



**Sample Pages from
Strawberries in Winter**

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STRAWBERRIES IN WINTER

ADAPTED BY
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FROM
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Strawberries in Winter

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Characters

IM+4W+12 Either, Plus Snow Dancers

Morozko, Jack Frost (*Muh-ROZ-koh*)

Zhar-Ptitsa, The Firebird (*Zar-TEET-sa*)

Stepmother

Helen

Marouckla (*Mah-RUKE-la*)

The Twelve Months

(January, February, March, April,

May, June, July, August,

September, October, November, and December)

Snow Dancers

Set

There are four sets of risers arranged like steps getting higher and higher as they move upstage.

The Twelve Months arrange themselves in a semi-circle on the top two risers. Marouckla walks across the stage on the lower sets of risers; this will represent her climbing the mountain. The Stepmother's house scenes will be played downstage left. The house should have a table and a chair, maybe a window, and a fancy chair for Helen to sit in.

There is the sound of tinkling chimes and a cold wind. The curtain in front of the stage is closed or the lights are down. In front of the curtain Morozko (Jack Frost) enters and dances centre stage. As he dances, he performs a chant. He also either sprinkles the audience with tinsel or sparkles. If that's not possible, he blows bubbles.

MOROZKO:

Casi, casi. Colo, colo.
 Paci, paci. Polo, polo.
 Radi, radi. Rolo, rolo.
 Tee Tee Tum.
 Bali, bali. Bolo, bolo.
 Lami, Lami. Lomo, lomo.
 Tali, tali. Toko, toko.
 Dee Dee Dum.

MOROZKO: *(to the audience)* Repeat after me!

Casi, casi. *(the audience repeats)*
 Colo, colo. *(the audience repeats)*
 Paci, paci. *(the audience repeats)*
 Polo, polo. *(the audience repeats)*
 Radi, radi. *(the audience repeats)*
 Rolo, rolo. *(the audience repeats)*
 Tee Tee Tum. *(the audience repeats)*
 Bali, bali. *(the audience repeats)*
 Bolo, bolo. *(the audience repeats)*
 Lami, Lami. *(the audience repeats)*
 Lomo, lomo. *(the audience repeats)*
 Tali, tali. *(the audience repeats)*
 Toko, toko. *(the audience repeats)*
 Dee Dee Dum. *(the audience repeats)*

MOROZKO: *(clapping his hands together)* Hooray! Hooray!

There is the sound of tinkling chimes and the wind howls. MOROZKO tilts his head to the side, listening to the sound.

MOROZKO: Do you hear that? Do you hear that? The tinkling chime. The wind howl. *(he howls)* Ahoooooooooooooooooooo.
 That is my sound. That is the sound of my people. *(he howls)*
 Ahhhhhhoooooooooooo. The ice. The snow. The wind. The cold. Ha

ha! I love it! Do you know who I am? (*asks someone specific in the audience*) Do you? (*asks someone else*) Do you? (*No one is giving the right answer. He puts his hands on his hips.*) Does anybody? (*he poses*) I'm very important. I am everywhere! There is not a single winter's day... Sometimes my blue hair gives me away... (*he can't hold it in any longer!*) I'll tell you! (*he poses*) I am known in my land as Morozko, but you may know me as Jack Frost. (*he runs back and forth in front of the audience, sprinkling them with tinsel*) I sprinkle the world with ice and wind and snow. If you respect the ice and wind and snow, then Morozko respects you. But if you do not... Those who scorn the ice and wind and snow will feel my sting.

There is the sound of laughter and shaking maracas offstage.

MOROZKO: Who's that? Who's there?

The laughing gets closer and louder. The maracas get faster and faster. MOROZKO stamps his feet and runs back and forth looking for the source of the laughter.

MOROZKO: Who's laughing at me?

ZHAR-PTITSA: (*offstage, mocking*) "Feel my sting." (*laughing and maracas*)

MOROZKO: Come out here whoever you are! You better bow down to the mighty Morozko or I'll...

ZHAR-PTITSA (The Firebird) enters. She extends her wings and 'flies' centre stage. She poses.

