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## INTRODUCTION: Snow White

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Walt Disney's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* has so eclipsed other versions of the story that it is easy to forget that hundreds of variants have been collected over the past century in Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Americas. The heroine may ingest a poisoned apple in her cinematic incarnation, but in Italy she is just as likely to fall victim to a toxic comb, a contaminated cake, or a suffocating braid. Disney's queen, who demands Snow White's heart from the huntsman who takes her into the woods, seems restrained by comparison with the Grimms' evil queen, who orders the huntsman to return with the girl's lungs and liver (she plans to eat both after boiling them in salt water). In Spain, the queen is even more bloodthirsty, asking for a bottle of blood stoppered with the girl's toe. In Italy, she instructs the huntsman to return with the girl's intestines and her blood-soaked shirt. Disney's film has made much of Snow White's coffin being made of glass, but in other versions that coffin is made of gold, silver, or lead or is jewel-encrusted. While it is often displayed on a mountaintop, it can also be set adrift on a river, placed under a tree, hung from the rafters of a room, or locked in a room and surrounded with candles.

"Snow White" may vary tremendously from culture to culture in its details, but it has an easily identifiable, stable core. Steven Swann Jones, modifying and refining the structure outline in the Aarne-Thompson index, emphasizes nine episodes: origin (birth of the heroine), jealousy, expulsion, adoption, renewed jealousy, death, exhibition, resuscitation, and resolution. But while Swann captures the defining features of the tale and reveals how the story's narrative structure is sustained by the tension of binary oppositions (birth/death, expulsion/adoption, jealousy/affection, etc.), he is at a loss when it comes to accounting for the staying power of this cultural story. Rather than drawing definite conclusions about what is at stake in a plot driven by competitive energy, he cautiously formulates what he perceives to be the tale's shaping force: "The most plausible explanation for the form that the overall plot structure of 'Snow White' assumes," he declares, "is that it is a reflection of a young woman's development."<sup>1</sup>

Page numbers in brackets refer to this Norton Critical Edition.  
1. Steven Swann Jones, *The Comparative Method: Structural and Symbolic Analysis of the Al-motifs of "Snow White"* (Helsinki: Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 1990) 32.

To account for the remarkable narrative stability and cultural durability of "Snow White," most critics point to the tale's powerful staging of mother/daughter conflicts. Bruno Bettelheim defines those conflicts as oedipal and asserts that they are "left to our imagination" because "the person for whose love the two are in competition is never mentioned."<sup>2</sup> Basing his interpretation of the story on the Grimms' "Snow White," which features a "good" biological mother who dies in childbirth and an "evil" queen who persecutes her seven-year-old stepdaughter, he advances the thesis that this splitting of the maternal function has a strong emotional resonance for fairy-tale audiences. The oedipal child, he argues, has a deep need to preserve a positive image of mother, one uncontaminated by the natural feelings of anger and hostility that arise as differences develop between mother and child. The wicked stepmother of fairy tales "permits anger at this bad 'stepmother' without endangering the goodwill of the true mother, who is viewed as a different person."<sup>3</sup>

For Bettelheim, the malice of the stepmother is, in the end, nothing more than a projection of the heroine's imagination. Fairy tales, he argues, do not stage scenarios that correspond to psychological realities of family life; rather, they dramatize *projections* of trouble brewing in the young child's mind. Thus the jealousy of the evil queen has nothing whatsoever to do with a mother's possible competition with her daughter and reflects only the daughter's envy of the mother: "If a child cannot permit himself to feel his jealousy of a parent . . . he projects his feelings onto the parent. Then 'I am jealous of all the advantages and prerogatives of Mother' turns into the wishful thought 'Mother is jealous of me.'"<sup>4</sup>

The struggle between Snow White and the wicked queen so dominates the psychological landscape of this fairy tale that Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar have proposed renaming it "Snow White and Her Wicked Stepmother." These two feminist critics, for whom the Grimms' tale enacts "the essential but equivocal relationship between the angel-woman and the monster-woman" of Western patriarchy, emphasize the contrast between protagonist and antagonist:

The central action of the tale—indeed its only real action—arises from the relationship between these two women: the one fair, young, pale, the other just as fair, but older, fiercer; the one a daughter, the other a mother; the one sweet, ignorant, passive, the other both artful and active; the one a sort of angel, the other an undeniable witch.<sup>5</sup>

2. Bruno Bettelheim, *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales* (New York: Knopf, 1976) 201.

3. Bettelheim, *Uses*, 690.

4. Bettelheim, *Uses*, 204.

5. Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1979) 36.

