

Eirawen, as White as Snow

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This is for a challenge in which we re-write fairy tales! And so, this is my adaptation of Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs :)



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Table of Contents

Eirawen, as White as Snow Chapter 1

Eirawen, as White as Snow Chapter 2

Eirawen, as White as Snow Chapter 3

Eirawen, as White as Snow Chapter 4

Eirawen, as White as Snow Chapter 5

Eirawen, as White as Snow Chapter 6

Eirawen, as White as Snow : Chapter 1

"Oh, I do hope we have a good, strong son," wished a poor peddler woman as she sat in the snow at her loom, "Or perhaps a fair and beautiful daughter."

"My darling wife, you know it wouldn't matter in the least if we had a either one, or an imperfect child at that," said her husband beside her, wiping sweat from his brow before swinging his black axe to cut another stump into firewood, "We shall love the child just the same, whether he is a not strong or she is not fair."

"Indeed, we shall," the mother agreed, but she soon added, "It may come important when the child is married. But we shall love the child the same whether he brings us only a small dowry or we must pay a large one for her."

The two were married, as you might have guessed, and the two were very happy. But, alas, the two were poor and had only what they could make with their hands, all but Darrin's trusted axe and Dara's faithful loom. They were now pregnant, and so they spoke often of the coming child and what joys and pains it would bring. Dara, in her discomfort, frequented more the painful truths while Darrin looked forward brightly to his child's birth.

"The last stump and only half a pile," he said sadly, "I must go for another tree, my darling. Wait here and I will return soon," he tenderly kissed his wife's cheek, took hold of his axe, and left around the small house's corner.

Poor Dara set again to her work, worrying still what her child would be like. Suppose it was deformed and impossible to find a husband or wife? Suppose the labour was hard and Dara died at the child's birth? Suppose again that the child was spiteful and turned against its parents? Her husband and she had come from very poor families, though Dara was very beautiful. Her parents had not wanted their marriage for they hoped she could win a wealthy family's son, but the two had loved each other so purely that they married without the girl's dowry or her parents' blessing. Now, she pondered the worst, fretted incessantly, but never had she been so prepared for the sound she now heard.

After a loud cracking, a deep, inhuman cry warbled through the quiet winter world, screeching through the woman's ears. She closed her eyes and blocked it out but still it rang so clear that she had to follow it,

"Darling, Darrin, answer me!" she called over and over, running slowly through the snow, but still no answer came. Finally she came deep enough in the woods to find a thick tree felled. There was no sign of he husband but a trickle of red blood that spread from beneath the trunk and his black axe in the snow beside it all.

The young widow held her stomach and cried, her child seemed to kick restlessly within as if it sensed the woman's strife.

"May you, my dear," she spoke now to her baby, "be for us a girl with skin so white as the snow and lips so red as your father's blood. May your hair grow black as his axe that lays here and your eyes shine blue as my heart has become this day."

Chapter 2

The child was born one day that spring, hairless and pink as most babies are, and her mother wondered painfully if the child had heard her request. Two things were certain; she was, in fact, a girl and she had, in fact, blue eyes. But the mother knew that eyes were prone to change, and since the skin colour could hardly be determined and the lips blended lightly into the pinkish tinge, she worried still.

Three weeks later, Dara finally concluded that the skin was truly white, the eyes were truly blue, the lips were truly red, and the hair was truly black, and so her heart grew. The babe was given the name "Eirawen" meaning "Snow-White" after Dara's wish. She loved the child as a memory of Darrin and a new beginning to her life, so she moved from the small house that same day. As a cloth maker for the King, she raised the Eirawen dearly and alone for all of the first year.

"Hello good sir, what will you be needing this spring morning?" the woman asked a new buyer in ornate clothing as her one-year-old played with spools of thread in the corner.

"I shall be needing a wife to queen my realm," he said smiling, "And all the town has agreed that you are the most beautiful of peasants, the most humble of women, and the most loving to your child. My kingdom is my child and I must love it as you love yours. Will you be my wife this day and live with me in my castle?"

"Sire, you are not the king of this country. Whence do you come and how far is the travel?" she could hardly ask, so was she shocked.

"I am King Ryan of Reinheim, two days north by my horses," he answered and produced a ring so dazzling, Dara could scarcely take her eyes away.

"I cannot marry you," she said to him firmly, "I cannot love you. My love is dead, for I am dead. My soul and spirit died with my first husband."