ZHAR-PTITSA: Or you'll what, Mr. Freeze?

MOROZKO: Firebird! What are you doing here? (*stamps his feet*) This is my territory. My time of year.

ZHAR-PTITSA: (*she moves forward*) I go where I please.

MOROZKO: (*stepping back*) Yes, yes...

ZHAR-PTITSA: What will you do if I don't bow? Freeze me with your icy grip? (*stepping forward*) Go ahead and try.

MOROZKO: (*backing away faster*) Oh never, never!

ZHAR-PTITSA: (*flapping her wings*) Feel my flames, Morozkho...
Smell my smoke...

MOROZKO: (*to the audience*) There is only one being mightier than the mighty Morozko in wintertime. And that's the heat of Zhar-Ptitsa. (*he gestures grandly*) The Firebird.

ZHAR-PTITSA: (*she giggles and preens her feathers*) You flatter me.

MOROZKO: The Firebird brings great happiness to all in her in path...

ZHAR-PTITSA: (*she flies around the stage*) I do, I do!

MOROZKO: (*aside to the audience*) And great disaster, too.

ZHAR-PTITSA: (*still flying*) I do, I do!

MOROZKO: (*to audience*) Shhhh!

ZHAR-PTITSA: (*realizing, she stops suddenly*) Wait a minute! (*moving toward MOROZKO*) What did you say?

MOROZKO: (*dancing away*) Nothing, dear Zhar-Ptitsa, nothing! Hee, hee!

ZHAR-PTITSA: (*gesturing to the audience*) What is all this? You've gathered quite the crowd Morozko.

MOROZKO: (*boasting and posing*) They are here to see a story from a great storyteller.

ZHAR-PTITSA: Really? Who? (*MOROZKO deflates in his pose. He pouts.*) Oh Morozko, I'm teasing. (*flying about the stage*) I love stories!

MOROZKO: (*not happy*) You do?

ZHAR-PTITSA: (*she finds a place to land*) It seems I've arrived just in time.

MOROZKO: (*not happy*) You're staying?

ZHAR-PTITSA: You do want me to hear your story.

MOROZKO: *(to audience)* You see? Disaster!

ZHAR-PTITSA: *(peering out to the audience)* Your gathering looks chilled to the bone, Morozko. We must warm them up.

MOROZKO: *(to audience, pouting)* Total disaster.

ZHAR-PTITSA: *(warning)* Morozko, what did you say?

MOROZKO: My dear Firebird! *(to the audience)* Let's all stand up!

ZHAR-PTITSA: Lovely!

MOROZKO: And sing a song about birds.

ZHAR-PTITSA: *(clapping her hands together)* Wonderful!

MOROZKO: Zhar-Ptitsa, please prepare our friends to act like birds.

ZHAR-PTITSA: First, we all must shake our feathers. *(she does so, encouraging the audience to do the same)* And we must scratch the ground with our claws. *(she does so)* We gently peck the air with our beaks. *(she does so)* And lastly, we extend our wings and give them a flap. Ready? *(she flaps her wings on each count)* One, two, three! Again. One, two, three!

MOROZKO: *(he reacts in exaggerated shock)* How could this be? A whole flock of birds have appeared in front of me! And now, a little french tune all about the skylark. *(he clears his throat)* Mee, mee, mee, mee, meee! It's called *Alouette* – you may know it my feathered friends. Sing along if you do *(he sings)* “*Alouette, gentille alouette, Alouette, je te plumerai...*” *(NOTE: see the phonetic pronunciation and the tune for this song at the end of the play)*

ZHAR-PTITSA: How pretty.

MOROZKO: Repeat after me!

Alouette, gentille Alouette,

Alouette, je te plumerai.

Je te plumerai la tête.

Je te plumerai la tête.

Et la tête.

Et la tête.

Alouette.

Alouette.
Ohhhhhhhhhhhh!

ZHAR-PTITSA: (*clapping her hands*) Ohhhhhhhh! Tell me what it means!

MOROZKO: (*clapping his hands together*) Let's get on with the story. (*gesturing audience to sit down*) Set yourselves on a branch my feathered friends.

