



**Sample Pages from
The Snow Queen**

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THE SNOW QUEEN

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The Snow Queen

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Characters

Full Cast: 20W / 8M / 3I Either
(see below for flexible casting notes)

THE SNOW QUEEN

KAI and GERDA - two sisters

GRANDMOTHER ASTRID

SNOW BEES (x6 or more Either)

BIRDS: SWALLOW, SWIFT, PIPIT, CHIFFCHAFF (4 Either)

THE RIVER (x2 Either)

HEKSERI - a witch

**FLOWERS: TIGER LILY, SNOWDROP,
HYACINTH, NARCISSUS** (4F)

ROSES: BELINDA, LADY BANKS, SKYROCKET (2F, 1M)

KRAGE - A crow (M)

ELSKE - The crow's sweetheart (F)

THE PRINCE

COURTIERS: LADY LIDDY, LADY LETTY, LADY LINDY

COURTIERS: LORD LEANDER, LORD LAMBERT, LORD LOCKE

GUARDS: VAGT, VOGTE, VERNE (3 Either)

LADY STUM

THE YOUNG LADY/PRINCESS

ROBBERS: ROVER, SKURK, SNYDE (2M, 1F)

RIKKA - the Robber Maid

BAC - the Reindeer (Either)

FUGL, FLUE, DUE - Pigeons (3 Either)

MORMOR - the Old Woman

THE ANGELS (x6 or more Either)

THE DREAMS (x6 or more Either)

Character Notes: This play has very flexible casting.

In the original story Kai was a boy. Feel free to change this back if the casting fits. Kai would be a “Brother-Friend” instead of a “Sister-friend” in the script.

You can have actors who only play the Snow Bees or double up their parts with the Courtiers. Feel free to expand or double up any of the roles as needed. You can also double up the Angels with the Flowers

There are a lot of characters with odd names. Some are made up, some are words from other languages. Decide as a cast how they sound, repeat them out loud, and say them with confidence!

Location

Gerda goes to many places on her journey so design your set to accommodate all of the locations easily. Avoid scene changes that will take away from the magic of the story.

Create a Nordic backdrop that remains for the whole play and use risers for levels as Gerda moves from place to place. Use cubes for seating areas around the stage. I would suggest you paint cubes two sides brown and two sides white to accommodate the changes in location and season. This way they could be easily switched in a scene change.

Alternatively the cubes could be brown and then covered in white cloth during winter scenes.

Needs: A Throne for the Snow Queen. Think about leaving this onstage for the whole play. Cover it with a large cloth when not in use (or when the seasons change). Or paint the back brown/green and turn it around to match the season.

You can also re-use the throne during the Prince story. I would suggest a purple add on — some kind of swag that can be added to the throne so that it's clearly different.

There are a several cottages in the story — Grandmother Astrid, Mormor, and Hekseri. Don't use separate sets for all these places. Let the audience use their imagination and add a couple of extra stools or hand props. That will keep the play moving from scene to scene.

Costuming

The story takes place in a Nordic country and is not set in the present day. Use this as your costuming inspiration in terms of any fabrics, patterns, or chosen pieces.

There are two colour palates here: the blinding winter white of ice and winter and then the browns and greens of spring.

If you're doubling roles, simpler is going to be better. Simple base costumes with added pieces instead of full-on costumes.

Animals can be simply represented. The birds have wings. The reindeer have horns. (These can be found in every dollar store during Christmastime!)

Kai and Gerda are peasant girls so they should be dressed simply as well. All the human girls should wear skirts and blouses. All the human guys should wear plain pants, shirts and shoes. No sneakers and no logos.

SCENE ONE

The SNOW QUEEN's throne is on a riser. On the opposite side of the stage and far downstage is KAI and GERDA's cottage. There doesn't need to be any set dressing but there does need to be a stool, a small basket with laundry, and two Nordic-looking blankets on the basket.

The play opens with music playing. [See Appendix for Music suggestions]

From the back of the theatre THE SNOW QUEEN enters with her SNOW BEES. As the music plays, she moves about the audience, touching people with ice cold hands. Have the actor hold an ice pack before the show so that her hands are really cold.

The SNOW BEES buzz and swarm around her and all over the audience as well. Ideally they would cover the audience in snowflakes. They could also blow bubbles.

After THE SNOW QUEEN is established, she makes her way onstage and sits as if on her throne in her ice palace. The SNOW BEES swarm around her.

At the same time KAI, GERDA, and GRANDMOTHER ASTRID enter on the opposite side of the stage. GRANDMOTHER sits on a small stool. KAI and GERDA sit at her feet.

KAI: Look, look! The Snow Bees are swarming.

GERDA: Do the Snow Bees have a Queen?

GRANDMOTHER: Of course. She rides where the swarm is thickest.
She flies through the sky, bringing winter wherever she goes.

KAI: That sounds like fun.

GERDA: It sounds cold.

GRANDMOTHER: She will swirl through the streets and breathe on the windows. The ice freezes the panes into intricate patterns.

KAI: Like ice flowers!

GRANDMOTHER: Yes indeed.

KAI: Snowflakes are perfect. No two are the same.

GERDA: But then they melt.

