

THE SNOW QUEEN

By Justin Arnold

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Adapted from the fairytale by Hans Christian Andersen

SYNOPSIS: A wicked queen of winter, the boy she has stolen, and the brave young girl who will do anything to save him. Kai and Gerda are the happiest friends in the world. They have laughter, games, and a pet reindeer named Beau. But when a sudden snowstorm sends a piece of the Snow Queen's mirror into Kai's eye, he begins to see only the cruelty and the sadness of the world. Unable to cope with his new sorrow, Kai goes willingly with the Snow Queen as a prisoner in her ice palace. Gerda embarks on a dangerous journey where she will sacrifice everything to save her friend. Adapted from the Hans Christian Andersen tale that inspired Disney's *Frozen*.

DURATION: 90 minutes.

TIME: Once upon a time.

SETTING: A mystical forest that spreads from Denmark to the top of the world.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(7-10 females, 6-9 males, 1-21 either)

GERDA (f).....	A compassionate young girl. (318 lines)
KAI (m).....	A sweet and kind young boy who falls prey to The Snow Queen. Also plays PRINCE LIGGE, Kai's doppelganger. (144 lines)
THE SNOW QUEEN (f).....	The seductive commander of winter out to take over the world. (66 lines)
TAPIO (m).....	Spirit guardian of the forest. (31 lines)
GRANDMOTHER (f).....	Kai's superstitious grandmother, and Gerda's guardian. (57 lines)

BEAU (m).....	Gerda's pet reindeer. Wise and compassionate. (32 lines)
FRU. FORAR (f)	Mrs. Springtime. Seemingly kind, she proves to be Gerda's first test. (22 lines)
CROW (m/f)	A kind, if scatterbrained, crow who helps Gerda through the forest. (32 lines)
PRINCESS SOMER (f)	The royal daughter of summer. Loves a challenge. (39 lines)
PIDGE (f).....	A rude and menacing robber girl. (36 lines)
SKURK (m)	A sinister troll who creates The Snow Queen's mirror. (22 lines)
YOUNG KAI (m)	Kai's younger self. (6 lines)
YOUNG GERDA (f)	Gerda's younger self. (5 lines)
VOICE 1 (m/f)	Offstage voice. (2 lines)
VOICE 2 (m/f)	Offstage voice. (2 lines)
TOWNSPEOPLE:	
SHOP KEEPER (m)	(6 lines)
SCHOOL TEACHER (f)	(12 lines)
APPRENTICE (m)	(2 lines)
SNOW DEMONS: The Snow Queen's minions. Little sprites frozen solid.	
SNOW DEMON 1 (m/f)	(3 lines)
SNOW DEMON 2 (m/f)	(2 lines)
SNOW DEMON 3 (m/f)	(1 line)
SNOW DEMON 4 (m/f)	(1 line)
FLOWERS: Children under Forar's curse.	
FLOWER 1 (m/f)	(4 lines)
FLOWER 2 (m/f)	(4 lines)
FLOWER 3 (m/f)	(4 lines)
FLOWER 4 (m/f)	(2 lines)
ROBINS: A trio of birds who mock the crow.	
ROBIN 1 (m/f)	(10 lines)
ROBIN 2 (m/f)	(9 lines)
ROBIN 3 (m/f)	(10 lines)

COURTIERS: Somer's court. Loves to ridicule each other.

LADY (f) (3 lines)

LADY 2 (f) (8 lines)

GENTLEMAN (m)..... (3 lines)

GENTLEMAN 2 (m)..... (2 lines)

ROBBERS: Pidge's band of cutthroats.

ROBBER 1 (m/f) (7 lines)

ROBBER 2 (m/f) (6 lines)

ROBBER 3 (m/f) (5 lines)

ROBBER 4 (m/f) (6 lines)

TROLLS: Skurk's Clan.

TROLL 1 (m/f) (2 lines)

TROLL 2 (m/f) (2 lines)

TROLL 3 (m/f) (2 lines)

OPTIONAL DOUBLING

All roles other than GERDA, KAI, and THE SNOW QUEEN are available to be double cast.

COSTUMES

The costumes should be fantasy fairytale dress. Specific costume items referenced in the script are listed below.

