

The True Snow White

by Harald Walter Azmann

The True Snow White Ltd

The True Snow White
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Limited Premiere Edition, 2007

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Based on the classic tale
as published by
Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm

and the original screenplay by

Harald Walter Azmann,
Conny Hart, and Hartmut Zingel

Consultant
Gerd Ziegler

*Wake up my heart
And dance in the light of God,
Who is a God of truth
And cannot lie.*

*To the truth within us,
That connects us all.*

PREFACE

*Don't search outside, but look within.
The Seven Dwarves are living proof
That all of us can win!*

Mind you, *The True Snow White* wasn't written to please everyone. For those who reject it, there will be enough stories in this world to keep them entertained for the rest of their lives. But those who love it are in need of every bit of encouragement they can find to reclaim their rightful inheritance and guide them safely home.

And so I proceed with the strictly limited, one-time publication of twelve hundred English language copies, mostly designed and hand-crafted by myself with the tireless assistance of Snow White, the Prince, and the Seven Dwarves, to venture all over the globe.

You will be wise to order one, both for yourself and any of your loved ones, personally signed by the author and dedicated to each new owner, for they will be collectors' items soon, and once they are gone, you will be waiting along with everybody else for a future, general release.

PREFACE

Yet this is only the beginning of a marvelous dream come true. I extend my heartfelt invitation to regularly see us at www.thetruesnowwhite.com. You will be surprised about the many exciting opportunities we have for you to join us on our journey. And chances are, you'll be forever glad you did.

*The greatest gift
We can give each other
Is the truth . . .*

Snow White concludes. It's not our entire self that has to die, just some of our old attitudes, so we can truly live! And if we are wise and serious about the truth, we'll change our minds until we are right.

To every fellow traveler on our wondrous journey through the universe, with great respect and love, I dedicate this book.

Harald Walter Azmann
August 31, 2007

The True Snow White

Chapter One

A Wish

ONCE UPON A TIME in midwinter, when snowflakes fell from the sky like feathers, a Queen sat sewing at a window with an ebony frame. Quietly, she worked on a beautiful dress she hoped to wear for the King's return.

From the small village below the castle, the barking of dogs and shouts of playing children rang faintly through the air, thin trails of smoke rose from snow-covered houses, and in the distance a horse-drawn sleigh sped brightly jingling through the winter scene.

Looking up for a moment, the Queen watched the children, smiling at their untamed love of life. Then, thoughtful again, she studied the snowflakes, how they softly covered the hills and fields. And lost in her gaze at the beauty of the snowfall, she accidentally pricked her finger.

Dazed, she opened the window, and three drops of blood fell onto the snow-covered windowsill. And as the red looked so beautiful on the white snow, she thought to herself, *If only I had a child as bright and white as snow, as lively and red as blood, and as firm and strong as the black of my window frame . . . I would cherish it with all my heart and no longer be lonely!*

A cold wind struck her face, and the Queen was just about to close the window when she recognized the royal sleigh carrying the King's herald swiftly approaching the castle. Her eyes lit up with joy as she hurried from her chambers.

The splendid sleigh passed the guards, and the herald stayed his steaming horses in front of the courtyard staircase, where the Queen already awaited him. He knelt devoutly, and the royal servants tried to follow everything as inconspicuously as possible.

"Hail, noble Queen!" the herald exclaimed. The Queen, uncomfortable at him kneeling in the snow, beckoned him to rise. "My Lord and King sends greetings to his wife and notice that he intends to return to her and his court the first

day of spring,” the herald continued, answered by the surrounding servants’ joyous applause.

“We thank him for this message,” the Queen said with a smile and then declared more firmly, “but there is much to do before that happy day.” The herald bowed. “Let the Lord Chamberlain follow me without delay!” And that wise, old counselor, who had served his royal family for as long as he or anyone in the court remembered, followed her inside the castle.

A few months later, on the first day of spring, excited noise filled the court. A splendid chamber orchestra tuned its instruments while barons, counts, church dignitaries, noble ladies, and royal servants formed an aisle toward the center where the King was to dismount.

At last, a glorious trumpet fanfare announced the King’s arrival, and the herald and seven stately horsemen passed swiftly through the castle gates. Doffing his hat, the herald saluted the assembled guests. But there was breathless silence because the King was not among his men. Then the herald looked toward the courtyard terrace and proclaimed, “Behold, your Lord and King!”

Everyone turned to see the King in all his majesty and, next to him, the Queen. The guests laughed at the surprise and applauded with delight. The old Lord Chamberlain boasted an exceptionally bright smile.

“Hail to our King and Queen,” the herald shouted. And all broke into three successive shouts, each louder than the one before, while the King waved and the chamber orchestra began to play.

“Well done, my lord. Quite a successful joke!” the old Lord Chamberlain confirmed. “How have you done, if one may ask?”

“Excellent, Lord Chamberlain, as I look back from here.” The King laughed, still waving to the cheerful crowd. “But miserably, when I consider how homesickness has often tormented me.” The King and Queen smiled at each other.

And while several noblemen still awaited him, he suddenly recognized the music. “Bach . . .” the King mused and whispered, “as extraordinary and beautiful as you, beloved Queen.”

The servants carried ever more exquisite food and drink to the long tables in the palace

gardens, and the King tended to his duties, mingling with the guests. But time and time again, his eyes returned to the Queen, and hers to him.

“And how is our glass manufacture?” he inquired of a wealthy merchant enjoying a rare moment of the King’s attention.

“Our mirrors, Highness, are nearly matchless,” the merchant said. “We are selling to Frankfurt, Leipzig, Dresden—even from Milan and Paris we have had inquiries!”

Meanwhile, unnoticed by the royal family’s elect society or even any of the guards, a growing crowd of starving peasant children had gathered outside the castle’s iron gates, dumbfounded by this world of overwhelming luxury they watched with hungry eyes.

Not far from them, they saw a sinister and dark-clad count, who took no pleasure in any of the splendor or the happiness surrounding him. Terribly bored and disagreeable, he flung bits of meat at his two hounds. But a ragged little girl escaped the crowd beyond the fence and slipped under the tables. And much hungrier than she was afraid, she snatched one of the Dark Count’s

morsels and desperately fought for it with the growling dogs.

