

Narcissus

Narcissus was a handsome lad, known to spurn the attentions of even the most beautiful maidens. His brazen and callous attitude did not go unnoticed on Mount Olympus. Of all the gods and goddesses, Aphrodite, the goddess of love, was most incensed by his selfish indifference. When she could no longer tolerate his egotism, she decided to punish him. He was to endure the same suffering he had inflicted upon those who had sought his love.

One day, as Narcissus ambled aimlessly through the woods, he happened to stop at the edge of a small pool. Chancing to look down, he caught his breath. There before him was a face whose beauty surpassed all he had seen before. Having, at last, encountered a visage he considered worthy of his

affection, he fell hopelessly in love; but each time he reached down to touch the lovely countenance, it disappeared in a swirl of rippling water. For the first time, Narcissus knew the awful ache of unrequited love: he could not take his eyes off his own reflection. Day after day, he stood rooted to that spot. Oblivious to his need for sustenance, Narcissus soon pined away and died.

Upon learning of Narcissus's death, the wood nymphs hastened to the spot where he had died, intending to prepare his body for the funeral. Yet, as he had avoided them in life, so he eluded them in death. Where they had expected to find his body, they actually found only one delicate white flower. Even now, this flower bears his name—the narcissus.