TAPIO – dressed in nature, worn of the earth, costume morphs with each encountered season

GERDA – pinafore, coat, red snow boots

FRU. FORAR – brightly colored and butterfly wings

PIDGE – dirty garments and furs

ROBBERS – dirty garments with leaves and gourds

CROW – vest

PRINCESS SOMER, LADY, LADY 2 – gown

SET

Grandmother's Cottage & Rooftop

Act One: full of crates, pots, gardening tools, and thriving flowers. A post outside for Beau.

Act Two: over grown vines, bushes, roses.

Forest – trees, shrubs, etc.

Bridge over an icy river

Spring world: colorful and bright, river, garden bed.

Robber's Camp: a wreck of a place, torn clothing on a line, a burned out bonfire strewn with bits of stolen treasure

Ice Palace – dim, frozen faces are carved in the walls, sharp icicles hang from above.

Princess Somer's Ballroom – large fans of gold and red decorate the walls.

SOUND EFFECTS

- ☐ ethereal screeching
- ☐ folk music
- ☐ whispering
- ☐ gong
- ☐ ice melting and dripping on ground

PROPS

- ☐ tall mirror with a dark ornate frame
- ☐ cloth to cover the mirror
- ☐ Tapio's staff
- ☐ bindings
- ☐ gag
- ☐ gas lamp
- ☐ package wrapped in paper and tied in string
- ☐ red snow boots
- ☐ dead flower stems
- ☐ picnic basket
- ☐ tea set
- ☐ hairbrush
- ☐ watering can
- ☐ gardening tools
- ☐ golden apple
- ☐ bible
- ☐ bouquet
- ☐ medal
- ☐ sticks
- ☐ knife
- ☐ crown
- ☐ cleaver
- ☐ bandages
- ☐ dagger of ice
- ☐ blanket of snow
- ☐ altar of ice
- ☐ crown of icicles
- ☐ blankets

PREMIERE PRODUCTION

The Snow Queen premiered at the Red Hen Theatre Company in Georgetown, KY with the following cast.

GERDA.....	Katie Bowling
KAI/PRINCE LIGGE	David Bowen
THE SNOW QUEEN.....	Caroline Dahl
TAPIO.....	Alex King
GRANDMOTHER/FRU. FORAR	Megan Arnold
BEAU/COURTIER.....	Walker Nipper
SKURK/ROBIN/COURTIER.....	Clay Arnold
PRINCESS SOMER/TROLL	Ellie Mook
THE CROW/SHOPKEEPER/ROBBER.....	Kitty Jo Arnold
PIDGE/COURTIER.....	Lainie Stidham
YOUNG GERDA/TROLL.....	Lauren Holder
YOUNG KAI/ROBBER	Mox Francis
SCHOOLTEACHER/ROBIN/VOICE.....	Skylar Ellegood
APPRENTICE/ROBBER	Abbie Turner
ROBIN/ROBBER/TROLL	Ella Huber
COURTIER/TROLL.....	Mackenzie Manning

ACT ONE, SCENE 1

AT RISE: *A forest clearing. It is night. Colors of ghoulish blue and green wash across the trees. The ground is frozen and cracked with ice. It is a place far from the world. No mortal man has trod here. SFX: ethereal screeching and calls, the flapping wings of unseen beasts form a symphony of dark magic.*

TAPIO, a spirit of the forest, jumps in. An ancient figure, he is worn of the earth, dressed in nature. He makes himself imposing by brandishing a staff.

TAPIO: Evil be gone! Fear be gone! For I am Tapio, the bear king, keeper of the forest! Sprites and rhinemaids bow to me! Be gone, I say! It is not your time! Your season has not come! I say evil be gone! *(All is silent. TAPIO considers his staff.)* Yet I am growing weak. My power holds little against the dark forces here. Evil will not be gone... unless she can be stopped.

SFX: a screech. A blast of wind. TAPIO brandishes his staff, shaking with fear.

TAPIO: She must be stopped. Or what of the earth? What of poor Tapio?

TAPIO retreats to the shadows. Enter a procession of SNOW DEMONS, little sprites frozen solid. They push along a tall shape, hidden beneath a cloth. The SNOW QUEEN, a beautiful yet lethal person with frostbitten skin, enters. She drags SKURK, a bound and gagged troll. She rolls him to the floor.

SNOW QUEEN: Tell me, troll, have you enjoyed your stay in my palace?