Observing the commotion for what seemed an eternity, and gravely disappointed when his dogs began to back off, the Dark Count finally jumped up and shouted, "You there! Wait!" Grabbing the terrified girl by her hair, he dragged her toward one of the lesser gates and motioned at the other children to flee.

"This is no place for scum. Guard!" he commanded. But suddenly, instead of the expected guard, the Queen stepped in his way.

"Release the girl," she ordered. Surprised, the Dark Count let go of his poor victim and bowed. "If you do not want to fall into disgrace, Count," the Queen continued, "you had better change your views, and quickly!"

"Excellent. So be it!" the King said, still conversing with the wealthy merchant. But looking for his Queen again, he noticed the commotion and immediately excused himself.

"These children aren't scum," the Queen continued. "Above all, they are human beings. Take note of that!"

The Dark Count bowed even deeper but clearly found it hard to accept such public humiliation. "Forgive my blind diligence to serve you, Royal Highness," he responded. "No doubt, I still have much to learn."

But the Queen took no more notice of him. She knelt before the terrified girl and stroked her dirty hair. "Go on," the Queen encouraged her. "And tell all your friends that they are also welcome at my feast today!" The girl bowed and ran off as the King came up to the Queen, and she reached for his hand.

Before long, a crowd of ragged peasant children entered the courtyard, far more than could be seen before. They nervously greeted the King and Queen and quickly disappeared into a corner by the stables, where the Cook's Wife immediately took charge of them and saw to it that they were fed.

"No wonder my people love you," the King said softly, "almost as much as I!"

The Queen smiled. Just then, comedians and gypsies leaped and somersaulted into the courtyard, starting their performance. And

the assembled guests, witnessing all that had happened, had no choice but to hide their disapproval of the Queen's unseemly conduct and direct their attention to the fabulous entertainment.

Chapter Two

New Life

Summer came, and the King stood by the window of his study, supervising the construction of an exquisite tower house in a corner of the palace gardens. He was just about to return his attention to studying a big and heavy book on seventeenth century French architecture when, suddenly, he looked up into the hazy distance and discovered three imperial heralds on their way to the castle. Thoughtful, he left the room.

Inside her quiet chambers, the Queen carefully brushed her beautiful, long hair. She was pregnant and wore the colorful, fine dress she had made for the King's return. But interrupted by the noise in the courtyard, she got up to look outside.

From her window, she saw the heralds stay their horses. One of them handed the King a

letter, which he immediately opened. Clearly in high spirits, he conducted the messengers into the castle, and with tears in her eyes, the Queen turned from the window.

Before long, there was a knock at her door, but she wouldn't answer. The King silently entered the room and took the Queen in his arms, and she embraced him as if she were never going to see him again. Then she composed herself, wiping the tears from her eyes. "And where is the emperor inviting you to go this time?" she asked.

"To study the current mode in stately architecture," the King replied.

The Queen gave him a surprised look, and he continued, "From reality instead of books . . . in Paris!"

"A great honor for you," the Queen agreed, and as the King looked worried, she quickly added, "I much prefer such peaceful travels to your journeys in matters of the empire." She took hold of both his hands. "Will we have time to finish our tower house?" But the King didn't answer, and the Queen, as always, understood.

Weeks later, however, work on the elegant tower house swiftly neared completion, and the King's retinue waited in the courtyard. Still, he stopped once more to embrace his beloved wife.

"I will be fine." The Queen composed herself. "I'll always have our child with me!" Then the King also struggled with the reality of having to leave. But she kissed and encouraged him, "Farewell! And may God bless you."

So the King and his servants rode from the castle. But before they were out of sight, he turned one last time and saw the Queen still standing on the terrace and waving goodbye.

Months passed, and by late fall the tower house was finished and a royal flag waved from its gables. The sun set behind a dark red horizon, with the moon already bright in the clear night sky, and lost in thought the Queen played a beautiful melody on her harpsichord.

Suddenly, she paused and felt the baby moving in her womb. Then she smiled and continued singing her music,

*Day is done, slowly fades the light.
No need to fear, no need to fear.
Moon and stars guide you through the night.
Sweet dreams, sweet dreams, my dear.*

*Soon, the sun will be on his way.
No need to fear, no need to fear.
And we'll dance in a bright new day.
Sweet dreams, sweet dreams, my dear.*

Winter fell, and the royal coachman drove his horses up the snow-covered hill toward the castle. Inside the coach, the doctor held on to a black case on his lap and fiddled with the handle.

The gates were already wide open, and the coachman cracked his whip as the coach rumbled into the yard. Without a moment of hesitation, the doctor bounded up the staircase, down a long hallway, and past several servants looking after him with solemn faces.

“Thank God you have come so quickly,” the old Lord Chamberlain said, receiving the doctor at the Queen’s chambers and clearing the way

for him. Inside, two midwives and the bishop, whom the doctor acknowledged with a short nod, attended to the moaning Queen, and no one said a word, but for the bishop softly mumbling the rosary.

The doctor gently took the Queen's hand as he sat at the edge of her bed. "The loss of blood has already taken most of her power!" he whispered and dried the pale Queen's forehead.

Finally, she struggled up once more with a primordial cry, followed by the wail of a newborn. And the relieved midwives washed it with warm water, wrapped it in swaddling clothes, and placed the infant into the Queen's arms.

"Your Highness, it's a most healthy girl," the doctor confirmed. "How do you wish to name her?"

The Queen smiled at her baby, for she had indeed given birth to a child that was as white as snow, with lips as red as blood and hair as black as ebony.

She tried to speak, and the doctor urged her, "Your Highness! You must tell me! What name is this child to bear?"

And the weary Queen whispered, “Snow White. My Snow White . . .” and fell silent.

Thus, as her child was born, the Queen died, and the bishop left his place and knelt beside her. Somberly, the doctor closed the Queen’s eyes and was about to hand the baby to one of the midwives. But the bishop put forth his arms, too. So the doctor gave him the baby first, and the bishop looked at her for a long time.

“Snow White . . . what an unusual name,” he wondered. Then he blessed the girl and made the sign of the cross over her.

Chapter Three

The Loss of a Mother

An overwhelming congregation attended the Queen's funeral. Inside the small castle cemetery, counts and noblemen stood in black while outside its lower walls, hundreds of ordinary people had gathered to pay their last respects. With tears in his eyes, the King stood in front of the Queen's beautiful coffin, and his faithful confidant, the old Lord Chamberlain, as always not far off.

