Snow White

The child’s song broke off in a little scream, for things are sometimes startling even when you have been expecting them, but the scream bubbled into a laugh. “Ah! I … I mean I’m laughing because you look so funny. I took some bread and milk because I was hungry.” She stopped abruptly, feeling that sob somewhere about her again. The dwarf advanced toward her, and she held on to the back of the chair, but he held out his hand and smiled.

“How do you do?” he said. “I am very glad to see you; pray sit down again and finish your supper.”

“It’s your supper,” said the child, who was honest. “I didn’t mean to steal it; I don’t know, perhaps there isn’t enough for both of us.” She had a way of leaving out words in her sentences that sometimes confused people, but the dwarf seemed to understand.

“There’s plenty for both!” he said. “Come! I’ll sit down here, and you shall give me some milk. I am hungrytoo. Have some honey!” He nodded at her and smiled again; he had the most delightful smile the child had ever seen. Somebody once said you could warm yourself at it as at a fire. The child took a piece of bread and looked at him over it as she nibbled. He was not a tiny dwarf, not one of the kind that gets into flowersand fights with grass-bladesand that sort of thing. No, indeed! He was just a little man; why, he was taller than she was, though not so very much taller. He had brown hair and a soft brown beard; his eyes were brown, too, and full of light. All brown and gray, for his dress was gray and soft, “kind of humplety velvet,” the child said to herself, though it was really only corduroy. He seemed all of a piece with the houseand the gray rock behind it. Now he looked at herand smiled again.

“You look as if you were wondering something very much,” he said. “Have some more milk! What are you wondering?”

“Partly I was wondering where the rest of you was!” said the child.

“The rest of me?” said the man. “There isn’t any more of me. This is all there is. Don’t you think it’s enough?” He smiled still, but this time it was only his mouth, and his eyes looked dark, as if something hurt him.

“I mean the others,” the child explained. “The rest of the seven. I guess it’s six, perhaps. There was seven of ’em where Snow White came to, you know.”

“Seven what?” asked the man.

“Dwarfs!” said the child.

“Oh!” said the man.

He was silent for a moment, as if he were thinking; then he laughed, and the child laughedtoo. “Isn’t it funny?” she said. “What are you laughing at?”

“Yes, it is funny!” said the man. “Why, you are just like Snow White, aren’t you? But there aren’t any more dwarfs. I’m the only one there is here.”