to treat her like a man.

After the Midwinter feast, the King slips on ice and injures his leg. He is carried to his bed in pain. His thigh is broken. When the Second Priest, Arnom, tries to set the leg, the King almost stabs him. Bardia and Orual have guards hold the King down, and he seems to fear Orual, screaming for her to be taken away. He develops a cough, and Batta keeps giving him too much wine. He seems to think Orual is someone else who tortures him.

Faces in this book act as representations of inner character, so Orual's decision to hide her face indicates that she doesn't want others to see her true self. Even if she doesn't yet know her true self, she seems to recognize that it's not any prettier than her face.



Orual's ordeal in the valley has hardened her. She also finds that the veil gives her advantages besides not having to worry about her ugliness. Having lost everything that matters to her, Orual has nothing left to fear from her father. In standing up to him, she takes control of her own life and shows herself worthy of taking his place, though this is not yet on her mind. Batta, Redival, and the King all share a petty, cruel, selfish nature that Orual hates, probably because she also shares parts of it.



Orual begins to recognize that continuing to live is a worse punishment than being struck down. In an attempt to deny recent events completely, Orual tries to modify her surroundings so that she can only remember the time in which she didn't have to share Psyche's love with anyone but the Fox, and she could be sure of her influence over her sister. She refuses to acknowledge that Psyche's love for the god was an important part of her even before the sacrifice.



Orual's desire for concrete knowledge denies the existence of the divine mysteries with which she's had to struggle. Due to her ugliness, Orual was never treated as other women were, but now she consciously denies her femininity, as it is associated with emotion and empathy. Orual tries to change herself, but only to deny her crimes, not to remedy them.



The King's fear of Orual seems to come from both his recognition of his own sins, (which have hurt her in many varied ways), and also from recognition of the cruelty in her that he fears will turn against him. It is even possible that he sees her as Ungit, as he will later come to her in a dream and reveal her face to be Ungit's.



Three nights later, Arnom tells Orual, Bardia, and the Fox that the King will probably die. Orual thinks she'll be driven out of Glome in the struggle for power. Arnom admits that the Priest of Ungit is also dying, and he himself will take his place unless the King forbids it. Bardia says that **Ungit** and the crown need to work together to avoid chaos in Glome, and he calls Orual the Queen, which the Fox quickly echoes. Arnom wishes she were married, since she can't lead Glome's army. Bardia, however, insists that she can.

Arnom brings up the long conflict over the "Crumbles," land claimed by both **Ungit** and the King. Orual has always thought Ungit should have it so the priests won't have to take so many sacrifices from the people. Due to the King's sickness, Orual claims the power to speak for him and gives the Crumbles to Ungit on the condition that Ungit's guards come under the direction of the King's guard. She knows that Arnom will accept because he needs the palace on his side. The Fox and Bardia congratulate her.

Standing alone in the great hall, Orual feels very strange. Being Queen won't lessen her sorrows, but it might help her push them away. She realizes her father will die, and suddenly feels incredibly free and glad. But then she thinks she hears a girl crying—a sound she's always waiting to hear. She goes outside in pursuit of the noise and calls for Psyche, but soon she realizes that it was only the **chains of the well** swinging in the breeze. She then sees someone dive into some bushes, and when she investigates, a man's voice tells her to take him to the King.

PART 1: CHAPTER 17

A tall man comes out of the bushes and tries to kiss Orual, calling her pretty, but she takes out her dagger and points out that she's **veiled**. He replies that anyone with her voice must be beautiful. Orual has never been approached this way before, and almost doesn't want it to end, but she demands to know who the man is. He says he needs the King's help and must speak with him.

Orual reveals that she is the Queen, unless the King recovers. The man says he is Trunia of Phars and has come looking for protection. He is at war with his brother and father, the king of Phars. He had to escape, got lost, and ended up in Glome, where his horse went lame. He wants Orual to hide him for a day so that he can sneak back into Phars. Orual says that if she takes him in she has to defend him, and they don't have the strength to go to war with Phars. She'll have to take him prisoner instead.

Orual has never imagined herself as Queen, perhaps because the King always focused his efforts on having a son to inherit his throne. The passing of both the King and the Priest at the same time will bring on major changes in Glome. Orual's denial of her femininity works to her advantage in this situation where society demands that a man take power. Though she's not a man, she has the necessary traditionally male knowledge.



Orual negotiates her first diplomatic deal as Queen, demonstrating a natural ability to find a fair arrangement that benefits both sides. She also brings herself into closer association with Ungit and all that the goddess stands for. Orual essentially puts herself in charge of Ungit's manpower, preventing the sort of dangerous face-offs that occurred between the King and the Priest.



Orual doesn't want to be Queen for the power it will give her, but for the distraction it will provide. The best rulers are often those who don't particularly want to rule, and Orual makes no exception. But even as she thinks ruling will push away thoughts of Psyche, all of those thoughts become concentrated into the weeping sound of the chains in the well, which will haunt her from this day forth.



Orual's masculine and feminine sides clash here—the man's flirting makes her feel her femininity in a way she never does, but she is also defending herself with her dagger, a skill she associates with Bardia treating her like a man. Additionally, this is the first Orual mentions of her beautiful voice, apparently an attribute that she feels is overwhelmed by her face.



The introduction of Trunia to the story marks the next phase of Orual's life, one in which Psyche is almost absent. But Psyche's sacrifice coincided with (or perhaps even caused) the beginning of the civil war in Phars, and now its consequences have come to Orual's doorstep. Orual takes this opportunity to display her power as a Queen working for the good of Glome.



Trunia tries to run away, but he trips and hurts himself. He submits to being a prisoner, and Orual says she'll save him from his brother if she can do it without going to war. She calls the guards, who bring him into the castle.

Orual goes to the King's bedroom. He seems worse, and he can't speak. The Fox tells her that he's just received word that Argan of Phars is ten miles away with cavalry, seeking Trunia. Orual feels shocked and reveals to the Fox and Bardia that Trunia is in the palace. She brings them to the Pillar Room to get away from the King and sends Trunia to the room where Psyche was kept before the sacrifice.

Orual, Bardia, and the Fox agree that Trunia will probably rule Phars in the end, since most people hate Argan and think him a coward. Furthermore, Trunia will treat Glome well in the future if they help him now—but in the meantime they can't face a war with Phars.

Orual has an idea and asks Bardia how good Argan is with a sword. Bardia replies that he and Orual are both better than Argan. Orual points out that Argan won't want to do anything that would make him seem more of a coward, so he'll have to accept if they propose single combat for Trunia's life. Bardia approves of the idea. Even if they lose the combat, they will have done their best by Trunia, and if they succeed, Trunia will be their friend as king of Phars.

Orual proposes that their champion must be someone so low that it would be shameful for Argan to refuse to fight. The Fox and Bardia are skeptical. Orual clarifies that she means Argan must fight a woman. She hasn't told the Fox that she's learned to use a sword, and he's confused. Bardia understands, but doesn't want Orual to risk her life. He admits that she has more skill than Argan, but she could still fall prey to bad luck. Bardia explains the situation to the Fox, saying again that he wishes Orual had been born a man. He means well, but it hurts her.

Though Orual has cruel aspects to her personality, she shows a more merciful side in her position as Queen. For her first night in charge, she's already been presented with quite a challenging situation.



The King's health seems to decline in direct correlation with the increase in Orual's power and confidence. However, she still feels unsettled around him. In imprisoning Trunia where Psyche was imprisoned, Orual takes another step towards writing over the memories surrounding the sacrifice.



Orual needs to make Trunia into her ally, but she can't afford to openly declare her support for him. Meanwhile, Bardia and the Fox have naturally begun to act as her advisors, as they will continue to do for many years.



Though Glome can't afford to send a whole army after Argan, Orual sees a way to scale the fight to their abilities. Orual proved her ability to manipulate people in her conflict with Psyche, and now she's using the same skills to force Argan into a situation in which he can't refuse to fight.



Orual's training in the use of a sword has gone on for a while with no specific purpose, but now she finds herself about to stake her life and her kingdom's future on her abilities. In fact, she shows great bravery in being willing to, in a sense, sacrifice herself in this situation. Taking on a masculine role, Orual is once again reminded that Bardia will never regard her as a love interest, as she wishes he would.



The Fox thinks the plan is scandalous—Greeks are more sensitive to social conventions than the people of Glome. Orual points out that she’s already so ugly that she might as well become manlier by fighting. Furthermore, the people of Glome might not accept her as Queen, because they don’t know much about her. They’ll be more likely to welcome her if she has acted like a hero. Bardia agrees. The Fox fears losing her, but Orual has made her decision. She orders them to send a messenger to Argan to inform him of the place and time of the combat. If she dies, he gets Trunia. If he dies, Trunia can return freely to Phars.

Orual has long wanted people—particularly Psyche—to love her as a hero, and now her chance has come. In fact, in this situation it’s hardly even a selfish desire, as Orual plans to use her heroism to make the people loyal to her as Queen. The Fox’s love for her keeps him from supporting her plan; this draws a parallel between Orual and the Fox, who both have trouble putting the needs of those they love before their own desires. Orual now acts just as dismissively of her own life as Psyche did when contemplating her sacrifice.