SKURK mumbles unintelligibly.

SNOW QUEEN: Why do you shake so? I thought you enjoyed our company.

The SNOW QUEEN removes the gag from SKURK'S mouth.

SKURK: P-please, your majesty! Let me go home!

SNOW QUEEN: Home? Now? But we haven't unveiled your master work! And besides, I thought you wanted our alliance.

SKURK: I'm a poor troll, your majesty, please!

The SNOW QUEEN grabs each side of SKURK'S head. He convulses with ice flowing into his blood.

SNOW QUEEN: You show me your work, and I will let you go. Protest, and I will freeze you.

The SNOW QUEEN drops SKURK. He stands and stumbles over to the shape.

SKURK: I do hope it pleases your majesty. I believe it to be my best work. For you.

SKURK lifts the cloth and tears it away to reveal a full length mirror with a dark ornate frame. The SNOW QUEEN is speechless at its beauty. She rushes over to appraise it.

SNOW QUEEN: You have outdone yourself, Skurk. The frame, it is hornbeam is it not?

SKURK: Yes, Your Majesty. The darkest hornbeam.

SNOW QUEEN: The polish. It gives the wood a strange color and smells of mud.

SKURK: Troll's blood.

SNOW QUEEN: Troll's blood? No doubt your own. The frost on the glass... why, it's glazed in—*(Breathes in heavily along the glass.)* Banshee lung soot. How clever!

SKURK: Any mortal who dare look in its reflection would see only the cruelty and ugliness of the world!

SNOW QUEEN: What if, perhaps, a child should get a shard of it in his eye?

SKURK: A shard? Why ever would there be a shard?

The SNOW QUEEN gives SKURK a warning look.

SKURK: Should a shard get in his eye, he would always see only the darkness.

SNOW QUEEN: And—what if a child should get a shard in his heart?!

SKURK: Then he would be the cruelest of all children! Cold and empty of all compassion!

SNOW QUEEN: With that child, I could rule the seasons for eternity!

SKURK understands now and nods happily. He bows.

SKURK: And when you do, we trolls shall be your loyal subjects.

SNOW QUEEN: But does it work? Can we know for sure?

SKURK is at loss for a response. The SNOW QUEEN runs her long fingernails across the glass. In an instant she breaks two pieces from the center, leaving a heart shaped hole, and tosses them with precision. The shards cut into TAPIO. He cries out in pain and tumbles from his hiding place.

SNOW QUEEN: Ah, Tapio. I could hear your breath the moment I arrived. Have you come to stop me?

TAPIO: Evil be gone! It is not your season!

SNOW QUEEN: How lucky that you can fortify yourself against my mirror. Unfortunately, mere mortals have no hope. However will you protect them?

TAPIO: I say, evil be gone! I am Tapio, the bear king—

TAPIO pushes himself to his feet.

SNOW QUEEN: Keeper of the forest, and sprites and rhinemaids and all that. Honestly, Tapio, don't you see we are tired of you?

TAPIO: This is my domain, witch!

SNOW QUEEN: We seasons can't be confined to a paltry few months. It's every deity for themselves now, and I'm ahead of the game. This is my forest, and you are now my slave. Bow to your queen!

The SNOW QUEEN thrusts her hands toward him. TAPIO is forced to his knees. The SNOW QUEEN unleashes a demented laugh.

SNOW QUEEN: My power already outshines you! Skurk, please welcome our new servant.

SKURK takes TAPIO'S staff and breaks it in two pieces. TAPIO cries out in fear.

SNOW QUEEN: Tapio, for treason against your queen, you are forevermore banished to the shadows of the forest. Forever hiding in darkness, feeding at the bottom of the rivers. Never able to assume your true form again, for fear of me.

TAPIO: I do not fear you! Not so long as there is compassion in the world. It only takes one, witch. One person with a loving heart, and your entire dynasty will fall!

SNOW QUEEN: You fool! Compassion cannot weaken me. I am the Snow Queen! Commander of winter! Joy, love, it can never survive in my reign. *(Turns to her SNOW DEMONS.)* And now, we must smash the mirror! I command it as your queen!

The SNOW DEMONS begin to smash the mirror. Shattered glass and flashes of light pulsate through the theater. TAPIO cowers.

