

## SNOWDROP

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Tw'as the middle of winter, and the snowflakes were falling from the sky like feathers. Now, a Queen sat sewing at a window framed in black ebony, and as she sewed she looked out upon the snow. Suddenly she pricked her finger and three drops of blood fell on to the snow. And the red looked so lovely on the white that she thought to herself: 'If only I had a child as white as snow and as red as blood, and as black as the wood of the window frame!' Soon after, she had a daughter, whose hair was black as ebony, while her cheeks were red as blood, and her skin as white as snow; so, she was called Snowdrop. But when the child was born the Queen died. A year after the King took another wife. She was a handsome woman, but proud and overbearing, and could not endure that any one should surpass her in beauty. She had a magic looking-glass, and when she stood before it and looked at herself she used to say:

'Mirror, Mirror on the wall,  
Who is fairest of us all?'  
then the Glass answered,

'Queen, thou'rt fairest of them all.'

Then she was content, for she knew that the Looking-glass spoke the truth.

But Snowdrop grew up and became more and more beautiful, so that when she was seven years old she was as beautiful as the day, and far surpassed the Queen. Once, when she asked her Glass,

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'Mirror, Mirror on the wall,  
Who is fairest of us all?'  
it answered—

'Queen, thou art fairest here, I hold,

But Snowdrop is fairer a thousandfold.'

Then the Queen was horror-struck and turned green and yellow with jealousy. From the hour that she saw Snowdrop her heart sank, and she hated the little girl.



The pride and envy of her heart grew like a weed, so that she had no rest day nor night. At last she called a Huntsman and said: 'Take the child out into the wood; I will not set eyes on her again; you must kill her and bring me her lungs and liver as tokens.'

The Huntsman obeyed, and took Snowdrop out into the forest, but when he drew his hunting-knife and was preparing to plunge it into her innocent heart, she began to cry:

'Alas! dear Huntsman, spare my life, and I will run away into the wild forest and never come back again.'

And because of her beauty the Huntsman had pity on her and said, 'Well, run away, poor child.' Wild beasts will soon devour you, he thought, but still he felt as though a weight were lifted from his heart because he had not been obliged to kill her. And as just at that moment a young fawn came leaping by, he pierced it and took the lungs and liver as tokens to the Queen. The Cook was ordered to serve them up in pickle, and the wicked Queen ate them thinking that they were Snowdrop's.

Now the poor child was alone in the great wood, with no living soul near, and she was so frightened that she knew not what to do. Then she began to run and ran over the sharp stones and through the brambles, while the animals passed her by without harming her. She ran as far as her feet could carry her till it was nearly evening, when she saw a little house and went in to rest. Inside, everything was small, but as neat and clean as could be. A small table covered with a white cloth stood ready with seven small plates, and by every plate was a spoon, knife, fork, and cup. Seven little beds were ranged against the walls, covered with snow-white coverlets. As Snowdrop was very hungry and thirsty she ate a little bread and vegetable from each plate, and drank a little wine from each cup, for she did not want to eat up the whole of one portion. Then, being very tired, she lay down in one of the beds. She tried them all but none suited her; one was too short, another too long, all except the seventh, which was just right. She remained in it, said her prayers, and fell asleep.

When it was quite dark the masters of the house came in. They were seven Dwarfs, who used to dig in the mountains for ore. They kindled their lights, and as soon as they could see they noticed that someone had been there, for everything was not in the order in which they had left it.

The first said, 'Who has been sitting in my chair?'

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The second said, 'Who has been eating off my plate?'

The third said, 'Who has been nibbling my bread?'

The fourth said, 'Who has been eating my vegetables?'

The fifth said, 'Who has been using my fork?'

The sixth said, 'Who has been cutting with my knife?'

The seventh said, 'Who has been drinking out of my cup?'