KAI: (*teasing, playfully*) Well, flowers die.

GERDA: Oh Kai. Don't talk about our flowers that way.

KAI: I didn't mean it. I was only playing. (*this is a ritual they do*) Sister-friend?

GERDA: (*her part in the ritual*) To the end.

They hug.

KAI: Tell us more about The Snow Queen.

GRANDMOTHER: She lives in a palace completely made of ice and snow.

KAI: Alone?

GRANDMOTHER: Always alone. The cold would freeze a mere mortal to death.

GERDA: It must be lonely.

KAI: It sounds...

GERDA: What?

KAI: I don't know.

GERDA: She could never grow roses like we do.

KAI: She would have ice flowers. And icicles everywhere!

GERDA: It's not the same. She can't come inside, can she Grandmother? The fire would melt her, right?

KAI: I'll protect you Gerda!

She poses heroically and GERDA laughs.

Music plays. The SNOW BEES swirl around THE SNOW QUEEN. KAI and GERDA lie on the ground. GRANDMOTHER takes two blankets and places one over KAI and one over GERDA. She exits. Two of the SNOW BEES move downstage to hold up a window frame—this is the window into KAI and GERDA's room.

The SNOW QUEEN moves to the window, surrounded by swirling SNOW BEES. She peers in.

QUEEN: Hello...

BEES: (*echoing*) Ello, ello, ello...

QUEEN: Hello...

BEES: (*echoing*) Ello, ello, ello...

The SNOW QUEEN blows on the window to make frost. The SNOW BEES giggle. This wakes up KAI.

QUEEN: Hello...

BEES: (*echoing*) Ello, ello, ello...

KAI: Hello? Who's there? (*she looks over at the window and gasps*)

QUEEN: Hello...

BEES: (*echoing*) Ello, ello, ello...

KAI: Are you The Snow Queen?

QUEEN: You know me.

BEES: (*echoing*) ee, ee, ee...

KAI: You're real. (*moving closer*) What a beautiful dress. All ice. It glitters so.

QUEEN: You said snowflakes are perfect.

KAI: I did?

QUEEN: I heard it on the wind. What's your name?

KAI: (*moving closer*) Kai. You frosted the windows.

QUEEN: Like ice flowers.

KAI: Yes.

QUEEN: Open the window so I can see you better.

KAI mimes opening the window.

QUEEN: Hello there...

BEES: Ere, ere, ere...

KAI: Do you really live in a palace of ice and snow?

QUEEN: I do. Would you like to see? (*she reaches out her hand and touches KAI, who jumps back with a cry*)

KAI: So cold!

GERDA: (*waking up*) Kai?

The SNOW QUEEN and her BEES swirl offstage. KAI falls to her knees.

KAI: My fingers... My heart...

GERDA: (*looking around*) Kai, where are you?

KAI: So... cold...

GERDA: (*seeing KAI by the window*) Oh, there you are.

After being touched by the SNOW QUEEN, KAI has completely changed. She is cold and somewhat mean to GERDA. She stands and stares.

KAI: Where else would I be?

GERDA: (*crossing to KAI*) Why is the window open?

KAI: (*sneering*) That's the way I like it.

GERDA: But it's so cold.

KAI: Can't take a little wind, you stupid baby?

GERDA: Kai!

KAI: (*pushing past GERDA*) Get out of my way.

GERDA: Where are you going?

KAI: Away from you.

Music plays. KAI exits. GERDA stands still in surprise.

SCENE TWO

GRANDMOTHER enters. She sits on the stool and starts folding the clothes from the laundry basket. GERDA joins her.

GRANDMOTHER: Where is Kai today?

GERDA: I don't know.

GRANDMOTHER: She leaves the house so early these days.

GERDA: And doesn't come back till dinner. I don't know where she goes.

GRANDMOTHER: That's strange.

GERDA: And when she's here she never wants to talk. All she wants to do is sit by the open window. I don't understand it at all.

KAI enters storming past GRANDMOTHER and GERDA.

GERDA: Kai!

GRANDMOTHER: Come join us, Kai.

KAI: And fold laundry? No thank you. What a bore. I just came for my sled and another scarf. (*more to herself*) I can't keep warm.

GERDA: Where are you going?

KAI: None of your business.

GRANDMOTHER: Kai, that's unkind.

KAI: Who cares what you think, old woman.

KAI goes to leave and GERDA grabs her.

GERDA: Why are you so cold?

KAI: Let go of me.

GERDA: Not till you tell me what's going on.

KAI: Nothing! I'm perfectly fine. Let go!

GERDA: You're not, you've changed.

KAI breaks free and pushes GERDA away.

KAI: You're wrong. This is who I'm meant to be.

GERDA: Sister-friend? Sister-friend!

KAI: You're such a baby.

KAI leaves. GERDA runs to GRANDMOTHER. Music plays. GERDA and GRANDMOTHER leave.

SCENE THREE

The SNOW BEES swarm the stage and even into the audience a little bit. They are always moving, always swirling. The SNOW QUEEN enters in the middle of the swarm. KAI enters from the opposite side, stamping her feet and slapping her arms around her, trying to get warm.

KAI: Why can't I get warm?

