

**PERUSAL SCRIPT**

# **THE JUNIPER TREE**

by

**Matthew Ivan Bennett**

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

Part 2 of GRIMM - Episode 7 in the **RADIO HOUR** Series



Newport, Maine

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## **THE JUNIPER TREE**

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**CAST OF CHARACTERS** (in order of appearance)

Actors 1-5 play multiple 'roles'

**Period Costumes or contemporary clothes**

**Radio Station setting**

**Sound Effects could be used** (can be Foley, recorded, or a mix of both. No music required.)

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**THE JUNIPER TREE** by Matthew Ivan Bennett. Part 2 of GRIMM - Episode 7 in the RADIO HOUR Series. 5 performers. Period Costumes or contemporary clothes. Radio Station setting. SFX essential. Staged Radio Drama, Radio Broadcast, Fully-Staged Production, or Virtual Theatre. (6-7 minutes) An adaptation of three beloved Grimm Brother stories to their original, dark tellings. *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. 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 #3241.2**

**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

## 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

**THREE more pages to the end of the script**