

## Snow White and Rose Red

A POOR WIDOW LIVED all alone in a hut and in front of the hut there was a garden with two rosebushes growing in it, one bearing white roses and the other red roses. She had two children, who resembled the two rosebushes, and one was called Snow White, the other Rose Red. No two children in all the world had ever been so good and kind, so willing and cheerful. Snow White was quieter and gentler than Rose Red. Rose Red liked best to run about the fields, looking for flowers and catching butterflies, while Snow White stayed home with her mother, helping with the housework, or reading to her when there was no work to be done.

The two children loved each other so dearly that they always held

hands when they went out together, and when Snow White said: "We will never leave each other," Rose Red replied: "Never as long as we live," and their mother added: "What one of you has, she must share with the other." They often roamed the forest alone, picking red berries, and the animals made friends with them and never harmed them. The hare ate a cabbage leaf out of their hands, the roe grazed beside them, the stag came along, bounding merrily, and the birds sat still on their branches, singing all the songs they knew. No harm ever came to the little girls. When they stayed in the forest too long and night overtook them, they lay down side by side on the moss and slept till morning. Their mother knew what they were doing and didn't worry.

Once when they had spent the night in the forest and the dawn woke them, they saw a beautiful child dressed in glittering white sitting near them. The child arose, gave them a friendly look but said nothing, and went off into the forest. When they looked around, they saw they had been sleeping near a precipice and would certainly have fallen off if they had gone a few steps farther in the darkness. Their mother told them it must have been the angel who watches over good little children.

Snow White and Rose Red kept their mother's hut so neat and clean it was a pleasure to look at. Rose Red took care of the house in the summertime. Every morning before her mother woke up the little girl brought two flowers, a rose from each of the rosebushes, to her bedside. In the winter, Snow White lit the fire and hung the kettle over the hearth. The kettle was brass, but it was scoured so clean that it glistened like gold. In the evening when the snowflakes were falling, the mother would say: "Snow White, go and bolt the door." Then they would sit by the hearth, the mother would take her spectacles and read to them out of the big book and the two little girls would spin as they listened. A lamb lay on the floor beside them, and behind them on a perch sat a white dove with its head under its wing.

One evening as they were sitting quietly together, there was a knock at the door as though someone wished to be let in. The mother said: "Quick, Rose Red, open the door. It must be a wayfarer in need of shelter." Rose Red went and pushed back the bolt. She thought it would be a poor man, but it wasn't. It was a bear who thrust his big black head through the doorway. Rose Red screamed and leaped



back. The lamb bleated, the dove fluttered into the air, and Snow White hid behind her mother's bed. But the bear spoke and said: "Don't be afraid. I won't hurt you, I'm half-frozen. All I want is to warm myself a little." "Poor bear," said the mother, "lie down by the hearth. Only take care your fur doesn't catch fire." Then she cried: "Snow White, Rose Red, come out, the bear won't hurt you, he means no harm." The two girls came out and little by little the lamb and the dove moved closer and weren't afraid of him any more. The bear said: "Children, beat my fur a little, it's full of snow." They brought the broom and swept the snow out of his coat, after which he stretched out by the fire and rumbled contentedly. Soon the children were used to him and the poor awkward guest had to put up with all sorts of mischief. They tugged at his fur, walked on him, and rolled him back and forth, or else they beat him with a hazel switch and laughed when he growled. The bear took it in good part, but when they went too far, he cried: "Children, children, let me live:

"Snow White and Rose Red,  
You'll beat your suitor till he's dead."

When bedtime came, the others retired, and the mother said to the bear: "You're very welcome to spend the night by our hearth. Then you'll be safe against the cold and the harsh weather." At daybreak the children let him out and he trotted over the snow and into the forest. From then on he came every evening at the same time, lay down by the hearth and let the children tease him as much as they pleased. They grew so fond of their black friend that the door was never bolted until he got there.

One morning when spring had come and the whole countryside was green, the bear said to Snow White: "I must leave you now. I won't be able to visit you all summer." "Where are you going, dear bear?" she asked. "I must go to the forest to guard my treasures from the wicked dwarfs. In the winter when the ground is frozen hard, they have to stay in their caves because they can't work their way through, but now that the sun has warmed the ground and thawed it out, they break through and come up and ferret around and steal. And when they get their hands on something and carry it away to their caves, it's not very likely to see the light of day again." Snow White was sad to hear that he was going. When she opened the door



for him and the bear pushed through, his coat caught on the latch, which tore it just a little, and Snow White thought she saw gold shining through, but she wasn't sure. The bear hurried away and soon vanished into the woods.