"So long as you can love your child, I will believe you can love your people. If you cannot love me, so be it. A queen's love for her people values more than her love for her husband."

"Very well," she replied finally, "I will marry you so long as you do not demand my love."

"Of course, my queen," King Ryan smiled and put the large ring on her thin finger, but secretly he believed she would come to love him in time.

The journey back to his castle lasted near four days and Dara came to ask her fianc © why he had lied.

"So sorry, my darling," he said sincerely, "It is these hills, you see? They are steeper to go home by than to come."

She left again to sit in her separate carriage with Eirawen, for it was not right for the queen and king to ride together before their wedding. The child slept silently through most of the ride and Dara was dearly thankful for her.

Once in Reinheim, the two were married right away and she was given her place in the castle. The servant said to her,

Eirawen, as White as Snow

"Fair Queen, you shall never be asked to lay your hand upon a loom again, nor to cook another meal, nor to wash another cloth."

To this she replied, "Suppose I wish to make a fine blanket for my daughter?"

"It shall be arranged," answered the servant.

"Suppose I wish to cook my daughter a special meal?" she asked.

"It shall be arranged," answered the servant.

"Suppose I wish to clean my daughter's clothes?" she asked.

"It shall be arranged," answered the servant, and he left.

"Suppose I do not wish for it to be arranged?" she then asked herself and took her daughter up in her arms. The girl had been clothed in red silk and velvet, purple ribbons in her hair, and gold chains around her neck, which she chewed now happily.

Her mother took them away and said, "Chains of all kinds are a prison."

Chapter 3

So it came that the girl grew up in the castle, and her mother was a good queen to the people. In fact, Dara loved the people so that she would walk among them with her young daughter to greet them, peasant and duke alike, for she knew the sorrows of poverty. She hardly fancied the palace ways and much preferred simple living, which greatly perplexed her new husband. He doted on Dara and her daughter relentlessly, gave her anything a woman could want in the world. But as the girl aged, she grew fonder of the peasant folk, as her mother was, than of the noblemen and royals and the king's heart grew very worried and wicked.

In his court behind the throne was kept a large looking glass, who, by command of royal blood, would issue any truth (It was kept there for difficult judgements to be made correctly, for it could tell whether a person lied or where a stolen thing was hid and could guess the answer to any riddle. The King could demand a moment alone to think and duck behind his throne to ask wisdom of his mirror. For this, Ryan was known as King Ryan the Wise, but it was truly his trusted mirror that held such knowledge). One day, when Eirawen was seven years of age, he asked the mirror which prince she fancied best. The King expected that she would choose Prince Brenden of Layathal, where she had been born, but to his surprise the mirror answered thus:

*"Be it not wise to ask me so soon,
I tell thee, her heart does love the young Brune"*

The King was perplexed and asked the glass again, "Is it certain, oh Glass, that fair Eirawen does not love Prince Brenden?" and so the mirror answered again,

*"Not Brenden or Robin, or Prince any way
Eirawen loves but a farm boy I say"*

And this was true, for the mirror could not lie, and Brune was surely a shepherd boy, living on a poor farm. The King knew not what to do, for he did not understand that, though a girl may love one at seven years, she is likely to change her mind over time.

And here we see where his heart became wicked. For then, the man asked his huntsman to take Brune with him the next season and shoot the boy through the heart with an arrow. After this, the hunter was to bring the heart back for the King as evidence.

The poor huntsman agreed, but having brought the young boy, only eleven years old, he could not bring himself to shoot. So he told the boy of the King's evil plan, though he knew not why the King had decreed it, and had him run into the woods, expecting he'd soon be eaten by a wild animal.

The boy ran all that day, for they had set out early morning, and was very frightened by the thick trees and the dark shadows all around. Finally, after he was sure he could run no more, he came to an opening in the trees and saw a tiny home.

He knocked at the door and waited a long while before realizing it had no lock. Being very tired and still afraid of the wood, he decided to enter. Brune saw six small plates laid on a little table, with a small cup of wine beside each and a childish stool at each place. On each plate was a good serving of meat and bread, and Brune was very hungry and thirsty after running all day without food or water. He resolved to eat only a bite from each plate, so as not to empty any one, and drink only a sip from each cup. But after this, as the long day and the wine might affect any poor farmer's boy, he became very tired and lay to sleep on the first bed he found, which seemed to be the perfect size.