QUEEN: Hello...

BEES: Ello, ello, ello...

KAI: Hello. It's been awhile.

QUEEN: Winter is my calling and my duty. There are many places to visit. So many lands to see. Would you like to come along?

KAI: What? Me?

QUEEN: I have not forgotten you. I have always wanted a sister.

KAI: I have a sister.

QUEEN: Do you?

She blows toward KAI. The sound of wind rises. The SNOW BEES swirl around KAI. The SNOW QUEEN moves slowly toward KAI.

KAI: I can't see. I can't see, the cold!

QUEEN: It is, isn't it. Cold enough to kill a mortal.

KAI: I—I—I'm sinking into snow. Freezing. I can't breathe, I can't—

QUEEN: Let me fix that. *(She kisses KAI on the forehead. KAI jumps back with a cry.)* That will go to your heart. It'll only hurt for a moment.

KAI stands and now she can't feel the cold.

KAI: Hey. I don't feel cold. *(she laughs)* I don't feel it. Wait till I tell—

QUEEN: Tell who? *(she kisses KAI on the forehead again)* That will go to your mind. What do you remember from before?

KAI: I remember...nothing. Is there anything worth remembering?

QUEEN: Of course not.

KAI: I am only here. There is no before.

QUEEN: Exactly. (beat) No more for you. The next one will be your death.

KAI: I thought you were made of ice, but now I see you clearly. You look perfect.

QUEEN: How charming of you. A charming sister.

KAI: I'm smart too. I can do fractions, and calculate the area of a country. Where shall we go?

QUEEN: Charming sister, ride with me!

The SNOW QUEEN sweeps offstage with KAI. The SNOW BEES swirl round the stage. They represent a storm.

SNOW BEES: Storm rage snow blow, snow brings swirling snow. Wind howl, wind ring. Wind blows, storm stings. The dark, the night, the clouds, the moon. The Queen is here we sing her tune. The Queen is here, the storm is near. The wind rings, the storm stings. Bzzzzzzzzz.

The SNOW BEES dance, swirl and Bzzzz about the stage transforming the set into spring. As soon as the set is changed, spring music begins to play.

SCENE FOUR

Music plays. GERDA enters, swinging a stick or a flower in her hand. She sits on a "stump" with a sigh. She is wearing red shoes. At the same time, the RIVER enters upstage. They hold a long blue sheet between them. They gently raise and lower the long sheet creating the ripples of the river.

The BIRDS enter, flying around GERDA, and sit with her.

PIPIT: Gerda!

SWALLOW: Oh Gerda!

PIPIT & SWALLOW: Spring is here!

CHIFFCHAFF: Come and sing with us!

GERDA: I can't sing.

The BIRDS all groan.

BIRDS: Why not?

SWIFT: It's been so long. You always sing with us in spring.

GERDA: Kai has been gone since mid-winter. They say she must have fallen into the river and drowned.

BIRDS: We don't believe it.

GERDA: She is dead and gone.

BIRDS: We don't believe it.

GERDA: Why? Have you seen her?

CHIFFCHAFF: No...

PIPIT: No...

SWIFT: But...

BIRDS: We don't believe it.

SWALLOW: Ask the river.

PIPIT: She would know.

BIRDS: Ask the river. She would know.

They all move upstage to the RIVER.

GERDA: Is it true? Have you taken my sister? Have you taken Kai? I'll give you my red shoes if you bring her back to me. *(the ripples in the RIVER get faster)* Is that a yes? *(she slips off her shoes)* All right, here you go.

GERDA throws her shoes over the sheet.

RIVER: *(both actors speak)* Not I, not I. Little Kai never came by and never have I seen her since the swallow files.

The RIVER throws the shoes back at GERDA over the sheet.

GERDA: Oh! I wish I could understand, River. My dear birds, you I can talk to all day long but River is unclear. Do you know what she's saying?

BIRDS: We don't understand her.

SWIFT: She mumbles.

RIVER Not !! Not !!

GERDA: Perhaps you're asking me to throw my shoes farther in?

RIVER: Not !! Not !!

BIRDS: That must be it!

RIVER: That's not it!

SWALLOW: There's a small boat over there.

CHIFFCHAFF: You could go farther out that way.

PIPIT: Yes, yes!

RIVER: No, no!

GERDA: I'll do it.

GERDA runs to a cube.

RIVER: Ugh. Birds and humans.

GERDA moves the cube behind the sheets as if she's pushing a boat into the water and sits on it. The RIVER moves as if GERDA has been caught by the current.

GERDA: Oh, oh, oh no! The boat is taking me away.

The BIRDS flutter and fly around.

BIRDS: Gerda! Gerda! Gerda!

GERDA: I can't reach the shore.

SWALLOW: We are here with you.

PIPIT: We are here!

CHIFFCHAFF: We wish we could carry you to shore.

GERDA: Maybe the river is taking me to Kai.

RIVER: Humans.

HEKSERI enters on the opposite side of the stage. She looks across the stage, and sees GERDA in the water. She waves.

HEKSERI: (*calling*) Hello there!

SWIFT: Look, look, maybe she can help.

BIRDS: Help, help!

GERDA: Hello!

