

# Echo and Narcissus

**E**cho played in the forests, entertaining the other nymphs with her stories and songs. Her voice was never silent. One day the goddess Juno came into the forest looking for her husband, Jupiter. Echo stopped the goddess and began telling stories. She wouldn't stop talking. She followed wherever Juno went, telling her about all the nymphs in the forest.

Finally Juno became so angry with the gossiping nymph that she took away the nymph's voice. "You will never again have the first word," the goddess said. "You will only be able to repeat the last words of those who speak to you."

Echo hid in caves near the mountains she had once loved to climb. She was ashamed to meet her friends and not be able to greet them. When the other nymphs called to her, she called back, repeating the last words they had said.

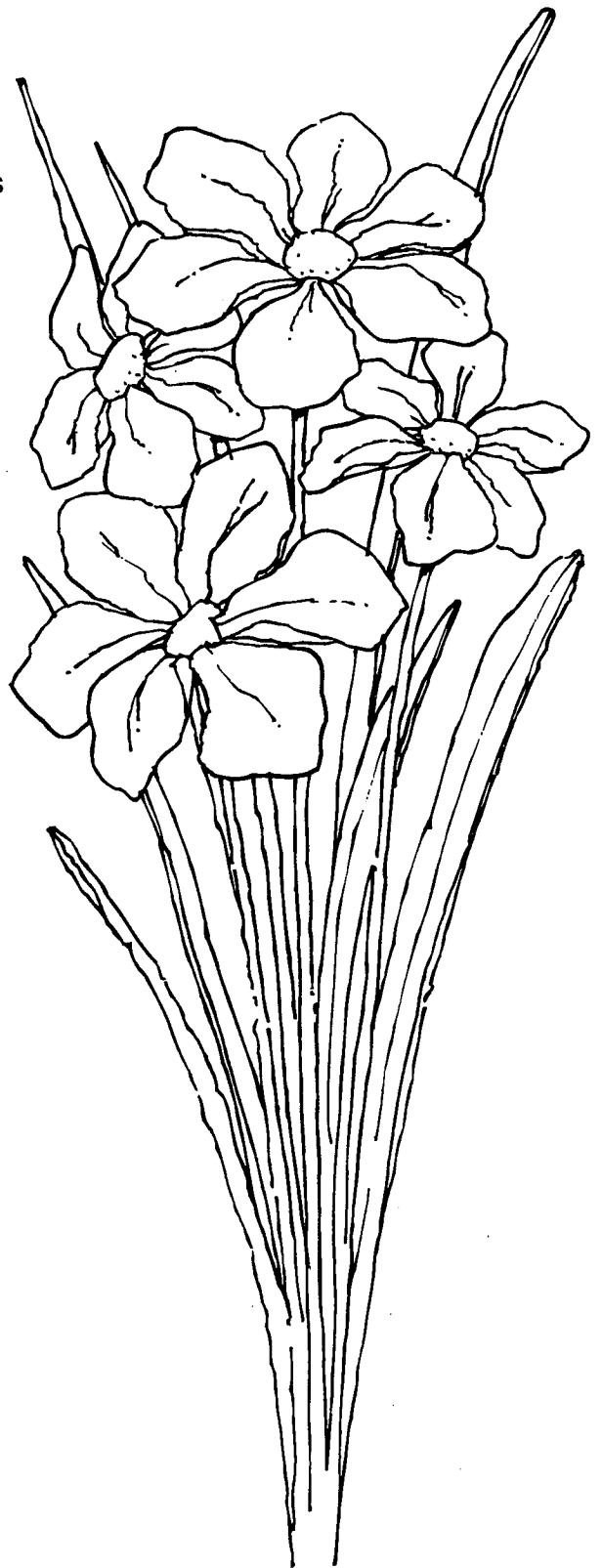
One day Narcissus, a handsome youth, stopped to rest in the shade of a giant rock. Echo, who was hiding in a nearby cave, gazed upon the godlike young man and fell in love with him. But since Juno had taken away her first words, she had to wait for him to speak. She left the cave and sat down beside the young man.

Narcissus, who felt he was better than all others, frowned at Echo. "Why are you here?" he asked.

"Here," repeated Echo.

"I wish you would go away!" Narcissus said.

"Away," repeated Echo. She hid behind a tree and watched Narcissus.



Narcissus walked to a nearby pond to get a drink. When he bent down, he saw a beautiful face staring back at him. Narcissus smiled and the face smiled at him. He tried to touch the face, but it disappeared under the water. Narcissus waited until the water was calm, then looked again. The face was there once more.

“I can see you care for me just as I care for you,” said Narcissus to the face in the water. “When I smile, you return my smile. Still, you won’t let me touch you. I will have to be content to stay here and gaze at your face. My heart is filled with love for you.”

“Love for you,” Echo repeated sadly, but Narcissus didn’t seem to hear her. He just gazed at his own reflection in the pond. Narcissus had fallen in love with himself.

Narcissus was so much in love that he forgot to eat and drink. He grew pale and became ill. Even so, he didn’t leave the face in the pond. Finally he died, and there, by the pond, a beautiful purple and white flower grew. The gods called the flower the narcissus in memory of the youth who loved only himself.

Echo mourned the handsome Narcissus. She died of grief, unable to tell anyone about her love. Her voice is still heard repeating the last words she hears.