ZHAR-PTITSA: What do the words mean, dear Mr. Freeze? I must know.

MOROZKO: What?

ZHAR-PTITSA: The song!

MOROZKO: (*dancing away*) Oh, it's not really important.

ZHAR-PTITSA: I want to know.

MOROZKO: Oh you don't.

ZHAR-PTITSA: (*chasing him*) Yes I do.

MOROZKO: (*keeping his distance*) Oh no you really don't.

ZHAR-PTITSA: Morozko, tell me before I set you on fire!

MOROZKO: Let me share my story first. Then I'll tell you. All right?

ZHAR-PTITSA: All right. But don't think I'll forget. (*she sits.*)

MOROZKO: (*he clears his throat*) There once was a widow who had two daughters.

MOROZKO gestures upstage. The lights come up or the curtain opens. There stands the STEPMOTHER and HELEN in a pose.

STPMOTHER: Helen, you are the most beautiful girl in all the world!

HELEN: I know.

STPMOTHER: And the smartest!

HELEN: I know.

STEPMOTHER: With the most grace!

HELEN: I know.

ZHAR-PTITSA: I thought you said TWO daughters?

MOROZKO: Oh yes. Two. Helen, the beloved daughter and then...

STEPMOTHER: (*calling offstage*) Marouckla! Marouckla! Get in here you lazy, loafing, laggard. There are chores that need doing. RIGHT NOW!

MOROZKO: The widow treated Marouckla horribly because she was the daughter of her dead husband. Whom she hated.

STEPMOTHER: Marouckla!!!

MAROUCKLA runs in out of breath.

MAROUCKLA: Yes, Stepmother? You called for me?

ZHAR-PTITSA: Marouckla is far prettier than horse-faced Helen.

HELEN & STEPMOTHER both put their hands on their hips and pout at ZHAR-PTITSA.

HELEN & STEPMOTHER: Hey!

ZHAR-PTITSA: It's the truth.

MOROZKO: That's the other reason Marouckla was hated. She was pretty without any effort, and became prettier with each passing day.

MAROUCKLA: Helen is very beautiful. I'm not pretty at all.

ZHAR-PTITSA: Oh she's nice too.

HELEN: Be quiet, Marouckla! No one cares what you think.

In the following, every time STEPMOTHER barks out a new chore, MAROUCKLA tries to switch tasks, she tries to do everything and ends up getting nothing done.

STEPMOTHER: Marouckla! Clean the room! Marouckla! Make us dinner! Stoke the fire! Sew my apron! Bring in the hay! Milk the cow! Marouckla, you stupid dolt! Can't you do anything right?

HELEN: She is stupid, isn't she mother?

STEPMOTHER: Yes, my precious jewel.

HELEN: And a halfwit.

STEPMOTHER: Yes, my treasured pet.

HELEN: And dense.

STEPMOTHER: Yes, my pride and joy.

HELEN: And still standing here.

STEPMOTHER: (*looking around*) What? (*to MAROUCKLA*) What are you standing around for?

HELEN: (*stomping her feet*) Get me some cake!

STEPMOTHER: (*stomping her feet*) Get your sister some cake!

MAROUCKLA: Anything you say. (*she exits*)

STEPMOTHER & HELEN: Hurry up!

HELEN: Mother?

STEPMOTHER: Yes, my darling dove?

HELEN: What should I wear to the winter kalinka?

STEPMOTHER: The gold dress.

HELEN: (*stomping her feet*) I hate the gold dress!

STEPMOTHER: (*stomping her feet*) I do too!

HELEN: Get me a new dress.

STEPMOTHER: You will have a new dress. You will have ten new dresses!

HELEN: Where is my cake?

HELEN & STEPMOTHER: Marouckla!

MAROUCKLA: (*entering on the run with a piece of cake*) Here you are, dear sister.

HELEN: Took you long enough.

MAROUCKLA: I wanted to cut you the biggest piece.

HELEN: The biggest?

MAROUCKLA: Yes.

HELEN: Why?

MAROUCKLA: You deserve it.

HELEN: Mother!

STEMMOTHER: What's the matter, my little lamb?

HELEN: (*she stamps her feet*) She's trying to make me fat!