HEKSERI: My poor girl how did you manage to get in the middle of that river?

GERDA: I don't know.

HEKSERI: Grab on to this rope!

HEKSERI throws a rope to GERDA. GERDA grabs it and moves toward her. The RIVER exits, pushing the cube to the side. The BIRDS fly around GERDA. At the same time, the FLOWERS and ROSES enter and sit.

HEKSERI: Come, tell me who you are and how it is you're out in the world all alone. (to the BIRDS) Shoo! Shoo birds! You're not welcome here.

The BIRDS squawk and fall back. HEKSERI protectively (perhaps overly so) guides GERDA to the side. They sit and chat silently as the BIRDS stand their distance and watch warily.

CHIFFCHAFF: Did you see that? She shooed us!

SWALLOW: I don't like this.

SWIFT: Do you trust her?

CHIFFCHAFF: I don't.

PIPIT: Me neither. What do we do?

SWALLOW: (gasping) She's a witch.

SWIFT: How do you know?

SWALLOW: Look at the air around her cottage.

CHIFFCHAFF: Gerda! Gerda come away!

SWIFT: Gerda!

PIPIT: She can't hear us. (realizing) She can't hear us!

SWALLOW: (calling out) Gerda, she's a witch.

PIPIT: A witch!

SWIFT: What do we do?

The BIRDS watch as the focus shifts to GERDA and HEKSERI.

GERDA: That's my story. Have you seen my sister?

HEKSERI: Oh no. But I expect her.

GERDA: You do?

HEKSERI: Oh yes. Any day now.

GERDA: How wonderful!

HEKSERI: So dry your eyes and enjoy your time here while you wait.
Come inside. You'll like it here. I have gorgeous ripe cherries and beautiful flowers. (*she points to the stage*) See?

GERDA: Oh yes! More beautiful than any picture.

HEKSERI: Come inside child. You and I will get along so well. (*She indicates that GERDA goes on ahead of her. GERDA skips offstage.*) Now. We will have no more talk of sisters. I have always wanted a daughter. (*she sees the BIRDS and puts her hands on her hips*) I told you to shoo! Come any closer and you'll see what it's like to live without feathers!

THE BIRDS squawk and fly to the far side of the stage. Music plays. HEKSERI starts to exit and sees the ROSES.

HEKSERI: The roses. They will remind Gerda of her sister. (*she points at them*) Down to the earth. Down to the underground. Stay forever, return never to the sun, to the light, to the sky. Down on my cry. Away!

The ROSES give a cry, crumple and roll backwards out of sight. HEKSERI wipes her hands together in satisfaction and exits. The BIRDS look at each other.

SWALLOW: See? A witch.

SWIFT: What do we do?

SCENE FIVE

The BIRDS are huddled together off to one side. GERDA enters with HEKSERI eating cherries. HEKSERI is wearing a hat with roses on it.

GERDA: These are the best cherries I have ever eaten. I must have had a million!

HEKSERI: Eat as many as you like, my child. Did you count the flowers today?

GERDA: Oh yes. Good morning flowers!

The FLOWERS wave and titter.

HEKSERI: (*she takes her hat off*) You'll do the same tomorrow.

GERDA: And fall asleep on a bed of violets?

HEKSERI: Yes of course. Whatever you want.

GERDA: Thank you, Mother.

HEKSERI: (*hugging GERDA*) It pleases me to hear you say that. More cherries?

GERDA: Yes please!

HEKSERI gives GERDA a hug and exits. GERDA moves about as if enjoying the beautiful flowers.

CHIFFCHAFF: Gerda! Gerda!

SWIFT: She can't hear us.

SWALLOW: She's under a spell.

PIPIT: How long will we stay?

CHIFFCHAFF: Gerda!

SWIFT: The summer's drawing to a close.

CHIFFCHAFF: The fall chill is in my feathers.

PIPIT: Gerda!

SWIFT: She can't hear us.

PIPIT: But we're so close.

CHIFFCHAFF: How does she play all day and not think of us?

SWALLOW: She can't. The witch has made sure of that.

GERDA: So many beautiful flowers. I know all your names. Asters, Bee Balm, Columbine... Hmm. (*she looks around*) In my heart I think there is one missing. But mother has made sure there's a place for every flower. (*to the FLOWERS*) Is there one of you missing?

The FLOWERS giggle.

GERDA: What could it be? Oh look, there are so many on mother's hat. (*she picks up HEKSERI's hat*) Daisy, violet and... and...what's this? What is this flower? I've never seen you before. (*looking around*) You're not in the garden. Why, I believe it's a... it's a... rose! It's a rose! Where are the roses in the garden? Where are you? (*she races around the stage ending up where the ROSES disappeared earlier*) Not a single one? Oh, oh! How I've missed the roses, it makes me think of the ones at home...the ones that... Kai! Kai and I used to grow roses. (*now remembering in full*) I'm supposed to be looking for Kai! What have I been doing? (*looking around*) Where am I?

She collapses to the ground and cries.

SWIFT: Oh Gerda!

PIPIT: Poor Gerda!

CHIFFCHAFF: She cries so hard.

SWALLOW: Look!

