

PERUSAL SCRIPT

GRIMM

by

Matthew Ivan Bennett

based on the fairy tales collected and published by the Brothers Grimm

Episode 7 in the **RADIO HOUR** Series



Newport, Maine

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GRIMM

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CAST OF CHARACTERS (in order of appearance)

Rapunzel

Oma
(Children)
Ilsa
Karl
Fairy
(Babe)
Rapunzel
Prince Meinhard
Meinhard Jr.
Meinhardette

The Juniper Tree

Actors 1-5

Little Snow-White

Storyteller
Snow-White
Friedrich the Huntsman
(Baby Boar)
Witch-Queen
Russell
Rupert
Angus
Fergus
Leslie
Wesley
(Trevor)
Mirror
Prince Adam
Friedhelm the Manservant

Period Costumes or contemporary clothes

Radio Station setting

Sound Effects required (can be Foley, recorded, or a mix of both. Music required.)

NOTE:

Each of the short plays contained in this manuscript are available separately as stand-alone plays.

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GRIMM by Matthew Ivan Bennett. Episode 7 in the RADIO HOUR Series. ?M ?F Period Costumes or contemporary clothes. Radio Station setting. SFX essential. Staged Radio Drama, Radio Broadcast, Fully-Staged Production, or Virtual Theatre. (62 minutes) An adaptation of three beloved Grimm Brother stories to their original, dark tellings. This version of *Rapunzel* isn't your mommy and daddy's version. It's dark, earthy, and just a little bit naughty — two children in need of some sex education! *The Juniper Tree* is not nostalgic radio drama. It's a dark, poetic and impressionistic take on the boy who revenged his death by becoming a bird. With themes of cannibalism and matricide, it's no child's version of the Brothers Grimm. *Little Snow-White* reimagines the classic tale with its original dark, earthy themes. It's not a tale for the nursery. All three tales are so perfect for the Halloween season! GRIMM was a co-production between Salt Lake City's Plan-B Theatre Company and the University of Utah's Public Radio station KUER's Radio West. **ORDER #3241**

MATTHEW IVAN BENNETT is a resident of Plan-B Theatre, listed by American Theater magazine as one of 14 companies nationwide exemplifying social action and civic engagement. At Plan-B, he's premiered several stage and radio plays, including an adaptation of "*Frankenstein*" that won a Utah Broadcasters Association award, and "*Eric(a)*" — which won Best Drama at the United Solo festival in New York. He received the Holland New Voices award from the Great Plains Theatre Commons, has twice been a finalist in screenwriting at Austin Film Festival, and in 2016 was an O'Neill finalist. His short plays have appeared at Chicago's Circle Theatre, Rising Sun in New York, Monkeyman in Toronto, and the Source Festival in DC. Matt is a member of the Dramatists' Guild

GRIMM

PART ONE: RAPUNZEL

OMA: (*ancient grandmother*) GAZZER roundt, childtren, make room for eferyvun, settle down; zat's it; not too near ze grate, Hänsel—ze Devil can grab you if ze flames go green!

(*OMA spits*)

(*CHILDREN startling*)

(*OMA cackles*)

So. You vant Oma to tell story she tell story: “Rapunzel”! Not your mommy and datty's version, but mein version, ze right version. So listen vell, no fidgetingk, ant maybe I give you schnapps, eh?

(*OMA glugging*)

I begin.

(*phlegm*)

Vunce, upon time, zere vas stupid girl. She ant husbandt hadt “special hug” ant she vas payingk ze price.

(*ILSA vomits*)

She retains vater, she's backed up, she vomits like Yellowstone geyser, until!, she gazes out vindow into a garden belonging to...A FAIRY! Not sunny California fairy, meine Lieben, but real fairy: pupils like smoke in sunset!; lips like leeches!; gangly! But I come to zat later. First she sees little rosebuds, daises ant poppies. Catsfoot, run-away-robin. But most of all? Bright, green, vaterly *rapunzel*.

(*ILSA smacks lips*)

She tell her husbandt:

ILSA & OMA: Oh, if I do not get some rapunzel from [ze] fairy's garden, I shall surely die.

OMA: Ant vhat do you sink *he* says?

KARL: Are you nuts?! That's supernatural private property, Ilsa.

ILSA: I have a craving, Karl. My body needs green leafy vegetables from exactly over there. Do you even love our unborn baby?

KARL: Of course, I'm just saying, let's not trespass in the backyard of Evil.

ILSA: Omigod, “evil”? You're assuming 'cause she's a fairy she's evil. You're about to be a dad, Karl, and you're a racist.

