

*Galatea* was a beautiful nymph, one of the fifty sea nymphs, all daughters of the marine gods Dorides and Nereus. Aci was a young shepherd boy, who grazed his sheep near the sea, where he met *Galatea* and where they fell madly in love at first sight.

Unfortunately for the young couple, Polyphemus, one of the Cyclops who lived on Mt Etna had also fallen in love with *Galatea*, so much so that he would have done anything to have her to himself. But *Galatea* refused all attempts by Polyphemus, so the Cyclops took revenge and planned to kill poor Aci.

One evening, under the moonlight, the Cyclops saw the two lovers kissing by the sea. Blinded by jealousy, he took a large lava boulder and as soon as he saw *Galatea* dive into the sea, threw it at the poor shepherd, crushing innocent Aci to death. As soon as *Galatea* resurfaced, she immediately ran to Aci and wept all her tears over his body.

The gods of Olympus took pity on the young lovers and transformed the shepherd's blood into a small river that springs from Etna and flows into the stretch of beach where *Galatea* used to meet her beloved Aci. A distinct feature of "Fiume di Aci", or Aci river, is its reddish colour in some areas as it runs its short course from the foot of Mt Etna to the sea of Acireale.

