

Modern Love

*"I'm still not sure about this,"
Eros said.*

"I mean, it's so . . . unconventional." He shifted his shoulders slightly, trying to ease the knot that had formed a few minutes ago while listening to his wife's suggestion. An errant fleck of dust was immediately brushed from the sleeve of his white duster.

"And your 'conventional' methods always work?" Psyche replied, looking over her shoulder at him. Not waiting for a reply, she started walking down the street, her riding boots clicking in a marching cadence.

"Hey! I just shoot 'em. That's my job. Always has been, and I thought it always would be. I don't care so much how they react to it." Although they were close in height, he had to stretch to keep up with her. "Misunderstandings happen. Miscommunications and bad information get lines crossed. It's not my fault."

Psyche laughed and tossed her long, black mane over a shoulder. "Is that what you call them? 'Misunderstandings?' Sometimes I swear Ares has you on payroll. Giving up your old bow for a crossbow really changed your outlook, didn't it? You get all that repeating marksmanship now."

"The glory of love knows no bounds or restrictions." Eros stuffed his hands deep into his pockets, shrugging down into the high collar. "So a few wars get started because of it."

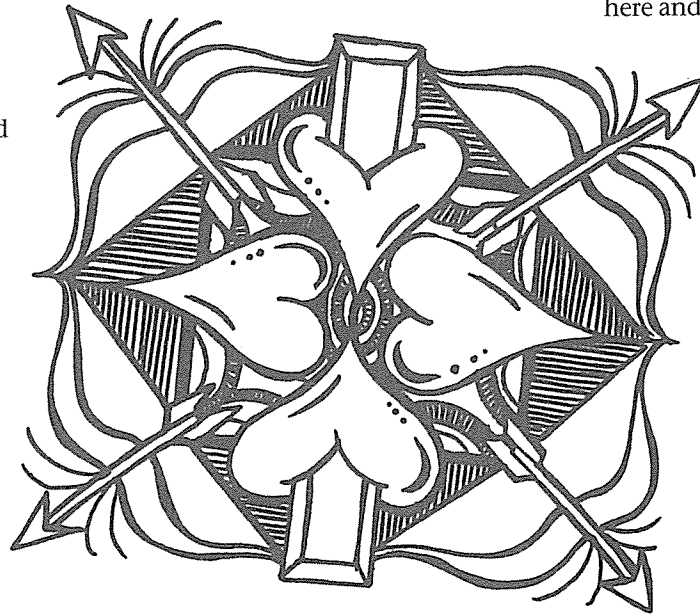
Psyche stopped suddenly and turned to him, making Eros stutter-step so as not to run into her. One long finger jabbed his chest with a red-painted nail. "I'm not talking about Helen again. That was just sheer mischief on your mother's part. But let's be smart here and recognize that she had a

point. Subtlety just does not work well on people these days. You need to change tactics to match the times." Pulling the finger back, she turned to admire her leather-clad form in a shop window. Critically, she checked her makeup, mostly unseen on the dusky hue of her skin. "That's why we're teaming up on this one."

A little irritated, Eros turned to look into the window as well. He brushed a lock of golden hair back from his forehead. "Sometimes you sound a little like Ares yourself. Have you been spending time with him?"

Psyche crossed her arms under her breasts, pushing them dangerously close to the top of her bustier. One hip cocked, a foot tapping, she scowled at Eros' reflection in the window.

"Am I asking you to use a missile-launcher on people? No. I'm just suggesting we use a more obvious method to get people to understand they're in love." Her emerald eyes gleamed as a smile played about her ruby lips. "Besides, it'll be fun."



fiction by
**DANIEL MYERS
& LISA McSHERRY**
artwork by
APRIL CAVERHILL

“Subtlety just does not work well on people these days. You need to change tactics to match the times.”

“All right. All right.” Eros raised his hands to ward off the glare. “I’m here, aren’t I? Let’s just get to it, ‘kay?”

Smiling again, Psyche turned and walked towards the entrance to a small café. Before following Eros admired her ability to make walking in a hard leather jacket look like she wore silk. Adjusting his pants, he followed.

