

King Midas and the Golden Touch

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"There once lived a very rich king called Midas who believed that nothing was more precious than gold."

So begins this imaginative and breathtaking retelling of the myth of the man with the golden touch. When a mysterious stranger offers to reward Midas for a kindness, the king does not hesitate: He wishes that all he touches would turn to gold. To his delight, his wish is granted and he soon sets about transforming his ordinary palace into a place of golden beauty. But to his dismay, when he accidentally turns his beloved daughter into a golden statue, Midas learns that what at first seems a blessing can also become a curse.

Charlotte Craft studied comparative literature at Columbia University in New York. After graduating, she traveled to Japan, where she worked as an interpreter and photographer. She now lives in Scotland with her family. The New York Times complimented her first book, *Cupid and Psyche*, for its "clear, simple text" and noted that the book "excels in conveying the mythology."

In addition to *Cupid and Psyche*, she is also the illustrator of Marianna Mayer's *Pegasus*, *Baba Yaga and Vasilisa the Brave*, and *The Twelve Dancing Princesses*. Ms. Craft lives in Connecticut.

Kinuko Y. Craft has won more than one hundred graphic-arts awards, including five gold medals from the Society of Illustrators. In 2008, she was inducted into their Hall of Fame. Her art has been in print for almost half a century, appearing on the covers of such prestigious publications as *Time* and *Newsweek*. Her illustrated books on Greek myths and of classic fairy tales have been published in the United States and other English-language countries, and in Europe, China, and Korea. Says *Kirkus Reviews*, "Every detail of her work—the flowers by a spring, a red cloak unfurled against a blue sky, moonlight on a tiger's back—is beautifully rendered." *Beauty and the Beast* is her ninth illustrated book.

The mother-daughter duo that produced *Cupid and Psyche* sumptuously interprets a familiar Greek myth. A note at the beginning explains that the text is inspired by Nathaniel Hawthorne's retelling, and it is structured like a fairy tale. Midas's kindness to a stranger earns him his ill-fated wish; Midas's love for his daughter inspires his remorse; and in the end, he is magically redeemed. The author writes fluidly and capaciously, invoking castle rose gardens and secret chambers of treasure. The lavish oil-over-watercolor paintings, said to be set in the Middle Ages, make overtures to the Renaissance in their lush compositional style and the characters' costumes. As Kinuko Craft's admirers will expect, her attention to detail is unflagging: embroidered, jeweled clothes almost seem to rustle, and the palace's columns, stairways and arches form dizzying arcades. At first her gold palette dazzles, but as the insidious gilt trail extinguishes the vibrant range of colors, the dark side of Midas's supposed good fortune is manifested as clearly in the pictures as in the text. A regal treatment. Ages 5-up.

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