Chapter 4

Brune woke up warm and comfortable, which had not happened regularly on the farm where he had spent his life, and he soon remembered where he was. At this recollection, he jumped up in the bed and look all about him, but was dismayed to find the room utterly dark. Even the moonlight through the windows was so scarce that he could not see his hand before him or the bed below him or distinguish the window frame from the night sky outside. However, he did hear a loud snoring from his left and a low whisper from the right that said,

"Hush, you dope! Can't you keep quiet for a night?" before the grunting sound of someone turning in their sleep, though the snoring continued.

Brune was terribly worried and thought he ought to leave the cottage immediately. So the boy got out of the bed and crossed the room as best as he could remember, nearly reaching the same table he'd eaten at earlier, when the voice came again,

"Hey, where d'you think you're going?" the voice sounded like an grumpy old man, "No snacks after lights out! Back to bed, you!"

Brune simply froze, not sure if he should run or return. He even considered answering and trying to explain himself, but he decided this would be very silly. In those few seconds, he hadn't made any decision and so the same voice called again,

"Git now, you hear? Back to bed, Dopey!" but also, a different, kinder, voice called after,

"Please Dopey, we're so sleepy! Go back to bed, or I'll never be able to sleep, with all this fuss!"

So, realizing the voices had mistook him for someone else, Brune decided finally that he would try to escape anyhow. Without thoroughly thinking, he dashed to where he expected to find the door, tripped over two chairs, and ran into the wall, making a lot of noise.

"Doesn't sound much like Dopey," said the kinder voice.

"Ahhh!" cried a very new and very strange voice from another corner of the room.

"That sounds more like Dopey," said the gruff, grouchy voice. Now, there was a lot of babbling amongst a lot of new voices.

"Then who's by the oven?" said the grouchy one.

"I don't know," was the kind voice's answer, "but I suggest we all go back to sleep."

"Oh, get up, you ninny!" (I'm sure you can guess which voice said that.) and there was a sort of thud, like someone had kicked something. Then, all the voices became visible little men, for one of them had lit his bedside candle, and they all rushed to the door to see what had happened.

"It's just the boy we found!" said a jolly looking one, but his voice was different from the "kind" voice we'd heard before.

Eirawen, as White as Snow

"Just the boy!" scoffed the familiar grumpy voice, "Just the boy trying to steal us blind and run off in the night!"

And it was at this point that Brune came back from his daze and saw the six strange little faces all about him and he was quite frightened.

"Back away, let him breathe!" said one of them, and once they were a good distance away, Brune felt much better because he saw that they were no taller than him. In fact, some were a few inches shorter.

"Who are you, boy? And what do you want here?" the grumpy dwarf asked unwelcomingly.

"My name is Brune and I was left to die in the woods because the King wishes me dead," he said quietly.

"Then you'd best get at it and do what you were left to do!" said the same man.

"Oh, please, Grumpy! We can't just leave the poor lad to die alone in the forest!" said the jovial-looking one, "Tell me, boy, would you like to die in the wood?"

"Hasn't got a choice, I say!" said the grouch, "The King wished it himself; it's the boy's duty to the throne!"

"Oh, hush!" the five others agreed.

"No, sir, I wouldn't like to die in the wood," Brune answered when the change came.

"Then die, you shall not!" said five of the six little men, and they all invited him to stay there.

"Thank you, sirs, I would like very much to stay with you," he politely replied, and they all cheered but one.

"What should your name be?" asked one with a very nasal voice.

"As I said, my name is Brune," the boy repeated.

"No, you can't go about with a name like 'Brune,' " said Grumpy, "If you'd like to live here, you ought to have a name like us. See, this is Happy," and he motioned to the jovial one,

"And Sleepy, Sneezzy, and Bashful," he pointed to each in turn. Sleepy, it so happened, had been the kind voice we heard before,

"And he," Grumpy said pointing at the only bald member of the party, "Is Dopey," and Dopey smiled and waved across the circle.

"Pleased to meet you all," Brune said and waved back.

"But you see, you simply must have a name that suits you," Happy now said, "So, how would you describe yourself?"

"Well, I suppose I'm poor," he answered firstly.

"But you wont need to worry of that, living with us," answered Sleepy, "We'll put you to dog-tiring work, and you'll be rich after the day is done."

Eirawen, as White as Snow

"What else?" Sneezy's wheezy voice urged him.