For both Bettelheim and for Gilbert and Gubar, the absent father occupies a central, if invisible, position in this domestic drama. Although we know nothing about Snow White's relationship to her father, Bettelheim insists that "it is reasonable to assume that it is competition for him which sets (step)mother against daughter."<sup>6</sup> Gilbert and Gubar find the father acoustically present if physically absent: "His, surely, is the voice of the looking glass, the patriarchal voice of judgment that rules the Queen's—and every woman's—self-evaluation."<sup>7</sup> The absence of the father is framed as an emphatic narrative denial that only reveals the extent to which he occupies center stage. What is at stake for the two female characters is, in sum, the love, affection, or approval of the father, a father whom we see only briefly as the huntsman and hear as the voice in the mirror. Although the centrality of the father does not become explicit in many versions of "Snow White," one Scottish folk-tale, "Lasair Gheug, the King of Ireland's Daughter," puts the father in the foreground of this family melodrama, but suggests that what is really at issue has more to do with inheritance customs than with sexual jealousy.

In "The Young Slave" of Giambattista Basile's 1634 collection of tales published under the title *The Pentamerone*, the persecution of the heroine is explicitly motivated by her aunt's (unwarranted) sexual jealousy. Lisa, a Neapolitan Snow White, falls into a coma and is preserved for many years in a casket of crystal. When she awakens, she finds herself the target of sexual rage and jealousy, for her aunt believes that she has been the clandestine mistress of her husband. In the end, Lisa's uncle, who has been a model of marital fidelity, reveals a distinct preference for his niece when he drives his cruel wife out of the house. Basile's tale, one of the earliest recorded versions of "Snow White," suggests that the complex psychosexual motivations shaping the plots of fairy tales underwent a process of repression once the social venue for the stories shifted from the household to the nursery.

Where Bettelheim sees a generational conflict between mother and daughter, Gilbert and Gubar see an intrapsychic drama played out between two possible developmental trajectories, one passive, docile, and compliant with patriarchal norms, the other nomadic, creative, and socially subversive. Gilbert and Gubar invest the figure of the wicked queen with narrative energy so powerful that she becomes the story's most admirable character. For them, she is a "plotter, a plot-maker, a schemer, a witch, an artist, and impersonator, a woman of almost infinite creative energy, witty, wily, and self-absorbed as all artists traditionally are."<sup>8</sup> And it is the queen who foreshadows the destiny of Snow White; once Snow White gains the throne, she will exchange her glass

6. Bettelheim, *Uses*, 203.

7. Gilbert and Gubar, *Madwoman*, 38.

8. Gilbert and Gubar, *Madwoman*, 38–39.

coffin for the imprisonment of the looking-glass: "Renouncing 'contemplative purity,' she must now embark on that life of 'significant action' which, for a woman, is defined as a witch's life because it is so monstrous, so unnatural."<sup>9</sup>

Gilbert and Gubar surely took an interpretive cue from Anne Sexton's poetic transformation of the Grimms' "Snow White," in which an aging Queen ("brown spots on her hand / and four whiskers over her lips") is pitted against a thirteen-year-old "lovely virgin." "Beauty is a simple passion," Sexton declares, "but, oh my friends, in the end / you will dance the fire dance in iron shoes" [96–97]. The scene that stages the Queen's death juxtaposes a mobile Queen, dancing herself to death with "her tongue flicking in and out / like a gas jet," with a frozen Snow White, "rolling her china-blue doll eyes open and shut / and sometimes referring to her mirror / as women do" [100]. Sexton's inert Snow White is destined one day to become her mother, galvanized into action and turned into an agent of persecution by the divisive gaze into the mirror.

The mirror image and the glass coffin, not surprisingly, have become the privileged sites for feminist interpretive projects. For Gilbert and Gubar, the magic looking glass and the enchanted glass coffin are "the tools patriarchy suggests that women use to kill themselves into art, the two women literally try to kill each other with art."<sup>1</sup> "In the mirrored reduplication of the self," Elisabeth Bronfen finds both the "ego's narcissistic desire for integrity and immortality" and its "division and mortality."<sup>2</sup> Beauty may mask death but its image (both in the magic mirror and on the face of Snow White in her coffin) reveals its connection with death. "For the queen to eliminate Snow White," Bronfen adds, "means reassuring herself that she as a unity exists independent of difference, Otherness and temporality."<sup>3</sup> For these critics, the story of "Snow White" reproduces a cultural script in which women are enmeshed in a discourse connecting beauty, death, and femininity. Beauty, as reflected in the glass and seen through the coffin, may be attractive, but its seductions have a sinister, lethal side.