Orual goes to bed, knowing that Bardia will send the message. Once she’s alone, she realizes it feels like someone called “the Queen,” not Orual, has been acting in her place. She’s amazed at what the Queen has done and no longer believes she can kill Argan. She worries her courage will fail when she has to fight, and imagines everyone being ashamed of her. They would all think that Psyche was better than Orual, both in beauty and bravery. She insists to herself that Psyche could never do what she’s doing.

Orual begins to recognize that in her new role, she can become someone different than the person who ruined Psyche’s life. She unwillingly finds herself thinking of Psyche as a competitor, revealing a jealousy of Psyche’s virtues, beauty, and ability to attract love. This attitude suggests that Orual may have also been jealous of Psyche’s favored position as the god’s wife.



Orual realizes that she’s thinking the way she did when she was sick and Psyche seemed like her enemy. She begins to think the gods have sent Argan to kill her, and this will be a good way to die. For the past few hours she’s forgotten the desolation of her life because she had so much to do as Queen. She promises herself that if she’s actually allowed to become Queen, she’ll throw herself into it entirely to keep herself from remembering her desolation. She wants to trick the gods by turning her old self, Orual, into a new self, the Queen.

Orual doesn’t quite recognize that she really does think of Psyche as her enemy sometimes. Dying bravely at Argan’s hand hardly even seems like a punishment to her, but if she survives she’ll get her revenge on the gods she hates by taking away their satisfaction of killing Orual; if she herself gets rid of Orual, she thinks the gods wouldn’t be able to go through with their punishment.



Orual goes to the King’s chamber, where Batta sits at his bedside. He’s awake, but can’t speak. He looks terrified when he sees Orual. She thinks that some people wouldn’t blame her if she murdered him. She’s afraid that he’ll survive his illness, for she feels free and doesn’t want to go back to being a prisoner if he pulls through. Finally, she realizes that even if he does survive, he’ll be insane. She sleeps deeply that night.

Even the King, awful as he is, always seems to have someone faithful at his bedside, which proves that love defies reason. Orual’s feelings about her father are some of the only ones she allows herself to see truly. She knows she hates him, and she feels no guilt about it. His death will let her more effectively hide the angry, violent part of herself that comes from him.



PART 1: CHAPTER 18

The next morning, Orual goes to check on the King as soon as she wakes. Redival comes in, desperately asking what’s going on in the palace. Orual tells her that if the King dies, Orual will be Queen and will treat Redival as she deserves. Redival immediately tries to flatter Orual, who is disgusted. Orual says she won’t kill her, but she’ll punish her if she disobeys.

On one hand, Orual treats Redival as cruelly as ever, despising her falsity. On the other hand, Orual is beginning to control her tendency towards violence—she once swore she would kill Redival in return for betraying Psyche, so this display of mercy is a change.



Redival leaves and the Fox comes in. He apologizes for using Orual's love for him to try to force her not to fight Argan. Bardia enters with news that a messenger has come from Argan. They go into the Pillar Room, where the messenger says Argan accepts the combat but plans to hang Orual after disarming her. Orual insults Argan's age, knowing that word of the insult will spread. They work out the details of the fight with the Fox worried the whole time.

Arnom comes in wearing the bird mask, and Orual knows that the Priest of Ungit has died and Arnom is the new Priest—but she doesn't fear him like she did the old Priest. Arnom and the Fox talk about the King's condition, and Orual and Bardia go outside.

Bardia is worried that Orual has never killed anyone, and it's much harder than it seems, because it doesn't feel natural to kill. He struggled the first time he killed someone. He worries that she might pause at a critical moment and let Argan get the upper hand. Orual imagines killing her father and says she doesn't think she'll pause. Even so, Bardia wants her to kill a pig, and she sees that she must do it to shut out the old Orual. She goes and kills the pig and decides that if she survives the duel, she and her advisors will eat it for dinner.

Orual returns to the Pillar Room, where she frees the Fox from slavery. Immediately she hears Bardia and Arnom lamenting the loss of him, and she realizes he's going to return to Greece. She's distraught. He imagines how wonderful it would be to go home and begs her to let him think about it. She is overcome with sorrow and wanders through the gardens.

Orual doesn't understand how much the Fox wants to go home, because she's never left Glome and she finds her home oppressive. She hates that the Fox might want to leave her, because she has always taken his presence for granted and she thought he did the same with her. She thinks that she's not an essential part of anyone's life. Even Bardia cares more about his family. The Fox only liked her because he had no one else. In fact, she thinks, he loved Psyche better. But part of Orual knows this isn't true.

The Fox unconsciously exemplifies the kind of self-understanding that Orual lacks. In comparison to Orual's use of love to coerce Psyche to return to her, the Fox's attempt to use love to keep Orual from fighting Argan was extremely tame. Even so, the Fox thinks it was bad enough to warrant an apology, making Orual's coercion seem even worse.



By bargaining with Arnom earlier, Orual has taken some control over the affairs of Ungit. For this reason, both Arnom and Ungit don't have the frightening sense of mystery that hung around the old Priest.



Orual exhibits surprisingly little trouble with the idea of killing a human, proving how hardened she has become and raising the possibility that if Psyche had refused to look at her lover's face, Orual really might have killed her. However, she does see her old self as weakened by love, and thus she sees killing the pig as a way to also kill the old Orual.



Orual acts well in freeing the Fox, but she has taken his presence for granted. She essentially re-enslaves him to her love, as he knows that she would hate for him to leave, and he loves her too much to be able to cause her this pain. Orual will later realize that she devoured the Fox's life with her love.



Orual interprets the Fox's desire to go home as a betrayal and as proof that he doesn't love her as much as she thought he did. She can't understand that he might also love other things and have to make a painful choice between loves. For her, love is all or nothing. Once again, Orual's jealousy of Psyche becomes clear, as she knows that Psyche was easier to love.



The Fox finds Orual before bedtime, and she is subdued. He has decided to stay, as he would only be a burden to his family. Orual is overjoyed, but she doesn't sleep well that night. She feels restless from all of the changes that are happening. It's as though the King's illness had disintegrated all the established elements of her world. She can't even feel her sorrow, and it feels like the Queen is taking over Orual.

The next day is the last day before the battle, and it seems like a dream. There are crowds at the gates who have heard what's happening and they cheer Orual on. Nobles visit to show their support, and they wonder what's behind her **veil**. Orual tells Trunia that they have a champion to fight for him. She calls for wine, which Redival brings because she wants to see Trunia. She acts like a perfect, dutiful sister.

When Redival leaves, Trunia wants to know who Orual is and why she wears a **veil**. If he survives, he wants to ally with Glome by marrying into the royal family, perhaps even marrying Orual herself. Orual says she won't marry, but concedes that he might marry Redival.

Later, Bardia has Orual practice her swordsmanship once more. He says that if they were to fight, she would probably kill him. He tells her that if she feels frightened when she's about to fight, it's natural and she must ignore it. She needs better armor, so they go to the King's room to find some. The Fox sits at his bed. As Orual and Bardia are debating about the armor, the Fox tells them that the King has just died. They finish finding armor before bothering about his body, and his death causes little disturbance.

PART 1: CHAPTER 19

Often the most important part of a day takes up the least time, Orual says. It takes very long to prepare for Orual's battle with Argan, even though the battle itself is short. Orual wants the Fox to come well-dressed, but he doesn't like the clothes of Glome. Then Bardia wants Orual to remove her **veil** for the fight so that it doesn't hinder her vision, but she refuses. Eventually she has her servant, Poobi, sew her a hood with eye holes. It makes her look like a ghost, so hopefully it will frighten Argan. All of them, including Trunia, set out on horseback. Trunia asks where the champion is, but Orual makes him wait to find out.

Though Orual feels only joy at the fact that the Fox will remain in Glome, she will later regret that she didn't force him to leave. Her possessive nature kept him from pursuing his other loves. In becoming the Queen, Orual must leave behind her obsession with Psyche, which also means burying her guilt about Psyche.



Orual has much of what she has desired—attention and admiration in large quantities. Her veil continues to provide her with power and mystery, making her almost like the gods in refusing to reveal herself. Redival has changed little, still constantly seeking love from men, perhaps because she felt cheated of Orual's love.



With her ugliness hidden, Orual receives attention of the sort she never has, which proves that there's nothing fundamentally unlovable about her, as she seems to think. However, Orual wants to preserve her power for herself, not give it to Trunia just as she wins it.



Though the King has played such a major and damaging role in Orual's life, he becomes insignificant in death. The fact that Orual and her advisors practically ignore the King's passing seems to be her final blow against him. It's particularly triumphant that she has already taken over his powers while he still lived, and furthermore, he dies watching her take over the masculine realm that he so valued.



Orual's veil has quickly become an integral part of her. For her purposes today, it gives her power and inspires fear, as she wants to spook Argan. In making her look like a ghost, the hood both suggests supernatural powers and seems to invoke the ghost of her old self that she is slowly strangling. The attempts to find good clothes make it seem as though the group is on their way to a celebration, not a duel to the death.