"My father used to say I'm pretty helpful," Brune tried again.

"But we're all helpful," said Grumpy, "If we start calling one 'Helpful' then folks will get to thinking the rest of us *aren't* helpful."

"Okay," Brune tried to think again, "I'm pretty smart too. What about that?"

"Well, we're all smart, too," said Dopey, "And folks wouldn't ever know it if we called you Smarty."

"That may not be all true, Dopey, but there's still the fact that *some* of us are smart, and so you couldn't be the only one," Happy clarified.

"Well, what *aren't* all of you, then?" Brune finally asked.

"Hmm, let's see. We're not tall," said Sneezy.

"That's right! In a few years, we could call you Tall!" said Dopey.

"Hah! And what should we call him in the mean time?" Grumpy folded his arms, "Not-Tall-Yet?"

"Sounds fine to me!" said Dopey, crossing his arms as well.

"That's enough, you two!" said Sleepy, but Dopey still stuck out his tongue.

"Anyhow, what aren't we that he is?" Happy asked them all again. They thought a bit before they started to all speak at once,

"We're not tall or weak,"

"And we've got beards on our cheeks,"

"And we all wear green hats on our heads,"

"We're not dumb or slack,"

"And carry packs on our backs,"

"And we work up in hills 'till we're dead,"

But Brune was a little disappointed by this list still.

"Those are all *bad* things," he pointed out to them, "I don't want a name like, 'Weak' or Slack,' "

"This is true," said Sleepy, "But you must choose one. And you ought to choose it quickly, because I'd like to get back to bed."

"Suppose I ask you a riddle," Brune cleverly suggested, "And if you cannot guess, you will call me 'Clever,'"

"And suppose we do guess?" Grumpy asked.

Eirawen, as White as Snow

"Then you may call me whatever you choose," he said.

"That sounds fair," said the six men, "What is your riddle?"

And related this,

"Three women were turned into flowers, but one was allowed to go home each night to be with her husband. Dawn was approaching one night and she would soon have to go back to the field and become a flower again, so she said to her husband, "If you come and gather me today, I can be home with you forever," and so he did.

"How did the husband know his wife from the other flowers, for they were exactly the same and without difference?"

The dwarfs all thought hard and long, but they could not think of the answer, so they agreed to call the boy Clever from then on.

As for that huntsman who was told to kill the boy, he brought back with him the heart of a pig, which he'd shot, and gave it to the King. And the King, in his vileness, cooked the heart and had it made into soup, which he ate that night with his queen.

Chapter 5

Because the King's heart was already wicked, the soup only worsened its state. As the eating of a pig's heart often spurs, he grew more and more conceited and evil each day. Dara's heart, on the other hand, was very pure and innocent and so the soup clashed violently within her, causing her to become very ill. The King, when he first heard the news, was very distressed. But as the gruesome mal intent sank into him deeper, he became ruthless and unfeeling, even toward his wife. He was careless about her health and hired only a few doctors to aid her, which is unfortunate because her goodness could have easily fought off the bad if she hadn't lost heart. She worried too much for Ryan, and her body soon became so absorbed in this pressure that it could not fight the ghastly soup and she died. After a brief moment of grief, King Ryan arranged to marry Dara's maidservant.

The name of this new queen was Morrigan and she was a very crafty woman. She had been ever jealous of Dara's grace, serenity and, most of all, her crown. Her greatest fault was her vanity, and she was desperately envious of the King's wise and priceless mirror, which was only answered by Royalty. It was a fact, however, that she knew not of the mirror's power, but only wished to gaze in its perfect, silver glass. On her first night as Queen, Morrigan stood before the mirror, behind the great throne, admiring how her eyes flashed the perfect look of disdain and how her frown gave such a magnificent air of superiority and how her crown perfectly commanded respect and fear. She became so absorbed that she soon began speaking to her twin in the glass and said this,

*"Reflection in the silver glass,
Mounted on the golden wall
Where only King and Queen may pass,
Thou art fairest of us all!"*

*"Listen, dear, 'tis very true
Near and far, the country's span
No one can compare to you,
Oh, let them die, if one girl can!"*

And the looking glass answered her, which greatly surprised the queen, and returned this verse,

*"Your beauty is undoubted, Queen,
But still it does yet rival one;
Your stepdaughter, skin snow-white and clean,
Though closely ranked, still thou hast won."*

This greatly enraged the queen, who immediately became consumed with jealousy. She had detested Eirawen since the moment she first saw the baby and had become bitter towards her in becoming her motherly figure. So, her hatred was now worsened.