The version of "Snow White" that has had the most significant impact on children today is Disney's "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs." Disney Studios bears the responsibility for turning Snow White into a cultural icon, making her the best known fairy-tale character in this country. The Grimms' "Snow White" may never have fared particularly well in the United States, but its cinematic reincarnation continues to fill the coffers of its corporate producer fifty years after its release. If Gilbert and Gubar believe that "Snow White" should be renamed to

9. Gilbert and Gubar, *Madwoman*, 42.

1. Gilbert and Gubar, *Madwoman*, 36.

2. Elisabeth Bronfen, *Over Her Dead Body: Death, Femininity, and the Aesthetic* (New York: Routledge, 1992) 104.

3. Bronfen, *Over*, 105.

include the wicked stepmother in that tale's title, it is largely because they use the Disney version as their interpretive point of departure. Covers for the video version of "Snow White" may foreground the heroine, the prince, and the seven dwarfs, but it is the wicked queen who dominates the action of the film and virtually monopolizes the film's visual and narrative energy. Interestingly, Disney Studios erased the Grimms' prefatory episode describing the death of Snow White's biological mother in childbirth—the only maternal figure is the stepmother in her double incarnation as beautiful, proud, and evil queen and as ugly, sinister, and wicked witch. Notes taken at story conferences reveal that the queen was planned as "a mixture of Lady Macbeth and the Big Bad Wolf," fiercely treacherous and mercilessly cruel.<sup>4</sup> Disney himself, who referred to the transformation of the queen into an old hag as a "Jekyll and Hyde thing,"<sup>5</sup> seemed unaware that there is no Jekyll component to this figure's personality, only two Hydes. Instead of the splitting of the mother image into a good mother who dies in childbirth and an evil queen who persecutes her stepchild, the maternal figure appears only in the realm of evil.

The Disney version of "Snow White" relentlessly polarizes the notion of the feminine to produce a murderously jealous and forbiddingly cold woman on the one hand and an innocently sweet girl accomplished in the art of good housekeeping on the other. Beginning with the Grimms, it is through a combination of labor and good looks that Snow White earns a prince for herself. Here is how the Grimms describe the housekeeping contract extended to Snow White by the dwarfs: "If you will keep house for us, cook, make the beds, wash, sew, knit, and keep everything neat and clean, then you can stay with us, and we'll give you everything you need" [85]. But the dwarfs in the Grimms' tale are hardly in need of a housekeeper, for they appear to be models of tidiness. Everything in their cottage is "indescribably dainty and spotless" [84]; the table has a white cloth with tiny plates, cups, knives, forks, and spoons, and the beds are covered with sheets "as white as snow" [84]. Compare this description of the dwarfs' cottage with the following one taken from a book based on Disney's version of "Snow White":

Skipping across a little bridge to the house, Snow White peeked in through one window pane. There seemed to be no one at home, but the sink was piled high with cups and saucers and plates which looked as though they had never been washed. Dirty little shirts and wrinkled little trousers hung over chairs, and everything was blanketed with dust.

"Maybe the children who live here have no mother," said Snow

4. Richard Holliss and Brian Sibley, *Walt Disney's "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs" and the Making of the Classic Film* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987) 14.

5. Holliss and Sibley, *Disney*, 14.

White, "and need someone to take care of them. Let's clean their house and surprise them."

So in she went, followed by her forest friends. Snow White found an old broom in the corner and swept the floor, while the little animals all did their best to help.

Then Snow White washed all the crumpled little clothes, and set a kettle of delicious soup to bubbling on the hearth.<sup>6</sup>

In one post-Disney American variant of the story after another, Snow White makes it her mission to clean up after the the dwarfs ("seven dirty little boys") and is represented as serving an apprenticeship in home economics ("Snow White, for her part, was becoming an excellent housekeeper and cook.")<sup>7</sup> The Disney version itself transforms household drudgery into frolicking good fun, less work than play, since it requires no real effort, is carried out with the help of wonderfully dextrous woodland creatures, and achieves such a dazzling result. Disney made a point of placing the housekeeping sequence before the encounter with the dwarfs and of presenting the dwarfs as "naturally messy," just as Snow White is "by nature" tidy. When she comes upon the dwarfs' cottage, her first instinct is "to clean it up and surprise them when they come home and maybe they'll let me stay and keep house for them."<sup>8</sup>