She was already at the wood counter ordering a couple of lattes for them and scanning the room. The clerk rushed to fill her order, taking special care to make the drinks perfect and almost forgetting to ask her to pay. Psyche tipped him outrageously, flirted subtly, and waved Eros to a table by the front window.

As he sat, he glanced to a corner table where two 30-year-old grad students gazed at each other over cups of coffee. Their knees almost touched under the table as they talked in animated tones. Their mouths spoke about their work while their eyes had another conversation entirely.

Eros leaned back and crossed his whitewashed denim-clad legs. Picking up his cup, he asked, “So what’s their story?”


Sipping on her own drink, Psyche pulled a palmtop computer from the inside of her jacket. Tapping briefly on the screen, she read intently – all business now. “They’ve known each other for a few months, since the term start-



ed. Both are just out of unsatisfying, but not bad, relationships. They see each other in classes almost every day and recently began to meet twice a week to edit on another’s thesis work.” She smiled at the screen. “Oh yes, this is perfect. Just last week, both told friends that nothing was going on between them. That neither one was, and I quote, ‘looking for anyone right now.’”

Eros smiled back at her. “Why are they always the last to figure it out?” He considered the couple again briefly. “I could just get out my bow and...”

Psyche shook her head. “Not going to work, my lovely. They’re so engrossed in their work that neither really no-



“So you think this’ll work better? I mean,” he touched the hard ridge along the left side of his coat briefly. “It’s so . . . blunt.”

tices the world around them. Both absolutely believe the work is all that matters to them right now. Iron-clad.”

Eros sighed. “So you think this’ll work better? I mean,” he touched the hard ridge along the left side of his coat briefly. “It’s so . . . blunt.”

“Just what they need, dear.” Psyche was rubbing the side of her own coat now. “Ready?”

Eros nodded, and they both stood, leaving their physical forms sitting at the table chatting away merrily. As they walked across the room, each pulled a long, ash board from under their coats. The silvery wood gleamed under the café’s lights. Eros stopped to stand behind one, Psyche the other.

“Wait for it,” she said, watching the two unknowing targets closely. “Wait . . . for . . . it.”

Eros shifted nervously, his cowboy boots scuffling a bit on the concrete floor. He stopped watching them a moment and looked at Psych.

“I don’t know, hon. Couldn’t I just . . .”

A lull in the students’ conversation had happened, unnoticed by them as they sat staring at each other intently. The silence dragged on.

“Now!” Psyche commanded. Reacting instinctively, Eros swung his board at the back of his target’s head. Matching his move, Psyche swung at the other. The silvery wood connected in synch with a crystalline crack. Both students’ heads lurched forward, meeting at the lips. After a brief, shocked look, the newly-christened couple fell into a long, slow kiss.

Eros stood watching, one fist on his hip. The kiss lingered as waves of intense, sensual release radiated out from the two. With his gift he could see a new future unfolding

before them, one filled with passionate exploration of both mental and physical realities.

“Oh . . . that feels good. This one will be special.” He looked at his wife, “I’ll be damned. This works better than I thought.”

She tossed her hair playfully and grinned. “You expected less?”

Eros smiled happily back and hooked Psyche’s arm to pull her close for a loving kiss. As they returned to their avatars, he told her, “Looks like we’ll be working closely from now on, my love.”

She leaned her head onto his shoulder, her hair trailing down his back. “Sounds like fun.”

As they walked away, the overhead lights glinted off the stamps on the side of both boards.

“ACME Brand™ Cosmic 2X4. Patent Pending.”▲

— Daniel Myers made the 2,700 mile trek from Michigan to Washington in 2001 to work on the Wizards of the Coast game Magic: The Gathering Online. He has written for the Magic Online help files, manual, and web site, and is currently working on more fiction projects with Lisa McSherry and on his own.

Lisa Mc Sherry is the author of several books including The Virtual Pagan and CyberCoven.Org. She teaches online and acts as the Priestess for the JaguarMoon CyberCoven. For more information, see her many Websites: www.thevirtualpagan.org, www.cybercoven.org, and www.jaguarmoon.org.

McSherry and Myers are collaborating on a book of stories retelling and rediscovering the myths in modern times. This is their first piece of fiction.