Some time after that the mother sent the girls to the forest to gather brushwood. They found a big felled tree trunk and near it something was jumping up and down in the grass, but they couldn't make out what it was. When they came closer, they saw a dwarf with a wizened old face and a long snow-white beard. The end of his beard was caught in a cleft of the tree trunk, and the little man was at his wits' end and jumping about like a dog on a chain. He glared at the girls out of his fiery red eyes and screamed: "Why are you standing there? Can't you come here and help me?" "How did it happen?" Rose Red asked. "Stupid nosey goose," said the dwarf. "I was trying to split this tree trunk to make firewood for the kitchen. The small portions of food we dwarfs eat get burned if we use big logs. We don't gobble and bolt like you crude greedy people. I drove the wedge in all right and there wouldn't have been any trouble, but the damned wood was so smooth it popped right out again and the cleft clapped shut on my beautiful white beard. Now it's caught and so am I. And you with your silly milk-fed faces, all you can do is laugh. Pooh! How nasty you are!" The girls tried hard, but his beard was stuck tight and they couldn't pull it out. "I'll run and get somebody," said Rose Red. "You crazy blockheads," the dwarf snarled. "Somebody indeed! There are two of you already, and that's too many. Is that all you can think of?" "Don't be so impatient," said Snow White. "Wait. I have an idea." Whereupon she took her little scissors out of her pocket and cut off the tip of his beard. As soon as the dwarf felt that he was free, he reached for a sack, which lay among the roots of the tree and had gold in it, and lifted it out, muttering: "Uncouth brats! Cutting a piece off my lovely beard. The Devil take you!" With that he heaved the sack over his shoulder and went away without another glance at the children.

Some time later Snow White and Rose Red thought they'd catch some fish for dinner. As they approached the brook, they saw something that looked like a big grasshopper hopping toward the water as if to jump in. When they came closer, they recognized the dwarf. "Where are you going?" asked Rose Red. "Not into the water, I



hope." "I'm not such a fool," said the dwarf. "Can't you see? That damned fish is trying to pull me in." The little man had been sitting there fishing, and unluckily the wind had tangled his beard in his line. Then a big fish had bitten and the puny little fellow hadn't been strong enough to land it. The fish was getting the better of the struggle and was dragging him into the water. He kept clutching at the grass and rushes, but it didn't help him much. He had to follow the fish's movements, and might have toppled into the water at any moment. The little girls had got there in the nick of time. They held him fast and tried to separate the beard from the line, but in vain, for they were hopelessly tangled. There was nothing for it but to take out the scissors and cut through the snarl. A small part of the beard was lost, and when the dwarf saw that, he cried out: "You nasty roads! What a thing to do! You've disfigured me. You weren't satisfied with clipping the end of my beard, now you've cut away the best part of it. I won't be able to show myself at home. I hope you have to walk a hundred miles and lose the soles off your shoes first." With that, he picked up a sack of pearls that was hidden in the rushes. Then without another word he dragged it away and disappeared behind a stone.

One day the mother sent the two little girls to town to buy needles and thread and laces and ribbons. Their way led across a heath that had big rocks scattered about on it. All at once they caught sight of a big bird high above them. It circled slowly downward, then suddenly swooped down on a big rock not far away. A moment later they heard a heart-rending scream. They ran to the spot and saw to their horror that the eagle had seized hold of their old friend the dwarf and was about to carry him away. The kindly children held the little man fast and tugged at him until the eagle finally let go. When the dwarf recovered from his fright, he screamed at them with his shrill voice: "Did you have to be so rough? My poor little jacket! You've practically pulled it to pieces. Clumsy clods!" Then he picked up a sack full of jewels and slipped back into his cave under the rocks. The little girls were used to his ingratitude. They continued on to town and did their errands. When they came to the heath on the way back, they surprised the dwarf, who hadn't supposed that anyone would be passing so late and had emptied a sack of jewels on the bare ground. The evening sun shone on the stones, and they sparkled and



glittered so beautifully in all colors that the children stopped to look. "Why are you standing there gaping?" cried the dwarf. His ash-gray face went scarlet with rage, and he was thinking up fresh insults when a loud growl was heard and a black bear came trotting out of the forest. The dwarf jumped up in a fright, but the bear was already too near and he hadn't time to slip away into his hole. The dwarf cried out in terror: "Oh, dear Mr. Bear, spare me, I'll give you all my treasures, all these beautiful jewels. Don't eat me. What would you get out of a wee little fellow like me? You wouldn't even know you had me between your teeth. Eat these wicked girls, they're as fat as young quails, tasty morsels, eat them in good health." The bear wasn't even listening. He struck out just once with his paw, and after that the wicked creature didn't move.

The girls had fled, but the bear called out to them: "Snow White and Rose Red, don't be afraid. Wait, I'll go with you." They recognized his voice and stopped. When the bear caught up with them, his bear skin suddenly fell off, and there stood a handsome man, dressed all in gold. "I am a king's son," he said. "That wicked dwarf stole my treasures. Then with his magic he turned me into a bear, and I had to roam the forest until his death set me free. Now he has got his well-earned punishment."

Snow White was married to him and Rose Red to his brother, and they shared the enormous treasures the dwarf had heaped up in his cave. The old mother lived for many years peacefully and happily with her daughters. She took the two rosebushes with her and planted them outside her window, and every year they bore the most beautiful white and red roses.