
DIARY OF A CUPID

By Liselore Goossens

Eros (immortal), son of Ares and Aphrodite (both immortal), is married to Psyche (immortal) and father of Hedone (perpetually 16). Here, he writes about his job as a cupid and his complicated family relations.

Let me begin with a warning to you, dear fellow immortals: this will not be a happy column. (Nor a Doric, Ionian or Corinthian one.) In the past, I have always tried to avoid this topic, but after all these decades of writing about my work as a cupid, I feel it is time I start speaking out about why I despise what has recently become the most important day of the year for those in my profession. Indeed: Valentine's Day. When *exactly* it became so important, I cannot say – but I don't need to explain to you, fellow deities, how any amount of time smaller than a few centuries becomes virtually meaningless when you've lived as long as we have.

Like all of you, I was forced to find a profession when Olympus was dismantled. I know most of us tried to find one close to our natural abilities. My parents became merchants, or whatever they call them these days – traders, sellers, *business people*? I have told you before of my mother's successful beauty company (she recently launched a fantastic new perfume!); my father's trade is more shady and secretive, and I'm not sure how much of it I'm allowed to disclose, so I will not discuss it. My wife has a centuries-long reputation of being a brilliant scholar in the field of the human mind, named 'psychology' after her; she is always doing research and adapting her theories and methods to the mortals' ever-changing mind. (They, foolishly, believe it is mostly a constant thing.) She recently wrote yet another ground-breaking book about it, under yet another pseudonym, that I will tell you all about in my next column.

Others saw Olympus' fall as an opportunity to branch out, so to say, and explore sides of themselves they hadn't delved into before. Did you know, for example, that Hephaestus decided to give up fire and metalwork and for eons now has been using his craftsmanship to design fabulous shoes, because 'even a lame foot deserves to look good' – his words.

And then there are those like my much sighed-about daughter, who opted out of professions and instead started a movement named after herself, and is still a lazy, good-for-nothing ... but enough about Hedone. I have moaned about her and her 'hedonists' often enough. (She insists she is this way through some fault of mine, and likes to quote this mortal that Psyche taught a while ago, but her arguments never makes any sense. I forget what this supposed 'prodigy' was called, too; apparently he knew Oedipus, yet I don't think Oedi ever mentioned his name to me.)

But I digress! I was to talk about Valentine's Day, and instead I spent paragraph after paragraph reminiscing. This is the curse of us immortals, who have all the time in the world to gather memories and acquaintances. I believe I left off at the fall of Olympus, and the moment we all had to find a profession. I was offered a place as a heart surgeon, but politely declined, chiefly because I felt my arrows were neither intended nor suited for cutting up chests. Despite the progress Asclepios and Hygieia have since made, I have never reconsidered. Instead, I requested to remain a cupid, and put the world through several days without love to argue my necessity. This was sufficiently convincing, and with the expanding population of mortals, I have expanded my company accordingly and now manage several thousand cupids; all demigods, not all mine.

So why then do I despise Valentine's Day so much, if that is arguably the busiest, best day of the year for me and my cupids? Because ever since its invention, every single one of my several thousand cupids takes that day off to be with their beloved – leaving me to do all of the work, alone. And that makes this small orb that we gods used to rule very, very large all of a sudden.