Then the first looked and saw a slight impression on his bed, and said, 'Who has been treading on my bed?' The others came running up and said, 'And mine, and mine.' But the seventh, when he looked into his bed, saw Snowdrop, who lay there asleep. He called the others, who came up and cried out with astonishment, as they held their lights and gazed at Snowdrop. 'Heavens! what a beautiful child,' they said, and they were so delighted that they did not wake her up but left her asleep in bed. And the seventh Dwarf slept with his comrades, an hour with each all through the night.

When morning came Snowdrop woke up, and when she saw the seven Dwarfs she was frightened.

But they were very kind and asked her name.

'I am called Snowdrop,' she answered.

'How did you get into our house?' they asked.

Then she told them how her stepmother had wished to get rid of her, how the Huntsman had spared her life, and how she had run all day till she had found the house.

Then the Dwarfs said, 'Will you look after our household, cook, make the beds, wash, sew and knit, and keep everything neat and clean? If so you shall stay with us and want for nothing.'

'Yes,' said Snowdrop, 'with all my heart'; and she stayed with them and kept the house in order.

In the morning they went to the mountain and searched for copper and gold, and in the evening, they came back and then their meal had to be ready. All day the maiden was alone, and the good Dwarfs warned her and said, 'Beware of your stepmother, who will soon learn that you are here. Don't let anyone in.'

But the Queen, having, as she imagined, eaten Snowdrop's liver and lungs, and feeling certain that she was the fairest of all, stepped in front of her Glass, and asked—

'Mirror, Mirror on the wall,

Who is fairest of us all?'

the Glass answered as usual—

'Queen, thou art fairest here, I hold,  
But Snowdrop over the fells,  
Who with the seven Dwarfs dwells,  
Is fairer still a thousandfold.'

She was dismayed, for she knew that the Glass told no lies, and she saw that the Hunter had deceived her, and that Snowdrop still lived. Accordingly, she began to wonder afresh how she might compass her death; for as long as she was not the fairest in the land her jealous heart left her no rest. At last she thought of a plan. She dyed her face and dressed up like an old Peddler, so that she was quite unrecognizable. In this guise she crossed over the seven mountains to the home of the seven Dwarfs and called out, 'Wares for sale.'

Snowdrop peeped out of the window and said, 'Good-day, mother, what have you got to sell?'

'Good wares, fine wares,' she answered, 'laces of every color'; and she held out one which was made of gay plaited silk.

'I may let the honest woman in,' thought Snowdrop, and she unbolted the door and bought the pretty lace.

'Child,' said the Old Woman, 'what a sight you are, I will lace you properly for once.'

Snowdrop made no objection and placed herself before the Old Woman to let her lace her with the new lace. But the Old Woman laced so quickly and tightly that she took away Snowdrop's breath and she fell down as though dead.

'Now I am the fairest,' she said to herself, and hurried away.

Not long after the seven Dwarfs came home and were horror-struck when they saw their dear little Snowdrop lying on the floor without stirring, like one dead. When they saw she was laced too tight they cut the lace, whereupon she began to breathe and soon came back to life again. When the Dwarfs heard what had happened, they said that the old Peddler was no other than the wicked Queen. 'Take care not to let anyone in when we are not here,' they said.

Now the wicked Queen, as soon as she got home, went to the Glass and asked—

'Mirror, Mirror on the wall,  
Who is fairest of us all?'  
and it answered as usual—

'Queen, thou art fairest here, I hold,  
But Snowdrop over the fells,  
Who with the seven Dwarfs dwells,  
Is fairer still a thousandfold.'

When she heard it all her blood flew to her heart, so enraged was she, for she knew that Snowdrop had come back to life again. Then she thought to herself, 'I must plan something which will put an end to her.' By means of witchcraft, in which she was skilled, she made a poisoned comb. Next, she disguised herself and took the form of a different Old Woman. She crossed the mountains and came to the home of the seven Dwarfs, and knocked at the door calling out, 'Good wares to sell.'

Snowdrop looked out of the window and said, 'Go away, I must not let anyone in.'

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'At least you may look,' answered the Old Woman, and she took the poisoned comb and held it up.



