

Risen

By Amy Windsor

For many years a fire smouldered inside me. I felt it deep in the pit of my belly, its dark and stinking flames fanning to life from time to time to betray my weakness and heat my cheeks with rage, embarrassment, or shame. Lately though, I had begun to fear that this weakness would consume me completely.

The dark embers of my suppressed rage had flared violently to life and burned, unceasing it seemed for years. Scornful words had poured from my mouth like a river of lava, scarring the sense I have always had of myself as a kind and compassionate person. The embarrassment of my “failure” to hold together a crumbling union had singed the fragile folds of my self-worth. And the knowledge that there must be something wrong with my very nature for this pattern to have repeated itself once again all but destroyed whatever dignity I felt I had left in the raging inferno of my shame.

But burn inside me though it did, I finally realised that the dark flames of that fire were not for me.

That fire is for the Narcissus to whom I so willingly handed my heart and who tried to make me the Echo in my own life’s story. The Narcissus who showered me with love and praise so long as I, like that still pool deep in the forest,



reflected the beauty of his own self-image without despoiling it with my own wants and needs. Without marring its surface with the ripples of a diminishing Echo. My place was only to love this Narcissus without condition, to supply his every desire, spoken and unspoken, without question. To assure him of his own worth by surrendering everything of myself.

But at long last I remember that I am no Echo. I will not waste away in darkness for the

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want of a kind and equal consideration from a man who sees nothing but himself. I am Gaia. I am Hera. I am Athene, Aphrodite, and Artemis. All these and more I contain within the cracked vessel of my being. The clean flames of their strength, beauty, love, knowledge, and resilience fuel my inferno, not rage, embarrassment, or shame. Those dark and stinking flames no longer lick upwards from my belly. They are quelled. Quashed. Dead.

Know this, then, Narcissus: my newly kindled fire is not a weakness, but a strength. It has allowed me to reclaim my voice, to stand and to speak for myself and our flame-haired child, regardless of the consequences.

I see now that the dark, all-consuming conflagration I had feared belongs to you and you alone. Within me, the clean and powerful flames of the goddesses have risen from my belly, burning the scales from my eyes, and turning to ash every tether that ever held me bound to the creator of my torment. All but the slimmest golden thread that forever links us through the glory of our child.

And you, Narcissus? You will burn in those foul, dark flames. The forest pool in which you

find your deeply loved reflection will evaporate in the heat. And though you have found another to accompany you as you linger long near that shrinking puddle, I offer to them this warning: do not allow yourself to be made an Echo of your former self.

And I? I will rise like a gilt-winged goddess, ever stronger, ever higher. Though it may take years to shake the last of your stinking grease and ashes from my shining feathers, ever onwards will I rise as you wither and burn behind me.

Image: "[wanna jump in the middle ?](#)" (CC BY 2.0) by [Ari Helminen](#)