There is the sound of growing. As GERDA cries the ROSES return back to their spot.

SWALLOW: Her tears have brought the roses back!

BELINDA: (*stretching up*) Hello!

SKYROCKET: (*stretching up*) Hello!

LADY BANKS: (*stretching up*) Hello!

GERDA: Beautiful roses! Where have you been?

BELINDA: Down.

SKYROCKET: Down.

LADY BANKS: We've been underground.

GERDA:.. Oh roses, I've been so delayed. I should be looking for Kai. Do you know where she is? Do you think she's dead and gone?

ROSES: No, no!

BELINDA: She's not dead.

GERDA: She's not? How do you know?

SKYROCKET: We've been down.

LADY BANKS: We've been underground.

SKYROCKET: Kai wasn't there.

GERDA: Thank you, thank you! (*she looks at the other FLOWERS onstage*)
Do any of you know where Kai is?

SWALLOW: Those flowers won't be any help. They're lost in their own dream world.

GERDA: My dear flowers do you know?

TIGER LILY: Do you hear the drum? Rub a dub. It has only two notes.
Rub a dub. Always the same. Rub a dub. (*continues to repeat "Rub a dub."*)

SNOWDROP: Between two trees a swing hangs. Two little girls in snowy frocks and green ribbons. (*continues to repeat "green ribbons."*)

HYACINTH: Three beautiful sisters all most delicate and transparent.
Crimson robe, blue robe, and white. (*continues to repeat "crimson, blue, white"*)

NARCISSUS: I can see myself! I can see myself! I can see myself!

The noise of the FLOWERS grows to a climax.

CHIFFCHAFF: Stop! Stop! Stop!

The FLOWERS stop their babbling. They look surprised for a second and then sniff with disdain at the BIRDS and turn away.

PIPIT: Gerda!

GERDA: (*seeing them for the first time*) My friends! Have you been here all this time?

SWIFT: We waited for you.

SWALLOW: Let's fly, fly away from here.

BIRDS: Fly, fly, fly!

GERDA and the BIRDS circle the stage, or run down into the audience as the FLOWERS leave.

SCENE SIX

GERDA and the BIRDS stop downstage.

GERDA: I have wasted my time. The summer's gone and everything is cold and dreary. How gray it is.

A large crow—KRAGE—enters and lands on a cube.

KRAGE: Caw! Caw! Good day!

GERDA: I wished I had listened to my grandmother and properly learned crow.

KRAGE: I can speak a little human. Caw! What are you doing out here all alone?

BIRDS: She's not alone!

GERDA: I'm searching for my sister Kai. Have you seen her?

KRAGE: Maybe I have. Caw!

GERDA: Do you think so? Really?

KRAGE: She may have forgotten you by this time because of the prince.

BIRDS: She lives with a prince?

GERDA: Really?

KRAGE: Are you sure none of you speak crow?

SWALLOW: *(aside)* I wouldn't speak crow if my feathers depended on it.

SWIFT: Shh!

GERDA: I'm sorry.

KRAGE: Caw! No matter I'll tell you the best I can.

A trumpet fanfare plays and the lights change. The stage becomes full of action. The PRINCE sits on his throne, GUARDS stand at attention and LORDS and LADIES spread about the space.

PRINCE: There! I have done it. I have read all the newspapers of the world and immediately forgotten everything in them.

Everyone onstage claps politely and nods to each other in agreement

LORD LEANDER: Prince, you are so clever.

LADY LIDDY: Clever, so clever.

LADY LETTY: The cleverest prince there ever was.

PRINCE: I have decided!

Everyone onstage gasps and leans in.

PRINCE: It's time for me to be married.

Everyone onstage applauds as if the PRINCE has said something quite wise.

LORDS & LADIES: Yes, yes!

LORD LAMBERT: Yes, you must be married.

LORD LOCKE: Married you must! Yes!

LADIES: That's just what we were thinking.

PRINCE: But I can't be married to just anyone.

LORDS & LADIES: No, no!

LADY LINDY: No, you can't!

LORD LEANDER: Not anyone. No!

LORDS: That's just what we were thinking.

PRINCE: Let's see...

LORDS & LADIES: Hmmmm...

PRINCE: It must be someone who can speak.

LORDS & LADIES: Yes!

PRINCE: They can't just look like the perfect partner.

LORDS & LADIES: No!

KRAGE: You can believe all of this, caw! I have a sweetheart who hops about the palace freely. She told me everything.

The trumpet fanfare plays. The GUARDS step forward.

GUARD VERNE: Hear yea, Hear yea!

GUARD VOGTE: Every young woman in the province and beyond—

GUARD VAGT: —is at liberty to come to the palace and speak to the Prince.

KRAGE: Yes, yes, it's all true. Ladies came in droves. But no one was successful on the first day.

The COURTIERS give a sigh of disappointment.

KRAGE: Or on the second day.

The COURTIERS give a bigger sigh of disappointment.

KRAGE: Every single lady could talk up and down in the street but when they stepped inside the castle they were tongue tied. The beauty of the castle, the guards in silver and the attendants in gold were too much for them.

LADY STUM approaches the PRINCE. The COURTIERS look at her with disdain. LADY STUM is very nervous.

