

Myths – A traditional story dealing with ancestors, heroes, or supernatural beings, and usually makes an attempt to explain a belief, practice, or natural phenomenon.

Echo and Narcissus

Echo fell in love with a vain youth named Narcissus.

Narcissus was one of the most beautiful people ever born. His father was the river god Cephissus and his mother was Leiropé of Thespia. His mother was overjoyed at the birth of her son but she was always worried about his future. She believed that someone would try to hurt her son someday because of his incredible beauty.

Leiropé was so concerned about the baby's welfare, she went to consult an oracle regarding her son's future. The oracle told the nymph that Narcissus "would live to a ripe old age, as long as he never knew himself."

Narcissus was beautiful as a child and grew even more so as he matured. By the age of sixteen he had left a trail of broken hearts. Every girl he met instantly wanted to be with him but Narcissus wanted nothing to do with falling in love with anyone and rebuffed all attempts at romance.

One day when Narcissus was out hunting stags, Echo stealthily followed the handsome youth through the woods, longing to address him but unable to speak first. When Narcissus finally heard footsteps and shouted "Who's there?", Echo answered "Who's there?" And so it went, until finally Echo showed herself and rushed to embrace the lovely youth.

He pulled away from the nymph and vainly told her to get lost. Narcissus left Echo heartbroken and she spent the rest of her life in lonely glens, pining away for the love she never knew, until only her voice remained. She prayed that something terrible would happen to Narcissus because of the way he treated her.

The goddess of the hunt, Artemis, heard the plea and made Narcissus fall in love, but a kind a love that couldn't be fulfilled. Narcissus came upon a clear spring at Donacon in Thespia and, as he bent low to take a drink, for the first time caught sight of himself reflected in the pool. Try as he might to touch this exquisite person in the waters, however, he never could.

Narcissus was confused by this, for he thought, "Finally, someone whom I can love but I can't reach them. She keeps going away every time I touch the water."

Narcissus stayed by that spring of water determined to figure out a way to be with the person in he saw before him. For hours he sat enraptured by the spring, at last recognizing himself but tortured by the realization that he could never possess the object of his infatuation. Narcissus was tormented, much as he had tormented all those who in the past had been unlucky enough to fall in love with him.

Finally unable to stand the agony Narcissus plunged a dagger in his heart and died, calling out a last goodbye to his reflected image. Where his blood soaked the earth sprung up the white narcissus flower with its red corollary.