

THE TRUE STORY OF ECHO AND NARCISSUS

A One Act Play

By Keith Eckert
107 Penn Street
Ridley Park, PA 19078
kaxeckert@gmail.com
(717) 609-5410

CAST LIST

Tiresias – Old, blind and using a cane, wears men's and women's attire (rather androgynous), played by a man or woman

Nymph 1 and 2 – Young forest nymphs

Narcissus – A handsome young man

Echo – A beautiful young woman

TIME/PLACE

Outside the city of Thespiae in Boeotia, Greece.
The age of Greek mythology.

SCENE

A wooded area with a natural well, raised above the ground, in front and slightly off center, as well as a large rock or boulder a few steps toward center stage.

EXCERPT

(Opening scene: Music rises. Two Nymphs leap onstage laughing and singing.)

NYMPH 1 & NYMPH 2

(singing)

Cup the color of the violets
 Drink it from their purpled eyelids
 Lovers sing
 Lovers play
 Lovers laugh, laugh away, all the day!

(The nymphs look back to see if anyone is following them. Nymph 1 signals to the other to be silent. They stand motionless as Tiresias enters. He seems flustered and upset. He walks to the rock, then the pool using his staff to guide him.)

TIRESIAS

(over-dramatically)

Oh! Where are those silly Nymphs? Halloo? Who'd leave
 These stony eyes to thrash lost in these woods?
 Here through thick and wicket, let me stumble bumbling –
 (stubs his toe on a rock)
 Ouch, my foot! Oh, I'm crippled now!
 Here my fate has laid me low -- to die
 Within these curséd woods, alone! All alone!

(The two Nymphs start laughing.)

NYMPH 1

We're here, Tiresias, you old queen. Have no fear.

NYMPH 2

Atop the coming hill's our lair.
 Here, take my hand. We'll be soon there.

TIRESIAS

Ooh! Crawling through these squirrel paths
 Is 'nough to drive an old man mad. I hear you laugh!
 Why, you foolish nymphs – you'll be my death!
 My limbs all ache, and my bones sore quake –
 I'm not a mountain goat, I'll have you know!
 Who's led by nymphs is a fool for a follower.
 Giggle, it's all a jest! But now I'm going to take my rest!

(Tiresias finds a rock and sits down. The Nymphs groan and roll their eyes.)

I hear you! Your groans won't make it any shorter!
 It's not good for my complexion to sweat like a porter.
 Why don't you sing a song to lull the gap?
 Yes, while I see if my joints are still intact.

NYMPH 1 & 2

Yes, Tiresias.

(sadly singing)

Hear you Echo's lovelorn plaint?
 Let her voice reverberate.
 From love's hard seat she's overthrown,
 Her languished heart is bled to stone.

Sing love's sorrow, sorrow's love,
 Sing tomorrow, tomorrow's dove,
 Spurn love's arrow, Cupid's play,
 Fly away, love, fly away.

Pale Narcissus, flowering fell,
 There beside the trancing well.
 Fall not toward the curléd crown
 Lest lovers' eyes in tears are drowned.

Sing love's sorrow, sorrow's love,
 Sing tomorrow, tomorrow's dove,
 Spurn love's arrow, Cupid's play,
 Fly away, love, fly away.

TIRESIAS

What's that, my nymphs? Oh, no, no, no!

NYMPH 2

What the matter?

TIRESIAS

Your song. You've got it wrong! All wrong.
Everyone has turned the tale upon its head!

NYMPH 2

Our song? How so?

TIRESIAS

The story isn't sad – not dour nor glum. The tale
Of Echo and Narcissus is a joyous one.

NYMPH 1

How do you know?

TIRESIAS

How do I know? Well, I was there.

NYMPH 1

(suspiciously)

You were? That story I never heard regaled.

NYMPH 2

Oh Tiresias! You're always telling us tall tales.

TIRESIAS

I tell you I was there. It happened here upon this very spot.

NYMPH 1

By Zeus, your lies are an unbearable curse.

NYMPH 2

And your predictions even worse!

TIRESIAS

What the – ? Are you – ? My prophetic visions – ?
Have you some dismay with my soothsaying?

NYMPH 1

Yes, when you say the sun will shine --

NYMPH 2

It's surely going to rain.
When you predict a bright success –

NYMPH 1

One's sure to feel some pain.

TIRESIAS

Well, I never!

NYMPH 2

That's exactly what we're saying!

TIRESIAS

Have your little giggles my pretty gaggle.
'Twas here upon this very spot of woods
The plot was undertook. Come here, unwrap,
And let me share the story as it truly happed.

For more, contact Keith Eckert at kaxeckert@gmail.com.