Eirawen was in a very uncomfortable state. Both of her true parents were now dead and she had only her stepfather and his second wife, neither of whom cared for her. She spent most of her days in the village with the other children, for she was still just a young girl. When at the castle, her father was generally in an attempt to pair her with some fair, handsome prince, despite her age. He had, in honesty, lost his mind and was therefore quite incapable of logic and reasoning, even after asking his magic mirror. He became so obsessed with finding a suitor for his daughter that he quite forgot about Eirawen herself. The Queen Morrigan, however, was incapable of both logic and reasoning, and of forgetting the poor girl. She would have, if she could, made Eirawen to be a servant, but none of the palace officials would have stood for this, for they loved

Eirawen, as White as Snow

Eirawen dearly. In turn, Ryan might hear, and he would never allow it.

"She'll never be able to marry a good, handsome Prince if she is waiting upon us all the day long," he would be sure to say.

Of course, the Queen could still tolerate her stepdaughter to a point, because she still held the lead of Fairest in the Land, according to the magic mirror. It was only on the day that the mirror foresaw the Queen's from this place, and Eirawen taking it, that her heart truly turned from her stepdaughter and she sought to reverse the prophesy.

Chapter 6

It had been three years since Brune had been allegedly kill, and Eirawen was now ten years of age. She continued to spend her time in the village, avoiding her stepparents as well as she could. They didn't understand her in the slightest and it truly broke her heart. To King Ryan, was she only some lure for a handsome son-in-law? Was her worth only depicted in her choice of husband, weighing more if he were appealing to the eye? She resented this, though she hardly began to understand it, and she was inwardly very bitter, but, toward the townsfolk, she remained kind and gentle.

By Queen Morrigan, however, she felt even more degraded. Having been raised by such an endearing and caring mother as Dara, Eirawen's shock came in abounding with the vain, selfish monster. More than this, she could not comprehend what transgression she had aired to deserve the Queen's malice. Perhaps her mother had, in some way, offended the servant? Could it be that Eirawen still held her role as Princess, with neither parent alive, much less on the throne? She felt very lost, without a place to belong, and cried a good many nights, alone.

Even in the city, as she aged, her own people had begun to treat her very differently. Her close friends, the girls, grew jealous of her beauty, though they had yet to reach the green shade of the Queen, and the boys began to be quite bothersome. Of course, they were trying to be just so, in order to win her love, as all young boys try. It didn't work, I should say. The more they pulled her long hairs of coal, the more she cried the next night. The more filthy puddles they soiled her flawless, white skin in, the more she prayed for another life. And somehow, these other foolish town girls would complain that every boy ignored them because of *her*.

When Eirawen had been younger, the problem hadn't been quite so bad. But, even then, she had felt Brune was her only true friend. It was this deep friendship that the two had shared that the wise Magic Mirror had informed Ryan of before; not romance, so young, but simply the love friends share, when they choose not to judge one another.

And so, really, Eirawen missed Brune most of all and wondered incessantly if, were he alive, he too would have treated her so differently now. She was tied between the castle, with her duties as Princess, and the townspeople, with their own struggles to share. Yet she wanted to be neither place.

It was lucky, though, that she chose to spend most of her time alone, because she surely would have gone mad in either the village or the castle. Morrigan, though cruel, did not plan to kill her, but tried desperately to ruin the girl's perfect form and face. She began filling golden bowls with candies and chocolates, placing them all about the house, to tempt Eirawen. She began sending the Princess on duties out of doors, begging that the Sun would colour her milk-white skin bronze. But none of this worked at all, because Eirawen's self control overcame the many chocolates and she brought a parasol with her on all trips outside. In fact, the chocolate plan fairly backfired because Morrigan ate a good deal of them instead.

The young princess' favourite place became, instead of any regular place, a small hideout she made in the trees. She would sit up in a tree, in the castle garden, and draw things and write things and read things and do all sorts of things by herself. She threw herself into her studies, which were many, as she was the only Princess. But she was not to be the King's only child a lot longer.

Finally, in the beginning of Eirawen's eleventh year, Morrigan conceived two twins, which were born the following fall.

Eirawen, as White as Snow

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