

# *Narcissus*

*By Ellen Jurik, 2006*

*A play in One Act  
Running for 30-40 minutes  
For four actors- two male, two female.*

## Characters:

Hera	<i>female</i>	Queen of the Gods- caring yet proud
Echo	<i>female</i>	A talkative, playful Oread (a mountain nymph)
Narcissus	<i>male</i>	A beautiful, naive young man
Pan	<i>male</i>	A Satyr demi-god, subservient to Dionysus

*Set in a ruin in a forest clearing, mid-afternoon in another time.*

*Note: Scenes are divided into workable chunks, and that is the only significance of the divisions.*

## Scene 1

*ECHO sits to the side of the stage, in front of the upstage door/entry, pulling faces into a hand mirror. She has a book at her side. HERA walks in from upstage of the opposite side and addresses the audience.*

HERA:                                This world was not always as you see it. There has been too much repression of the spirit and the soul for too long. When you repress something, it does not simply go away- it lays in wait for just the perfect time to swing out. This world is chaotic. We never used to listen to our inner divinity, but instead would cling to the solidity of science and technology. This, however, eventually broke down, as we lost the ability to explain what we saw happen. It became utterly chaotic.

*HERA walks to the same side ECHO is sitting in.*

HERA:                                Echo? Where is my husband?

ECHO:                                Oh! Hera! Uh, you know, I've been looking for you. I've got to tell you about what happened to me! I was outside singing the other day, and this bird started singing along with me!

*ECHO freezes or continues talking silently while HERA turns away and re-addresses the audience.*

HERA:                                In a world filled with Chaos, balance must come. Personally, I cannot stand when people or events are unbalanced. As Queen of the Gods, I feel it is well within my power and privilege to teach unbalanced individuals their lessons. This young nymph is about to learn what can happen when she abuses her power of speech.

*HERA turns back to ECHO, who resumes talking.*

ECHO:                                I've always said that I'd sing all day if I could. It's like talking and the wind is carrying your voice: drawing it out of you, through the trees and mountains; making it reverberate through rocks and ripple across oceans, echo in caverns and babble through brooks.

ECHO (cont'd):                   It's just the most amazing feeling. It's like your whole body is just... taken over by magic, or something. I can't explain it. It's different to talking, though. When I sing, the music floats out of me with no effort: softly, smoothly. When I talk, it's like a waterfall gushing wildly out of my mouth! And you know sometimes I can't help but let it all out!

HERA:                               Yes, Echo, I know. Oh, that dear little bird! I love bluebirds so much! I can't believe he did that. Oh, well. Yes. That's a wonderful story. Now, what did I come in here for?

ECHO:                               Well, you know, they say that if you can't remember, it must not have been important!

HERA:                               Oh, but I'm sure it was. Wait... Who's in there?

***ECHO shows HERA the book.***

ECHO:                               What? No one. Just me. I was reading. You see, I read this most WONDERFUL story about this baby that had to be hidden and so was placed into a river and then further down the stream some old farmers found him and took him in and it turned out he was a prince!

HERA:                               Oh, I'm sure I know that story. But I was sure I heard voices in there. That's why I came in- to see if anything strange was going on.

***Embarrassed/uncomfortable pause.***

ECHO:                               Well, I'm ashamed to admit... I like to read out voices for all the characters. It's a silly habit, I know, but...

HERA:                               ...I was SURE I heard more than one voice at once.

ECHO:                               Um... well, I'm very talented.

HERA:                               That's enough!

***HERA pushes ECHO aside and bursts open the door to see what is inside. The Audience does not need to see. HERA is clearly appalled.***

HERA:                               What are you doing...?! And you, Echo! You were protecting them!

ECHO: Look, I just wanted to make sure no one was upset. You know... what you don't know won't harm you, sort of thing.

HERA: I can't believe you've done this to me. I thought you were my friend!

ECHO: What do you mean? Of course I'm your friend! I don't know why you're so angry!

HERA: Don't act dumb. You knew what was going on! Hmm! If you're going to act dumb... maybe that's what you deserve! If you could only repeat exactly what others have said, you'd NEVER be able to distract anyone from the truth again!

***HERA rings her bell. ECHO acts dumb (can't talk).***

HERA: Ha! Well, I guess that's all you can do now. I'm just glad that for once in your life, you have nothing to say.

ECHO: Nothing to say.

HERA: Good. I've had enough of you now. Get out!

***HERA snatches the book and mirror off ECHO. ECHO leaves and moves to the other side of the partition. HERA remains onstage but lurks around upstage or moves to a vantage point for the rest of the scenes, but stays out of the other characters' ways. They cannot see her, and are unaware of her presence. She addresses most of her comments straight to the audience.***

HERA: Don't think badly of me. I know I get jealous, but... Well, you would too if you had a philandering bastard of a husband who can change shape into anything just to get into a woman's pants.