KARL: We gave her a live chicken on Christmas she returned it inside-out!

ILSA: Karl, I need rapunzel. On my fork. You want the special hug, do as I say.

OMA: Zat night, he bumbles ofer ze vall ant digs.

KARL: “I need it, Karl, the baby needs calcium, my ugly feet hurt, rub them.”

(*startles at a noise*)

Hello? Anyone there? ... OK, just fill the bag 'n run, Karl, nothin' to it; a snip here a snip there; no

one's gonna find—AHH!

MUSICAL STING

OMA: Out of black ze fairy slices, its cape ze color of midnight, sewn from ze faces of human babies. Man's testicles tighten like raisins. Fairy looms ofer him, its arms bony as branches; is voman, but has a vortex of white oily hair clingkingk to her chest, two hells instead of eyes, ant only imagination can conjure her bizarre preternatural voice as she says—

FAIRY: *(completely normal; also, psychotic)* Hey Karl. Whatcha you doin' here?

KARL: Me? Oh, I was just...getting rid of snails. You've got quite a pest problem.

FAIRY: Maybe I like "pests."

KARL: Do you? Huh. I can see that. Also, I'm sorry I smashed one of them.

FAIRY: Sven.

KARL: Sorry?

FAIRY: His name was Sven—that snail. We used to winter together in Sanremo. Though he had been getting on my nerves. Always blaspheming. You reap what you sow. I notice you've got a good grip on those scissors.

KARL: Do I? Huh. Sure do. Can't help it with these forearms, you know? I'm a baker by trade. Lotta dough in these hands.

FAIRY: I bet
(mind control)

But it's so dark out here 'n those things are so pointy, Karl, I'd hate you to trip on my property, puncture your spleen. Why don't you put 'em down.

KARL: OK.

FAIRY: Thanks, 'preciate it. By the by, what's in your bag there, neighbor?

KARL: Bag? Oh. This bag. Odds 'n ends. Got a red onion; couple carrots—

FAIRY: *(sniffing)* I may be wrong, Karl, but it smells like fresh-cut rapunzel.

KARL: *(sniffing)* Gee, so it does. Weird. Anyway, I should split; the Old Lady—

FAIRY: Did you know that scent, Karl—that green, fresh-cut scent—is secreted by plants to attract predators?

KARL: Really.

FAIRY: Yeah. They give off that odor so a beast can come to feast.

KARL: I did not know that. I was bad at science.

FAIRY: (*buzzing with power*) I wouldn't call it "science," Karl, I'd call it common sense: I think every living thing wants to go on, don't you? To put off the Final Judgment? Or maybe you long for this. *O Deus, aeternus pater*—

KARL: OK, OK! We can solve this without Latin. I stole from you, it was wrong, I'll make it up. It's my wife, alright, she threatened me—specifically my genitals. And the rapunzel was so close to our yard, I just thought—

FAIRY: Karl, chill. I'm not a grump. Love thy neighbor. You can help yourself.

KARL: I can?

FAIRY: Absitively. Any time. As much as you want. As long as you compensate me in, say, the ballpark of your first-born child. That seem fair to you?

KARL: Very fair, Mrs. Fairy. It seems fairy—I mean, very, fairly, caring of you. Considering what I've already been through in the last eight months.

(FAIRY laughs)

(KARL laughs)

FAIRY: (*stops laughing*) Get off my lawn.

MUSICAL STING

OMA: A munce later?

(BABE crying)

Anuzzer baby squirts into poverty; ze fairy comes in spiral of green mist.

MAGIC

FAIRY: I'll be taking that, nice doin' business with you, Karl, go with God.

MAGIC

ILSA: What? Business? Karl. What did you do? Did you sell our baby?!

KARL: A little bit, yeah.

ILSA: Karl Werner Von Schlitz. Give me one good reason I shouldn't throw this afterbirth at you.

KARL: I got a receipt?

MUSICAL STING

OMA: Fairy flies deep into forest, to a tower vis no doors, no stairway, but only high window. Baby suckles ant grabs at hairy breasts, as if twin bottles of schnapps—

(she glugs)

FAIRY: Oh yeah mmm; suck 'em good, my precious, my...Rapunzel.

OMA: Seasons pass. Snow blows in, it melts; stars whiz by; little girl grows to be twelve years old—radiant as sunrise. And yet, she hasn't even a book up in her tower, no puzzles, no kittens; no scissors to have her hair cut, and so it grows long, barbarous, angelic. Day in, day out, she sits, brushes her brass hair in the window, and sings....