"We just try to make a good picture," Walt Disney once observed in connection with *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. "And then the professors come along and tell us what we do."<sup>9</sup> In a sense, Gilbert and Gubar have become the professors who tell us what Disney did, for their critical intervention is above all a response to Disney's film, to a motion picture that positions the evil queen as the figure of cinematic fascination and that makes Snow White so dull that she requires a supporting cast of seven to enliven her scenes (Disney's is the only version of "Snow White" that presents the dwarfs as individualized figures). With a voice in which "the accents of Betty Boop are far too prominent" and with a figure that has been described as a "pasty, sepulchral, sewing-pattern design scissored out of context," the Snow White character lacks the narrative charge and élan so potently present in the representation of her stepmother.<sup>1</sup> Ultimately it is the stepmother's disruptive, disturbing, and divisive presence that invests the story

6. *55 Favorite Stories Adapted from Disney Films*, A Golden Book (n.p.: Western Publishing, 1960).

7. The phrase about the dwarfs is from *Snow White*, illus. Rex Irvine and Judie Clarke (n.p.: Superscope, 1973). The description of Snow White comes from *Storytime Treasury* (New York: McCall, 1969).

8. These are the thoughts that Walt Disney put into Snow White's mind in transcripts of a story conference in preparation for *Snow White*. See Rudy Behlmer, "They Called It 'Disney's Folly': Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs (1937)," *America's Favorite Movies: Behind the Scenes* (New York: Ungar, 1982) 53.

9. "Mouse & Man," *Time* (27 December 1937): 21.

1. "The accents of Betty Boop . . .": Holliss and Sibley, *Disney*, 65; "pasty, sepulchral . . .": "The Snow White Fiasco," *Current History* (June 1938): 46.



with a degree of fascination that has facilitated its widespread circulation and that has allowed it to take hold in our culture.

## GIAMBATTISTA BASILE

### The Young Slave†

\* \* \*

There was once a Baron of Selvascura who had an unmarried sister. This sister used to go and play in a garden with other girls her own age. One day they found a lovely rose in full bloom, so they made a compact that whoever jumped clean over it without touching a single leaf, should win something. But although many of the girls jumped leapfrog over it, they all hit it, and not one of them jumped clean over. But when the turn came to Lilla, the Baron's sister, she stood back a little and took such a run at it that she jumped right over to the other side of the rose. Nevertheless, one leaf fell, but she was so quick and ready that she picked it up from the ground without anyone noticing and swallowed it, thereby winning the prize.

Not less than three days later, Lilla felt herself to be pregnant, and nearly died of grief, for she knew that she had done nothing compromising or dishonest, and could not understand how it was possible for her belly to have swollen. She ran at once to some fairies who were her friends, and when they heard her story, they told her not to worry, for the cause of it all was the rose-leaf she had swallowed.

When Lilla understood this, she took precautions to conceal her condition as much as possible, and when the hour of her deliverance came, she gave birth in hiding to a lovely little girl whom she named Lisa. She sent her to the fairies and they each gave her some charm, but the last one slipped and twisted her foot so badly as she was running to see the child, that in her acute pain she hurled a curse at her, to the effect that when she was seven years old, her mother, whilst combing out her hair, would leave the comb in her tresses, stuck into the head, and from this the child would perish.

At the end of seven years the disaster occurred, and the despairing mother, lamenting bitterly, encased the body in seven caskets of crystal, one within the other, and placed her in a distant room of the palace, keeping the key in her pocket. However, after some time her grief brought her to her grave. When she felt the end to be near, she called her brother and said to him, "My brother, I feel death's hook dragging me away inch by inch. I leave you all my belongings for you to have

† Giambattista Basile, "The Young Slave," in *The Pentamerone*, trans. Benedetto Croce (London: John Lane the Bodley Head, 1932). Reprinted by permission.

and dispose of as you like; but you must promise me never to open the last room in this house, and always keep the key safely in the casket." The brother, who loved her above all things, gave her his word; at the same moment she breathed, "Adieu, for the beans are ripe."

At the end of some years, this lord (who had in the meantime taken a wife) was invited to a hunting-party. He recommended the care of the house to his wife, and begged her above all not to open the room, the key of which he kept in the casket. However, as soon as he had turned his back, she began to feel suspicious, and impelled by jealousy and consumed by curiosity, which is woman's first attribute, took the key and went to open the room. There she saw the young girl, clearly visible through the crystal caskets, so she opened them one by one and found that she seemed to be asleep. Lisa had grown like any other woman, and the caskets had lengthened with her, keeping pace as she grew.