How do you think he got me? I'm not even his first wife. I'm his third wife. You know, his second wife hangs around all the time. I'm just *waiting* for those two to get together again. One of their fights is just going to cave into passion.

Anyway, I wasn't even interested in Zeus. I'd never be with the husband of another woman, divorced or not. But Zeus always gets what he wants. Don't doubt it. If he wants something bad enough (and he usually does), he'll turn into whatever he can in order to get it.

HERA (cont'd): Zeus knew I have a soft spot for anything small and helpless. Especially birds. So what did he do? He turned himself into a tiny, beautiful bird, helpless in the cold winter. I didn't know it was Zeus. I really, truly, didn't. I was so taken by this poor, freezing little bird, that all I could do was scoop it up and try to warm it. I knelt down on the cold earth, loosened my clothing, and pressed it against my skin. The warmth of its heart soon made it warm too... and that's when the bastard got me. Before I knew it, he was on top of me, and I'd already loosened my robes so he had "easy access."

Well, I couldn't fight him off. I couldn't stand the shame, though, so I told him that he *had* to marry me, or he'd be sorry. So, he did.

That didn't stop him from shaming me, though. And I always did everything in my power to set things right. I'm the Queen of the Gods, isn't it my right to... dispose of everything that upsets me?

I guess you could say that it isn't their fault, it's my husband's. I guess I kind of feel sorry for them for being the victims, in a way. But... no, I just don't care. I must not be made to look bad!

## Scene 2

*ECHO turns and walks back to the original room when she happens across a beautiful young man, NARCISSUS, who has entered. She watches him for a while before he looks up and notices.*

NARCISSUS: Hello.

ECHO: Hello!

*Pause*

NARCISSUS: What's your name?

ECHO: Name?

NARCISSUS: Yes, tell me what your name is.

*Pause*

ECHO: Tell me what your name is.

NARCISSUS: Okay... I'm Narcissus.

ECHO: Narcissus!

NARCISSUS: Yes.

ECHO: Yes.

*Pause*

NARCISSUS: Okay... So what's your name?

ECHO: Name?

NARCISSUS: Yes?

ECHO: Yes.

NARCISSUS: Yes? Uh... yeeessss...

*ECHO looks embarrassed and uncomfortable.*

NARCISSUS: Look...

ECHO: Look!

NARCISSUS: What!?

*ECHO is pointing to her face.*

NARCISSUS: Okaay... Look, I have to... practice. You can stay if you want to. You know my name: just call me if you need me.

*NARCISSUS backs back. He picks up his gun and practices. ECHO watches. She grows bored and starts looking around. She turns to go and NARCISSUS sees her.*

ECHO: Just call me if you need me.

NARCISSUS: ...Okay then.

*NARCISSUS goes back to practicing with his gun. ECHO moves back towards the dividing wall, looking behind her as she goes.*

HERA:                       That beautiful being is completely unaware of the spell which he casts on those around him. He attracts all the wrong people with his unrestrained charisma and good humour. He never tries to make anyone love him, and yet they still do. When he does not return their interests, they feel as if they've been led on and are often frustrated and vengeful. He has obtained a reputation that he arrogantly believes has absolutely nothing to do with his actual behaviour. He likes himself the way he is, but no one else seems to even give him a chance anymore. That's why he has come here: to start again. New people will know nothing of who he is meant to be and will judge him purely for how he acts.

                                  However, he does not know that when he was born, his mother followed custom and took him to the wise woman and asked her whether he would live a long and happy life. The wise woman told her:

                                  “He will live a long, carefree life; so long as he does not know himself.”

### Scene 3

*ECHO keeps walking and suddenly runs into PAN, who has entered from the other side of the partition, whistling.*

PAN:                       Well! Hello there!

ECHO:                     Hello there.

PAN:                     Aren't you a pretty little thing?

ECHO:                     A pretty little thing?

PAN:                     Yes. You're lovely.

*ECHO says nothing. She isn't attracted to PAN at all and seems slightly uncomfortable.*

HERA:                     This is Pan. A man –God –of the world, he is. And like Narcissus, he often feels rejected and emotionally neglected because of his reputation- people believe him to be shallow, lascivious and selfish.

HERA (cont'd):                    But like everyone else, he secretly wishes for someone to truly understand him. Until he finds that one special someone, he searches and tries to make rocks bleed for him.  
   He knows about every eligible man and woman in his area. And just as Pan has a reputation, Echo's name, face and personality aren't exactly unknown in these parts.

PAN:                                    You're... you're Echo, aren't you?

*ECHO nods hesitantly.*

PAN:                                    Won't you sing me something?

*ECHO shakes her head.*

HERA:                                Pan's distinctive looks make sure he needs no introduction; and if you have a good reputation, you know that you could very easily lose it spending time with Pan.

PAN:                                    I've heard you have a beautiful voice. Please sing for me?

ECHO:                                Me?

