Echo and Narcissus: A Retelling of a Greek Myth

by Rachel Cunning

Once upon a time, there was a beautiful nymph. Her name was Echo, and she lived in a forest. She loved the trees and the mountains. She wandered through them all the time.

Her favorite thing to do, though, was talking. She loved to chat all day long with her friends. She enjoyed sharing stories. She was sweet and kind. Yet she sometimes spread rumors that were untrue. One day, Echo told a story about Hera. Hera was the queen of the gods on Mount Olympus. She was very powerful. Hera was mad because the story wasn't true.

"Echo!" Hera shouted angrily.

Echo approached Hera nervously.

"You can't get ahold of your tongue! So stop talking. Be brief," Hera ordered and marched away angrily.

"Be brief!" Echo repeated back to Hera.

Echo covered her mouth in shock. She tried to speak, but she couldn't. She tried to call to Hera, but she could only watch her leave. Later, she tried to talk to her friends. But she could only repeat back the last few words her friends said! She realized sadly that Hera had taken away her ability to speak correctly. She could only repeat what others said.

Echo missed how she used to chat with friends. Her friends didn't like that Echo repeated everything. Soon, Echo quit talking. She spent most of her time enjoying nature. She played in the trees and swam in rivers.

One day, Echo was wandering through her favorite mountains. These mountains towered into the sky. She saw a group of boys walking together. One of them was the most handsome boy she
had ever seen. He had curly dark hair. His eyes twinkled just like her favorite star. His nose was as straight as her favorite tree. Echo fell in love instantly.

She followed the group of boys. She learned that the handsome boy was named "Narcissus." She thought the name sounded dreamy and delightful.

The other boys went ahead on the trail, but Narcissus remained behind. He was admiring his reflection in a mountain spring. He thought that he was handsome, too.

Echo started to approach him on the trail. She stepped on a branch, and it cracked loudly.

Narcissus jumped and asked, "Who's there?"

"There," Echo responded happily.

"Is anyone here?" Narcissus asked.

"Here!" Echo shouted back.

Narcissus surveyed the mountain trail. He felt confused because he couldn't see anyone.

"Why don't you come out? We could meet." Narcissus ruffled his curly, dark locks. His blue eyes sparkled with curiosity. Then he saw the outline of his shadow. He flexed his muscles and smiled.

"Meet!" Echo called out, overwhelmed with joy.

She ran forward to Narcissus. She pulled him into a hug and beamed brightly at him.

Narcissus was cruel. He pushed her away. She stumbled backward and her eyes filled with tears.
"Ugh! I have myself. Why would I want you?" Narcissus hissed. He took a step backward.

"I want you," Echo responded miserably.

Narcissus had no room in his heart to love anyone else. He could only love himself. So Narcissus left Echo crying on the trail.

Echo wept wretchedly. As cruel as Narcissus was, Echo still loved him. She wandered the mountains and slept in caves. Eventually her body faded away. Her voice alone remained. Even after all those years, she still could only repeat words. If you call to her up in the mountains, you can hear Echo calling back to you.

END OF TEXT

"Echo and Narcissus: A Retelling of a Greek Myth" by Rachel Cunning, copyright © 2011 by The University of Kansas.