

Echo

Echo, a young wood nymph, was as flawless as the wildflowers she loved to pick. While her physical beauty was much admired, the musical quality of her voice attracted even more notice. As she frolicked through the woods each day, happiness surrounded her.

One morning as Echo was gathering some of the ferns that carpeted the forest floor, she was astonished to see Zeus run past her, accompanied by a young woman. Undetected, Echo watched in silence until the god and his companion had disappeared from sight. Then, she returned to her task.

Now Zeus's wife Hera was well known for her vengeful and jealous nature, so Echo was understandably upset to see her approaching in a very agitated state. To protect the ruler of the gods, Echo began a stream of chatter designed to delay the suspicious wife and to give her fiery anger time to cool. Instead, the ploy infuriated Hera, who vowed to punish Echo for her interference.

"Echo, you are impudent and unwise. Because you prevented me from finding my husband, you must pay dearly for your folly. From this day forward, you shall speak only when spoken to. You shall repeat what is said to you. Never again will your words be your own," Hera declared to the horrified nymph.

Echo was devastated by the unjust punishment

Hera imposed on her. By Hera's command, Echo's greatest gift, her voice, had been rendered all but useless.

Echo forgot her sorrow, however, on the day she chanced to meet Narcissus, a handsome lad who was known to spurn the attentions of even the most beautiful maidens. Echo fell madly in love with him. This emotion, totally new to the young wood nymph, gave her shattered life purpose and hope. She raced to Narcissus, intent on expressing her fondness for him.

"Who are you?" he asked.

"Who are you?" she repeated.

"What are you up to?" he questioned, wrinkling his brow.

"What are you up to?" she replied.

Stamping his foot in consternation, Narcissus commanded, "Stop that!"

"Stop that," Echo replied woefully, as she began to realize the futility of her situation.

Infuriated by Echo's constant mimicking, Narcissus ordered her from his sight. "And don't ever come near me again," he concluded as he dashed away from her.

Poor Echo ran off in shame and hid in a cave for days. Grief stricken, she wasted away, until nothing was left but her lovely voice.