RAPUNZEL:

THEY ALL RAN AFTER THE FARMER'S WIFE
WHO CUT OFF THEIR FEET WITH A CARVING KNIFE
DID YOU EVER SEE SUCH A THING IN YOUR LIFE,
AS THREE BLIND CATS?

OMA: The fairy wanted to see her, she called up:

FAIRY & OMA: (*below*) Rapunzel, Rapunzel, let down your hair to me!

RAPUNZEL: (*inhale of surprise*) Fräü Gothel! Yay. Just a minute.

OMA: Up the fairy climbs; girl bounces up and down.

FAIRY: Hello, darling. What mischief have you been up to? Have you said your prayers?

RAPUNZEL: Oh yes, Fräü Gothel, I always say them: when I wake, when I eat, and when I tinkle in the corner.

FAIRY: Good girl.

(*a sniff*)

Would you like me to shampoo your hair? It's Hair Day.

RAPUNZEL: Is it?! I must've lost track! I'd been stacking up mouse droppings as a way of...well, I don't know what to call it—knowing what day it is, I guess?; but when I get a big pile, I get overwhelmed. But yay, Hair Day. Sometimes I dream of your long, long brittle fingers on my scalp.

FAIRY: (*incantation*) *Varetah!*

RAPUNZEL: (*claps*) Woo! Water that's hot! I tried that, the other night, for an hour, and I swear the water got slightly colder.

FAIRY: Only your Gothel can do magic, Rapunzel, I've told you.

RAPUNZEL: I know, but I was thinking if I could *learn* magic then maybe I could breathe outside the tower, and—

FAIRY: But you can't, my dear. There's only enough air outside the tower for me.

RAPUNZEL: I know you say that, but sometimes the wind *shhs* in the window and I think "Whoa that's a lot of air."

FAIRY: Pumpkin, I've explained: the air thins as you go farther from home; it's a brutal, heathen, lonely world. Now sit down, lean back, let me groom you, you must be groomed.

RAPUNZEL: Yes, ma'am.

FAIRY: There now. Isn't that a dream? We're going to get you spick and span. Clean as Mother Mary's knickers.

MUSICAL STING

OMA: But vun day, a young prince rustles by in forest, hot rabbit guts in his handts, vhen suddenly...he sees Rapunzel in her tower, forlorn, singkingk:

RAPUNZEL:

LIMB FROM LIMB AT ONCE HE'LL TEAR YOU
JUST AS PUSSY TEARS A MOUSE
AND HE'LL BEAT YOU, BEAT YOU, BEAT YOU
AND HE'LL BEAT YOU ALL TO PAP

OMA: He fell in love, straight off.

PRINCE MEINHARD: (*he claps; pubescent cracking*) Yeah! You had me at "limb from limb"! What's your name? I know I don't know you, but, we should go out!

OMA: Rapunzel hadt never seen a boy, ant so she sougth "Oh my, he might be Devil."

RAPUNZEL: (*whisper*) Please don't drink my blood please don't drink my blood please.

PRINCE MEINHARD: (*muffled; below*) Hey! Where'd you go? Hello?! I'm a prince! ... Dangit.

OMA: Boy prince searches for door; none vas to be foundt. So he vaits, at edge of clearingk.

FAIRY: (*at a distance*) Rapunzel, Rapunzel, let down your hair.

OMA: Ze prince hears passvord. So at dusk, ze next day, vhen fairy has gone:

PRINCE MEINHARD: Rapunzel, Rapunzel, uh... Let down, your hair.

OMA: Hair falls down. Prince ties a braidt aroundt his mittle.

PRINCE MEINHARD: (*calling up*) OK, uh, pull me up?

OMA: Ant Rapunzel, distracted in her dreams ant longingk, drug him up, expectingk to see fairy.

(*RAPUNZEL hoisting...hoisting...then:*)

PRINCE MEINHARD: Hi!

RAPUNZEL: Ahh!

PRINCE MEINHARD: Oh no, oh no, sorry, I should've sent my manservant ahead, I know, but I brought you some uh mulberries—

5 more pages to the end of RAPUNZEL

PART TWO: THE JUNIPER TREE

1-5: (*whisper*) “The Juniper Tree.” ... Two thousand / years ago—

1: Beneath a juniper a woman peels an apple / slices her finger

2 & 5: Ssslices

3: Hhh

4: Blood spots the snow / she thinks:

5, 2: (*sucking finger*) Nine months fall **3:** “How I wish I had a child white as snow and red as blood”

1: She bears a pale boy / she dies, she lies now under the twist of juniper

2 & 4: Shhhoveling shhhoveling shhhoveling

1: The man remarries—

5: Has a second child / Lena

4: Lena, jewel of her mother’s eye; but the boy / he always always

1, 5: Slap, slap

2 & 4: Stands in her way / right in her way

1: Slaps him, cuffs him in the corner

3: “My daughter will have everything, boy.”