"She was the essence of feminine virtue," the bishop began his sermon, "the comforter and consultant of her husband in all affairs—indeed, the center of the kingdom!"

The Dark Count exchanged a glance with a beautiful woman, whose striking appearance under her luxurious cape drew many eyes.

"She was sensitive and affectionate," the bishop continued, "the absolute contrast to

the attitude and values of our time eagerly absorbing every corrupting principle—always ready to lay aside the things of this world and strive for a better.”

Finally, the Dark Count nodded, and the woman moved slowly through the mourning crowd, ultimately positioning herself near the King, who was too caught up in his pain to notice. And when at last he turned to leave, she addressed him.

“Your loss, my King, is also my loss!” she said and bowed respectfully.

The bystanders were shocked at her arrogance and boldness, but the King barely saw her face through his tears and nodded absently.

A year later, he took her as his new wife. And indeed, she was beautiful, but proud and overbearing, and couldn’t stand the thought that anyone might be more beautiful than she.

She had a magic mirror, and when she looked at herself, she said,

*Tell me, mirror, tell me true!
Of all the ladies in the land,*

Who is the fairest? Tell me, who?

And the mirror answered,

Thou, O Queen, art the fairest in the land.

That set her mind at rest, for she knew the mirror told the truth.

But as Snow White grew, she became increasingly beautiful. And by the time she was seven years old, she was as beautiful as the day and even more beautiful than the new queen!

That Christmas Eve, Snow White sat at her mother's harpsichord and played a lovely Bach cantata while her music teacher watched and listened carefully.

"That was one of your mother's favorites, Your Highness. She played it often," he said.

"But you are not supposed to always call me 'Highness.' Too much courtesy is foolish!" Snow White answered and stopped playing. "Do you still remember her?"

The music teacher took a seat next to Snow White. "Of course I do, Your Highness.

Who wouldn't? She was kind and beautiful, but sad, and always lonely when your father was away. Yet she loved only him . . . and you!"

The music teacher had a beautiful voice and continued singing what Snow White had just practiced,

*If you confess your love
Then do so secretly,
That no one may perceive how
You feel about you and me.*

*The love inside our hearts
Always concealed must stay.
So hide what you cherish most
That no one may revile, and let
Your feelings not be torn away!*

While the music teacher sang, Snow White studied her mother's portrait above the harpsichord. "But why shouldn't we show our feelings?" she inquired.

The question caught the music teacher by surprise, and he stopped and looked at the

young girl. “Your Highness, umm . . . you might not understand that yet. And it’s probably just as well. The greatly respected Herr Bach simply may have thought it ought to be this way!”

“Well, I don’t think so,” Snow White said.

“I know.” The music teacher smiled. And while he returned to playing the harpsichord, Snow White gazed at the former Queen’s portrait again.

Suddenly, Christmas bells chimed, and Snow White’s eyes lit up. “All right, Your Highness,” the music teacher laughed. “You had a long day, indeed. Off you go. And Merry Christmas!”

In Snow White’s tower house, like every year, she found her very own Christmas tree inside a large flowerpot with her name and the royal coat of arms on it, and lots of fine presents befitting a royal princess. Snow White lay on the floor and played with a splendid, new paper doll theater while her old Nanny smiled at her from a rocking chair. Suddenly, the door opened and her Stepmother burst in.

“Child,” she announced, “we have been searching for you everywhere!”

The old Nanny quickly jumped to her feet, and the Stepmother cast her a disapproving look. “Who had you come in here again?” But Snow White refused to be interrupted. “Go away,” she said, lost in her play. “This is *my* castle. You have no business here. My parents built it just for me. And besides, my name is Snow White, and not ‘Child!’”

“What a ridiculous name,” the Stepmother sneered, pulling Snow White to her feet. “Now, stop this nonsense. Your father is waiting,” she continued, pushing Snow White out the door. “It’s time you finally grew up, Princess!”

Hours later, Snow White and her parents attended Christmas Mass. The magnificent village church was built to the honor of God. But for the poor, gathering there from their pitiful huts and dwellings, it seemed like a fairy-tale world they could lose themselves in for a few, brief moments.

Captivated, Snow White’s thoughts wandered to each stained glass window’s scene and each saint’s statue as she thought about the legends of their lives, and the singularly fine Gregorian

chant of the monks echoed through the chapel:
Veni, veni, Immanuel, captivum solve Israel, which
translated from Latin means,

*O come, O come, Immanuel,
And ransom captive Israel
That mourns in lonely exile here
Until the Son of God appear.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Immanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel!*

*O come, thou wisdom from on high,
And order all things, far and nigh;
To us the path of knowledge show,
And cause us in her ways to go.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Immanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel!*

*O come, desire of nations, bind
All peoples in one heart and mind;
Bid envy, strife, and quarrels cease;
And fill the world with heaven's peace.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Immanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel!*

At the completion of the glorious Mass, the priests and nobility paid their compliments to the King and his queen while the common people remained confined behind their barriers. Her true mother would have never allowed anything like that, Snow White thought. After all, God and his church belonged to everyone! And after having stood obediently by her father all throughout the service, she quietly slipped away into the crowd, unnoticed.

The priest's hidden side door to the chapel shut behind her, and Snow White stepped out into the cold. Relieved, she marveled at the festive white snow against the black shadows of the night. And forgetting all about her parents and the ceremony's pomp and pretense in the church behind her, Snow White skipped across the dark, cobblestone churchyard, relishing the crisp winter air.

As she jumped between patches of snow and puddles of water reflecting the moon and stars above, the quiet village ahead seemed to belong all to her—some places dark and menacing, some full of warmth and laughter and the sweet

smell of a thousand spices. At last, this was the world she was master in—her world.

And in the distance, the monks' chanted prayer still echoed through that special winter night.

*O come, desire of nations, bind
All peoples in one heart and mind;
Bid envy, strife, and quarrels cease;
And fill the world with heaven's peace.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Immanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel!*

A humble shanty in the village's poorest quarters by the river was home to the sister of the royal Cook's Wife and her family of fishermen, and late that Christmas Eve, someone knocked on their door.