TAPIO: You will fall, witch! I will find the truest heart, and then you will be banished!

The SNOW QUEEN laughs as all goes dark. Shards of the mirror soar above the audience. As the pieces scatter and fade away, SFX: folk music strums. The forest vanishes, and we find ourselves years later in a different world.

ACT ONE, SCENE 2

AT START: *Lights rise on the rooftop of Grandmother's Cottage. It is a crammed garret, full of crates and pots, from which flowers thrive. GERDA, a young girl in the last days of her childhood, prunes and waters her garden. She produces shears and cuts a few roses.*

GERDA: Now, you will come in with me, and the rest of you need only stay strong one more night.

GERDA gently holds a flower like the hand of an old friend. GRANDMOTHER enters in the cottage below. She turns up a gas lamp and rubs her hands over it.

GRANDMOTHER: Gerda! You'd best come inside!

GERDA: Coming!

GERDA rushes down the steps and passes a reindeer, BEAU, who is tethered to a post, grazing.

GERDA: Hello, Beau. (*Crosses inside, carrying the roses.*) I thought we could press and dry these, so that we can have roses all winter.

GRANDMOTHER: A wise thought, for winter will be long. Has Kai returned?

GERDA: I didn't know he'd left.

GRANDMOTHER: Oh, that boy! He'll get trapped in the snowfall and we'll find him frozen come morning.

Sounds of mocking and shouting from children come from offstage. KAI enters with a package wrapped in elegant paper and tied with a string. He is at the age where a boy is rapidly becoming a young man. He shouts towards the unseen children.

KAI: Alright! You've had your fun! Go on, then! Go on! (*Sticks his tongue out and enters the cottage.*)

GRANDMOTHER: There you are! What was the shouting all about?

KAI: Christian and his gang again.

GERDA: You shouldn't let them push you around, you know.

KAI: What can I do? He's twice my size!

GRANDMOTHER: Why were they bothering such a nice boy as you!

KAI: Well, they saw me come out of a shop. Shall we say, a lady shop.
That sells lady things.

GRANDMOTHER: You should have told them it was for someone else!

KAI: They don't care, Grandmother.

GERDA: What did you buy?

KAI and GRANDMOTHER exchange a mischievous look. KAI puts the package behind his back.

KAI: Oh, nothing.

GRANDMOTHER: Just a loaf of bread.

GERDA: In a lady shop?

KAI: That's right! It's lady bread.

GERDA pretends to give up, circling around KAI.

GERDA: Oh, well if that's all, then I'll just get to pressing my roses.
Let's see now, where did I put my book? I believe it was—HERE!
(*Snatches the package and inspects it.*)

KAI: Hey!

GERDA: Whatever could it be? Not bread. Not from a lady shop. Oh!
Oh! Could it be a token of love? Is Kai in love?

KAI: Don't be ridiculous.

GRANDMOTHER: It's your birthday present, dear!

GERDA: My birthday! But my birthday isn't until tomorrow!

KAI: Hence why I tried keeping the package from you.

GRANDMOTHER: Why don't you open it now?

GERDA: Could I? Thank you! I can't wait to see—(*Sits down and rips open the package. Halts.*) Oh, Kai. You didn't!

GERDA reaches inside the box and pulls out a pair of bright red snow boots.

KAI: Think I didn't notice you going every day to see if they were still in the window?

GERDA: How did you ever—

KAI: Had to clean over a hundred gutters to afford them.

GERDA: (*Taking her old shoes off.*) You shouldn't have, you couldn't have, I can't, I mustn't!

KAI: Alright, well I'll just return them for a new cap for myself.

KAI reaches for the boots. GERDA slaps his hand away and pulls them on her feet.

GERDA: I've never had anything from a shop!

GERDA stands and walks around them. She appears to move more gracefully, more grown up, in them.

GRANDMOTHER: So becoming, like a young woman. Your parents would have been very proud.

KAI: Imagine, Gerda, a woman!

GERDA: Woman or not, I can still give you a black eye.

GERDA holds her fist out towards KAI. He points past her, toward the window.

KAI: Look!

GERDA: Come on, that old trick won't work.

KAI: No, look! (*Runs to the window.*) The snowfall is starting!

GERDA: (*Joins KAI.*) Look how it swarms!

GRANDMOTHER: Like honeybees.