2: Then one day, the daughter—

5: “Can I have an’apple, Mother?”

2: She kept them in an iron chest

3: “Of course, my darling girl.”

5: “Can Brother have one too, when he’s home from school?”

2 & 4: Anger. Her heads splits / the Dark One creeps over the woman

1: (*growling*)

3: “Yes, he ‘may’ have one, but you shan’t have one before him.”

2: Lena waits upstairs curls up in the sun the boy toddles in—

3: (*kindly*) “My son, do you want an apple?”

2: She unlatches the chest **4:** Creeeak

3: “Pick out an apple for you and your sister.”

2: He leans over the chest, wary but hungry when—

4: She slams down the lid!
Slicing off his head

2: ...slams!
Ssslicing

1: A smile spasms along her lips—at last,
she’s free of him—but fear burbles up

3: (short, ecstatic breaths)

1, 2, 4 & 5: (*her thoughts*) What have I done? What have I done? Maybe... Maybe if...

1: She pulls the oozing head out of the apple bin / sets it back on the body

2: Squishhh

4: Props him up, ties the head and neck together with a scarf

1: Lays an apple in his hand.

3: (*calling up*) “Lena! Your brother’s home!” (*humming over the next section*)

2: Daughter clomps down the stairs

5: “Hey, gimmie one of those!”

2: But Brother is quiet so Mother says

3: “Box him in the ear if he won’t answer.”

4: So the girl / whacks him on his ear

2: Whhhacks

4: And his head / thuds thuds thuds on the cold kitchen floor

5: And his head thuds thuds thuds / on the cold kitchen floor

3: “Lena! What have you done?!”

5: “I, I—You said—”

3: “Shush! Don’t waste another word with me. I’ll help you hide your mistake—we’ll cook him, in a stew—
but then, you must repent.”

2-4: Shhhing.

1: Apart they hack him boil him up with shallots and rosemary

2: At dinner the father eats and eats

4: “Mmm”
(*lip smacks*)
“Mmm”

4: (*mouth full*) “Where’s the boy? Such a meal he’s missing; mmm.”

3: “He’s gone over to his uncle’s.”

1: The father wishes he’d said goodbye but mouth waters away the thought

4: Slurp ’n gobble smack ’n slurp 1: He slurps and gobbles, tosses bones

2: And Lena, / little Lena, weeps the tears of blood

5: (*weeping*)

2: Gathers Brother’s bones in a silk handkerchief sets them on the grass

1-4: (*whisper*) Under juniper

1: And the tree.../ it moves

4: It groans and sways and claps. 2: (a boy groaning)

5: A mist rises / the tree screams into flame

2: (*a boy screaming*)

1: And then a bird streaks / out of the smoke and up and up and up and—

4: Whuft

2: (*singing; two extended notes*) MO-THER!

3: The silk and shining wet bones are gone

1: Lena sighs, less sad somehow, but why?

4: The bird alights on a goldsmith’s home farther up the lane and sings

2: MOTHER SHE KILT ME
FATHER HE ATE ME
SISTER SHE LAID MY BONES IN SILK
NOW I’M A BIRD WITH EYES LIKE MILK

5: So struck by the melody the goldsmith thrusts his head out his door:

1: “How wonderfully you sing! Sing that piece again!”

2: “I sing nothing twice for free. But give me your golden chain I will sing.”

5: He tosses up the chain the bird snatches it it sings and / wings away

2 more pages to the end of THE JUNIPER TREE

PART THREE: LITTLE SNOW-WHITE

STORYTELLER: “Little Snow-White.”

MUSIC

He crept into the girl’s bed-chamber and gagged her.

(SNOW-WHITE muffled protest)

She scratched and wept and shat the powder-blue silk of her nightgown. He slapped her for the stink, drug her into the woods; it was easy. Yes, how easily did his knife sing through the dark and—

SNOW-WHITE: *(weeping)* PLEASE! Whatever I did, I’ll make it well! Show me mercy. I will run away, never pester you again, I promise, I promise, I—!

FRIEDRICH THE HUNSTMAN: *(slapping her)* *Gottverdammt!* No more weepingk. I have headtache now.