Reluctantly, the fisherwoman opened it and found Snow White shivering in the cold. "You aren't supposed to be with riffraff like us," she said and quickly pulled Snow White inside. "You are a princess and should be at home now in your beautiful castle!"

“But I like it better here than in my ‘beautiful castle,’” Snow White mimicked her and stepped in front of the open fire. The fisherwoman looked at her for a while. Then she took a dark red candle carved into a beautiful rose from a cabinet, lit it, and placed it into Snow White’s hands.

“This is for you,” she kindly said. “Unfortunately, we don’t have more this year!”

Surprised, Snow White looked at the occasionally toothless smiles of the large peasant family, young and old, sitting in the shadows of the room and watching her eagerly in the fire glow.

“But why?” she asked. “You barely have anything yourselves.”

Amused, the fisherman nudged his wife. “Sure we do!” he said and pointed to a good-sized catfish lying on the nets in a dark corner of the room. “Didn’t pay attention anymore,” the fisherman continued. “Thought it was already peace on earth and all that rumpus.”

The catfish shuddered and the fisherman squarely struck its broad head with a heavy club.

“Well, thou shalt never be wrong,” he mumbled. “That’s the eleventh commandment. And poor, neither. That’s the twelfth!”

The fisherman looked up, rolling his eyes, and everyone laughed and giggled, except Snow White and the fisherwoman.

“What?” the fisherman chuckled. “Ah, living happily and dying cheerfully will spoil the devil’s due!” he said and started cleaning the fish.

But Snow White took off her golden necklace and placed it into the hands of the fisherwoman. “Then take this at least!” Snow White insisted, “And . . .”

Someone started pounding on the door. “Open!” an angry voice demanded.

The Stepmother’s coach waited in the road. Again, the guard beat on the door, and lights in some of the dark windows in the street went on. “Open up!” the guard shouted, and Snow White grabbed her gloves and scarf.

The fisherwoman poked at her husband to open the door, and reluctantly, he approached it. But Snow White said, “Never mind. I know who it is. And you do, too.”

Determined, she turned to leave, and the fisherwoman's family, half intimidated and half grinning, nodded at her.

"All the best," Snow White said. "And see you soon!" Her rose candle remained shining bright on the crude, wooden table.

"Open!" the guard shouted and was just about to strike again, when Snow White opened the door and lifted her coat to step up into the awaiting coach. Without a word, she kicked the shin of the other guard, who tried to suppress a groan. Then she took a seat beside her Stepmother, and with jingling bells the coach was set in motion.

The Stepmother, dressed in the most luxurious furs, brocades, and jewels the royal coffers would buy, reproached Snow White. "How did I know that I would find you here?" she raged. "How many times have you been told you must not mingle with the rabble? And always with the fishermen—the worst of all!"

The Stepmother tried to pull Snow White's hair, but Snow White quickly moved aside, accidentally slapping her Stepmother's hand.

Utterly surprised, the Stepmother raised her eyebrows and . . . said nothing. Silent, too, Snow White looked out into the dark.

“And what did you give away today?” the Stepmother scolded. But Snow White wouldn’t answer. “Well then, I’ve had enough!” the Stepmother announced. “The next nincompoop who tries to offer us ‘a lost keepsake of the princess’ for a finder’s fee again,” she imitated, “I will have thrown to rot into the deepest dungeon!”

Finally, they arrived at the castle, and trying to hold back her tears, Snow White ran to her room.

Before long, the King entered. His face was kind and his voice low and gentle, though he was displeased with his young daughter.

“Where have you been, Snow White?” he asked. But Snow White, lying on her bed, turned to the other side.

The King sat beside her. “You know that you are not to associate with the servants or the villagers.” Snow White sat up to look at her father, and he took her hand. “You had us deeply worried again, your mother and I!”

But Snow White pulled her hand away and threw herself back on her pillows. “She’s not my mother!” she shrieked.

The King smiled. “Well, she is my wife.”

“Yes,” Snow White answered. “But you never asked me if I wanted her for a mother, too!”

“Ask you? Should I have done that?” Snow White nodded. “You don’t make it any easier by refusing to accept her,” the King said, concerned.

“She never makes it easy for anybody either!” Snow White insisted and pulled the blanket over her head. “I hate her!” Snow White began to cry and stared at the wall from underneath her covers.

The King pulled gently at the blanket. “Now, little princess,” he said, “one day you will be queen yourself. Look what I brought you from my journey to Geneva.”

He held up a beautiful music box of shining midnight blue, covered with little stars. But Snow White wouldn’t look up. Then the King opened the lid and a beautiful, simple melody filled the air.

Slowly, Snow White turned around, and the King smiled. “You may open it every night when I’m away,” he said kindly, “and sweet dreams and memories of your good mother will flow from it.”

Snow White took the music box, carefully turning it over in her hands and feeling the stars with her fingers.

The King watched her, pleased. “She sang this song for you long before you were even born,” he whispered, and Snow White’s eyes filled with tears.

“I know,” she answered.

“But how?” the King asked. “Since she has passed away, no one knows it anymore but me!”

Snow White placed the music box next to her father and turned away again. “And me,” she said, sobbing quietly. “I’ve often heard it in my dreams.”

Concerned, the King got up to exchange a few words with the old Nanny, who had entered the room. Snow White continued staring at the wall. But as the King was just about to leave, he heard her voice. “Thank you for taking time for me.”

Surprised, the King returned to sit down on her bed and took Snow White in his arms. “But we are friends, little princess!” he assured her. Snow White nodded. “Aah . . . then why do you cry like this?”

“Because I often feel so lonely,” Snow White said, clinging to her father. “And I didn’t know if you still cared about me!”

The King kissed Snow White’s head. “But of course I do. You mean everything to me!” he said, hugging his daughter tightly. And suddenly, so reminded of the loss of his first, beloved wife, he, too, was overcome with emotion and found it hard to speak.

“Now go to sleep,” he comforted Snow White. “Tomorrow everything will be all right again, you’ll see . . .”

The King tucked Snow White in and left the room. And thoughtfully, the old Nanny stroked Snow White’s hair until the weeping princess fell asleep.

Chapter Four

Stolen Childhood

In the King's reading room, a servant placed another log on the fire and left.