KAI: Honeybees?

GERDA: I see. Look how it swarms and buzzes, like bees around the queen.

KAI: Does the snow have a queen?

GRANDMOTHER: Depends who you ask. Myself, I believe in her as I believe you stand before me.

KAI: Tell us about her.

GRANDMOTHER: Oh, I dare not. To speak so freely of her would call her forth, and she is not someone I would like to see again.

GERDA: Again?

KAI: You have to tell us now.

GRANDMOTHER: I have to do no such thing.

GERDA: Please do! I'd like to hear it.

GRANDMOTHER: Well... since it is your birthday tomorrow, very well.

(KAI and GERDA are delighted.) But—we must be careful. You two make a tent, and I will bring down the lights. We must be secretive—even the snowflakes love to eavesdrop.

GERDA: Could Beau come in to listen?

GRANDMOTHER: If he likes.

GERDA steps out to retrieve BEAU. KAI makes a fort from two chairs and a blanket. GRANDMOTHER retrieves the gas lamp and settles between them on the floor, lowering the light.

KAI: Alright, we're safe now.

GERDA: Begin.

GRANDMOTHER: Tell me, children. The icicles that form above the doors, the frost on your windows. Do you think these things simply appear? No, it is the Snow Queen. Wicked and vain, she keeps her grip tight on us. She wants us all for her servants. But it is not enough to keep your fire stoked and your doors locked. She will tempt you.

KAI: How?

GRANDMOTHER: I do not know for certain. But a lifetime ago, when I was a little girl, strange things happened here. Children, sweet and kind one day, were cold and cruel the next. I don't know how, but they had changed. And each night, the Snow Queen would stalk the street, calling to the children to come play with her.

GERDA: Did she ever tempt you?

GRANDMOTHER: No. I kept my guard. But I could still hear her. Sometimes I would peek out my window, and see her reaching inside houses, taking those cruel children from their beds, and carrying them to her palace of ice.

GERDA: You should have told someone.

GRANDMOTHER: I did, but none would believe me. Winters were never the same after that. They were longer, colder, each one more dangerous than the last. I suspect she still has her hold on us all. But I know that she is still here, for some nights, such as this, I still hear her calling out, beckoning the children.

KAI and GERDA hang on for her next word. GRANDMOTHER turns and grabs KAI with a yelp, he screams and jumps to his feet. GERDA laughs. BEAU even snorts a bit.

GRANDMOTHER: Or so it goes.

GERDA: Kai! You should have seen your face!

KAI: I wasn't scared.

GRANDMOTHER: Of course you weren't.

KAI: I wasn't!

GERDA: Come now, it's fun to be afraid sometimes.

KAI: I tell you, I wasn't afraid. Why, I'd even go outside now! Let that Snow Queen come, I'd melt her on the stove.

GERDA: Well, if you're really that brave, then maybe I'll watch and test out my boots.

GRANDMOTHER: Suit yourself.

KAI: Could we really go out?

GRANDMOTHER: Don't go far. The snow is thick and you could get lost. I'm going to turn in. Lock the doors when you come in, and keep the lamps low. *(Exits.)*

GERDA: Well, come on then, unless you're too scared.

KAI: I have nothing to prove.

KAI runs outside. GERDA laughs and follows. BEAU trots behind. They leave the cottage. KAI stops on the front steps. GERDA runs into the wintry street.

GERDA: How cold it is! And the snow so fresh and packed, we could build a terrific snowman. Here, Beau. *(Holds some snow to BEAU'S mouth. He munches it up happily. She turns, sees KAI hasn't joined.)* Don't tell me you're still afraid. It was just a story.

KAI: I wasn't afraid.

GERDA: Then join us!

KAI takes a hesitant step into the street.

KAI: Happy?

GERDA: Yes.

KAI: Do you think the Snow Queen, if she were real, would look in our windows?

GERDA: I suppose so. We are children, after all.

KAI: Do you think she would take us?

GERDA: She would try. But we already know about her so it would be harder. Like you said, we could melt her on the stove.... Do you think she would still come after we've grown up?

KAI: It's hard to say. I don't know about being grown up yet.

GERDA: I know what I want to be when I grow up.

KAI: What is it?

GERDA: It's silly. Stupid, really.

KAI: Tell me.