When she beheld this lovely creature, the jealous woman at once thought, "By my life, this is a fine thing! Keys at one's girdle, yet nature makes horns!<sup>1</sup> No wonder he never let anyone open the door and see the Mahomet<sup>2</sup> that he worshipped inside the caskets!" Saying this, she seized the girl by the hair, dragged her out, and in so doing caused the comb to drop out, so that the sleeping Lisa awoke, calling out, "Mother, mother!"

"I'll give you mother, and father too!" cried the Baroness, who was as bitter as a slave, as angry as a bitch with a litter of pups, and as venomous as a snake. She straightaway cut off the girl's hair and thrashed her with the tresses, dressed her in rags, and every day heaped blows on her head and bruises on her face, blackening her eyes and making her mouth look as if she had eaten raw pigeons.<sup>3</sup>

When her husband came back from his hunting-party and saw this girl being so hardly used, he asked who she was. His wife answered that she was a slave sent her by her aunt, only fit for the rope's end, and that one had to be forever beating her.

Now it happened one day, when the Baron had occasion to go to a fair, that he asked everyone in the house, including even the cats, what they would like him to buy for them, and when they had all chosen, one one thing and one another, he turned at last to the slave. But his wife flew into a rage and acted unbecomingly to a Christian, saying, "That's right, class her with all the others, this thick-lipped slave, let everyone be brought down to the same level and all use the urinal.<sup>4</sup> Don't pay so much attention to a worthless bitch, let her go to the devil." But the Baron who was kind and courteous insisted that the

1. The husband or wife is cuckolded.

2. The body of Mahomet was rumored to have been preserved in a coffin suspended between heaven and earth. The Baron, it is implied, has been worshipping a false god.

3. Dripping with blood.

4. All have the same privileges (reflects a time in which using the urinal was considered a luxury).



slave should also ask for something. And she said to him, "I want nothing but a doll, a knife and a pumice-stone; and if you forget them, may you never be able to cross the first river that you come to on your journey!"

The Baron bought all the other things, but forgot just those for which his niece had asked him; so when he came to a river that carried down stones and trees to the shore to lay foundations of fears and raise walls of wonder, he found it impossible to ford it. Then he remembered the spell put on him by the slave, and turned back and bought the three articles in question. When he arrived home he gave out to each one the thing for which they had asked.

When Lisa had what she wanted, she went into the kitchen, and, putting the doll in front of her, began to weep and lament and recount all the story of her troubles to that bundle of cloth just as if it had been a real person. When it did not reply, she took the knife and sharpened it on the pumice-stone and said, "Mind, if you don't answer me, I will dig this into you, and that will put an end to the game!" And the doll, swelling up like a reed when it has been blown into, answered at last, "All right, I have understood you! I'm not deaf!"

This music had already gone on for a couple of days, when the Baron, who had a little room on the other side of the kitchen, chanced to hear this song, and putting his eye to the keyhole, saw Lisa telling the doll all about her mother's jump over the rose-leaf, how she swallowed it, her own birth, the spell, the curse of the last fairy, the comb left in her hair, her death, how she was shut into the seven caskets and placed in that room, her mother's death, the key entrusted to the brother, his departure for the hunt, the jealousy of his wife, how she opened the room against her husband's commands, how she cut off her hair and treated her like a slave, and the many, many torments she had inflicted on her. And all the while she wept and said, "Answer me, dolly, or I will kill myself with this knife." And sharpening it on the pumice-stone, she would have plunged it into herself had not the Baron kicked down the door and snatched the knife out of her hand.

He made her tell him the story again at greater length, and then he embraced his niece and took her away from that house, and left her in charge of one of his relations in order that she should get better, for the hard usage inflicted on her by that heart of a Medea<sup>5</sup> had made her quite thin and pale. After several months, when she had become as beautiful as a goddess, the Baron brought her home and told everyone that she was his niece. He ordered a great banquet, and when the viands had been cleared away, he asked Lisa to tell the story of the hardships she had undergone and of the cruelty of his wife—a tale which made all the guests weep. Then he drove his wife away, sending

5. Princess and sorceress of Colchis who helped Jason obtain the Golden Fleece and murdered her two sons when she was betrayed.

her back to her parents, and gave his niece a handsome husband of her own choice. Thus Lisa testified that

*Heaven rains favors on us when we least expect it.*

## BROTHERS GRIMM

### Snow White†

Once upon a time in the middle of winter, when snow flakes were falling from the sky like feathers, a queen was sitting and sewing by a window with a black ebony frame. While she was sewing and looking out at the snow, she pricked her finger with a needle, and three drops of blood fell onto the snow. The red looked so beautiful against the white snow that she thought to herself: "If only I had a child as white as snow, as red as blood, and as black as the wood of the window frame." Soon thereafter she gave birth to a little girl, who was as white as snow, as red as blood, and as black as ebony, and she was called Snow White. The queen died after the child was born.