SNOW-WHITE: On the Lord Jesus I swear, sir, I will right whatever wrong, I will—

FRIEDRICH THE HUNSTMAN: Listen, leetle girl, you do nussingk bad. What I do is not against you, ja?

SNOW-WHITE: Carving me like a goose isn’t against me?

FRIEDRICH THE HUNSTMAN: Vell, from your point of view, but—

SNOW-WHITE: How much are they paying you?

FRIEDRICH THE HUNSTMAN: Oh, “zey” are payingk me—in a vay you are too young to know about.

So halt den kleinen roten Mund! I slice and tice now. I *schneiden* your lungs, *und* your liver, *und* I fry zem in skillet vis garlic *und* lemon zest! Now d—!

SNOW-WHITE: Wait!

FRIEDRICH THE HUNSTMAN: You vait! Stop talkingk *und* vait, quietly, until ze man vis ze knives kills you, you...sveet, inovensive, leetle eight-year-oldt. I destroy you! Vis your skin, white as snow...*und* your lips, *rot wie Blut*. ...You qvell my murderous ire. Run. Run away now, I kill somesing else. *Abhauen!* Or I pluck out your eyes *und* piss on you.

(to scare her)

Ahhhhhhhh.

(SNOW-WHITE screams; runs)

STORYTELLER: Shaking but grateful, Little Snow-White rushed into the wild—branches snapped around her, spider webs stuck to her mouth, and the huntsman was alone. He sighed, and muttered, and shook his blond head, wondering what to say to the Queen...when a wild piglet trotted by.

FRIEDRICH THE HUNSTMAN: Die!

BABY BOAR: *(squeal of death)*

STORYTELLER: Fooled by the huntsman, the Witch-Queen ate the animal’s lung sacks. With a greasy

chin, she imagined that the bolus in her throat was her daughter's threefold beauty—the red, white, and black now macerated, liquefied, made into nothing by teeth and acid and bowels twitching.

(WITCH-QUEEN snarfling—over the last)

FRIEDRICH THE HUNTSMAN: How do you like zat marinate, Gorgeous?

WITCH-QUEEN: Silence. Bar the door. Take off your pants.

STORYTELLER: Meanwhile, Snow-White ran until her feet throbbed and she came to a cottage built into a hill. The roof was a fallen wedge of granite and moss, the windows sheets of crystal and inside... everything was small. The table, chairs, plates, spoons, mugs, the seven tiny beds against the wall—each of them seemed built for a child. Even the food...

(SNOW-WHITE eats)

Oh she was starving; her throat felt like linen in the sun. The green beans, the corn muffin, the honey wine—she snatched and nibbled and drank them all. And then wobbling, laid herself down in a numb wondering:

SNOW-WHITE: *(interior)* “Who would want to a kill a girl?”

STORYTELLER: In her mind's eye, her mother wept and raged and rode into the forest with a torch. But soon—

(SNOW-WHITE yawning)

Sleep came, and the sun shrank away, and the moon blossomed, and the seven owners of the cottage came calling. Sweaty, grimy, reeking of roots and iron, in they clumped—and when they saw the disarray!

RUSSELL: *(fussbudgety)* Oh razzle-frazzit! Who has been in my chair again? I left it perpendicular to the wall and it's been disturbed by at least four degrees.

RUPERT: *(uppity)* What I'd like to know, Russell, is who's absconded with my garden-fresh green beans.

ANGUS: *(tetchy)* Yeah! An' 'oo nicked 'alf my muffin?

FERGUS: *(gruff but grounded)* Sod you and your muffin, Angus, you 'ad a nibble this mornin', the question's where's my delicious spotted dick puddin'?

LESLIE: *(nasal; homemaker)* I say, our Bishop Hat's napkin arrangement, Wesley! It's been rumped.

WESLEY: *(ditto)* Right you are, Leslie. Who is the culprit?! I call a house meeting forthwith!

RUPERT: Hold up, Trevor would like a word first.

WESLEY: Trevor can have a “word” in the meeting.

RUPERT: Wesley, I tire of reminding you: Trevor is a member of this Collective despite his disability. Now what was that, Trevor, slow down, I can't understand you when your hands flit. ... Oh! My. Trevor signs to me that he feels like a little girl inside his head.

(slapped)

Ah. No. He says, “There *is* a little girl...inside his *bed*.” What?

ANGUS: Bugger, ‘e’s right; ‘ave a look at Trevor’s bed; that’s the muffin marauder, right there. Oi! Did you diddle my muffin? Wake up.