GERDA: Well, I think I would like to have a greenhouse. A place to grow my flowers year-round and sell them. Work my hands in the soil.

KAI: That's not silly, you were meant for that. Not nearly as ridiculous as what I want to be.

GERDA: Tell me.

KAI: No, you'll only laugh.

GERDA: I won't!

KAI: You promise?

GERDA: I promise.

KAI: Well... I don't know exactly what I would like to be. But—something with a title and importance—with stature. I—I want to be great. (*GERDA laughs.*) Hey, you promised!

GERDA: I'm not laughing at you, I'm laughing because I can see it so easily.

KAI: You don't mean that.

GERDA: I do, and see? The ballroom is all ready for a grand affair in your honor. Why, it's your coronation, and you are the king! And all of your subjects are here to celebrate you. (*Gestures to BEAU, the "subjects," and curtsies.*) I only hope that after tonight, you will never forget your meek, unimportant friend Gerda.

KAI: You're ridiculous. May I have this dance, unimportant Gerda?

GERDA: Delighted, your highness.

GERDA takes KAI'S hand and they dance. It is childish play, awkward and energetic. They laugh and twirl, uncaring of the dark night setting in and the wind picking up. Something stabs KAI'S eye. It is sharp, like a tiny knife in his pupil. He yelps and lets GERDA go. He rubs his eye red.

GERDA: Are you alright?

KAI: Something's in my eye. It—it stabs—ow!

GERDA: Let me see!

GERDA tries to pull KAI'S hand away. He lowers his hand to reveal a scowl.

KAI: It's alright. I said it's alright! It's gone now.

GERDA: Oh, well it must have been a bit of sleet. Shall we dance, your highness?

KAI: No.

GERDA: Come, we mustn't disappoint your subjects—

KAI: I said no! I don't want to play anymore, don't you get that?

GERDA: What's wrong with you?

KAI: Me? What's wrong with me?!

GERDA: I meant your eye, it's gotten so red!

GERDA reaches out, but KAI pushes her hand away.

KAI: Don't touch me!

GERDA: I'm sorry.

KAI: I think you should get lost. I don't want to see you anymore?

GERDA: What?

KAI: You heard me.

GERDA: Your eye looks like it's bleeding. I'll go get your grandmother, she'll nurse it. (*Heads to the door.*)

KAI: Of course, run to my grandmother.

GERDA: What are you talking about?

KAI: She's my grandmother, but you are her favorite.

GERDA: That's not true, don't be stupid.

KAI: It's not stupid! The only reason you're here is because your parents died!

GERDA shoves KAI.

GERDA: So did yours!

KAI: Are we going to fight now?

GERDA: I'm going inside. I don't like you this way. (*Exits.*)

KAI: Chicken!

KAI stands and brushes himself off. His eye begins to hurt again and he wipes at it.

KAI: Ow!... (*Notices BEAU watching him.*) Beau, come here.

BEAU looks away solemnly and trots off.

KAI: What have I done? Why did I say those things? Gerda! Gerda, I'm sorry! (*There is no answer.*) She doesn't want to be around me. She hates me... they all hate me.

SFX: there is whispering in the wind. It picks up speed and volume. KAI puts his arms around himself to keep warm. Then—a shadow appears above the stage. The figure of a woman. The SNOW QUEEN.

SNOW QUEEN: (*Whispering.*) Kai...

KAI: Hello? Is someone there?

SNOW QUEEN: COME WITH ME, KAI...

A second shard of the mirror pierces KAI'S heart. He clutches at his chest and cries out. He falls to his knees.

KAI: It's so cold!

SNOW QUEEN: Come with me, and leave them all... Kai....

The shadow of the SNOW QUEEN disappears. KAI tears at his heart, shivering. Lights out.

A scream. It is GERDA. Lights up on the same street, but it is the late afternoon. GRANDMOTHER rushes out of the house just as GERDA runs in. She carries a handful of dead stems in her hand.

GERDA: Help! Help!

GRANDMOTHER: What's all the fuss, child?

GERDA: My flowers are all destroyed!

GRANDMOTHER: Oh, don't worry, dear. Winter always takes the flowers sooner or later.

GERDA: No, it wasn't winter! Someone ripped them up, and they smashed the petals so that I can't even press them.

GRANDMOTHER: Perhaps Beau's appetite got the best of him.