"You are extremely beautiful, and you know it." The King carefully chose his words as he warmed his hands above the flames.

The Stepmother, resting on a love seat, looked at him.

"But I've had many complaints about you. Too many!" the King continued, turning toward her, and started pacing through the room. "I assigned Snow White and my court to you in confidence that you would care for her and rule them properly!"

The Stepmother rose. "But I have! As well as I could manage."

"Ah well. You have," the King replied and took her by the shoulders. "Beauty," he mocked,

“that’s all you care about! But inside you are cold and barren!”

The Stepmother shook herself free. “My beauty once meant much to you,” she answered coldly.

“Our daughter needs a mother, not a wardress,” the King insisted.

Then the Stepmother paced. “She’s just too stubborn and won’t accept me. And you let her get away with everything!”

The King stood quietly by the window, looking out into the starlit night.

“Life isn’t always easy,” he said in a softer tone, “I know.”

His gaze spanned the sparsely illuminated village resting quietly below the castle.

“But look at the people down there in the village. They have barely anything, and still they live and laugh and care for each other!”

“Well.” The Stepmother stared at him as if he had lost his mind. “I’m certainly tired of acting your loving wife, always staying behind, lonely and dejected. If you still care about us, then don’t leave me anymore!”

The King turned around. "And if you still care about us, don't even try to hold me back!"

"But I am your wife," the Stepmother maintained.

"And I must honor duty's call!" The King stood firm.

"Enough!" the Stepmother cried, stamping her foot. "So I've been nothing but a cheap substitute for your 'dream' of a woman. But I am not so cheap much longer, for you or anyone! Have you ever seen me as I really am?" she asked bitterly. "Well! Have you?"

The King was startled out of his reverie. "I do now . . . Snow White I'll leave in my trusted servants' care," he declared. "And you," he turned and warmed his hands at the fireplace again, "from now on, you better stay away from her."

Their silence was broken only by the sound of the crackling flames and tired, the King left the Stepmother, who remained staring into the fire.

Weeks later, at the break of day, the King's retinue left the castle. One last time, he turned to salute the Stepmother watching his departure

from her window, where the good Queen had watched him fade into the distance and patiently awaited him so many times before. But the Stepmother was too proud to return his farewell, and the King spurred his horse.

“You don’t deserve me. No one does!” the Stepmother said under her breath, sinking back on her bed. And the window still open, she was chilled and pulled a dark blanket over her shoulders. Then she rose, bolted the door, and stepped into her dressing room.

There was a steaming, candlelit bath prepared for her, and she tossed a variety of herbs and leaves into the water. Taking a black leather book from a jewel case, she placed it on a sideboard and turned the pages. And after finding what she was looking for, she secretively mumbled something, undressed, and climbed into the bubbling water.

She submerged herself for such a long time that one would have thought she had surely drowned, for no mortal could hold her breath that long. But then, calm and relaxed, she arose from the water, dried herself, and dressed.

And when the candles had completely burned down, the Stepmother—in her most spectacular dress, a shimmering dream of the blue and green hues of spring, her hair done in the most beautiful style, and her body firm and slender—stepped in front of the mirror. Then it was spring! She said,

*Tell me, mirror, tell me true!
Of all the ladies in the land,
Who is the fairest? Tell me, who?*

And the mirror answered, as always revealing hazy images as he spoke,

Thou, O Queen, art the fairest here . . .

In the mirror, she saw herself at the side of the King, proceeding along a row of admiring noblemen. But the King was too busy to notice, and the Stepmother enjoyed it.

*But Snow White is
A thousand times more fair . . .*

the mirror continued and showed Snow White in her tower house, playing with her paper doll theater.

The Stepmother was startled. “Her?” she burst into tears of rage. “What is it she has that I don’t have?” But the mirror remained silent. “Well,” she hissed at Snow White’s image in the mirror, “just you wait until I am completely in control here!”

From that moment on, whenever she looked at Snow White, it turned her heart to stone. And envy and pride grew like weeds in her heart, until she knew no peace by day or by night.

Months later, one splendid summer day, all royal servants and courtiers were assembled in the crown hall, where the Stepmother, powerful and imposing, sat on her throne before them. “Upon the emperor’s death,” she announced, “our King, as we all know, has been called to the courts of Vienna, Dresden, Berlin, and Cologne to discuss the election of a new one. Meaning that, once again, he will be long and far away.” She paused and added, almost mocking, “As always ‘in the service of his people!’” The Step-

mother rose. "Therefore, as of this day, we take dominion of this court and thank our Lord Chamberlain for his hitherto most faithful service."

The old Lord Chamberlain, uncertain about the reasons for her praise, watched uneasily as she walked toward him. Her gloves muffled her applause, which no one echoed. "I hope that he, as well as the remaining royal household, will continue to serve their queen in the same faithful way," she said, speaking to him but focusing on everyone present.

By the time she returned to her throne and seated herself, there was only one royal seat where there had been two just moments before.

"That will be all," she concluded. And with submissive bows, the servants and courtiers left the hall while the Stepmother carefully noted each of their subservient gestures.

Keeping his thoughts to himself, the old Lord Chamberlain was the last to leave and closed the massive doors behind him. But late at night, after retiring to his room at last, he had just hastily began a letter to the King at the imperial court in Vienna when a sudden breath

of wind extinguished his candle, and his warning message remained unfinished forever.

Early the next morning, the Stepmother sat in her coach. "Where is the Lord Chamberlain, for heaven's sake?" she asked, leaning out the window.

The guard saluted. "The Lord Chamberlain, Your Highness, is nowhere to be found! His chambers are unlocked and all his things still there. But he . . . is gone!"

"Gone?" The Stepmother feigned surprise. "How strange! Well then, let's go. I mustn't wait much longer." The guards mounted their horses and the small team left the castle. And while the Stepmother settled herself more comfortably, she smiled and said to herself, "A fine beginning. He was the first, and certainly won't be the last . . ."

Thus, one by one, the King's loyal aides disappeared, and the Stepmother made true her promise to seize all power at his court and throughout the kingdom. Soon, both men and women of nobility as well as common people, were arrested. At the Dark Count's command, the King's glass manufacture was destroyed, and

while the wealthy merchant and his French and Dutch craftsmen were bound and carried off, the Stepmother stepped inside. Satisfied, she examined the devastation and smashed a beautiful mirror resembling her own with a cane. Then the glass manufacture went up in flames, and the captives were thrown onto carts and driven away.