GUARDS: The Lady Stum!

LADY STUM jumps at her introduction and gives a loud squawk. This causes the LORDS and LADIES to shake their head and murmur in disappointment.

PRINCE: So, Lady Stum.

LADY STUM: Uh huh...

PRINCE: What area of the province are you from?

Everyone leans in to hear her answer. This startles LADY STUM.

LADY STUM: Ah... ah... well... far.

PRINCE: Far.

LADY STUM: Yes. I'm pretty far from here. *(looking around)* Real far. Totally not near. Yep, you would not believe how long it took me to travel here to the...*(looking around)* big place thingy.

GUARD VERNE: Palace.

LADY: Yes. The palace. Thank you.

There is a pause.

PRINCE: So. Where exactly did you travel from?

LADY STUM: Right. Where. Where, where, where? What a great question. And I have a great answer. I've lived there all my life. I should know. So it should be on the tip of my tongue. (*she grabs her tongue*) Hello tongue. Help me out, would you? (*she laughs weakly then clears her throat*) I live... in the kingdom of... that way!

LADY STUM turns and flees. All the COURTIERS sigh and shake their heads discussing the events quietly with one another.

GERDA: Where is Kai? Where is she?

KRAGE: Caw! I'm getting to that.

A YOUNG LADY calls to the GUARDS from the audience.

YOUNG LADY: Hey. Hey! Let me in.

GUARD VAGT: What do you want?

YOUNG LADY: I'm here to see the prince.

GUARD VOGTE: You can't come in.

GUARD VERNE: Your hair is long and unkept.

GUARD VOGTE: Your clothes are shabby.

GERDA: That must be her! That must be Kai.

YOUNG LADY: Let me in all the same. I'm here to meet the Prince.

GUARDS: Ha!

YOUNG LADY: The decree said all ladies. I'm a lady. Let me in.

GUARD VOGTE: Let her in.

GUARD VAGT: We can't!

GUARD VERNE: She's no lady.

GUARD VAGT: If the princesses can't do it, there's no way she's—

YOUNG LADY: I can hear you, you know!

GUARD VOGTE: She's right. The decree said all ladies. Let her in.

GUARD VERNE waves her through and the YOUNG LADY bounces onstage and right up to the PRINCE.

GUARD VERNE: Wait! We didn't introduce you!

YOUNG LADY: Hello.

The COURTIERS all stop what they're doing and turn to stare at her.

PRINCE: *(a little shocked)* Uh... Hello.

YOUNG LADY: *(plopping herself down in front of the PRINCE)* So. It must be boring sitting there day after day.

The COURTIERS whisper to one another.

PRINCE: I guess so. You know what, yes it is really boring sometimes. Um, are you not tongue tied in the royal castle?

YOUNG LADY: Not so much. A room is the same as any other with different things on the walls. We should go horseback riding.

PRINCE: I would like that. Shall we go right now?

YOUNG LADY: Yes. Let's.

They exit, followed by all the COURTIERS who gossip in shock about this turn of events.

KRAGE: And she became the princess the very next day.

GERDA: I'm sure that was Kai. She is so smart. She can do fractions. Please take me to her.

KRAGE: Easier said than done. You have bare feet. The guards will never let you pass.

GERDA: Kai got in all right.

KRAGE: Caw! I Maybe my sweetheart can help us. She knows all the ins and outs of the palace.

GERDA: We must ask her. Stay here my birds. I will return with Kai!

They run offstage. Music plays.

THE BIRDS sit on the far side of the stage with their heads bowed, as birds do when they go to sleep. The lights dim and GERDA, KRAGE and ELSKE enter sneaking across the stage. GERDA holds a lamp high.

ELSKE: This way, this way, caw! The royal bedchamber is just this way.

GERDA: Kai must be there. It must be her.

KRAGE: Shh! Caw!

GERDA: No doubt she will be happy to see me. She will realize how far I've come and how unhappy we are since she's been gone.

KRAGE: Shh, shh!

SWEETHEART: Caw, caw! This way, this way. No one uses this hallway any longer. We will not meet anyone.

There is a noise, like the whispering wind, and a number of gauzy figures rush past.

GERDA: *(moving the lamp around)* Who's there?! I thought you said no one uses this hall.

SWEETHEART: Don't be scared. Those are only dreams. They race through the hallways capturing the thoughts of the courtiers.

The DREAMS rush by again.

GERDA: Lords and Ladies must have such exciting dreams!

They stop on the side of the stage looking off.

SWEETHEART: There's the bedchamber and there the princess lies. Is she the one you're looking for?

GERDA: Kai! Kai! It's me, it's Gerda!

GERDA rushes offstage. There is an immediate ruckus offstage. The CROWS cower together.

GERDA: *(offstage)* Kai wake up!

PRINCESS: *(offstage)* Who are you? What's this?

PRINCE: *(offstage)* What, what? What's the matter?

PRINCESS: *(offstage)* Who are you?

GERDA runs back onstage. She sinks to the ground.

GERDA: It's not Kai. It's not Kai!

The PRINCE and PRINCESS enter in night clothes. The two CROWS start bowing immediately.

KRAGE: Beg your pardon, Your Highness.