STEMMOTHER: (*she stamps her feet*) How dare you!

MAROUCKLA: Oh no!

HELEN: She doesn't want me to wear nice dresses and go to the kalinka!

STEMMOTHER: You ungrateful girl!

MAROUCKLA: I'm so sorry. I didn't mean it. (*turning away*) I'll get you a different piece.

HELEN: Mother!

STEMMOTHER: Yes, my angel?

HELEN: She doesn't want me to have any cake!

STEMMOTHER: (*to MAROUCKLA*) How dare you! (*taking the cake*) Go outside and clean the barn.

MAROUCKLA: May I wear a scarf? It's very cold.

STEMMOTHER: No scarf! That is your punishment.

MAROUCKLA: Whatever you say, Stepmother. (exits)

HELEN: (*stomping her feet*) Ooooooooooooooh.

STEPMOTHER: What is it, Helen? Do you have a pain? An ache? A boil?

HELEN: (*pointing off*) It's HER!

STEPMOTHER: Her? Marouckla?

HELEN: (*stomping her feet*) I hate her, Mother!

STEPMOTHER: (*stomping her feet*) I do too.

HELEN: I hate her with all my heart!

STEPMOTHER: I hate her with all my heart and all my stomach too!

HELEN: (*crossing her arms*) Why does she have to be here?

STEPMOTHER: Well...

HELEN: Live here?

STEPMOTHER: Well...

HELEN: Well what?

STEPMOTHER: She IS Ivan's daughter...

HELEN: (*pouting and turning away*) You like her more than you like me...

STEPMOTHER: I don't!

HELEN: You love her!

STEPMOTHER: I don't, I don't!

HELEN: So DO something.

STEPMOTHER: We will... we will get rid of Marouckla!

HELEN: (*clapping her hands*) Yay! How?

STEPMOTHER: We will... make her life miserable.

HELEN: Yes!

STEPMOTHER: As miserable as mud.

HELEN: As downtrodden as dirt.

STEPMOTHER: As rock-bottom as rotten roast.

HELEN: Ew! That's awful. I love it! (*she gets an idea*) Ah ha!

STEPMOTHER: What?

HELEN: Oh ho! I know just what to do.

STEPMOTHER: I can't wait!

HELEN & STEPMOTHER: (*calling out*) Marouckla!

MAROUCKLA enters, shivering with cold.

MAROUCKLA: Good news! I cleaned the barn yesterday, so there was hardly any work to do. You're so right, I should do it every afternoon.

STEPMOTHER: Stop talking, you foolish thick.

MAROUCKLA: Yes, Stepmother.

HELEN: Marouckla!

MAROUCKLA: Yes, dear sister?

HELEN: You will do ANYTHING I say, won't you?

MAROUCKLA: Anything you say.

HELEN: Go up the mountain and find me some violets. I want some for my new gown. They must be fresh and smell very sweet. Understand?

MAROUCKLA: But, my dear sister, it's winter.

HELEN: So?

MAROUCKLA: Whoever heard of violets blooming in the snow?

STEPMOTHER: (*pushing MAROUCKLA*) How dare you disobey your sister!

HELEN: (*pushing MAROUCKLA*) How dare you disobey me!

STEPMOTHER: (*pointing*) Go to the mountain!

HELEN: (*pointing*) To the mountain!

STEPMOTHER: Do not return without the violets, or else!

HELEN: Or else, you will sleep in the barn for the REST of the winter.

STEPMOTHER: That's good.

HELEN: I know.

MAROUCKLA: But –

STEPMOTHER & HELEN: Out, out, out!

They chase MAROUCKLA offstage.

ZHAR-PTITSA: Horrible horse-faced humans. I'm so glad I'm a bird.

MOROZKO: Off to the mountain went Marouckla. Off into the deep, deep snow. Off into the deep dark wood. Higher and higher she climbed.

MAROUCKLA enters, shivering with cold. She slowly staggers across the lowest riser. She chants as she walks.

MAROUCKLA:

Higley, pigley, my fat hen
She lays eggs for gentlemen
Sometimes nine and sometimes ten
Higley, pigley, my fat hen.

