

Snow White and Rose Red

A poor widow once lived in a little cottage. In front of the cottage was a garden, in which were growing two rose trees; one of these bore white roses, and the other red.

She had two children. One was called Snow White, and the other Rose Red; and they were as religious and loving, busy and untiring, as any two children ever were.

In the evening, when snow was falling, sitting by the hearth, the good widow would read aloud to them from a big book.

One evening, as they were all sitting cozily together like this, there was a knock at the door.

“Rose Red!” said her mother; “open the door; it is surely some traveler seeking shelter.” But it was a bear that thrust his big, black head in at the open door. Rose Red cried out and sprang back, and Snow White hid herself behind her mother’s bed. The bear said, “Do not be afraid; I am half-frozen.”

“Poor bear!” the mother replied; “come in and lie by the fire.” Then she called Snow White and Rose Red, telling them that the bear was kind and would not harm them.

“Children,” begged the bear; “knock some of the snow off my coat.” So they brought the broom and brushed the bear’s coat quite clean.

After that, he stretched himself out in front of the fire, happy and comfortable. Before long, they were all quite good friends, and the children began to play with their visitor, pulling his thick fur, or placing their feet on his back, or rolling him over and over.

After this, every evening the bear came and lay by the fire, so they became quite fond of their curious playmate, and the door was not ever bolted in the evening until he had appeared.

When springtime came, one morning the bear said to Snow White, “Now I must leave

you, and all the summer long I shall not be able to come back.”

“Where, then, are you going, dear Bear?” asked Snow White.

“I have to go to the woods to protect my treasure from the bad dwarfs.”

Snow White was very sad when she said good-bye to the good-natured beast, and unfastened the door; but in going out, he was caught by a hook in the lintel, and a scrap of his fur being torn, Snow White thought there was something shining like gold through the rent. Soon he was hidden among the trees.

One day the mother sent her children into the wood to pick up sticks. They found a big tree lying on the ground, and they noticed a dwarf, with a shriveled-up face and a snow-white beard in the tree trunk. The tiny fellow could not free himself. He stared at the children with his red, fiery eyes, and called out, “Why are you standing there? Come and help me!”

Despite the dwarf’s bad temper, the girls took all possible pains to release him. Snow White took out her scissors and, in a moment, set the dwarf free by cutting off the end of his beard.

“Clumsy creatures, to cut off a bit of my beautiful beard.” Then he swung a sack of gold across his shoulder and went off.

Not long afterward when the two sisters went to the brook to catch fish for dinner, they heard the same dwarf yell, “Don’t you see that a wretch of a fish is pulling me in?”

The dwarf had been sitting angling from the side of the stream when, by ill-luck, a big fish taking the bait was dragging the dwarf after it.

The girls caught hold of him firmly. Again the scissors were taken out, and the tangled portion of his beard was cut off.

The dwarf exclaimed in a great rage, "Is this how you damage my beard?" Then he fetched a sack of pearls and hobbled off.

Soon after this, the poor widow sent her children to the town. On the way, they heard a heartrending cry, and they saw, with horror, that an eagle had seized the dwarf and was just about to carry him off. The kind children took a firm hold of the little man, and the eagle took to flight.

The little man squeaked, "See my little coat; you have damaged it, you clumsy, officious things!" Then he picked up a sack of jewels and slipped out of sight.

The maidens were quite used to his ungrateful ways; so they went on their way.

On their way home, once more they ran across their dwarf friend, admiring and counting the brilliant stones from his sack of jewels.

"What are you gazing at, making ugly faces?" cried the dwarf with rage. Suddenly with a great growl, a big black bear joined the party. The dwarf cried out in very evident anguish,

"Dear Mr. Bear, forgive me, I pray! I will render to you all my treasure. Grant me my life! I beg of you to take those two children, good Mr. Bear, and let me go!"

But the bear would not be moved by his speeches. He gave the ill-disposed creature a blow with his paw, and he lay lifeless on the ground.

Meanwhile, the maidens heard a well-known voice that called out, "Snow White, Rose Red, stay! Do not fear. I will accompany you."

Suddenly the bear-skin slipped to the ground, and there before them was standing a handsome man, completely garmented in gold, who said,

"I am a king's son, who was enchanted by the wicked dwarf lying over there. He stole my treasure, and compelled me to roam the woods transformed into a big bear until his death should set me free. Therefore he has only received a well-deserved punishment."

Some time afterward, Snow White married the Prince, and Rose Red his brother.

They shared between them the enormous treasure which the dwarf had collected in his cave.

The old mother spent many happy years with her children.