The child was so pleased with it that she let herself be beguiled and opened the door.

When she had made a bargain the Old Woman said, 'Now I will comb your hair properly for once.'

Poor Snowdrop, suspecting no evil, let the Old Woman have her way, but scarcely was the poisoned comb fixed in her hair than the poison took effect, and the maiden fell down unconscious.

'You paragon of beauty,' said the wicked woman, 'now it is all over with you,' and she went away.

Happily, it was near the time when the seven Dwarfs came home. When they saw Snowdrop lying on the ground as though dead, they immediately suspected her stepmother, and searched till they found the poisoned comb. No sooner had they removed it than Snowdrop came to herself again and related what had happened. They warned her again to be on her guard, and to open the door to no one.

When she got home the Queen stood before her Glass and said—

'Mirror, Mirror on the wall,  
Who is fairest of us all?'  
and it answered as usual—

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But Snowdrop over the fells,  
Who with the seven Dwarfs dwells,  
Is fairer still a thousandfold.'

When she heard the Glass speak these words she trembled and quivered with rage. 'Snowdrop shall die,' she said, 'even if it cost me my own life.' Thereupon

she went into a secret room, which no one ever entered but herself, and made a poisonous apple. Outwardly it was beautiful to look upon, with rosy cheeks, and everyone who saw it longed for it, but whoever ate of it was certain to die. When the apple was ready she dyed her face and dressed herself like an old Peasant Woman and so crossed the seven hills to the Dwarfs' home. There she knocked.

Snowdrop put her head out of the window and said, 'I must not let anyone in, the seven Dwarfs have forbidden me.'

'It is all the same to me,' said the Peasant Woman. 'I shall soon get rid of my apples. There, I will give you one.'

'No; I must not take anything.'

'Are you afraid of poison?' said the woman. 'See, I will cut the apple in half: you eat the red side and I will keep the other.'

Now the apple was so cunningly painted that the red half alone was poisoned. Snowdrop longed for the apple, and when she saw the Peasant Woman eating she could hold out no longer, stretched out her hand and took the poisoned half. Scarcely had she put a bit into her mouth than she fell dead to the ground.

The Queen looked with a fiendish glance, and laughed aloud and said, 'White as snow, red as blood, and black as ebony, this time the Dwarfs cannot wake you up again.' And when she got home and asked the Looking-glass—

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'Mirror, Mirror on the wall,

Who is fairest of us all?'

it answered at last—

'Queen, thou'rt fairest of them all.'

Then her jealous heart was at rest, as much at rest as a jealous heart can be. The Dwarfs, when they came at evening, found Snowdrop lying on the ground and not a breath escaped her lips, and she was quite dead. They lifted her up and looked to see whether any poison was to be found, unlaced her dress, combed her hair, washed her with wine and water, but it was no use; their dear child was dead. They laid her on a bier, and all seven sat down and bewailed her and lamented over her for three whole days. Then they prepared to bury her, but she looked so fresh and living, and still had such beautiful rosy cheeks, that they said, 'We cannot bury her in the dark earth.' And so, they had a transparent glass coffin made, so that she could be seen from every side, laid her inside and wrote on it in letters of gold her name and how she was a King's daughter. Then they set the coffin out on the mountain, and one of them always stayed by and watched it. And the birds came too and mourned for Snowdrop, first an owl, then a raven, and lastly a dove.

Now Snowdrop lay a long, long time in her coffin, looking as though she were asleep. It happened that a Prince was wandering in the wood and came to the home of the seven Dwarfs to pass the night. He saw the coffin on the mountain and lovely Snowdrop inside and read what was written in golden letters. Then he said to the Dwarfs, 'Let me have the coffin; I will give you whatever you like for it.'

But they said, 'We will not give it up for all the gold of the world.'

Then he said, 'Then give it to me as a gift, for I cannot live without Snowdrop to gaze upon; and I will honor and reverence it as my dearest treasure.'