MAROUCKLA continues to chant as she crosses back across the next level of riser. ZHAR-PTITSA stands.

ZHAR-PTITSA: I can make her warm!

MOROZKO: It's just a story, dear Firebird.

ZHAR-PTITSA: She's going to freeze to death. (*pointing at MOROZKO*) That's your fault, Morozko!

MOROZKO: She's not done for yet. Up ahead there lies a fire.

ZHAR-PTITSA: Marouckla! Look! There's a fire!

MOROZKO: High up on the mountain.

MAROUCKLA: (*turning back*) A fire?

MOROZKO: That's not all. Some strange beings were gathered there...

Offstage there is a loud humming. Twelve beings in long robes and half-masks enter slowly in a line. One marks the beat of their walk on the tambourine, another on a small drum. MAROUCKLA watches them enter. The humming turns into an OH sound as they get into place. The TWELVE MONTHS form a large semicircle over the last two riser levels.

NOTE: Suggestions and links can be found at the back of this book.

MAROUCKLA: Who are they?

ZHAR-PTITSA: Who are these beings, Mr. Freeze?

MOROZKO: These are not just any beings. They are the Twelve Months. (*each month bows as their name is called*) January, February, March, April, May, June, July, August, September, October, November, December. The Twelve Months rule the year from atop this very mountain. It is their fire that Marouckla saw in the distance.

MAROUCKLA: I am afraid but I'm so, so cold. (*stepping forward*) Oh great ones!

JANUARY: Who is there?

FEBRUARY: Who disturbs us?

MAROUCKLA: Oh great ones, may I warm myself by your fire? I am frozen to the bone.

JANUARY: Why have you come up the mountain?

OCTOBER: Why are you here?

JUNE: The mountain air is too much for humans.

MAROUCKLA: Violets, great ones. I look for violets.

The TWELVE MONTHS murmur loudly to each other at the request.

APRIL: It's wintertime.

DECEMBER: Can you not see the snow?

JULY: There are no violets, child.

SEPTEMBER: Come back in the spring.

MAROUCKLA: I was told to bring violets from the mountain.

MAY: In winter?

MAROUCKLA: I cannot wait till spring. If I return without them, I sleep in the barn.

AUGUST: That's not fair.

NOVEMBER: Not at all.

MAROUCKLA: Can you tell me, please, where I may find violets? I will go anywhere.

JANUARY: That is not necessary. March, wave your wand over the fire.

MARCH steps forward and waves a wand. Music plays.

MARCH: Winter blasts the frozen ground. Winter holds us in a grip.

A dancer enters, waving a white ribbon. She weaves in and out, moving around MAROUCKLA.

MARCH: Fire flame reach to the sky. Turn winter white to sudden spring.

The white ribbon dancer exits and two dancers holding green and blue ribbons enter. They wind around MAROUCKLA.

MAROUCKLA: It's melting! The snow is melting. Green grass and oh! Violets. A whole meadow full!

MARCH: Gather them quickly, Marouckla.

The dancers ceremoniously give MAROUCKLA the blue ribbon.

MAROUCKLA: Thank you, thank you! I must hurry home!

MAROUCKLA exits. The TWELVE MONTHS sit and lower their heads.

MOROZKO: Down the mountain Marouckla ran, as fast as her feet would go.

ZHAR-PTITSA: Don't give those flowers to the horse-faced people!

HELEN and STEPMOTHER enter together.

HELEN: Mother?

STEMMOTHER: Yes, Helen?

HELEN: I am happy.

STEMMOTHER: I'm so happy you're happy.

HELEN: I love being an only child.

STEMMOTHER: I love that too.

HELEN: I've never felt so wonderful! There's nobody here but...

MAROUCKLA: (*offstage*) Helen, oh Helen!

HELEN: Who's that?

STEMMOTHER: It can't be!

MAROUCKLA: (*entering*) I'm back!

HELEN & STEMMOTHER: No!

MAROUCKLA: And look what I have. (*she holds out the ribbon*)
Violets.

HELEN & STEMMOTHER: No!

MAROUCKLA: Just as you asked.

