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The Tale of Snow White

Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs by the Brothers Grimm

A very long time ago, in midwinter, when the snowflakes were falling like feathers from heaven, a beautiful queen sat sewing at her window, which had a frame of black ebony.



As she worked, she looked sometimes at the falling snow, and it happened that she pricked her finger with her needle, so that three drops of blood fell upon the snow. How pretty the red blood looked upon the dazzling white! The queen said to herself as she looked it, "Ah me! If only I had a dear little child who had skin as white as the snow, lips as rosy as the blood, and hair as black as the wood in the window frame."

Soon afterwards she had a little daughter, with skin white as snow, lips rosy as blood, and hair as black as ebony – and she was therefore called "Little Snow White."

But alas! When the little one was born, the good queen died.

A year passed by, and the king took another wife. She was a beautiful woman, but proud and haughty, and she could not bear that anyone else should surpass her in beauty. She had a mirror and when she stood in front of it and asked,

"Mirror, mirror upon the wall, who is fairest of us all?"

The mirror answered, "Thou, O Queen, art the fairest of all," and the queen was contented, because she knew the mirror could speak nothing but the truth.

But as time passed on, Little Snow White grew more and more beautiful. When she was seven years old, she was as lovely as the bright day, and still more lovely than the queen herself, so that when the lady one day asked her mirror, "Mirror, mirror upon the wall, who is fairest of us all?"

It answered, "O Lady Queen, though fair ye be, Snow White is fairer far to see."

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The queen was shocked, and grew yellow and green with envy, and from that moment envy and pride grew in her heart so that she had no peace day or night. Finally, she summoned a huntsman and said, "Take the child away into the woods and kill her, for I can no longer bear the sight of her. When you return, bring with you her heart, that I may know you have obeyed my will."

The huntsman dared not disobey, and he led Snow White out into the woods and placed an arrow in his bow to pierce her innocent heart, but the little girl cried and begged him saying, "Ah dear huntsman, leave me my life! I will run away into the wild forest, and never come home again."

And as she was so beautiful, the huntsman had pity on her and said, "Run away then, you poor child." And as a young wild boar came rushing by, he killed it, took out its heart, and carried it home to the queen. The cook was ordered to prepare this, and the wicked queen ate it, and thought she had eaten the heart of Snow White.

Poor little Snow White was now all alone in the wild wood, and so frightened was she that she trembled at every leaf that rustled. Then she began to run, and ran over sharp stones and through thorns, and the wild beasts ran past her, but did her no harm. She kept on running until she came to a little house, where she went in to rest.

Inside the cottage, everything she saw was tiny, but more dainty and clean than words can tell. Upon a white-covered table stood seven little plates and upon each plate lay a little spoon, besides which there were seven knives and forks and seven little goblets. Against the wall, and side by side, stood seven little beds covered with perfectly white sheets.

Snow White was so hungry and thirsty that she took a little food from each of the seven plates, and drank a few drops of wine from each goblet, for she did not wish to take everything away from anyone. Then, because she was so tired, she crept into one of the beds and soon fell fast asleep.

When night fell, the masters of the little house came home. They were seven dwarfs, who worked with a pick axe and spade, searching for copper and gold in the heart of the mountains.

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They realized at once that someone had been to visit them. And looking around, they discovered Snow White, who was lying asleep in one of the little beds.

When the sun rose, Snow White awoke, and oh! How frightened she was when she saw the seven little dwarfs. But they were very friendly, and asked what her name was. "My name is Snow White," she answered.



"And why are you here in our house?" Asked the dwarfs.

Then she told them how her cruel stepmother had intended her to be killed, but the huntsman had spared her life and she had run on until she reached the little house. The dwarfs said, "If you will take care of our house; cook for us, make the beds, wash, mend, and knit, and keep everything neat and clean, then you may stay with us and you shall lack for nothing."

"Yes," answered Snow White. "With all my heart," and so she stayed.

She kept the house neat and clean for the dwarfs, who went off early in the morning to search for copper and gold in the mountains, and who expected their meal to be standing ready for them when they returned at night.

All day long Snow White was alone, and the seven dwarfs warned her to be careful to let no one into the house. "For," said they, "your step mother will soon discover that you are living here."

The queen, believing, of course, that Snow White was dead, and that she had eaten her heart, and therefore that she was again the most beautiful lady in the land, went to her mirror, and said, "Mirror, mirror upon the wall, who is the fairest of us all?"