A year later the king married another woman. She was a beautiful lady, but proud and arrogant and could not bear being second to anyone in beauty. She had a magic mirror, and when she stood in front of it and looked at herself, she would say:

"Mirror, mirror, on the wall,  
Who's the fairest one of all?"

The mirror would reply:

"You, oh queen, are the fairest of all."

Then she was satisfied, for she knew that the mirror always spoke the truth.

Snow White was growing up and becoming more and more beautiful. When she was seven years old, she was as beautiful as the bright day and more beautiful than the queen herself. One day the queen asked the mirror:

"Mirror, mirror, on the wall,  
Who's the fairest one of all?"

The mirror replied:

"My queen, you are the fairest one here,  
But Snow White is a thousand times more fair than you!"

† Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, "Schneewittchen," in *Kinder- und Hausmärchen*, 7th ed. (Berlin: Dieterich, 1857; first published: Berlin: Realschulbuchhandlung, 1812). Translated for this Norton Critical Edition by Maria Tatar. Copyright © 1999 by Maria Tatar.

When the Queen heard these words, she trembled and turned green with envy. From that moment on, she hated Snow White, and whenever she set eyes on her, her heart turned as cold as a stone. Envy and pride grew like weeds in her heart. Day and night, she never had a moment's peace. One day, she summoned a huntsman and said: "Take the child out into the forest. I don't want to have to lay eyes on her ever again. You must kill her and bring me her lungs and liver as proof of your deed." The huntsman obeyed and took her out into the woods, but just as he was pulling out his hunting knife and about to take aim at her innocent heart, she began weeping and pleading with him. "Alas, dear huntsman, spare my life. I promise to run into the woods and never return."

Snow White was so beautiful that the huntsman took pity on her and said: "Just run away, you poor child."

"The wild animals will devour you before long," he thought to himself. He felt as if a great weight had been lifted from his heart, for at least he did not have to kill her. Just then a young boar ran past him, and the huntsman stabbed it to death. He took out the lungs and liver and brought them to the queen as proof that he had murdered the child. The cook was told to boil them in brine, and the wicked woman ate them up, thinking that she had eaten Snow White's lungs and liver.

The poor child was left all alone in the vast forest. She was so frightened that she just stared at all the leaves on the trees and had no idea what to do next. She started running and raced over sharp stones and through thornbushes. Wild beasts darted near her at times, but they did her no harm. She ran as far as her legs could carry her. When night fell, she saw a little cottage and went inside to rest. Everything in the house was tiny, and indescribably dainty and spotless. There was a little table, with seven little plates on a white cloth. Each little plate had a little spoon, seven little knives and forks, and seven little cups. Against the wall were seven little beds in a row, each made up with sheets as white as snow. Snow White was so hungry and thirsty that she ate a few vegetables and some bread from each little plate and drank a drop of wine out of each little cup. She didn't want to take everything away from one place. Later, she was so tired that she tried out the beds, but they did not seem to be the right size. The first was too long, the second too short, but the seventh one was just right, and she stayed in it. Then she said her prayers and fell fast asleep.

After it was completely dark outside, the owners of the cottage returned. They were seven dwarfs who spent their days in the mountains mining ore and digging for minerals. They lighted their seven little lanterns, and when the cottage brightened up, they saw that someone had been there, for some things were not the way they had left them.

The first one asked: "Who's been sitting on my little chair?"

The second asked: "Who's been eating from my little plate?"

The third asked: "Who's been eating my little loaf of bread?"

The fourth asked: "Who's been eating from my little plate of vegetables?"

The fifth asked: "Who's been using my little fork?"

The sixth asked: "Who's been cutting with my little knife?"

The seventh asked: "Who's been drinking from my little cup?"

The first one turned around and saw some wrinkles on his sheets and said: "Who climbed into my little bed?"

The others came running and each shouted: "Someone's been sleeping in my bed too."

When the seventh dwarf looked in his little bed, he saw Snow White lying there, fast asleep. He shouted to the others who came running and who were so astonished that they raised their seven little lanterns to let the light shine on Snow White.

"My goodness, oh my goodness!" they exclaimed. "What a beautiful child!"

They were so delighted to see her that they decided not to wake her up and let her continue sleeping in her little bed. The seventh dwarf slept for one hour with each of his companions until the night was over.

