



SNOW WHITE

It was the middle of winter, and the snowflakes were falling like feathers from the sky, and a Queen sat at her window working, and her embroidery frame was of ebony. And as she worked, gazing at times out on the snow, she pricked her finger, and there fell from it three drops of blood on the snow. And when she saw how bright and red it looked, she said to herself, “Oh that I had a child as white as snow, as red as blood, and as black as the wood of the embroidery frame!”

Not very long after she had a daughter, with a skin as white as snow, lips as red as blood, and hair as black as ebony, and she was named Snow White. And when she was born the Queen died.

After a year had gone by the King took another wife, a beautiful woman, but proud and overbearing, and she could not bear to be surpassed in beauty by any one. She had a magic looking-glass, and she used to stand before it, and look in it, and say,



“Looking-glass upon the wall,
Who is fairest of us all?”

And the looking-glass would answer,

“You are fairest of them all.”

And she was contented, for she knew that the looking-glass spoke the truth.

Now, Snow White was growing prettier and prettier, and when she was seven years old she was as beautiful as day, far more so than the Queen herself. So one day when the Queen went to her mirror and said,

“Looking-glass upon the wall,
Who is fairest of us all?”

It answered,

“Queen, you are full fair, 'tis true,
But Snow White fairer is than you.”

This gave the Queen a great shock, and she became yellow and green with envy, and from that hour her heart turned against Snow White, and she hated her. And envy and pride like ill weeds grew in her heart higher every day, until she



had no peace day or night. At last she sent for a huntsman, and said,

“Take the child out into the woods, so that I may set eyes on her no more. You must put her to death, and bring me her heart for a token.”

The huntsman consented, and led her away. But when he drew his cutlass to pierce Snow White’s innocent heart, she began to weep, and to say,

“Oh, dear huntsman, do not take my life. I will go away into the wild wood, and never come home again.”

And as she was so lovely the huntsman had pity on her, and said,

“Away with you then, poor child,” for he thought the wild animals would be sure to devour her, and it was as if a stone had been rolled away from his heart when he spared to put her to death. Just at that moment a young wild boar came running by, so he caught and killed it, and taking out its heart, he brought it to the Queen for a token. And it was salted and cooked, and the wicked woman ate it up, thinking that there was an end of Snow White.

Now, when the poor child found herself quite alone in the wild woods, she felt full of terror, even of the very leaves on the trees, and she did not know what to do for fright. Then she began to run over the sharp stones and through the thorn bushes, and the wild beasts after her, but they did her no harm. She ran as long as her feet would carry her. And when



the evening drew near she came to a little house, and she went inside to rest. Everything there was very small, but as pretty and clean as possible. There stood the little table ready laid, and covered with a white cloth, and seven little plates, and seven knives and forks, and drinking cups. By the wall stood seven little beds, side by side, covered with clean white quilts. Snow White, being very hungry and thirsty, ate from each plate a little porridge and bread, and drank out of each little cup a drop of wine, so as not to finish up one portion alone. After that she felt so tired that she lay down on one of the beds, but it did not seem to suit her. One was too long, another too short, but at last the seventh was quite right. And so she lay down upon it, committed herself to heaven, and fell asleep.

When it was quite dark, the masters of the house came home. They were seven dwarfs, whose occupation was to dig underground among the mountains. When they had lighted their seven candles, and it was quite light in the little house, they saw that someone must have been in, as everything was not in the same order in which they left it. The first said,

“Who has been sitting in my little chair?”

The second said,

“Who has been eating from my little plate?”

The third said,

“Who has been taking my little loaf?”

The fourth said,



“Who has been tasting my porridge?”

The fifth said,

“Who has been using my little fork?”

The sixth said,

“Who has been cutting with my little knife?”

The seventh said,

“Who has been drinking from my little cup?”

Then the first one, looking round, saw a hollow in his bed, and cried,

“Who has been lying on my bed?”

And the others came running, and cried,

“Someone has been on our beds too!”

But when the seventh looked at his bed, he saw little Snow White lying there asleep. Then he told the others, who came running up, crying out in their astonishment, and holding up their seven little candles to throw a light upon Snow White.

“O goodness! O gracious!” cried they. “What beautiful child is this?” and were so full of joy to see her that they did not wake her, but let her sleep on. And the seventh dwarf slept with his comrades, an hour at a time with each, until the night had passed.

When it was morning, and Snow White awoke and saw the seven dwarfs, she was very frightened. But they seemed quite friendly, and asked her what her name was, and she told them. And then they asked how she came to be in their house.

