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Dramatic Publishing

Snow White: The Queen's Fair Daughter

By
MAX BUSH

Based on the Olenberg manuscript
and early versions of the Brothers Grimm tale.



Dramatic Publishing

Woodstock, Illinois • Australia • New Zealand • South Africa

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(SNOW WHITE: THE QUEEN'S FAIR DAUGHTER)

ISBN: 978-1-58342-699-9

For Kelie Miley,
who believed in the tale.

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INTRODUCTION

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Probably sometime in 1808 the Brothers Grimm listened to the story of “Little Snow White.” They were probably told the tale by Marie Hassenpflug, an educated woman in her early 20s, whose first language was French, and who was not a peasant but born into a privileged family. The Hassenpflugs (Marie, Jeanette, Amalie) met the Grimms on a number of occasions to tell their stories. Marie, probably, heard “Little Snow White” from her servant, or governess. From listening to Marie’s story the Grimms created a handwritten manuscript.

Clemens Brentano, a collaborator and mentor of the brothers was, at that time, working on collecting folk songs and stories himself. Probably sometime in 1810, Brentano asked the brothers to send him copies of all the tales they had collected. Brentano intended to base stories of his own upon the tales. The brothers made copies for themselves and complied, as they were collecting the stories as material for exploring and developing a deeper understanding of the authentic German character and language, and they wanted to keep the versions of the stories that were closest to the source. Indeed, they approached their work as scholars doing scholarly research, not as collectors of stories to be retold in a literary fashion to children. The brothers sent a total of 49 tales to Brentano with the proviso that he destroy the manuscripts after he gleaned from them what he wanted. Brentano agreed.

Apparently, the brothers destroyed all their original manuscripts, as there is no evidence that any of them have survived.

For the next 100 years, for all the world knew, no copies of the original manuscripts remained. Then, in 1920, in the Olenberg

Monastery in Alsace, France, the Brentano manuscripts resurfaced. Included in the 49 tales was the original handwritten manuscript version of “Little Snow White.”

In 1974 Heinz Rölleke edited a volume called *Die älteste Märchensammlung der Brüder Grimm (The Oldest Fairy Tales)*, which contains all 49 tales found in the Olenberg manuscript, as well as annotations concerning how the Grimms changed the tales through the various editions published during their lifetimes.

By the first edition of *Kinder- und Hausmärchen (Children’s and Household Tales)*, published by the Grimms in 1812, the brothers began substantially altering the story of “Little Snow White.” For instance, Snow White’s father, the king, played a prominent role in the manuscript version of the tale, but the Grimms completely cut him out. And the huntsman, ordered by the queen to kill Snow White and return with her liver and lungs, and who did not kill her but used the organs of a boar, was a creation of the Grimms. (It is possible that this element came from a different storyteller of the same tale, but there is no record of that.)

It is interesting to note that in the first published edition, the mother was still a mother, not a stepmother. The brothers later changed her into a stepmother when they realized their stories were being read to children. They wished to make the tales more palatable, and so softened some elements, as well as added moralistic and Christian motifs not found in the “original” tales.

2

Other versions of “Snow White” were told by different storytellers at the time the Brothers Grimm were collecting their tales. These versions, frequently similar in content and images, also frequently contained different characters, scenes, beginnings and endings. (In one version the queen speaks not to a mirror but to

her dog; in another, Snow White befriends not seven dwarves but seven thieves.) The question of what constitutes the “original version” proves difficult to answer. However, the manuscript tale remains the version closest to the oral tradition while being the most complete and coherent, and seems to contain most of the major elements of the story, and that is why I chose to base the play largely on it.