SWEETHEART: Please beg your pardon.

KRAGE: This little girl thought she knew you, Princess.

SWEETHEART: Please beg your pardon.

KRAGE: We didn't mean any harm.

SWEETHEART: Please beg your pardon.

KRAGE: Please don't pluck all our feathers and make us walk bald through the village.

SWEETHEART: Being bald is very cold, beg your pardon.

PRINCE: We wouldn't dream of it.

PRINCESS: Elske, is this young girl your friend?

SWEETHEART: Beg your pardon, she's a friend of my intended.

PRINCE: Then she's a friend of ours.

PRINCESS: Who is Kai?

GERDA: My sister, Princess. I thought my search for her was over.

KRAGE: My fault, Princess.

ELSKE: Easy mistake to make, beg your pardon.

PRINCE: I want to hear about this search. How far have you come in bare feet?

PRINCESS: Come inside, share your story with us.

KRAGE: We'll stay here in the hall, Princess.

ELSKE: That's where we belong, beg your pardon.

PRINCESS: (*laughing*) Nonsense! I'm the one who belongs in the hall. You are welcome.

Music plays and they exit. The focus shifts to the sleeping BIRDS. They wake and stretch.

SWALLOW: Oh my feathers, what a cramp.

SWIFT: How long has it been?

CHIFFCHAFF: What a crick my neck has.

PIPIT: Where is Gerda?

SWIFT: Not back yet.

SWALLOW: I hope she didn't get in trouble. You never know with crows.

PIPIT: What a thing to say.

CHIFFCHAFF: He's helping our friend.

SWALLOW: Not yet he hasn't.

SWIFT: Just because you had a bad—

PIPIT: (*pointing off*) Look!

*The PRINCE, PRINCESS, CROWS and GERDA enter.
GERDA has a beautiful winter cape and hat.*

PRINCE: Will you not stay, Gerda?

PRINCESS: We can offer you a happy life.

GERDA: Thank you but no. I must look for my sister.

PRINCE: Then you shall want for nothing on your journey. A carriage of pure gold, a coachman and horses, warm clothes and food. Fruit and gingerbread for all!

GERDA: Thank you.

PRINCESS: And you two, you have been so kind to little Gerda. The Prince and I would like to make you court crows. You may stay in our palace as long as you like.

SWEETHEART: Oh thank you, Your Highness. Beg your pardon, thank you.

KRAGE: It's nice to have a job for your old age.

PRINCESS: All the best with your search. May you find your sister safe and sound.

PRINCE & PRINCESS: Farewell! Farewell! (*they exit*)

GERDA: How good people are. My birds! Thank you for waiting.

SWALLOW: Where do we go now, Gerda?

GERDA: North. That's where I will try.

ELSKE: I'm sorry we cannot go with you.

CHIFFCHAFF: I don't think I can either. I'll freeze.

PIPIT: We'll all freeze.

SWIFT: My wings can't take it.

PIPIT: The frost will hurt my feathers.

GERDA turns to the CROWS.

GERDA: Could they stay here with you? Just till I get back.

ELSKE: Of course!

KRAGE: Caw! Stay with us.

CHIFFCHAFF: (*elbowing SWALLOW*) Isn't that nice?

SWALLOW: Hmpft.

SWIFT: Goodbye Gerda. We'll think of you!

BIRDS: Farewell!

GERDA: I will see you all soon!

GERDA exits one direction while the BIRDS exit in the other.

SCENE SEVEN

Music plays, it is dark and full of foreboding. The lights dim. The scenery changes to a dark forest. The ROBBERS dart around the stage, covering up the palace scene with dark leaves and branches. The cubes switch sides.

When the change is done the ROBBERS (including RIKKA the ROBBER MAID) gather downstage and look out. It's as if they can see GERDA's carriage in the distance.

SNYDE: Look, look do you see?

ROVER: Where?

SNYDE: There. You can't miss it, the light is blinding.

SKURK: Is that carriage made of gold?

SNYDE: It is.

ROVER: (*rubbing hands together*) Oh ho!

SKURK: (*rubbing hands together*) Hee hee!

SNYDE: Let's make it ours.

The give a cry and race offstage. There is a lot of noise, a horse ninny, and GERDA is flung onstage chased by the ROBBERS.

ROVER: How plump you are.

SKURK: She must have been fed on nut-kernels.

SNYDE: She's as good as a fatted lamb.

The ROBBERS laugh evilly. RIKKA jumps up and bites SNYDE on the ear.

SNYDE: Owww! What'd did you do that for? Naughty girl!

RIKKA: I want a sister. She shall give me that cape and play with me.
Do you understand old woman?

ROVER: Does that mean we don't get eat her?

SNYDE growls at RIKKA and RIKKA gives an even bigger growl back that scares the ROBBERS offstage. RIKKA turns and goes to GERDA, who is cowering at the side of the stage.

RIKKA: They won't hurt you now.

GERDA: No one will eat me?

RIKKA: For now. Not so long as you're nice and do as I say. Give me that cape. (GERDA does so) This will keep me toasty warm. Are you a princess?

GERDA: No. I'm looking for my sister.

RIKKA: An adventurer! You don't look the type. Have you traveled far?