Then the mirror answered, "O Lady Queen, though fair ye be, Snow White is fairer far to see. Over the hills and far away, she dwells with seven dwarfs today."

How angry she was, for she knew that the mirror spoke the truth, and that the huntsman must have deceived her. She thought and thought how she

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might kill Snow White, for she knew she would have neither rest nor peace until she really was the most beautiful in the land.

At length she decided what to do. She went into a secret chamber that no one else ever entered, and there she made a poisoned apple. When the apple was ready, the queen painted her face and disguised herself as a peasant woman. Then she made her way to the home of the seven dwarfs and knocked at the door.

Snow White put her head out of the window, and said, "I must not let anyone in; the seven dwarfs have forbidden me to do so."

"Fine with me," answered the peasant woman, "I'll sell these apples easily enough. Aren't they beautiful? Here, I'll give you one."

"Oh! No," said Snow White, "I'm afraid to take it."

"Surely you aren't afraid of poison?" said the old woman. "See, I'll cut one in two; you take one half, I'll eat the other."

Now, the apple had been so cleverly made that only the one side contained the poison. Snow White longed for the delicious-looking fruit, and when she saw the woman eat part of it, she thought there could be no danger. So, unable to resist any longer, she stretched out her hand and took the other half. But no sooner did she bite into it than she fell down dead.

The wicked queen laughed aloud with joy and rushed straight home to her mirror. "Mirror, mirror upon the wall, who is fairest of us all?" asked the queen. And the mirror answered, "Queen, thou art fairest of us all!"

When they came home that night, the dwarfs found Snow White lying upon the ground. No breath came from her parted lips, for she was dead. They lifted her tenderly and looked for some poisonous object which might have caused the mischief. But they found nothing. Snow white was dead and dead she remained.

The dwarfs laid her upon a bier, and all seven of them sat around it and wept as though their hearts would break. But, when the time came to bury her, they could not bear to do it. Her pretty cheeks were still rosy red, and she looked just as though she were still living.

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"We cannot hide her away in the dark earth," said the dwarfs. Instead, they made a transparent coffin of shining glass, laid her in it, and wrote her name upon it in letters of gold. Then they put the coffin out upon the mountain top, and one of them always stayed by it and watched it.



Snow White lay in the coffin for a long, long time. And, all the while, she looked as though she were just sleeping, for she was still as white as snow, her lips as red as blood, and her hair as black as ebony.

It chanced one day that a king's son came into the wood, and stopped at the dwarfs' house, hoping to spend the night. There, on the mountain top, he saw the glass coffin with Snow White lying inside, and he read the words that were written upon it in letters of gold.

He was amazed at Snow White's beauty and said to the dwarfs, "If you will but let me have the coffin, you may ask of me what you will, and I will give it to you."

But the dwarfs answered, "We would not sell it for all the gold in the world."

Then said the prince, "Then let me have it as a gift, I pray you, and I will prize your gift as the dearest of my possessions."

When they heard these words, the good dwarfs took pity on him and gave him the coffin, and the prince had his servants carry it away on their shoulders.

But as they were going, the servants stumbled over a tree stump and dropped the coffin. The jolt shook the piece of poisoned apple out of Snow White's throat where it had lodged. Now, with the piece of apple gone, Snow White opened her eyes, raised the lid of the coffin, sat up, and was alive once more. "Where am I?" she cried.

The joyful prince then told her all that had happened and how he loved her better than the whole world. He begged her to go with him to his father's palace and become his wife, and Snow White happily agreed.

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The prince's parents planned a magnificent wedding for their son, and everyone was invited to the marriage feast, including Snow White's step-mother.

Of course, the evil queen had no idea that the bride-to-be was in fact her own step-daughter. After all, she thought Snow white was dead! So, before leaving for the wedding—looking her loveliest—the queen stepped in front of her mirror and said, "Mirror, mirror on the wall, who is fairest of us all."

The mirror answered, "Queen, thou art the fairest in this hall, but the *bride* is fairest of us all."

The queen was miserable. She didn't want attend the wedding at all, but still she had to go see this young bride for herself. So, off she went. But when she arrived at the feast and saw that the bride was none other than Snow White, she was so surprised and terrified that her heart froze, and she turned into stone right then and there.

As for Snow White and her prince, the two lived happily together for a very, very long time.

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