SNOW-WHITE: *(bleary)* Wha? It’s not even light out, Moth—AHH!

ANGUS: *(muffles her)* Scream all you like, Nancy, you’ll be workin’ off every bite!

RUSSELL: No need to manhandle, Angus, you’re disheveling the bed-sheets—and the Collective does not — Well, well, well, isn’t she lovely specimen.

ANGUS: Lovely for a larcenist.

RUSSELL: Shush. Rupert, Wesley, Leslie, Trevor, do you see what I see—that symmetry? That complementarity of color? That bone structure?

RUPERT: Oh yes, quite. What Trevor? Really?! He says the girl’s face is statistically one in five hundred million.

ANGUS: Tripe. You yanked that out.

RUPERT: Trevor has a very high spatial intelligence, Angus, as he’s told you. Unhand the girl.

ANGUS: If I un’and ‘er, she’ll bite my arm off, look at ‘er. I concede she’s symmetrical, but she looks like she’s feral.

(sniffs)

Smells like shite.

RUPERT: Motion to have Angus unhand her.

ANGUS: You stop it with the motions.

RUPERT: All in favor say aye, please.

ALL BUT ANGUS: Aye.

ANGUS: What?! No! We approve of breakin’ the Eighth Commandment set down by Moses all a sudden? All muffins’re up for grabs?

RUPERT: Angus, the Collective has spoken.

ANGUS: Trevor didn’t speak.

RUPERT: He gestured. And you have cheeked the Judgment twice, Angus; I declare you Insurgent; proceed at once to the Stool of Anarchy, not a word for *five* minutes.

ANGUS: FIVE?! *(grumbles; un-muffles her)* Alright, I submit, for the Greater Good, but I want that toddler to spit my muffin up. Where’d you leave the Stool?

RUPERT: *You* left the Stool by the potato bin yesterday, you thoughtless burke.

ANGUS: If I'm a burke, you're a—

RUSSELL: Language! Both of you. The Collective has been blessed with a visitor, at last, and you mar the image of its munificence and efficiency. As Director of Public Relations I order you to apologize.

RUPERT & ANGUS: ... Sorry.

RUSSELL: Thank you. Now: little girl, we welcome you, we ask your name, and we wonder how you arrived here.

SNOW-WHITE: *(still heaving)* Well... first of all... I'm called Snow-White, noble sirs.

WESLEY & LESLIE: "Snow-White"?

WESLEY: Is that your Christian name?

SNOW-WHITE: Yes, sirs. And, I'm very sorry for my unlawful entry; I was attacked, you see, by a German, and.... Forgive me but...are you...dwarves?

ANGUS: "Dwarves"?! You 'ear that?! That's 'ow they bring them up! No, as a matter of fact we are not "dwarves"—!

FERGUS: Angus, let it be.

ANGUS: As that is a derogatory term used only by the acro majority!

RUPERT: We prefer the term midget, Ms. White.

WESLEY & LESLIE: "Midget"?

LESLIE: We decided on sub-tall human unit.

RUSSELL: No, Trevor broke the tie: it's easier to sign "midget" with his hands.

WESLEY & LESLIE: Oh. Sorry, Trevor.

RUSSELL: So there you are, we are seven midgets. I am Russell, this is Rupert *(greetings from each)*, that's Angus on the stool—forbidden to vocalize—Fergus, his twin, though raised apart, Wesley and Leslie, who only seem twins, and, of course, Trevor, who is gesturing "Hello."

SNOW-WHITE: I see. What a pleasure to meet you. You're the first midgets I've ever met. And the only people I've ever robbed. So I swear to repay you. Until my mother comes I shall cook and wash and sweep and sew and knit and crochet and spin flax and churn butter and...I can also groom a pony.

RUSSELL: Can you use a protractor? I require ninety-degree angles in my area.

SNOW-WHITE: Yes! My tutor taught me the protractor last week. I know them *acutely*.

RUSSELL: Oh mercy, at last! Motion to add a member to the Collective! All in favor?

MUSICAL STING

STORYTELLER: But in that very same hour—

WITCH-QUEEN: Mirror, Mirror, on the wall
Who's the fairest of them all?

MIRROR: O Queen, thou art the fairest of all I see
Yet o'er the hills, where dwarves do dwell
Your daughter is alive and well
And none is so fair as she.

WITCH-QUEEN: Betrayal.

STORYTELLER: And so she plotted, painted her face, dressed like a Gypsy, and with a spell, went over the seven mountains like wind the next day. A potion hid her voice.