When he had said these words, the good Dwarfs pitied him and gave him the coffin.

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The Prince bade his servants carry it on their shoulders. Now it happened that they stumbled over some brushwood, and the shock dislodged the piece of apple from Snowdrop's throat. In a short time, she opened her eyes, lifted the lid of the coffin, sat up and came back to life again completely.

'O Heaven! where am I?' she asked.

The Prince, full of joy, said, 'You are with me,' and he related what had happened, and then said, 'I love you better than all the world; come with me to my father's castle and be my wife.'

Snowdrop agreed and went with him, and their wedding was celebrated with great magnificence. Snowdrop's wicked stepmother was invited to the feast; and when she had put on her fine clothes she stepped to her Glass and asked—

'Mirror, Mirror on the wall,

Who is fairest of us all?'

The Glass answered—

'Queen, thou art fairest here, I hold,

The young Queen fairer a thousandfold.'

Then the wicked woman uttered a curse and was so terribly frightened that she didn't know what to do. Yet she had no rest: she felt obliged to go and see the young Queen. And when she came in she recognized Snowdrop and stood stock still with fear and terror. But iron slippers were heated over the fire and were soon brought in with tongs and put before her. And she had to step into the red-hot shoes and dance till she fell down dead.

# **SNOW-WHITE AND ROSE-RED**

By Dinah Maria Craik

1857



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A poor widow lived alone in a little cottage, in front of which was a garden, where stood two little rose-trees: one bore white roses, the other red. The widow had two children, who resembled the two rose-trees: one was called Snow-white, and the other Rose-red. They were two of the best children that ever lived; but Snow-white was quieter and gentler than Rose-red. Rose-red liked best to jump about in the meadows, to look for flowers and catch butterflies; but Snow-white sat at home with her mother, helped her in the house, or read to her when there was nothing else to do. The two children loved one another so much, that they always walked hand in hand; and when Snow-white said, "We will not forsake one another," Rose-red answered, "Never, as long as we live;" and the mother added, "Yes, my children, whatever one has, let her divide with the other."

They often ran about in solitary places and gathered red berries; and the wild creatures of the wood never hurt them but came confidingly up to them. The little hare ate cabbage-leaves out of their hands, the doe grazed at their side, the stag sprang merrily past them, and the birds remained sitting on the boughs, and never ceased their songs. They met with no accident if they loitered in the wood and right came on; they lay down together on the moss and slept till morning; and the mother knew this and was in no anxiety about them. Once, when they had spent the night in the wood, and the red morning awoke them, they saw a beautiful child in a shining white dress, sitting by the place where they had slept, who, arising, and looking at them kindly, said nothing, but went into the wood. And when they looked round, they found out that they had been sleeping close to a precipice and would certainly have fallen it if they had gone a few steps farther in the dark. Their mother told them it must have been the angel that takes care of good children who had sat by them all night long.

Snow-white and Rose-red kept their mother's cottage so clean, that it was a pleasure to investigate it. In the summer, Rose-red managed the house, and every morning she gathered a nosegay in which was a rose off each tree and set it by her mother's bed before she awoke. In winter Snow-white lighted the fire and hung the kettle on the hook; and though it was only copper, it shone like gold, it was rubbed so clean. In the evening, when the snow fell, the mother said, "Go, Snow-white, and bolt the door;" and then they seated themselves on the hearth, and the mother took her spectacles, and read aloud out of a great book, and the two girls listened, and sat and span. Near them lay a lamb on the floor, and behind them, on a perch, sat a white dove, with its head under its wing.

One evening, as they were thus happy together, someone knocked to be let in. The mother said, "Quick, Rose-red, open the door; perhaps it is a traveler who seeks shelter." Rose-red went and pushed the bolt back, and thought it was a poor man, but a bear stretched his thick black head into the door. Rose-red screamed and sprang back, the little lamb bleated, the little dove fluttered about, and Snow-white hid herself behind her mother's bed. However, the bear began to speak, and said, "Do not be frightened, I will do you no harm; I am half frozen, and only want to warm myself a little."