GERDA: It couldn't have been him.

GRANDMOTHER: Then who?

A stern, put upon SCHOOL TEACHER enters.

SCHOOL TEACHER: Good day, madam. Gerda.

GRANDMOTHER: Good day, teacher.

SCHOOL TEACHER: I have come to talk to you about Kai.

GRANDMOTHER: Kai? Whatever could this be?

SCHOOL TEACHER: Madam, your grandson has made quite a fool out of himself, and worse, me.

GRANDMOTHER: What do you mean?

SCHOOL TEACHER: One thing after the next. Tying other children's shoelaces together, putting ink in the drinking water

GRANDMOTHER: Oh no, that couldn't be Kai.

SCHOOL TEACHER: I didn't believe it either. He's always been a sharp, creative boy. But then I couldn't deny it was him.

GRANDMOTHER: Why?

SCHOOL TEACHER: At recess, he tied a pair of girls' braids together and charged the other children admission to see Siamese twins.

GERDA: He always was creative...

SCHOOL TEACHER: I required him to stay and write lines, and to clap erasers after school.

GRANDMOTHER: Well, I'm sure that will stop his behavior.

SCHOOL TEACHER: I don't think so, madam.

GRANDMOTHER: Why not?

SCHOOL TEACHER: He clapped them on my face!

SCHOOL TEACHER turns fully and shows the entire other half of her face is covered in chalk dust.

GRANDMOTHER: Oh! I assure, you, I—

An angry SHOP KEEPER enters. He has KAI by the ear. The Shop Keeper's APPRENTICE follows behind, holding his nose.

SHOP KEEPER: Madam! Madam!

GRANDMOTHER: What now?

SHOP KEEPER: I shall thank you to keep your boy out of my shop!

GRANDMOTHER: What has he done?

SHOP KEEPER: What has he done?! I'll tell you what! He was terrorizing my apprentice!

APPRENTICE: Broke my nose, he did!

KAI: He started it!

APPRENTICE: Did not!

KAI: Did so!

SHOP KEEPER: Enough out of you!

GRANDMOTHER: Did you see what happened? Perhaps the other boy is as much to blame.

SHOP KEEPER: I think not! I think your boy provoked a fight, and I don't want him near my shop!

SCHOOL TEACHER: This is exactly the sort of thing I was telling you about.

GRANDMOTHER: Kai, I never! What has gotten into you?

KAI: They all started it! They all hate me!

GRANDMOTHER: Nonsense! I am so sorry, he is usually so kind.

SHOP KEEPER: I ask you to keep his kindness confined to home. If I see him in my shop again, I'll call the authorities.

SHOP KEEPER and APPRENTICE leave. The APPRENTICE sticks his tongue out on his way.

KAI: You see what he did?!

GRANDMOTHER: Be quiet.

SCHOOL TEACHER: I always enjoyed having Kai in class before. But I'm afraid that until he can behave, he cannot come to school.

GRANDMOTHER: Oh, but—

SCHOOL TEACHER: Rules are rules. Personally, I think a good strapping will do him better than writing lines. But from now on, I will keep my nose out of it. Good day! Gerda. *(Exits.)*

KAI: They all started it. They did!

GRANDMOTHER: What has gotten into you? How could you embarrass me so?

KAI: They all hate me! Everyone makes fun of me. I don't care, I'm better than them all! I've been told so!

GRANDMOTHER: Who told you that?

KAI: Oh, never mind.

GRANDMOTHER: Oh, Kai. I'm so ashamed of you. I—I can't bear to look at you!

GRANDMOTHER rushes into the house. KAI broods.

GERDA: Ahem.

KAI: Oh, are you here?

GERDA: *(Raising the dead stems.)* Did you do this?

KAI: Perhaps.

GERDA: Why?! You know I wanted to keep them!

KAI: What difference does it make? She would have killed them anyways.

GERDA: Who?

KAI: Never you mind.

GERDA: I don't even know who you are anymore. You know, you forgot to wish me a happy birthday.

KAI: I gave you those boots!

GERDA: And the next day you made fun of them.

KAI: I don't care about your birthday, just as I don't care about your stupid flowers! You know, I bet there are still some up there, hiding.

KAI flashes a devilish grin and ascends the stairs to the rooftop garden. GERDA rushes after him.