PAN:                                    Yes. You're being very shy. I thought you were meant to be talkative?

ECHO:                                Talkative?

*ECHO shakes her head forcefully.*

PAN:                                    You seem quite different to what I've heard about you.

ECHO:                                I've heard about you.

PAN:                                    Have you? What have you heard?

*He smiles sleazily.*

Tell me. What have you heard?

ECHO:                                What have you heard?

PAN:                                    I always heard that you were loud and talkative. Not like this at all. So... quiet.

ECHO: Quiet.

PAN: Yes, well, you're not really saying much. I had the impression you were a blabbermouth. I don't like it when people talk too much. People always talk too much. So I thought that your talkativeness would be really unattractive, despite what most people say about you.

*ECHO listens, her brow furrowed.*

PAN: They've got you wrong. You're a good listener, you know. But, well, I'd like to know about you.

ECHO: I'd like to know about you.

PAN: Really? Well, no one ever wants to know about me. They take one look at me and think I must be stupid and boring, or a complete sleaze. And I'm not.

HERA: Mmm, of course not.

*ECHO looks at PAN sympathetically.*

PAN: Just because I look different, it doesn't mean I am different.

ECHO: I am different.

PAN: Are you? You don't look different.

ECHO: You don't look different.

PAN: How can you say that? I mean, look at me!

ECHO: Look at me!

PAN: I am, and you're beautiful. You're perfect. There's nothing wrong with you at all.

*ECHO begins to get a little worried she's got in too deep but doesn't want to break away too suddenly for fear of what PAN might do.*

HERA: Be careful there, girl! You don't want Pan to think he's found what he's looking for, if he hasn't.

ECHO: There's nothing wrong with you at all.

PAN: Do you think so? Wow, how nice of you to say that. Hey-I'm actually on my way to Dionysus's place. There's a party on tonight. You'd love his parties! He sets them up on the side of the river, and everyone eats and drinks and talks and dances and no one worries about having to impress anyone or being different or anything like that. I love it. I never have to worry about being stupid or boring or ugly or anything, because at those parties, everyone is beautiful and interesting. Down by the river from dusk til dawn, with the moonlight shining down on us, we can dance and drink and get lost in the night and each other. I have some friends there, too. You can meet all of them. We always see each other at Dionysus's parties. I'm sure he won't mind if you come. We could talk more then. Why don't you come with me?

ECHO: Why don't you come with me?

PAN: Oh, I should have known you're not the partying type. I can always go later. And if you change your mind, you can come too. But, well, if you want me to come with you... Sure! Where are we going?

*HERO points towards where NARCISSUS is.*

PAN: What's over there, then, you cheeky little thing?

*HERO shrugs and starts moving off.*

PAN: Hey, wait for me!

*PAN follows her.*

HERA: What's she trying to do? Is she just looking for protection, or is she trying to distract Pan while she makes an exit?

*When ECHO reaches the dividing wall where she can see NARCISSUS, she stops and turns back. PAN stops behind her and smiles at her, thinking it was all a game to make him chase her. NARCISSUS sees ECHO but not PAN.*

## Scene 4

*In the next section, ECHO's comments are either heard by PAN or NARCISSUS, and occasionally both, as indicated. The dialogue should be fast and overlapping. PAN's and NARCISSUS' comments should be natural, while ECHO's are apprehensive and always thought of before she says it. She can tell that PAN would be likely to attack NARCISSUS and doesn't want this to happen.*

NARCISSUS: Hello again!

ECHO: (BOTH) Hello again!

PAN: Hello again.

NARCISSUS: Where have you been?

PAN: Where are we going? Is this it? We're not stopping here...

ECHO: (BOTH) Here.

PAN: Only a few steps away?

ECHO: (BOTH) Only a few steps away!

NARCISSUS: No you weren't.

PAN: Are you teasing me?

ECHO: (NARCISSUS) Are you teasing me?

NARCISSUS: I wasn't trying to.

ECHO: (PAN) I wasn't trying to.

PAN: You are cheeky!

ECHO: (NARCISSUS) Cheeky.

NARCISSUS: I am not!

ECHO: (PAN) I am not!

PAN: I like you.

ECHO: (NARCISSUS) I like you.

NARCISSUS: You amuse me.

ECHO: (PAN) You amuse me!

PAN: I amuse you? Is that all I am to you? I thought you might actually understand me! How wrong I was! Maybe they are right about you.

ECHO: (NARCISSUS) They are right about you.

NARCISSUS: Oh? What do you mean?

ECHO: (PAN) What do you mean?

PAN: You play with people!

ECHO: (NARCISSUS) You play with people.

NARCISSUS: Who told you that? And besides, so what if I do? I like being playful.

ECHO: (PAN) So what if I do? I like being playful.

PAN: How DARE you play with my heart?

ECHO: (BOTH) My heart!

NARCISSUS: What is it!?