One of the difficulties, of course, in making a play out of any version of any of the Grimm tales, is the necessity of making the play work on stage while doing as little violence to the narrative and the underlying psychology as possible. While I stated that I based the script on the Olenberg manuscript and the later versions of the story, I myself made major changes in the narrative to make a more effective play. For instance, in the manuscript, the king finds Snow White in the glass coffin in the forest. He orders his doctors to tie a rope to the four corners of the coffin, and thus she is brought back to life. A note written in the manuscript, presumably by the brothers, after the end of the story, states: “According to a different version the dwarves touched her with a magic hammer 32 times and thus brought Snow White back to life.” I found these endings not only dramatically unsatisfying, but suspect. Indeed, the tale teller in the manuscript seemed to have a difficult time recalling how the princess was awakened. A note in the margin near the end of the manuscript, also presumably written by the Grimms, states that the ending “isn’t right” and is “incomplete.” The brothers went on to disregard Marie Hassenpflug’s ending as well as the other version they mention (32 soft magic-hammer strikes) and to write their own version of Snow White’s awakening for their first published edition. They had a servant knock the apple piece out of Snow White’s mouth. (Ultimately the Grimms found this ending unsatisfactory as well and changed it again in later publications.)

I struggled for some time as to what to do with the ending, trying both the king and then the prince for Snow White's awakening. In the manuscript, after the king's doctors awaken Snow White, the storyteller relegates the prince's character to less than one sentence: "Thereafter, all of them moved out of the house and Snow White was married to a beautiful prince." When I decided the prince actually fit the story as I understood it—and proved more effective dramatically—I also wrote a different method of Snow White's awakening.

But this gave me pause. As with any play, it is necessary to decide what to focus on, what to keep in, what to discard, what to alter, what to expand, how to shape. But because this was an adaptation and I wished to keep as much of the tone, structure and meaning of the "original" material as possible, I returned to the research for a more thorough understand of the tale, its many narrative forms, and levels of meaning.

Also, I wanted a better, more complete answer for a question that kept resurfacing the more I looked at the tale: Why would mothers continuously tell this story—with this queen, this mother—to their daughters generation after generation? Since this was the central relationship in the story, why did generations of mothers and daughters find this story so appealing?

In the afterword to this publication I explore some answers to this question, as well as discuss some other of the Grimm tales. I include, as well, an English translation of the complete manuscript version of the tale.

Max Bush
June 2009

Snow White: The Queen's Fair Daughter was commissioned by Savannah Children's Theatre, Savannah, Ga., and opened there on April 18, 2008, with the following cast and crew:

NARRATOR(S) Micaela Slotin
QUEEN Amy Kole
GRETA Caitlyn Scott
KING Kevin Feldman
YOUNG SNOW WHITE. Ana Khutsishvili
SNOW WHITE. Lauren Holman
MIRROR Kevin Feldman
GUARD Carter Keith
SEVEN DWARVES. . . . Cason Richter, Ethan Bonsignori,
Troy Allen, Andrew Ottimo, Erin McMahon,
Sophia Prisco, Trevor Martin
ROLAND Galen Schneider
FREDERICK Evan Bonsignori
CHILDREN. Anna Schneider, Lexy Bonsignori

Director Kelie Miley
Stage Manager Cynthia Holman
Assistant Stage Manager Eric Mitchell
Costume Mistress Renee McMahon
Costumes . . . Bonnie Juengert, Cheryl Lauer, Cheryl Prisco
Window Suzanne Crum
Props Heather Wall, LeeAnn Kole
Lighting and Sound Terri Sparks, Danielle Pinkerton,
On Site Services
Program Lee Brantley

Set Construction Eric Mitchell, Mike Prow,
Carrie Negley, Stanley Simons Jr., Stewart Pinkerton

Tech Crew Georgette Bonsignori, Kim Buice,
Carrie Negley, Glory Padgett, Mark Padgett,
Sarah Pinkerton, Caitlyn Scott, Marcia Smith,
Stanley Simons Jr., Rob Sumerlin, Corinne Willis

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS:

I thank the following for their invaluable contributions to the development of this play: Kelie Miley; Jennifer Hunter; CJ Namenye; Adam Miller; Megan Cavanaugh; Lynn Brown and the Circle Theatre of Grand Rapids, Mich.; Bob Selig; Sherryl Despres; Alyssa Bauer; Geo Hernandez; Justin Kilduff; Geoffrey Bryan; Richard Mulligan; Megan Johnson; Lyle Henning; Caroline Cahoon; Kristopher Bottrall; Amanda Wright; Bradley Lake; Preston Mulligan; Will Vicari; Emily Smith; Patrick Nowak; Don Wilson; Nancie Smith; Mark Neumann; Alyssa Karnes; Todd Lewis.