Nobles wait at the palace gate to accompany the party. Orual thinks of Psyche going this way to heal the people and then to be sacrificed. She wonders if she is becoming Psyche by also being an offering to the gods. Now she can only think of maintaining a show of bravery. The nobles around her think she'll lose the battle, but the commoners are celebrating in the streets. They don't actually care about Orual; they're excited for the free entertainment.

Once at the appointed place, Arnom must sacrifice a bull. Argan sits with his men on the other end of the field. Orual finds it strange that one of them will soon kill the other. Both of them eat a bit of the bull and take oaths. The preparations seem endless. Finally all is ready, and the Fox is very distressed. Trunia is shocked when Orual reveals herself as the champion. She and Argan start to fight.

Argan doesn't begin to respect Orual until she skins his hand with her sword. She isn't afraid anymore because the fight seems just like her practice bouts with Bardia. Before long, she knows he won't kill her, but she worries she won't kill him either. If it lasts too long, his strength might tire her out. Then she sees his **face** change, and she doesn't understand why; it's the look of someone who knows he's about to die. When he makes a mistake, she cuts his leg where it will never stop bleeding.

Everyone runs to Argan, but he can't be saved. Orual suddenly feels weak and different, perhaps the way women feel when they lose their virginity. Bardia and the Fox run to congratulate her, and she weeps. She has to talk to everyone and do many things and she wishes for peace and quiet. She mounts her horse and takes Trunia's hand. They face the soldiers from Phars and ask whether they have any doubts about who will be the next king of Phars. Some gallop away, but most declare allegiance to Trunia.

Bardia tells Orual she must have a feast for the important nobles. They don't have much food, but they'll make do. She immediately must act the woman's part again, arranging for guests. On the ride back to the palace, Trunia begs her to let him see her **face**, and, as this kind of attention is so unknown to her, she enjoys it immensely. Everything seems wonderful, but she also knows that the gods always do this before they ruin things.

Orual imagines herself following in Psyche's footsteps both literally and metaphorically. Both women go willingly to their possible death, supported in their journeys by the people, and their survival has a deep effect on the future of Glome. Even before she fights, Orual has already drummed up support for her rule in Glome.



The fact that Arnom prepares for the battle with a sacrifice to Ungit suggests that she, or the gods in general, will preside over the duel and decide who the rightful winner is. Orual may think that the gods will cause her death here, but, in fact, her punishment must be extended far longer.



Orual was afraid that her courage would fail her, but, in fact, she finds that she feels confident in her ability to win the duel. Though Orual has considered killing Psyche, Revival, her father, and herself, Argan ends up being the first person she kills, and it's an honorable killing. The ease with which she does it suggests that killing comes almost naturally to her.



Orual will never lose her virginity due to the effects of her ugliness, but her embrace of masculinity means that she goes through a male version of this rite of passage, affirming her masculine strength over her femininity. Orual comes out triumphant both personally and diplomatically, having gained the respect of her people and the friendship of a neighboring kingdom.



Orual proves that she can move fluidly between genders. Her success at a masculine rite of passage leads into her playing the conventional woman, absorbed in domestic concerns and navigating the flirtations of a man. This is one of the happiest moments of her life, basking in the love and attention of so many people. Yet the gods' form of justice means it can't last.



When they reach the palace, a slave girl whispers to Bardia, and he worriedly tells Orual that he must go home because his wife is giving birth. Orual wants to be angry, but instead she gives him a fine ring to offer to **Ungit** for his wife's sake. Orual behind thinks bitterly that she is nothing more than Bardia's work—his real life lies with his family.

The banquet that night is the only one Orual sits all the way through. In future, she only comes in briefly to give a speech, which creates a useful impression of her. At this banquet, she is the only woman. Most of her feels she shouldn't be there, but the queenly part of her feels like both a warrior and a woman alluring to Trunia.

After the banquet, Orual thinks how disgusting men are. They got drunk and ate with no manners at all. She wonders if Bardia acts that way, which brings on loneliness for both him and Psyche. She wishes she could have married Bardia and had Psyche as their daughter. She discovers that if she drinks enough, her grief seems noble. She revels in her sorrows. When she goes to bed, she thinks she hears a girl crying, but tells herself it's only the **chains in the well**. She must not investigate because she is a great Queen and a brave warrior. She has her servant Poobi shut the window, contemplates how she could have killed the King, and decides that the Queen will kill Orual.

PART 1: CHAPTER 20

The next day, they burn the King's body. The day after, Redival becomes engaged to Trunia. Finally, the palace goes back to normal. As the years pass, the narrator becomes more the Queen and less Orual. Orual has been trapped far within the Queen. The Queen knows that the stories about her reign greatly exaggerate most of what she's done. In truth, she fights three wars alongside her soldiers. Bardia and another noble really lead the army, and whenever she finds herself in battle, she wishes she weren't there. The only time she does anything great is once, when Bardia is surrounded and she kills seven men to save him.

The gods' punishment comes, in part, as a reminder to Orual that Bardia cares more about his wife and family than about her. However, Orual is learning to control her passions, so she gives him a gift. Ironically, the gift is an offering to the goddess not only of fertility, but also of jealousy.



Orual's discussion of this banquet as one of many gives the impression that she will rule for many years and learn to navigate her image, using the gods' tactic of remaining mysterious to maintain power. For Orual, being Queen means she can recognize and unite her masculine and feminine sides.



Orual finally admits that she's in love with Bardia, finding that even with all of the attention on her, she still needs the love of the two people she truly adores. As she decides to entirely bury her old self in favor of her new Queen persona, she must deny once and for all her lost love for Psyche and the pain that she caused Psyche. She does so by refusing to pay attention to the sound of the chains, even though this could be the one time that it isn't the chains. Orual will be no more.



Orual quickly gives up any fantasies she had of marrying Trunia, instead acting in the best interests of the kingdom and her power. She manages to repress her old self and become someone new who doesn't have to feel the guilt of what her past self did. For once, the ferociousness of her love has positive consequences, as it allows her to act with almost superhuman strength to save Bardia. However, even this heroic act is one of violence.



The Queen's strength comes from her excellent advisors, Bardia and the Fox, who are honest and loyal. It helps that they don't think of her as a woman (essentially due to her ugliness). Her strength also comes from her **veil**. When people can't see her **face**, they find her voice beautiful. As fewer people remember ever seeing her face, they begin to speculate about what the veil hides, guessing that she has an animal's face or no face at all. Some say her beauty is so tremendous that it would drive men mad or make **Ungit** jealous. In sum, the Queen becomes an object of mystery and fear, which adds to her power.

Early on, the Queen moves to a different side of the palace to avoid the sound of the **chains in the well**. But no matter where she goes, she finds that she can still hear the sound at night. She's terrified of it, but she's also scared of not hearing it, in case one day it will be Psyche. However, she knows that if Psyche were alive and wanted to return, she already would have. When she thinks Psyche must be dead or a slave, she goes to the Pillar Room to bury herself in work. For years, she has agents all over the world searching for Psyche, to no avail.

In the first year of her reign, the Queen hangs Batta after finding out that she has always blackmailed the other slaves into giving her valuables. She sells or frees many slaves, giving the freed ones their own homes and sometimes letting them marry for love. She sets Poobi free. Many of the freed slaves become successful and loyal subjects.

The Queen also makes the silver mines more productive. The King only used them as a place to send people as punishment, and they never made much money. The Queen finds a good overseer, buys strong slaves, provides good living conditions, and lets the slaves go after they have each mined a certain amount of silver. The mines become a source of wealth for the kingdom.

The Queen gives the Fox pleasant rooms and land, as well as money to buy books. Traders come to Glome once they realize that someone in Glome is buying books, though the books are very expensive. Orual and the Fox manage to buy eighteen books, which is impressive for Glome. They have Homer, Patroclus, Euripides, Socrates, and Heraclitus, among others. Arnorn and other noblemen begin to learn from the Fox.

Much of the Queen's power comes from her denial of her femininity, and thus the symbolic denial of her ability to feel emotion. In this situation, her ugliness works to her advantage, even though it also causes her pain for Bardia to think of her as a man. The Queen's face becomes a frightening object of speculation just like the face of the god was to her. At the same time, people treat her more like Psyche; they are in awe of her possible beauty, and they think it might cause conflict with the gods.



The Queen tries to completely block out the old Orual by escaping from the sound of the chains. This sign of her guilt will not go away so easily, though, which indicates that the guilt lives on within her and thus cannot be escaped. No matter how hopeless she knows it is, she continues to almost expect Psyche to show up on her doorstep. No matter how much she tries to become someone new, her love lives on, and so does the pain it caused.



Batta represents the fears and weaknesses of the Queen's childhood, as well as a cruel side of the Queen herself. Hanging Batta is another step towards completely killing Orual. The Queen allows love and freedom to reign hand in hand, in contrast to her own personal enslaving form of love.



The Queen turns away from the influence of the King upon her, not only reforming his way of running the kingdom but also doing it in a way that denies the violence and cruelty that he passed on to her. The fact that the Fox was a slave undoubtedly helps convince her of their humanity.