WITCH-QUEEN as GYPSY: (*through the door*) Pretty things to sell, very cheap.

STORYTELLER: The men gone, Snow-White poked out of a round, crystal-paned window.

SNOW-WHITE: Good day, ma'am. What've you to sell?

WITCH-QUEEN as GYPSY: So much my dear: ribbons, hairpins, laces. You see this? Chinese silk.

STORYTELLER: Snow-White had no suspicion, so she stood before the old bent woman and let herself be laced.

SNOW-WHITE: Ooo, that's a little tight. Looser, if you please. No, um, looser. Ma'am?

STORYTELLER: The mother corseted quickly, so tightly that Snow-White lost her breath, a rib cracked, and she fell down as if dead, her face a blue-gray. The mother fled, relieved. But when the seven men came home...

ANGUS: Why's the maid writhin' on the floor?

(SNOW-WHITE gasping)

RUSSELL: Christmas Fudge! She's strangled herself with an undergarment. Trevor, quickly. You're best with knots.

STORYTELLER: Meanwhile...

MIRROR: Oh, Queen, thou art fairest of all I see
Yet o'er the hills, where seven—

WITCH-QUEEN: Blast!

STORYTELLER: The mother racked her cruel mind. What would fool a little girl twice?

WITCH-QUEEN: Yes. Yes.

MAGIC

STORYTELLER: With a second spell, she raced over crag and valley, took disguise as a blind woman, a yellowed bandage on her eyes. The seven men off in the mines, she rapped on the door.

SNOW-WHITE: (*within*) No solicitors, please!

WITCH-QUEEN as OLD BLIND WOMAN: I have naught to sell, child, only a bauble or three to trade. For a spoonful of porridge, I would leave you this lady's comb.

STORYTELLER: It was all too tempting—the jeweled comb reminded her of home. With gratitude, she ran it through her raven hair when—

SNOW-WHITE: Ah!

STORYTELLER: Poison squished into her scalp. She collapsed.

WITCH-QUEEN as OLD BLIND WOMAN: What's comb over you, my love?

MAGIC

STORYTELLER: When the halfling men came....

RUSSELL: Ms. White, good news, Leslie has uncovered a trove of wild shiitake mush—*oh rue the day, no!* Trevor!

STORYTELLER: Meanwhile...

MIRROR: Oh, Queen, thou art prettiest of all I see
But—

WITCH-QUEEN: *Ahh!* Why?! What has happened now?

MIRROR: One dwarf of seven has wit unsurpassed
A magic most dark must now be—

WITCH-QUEEN: Yes, got it. *Ugh,* I should've squeezed her flat in the birth canal.

STORYTELLER: She fled to a secret dungeon room caked with dust, where she made a poisonous apple. Then with a third spell, she folded space between castle and cottage at noon the next day—

MAGIC!

She rapped on the door, dressed in gingham as a farmer's wife.

SNOW-WHITE: (*within*) Sorry, I'm not allowed to buy anything or let anyone in or talk to strangers. The Collective forbids me.

STORYTELLER: But the girl spied the bushel—its bounty large and royal red and gold-flecked, smelling of juice and autumn. Mouth awater, she thought—

SNOW-WHITE: (*interior*) Well, the farmer's wife is *giving* them all away.

STORYTELLER: And when she saw the woman eat a portion—

WITCH-QUEEN as FARMER’S WIFE: You eat this red cheek and I’ll eat the yella.

STORYTELLER: She stretched out her hand...and bit down into a crisp, earthy, sweetness.

SNOW-WHITE: *(eating)* Mmm.

WITCH-QUEEN as FARMER’S WIFE: There now. Ain’t that to die for?

SNOW-WHITE: *(chewing)* Oh yes, it’s so scrum—
(it begins to burn)

WITCH-QUEEN as FARMER’S WIFE: What’s that, dear? Use yer words.

(laughing)

(SNOW-WHITE choking)

MUSIC

WITCH-QUEEN: *(voice reverting)* White as snow, red as blood, black as ebony?! Let them see your corpse, girl, and say that still.

SNOW-WHITE: M-m-mother?

WITCH-QUEEN: Oh yes, dear, it’s me.

(the girl weeps and chokes)

I’m here. I’m here. But you are *not* safe now. No. I’m not going to get you water from that well, or blow on your elbows. I am going to watch. And grin. Because the truth is: the week I bore you I wanted to sling you out the window into a snow drift. You’ve just given me an excuse by getting pretty!