Months passed, fall came, and as always, a crackling fire burned in the King's reading room where the Stepmother and the Dark Count were talking.

"Now the best way to make friends is to organize grand parties with influential people," the Dark Count said and graciously put a live, bronze-colored snake around the Stepmother's wrist, where it instantly changed into a beautiful gold and green bracelet. "Celebrate, and let them cheer you!"

"Excellent," the Stepmother mused, clenching a fist. "He shall be our new lord chamberlain!"

The Dark Count grabbed his feathered hat and bowed. "Forever at your service, Royal Highness."

Then the Stepmother was pleased and charged him, "And make sure there are no more mirrors anywhere except for mine!"

Years passed, it was fall again, and Snow White, grown into a sober-minded young girl, was nearly thirteen. From her window in the kitchen, the Cook's Wife watched the lonely princess on her way to her mother's grave, its white stone under a small weeping willow sparkling brightly in the clear morning sun.

"There she goes again, like every morning. Poor girl," the Cook's Wife said.

"Be quiet and get on with your own business!" the Cook said.

"Ah, humbug," his wife snapped back. "My business isn't a frog. It's not going to jump off!"

The Cook glanced out the window and shook his head, too, but said nothing.

"The King doesn't deserve such a daughter," his wife sighed. "Not to mention that Stepmother!" Then she threw a shawl around her shoulders and hurried out the door. "I tell you, if God wants to see a fool, he lets the wife of an old man die! That's how all this tragedy began . . ."

Snow White embraced her mother's modest but beautiful gravestone. Then she placed her father's music box beside it in the wilted, frost-covered grass and opened it. The Queen's lullaby of so many years ago began to play, and Snow White cried. But the Cook's Wife, who had been watching quietly, took her back to the warm kitchen and sat her at the large table.

"There," she said, filling a bowl with hot soup from the stove. "We're supposed to have only one life to live. So we should make it pleasant, shouldn't we?"

The Cook watched in disapproval. "I tell you, stubborn woman, you're getting yourself into big trouble! Why don't you mind your own business?" He glanced at Snow White. "The new queen has ordered us . . ." He tried to reprimand his wife more quietly, but she pushed him away.

"The queen, the queen," she mocked. "This *is* my business. That queen can go to h—"

The Cook clapped his hand over his wife's mouth, but she bit him hard, and he looked too funny trying not to scream. Snow White laughed, spewing the soup out of her bowl. Barely catching

herself, she bowed, giggling, and with a sweeping gesture showed the way for the Stepmother to go. "Oh yes, Milady. Right this way!"

The cook and his wife looked at each other in awe and joined in the laughter. Suddenly the door was pushed open, and instantly the Cook fell quiet, but Snow White and his wife continued giggling.

The royal Hunter, a strong and handsome man, and his helpers carried pheasants, partridges, doves, and several wild boars into the kitchen and dropped them in a corner and onto the large table. The Cook rolled his eyes and turned toward his butcher's tools to sharpen a large knife. "They are for the feast tomorrow," the Hunter said, pulling up a chair. "And then the great chase with all her guests is on!"

"Now, Princess, this is not for you." The Cook's Wife jumped up, gently pushing Snow White out the door, and lost in thought, the Hunter watched her leave.

The next day, carts with food and goods were delivered. Coaches with strange, eccentric ladies and noblemen on stately horses arrived and were

accommodated in the castle, and the Stepmother observed everything from her window through an opera glass.

Snow White skipped through the hustle and bustle on the way to her tower house, but when she arrived, it was boarded up with heavy planks. Desperate and furious, she ran back through the seemingly endless, tree-lined walk in the park and burst into the Stepmother's chambers.

Breathless, she confronted her with scornful eyes while the old Nanny resolutely stood behind her. But the Stepmother, perfectly at ease, sat in front of her mirror, masterfully painting her face and practicing different expressions.

"The human animal," she mused. "How we eat, make love . . . how our skin turns old and wrinkled. The human being really is an animal."

"You, maybe. I'm not!" Snow White shouted.

The Stepmother smiled. "So, what are you then?" she asked, turning around. "A silly girl, as everyone here already knows."

"I want my tower house . . ." Snow White protested.

“Too bad. Your childhood’s over,” the Stepmother cut her short, turning back to her mirror. “In any case, you can’t go there anymore.”

And her toilette finally complete, she rose, approaching Snow White with open arms. “Oh, let us be friends at last.” But Snow White tried to hide behind her old Nanny, and the Stepmother glared at them both.

“So you still don’t want to give in, little brat. But I will tell you a secret.” Suddenly, a haze began to form in front of Snow White. “You always thought you were so good and sweet, and me . . . you think I’m bad. But I am nothing but your own reflection, everything in you that you don’t yet know, and don’t even want to know! But you will find out soon. Just look a little closer . . .”

Terrified, Snow White covered her eyes. “No. I don’t want to!” she cried, and the old Nanny shielded her, casting the Stepmother a fierce look.

“You’re acting like a foolish little girl, and that’s exactly how I’m going to treat you,” the Stepmother sneered as her vision dissolved, and the old Nanny whisked Snow White out of

the room. "You have no business at my party tonight!" the Stepmother bellowed after them.

The Stepmother's feast, decadent and frivolous, was in absolute contrast to those of the good Queen. The Stepmother's throne stood at the center of the crown hall. There she sat in another spectacular dress, wonderful to look at and surrounded by men, both young and old, eagerly trying to outdo the others in flattering her.

"And who of my trusted servants may escort me tonight?" she flirted, and the noblemen knowingly looked at each other, while the few ladies present tried their best to simply ignore her. Then the Stepmother closed her eyes and, as if by chance, she pointed at the surprised Hunter, answered by the sighs of disappointment of the other men.

Spying from a little hatch above the hall, the Cook's Wife scornfully looked down at them. "That parody of a woman." She got all worked up. "If she had choked on her first act of malice, she would have been stone dead a long time ago!" Then the Hunter lifted a candlestick off

the table and guided the Stepmother from the feast, while the Cook's Wife rushed back to her frowning husband in the kitchen where the dirty dishes were already piling high. "Poor Snow White," she sighed. "This will never find a happy ending!"