In the morning, Snow White woke up. When she saw the dwarfs, she was frightened, but they were friendly and asked "What's your name?"

"My name is Snow White," she replied.

"How did you get to our house?" asked the dwarfs.

Then she told them how her stepmother had tried to kill her and that the huntsman had spared her life. She had run all day long until she had arrived at their cottage.

The dwarfs told her: "If you will keep house for us, cook, make the beds, wash, sew, knit, and keep everything neat and tidy, then you can stay with us, and we'll give you everything you need."

"Yes, with pleasure," Snow White replied, and she stayed with them.

She kept house for them. In the morning, they went up to the mountains in search of minerals and gold. In the evening, they returned, and dinner had to be ready for them. Since the girl was by herself during the day, the good dwarfs gave her a strong warning:

"Beware of your stepmother. She'll know soon enough that you're here. Don't let anyone in the house."

After the queen had finished eating what she thought were Snow White's lungs and liver, she was sure that she was once again the fairest of all in the land. She went to the mirror and said:

"Mirror, mirror, on the wall,  
Who's the fairest of them all?"

The mirror replied:

“Here you’re the fairest, dearest queen,  
But little Snow White, who plans to stay  
With the seven dwarfs far far away,  
Is now the fairest ever seen.”

When the queen heard this she was horrified, for she knew that the mirror could not tell a lie. She realized that the huntsman had deceived her and that Snow White must still be alive. She thought long and hard about how she could kill Snow White. Unless she herself was the fairest in the land, she would never be able to feel anything but envy. Finally, she came up with a plan. After staining her face and dressing up as an old peddler woman, she was completely unrecognizable. She traveled beyond the seven hills to the seven dwarfs in that disguise. Then she knocked on the door and called out: “Pretty wares for a good price.”

Snow White peeked out of the window and said: “Good day, old woman, what do you have for sale?”

“Nice things, pretty things,” she replied. “Staylaces<sup>1</sup> in all kinds of colors,” and she took out a silk lace woven of many colors.

“I can let this good woman in,” Snow White thought to herself, and she unbolted the door and bought the pretty lace.

“Oh my child, what a sight you are. Come, let me lace you up properly.”

Snow White wasn’t the least bit suspicious. She stood in front of the old woman and let her put on the new lace. The old woman laced her up so quickly and so tightly that Snow White’s breath was cut off, and she fell down as if dead.

“So much for being the fairest of them all,” she said and hurried away.

Not much later, in the evening, the seven dwarfs came home. When they saw their beloved Snow White lying on the ground, they were horrified. She didn’t move in the slightest, and they were sure she was dead. They lifted her up, and when they saw that she had been laced too tightly, they cut the staylace in two. Snow White began to breathe, and little by little she came back to life. When the dwarfs heard what had happened, they said: “The old peddler woman was none other than the wicked queen. Beware, and don’t let anyone in unless we’re at home.”

When the wicked woman returned home, she went to the mirror and asked:

“Mirror, mirror, on the wall,  
Who’s the fairest of them all?”

The mirror replied as usual:

1. Laces used to tighten the band of strips in a corset.

“Here you’re the fairest, dearest queen,  
But little Snow White, who plans to stay  
With the seven dwarfs far far away,  
Is now the fairest ever seen.”

The blood froze in her veins when she heard those words. She was horrified, for she knew that Snow White was still alive. “But this time,” she said, “I will dream up something that will destroy you.”

Using all the witchcraft in her power, she made a poisoned comb. She then changed her clothes and disguised herself as another old woman. Once again she traveled beyond the seven hills to the seven dwarfs, knocked on the door, and called out: “Pretty wares at a good price.”

Snow White peeked out of the window and said: “Go away, I can’t let anyone in.”

“But you can at least take a look,” said the old woman, and she took out the poisoned comb and held it up in the air. The child liked it so much that she was completely fooled and opened the door. When they had agreed on a price, the old woman said: “Now I’ll give your hair a good combing.”

Poor Snow White suspected nothing and let the woman go ahead, but no sooner had the comb touched her hair when the poison took effect, and the girl fell senseless to the ground.

“There, my beauty,” said the wicked woman, “now you’re finished,” and she rushed away.

Fortunately, it was almost evening, and the seven dwarfs were on their way home. When they saw Snow White lying on the ground as though dead, they suspected the stepmother right away. They examined Snow White and found the poisoned comb. As soon as they pulled it out, Snow White came back to life and told them what had happened. Again they warned her to be on her guard and not to open the door to anyone.