Snow White: The Queen's Fair Daughter

CHARACTERS:

NARRATOR(S) (w) one or more actresses
QUEEN Snow White's mother
GRETA chambermaid
KING Snow White's father
SNOW WHITE daughter of the queen
MIRROR (m)
GUARD (m or w) Snow White's personal guard
SEVEN DWARVES (m or w)
ROLAND a prince
FREDERICK Prince Roland's tutor

TIME: Once upon a time.

PLACE: The chamber room and queen's secret room, the deep forest, a forest clearing, the home of the seven dwarves.

PRODUCTION NOTE: This play is designed to run fairly smoothly, with as many crossfades and as few blackouts between scenes as possible. While there will be times blackouts are necessary, holding them to a minimum will substantially improve the quality of a production.

Snow White: The Queen's Fair Daughter

AT RISE: *We see the QUEEN's chamber. A large fire burns in the fireplace. Off the main chamber (or in the above) is the QUEEN's secret room. In it we see the MIRROR, her tables of herbs and potions, manikins dressed in her disguises, a skull, candelabra, stone bowls, jars, ancient manuscripts, and various other implements of witchery.*

In dim light, in the QUEEN's chamber, the QUEEN sits facing the audience, frozen, sewing a small girl's dress. She's framed by a window unit containing an ebony window frame with snow on the outside of the sill. Also in dim light, GRETA (chambermaid) kneels at the fireplace, frozen, stoking the fire. Spot up on NARRATOR(S).

NARRATOR. This is the story as it was told to us. Once, in the winter,

(Lights up on GRETA; she animates, placing another log on the fire.)

NARRATOR. while snow fell from the skies, a queen

(Lights up on QUEEN as she animates and begins sewing.)

NARRATOR. sat in her chamber room, sewing by the window.

GRETA. You seem lost in thought, madam.

QUEEN *(obviously too warm)*. I was thinking: How I would like a child.

GRETA. Oh, yes, madam, all of us wish for one; the king himself has said so.

QUEEN. A daughter. *(Holding up the dress.)*

GRETA. And a pretty dress that is, madam. May your wish come true.

QUEEN. Your fire, Greta; I'm so warm! And there is no air! *(She rises, opens the window, we hear the winter wind.)* Ah, the wind is cold...the snow...clean...pure... *(She breathes in the cold air.)* Yes, a daughter; a daughter as— *(She pricks her finger.)* Ah!

GRETA. Madam?

QUEEN. I pricked my finger with the needle. Look, drops of blood on the snow. Isn't that beautiful...? If only I had a child as white as snow; as red as this blood; and with hair as black as this window frame.

NARRATOR. Soon after, she had a beautiful daughter: white as the snow, red as blood, and black as ebony wood. And the queen named her:

QUEEN *(fondly)*. Snow White.

NARRATOR. Now, next to the chamber

(GRETA shuts window, exits. The QUEEN moves to the door of her secret room, gestures to the door, and it opens.)

NARRATOR. was a room no one entered except the queen, for it was her secret room. In her room she kept her ancient books, herbs, disguises and a mirror...

(The QUEEN pulls back drape that covers the mirror. Mirror lights up.)

QUEEN. Mirror, Mirror, on the wall

Who is the most beautiful in all the land?

MIRROR. You, my queen, are fairest of all.

QUEEN. But surely there is some other who is more beautiful than I?

MIRROR. None, my queen, in this land, is fairer to the eye.

NARRATOR. And then she knew for certain that no one was more beautiful than she.

(She pulls drape in front of mirror. QUEEN exits her secret room, moves into chamber.)

NARRATOR. Time passed. As Snow White grew, she would often visit her mother in the chamber room. Here they would eat together, play together, and Snow White would tell her mother stories.

(SNOW WHITE runs on into chamber, followed by the GUARD. She's about 12 or 13, with long black hair pinned up, pale skin, red cheeks. She's dressed royally in white with gold trim—but like a child—and carries a bouquet of small red flowers, which she holds in her gloved hand. The GUARD, rather embarrassedly, car-

ries a larger bouquet of larger white daisies. GUARD hides them from the QUEEN.)

SNOW WHITE. Mother!

(SNOW WHITE runs to the QUEEN and they embrace. QUEEN kisses SNOW WHITE. GUARD bows to QUEEN.)