Though the Queen doesn't realize her love has devoured the Fox's potential for a happy life at home in Greece, she does help him try to recreate a sense of Greece in Glome. Together, they begin to turn the barbarian kingdom of Glome into a more civilized, learned place.



The Queen begins getting to know her nobles, and she meets Bardia's wife, Ansit. She expected her to be beautiful, but, in fact, she is not. The Queen tries hard to be polite and loving to Ansit, but Ansit speaks little around her. The Queen wonders if Ansit might be jealous of her. The Queen knows that Ansit has borne Bardia's children, but she has never shared the hardships of war with him. The Queen knows a side of Bardia that Ansit doesn't. Bardia goes back and forth between them, never thinking of any conflict the two women might have.

The Queen doesn't like having to sacrifice in the house of **Ungit**. At least Ungit is weaker now, she thinks. Arnom has let more light into the temple and he keeps it cleaner. He is also learning from the Fox to see the gods philosophically. He orders a woman-shaped statue of Ungit like the Greeks have—a contrast to the old, blank stone statue.. He has to send away men who have learned from the Greeks to have the statue made. The Queen contributes money, feeling that the new statue helps to destroy the Ungit that used to terrify her. When the statue is finished, it becomes a wonder and an object of pilgrimage.

The Queen realizes she'll never find a room where she can't hear the **chains in the well**, so she builds ridiculously thick walls around the well. She can no longer hear the sound, but for a while she's tormented by dreams that she has walled up Psyche or Orual. The dreams eventually end, and the next year she defeats the kingdom of Essur.

The Fox grows old and plays a less active role; he writes a history of Glome, once in Greek and once in Glome's language. He doesn't know Glome's language as well as he thinks he does, but the Queen doesn't tell him this. As he ages, he strays from philosophy towards beauty and poetry. Sometimes he mistakes the Queen for Psyche or other people.

The Queen doesn't have much time for the Fox. She makes many changes for the good of Glome, but she doesn't care much about them in the long run. Every night, she must retreat alone to her own empty being. She hates evenings and mornings, and the days and years feel irritatingly repetitive.

The Queen has always believed that her ugliness prevents Bardia from loving her and she has been jealous of the beauty that keeps Ansit at his side, but she finds that these sentiments were unfounded, since Ansit isn't even beautiful anymore. The Queen begins to see that she might have access to a valuable part of Bardia that Ansit doesn't ever see, but her love continues to be possessive, as she takes pleasure in Ansit's loss.



The Queen still feels uncomfortable around Ungit, probably because she doesn't want to acknowledge that Ungit's jealous, destructive love lives within her. Ungit becomes weaker as the mysteries around her are stripped away: the temple is well-lit, and the statue allows her to be viewed as a human-shaped woman rather than as a blank stone that could represent anything at all. As these mysteries are taken from Ungit, the Queen begins to use them for herself, as with her veil.



The sound of the chains continues to pursue the Queen, since it really comes from within her own guilt. The walls around the well act as a sort of veil, hiding the guilt of her old self just as her own veil allows her to hide the ugliness of her true soul.



The Fox's philosophy has always represented atheism, and he associates poetry with the foolishness of emotion and misguided belief in the gods. In his old age, as death nears, he begins to fall back on the potential existence of the gods, which suggests that this is a more natural state. In death, his ghost will fully embrace this truth.



The Queen originally threw herself into her role to distract herself from the sorrow and guilt of her former life. It becomes apparent that she's still trying to escape that life, and she finds nothing truly fulfilling in her position that can mend her broken soul. She's still not dealing with her own faults; instead she's trying not to acknowledge herself at all.



The Fox dies, and the Queen writes Greek verses for his gravestone. He is buried behind the pear trees, where he, Psyche, and Orual were happy. Life goes on until the Queen decides she's sick of seeing the same places over and over. She decides she'll travel to other kingdoms and let her advisors take care of Glome in her absence, since it's in such good shape. She leaves three days later, taking Bardia's son Ilerdia and Poobi's daughter, Alit.

The Queen's Greek poetry is a nod to the Fox's love of his homeland, but she still doesn't see that she should have let him go home. She has nothing to make her truly happy in Glome. Her desire to see new places echoes Psyche's old desire to go to the Mountain, as well as Orual's hope that she and Psyche would wander the world together, either in punishment or to escape Psyche's captor.



PART 1: CHAPTER 21

The Queen first goes to Phars. Because they harvest later there, the party sees everything happening that just finished in Glome. They stay in Trunia's palace and the Queen notices that Redival (now his wife) has become fat and ugly. Trunia ignores Redival but gets on well with the Queen. His second son, Daaran, will inherit the throne when the Queen dies. She knows she could love him, but she refuses to make herself vulnerable in that way again.

The repetition of the harvest as they travel through Phars indicates that this trip will take the Queen back in time in a more major way, as well. The Queen, who has always been jealous of beauty, finds that it decays over time, at least in the cases of both Redival and Ansit. Part of the Queen's burying of Orual seems to be a conscious denial of her ability to love, which she does in order to save herself from pain.



When they leave Phars, they pass through mountains to enter Essur. The Queen and her companions become good friends and enjoy their travels together through the beautiful land. They spend three nights with the King of Essur. Both he and his wife act deferentially to the Queen.

This part of the trip is reminiscent of Orual's journey with Bardia to find Psyche on the Mountain. In both, she is happy, relishes the landscape, and feels an enjoyable connection to her companions. In fact, Bardia's son is even with her now, which strengthens the parallel.



The Queen planned to go home after this, but she hears of a hot spring nearby and decides to visit. It's an autumn day, and the Queen promises herself that she'll start resting more when she returns home, and that she will let Bardia rest too. They've done enough. The party finds a good camping place near the spring. Sitting alone in the forest, the Queen hears a temple bell. She walks towards the sound and finds a small white temple with Greek columns.

As Orual previously found Psyche near a stream, she will now find her in a different form near another body of water. Just as the Queen begins to feel more contented with herself and less inclined to work herself into distraction, she will be faced with a new reminder of her past that won't allow her this peace of mind. This is part of the gods' punishment.



Inside the temple, it's very quiet, cool, and clean. The altar holds a wooden statue of a woman with a black **veil** over her **face**. The Queen likes this much better than the house of **Ungit**. A priest appears and asks for an offering, which the Queen gives, inquiring as to the name of the goddess. The priest says she is called Istra. This is a common name, so the Queen doesn't react. The priest of Istra explains that she is a young goddess who used to be a mortal. The Queen pays him to tell the story.

At first, the Queen likes this Greek-style temple. Though the goddess in this temple is essentially Psyche, the veil on the statue also connects her to Orual. This suggests that they are in some way one, as the god commanded they would be. The priest makes the interaction a commercial transaction, establishing the sense of false religion that permeates the scene.



The priest of Istra tells the story as though he has often repeated it, and the Queen realizes that he's telling the story of her own life and Psyche's. A goddess was jealous of Istra's beauty and forced her to be sacrificed on a mountain, and the goddess's son took her to his **palace**, where he came to her only in darkness. The priest claims that the god couldn't show his **face** because his mother would be angry with him for marrying her enemy, which the Queen thinks is silly.

The Queen is glad she's only hearing this story now, since she's not as disturbed by it as she would have been in the past. She asks how the priest of Istra came to hear this story, but he's confused and says only that it's the sacred story of the goddess. As he continues telling it, the Queen suddenly becomes angry. He has the story wrong, she says, when he claims that both of the sisters went to visit Istra and saw her **palace**.

The Queen thinks the gods have mangled her story to spite her. There's no other way a human would have learned of the **palace's** existence. The gods have revealed part of the truth to a mortal, but have hidden the most important part—the fact that they made Orual guess whether or not the palace was real. In the world of the story, the gods present themselves clearly instead of asking humans to figure out what's true. In that kind of world, Orual would not have blundered. It seems entirely unfair to tell the story as though Orual could see the palace. But she knows that the story will be spread in this form, which makes her doubt the truth of other sacred stories.

The Queen asks the priest of Istra why the sisters wanted to get Istra away from the god if they had seen the **palace**. He replies that they were jealous of all that she had. In that moment, the Queen decides to write this complaint against the gods. For years she has kept away from the gods, almost believing they didn't exist. But now she knows the gods are still against her, and they know all and have unending strength. She must write the truth and make a case against them.

The Queen is disgusted that the gods would use such a debasing lie by saying that she was jealous of Psyche. The priest speaks of Istra weeping, and the Queen can almost hear it. He says that Istra wanders and the goddess forces her to complete many seemingly impossible tasks; when she finishes them all, the goddess will let her go, and Istra will become a goddess herself. This corresponds in the temple with the removal of the black **veil** from her statue.

The Queen's life has been turned into a myth. However, the priest seems to simplify the story, first by suggesting that the god's concealment of his face was in order to avoid Ungit's anger. The Queen sees his concealment as the trickery of the gods, a riddle intended to lead her onto a false and destructive path and divide her from Psyche.