At home, the queen stood before the mirror and said:

“Mirror, mirror, on the wall,  
Who’s the fairest of them all?”

The mirror answered as before:

“Here you’re the fairest, dearest queen,  
But little Snow White, who plans to stay  
With the seven dwarfs far far away,  
Is now the fairest ever seen.”

When the queen heard the words of the mirror, she began trembling with rage. “Snow White must die!” she cried out. “Even if it costs me my life.”



Then she went into a remote, hidden chamber where no one ever set foot and made an apple full of poison. On the outside it looked beautiful—white with red cheeks—so that if you saw it you longed for it. But anyone who took the tiniest bite would die. When the apple was finished, she stained her face, dressed up as a peasant woman, and traveled beyond the seven hills to the seven dwarfs.

She knocked at the door, and Snow White put her head out the window to say: "I can't let anyone in. The seven dwarfs won't allow it."

"That's all right," replied the peasant woman. "I'll get rid of my apples soon enough. Here, I'll give you one."

"No," said Snow White, "I'm not supposed to take anything."

"Are you afraid that it's poisoned?" asked the old woman. "Here, I'll cut the apple in two. You eat the red part, I'll eat the white."

The apple had been made so artfully that only the red part of it was poison. Snow White felt a craving for the beautiful apple, and when she saw that the peasant woman was eating it, she could no longer resist. She put her hand out the window and took the poisoned half. But no sooner had she taken a bite when she fell down on the ground dead. The queen stared at her with savage eyes and burst out laughing: "White as snow, red as blood, black as ebony! This time the dwarfs won't be able to bring you back to life!"

At home, she asked the mirror:

"Mirror, mirror, on the wall,  
Who's the fairest of them all?"

And finally it replied:

"Oh queen, you are the fairest in the land."

Her envious heart was finally at peace, as much as an envious heart can be.

When the little dwarfs returned home in the evening, they found Snow White lying on the ground. Not a breath of air was coming from her lips. She was dead. They lifted her up and looked around for something that might be poisonous. They unlaced her, combed her hair, washed her with water and wine, but it was all in vain. The dear child was dead and nothing could bring her back. They placed her on a bier, and all seven of them sat down on it and mourned her. They wept for three days. They were about to bury her, but she still looked just like a living person with beautiful red cheeks.

They said: "We can't possibly lower her into the dark ground." And so they had a transparent glass coffin made that allowed Snow White to be seen from all sides. They put her in it, wrote her name on it in golden letters, and added that she was the daughter of a king. They brought the coffin up to the top of a mountain, and one of them was

always there to keep vigil. Animals also came to mourn Snow White, first an owl, then a raven, and finally a dove.

Snow White lay in the coffin for a long, long time. But she did not decay and looked as if she were sleeping, for she was still white as snow, red as blood, and with hair as black as ebony.

One day the son of a king was traveling through the woods and arrived at the dwarfs' cottage. He wanted to spend the night there. On top of the mountain, he saw the coffin with beautiful Snow White lying in it, and he read what had been written in golden letters. Then he said to the dwarfs: "Let me have the coffin. I will give you whatever you want for it."

The dwarfs answered: "We wouldn't sell it for all the gold in the world."

Then he said: "Make me a present of it, for I can't live without seeing Snow White. I will honor and cherish her as if she were my beloved."

The good dwarfs took pity on him when they heard these words, and they gave him the coffin. The prince ordered his servants to carry the coffin away on their shoulders. It happened that they stumbled over a shrub, and the jolt freed the poisonous piece of apple lodged in Snow White's throat. She came to life. "Good heavens, where am I?" she cried out.

The prince was overjoyed and said: "You are with me," and he described what had happened and said: "I love you more than anything else on earth. Come with me to my father's castle. You shall be my bride." Snow White had tender feelings for him, and she departed with him. Their marriage was celebrated with great splendor.

Snow White's wicked stepmother was also invited to the wedding feast. She put on beautiful clothes, stepped up to the mirror, and said:

"Mirror, mirror on the wall:  
Who's the fairest of them all?"

The mirror replied:

"My queen, you may be the fairest here,  
But the young queen is a thousand times more fair."

The wicked woman let loose a curse, and she became so petrified with fear that she didn't know what to do. At first she didn't want to go to the wedding feast. But she never had a moment's peace after that and had to go see the young queen. When she entered, Snow White recognized her right away. The queen was so terrified that she just stood there and couldn't budge an inch. Iron slippers had already been heated up over a fire of coals. They were brought in with tongs and set right in front of her. She had to put on the red hot iron shoes and dance in them until she dropped to the ground dead.