"You poor bear," said the mother, "lay yourself down before the fire, only take care your fur does not burn." Then she called out, "Snow-white and Rose-red, come out; the bear will not hurt you—he means honestly by us." Then they both came out, and, by degrees, the lamb and the dove also approached, and ceased to be afraid. The bear said, "Children, knock the snow a little out of my fur;" and they fetched a broom, and swept the bear's skin clean; and he stretched himself before the fire and growled softly, like a bear that was quite happy and comfortable. In a short time, they all became quite friendly together, and the children played tricks with the awkward guest. They pulled his hair, set their feet on his back, and rolled him here and there; or took a hazel rod and beat him, and when he growled they laughed. The bear was very much pleased with this frolic, only, when they became too mischievous, he called out, "Children, leave me alone."

"Little Snow-white and Rose-red,  
You will strike your lover dead."

When bedtime came, and the others went to sleep, the mother said to the bear: "You can lie there on the hearth, and then you will be sheltered from the cold and the bad weather." At daybreak the two children let him out, and he trotted over the snow into the wood. Henceforward, the bear came every evening at the same hour, laid himself on the hearth, and allowed the children to play with him as much as they liked; and they became so used to him, that the door was never bolted until their black companion had arrived. When spring came, and everything was green out of doors, the bear said one morning to Snow-white: "Now I must go away and may not come again the whole summer."

"Where are you going, dear Bear?" asked Snow-white.

"I must go into the wood, and guard my treasures from the bad dwarfs; in winter, when the ground is frozen hard, they have to stay underneath, and cannot work their way through, but now that the sun has thawed and warmed the earth, they break through, come up, seek, and steal: what is once in their hands, and lies in their caverns, does not come so easily into daylight again." Snow-white was quite sorrowful at parting, and as she unbolted the door for him, and the bear ran out, the hook of the door caught him, and a piece of his skin tore off; it seemed to Snow-white as if she had seen gold shining through, but she was not sure. But the bear ran quickly away, and soon disappeared behind the trees.

After some time, their mother sent the children into the wood to collect faggots. They found there a large tree, which had been cut down and lay on the ground, and by the trunk something was jumping up and down, but they could not tell what it was. As they came nearer, they saw that it was a dwarf, with an old withered face, and a snow-white beard a yard long. The end of the beard was stuck fast in a cleft in the tree, and the little fellow jumped about like a dog on a rope and did not know how to help himself. He stared at the girls with his fiery red eyes, and screamed out, "Why do you stand there! Can't you come and render me some assistance?"

"What is the matter with you, little man?" asked Rose-red.

"Stupid little goose!" answered the dwarf; "I wanted to chop the tree, so as to have some small pieces of wood for the kitchen; we only want little bits; with thick logs, the small quantity of food that we cook for ourselves—we are not, like you, great greedy people—burns directly. I had driven the wedge well in, and it was all going on right, but the detestable wood was too smooth, and sprang out unexpectedly; and the tree closed so quickly, that I could not pull my beautiful white beard out; now it is sticking there, and I can't get away. There you foolish, soft, milk-faces! you are laughing and crying out, 'How ugly you are! how ugly you are!'"

The children took a great deal of trouble, but they could not pull the beard out; it stuck too fast.

"I will run and fetch somebody," said Rose red.



"You great ninny!" snarled the dwarf, "you want to call more people; you are two too many for me now. Can't you think of anything better?"

"Only don't be impatient," said Snow-white, "I have thought of something;" and she took her little scissors out of her pocket and cut the end of the beard off.

As soon as the dwarf felt himself free, he seized a sack filled with gold that was sticking between the roots of the tree; pulling it out, he growled to himself, "You rude people, to cut off a piece of my beautiful beard! May evil reward you!" Then he threw his sack over his shoulders and walked away, without once looking at the children.

