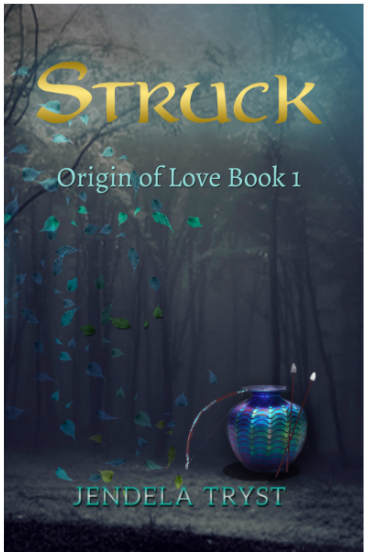
Jendela Tryst

Struck. Origin of Love Book 1

United States (2014)

TAGS: Aphrodite Athena Cupid Eros Greek Gods Hades Helen Hera Hermes Persephone Prometheus Psyche Trojan War



Picture courtesy of the Writer, from her personal website (accessed: May 28, 2018).

General information	
Title of the work	Struck. Origin of Love Book 1
Country of the First Edition	United States of America
Country/countries of popularity	United States
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Genre	Fiction, Myths, Novels, Romance fiction
Target Audience	Young adults
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Creators



Picture curtesy of the Writer from her personal website (accessed: May 30, 2018).

Jendela Tryst (Author)

Tryst is an American author of Indonesian descent who publishes her books independently. She keeps her personal life private. She is very passionate about the themes of her books and has loved mythology since her schooldays. Her books focus on the love connection between mythical couples such as Cupid and Psyche or Hades and Persephone.

Sources:

Official website (accessed: May 30, 2018).

Online interview (accessed: May 30, 2018).

Bio prepared by Ayelet Peer, Bar-Ilan University, ayelet.peer@gmail.com

Questionnaire

1. What drew you to writing/working with classical antiquity?

It began when I was eight years old. My eldest sister, seven years my senior who was charged with babysitting me, told stories for entertainment (usually because our one TV was occupied by my gaming brother). When she ran out of fairytales, she pulled out her high school required reading which was a compilation of Greek myths. She summarized the stories and treated them like fairy tales. Ever since then, I was hooked.

2. What challenges did you face in selecting, representing, or adapting particular myths or stories?

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The biggest challenge was creating sympathetic characters and explaining their oftentimes odd behaviors to an audience of modern critical thinkers. I'm not going to lie; I struggled to explain why Eros would not rescue Psyche as soon as he could when his mother was tormenting her. In the actual myth he seems so petty and vindictive. I also wanted Psyche to be more developed. Honestly, she is the only mortal female in Greco-Roman mythology who entered the Underworld in the flesh. The Underworld, the scariest place in the universe. She's a pretty amazing heroine who, in my opinion, does not get enough credit.

3. Did you think about how they would translate for young readers, esp. in (insert relevant country)?

I didn't worry too much because the characters themselves were young, but intelligent, passionate though a little naïve, struggling to gain respect from a larger, older, more jaded community. Honestly, I think those feelings reverberate in a lot of young people across all cultures. My main worry is trying to get young folks to give the book a chance. Many young readers may be turned off by the slightly academic slant of the story, which is why I wanted to focus on the romance. Honestly, who doesn't love a great love story?

4. How concerned were you with "accuracy" or "fidelity" to the original? (another way of saying that might be – that I think writers are often more "faithful" to originals in adapting its spirit rather than being tied down at the level of detail – is this something you thought about?)

Absolutely. I have always been impressed with writers who are able to take well-known stories and create something fresh. The most common example in recent years have been fairy tales like *Beauty and the Beast*, *Cinderella*, even *Sleeping Beauty* in Maleficent's point of view, all of which intrigue me. However, for me, accuracy is extremely important, otherwise the new versions just don't seem believable. At the same time, the "spirit" of any story is very subjective, which is why this "experiment" has been so rewarding for me. I know how much Eros and Psyche the myth means to me, but it was so heartwarming to hear from so many people who shared my viewpoint or could at least

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appreciate it.

5. Why do you think classical / ancient myth and literature continue to resonate with young audiences?

What a great question. I believe anything that is universal and can withstand the test of time will resonate with young audiences, because young audiences are part of the human race (although some might argue with me on that. ;)) The truth is, and I'm sorry for sounding cliché, but young people are the future, and I'm something of an optimist when it comes to the future. Youth today are proving to be more intelligent, worldlier, and more compassionate than any generation before them. If anything, bringing antiquity back with all its wisdom and all its lessons so that the same mistakes don't happen again and again is what will help young people when they eventually inherit this world.

6. Are you planning any further forays into classical material?

Absolutely. My upcoming novel, *Hell's Captive*, is based on the myth of Hades and Persephone. After that, I am considering delving into the story of Atalanta and the three golden apples. I wish to do for Greco-Roman Mythology what many have already done with common fairy tales. I want to add twists to otherwise well-known stories. And for those who don't know the stories, kindle a new interest. There is so much room for interpretation in these myths, as obvious in the many different ways they were told throughout history. It stretches the imagination greatly and I love the challenge of pushing the boundaries of the tale, yet still remaining true to the original story.

7. Do you have a background in classical education (Latin at school or classes at the University?)

I took four years of Latin in High School and one year in college, but my interest in antiquity began long before that. I chose Latin just so I could learn how to translate my favorite myths from its "purer" form.