While the Queen obviously knows the story comes from real life, the priest sees it as just a story. This is ironic, since, as a religious man, he's expected to believe in the truth of his religion. His story's inclusion of Revival takes away from the Queen's sense of her superior love for Psyche, and the visibility of the palace ruins her justification for her destructive actions.



Though the Queen has not argued with the gods in many years, this false story rekindles her anger against them. She believes that the story shows a world in which all of the gods' faults are erased, and Orual's faults become unjustifiable. The Queen objects to the story making it seem that she could see the palace; however, the fact remains that she did see the palace, if only briefly. She still doesn't want to acknowledge this truth because she knows it works against her.



Though the story certainly isn't entirely true, it does reveal aspects of the truth that the Queen has denied. She is most scandalized by the priest's suggestion that she was jealous of Psyche, and yet it will become clear that jealousy did partly motivate her. The story forces the Queen to confront herself in a way she doesn't want to, so she heaps all the blame on the gods and refuses to examine any possible truth it could reveal.



The force with which the Queen opposes the accusation of jealousy suggests that it hits on something true that she really doesn't want to acknowledge. The removal of the veil occurs at the moment Psyche becomes a goddess, suggesting that when the Queen can remove her veil, or come to recognize her faults truly, she might also reach a divine state.



The Queen asks when Istra's **veil** will be removed. The priest of Istra says they do it every spring, but the Queen wants to know whether Istra has become a goddess yet in real life. The priest doesn't understand, and tells of the rituals for different seasons. The Queen suggests that the sisters in the story might tell a different tale, and he says that jealous people always do.

Again, the Queen and the priest speak on different levels of reality. The priest insists that the entire worship of Istra is only symbolic. Ironically, the Queen believes more fully than he in the gods' activity. The priest unconsciously points out that Orual's perspective on the story might be influenced by her emotions, and thus it is not an objective truth.



The Queen leaves the temple to find that the sun has set. She hides her emotions from her companions. The next day, though, she realizes that she can't be happy until she writes her case against the gods. As they travel back to Glome, she hardly notices what goes on around them. Instead, she remembers every detail of her own story, freeing "Orual" from that place deep inside her. She feels sorrow, but always more indignation. She must write quickly, she thinks, before the gods can stop her. She urges her companions to ride farther each day, and wakes them early in the mornings. She becomes silent, and they wonder what's wrong.

Any peace that the Queen had found within herself has evaporated with this reminder of the injustices of the past. She feels driven to prove how unfairly the gods have treated her. The old self she has buried begins to emerge, making itself available for examination, though she must first become that old self again before she will gain any perspective on it. She feels all the emotions she has repressed for years.



When the Queen gets home, few issues have arisen in her absence. She hears that Bardia is ill in bed, but Arnom tells her it isn't serious. She doesn't fear for him because she knows how his wife fusses over him.

Though the Queen loves Bardia, her continuing jealousy and resentment of his wife wins out over her love, keeping her from acting on her care for him.



Finally, she writes her book. Now she asks the reader to judge between her and the gods. They gave her only Psyche to love, and then took her away. Furthermore, they forced her to be responsible for Psyche's fate and wouldn't reveal what her true situation was. When Orual guessed wrong, the gods punished her through Psyche. On top of this, they started a story in which Orual purposefully hurt Psyche out of jealousy.

The Queen has set out her complaint against the gods, and the reader now has the whole story from which to judge. Was Orual at fault, or were the gods? She thinks that the gods forced her to make important decisions without giving her adequate information, and then treated her unfairly when she made an understandable mistake.



The Queen thinks the gods are unfair. They won't leave humans alone, but they also won't guide humans plainly. Instead, they give hints that people can never see clearly or understand, which is torture. Thus, gods harm humans more than anything else. The Queen welcomes their response to her accusation, but she thinks they might just punish her. However, if they do this, everyone will know they have no answer.

The Queen's main complaint against the gods is their mystery. She resents the fact that they keep themselves always hidden, yet won't let humans live their own lives. She doesn't think they'll have any good answer to her complaint, and, to avoid admitting their faults, they'll just strike her down. Orual herself, however, is the one who will have to admit her faults.



PART 2: CHAPTER 1

Not long after finishing writing Part I, Orual begins to write again. She is dying. She can't rewrite the book, so she has to add to it. She now understands herself much better, partly from the very process of writing. She has had to write down emotions that she had forgotten, and, in the end, she realized that her memories had not been truthful for many years. But this was only the beginning of the change in her.

When the Queen is writing about her happy childhood years, she receives word that an embassy is coming from another king. When they get to Glome, she finds that their leader is a monstrously fat, conceited eunuch. He seems familiar, and eventually she realizes it's Tarin, who was once Redival's lover. He reminds her that it was her father who made him a eunuch, luckily for him, since eunuchs are valued at his king's court. Tarin says he's glad the Queen's father's temper got him out of being a guard in a backwards little kingdom like Glome.

Tarin asks about Redival, and the Queen tells him she's the Queen of Phars. Tarin remembers Redival as pretty, though he only took pity on her because she was lonely. She used to say that Orual loved her until the Fox and Psyche came, and then Orual stopped loving her. The Queen isn't sure whether to believe him, and she still doesn't like Redival. But she's never considered how Redival felt about her loving Psyche and the Fox—she's always thought she was the one who should be pitied, since Redival had beauty.

The Queen continues writing, sorting through her own motivations. At night, she dreams of sorting a pile of seeds, knowing she'll be punished if she stops or makes a mistake. She's pretty sure she'll fail, but there's the slightest chance she'll succeed, so she must continue. Sometimes she's an ant, and has to carry the seeds like huge stones.

The Queen is so focused on her work that she hardly thinks of Bardia, except to be angry that he isn't around to work on affairs of state so that she has more time to write. When she finally finishes her book, she actually listens to Arnom and realizes that Bardia is far sicker than she thought. She wants to go to him immediately, but Arnom tells her that a visit would only make Bardia think of all the work he needs to be doing and thus further tire him out. The Queen accepts this, since she would do anything to help Bardia live.

The Queen's new perspective shows the reader that something has happened since the Queen ended her story. In part, the very act of writing her story down has led her to examine her own motivations in the conflict with Psyche and find that she has long deceived herself.



Even while in the process of telling her story as the reader has heard it in Part I, the Queen was experiencing events that changed her view of the past. Tarin is a figure who belongs securely in Orual's youth, as she has hardly thought of him since he left Glome. However, he now appears to modify the Queen's understanding of that past. The Queen's lack of anger in the face of Tarin's insults shows that she has moved away from her similarity to the King.



Orual always saw Redival as very self-satisfied and entirely dismissive of Orual's personal value. Tarin, however, paints her in an entirely different light; her cruelty to Psyche came in part from her jealousy of Orual's love for Psyche, which Redival felt had been stolen from her. Orual has always seen herself as the wronged and unlovable one, but Tarin's story forces her to see that others have desired love that she refused to give.



The dream indicates that the Queen's writing is a sort of divine punishment by which she must discover truths about herself; it will later become clear that sorting seeds was a punishment that the gods sent to Psyche. Orual, however, takes on Psyche's pain, helping Psyche as an ant.



Just as Orual failed to appreciate Redival's love for her, she now fails to recognize that Bardia needs her, as she's so wrapped up in herself. Arnom recognizes that Bardia associates the Queen with work and stress, mostly because he's so loyal to her. Ansit will also emphasize this aspect of the Queen's relationship with Bardia. To her credit, the Queen denies herself the comfort of visiting Bardia in order to preserve his health.



Five days later, Bardia dies. The worst part is that the Queen never told him she loved him. At the funeral, she can't beat her breast for him because she isn't family. Three days later, she goes to visit his widow, Ansit. She feels like Ansit is her enemy, but also the only person she can talk to about Bardia's death.

The Queen has always kept her love for Bardia a personal secret, essentially hoarding it for herself rather than letting him feel its warmth. Her jealousy of Ansit has also poisoned her relationship with Bardia.



Ansit seems very calm, and she is beautiful in a proud way. The Queen offers words of sympathy, but Ansit is deferential and distant. The Queen begs her to be more familiar, since she also feels the loss of Bardia painfully. They sit, and the Queen says that Bardia's death was very unexpected. Ansit tells her that he wasn't strong to begin with, which shocks the Queen. He worked himself too hard, Ansit says, and should have retired years before. The Queen says he never seemed old, but Ansit replies that he would never have shown his weariness in front of her. In fact, he has been worked to death in the wars and the affairs of state.

Though Ansit is no longer physically beautiful, the Queen recognizes a beauty in her that comes from her inner character. The different ways in which the Queen and Ansit loved Bardia become apparent, as Ansit has seen clearly the fatigue in Bardia of which the Queen was entirely unaware. The Queen was too wrapped up in the supposed injustice of the fact that Bardia couldn't love her romantically to see all the ways in which he sacrificed himself for her.



The Queen doesn't know whether to believe Ansit. She says she's worked just as much as Bardia did. Ansit replies that women are tougher than men, and the Queen is younger. The Queen blames Bardia for not telling her he needed rest, but Ansit says he would never have done that, and her servants have loved her very much.