GUARD. My lady.

QUEEN *(delighted to see her)*. Snow White... How was your walk?

SNOW WHITE. I found the little red flowers you wanted, but when I picked them they smelled bad. *(She smells them, grimaces.)* And seemed to make a sound like a groan. *(She makes that sound.)*

QUEEN. They don't like to be picked. *(Looking at GUARD.)* Did you wear gloves like I asked?

GUARD. She did, my lady.

SNOW WHITE *(playfully singing this next line, showing her gloved hand)*. Yes, Mother.

QUEEN. I would not want the plant to harm you. *(She takes the flowers.)*

SNOW WHITE. But won't they harm you?

QUEEN. These flowers and I have come to an understanding—

SNOW WHITE. But I couldn't understand why you would want such flowers—

QUEEN. —because of the powers within them.

SNOW WHITE. —so I brought you... *(she takes them from the GUARD)* a bouquet of daisies! These are *(sing-*

ing the word) prettier. (Spoken.) And smell them! (She gives them to QUEEN.)

QUEEN (*smells them*). Fresh and bright. White flowers, like our little Snow White. (*Kisses SNOW WHITE's cheek.*)

SNOW WHITE. I knew you would like them.

QUEEN. Did you make up a story to tell me? I have been waiting all day for you to tell me a new story. Are your daisies part of your new story?

SNOW WHITE. I tried, but my stories are not as good as they used to be.

QUEEN. Of course they are.

SNOW WHITE. So, when I could not think of what was next: (*Overly dramatic.*) "Guard, help me! I cannot think of what happens! And mother will have to know!"

QUEEN. And did you help her?

GUARD. Yes, my lady, but she created most of the story herself. And may I say, our princess hopes you are pleased.

(The QUEEN sits, holding flowers, readies herself. She will take great delight in her daughter telling the story. SNOW WHITE removes her gloves.)

QUEEN. What is the name of your story?

SNOW WHITE. "The Secret Rosebush."

QUEEN. Oh, mysterious. And roses, not daisies?

SNOW WHITE. Once upon a time a girl was wandering with her kitten through the castle garden when she found a large rosebush. "Yvette—"

QUEEN. Yvette?

SNOW WHITE. Her kitten. “Yvette, this rosebush looks so old, but I don’t remember seeing it before.” Her kitten said: (*In a French accent.*) “Zis rosebush was not here yesterday.”

QUEEN (*laughing*). Oh, ze kitten, she is French.

SNOW WHITE. Oui, oui. (*Continuing story.*) As she walked closer she saw an opening in the bush, and a path. She thought: “These roses are so beautiful there must be something beautiful on the other side.” “No, no,” said the kitten, “zere might be snarling dogs on ze other side.” “There might be a lovely lake on the other side, where I could swim.” Suddenly a bear stuck his head out from the other side. The bear said: (*In a German accent.*) “Who would you be? Vhat do you vant?”

QUEEN. Ah, the bear; he is German!

SNOW WHITE. Ja!

QUEEN (*delighted and laughing*). Ja! Das goot!

SNOW WHITE. Now, the girl wanted to see what was on the other side, for she had never been away from her castle. She asked:

Girl: “What is on the other side?”

Bear: “A little lake vere you could svim in the deep vater.”

Kitten: “You will drown. We cannot swim.”

Girl: “I can swim. I am learning.”

Kitten: “But I cannot.”

Bear: “Do you haf some honey? Ja. I vant some honey.”

Girl: “Will you protect me if I go through the rosebush?”

Kitten: “He is a bear, *mademoiselle*! He will devour you.”

Bear: "Nine! I vill protect you if you gif me some honey."

Kitten: "He will eat you."

Bear: "Stay there. Ja, I vill come und get you."

Kitten: "He is coming to get you! Ze bear is coming to get you!"

Bear: "I am coming to get you, Fräulein."

Kitten: "Help! Somebody help us! Ze bear, he is coming to get us!"

Bear: "I vant honey. Give me honey!"

Kitten: "Run away! Run away!"

(The bear growls.

The kitten meows.

The bear growls louder.

The kitten hisses.

The bear growls louder.

The girl screams.)