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8. What sources are you using? Scholarly work? Wikipedia? Special Internet websites? (which ones?)

For Eros and Psyche, I used a combination of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, *The Golden Ass* by Apuleius and also as many different versions of the myth I could get my hands on. I wanted to borrow the most common themes and stretch out the gaps that appeared in all the different versions. I know growing up, these gaps caused me great grief, because they felt so incomplete and not well thought out. Then I realized that true beauty lay in the gaps. Where the holes were, a whole other story was waiting to be told. In the end, what began as just an exercise in creativity became an entire trilogy.

Prepared by Ayelet Peer, Bar-Ilan University, ayelet.peer@gmail.com

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Additional information

Summary

This book is the first in a trilogy unveiling the love story between Cupid and Psyche. In her trilogy, the author uses the mythological love-story as her basis, but adapts it for a modern teenage audience. Her Eros, and especially Psyche, are not cardboard characters, but have complex relations with one another and with their surroundings, especially their families. The Olympian gods may be mighty, but they also share very human feelings and concerns. In this book we meet Psyche and learn of her family and background and how she met her true love (who happens to be Cupid). We also meet Cupid, who is so used to playing with people's hearts that he is heedless of their effect, until he is struck by his own arrow.

Analysis

The author chose to name the first book of the trilogy, *Struck* which is very fitting. Many characters will be struck during the tale, some by Eros' arrows, some as a result of their own emotions. They may be love-struck, awe-struck or even stricken by hate. The ominous tone of the title hints to the sudden infatuation that will have an enormous power, and will forever change the lives of our main protagonists, who are struck with sudden and unexpected love, which they now they will have to cope with.

By choosing to write a trilogy, the author is able to expand the story and focus more on the different characters, as well as the mythological background. While using Apuleius as a basis, she at the same time tries to modernize the characters, giving a new spin on their motives, feelings and actions. There is a recurring theme in all three books, in that the Trojan wars looms in the background. While the war is still raging in the first book, it had already ended by the third, and so the life and death struggles of the main protagonists are set against the devastation of the great epic war. The author also pays homage to other mythological tales, which are also woven into the main story. One such myth is the abduction of Persephone by Hades and the acts of Prometheus for the human race.

The length of the trilogy also gives the author the freedom to expand the dramatis personae. While in the original mythical tale few characters other than Aphrodite, Cupid, Psyche, and her family feature, in this trilogy we encounter several Olympians, Hermes and

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Athena being the most prominent. The gods interact freely with each other, like a group of friends/rivals, and do not behave in a lordly or stately manner at all. Perhaps, like Homer, the author presents the gods as having basic human emotions: they get angry, jealous, worried, have friends whom they cherish, and hopes and dreams of their own. Their super powers are a great bonus, yet they are not all-powerful, and, in the second book of the series, for example, they rely on the human Lucius for help.

Tryst thus deviates from the more familiar post-classical tropes of the gods and the known myth in order to create more rounded characters, with feelings, emotions and thoughts. We become acquainted with Eros before he meets Psyche so that we can better understand his actions and motives. The first meeting of Eros and Psyche is also prolonged. Eros gets to know her first (disguising himself as human) and then falls in love with her and her personality, which is no less a characteristic of Psyche than her lauded beauty.

There is no doubt that the heroine of the novels is Psyche. Psyche is described somewhat unconventionally at first as the ugly sister; at least this is how she sees herself. We see how she relates to her caring father, and her more problematic relations with her mother and sisters. She is described as a feisty girl, fighting against injustice, not afraid to speak her mind. This is a strong and quite modern representation of the mythical girl, who is far more passive in the original myth, where she is honored, then punished, and then accidentally hurts Eros – almost in complete silence.

This Psyche is intelligent. Her beauty is her greatest visible asset, but it does not define her character entirely. She is beautiful from within as well as on the outside. Even her looks are narrated with a small twist. Special attention is given to Psyche's skin: it was the colour of olive and her sisters, trying to beautify her "tried to scrape the brown off" (p. 28). Her sister even laughs at her because Psyche is not as white as she is. Psyche's hair is also unique – it is extremely curly – and she has green eyes, a far cry from the blonde-haired, blue-eyed stereotype of Hollywood and fairy tales. Her figure is also athletic and strong as if her body represents her strong will. But in the end, her difference is what captivates all around her, exposing how truly beautiful she is. She is unique.

Thus the author is perhaps using the story to convey a message to every girl that she is beautiful as she is, and people will notice it

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	eventually. The emphasis on the contrast between the white skin of the sister and Psyche's darker skin can perhaps suggest that the author is particularly making the story an empowering tale for non-Caucasian girls. There is no specific rule or pattern for beauty. Real beauty comes within. So the first novel is a tale of finding and losing love, of personal growth and sacrifice. As the story unfolds, Psyche will mature and grow stronger, as will Eros. This is a tale of growing up, of understanding who you really are, of defying the will of others in order to find your own path. The characters may be mythological, but the message is universal.
Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Aphrodite Athena Cupid Eros Greek Gods Hades Helen Hera Hermes Persephone Prometheus Psyche Trojan War
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Adventure Emotions Knowledge Learning Love
Further Reading	Maurice, Lisa, "Cupid and Psyche for Children" in Regine May and Stephen J. Harrison, eds., *Cupid and Psyche: The Reception of Apuleius' Love Story since 1600*, Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2020, 381–396.

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