The Queen doesn't want to accept that she might have played some role in Bardia's death. As she always does, she blames the object of her love for his own demise, though her love and his own love for her actually caused his overwork. Ansit recognizes the love that Orual denies out of self-pity.



The Queen spits that she has never had love except from her servants. She thinks Ansit has had all the love she herself hasn't. However, Ansit feels she only had the part of Bardia that the Queen left her. The two of them shared so much in the wars, and he always came home older and more tired and went right back to the palace to advise her. The Queen suddenly realizes that Ansit is jealous of her.

The Queen has never been able to recognize all of the love directed at her, preferring to believe that she has been wronged. In fact, Ansit also feels wronged, which shows the Queen that she had much more of Bardia's love and devotion than she ever realized. Both women have been jealous of each other, neither able to find satisfaction in what she had.



This seems so preposterous that the Queen pulls off her **veil**, asking whether Ansit is jealous of her **face**. Ansit stares at her, but not in fear of her face. She begins to cry as she sees that the Queen has also loved Bardia and suffered from it. Suddenly they're holding each other. Now that Bardia is dead, they can't hate each other for loving him; instead, they're the only ones who understand each other's pain.

The Queen has shown no one her face in many years, and obviously still believes it makes her unlovable. When she does reveal her face, it becomes evident that it shows her inner character. For this brief moment, the pain of love overwhelms both women's jealousy, and they are united in their grief.



However, their sympathy doesn't last long. The Queen puts her **veil** back on and Ansit's **face** hardens again. The Queen says Ansit has had her revenge by calling her Bardia's murderer. She asks whether Ansit really believes this, and Ansit replies that she knows it. The Queen asks why she didn't tell her earlier. Ansit says that she couldn't take Bardia's life's work away from him for her own comfort. They didn't belong to each other; they each had to do what was best for their own lives. She points out that the Queen will also lead her son Ilerdia away from her with his work, but she would never do anything to stop it.

The Queen asks whether Ansit can bear doing nothing to keep her loved ones by her. Ansit exclaims that the Queen must not understand love, or perhaps her love is different than commoners'. The Queen loves like the gods and the Shadowbrute, loving and devouring at the same time. Angry, the Queen points out that she saved Bardia's life in a battle. Ansit retorts that she only saved Bardia's life for her own use. She's consumed the lives of everyone around her.

The Queen imagines torturing Ansit to death. She tells her that the King would have cut her tongue out, but she leaves. As she rides home, she thinks she'll send Ilerdia home to be a common farmer so that Ansit can't blame her for consuming his life. But in the end, she doesn't.

The gods are working on her. The Queen soon realizes that Ansit's words are true. She has always given Bardia extra work to keep him from leaving her. Furthermore, she often pushed conversation in directions that would lead to others mocking him about his faithfulness to Ansit. She thinks that her love was almost entirely hatred in those moments. At night, she used to imagine Ansit gone and Bardia begging her forgiveness, which she wouldn't give easily.

Once the Queen works through all of these thoughts, she has stopped longing for Bardia. Perhaps the strongest passions aren't necessarily the most deep-seated. Mostly, her love for Bardia has become disgusting to her. She realizes that she never gave him anything, and the jealousy of the women in his life undoubtedly made life hard for him. But when she no longer wants Bardia, she feels as though her entire self is gone.

Ansit contrasts her pure form of love, similar to that of Psyche and the Fox, with Orual's devouring love. Ansit never interfered in Bardia's life, even though she saw that the Queen was working him to death, because she knew that it wasn't her place to control Bardia. Orual has never understood this aspect of love; she believes that love naturally implies a right to keep her loved ones at her side.



Ansit recognizes that the Queen's way of loving mixes with hatred and depends on jealousy. The Queen hates the gods for taking Psyche from her, but she herself loves in just as possessive a way as Ungit does. Ansit finally makes the Queen see that her love is not true love, but in fact a cruel form of emotion that destroys those she loves.



The Queen's first reaction to Ansit's honesty is to let the violent part of her that comes from her father take over. She still doesn't entirely understand that Ansit doesn't want Ilerdia to abandon his dreams; Ansit's love allows Ilerdia to find his own happiness.



The Queen is forced to eventually recognize this part of her that she has denied for so long, and she believes the change is due to the gods' intervention. This is part of her punishment. She sees the cruel forms that her love took, even recognizing instances that Ansit didn't know about. She only wanted to control Bardia. For her, love and hate were not opposites.



When the Queen sees herself truly, she realizes that she never loved Bardia truly, and her relationship with him can only represent all the bad parts of her. Her entire life has centered around her love and the sense of wrong done to her by those she loved; thus, when she recognizes the falsity of this point of view, she hardly knows who she is. This makes way for a new Orual to arise.



PART 2: CHAPTER 2

A few days later, there's a ritual for the new year. Arnom stays in the house of **Ungit** overnight and then ceremonially fights his way out, although everything happens symbolically. The Queen goes into the temple an hour before the ceremony. The weather is beautiful, which makes her not want to enter the oppressive and smelly atmosphere of the temple.

She sits on a flat stone opposite the stone that is **Ungit**. Arnom sits to her right, and the temple girls sit in rows at the doors to their rooms, where they live their whole lives. The Queen thinks that men's semen goes to waste on these girls when it could produce healthy children. Men also waste their money here, and the girls are consumed and wasted.

The story goes that the stone, **Ungit**, pushed herself out of the earth at the beginning of the world. She has no **face**, but that means that the lumps of the rock form countless faces. Now blood has been poured over her, and the Queen sees a very vivid face that almost reminds her of Batta. The Queen remembers running to escape from Batta's smothering embrace.

The Queen asks Arnom who **Ungit** is. He replies that she represents the earth, a way of thinking that he's gotten from the Fox. The Queen asks how Ungit can be both the mother and wife of the god of the Mountain, and Arnom says that these are all metaphors for natural phenomena. The Queen thinks it strange that these tales try to be so cryptic about simple, everyday occurrences like rain.

Eventually a peasant woman comes into the temple to deal with a personal matter. She's crying and holds a pigeon, which a priest kills over **Ungit**. She lies weeping in front of the stone for a long time, but when she gets up to go, the Queen sees that she feels calm. In response to a question, the woman confirms that she feels much comforted. The Queen asks whether she always prays to the rough stone rather than to the Greek-style sculpture. She says she does, because the Greek Ungit wouldn't understand a commoner like her.

When they emerge from the temple, a crowd greets them with celebration. The Queen is amazed at the people's joy. They're so happy just because a man dressed as a bird whirled a sword around and came out of a door. Even enemies are celebrating together.

Ungit is ceremonially birthing the new year, and the Queen's participation in the ritual implies that a new time is beginning in her life, as well—perhaps even one in which she'll fight her way out from Ungit's influence.



The Queen's position across from Ungit implies that they are reflections of each other. The Queen perceives the devouring quality of Ungit's love, pondering how so much is wasted for the sake of Ungit. She doesn't yet see her own relationship to this waste.



Ungit is a very primitive goddess, and the imagery surrounding her shows that she is a fundamental part of humans. Since she has no face of her own, her face can become any face. Batta's cruel, rough love for the princesses is similar to Ungit's love, and the Queen hates both.



Arnom has begun to think of the gods in the symbolic way that the Fox did, rather than in the literal way of the old Priest. This way of thinking erases the power of the mysteries surrounding Ungit, making them into nothing more than metaphors for straightforward acts of nature.



Despite the changes that Arnom has made, the peasant woman proves that the mysteries of the more primitive Ungit provide some spiritual fulfillment that the Fox's civilized rationality cannot. The Greek sculpture of Ungit seems too far removed from the common people, too divinely perfect, while the rough stone version speaks to something fundamental within everyone. Even the Queen's fear of it proves that it moves her.



The people get satisfaction from a crude religion that has never fulfilled the Queen. While the scene confirms the power of ceremony, it also gestures to Lewis's Protestant dislike of elaborate rituals.



The Queen goes home to rest. She hears a voice and opens her eyes to find her father beside her. All the years she's been Queen seem to disappear. The King tells her to leave her **veil** off and come to the Pillar Room. Once there he looks around for the **mirror** that used to hang there, but the Queen has given it to Redival. He produces pickaxes and a crowbar and makes her help him take up the floor. They expose a deep hole.

The King makes Orual jump into the hole with him. They land safely far below in a smaller version of the Pillar Room made out of dirt. The King produces shovels, and they dig a hole in the clay floor. Orual pleads with her father not to make her jump down it, but he does anyway. They land in another Pillar Room, this one carved out of rock. It's shrinking around them. Orual cries out, but realizes that the King doesn't care if he's buried, since he's already dead.

The King asks who **Ungit** is, and drags Orual to the **mirror** that used to hang in the palace. She tries to get away, but fails. In the mirror, her **face** looks like the face of Ungit that she saw that day in the temple. The King poses his question again, and she wails that *she* is Ungit.