HELEN: But how?

STEPMOTHER: You can't!

MAROUCKLA: They are so beautiful and oh how lovely they smell.

HELEN: Where did you find them?

MAROUCKLA: Under the mountain slope.

HELEN: (*snatching the flowers*) Give them to me!

STEPMOTHER: Stupid girl.

HELEN: Took you long enough.

STEPMOTHER: I can't believe you stood there and held the flowers
for yourself.

HELEN: They are far too pretty for you.

STEPMOTHER: You are so selfish. Go sleep in the barn!

MAROUCKLA: Yes, Stepmother. (*she exits*)

HELEN: Mother?

STEPMOTHER: Yes, my golden rose?

HELEN: (*pouting*) I'm not happy.

STEPMOTHER: Oh no!

HELEN: I'm not happy at all.

STEPMOTHER: Please be happy.

HELEN: Then DO something!

STEPMOTHER: Anything!

HELEN: Get RID of her!

STEPMOTHER: Marouckla?

HELEN: Yes, Marouckla! Of course, Marouckla! How many times do I have to say it? (*jumping up and down*) Marouckla, Marouckla, Marouckla!

STEPMOTHER: Ok, ok. I got it. Marouckla.

HELEN: (*turning away*) You don't love me.

STEPMOTHER: I do, I do! Let me think. HmMMMMM.

HELEN and STEPMOTHER start pacing.

HELEN: HmMMMM. Something harder.

STEPMOTHER: Harder than violets.

HELEN: Something she'd never be able to do.

STEPMOTHER: I can't think! My brain is butterscotch pudding.

HELEN: Ah ha!

STEPMOTHER: What?

HELEN: Oh ho! I got it!

HELEN & STEPMOTHER: (*calling*) Marouckla!

MAROUCKLA: (*entering*) Good news! The cow has agreed to snuggle with me all night. I'm sure to have a lovely warm sleep.

STEPMOTHER: Be quiet you dunderheaded lummoX! Can't you see Helen has something to say?

MAROUCKLA: What is it, dear sister?

HELEN: You must leave now.

MAROUCKLA: Where?

HELEN: Back to the mountain.

MAROUCKLA: Now?

HELEN: Yes.

MAROUCKLA: What for?

HELEN: Strawberries.

STEPMOTHER: Oh that's good.

HELEN: Run and fetch me strawberries, Marouckla. I must have fresh sweet strawberries.

MAROUCKLA: But there's snow on the ground. There are no strawberries.

STEPMOTHER: How dare you disobey your sister!

HELEN: How dare you disobey me! Go to the mountain.

STEPMOTHER: To the mountain!

HELEN: And dare not return without the strawberries, or else!

STEPMOTHER: Or else you will sleep in the chicken coop for the rest of the winter. No cow to keep you warm there! Ha!

MAROUCKLA: But –

STEPMOTHER & HELEN: Out, out, out!

The STEPMOTHER & HELEN chase MAROUCKLA offstage.

MOROZKO: Back to the mountain went poor unhappy Marouckla. Back into the deep, deep snow. Back into the deep dark wood. *(he sees that ZHAR-PTITSA has stood and is crossing the stage)* Firebird, where are you going?

ZHAR-PTITSA: To deal with the horse-faced ones.

MOROZKO: *(getting in her way)* You can't.

ZHAR-PTITSA: *(to the audience)* Don't you want to see them dealt with? *(as the audience will surely agree)* You see?

MOROZKO: *(getting in her way)* It's just a story.

ZHAR-PTITSA: Get out of my way.

MOROZKO: Why don't you wait and see what happens.

ZHAR-PTITSA: All right. But if I'm not happy, I'll deal with you too.

MOROZKO: You have my word.

ZHAR-PTITSA: And don't think I haven't forgot about that song!

MOROZKO: Ha, ha, my dear Firebird, what a memory you've got.
(*he clears his throat*) Higher and higher Marouckla climbed.

MAROUCKLA enters, shivering with cold. She slowly staggers across the riser. She chants as she walks.

MAROUCKLA:

One, two, three, four, Mary's at the cottage door.
No one's home but Jumping Joan
Eating cherries off a plate, five, six, seven, eight.