Outside, lightning flashed and thunder rolled, and in the twilight of the hallway to the Stepmother's chambers, the Hunter knelt before her. "You are brilliant and beautiful, my queen," he said and tried to take her hand, which she denied him.

"Not so quick, my stalwart Hunter. How can I be sure of your devotion? Don't you have a wife and children at home?"

The Hunter dropped his head. "You shame me, my queen!"

"Now, my friend, collect yourself," the Stepmother continued. "The time will come when I will show you favor. But first, I need a token of your loyalty."

"Whatever you command—the heavens, moon, and stars!" The Hunter went completely overboard.

“Presently, the child will do. Take her into the forest and kill ‘Snow White!’” the Stepmother ordered. “And bring me her heart as proof that you have done it. For without her innocence, how can she be more beautiful than I?”

Then the Hunter began to comprehend the monstrosity of her order, and that he seemed to have no choice. “You’re the master, I the servant. What can I do but obey?”

The Stepmother smiled. “And see that it happens quickly.” The Hunter hesitated. “Now you may go,” she said, and resigned he bowed and left.

Meanwhile, tied together with brightly colored ribbons around their ankles and holding up their glasses, the Stepmother’s guests cheered, marching a clamorous parade through the palace gardens.

Suddenly, lightning struck and Snow White’s tower house went up in flames, which they applauded with shouts of “Aah!” and “Bravo!” as if it were a wonderful display of fireworks. Before long, Snow White noticed the fire from her window and rushed to look outside. Her

tower house was burning, and no one made even the slightest attempt to save it!

She wanted to dash out, but the old Nanny stopped her. “No!” she warned.

“Let me go!” Snow White struggled in her firm embrace.

“So something happens to you too?” the old Nanny insisted, trying to console her. Moments later, a heavy rain poured down. “The rain will save what’s left of it,” she mumbled as the guests fled back inside, and eventually the men’s clamor and the ladies’ screaming laughter died down in the halls and chambers of the castle.

Snow White lay silently on her bed. After the old Nanny left, she got up and started to undress.

While combing her hair, she hardly dared to look at the only mirror that had been left her. And when she finally did, she saw herself turning into a perfect image of the Stepmother! Snow White screamed and hid under her covers.

By dawn, the rain had stopped. Thin trails of smoke rose from her tower house, in ashes, and Snow White sobbed in her sleep.

The old Nanny entered with Snow White's hunting dress and sat on her bed. "Shh . . . it's all right," she said.

"I wish I was never born," Snow White cried. "I never want to wake up again!"

"Shh . . ." the old Nanny kissed Snow White's tears away. "You shouldn't ever think that way. Everything will be all right again . . ."

"So she is wishing for her death!" the Stepmother announced, entering Snow White's room and sporting a stunning hunting dress. "Well, we might even speed it up a little."

"Only over my dead body!" The old Nanny crossed herself and hurried from the room, crying for help. The Stepmother looked after her ominously. And rushing down the staircase, the old Nanny stumbled, fell, and remained motionless at the bottom.

Then, completely unimpressed, the Stepmother turned to her new lady's maid entering from the adjacent room. "Get her ready for the hunt!" she ordered.

Outside at the stables, the men had a hard time keeping Taranus, the Stepmother's black

stallion, in line. Again and again, he threw his head high in the air and tried to rear. But as soon as the Stepmother entered the yard, he cheerfully neighed a greeting.

“Taranus!” she commanded. Instantly, the splendid horse calmed down and allowed the saddle to be placed on him. “Easy, my best, easy,” she whispered in his ear. “You know you are my only friend. Now you can show what’s in you!”

In the first light of day, the hunting party set out. Taranus took off with breathtaking speed, and the Stepmother and the Dark Count led the party. Horses and riders became as one, and the Stepmother’s hair shone like fire in the wind while the wild animals ran for their lives. But the Hunter stayed near Snow White, and when the driver’s dogs caused her white horse to shy, both fell behind.

Then the Hunter motioned Snow White to take a shortcut and catch up with the Stepmother further down the fields. And the young princess proudly spurred her horse and challenged him to an intense race.

Chapter Five

Escape To Nowhere

Deep inside the forest, day was dawning. The dogs' barking grew fainter and fainter, and Snow White and the Hunter dismounted.

The Hunter pulled a telescope from his saddlebag and walked to the edge of a hill. Snow White followed. But as she reached the Hunter, he suddenly pulled his dagger. Snow White froze with fear. Then she began to run, but he caught up with her, and she stumbled and both fell.

"Oh no! Please let me live," Snow White begged in agony. "I'll run off into the forest and never come home again!" The Hunter leaned over her, and she cried out from the depths of her soul, "Father!"

Not far away, the Stepmother and the Dark Count were off alone when suddenly Snow White's cry echoed through the forest.

“What was that?” the Dark Count asked, looking up.

“Huh? Ah, nothing. A frightened bird,” the Stepmother said, and the Dark Count smiled.

“A partridge maybe, a pheasant, or even,” he continued to cover the Stepmother with kisses, “a most lovely, little turtledove?”

Snow White closed her eyes, and the Hunter hesitated as he looked into her innocent face. “I can’t!” he finally said despondently.

Everything fell quiet. Snow White opened her eyes and saw the Hunter staring into the distance. “But if I don’t die, you will!” she said somberly. “She’ll never forgive you for not doing it.”

Snow White’s words pulled the Hunter back into reality. “That’ll be my worry. I was a fool!” he said, getting up and sheathing his dagger. “You’ve got to be true to yourself. Better an end with terror than terrors without end. Now run!”

Not fully comprehending, Snow White wouldn’t move. He stared into her restless eyes. “Run! Run away!” The Hunter shooed her off, and Snow White scrambled up and disappeared into the forest.

“Before I change my mind again,” he mumbled, walking back to the horses.

Just then, a young, wild boar broke out of the thicket and attacked him. The horses reared and Snow White’s horse ran off in terror. But the Hunter killed the boar, removed its heart, and wrapped it in crude cloth. Then he jumped on his horse and raced back to the castle.