GERDA: Very.

RIKKA: Tell me more! If it doesn't bore me, I'll keep the robbers from eating you.

Music plays as they exit. The ROBBERS enter singing and dancing. On the side of the stage is BAC, a reindeer who has a rope around his neck. Three Wood PIGEONS (FUGL, FLUE, and DUE) are perched nearby.

At the end of their dance the ROBBERS end up laughing in a heap. RIKKA and GERDA enter.

RIKKA: What a great story! You'll fit right at home around here. And you know what? I'll make sure no one eats you even if you're not nice to me.

GERDA: (*a little unsure*) Thank you.

The ROBBERS lay down to sleep.

RIKKA: We'll sleep here with my animals. These are all mine. (*she pokes the PIGEONS, who squawk, making RIKKA laugh*) They'd fly away free in a heartbeat if they weren't chained down. And this is old Bac. He's my reindeer. Bet you've never had a reindeer before.

GERDA: No, never.

RIKKA: He'd escape too if he wasn't chained up. Every night I tickle him. That keeps him in line. (*she tickles BAC who laughs like an animal, which makes RIKKA laugh*) Now! To sleep! (*she takes a knife out of her belt and lays it beside her*)

GERDA: Oh my. Do you always sleep with a knife?

RIKKA: I wouldn't be a robber girl without one. You never know what may happen in the dark.

GERDA: (*looking around*) Oh.

RIKKA: Good night. (*she yawns, lies right down and starts to snore*)

GERDA: Of all the places I've seen, this is certainly the strangest. How am I going to look for Kai if I am here? Will I be chained up like the birds and the reindeer?

FLUE: Coo, coo.

FUGL: Did you say Kai?

GERDA: Why yes, have you seen her?

DUE: Through the window, up in the sky.

FLUE: We heard her name in the wind.

PIGEONS: Kai, Kai, Kai!

FLUE: We saw her in the swirling snow.

FUGL: She sat with The Snow Queen in her sleigh.

GERDA: And where does The Snow Queen go?

DUE: To Lapland, land of ice and snow.

FUGL: That is where she lives.

FLUE: There is always ice and snow.

DUE: But ask the reindeer, he will know more about it.

BAC: There is, there is, ice and snow, ice and snow. Beautiful! I was born there. Oh the snow, the snow, how I miss the snow.

GERDA: And that is where The Snow Queen goes.

BAC: That's one of the places she goes. But her castle is all the way, all the way North. She lives at the North Pole.

GERDA: Then that's where I must go.

RIKKA: Can't you see I'm trying to sleep? Quiet down, Princess.

GERDA: The pigeons have seen my sister and the reindeer knows how to find the palace of The Snow Queen.

RIKKA: Another palace?

GERDA: You have to let me go to her.

RIKKA: (*holding out her knife*) Don't you want to be my sister?

GERDA: (*backing away*) Why of course. But I've known Kai my whole life. She's my sister, too.

PIGEONS: Coo, coo! Let her go, let her go, let her go! (*they keep repeating*)

RIKKA: Quiet you! (*beat*) Oh, fine. Your story would tug at my heartstrings, if I had a heart. But if you tell anyone that I was kind, I will do terrible, awful things—understand?

GERDA: My lips are sealed.

RIKKA: (*releasing BAC*) And you should probably go with her, Bac. Go with her to the palace of The Snow Queen. But I only do this because I'm tired of you. Not because I'm kind or anything like that. My knife is very sharp.

BAC: The sharpest. The sharpest.

RIKKA: And take this bread so you won't starve. But I'm keeping the cape. When I wear it I feel... pretty. (*realizing what she said*) I swear, one word—

GERDA: (*hugging RIKKA*) Thank you Rikka. I won't forget you.

RIKKA: Now, now. Stop that. Get away. Robbers don't hug. Quick be off before the others wake up and make a stew out of you. Go!

GERDA and BAC run offstage and through the audience.

SCENE EIGHT

Music plays. See the Appendix for a song opportunity in this moment.

The stage is changed back to snow white. BAC and GERDA arrive onstage.

BAC: Look up, look up. Those are the Northern Lights. See how they shine. That's how I know I am home.

GERDA: They're beautiful. I wish I was warmer so I could enjoy them.

BAC: I know this house. We will stop here, we will stop here for food and drink and a fire. Mormor will help us.

They exit. Music plays. If you're performing the song, the second verse goes here.

They re-enter with MORMOR.

MORMOR: What a story my child. Oh the adventures you've had!

BAC: And mine? And my story?

MORMOR: Yes. Your story too, Bac. The life of a reindeer is fascinating from beginning to end.

GERDA: How far have we to go?

MORMOR: A good deal—through Finland and beyond. Sit by the fire, Gerda. Warm your hands, eat your fill, drink the cocoa I have there in the pot.

GERDA moves to sit on a stool and mimes warming her hands by the fire. BAC and MORMOR stay to the side.

BAC: Mormor, you are so smart. You can twist the winds of the world together in a knot. Will you give this young girl a potion so that she may have the strength of ten men, of ten men and defeat The Snow Queen?

MORMOR: The strength of ten men? Much good that would do.



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