The Queen suddenly wakes in her room and realizes it was a dream, but from now on the gods send her so many visions that she can't tell what's real and what isn't. Even so, she knows that she truly is **Ungit**, and she has devoured the people around her. She declares that she won't be Ungit. She takes out her old sword, intending to kill herself, but she's no longer strong enough to wield the sword effectively.

The Queen isn't sure whether anything that happens afterwards is real or a dream, and the only distinction she sees between the two is that more than one person can experience reality, and only one can experience a dream. Yet dreams might be truer.

That night, the Queen gathers a cloak and a cane. She realizes that her **veil** now distinguishes her, and no one will recognize her if she doesn't wear it. She goes out without the veil, thinking that if anyone sees her, they'll recognize her as **Ungit**. Maybe they'll even worship her. She is now holy.

The King represents a cruel part of the Queen that she has long tried to deny, since she hated him. Now, however, he has power over her again, particularly as she obeys his order to leave her veil off, which was actually his first order she directly disobeyed in real life. The fact that the Queen got rid of his mirror shows that she didn't want to see herself truly.



As the King and Orual descend into the earth, they symbolically descend into the depths of Orual's own being. The Pillar Room was the site of some of her worst humiliations under the King, but also has become the site of her power as Queen. Thus, it represents both her strengths and weaknesses, but the King forces her to dig through all of these to find her true self.



Orual has avoided seeing her true character for years by veiling the face that would reveal her nature and getting rid of the mirror that would make her see herself. Now, instead of seeing the physical ugliness that her father always pointed out, Orual finds moral ugliness—the devouring love and cruelty that Ungit represents.



The Queen realizes that she embodies everything that she has always hated about Ungit, and she sees her own sins truthfully. She has considered killing herself in the past as a sort of sacrifice, to bring about others' pity of her, but now she simply can't stand how much she despises herself. She's disgusted at being united with Ungit, whom she has always loathed.



In Psyche's valley, Orual couldn't accept the truth of anything that only Psyche could see. Now she begins to accept the mysteries of the gods and the subjective nature of reality.



The Queen has become defined by her concealment of herself, and so in revealing her true self she becomes unrecognizable. She believes that she has truly become Ungit both physically and spiritually. To her, holiness is disgusting and only another reason to hate herself.



The Queen goes out into the city, thinking of herself as a nightmarish monster, perhaps even the Shadowbrute. She walks to a high bank of the river, intending to jump in and drown herself. She ties her ankles together and hops towards the edge. Just then, the voice of a god tells her not to jump. Having heard a god before, she can't mistake it. The god says that **Ungit** is also in the place people go when they die, and so the Queen must "die before she dies." The Queen points out that she is Ungit, but no answer comes. She no longer thinks she can rebel against the god as she used to, so she goes home. When she wakes, she's unsure whether it was all a dream or not.

It could be argued that Orual has been the Shadowbrute all along, devouring Psyche. The fact that Ungit is in the land of the dead supports the idea that she naturally occurs within all people. The god's command that Orual must "die before she dies" seems to reference Psyche's philosophy of every change in life being a small death in which one leaves behind one's old self. The Queen must recognize her old self (and Ungit's presence within it) and allow that self to die before she can fully die.



PART 2: CHAPTER 3

For days, the Queen ponders the gods' signs, wondering if the gods sometimes merge with humans the way they do with each other. She finds comfort in the words of Socrates, who speaks of dying skillfully and fearing the invisible. She decides she must practice philosophy in Socrates' way, by being calm and stoic, in order to rid herself of **Ungit**'s influence. Although she tries, she always finds herself reverting to her negative emotions, and she thinks she won't be able to change her soul any more than she was able to change her ugly **face**. Orual thinks that the gods won't love anyone unless they have a naturally beautiful soul. Ugly people, in mind or body, are doomed from birth.

At this point, the Queen knows that she has acted in awful ways in the past and she needs to somehow become a better person. To do this, she tries to follow the teachings of the Fox and Greek philosophy, but she doesn't feel any fundamental change in herself. As usual in this novel, Orual's face is equated with her inner character, and since it has always been impossible for her to make herself more physically beautiful, she feels she has the same issue with her soul. By this view, a person's destiny is essentially determined at their birth.



Soon the Queen has another vision. In this one, she's standing on the bank of a river. On the other side, she sees a flock of giant sheep with golden fleece. She wants to steal a bit of their fleece, thinking it will give her beauty. But when she crosses the river, the sheep trample her in their joy. She realizes that the Divine Nature hurts humans without malice, but simply by existing. When she gets to her feet, she sees a woman leisurely picking the wool out of a hedge, out of danger from the sheep.

Though the Queen doesn't yet know it, she dreams of the second task that Psyche has to complete as her punishment. In this case, Orual helps by distracting the sheep so that Psyche can get the wool from the bushes. Orual also learns humbleness here, as she realizes that she isn't even important enough for the gods to purposefully try to hurt her. Instead, the very existence of the gods' strength and beauty puts humans in danger.



Orual doesn't think she'll ever rid herself of **Ungit**. She continues going about her duties, making very fair judgments when she presides in court, but not caring about any of it. Her only comfort is that she loved Psyche well, and the gods are at fault in that quarter. To revel in this, she goes to the garden to reread her own account of her relationship with Psyche.

Orual decides what is just for her people when they have disagreements or commit crimes, but she can't see what is just in the conflict between herself and the gods. Though she has gained some recognition of her past mistakes, she still thinks that she acted well towards Psyche—in fact, this was her greatest crime.



Before she can begin, Orual has another vision. She's walking through a desert, carrying a bowl that she must fill with water from the afterlife because **Ungit** has ordered her to. Eventually she comes to the base of some rocky mountains. She realizes that they're covered in snakes and scorpions, and she knows she has to cross the mountains to reach the water.

A giant eagle wheels down from the sky, clearly from the gods. When Orual gives her name, he says he's not there to help her, but he asks what she's carrying. She realizes it's her book, not a bowl like she thought. The eagle announces her arrival and tells her to follow him to the court of the gods to give her complaint. A crowd of human-like figures emerges from the mountains and push her into a hole in the mountain. It seems she has been expected.

Eventually Orual finds herself standing in darkness on a platform in a gigantic cave. She sees millions of ghosts standing all around her. A veiled judge commands her **veil** to be removed, and tells her to read her complaint aloud. But the book she holds isn't the book she wrote. She wants to protest, but instead she opens it to find strange, cruel handwriting inside, and begins to read against her will.

Orual says the gods will claim that she should know that the real gods aren't like **Ungit**, because she saw a real god. She would have preferred if they were like Ungit; she would have preferred if Psyche had been eaten. It's worse that the gods stole Psyche from Orual. Their beauty lures the best mortals to them with no regard for those left behind. Humans would rather have their loved ones destroyed by the gods than have them kept alive but taken away from the human realm.

Orual knows the gods will say she had enough signs that Psyche's **palace** was real, but she didn't want to acknowledge it. They'll say she was jealous of Psyche—that Orual was angry because she raised Psyche, and then Psyche became practically a goddess without Orual's approval. The very existence of the gods ruins human lives. There's no reason Orual should have been happy for Psyche's happiness if it meant she couldn't have Psyche by her side. Psyche belonged to Orual, and the gods stole her.

This is Psyche's third task of her punishment. The desert could be seen as Orual's life, as she has never known how to nurture any of her relationships in a way that would have allowed them to grow into something life-giving.



Though Orual doesn't realize it, the eagle intends to help Psyche get the water. Orual wrote her book as a plea for justice, but she never expected that the gods would actually give her a hearing. Just as Orual hears the complaints of her people, she now comes to court as a subject of the gods to accuse them of ruining her life.



The fact that the judge is veiled suggests that the judge might be herself. Above all, she's the one who needs to be able to assess her own actions. Orual must read her complaint without her veil on, meaning that her true self will be revealed. The handwriting matches with the strange, cruel story she begins to read, but both show a truer version of herself than she has ever recognized.



This account of Orual's life gives voice to the unconscious motivations that she has always denied. It becomes clear that she was jealous of the gods, and would prefer if Psyche had died rather than leaving Orual for a god. She resents the gods' beauty, but can't deny that beauty. Lewis, a convert himself, may be speaking to the difficulty that people feel when their loved ones become religious and devote themselves to worship.



Orual finally admits all of her selfish motives. She wanted to be able to control Psyche, and she wanted Psyche to admire her, but instead Psyche became better than Orual and left her behind for the gods. Orual even admits that, on some level, she knew that Psyche's palace was real. This has been one of her main complaints, as she constantly insisted that the gods refused to make it clear to her.



The judge stops Orual's speech, and she realizes she has been reading the book over and over. Her own voice sounds strange to her, and she realizes that it's her real voice. After a long silence, the judge asks whether Orual is satisfied, and she says she is.

For the first time, Orual recognizes the truth and speaks from a true part of herself, meaning that she has never before heard the real voice that represents the essence of her being. Orual now sees that she has no reasonable complaint against the gods.



PART 2: CHAPTER 4

The act of hearing herself read her own complaint has satisfied Orual's need for justice. The Fox always told her to say what she meant. Now (still in the mysterious courtroom) she realizes she has spoken the truth of her soul, which she has never before recognized. She understands why the gods don't directly engage with humans—it's pointless for them to try when humans don't speak their own truths. They don't even have **faces** that the gods can meet.