In the shadows of the hallway to the Stepmother’s chambers, someone placed a bloody bundle in front of her room. Deep red oozed onto the white marble floor. There was a knock followed by retreating footsteps, and when the Stepmother opened her door, she found the hallway empty. She knelt with an ecstatic expression on her face.

Meanwhile, Snow White was all alone in the seemingly endless forest. High above her, the birds gathered to fly to warmer and brighter places, a doe shyly eyed her and jumped past, and a snake slithered into the thicket next to Snow White’s feet.

The shadows grew longer and longer, night fell, and with the increasing darkness Snow White

became sorely afraid. And in despair, she started to run, repeatedly looking through the twisted branches to the clear, starry sky above her.

At the castle, the Stepmother rang for her lady's maid. Fascinated, she looked at the table in front of her. *Hard to believe that all her beauty may simply be contained in this heart*, she thought.

The lady's maid entered and bowed. "At your service, Royal Highness."

"I want this stewed in salt and water straight away," the Stepmother ordered, and the lady's maid reluctantly picked up the bloody bundle and hurried out the door.

Then the Stepmother went into her dressing room, brushed off her morning gown, and slipped back into her magnificent, blue and green dress. She groomed and preened until she was overwhelmingly beautiful again.

In the kitchen, the Cook tossed a ladle of salt into the kettle in his fireplace. "Day and night I must be at her service!" he mumbled, dropping the hunter's bundle in. "That woman has the most bizarre desires. No greens or anything." He tasted the broth and spat it out. "Blahh!"

Meanwhile, the Stepmother finished the last touches on her festive table. “Come in!” she said. The lady’s maid entered with a covered silver tray. “Over here!” the Stepmother directed, and the lady’s maid curtsied and left.

Then the Stepmother bolted the door, sat down, and took the cover off the steaming plate. Wiping a strand of hair from her forehead, she felt the wrinkles in her face, and closed her eyes. “This is how I seize the virgin nature of the child,” she whispered almost like praying, and opened her eyes. “To be the fairest of all again!”

Far away in the forest, a full moon rose, wolves howled, and the sounds of the night increased. “I’ll never get out of this darkness!” Snow White cried and sank against the massive trunk of an old oak. “Father! Mother!” she sobbed, beating her fists against it. “Why did you have to leave me? Why, why, why?”

Then an owl silently sailed over her head and Snow White panicked. Terrified, she began to run over rocks and thorns until, torn and utterly exhausted, she stumbled and fell into total blackness.

At the Stepmother's chambers, day was dawning. Softly it began to snow, and the Stepmother put her napkin back on the table. Eagerly, she stepped in front of her mirror and said,

*Tell me, mirror, tell me true!
Of all the ladies in the land,
Who is the fairest? Tell me, who?*

Again, the mirror revealed a few hazy images as he answered,

Thou, O Queen, art the fairest here!

In the mirror, she saw herself at the side of the King, proceeding along a row of admiring noblemen. But the Stepmother impatiently waved them off. She already knew these scenes, and the mirror, clearing his throat, continued,

*But Snow White, who has gone to stay
With the Seven Dwarves far, far away,
Is a thousand times more fair!*

Then the Stepmother was struck with disbelief, for she knew the mirror couldn't lie. "Dwarves?" She laughed like mad. "You are confused in time. The dwarves and all such elfish folk vanished hundreds of years ago. The world simply forgot them. Wiped out and burned!"

But the mirror wouldn't be intimidated, and as the Stepmother looked closer, she saw a wild sow nursing a bunch of young boars. The sow stared at her. Then she realized that the Hunter had deceived her and ran to the window, threw it open, and gasped for air.

"So she is still alive," she said. "Well then, my faithful huntsman!"

Chapter Six

Good Friends

Snow White lay asleep on the ground in the gray morning light. Softly, sparkling white snowflakes descended and melted on her cheeks, and she opened her eyes. In the tree above her, a jaybird chuckled.

“Funny how I’m lying down here crying, huh?” *Snow White* looked up and shook the snow off her dress. Suddenly, she saw something in the distance. “For all I know, I’m still alive!” she mused.

Nestled in a grove of stately pines, a small house barely stood out in the snow-covered scenery. A silver trail of smoke wafted from its chimney. Warily, *Snow White* approached the exquisitely crafted cottage and continued through its garden graced with rose trees. *What a quaint, little house. Who might live in it?* she

wondered and knocked. “Anyone home?” Snow White knocked again. Everything remained quiet, but the door was unlocked and Snow White stepped in. She was terribly cold and immediately walked to the fireplace, where a friendly fire burned.

Inside the house, everything was small, but so fine and tidy it’s almost impossible to describe. There was a table spread with a white cloth and seven little plates, each plate with a spoon, knife, and fork, and seven little cups. On each plate, vegetables were already served, with sweet, dark bread with dried fruit and nuts inside, and all cups filled with drink, as if the owner of the house were to come home any minute.

“How pretty!” Snow White said, and was so hungry that she ate some off each plate and had a sip from each cup, as she didn’t want anyone to go without. “Mmm! Some delicious, homemade drink,” she said, sipping from one cup after another. “Different flavors even.” And she returned to sip from the first cup again. “Sugar and spice and all things nice,” she giggled.

After her meal, Snow White yawned. “Ooh, I’m so tired!” And looking for a place to rest, she found her way into the bedroom with seven little beds inside. There, too, everything was extremely neat and clean.

“How cute.” Snow White smiled, going from one to another. “One, two, three, four, five, six, seven little beds,” she counted, looking for the one that would be best for her to stay in. “Let’s see. Too small. Too wide. And this . . . too deep! Hmm. Too soft. Too hard. And that? Oh, I don’t know. But this . . .” Snow White yawned again. “This one’s just right!”

Thus, the seventh bed finally suited her. And while saying her prayers, “Dear God, please bless my mother, who is an angel in heaven, and my father . . .” Snow White fell asleep.

The house was utterly quiet, except for a cuckoo clock ticking and a mouse hurrying across the floor, and the fire was almost out. Suddenly, men’s voices drew near. It was the Seven Dwarves, the owners of the house, returning from their work digging in the mountains and singing their song . . .

Thank you for your interest, and following us this far! Continue enjoying The True Snow White - Limited Premiere Edition by ordering from www.thetruesnowwhite.com, or be patient and wait along with everybody else for a future, general release.