The TWELVE MONTHS begin their song again. As they do, they stand and get into place.

MOROZKO: Up ahead, the same large fire. Up ahead the same strange beings.

MAROUCKLA: I am afraid but I'm so, so cold. (*stepping forward*) Oh great ones!

JANUARY: Who is there?

FEBRUARY: Who disturbs us?

MAROUCKLA: Oh great ones, may I warm myself by your fire? I am frozen to the bone.

JANUARY: Why have you come up the mountain?

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The TWELVE MONTHS murmur loudly to each other at the request.

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MAROUCKLA: I was told to bring strawberries from the mountain.

MAY: In winter?

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NOVEMBER: Not at all.

MAROUCKLA: Can you tell me, please, where I may find strawberries? I will go anywhere.

JANUARY: That is not necessary. June, wave your wand over the fire.

JUNE steps forward and waves a wand. Music plays.

JUNE: Winter blasts the frozen ground. Winter holds us in a grip.

A dancer enters, waving a white ribbon. She weaves in and out, moving around MAROUCKLA.

JUNE: Fire flame reach to the sky. Turn winter white to sudden summer.

The white ribbon dancer exits. Two dancers holding green and red ribbons enter. They wind around MAROUCKLA.

MAROUCKLA: It's melting! The snow is melting. Green grass and oh the sun is so warm. It feels wonderful! Listen to the birds sing. Look! It's strawberries. As far as the eye can see, beautiful ripe strawberries. Oh they smell so sweet.

JUNE: Gather them quickly, Marouckla.

The dancers gather the red ribbon and place it in MAROUCKLA's apron.

MAROUCKLA: Thank you, thank you! I must hurry home!

MAROUCKLA exits. The TWELVE MONTHS sit and lower their heads.

MOROZKO: Down the mountain Marouckla ran, as fast as her feet would go.

HELEN enters. She has a strange look on her face as she sniffs the air.

HELEN: Mother! Mother!

STEPMOTHER: *(offstage)* Yes, my one and only daughter?

HELEN: Get in here. *(she takes a big sniff)* I smell something.

STEPMOTHER: *(entering)* What is it?

HELEN: Smell the air.

They both take a deep exaggerated sniff.

STEPMOTHER: That smells wonderful.

HELEN: It's the most delicious smell I've ever smelled.

They both take a deep exaggerated sniff.

STEPMOTHER: It smells like...

HELEN: It's exactly like...

STEPMOTHER: *(realizing)* No!

HELEN: *(realizing)* It can't be!

MAROUCKLA: *(offstage)* Helen!

STEPMOTHER & HELEN: *(looking at each other in horror)* Noooooo!

MAROUCKLA: *(entering)* I'm back!

HELEN: I don't believe it.

STEPMOTHER: I can't believe it.

MAROUCKLA: *(holding out her apron)* Look, look, look! Look what I return with.

HELEN: Let me guess. Strawberries.

STEPMOTHER: It's not possible!

HELEN: Where did you find them?

MAROUCKLA: Right up the mountains under the beech trees.

HELEN: Took you look enough.

STEPMOTHER: (*grabbing them*) Give them here, they're too sweet for you.

HELEN: (*grabbing them*) I want them! I want them! I want them all.

STEPMOTHER: What, not one for your put upon mother?

HELEN: (*moving away*) I told her to get the strawberries, I deserve them!

STEPMOTHER: (*chasing*) Give me one, or else you can sleep in the barn.

HELEN: No!

STEPMOTHER: Yes!

HELEN: Fine! You can have a couple.

HELEN and the STEPMOTHER make short work of the strawberries, eating them rudely and noisily.

ZHAR-PTITSA: Not only are they horse-faced, they are pigs too.

HELEN: (*licking her fingers*) They're so good.

STEPMOTHER: And juicy.

HELEN: And delicious.

STEPMOTHER: And yummy.

HELEN: More, more!

STEPMOTHER: Give us more, Marouckla.

MAROUCKLA: You've taken all I have.

HELEN: You should have carried more.

STEPMOTHER: Thoughtless girl!



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