Simply by acknowledging her real motives, Orual sees that everything she thought she hated about the gods was actually her own fault. She was angry with them for not guiding humans, but now she realizes that until people can understand themselves, they would never understand or accept the gods' guidance. She sees humans as absurd, persistently lying to themselves and unworthy of the gods' attention. The entire book has depicted her own process of coming to see her real face so that she can interact with the gods.



The Fox then speaks up in the courtroom, taking the blame for teaching Orual that gods didn't exist—he encouraged her not to believe that **Ungit** represented humans' own sins, and to doubt that real gods do exist. He never told her why people got so much fulfillment out of worshipping Ungit. He still doesn't know the answer, but he knows Ungit is a step on the journey to finding the true gods, who will possess human souls. His empty words were not enough to nourish Orual.

The Fox makes a distinction between Ungit and real gods, suggesting that Ungit is only a crude deity who draws power from humans' shared tendency towards devouring or lustful love. Perhaps she doesn't even exist independently of humans, but can only work through them. Even so, Ungit is closer to the real gods than his stoic philosophy, which shunned the divine mysteries that he now embraces. The human soul needs something more substantial than his philosophy in order to be satisfied.



Orual wants to protest, but the trial is over. She jumps down into the crowd of ghosts, and the Fox finds her. He asks her forgiveness, but instead she says that she should have sent him back to the Greeklands when she freed him, rather than letting him stay, heartbroken, out of love for her. The Fox confirms that she has consumed men's lives, and he must bring her to another judge so that the gods can accuse her. He tells her that the gods are not just.

Orual proves that she really does understand her faults now, applying Ansit's accusation that she consumed Bardia's life to the Fox, as well. If she had loved the Fox more purely, she would have done all she could to ensure his happiness rather than worrying only about her own desire to have him near her. The gods' injustice seems to be a blessing, implying that human crimes deserve worse punishment than they receive.



The Fox leads Orual into a bright chamber. The walls are painted with stories that come alive when she examines them. First she sees a woman walking to a river and tying her ankles together. She realizes it's Psyche. Orual is overcome by Psyche's beauty, and cries out, "Do not do it." She doesn't. In the next picture, Psyche sits in a dark place, sorting a pile of seeds with help from an army of ants. Next, Orual sees Psyche figuring out how to obtain the wool of the gods' sheep. When they charge away, she gathers the fleece from the bushes. Finally, Orual sees herself and Psyche walking through the desert. Psyche seems happy, and sings. The eagle takes a bowl from her and brings it back full of the water of death.

The Fox asks whether Orual understands the pictures. She doesn't see how Psyche could have been so happy, but the Fox says that Orual took on all of Psyche's pain. This was possible because humans and gods are all connected. Orual feels very glad, now knowing that her demands for justice were ridiculous.

On the final wall, Orual sees Psyche walking down into the earth. The Fox explains that everyone is born into the house of **Ungit** and must escape it. Ungit has set Psyche a series of tasks, of which this is the last. She must retrieve beauty in a casket from the queen of death and give it to Ungit so Ungit can be beautiful. However, if she speaks to anyone, she'll never return to the world of the living.

Psyche encounters the people of Glome, who cry for her to become their goddess. Psyche ignores them. Next, the Fox appears and tells Psyche that the gods and her tasks are all her imagination. Instead, she should follow his philosophical principles. Psyche doesn't reply. Finally, she comes to a woman wrapped in misery. Psyche almost falters. The woman's arm is bloody, and she speaks in a moving voice, begging Psyche to come with her. Psyche weeps but continues on.

Orual can't believe she and the Fox did such awful things to Psyche in the name of love. The Fox says that as the gods become more beautiful, this sort of thing will only happen more often. Furthermore, the Divine Nature can change the past, and the present time will soon be the past.

Orual begins to see how the god's prediction that she would "also be Psyche" has come true. She and Psyche have both experienced the same trials in different ways. When Orual sees Psyche about to kill herself, her words are the same as those that she heard the god speak when she tried to jump in the river. This implies that Orual, Psyche, and the gods are all intertwined. When Orual considered jumping, the part of her that was Psyche was also considering it, and the voice they heard came not only from a god, but also from Orual herself. Orual has somehow been present for all of Psyche's tasks and has helped her succeed at what would have been impossible without Orual's help.



Though Psyche was physically present for the tasks, Orual did all of the emotional work, allowing Psyche to live a relatively peaceful life. Though the Fox has renounced most of his philosophy, he has found truth in his old teaching that everything in the world is a part of everything else, and this explains how Orual helped with the tasks.



According to the Fox's explanation, Ungit's cruel, jealous love is the natural state of humanity, and people must fight against it—renounce their sins—to be purified. In Christian terms, people are born burdened with original sin and must follow Christ's example to reach redemption.



On her journey to the land of the dead, Psyche comes across all the trials that she endured in her life before her exile. In fact, her journey seems to be a metaphor for her entire life, in effect a journey towards ultimate death—because she has made it through all of the challenges to her integrity that other people set for her, she proves herself a purified, Christ-like figure and will be made into a goddess.



Orual never recognized the pain that she caused Psyche while she was doing it, but now, from a more objective perspective, her actions seem deplorable. The Fox, however, doesn't think they're any more awful than other humans. In fact, their attempts to keep Psyche from the gods are only the natural response of all humans born into Ungit's legacy of jealousy. Since she causes humans to fight the gods, Ungit can be read as a Satanic figure.



Voices from outside announce that Psyche is approaching, bringing the casket of beauty from the land of the dead. The Fox leads Orual outside into a beautiful courtyard. Psyche appears, and Orual falls to the ground to kiss her feet, hailing her as a goddess. She admits that she only wanted to possess Psyche, but now Psyche can have all of her.

Psyche says Orual must stand up so that she can give her the casket to make **Ungit** beautiful. When Orual stands and looks at Psyche, she is overwhelmed by her beauty, which confirms that Psyche has become a goddess. Yet Psyche seems to be more herself than she ever was. Psyche recalls her prediction that she and Orual would meet in Psyche's **palace** in friendship, and Orual is perfectly joyful.

Suddenly a change comes over the courtyard, and everyone seems awed. They say that the god is coming to judge Orual. Psyche brings her to the edge of a pool as the air becomes bright. Orual feels terrified and ecstatic, and loves Psyche more completely than ever. But she can tell that everything only exists for the sake of the god who is approaching. Orual sees two reflections in the pool, but they are both Psyche, one wearing clothes, the other naked. The voice of the god tells Orual that she is also Psyche. But when she looks up to see him, she finds herself in her own palace gardens, holding her book.

Orual lives four more days. She is weak, and knows she's close to death, but she feels that her soul is almost ready. Arnom and her servants weep for her, but she doesn't understand why she deserves it. She wishes she had brought her heir, Daaran, to Glome and loved him. Now she understands why the god doesn't answer humans. He himself is the answer, and words mean nothing. Her narrative ends in the middle of a sentence.

Story and reality meet as the drawings on the walls become the present action. Orual no longer feels the need to be superior to Psyche, and, in fact she knows that Psyche is far superior to her. This is a moment of reconciliation, the first time that Orual loves Psyche purely and without jealousy.



Orual is Ungit, and Psyche's entire journey, perhaps her entire life, has been for the purpose of making Ungit beautiful; in other words, to help Orual purify her soul, as exterior and interior beauty are always linked in the book. It also becomes clear that the two of them are in Psyche's palace, and now Orual has become worthy of seeing this divine creation.



Though the novel exists in a world with multiple gods, this final climactic scene brings the story into a more Christian frame. The god seems to be not just one of many, but God himself, as everything centers around him and he is the ultimate purpose of everything in the world. The final part of the prophecy comes true. Orual has purified herself to such an extent that she has become as good as Psyche. She is probably the naked reflection, as nakedness is the complete opposite of living veiled. She has stripped away everything that she earlier felt she had to hide, and it has made her beautiful, even divine.



Orual now understands that the gods wouldn't allow her to die until she had recognized herself and purified her soul. She believes she's almost pure enough to die now, and death seems like an accomplishment, an attitude that recalls Psyche's welcoming of death before her sacrifice. Just before she dies, Orual expresses her complete faith in the god and his mysteries, an essentially Christian declaration of monotheistic conviction. Orual has been converted, just like Lewis was. The fact that her narrative is cut off seems to prove her point about the futility of words.



Arnom, who calls himself the priest of Aphrodite, writes that he has put the book in the temple. There are markings at the end that are illegible because Orual's head fell onto them. If a traveler to Greece finds the book, he should take it with him as Orual wanted. Arnom passes this responsibility on to the Priest who will succeed him.

Orual has essentially become a prophet of the god, and the account of her life and religious experiences will be guarded in a temple, as fits the writings of a prophet. Even as Orual's story has illuminated some of the gods' mysteries, she has also created more mystery with the illegible writing at the end of her book, suggesting that faith, by definition, involves belief in something that cannot be fully understood.





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