SNOW WHITE (*cont'd*). And then the girl... (*She stops abruptly.*)

QUEEN. "And then the girl..."

SNOW WHITE. And then the girl...

QUEEN. What is next?

SNOW WHITE. I do not know.

QUEEN. But how does it end? Does she run back to the castle? Does she go into the rosebush?

SNOW WHITE. I could not decide. Guard said she did go in.

GUARD. She must go in.

QUEEN. And what was on the other side?

SNOW WHITE. I do not know.

QUEEN. But I must know the end!

SNOW WHITE (*to GUARD. Singing the next line*). I told you! (*Spoken. Drawing a large frown with her two index fingers.*) The queen is unhappy.

QUEEN (*applauds enthusiastically*). What a delightful story. And such an excellent performance. You have a wonderful imagination, Snow White. (*SNOW WHITE curtsies gracefully to her audience.*) Will you finish your story tomorrow?

SNOW WHITE. If you will help me.

QUEEN. We will finish it together tomorrow. But now I must put these bright flowers in water; they are fading. (*She starts toward her secret room, SNOW WHITE follows her. QUEEN stops.*) You must wait here.

SNOW WHITE. But what is in that room? I hear sounds, I smell things, I imagine what is happening—am I still not old enough? I have a (*singing these two words*) birthday, soon.

QUEEN. Stay with the guard until I return.

SNOW WHITE. Soon I will be so old nothing in any room will ever scare me.

(SNOW WHITE watches as QUEEN moves toward her room. The QUEEN pauses at the door, then waves her left hand in a patterned way, which causes the door to open. She enters and puts the daisies in a vase.)

SNOW WHITE (*cont'd., turning away from secret room*).

Have you entered that room, Guard?

GUARD. The queen declared no one may enter.

SNOW WHITE. Do you know what is in it?

GUARD. No, and I would not go in, if I valued my life.

SNOW WHITE. Oh, it cannot be that dangerous. What do you suspect is in there?

GUARD. If I suspected, I would not say.

SNOW WHITE. I suspect there is a monster in that room, that she must feed with flowers and frustrating guards.
(She flops into a chair.)

(Focus shifts to the QUEEN at her table. She rips a number of pieces off the bouquet of red flowers, putting pieces into a stone bowl. Then, she carefully places a large doll on the table. The doll has black hair and red cheeks and lips, and is dressed all in white. She removes pieces of the red flower from stone bowl—together with some other sparkling and dark flecks—and sprinkles them over the head of the doll.)

QUEEN. Let children play, always in light.

Age stay away, while in your sight.

Always it is May, never summer night.

(There is a flash; then, she carefully wraps doll in a cloth, as:)

SNOW WHITE *(her patience wearing thin)*. What is she doing in there? And why must I wait? *(Short silence. She stands.)* Mother! *(She starts toward secret room.)* Someday I'm just going to—

(Just then the QUEEN reenters the main chamber.)

SNOW WHITE *(cont'd)*. Mother, is there some monster in the room, that I cannot go in there?

QUEEN. I made this for your coming birthday, Snow White, but, since you were kind enough to gather those beautiful daisies for me, I want to give it to you now.

(SNOW WHITE excitedly takes the gift, carefully unwraps doll.)

SNOW WHITE. Oh, Mother, she is beautiful. And royal. And almost alive.

QUEEN. She has the gift of making anyone who plays with her, forever young.

SNOW WHITE *(holding doll up to him)*. See, Guard?

GUARD. A pretty doll, Princess, but not as pretty as you.

SNOW WHITE. Thank you, Mother.

QUEEN. You are our Snow White, white as snow. May you always be Snow White.

GRETA *(entering)*. Madam...the king.

(The KING enters; he wears partial battle garb. GUARD bows, QUEEN and SNOW WHITE curtsy to him. GRETA exits.)

KING *(bowing slightly)*. My queen.

QUEEN. My lord.

SNOW WHITE. My lord.

QUEEN *(starting toward the KING)*. I am happy to—

KING *(opening his arms to her)*. Princess!

SNOW WHITE. Father! *(She runs in front of QUEEN to KING, jumps on him, he swings her around.)* Look what Mother gave me!

KING. Another doll?

SNOW WHITE. You know I like dolls.