(SNOW-WHITE “dies”)

MUSICAL STING

STORYTELLER: When the seven came home again, they could not resuscitate her. And at last the Mirror said:

MIRROR: Thou art the fairest.

STORYTELLER: But when they dug the grave, they saw her cheeks were still blood red.

RUSSELL: We cannot put her down in the dark. Not like this.

WESLEY & LESLIE: *(sobbing)* No. No.

LESLIE: The heartbreak must be seen.

RUPERT: Trevor motions that we...build a glass coffin and...install it permanently in our salón.

Five more pages to the end of LITTLE SNOW-WHITE

REVIEW:

Plan-B Theatre: Making radio drama from the dark edges of fairy tales

Stage • Plan-B and RadioWest team up to recast three fairy tales for adults.

By Ellen Fagg Weist *The Salt Lake Tribune*

Forget the Disneyfied versions of fairy tales. For this year's Halloween season, Radio Hour playwright Matthew Ivan Bennett is aiming for a darker vibe in retelling three classic Grimms' Fairy Tales as adult stories.

For its ninth annual radio play, Plan-B Theatre Company collaborated with KUER's RadioWest to select three fairy tales: "Little Snow-White," "Rapunzel" and "The Juniper Tree."

In adapting those stories, Bennett went back to the more gothic versions found in the 1812 edition of the Grimms' anthology. In later editions, the stories were pitched more to children; some scenes of graphic violence were eliminated, while some characters of evil mothers were transposed into stepmothers.

The stories weren't necessarily morality tales, as Bennett expected. "They have morals, but they don't advocate any one position," he says. "It's like a room full of people with chain saws. In that they fascinate me, as it makes them pure artifacts of the ancient mind."

The stories are dark, but they aren't just gory for gore's sake, as we've come to expect in contemporary horror movies. "They really reveal a wisdom about human nature, and I don't think we do anyone a service by oversanitizing that," says Elaine Clark, a RadioWest producer who studied folklore in college.

Just think of "Snow-White" as the story of a mother suffering postpartum depression, Bennett says. Consider "Rapunzel" a cautionary tale about the need for sex education, as it tells the story of what happens when you keep a pubescent girl in ignorance — even if she is locked away in a tower with only her hair for a ladder.

And then there's "The Juniper Tree," which Bennett describes as a nightmarish dream. It's the story of a stepmother who tricks a boy into looking into a chest for an apple, then decapitates him. His sister buries the boy's body beneath a juniper tree, and he is later resurrected.

"In a way, it's a relief as a writer to be recused from making sense of things," Bennett says of adapting folk stories for contemporary audiences. "At the same time, I don't think they are untrue to real human happenings."

For Bennett, adapting the stories for radio was an exercise in writing for sound, as he relied heavily on onomatopoeia, or words that sound like what they are. For example, he used the word "whuft" to describe

the sound of a bird's flight, and he relied on the violence of "s" words, whenever possible: words like "smack," "smash," "slice" and "splat."

The original tales are short and emphasize the grotesque. They rely mostly on description or narration, with very little dialogue or character details, which allowed Bennett some creative license.

For example, in "Snow-White," the original sleeping-thought-to-be-dead princess is 7 years old, and a prince comes along and offers to buy her. "That's too much, even for Plan-B audiences, so I made her 8 years old," Bennett says, laughing. "I don't know how old the prince is, so I made him 37."

For this year's radio show, director Cheryl Ann Cluff has given the cast a new challenge: eliminating sound effects. Instead of audience members watching Foley artists create sounds, for "Grimm" the dreamlike stories will be animated through sound designer Dave Evanoff's original music.

Evanoff will play instruments ranging from keyboards to a toy piano and an electronic theremin. "I really like how that becomes a part of the story, a part of the action that's going on onstage," Cluff says.

As "Grimm" will be performed in front of an audience as well as aired as a live broadcast, the cast can't rely too heavily on body language in their acting. "It really does help refine storytelling skills, because you have to tell a very, very clear story, and to tell it in the clearest way with just using sound," Cluff says. For "Grimm," male actors will voice female characters, and women will voice male characters, while every actor will play a dwarf in "Snow-White." "I thought it would be a fun visual gag for the audience to see how men handle those characters," Cluff says.

The most unusual of the stories might be Bennett's telling of "The Juniper Tree," which Clark describes as "impressionistic and poetic." "I like his adaptation because it really showcases his imagination as a playwright," she says. "Radio drama may be a medium that harkens back to the 'golden era' of broadcasting, but Bennett isn't bound by a stereotype of the form. He's experimenting, which is a great gift to the audience."