Sometime afterwards, Snow-white and Rose red wished to catch some fish for dinner. As they came near to the stream, they saw that something like a grasshopper was jumping towards the water, as if it were going to spring in. They ran on and recognized the dwarf.

"Where are you going?" asked Rose-red, "You don't want to go into the water?"

"I am not such a fool as that," cried the dwarf, "Don't you see the detestable fish wants to pull me in?"[176]

The little fellow had been sitting there fishing, and, unluckily, the wind had entangled his beard with the line. When directly afterwards a great fish bit at his hook, the weak creature could not pull him out, so the fish was pulling the dwarf into the water. It is true he caught hold of all the reeds and rushes, but that did not help him much; he had to follow all the movements of the fish and was in imminent danger of being drowned. The girls, coming at the right time, held him fast and tried to get the beard loose from the line, but in vain—beard and line were entangled fast together. There was nothing to do but to pull out the scissors and to cut off the beard, in doing which a little piece of it was lost. When the dwarf saw that, he cried out: "Is that manners, you goose! to disfigure one's face so? Is it not enough that you once cut my beard shorter?"

But now you have cut the best part of it off, I dare not be seen by my people. I wish you had had to run and had lost the soles of your shoes!" Then he fetched a sack of pearls that lay among the rushes, and, without saying a word more, he dragged it away and disappeared behind a stone.

Soon after, the mother sent the two girls to the town to buy cotton, needles, cord, and tape. The road led them by a heath, scattered over which lay great masses of rock. There they saw a large bird hovering in the air; it flew round and round just above them, always sinking lower and lower, and at last it settled down by a rock not far distant. Directly after, they heard a piercing, wailing cry. They ran up and saw with horror that the eagle had seized their old acquaintance the dwarf and was going to carry him off. The compassionate children instantly seized hold of the little man, held him fast, and struggled so long that the eagle let his prey go.

When the dwarf had recovered from his first fright, he called out, in his shrill voice: "Could not you deal rather more gently with me? You have torn my thin coat all in tatters, awkward, clumsy creatures that you are!" Then he took a sack of precious stones and slipped behind the rock again into his den. The girls, who were used to his ingratitude, went on their way, and completed their business in the town. As they were coming home again over the heath, they surprised the dwarf, who had emptied his sack of precious stones on a little clean place and had not thought that anyone would come by there so late. The evening sun shone on the glittering stones, which looked so beautiful in all their colors, that the children could not help standing still to gaze.

"Why do you stand there gaping?" cried the dwarf, his ash-colored face turning vermilion with anger.

With these cross words he was going away, when he heard a loud roaring, and a black bear trotted out of the wood towards them. The dwarf sprang up terrified, but he could not get to his lurking hole again—the bear was already close upon him. Then he called out in anguish, —

"Dear Mr. Bear, spare me, and you shall have all my treasures; look at the beautiful precious stones that lie there. Give me my life! for what do you want with a poor thin little fellow like me? You would scarcely feel me between your

teeth. Rather seize those two wicked girls; they will be tender morsels for you, as fat as young quails; pray, eat them at once."

The bear, without troubling himself to answer, gave the malicious creature one single stroke with his paw, and he did not move again. The girls had run away, but the bear called after them, "Snow-white and Rose-red, do not be frightened; wait, I will go with you. Recognizing the voice of their old friend, they stood still, and when the bear came up to them his skin suddenly fell off; and behold he was not a bear, but a handsome young man dressed all in gold.

"I am a king's son," said he; "I was changed by the wicked dwarf, who had stolen all my treasures, into a wild bear, and obliged to run about in the wood until I should be freed by his death. Now he has received his well-deserved punishment."

So, they all went home together to the widow's cottage, and Snow-white was married to the prince, and Rose-red to his brother. They divided between them the great treasures which the dwarf had amassed. The old mother lived many quiet and happy years with her children; but when she left her cottage for the palace, she took the two rose-trees with her, and they stood before her window and bore every year the most beautiful roses—one white and the other red.