GERDA: Kai! No! Stop it!

KAI clatters things about, tossing tools right and left. GERDA tries to pull him away but he can't be stopped. He rips the roots up and tosses them on the ground. He leaves the garden, leaving GERDA sobbing on the steps.

GERDA: Why?!

KAI: Go away, Gerda.

GERDA: This isn't like you. Where is Kai?

KAI: He's gone!

GERDA: Tell me what is wrong so that I can help you fix it.

KAI: Just leave me alone!

GERDA crosses to him and embraces him.

GERDA: Please, please, Kai. Let me help.

KAI: *(An almost remorseful expression.)* It's too late for that. Everyone hates me now. *(Returns to being bitter and arrogant in an instant. Like a switch was clicked.)* There is nothing wrong. This is me. Leave me alone!

GERDA: No, I won't! I want to help.

KAI: Please get off of me.

GERDA: No! No, Kai! I love you!

KAI: *(Flinging GERDA to the ground.)* I SAID GET OFF!

GERDA is on the floor. KAI stands over her, breathing heavy with anger. Then he looks at GERDA, in her frightened eyes, and he softens. It was an accident, he would never mean to hurt her. But—he had. He is filled with disgust. For a second, he looks as though he will say "I'm sorry." But then he runs away, nearly in tears.

GERDA is baffled. She knows this is not KAI. Not really. She can't make sense of it. She stands slowly, brushes herself off.

GERDA: Well, alright... if you want me, you know where to find me!

BEAU trots on. He sees GERDA is upset and nudges her.

GERDA: Oh, Beau.

GERDA hugs BEAU'S neck and sobs. Lights out.

ACT ONE, SCENE 3

AT START: *Lights rise on a bridge over an icy river. KAI sits on the edge, looking down into the water, studying his reflection.*

KAI: What's the matter with you? She only wanted to help. She'll never forgive me.

A moment of silence as KAI reflects. He does not notice when a pair of hands raise above him. Blue, frostbitten skin. The SNOW QUEEN, seemingly more gorgeous than when we last saw her, appears behind KAI. She places her hands gently on KAI'S shoulders. KAI sucks in an airless breath, riveted by the touch. The SNOW QUEEN pulls him close to her.

SNOW QUEEN: There now, my boy. All will be alright.

KAI looks back at the SNOW QUEEN. She gives him a warm smirk.

KAI: I—I thought I'd imagined you.

SNOW QUEEN: Hush now. I am here, and we will make it right.

A spotlight comes up on GERDA, rehearsing what she will say to KAI.

GERDA: Kai, I'm sorry. I'm sorry for whatever I did to make you feel this way. Please, let me help. You are my best friend. We've never fought before. I'm sure we could get past this.

KAI: It hurts so much.

SNOW QUEEN: Shh.

GERDA: Remember how we met? We found Beau in the forest. He was a newborn and injured from a hunter's arrow. We nursed him. He's our baby. And we planted flowers on the rooftop. Only once. Yet every spring, they return. Why did you destroy them? It was as though you were ripping our friendship.

KAI: I don't know why I keep doing these things.

SNOW QUEEN: Because you are better than all of them. You see the truth behind their lies. You are great.

GERDA: Please, Kai, forgive me. I've already forgiven you.

SNOW QUEEN: Forget them all, Kai. Come with me, where I can protect you. Together, we can rule the world.

GERDA: I guess that will have to do. (*Turns.*) Kai? Kai, open the door, please.

KAI: I'm ready now.

The SNOW QUEEN descends her lips toward KAI'S forehead.

GERDA: Kai?

SNOW QUEEN: Sweet boy.

GERDA: Kai, let me in!

SNOW QUEEN: Let. Me. In!

The SNOW QUEEN'S lips press into KAI'S forehead. His body is instantly filled with a shock of ice. He writhes and shakes, nearly frostbitten. He can hardly breath.

SNOW QUEEN: Don't be afraid. It only hurts for a moment.

KAI pushes himself back up. He is no longer shaking, and he doesn't seem as upset. Actually, he doesn't seem to feel anything at all. The SNOW QUEEN puts her hand on his heart and he cries out. GERDA turns to the sound.

GERDA: Kai?!

GERDA runs out. The SNOW QUEEN stands and holds her arm out.

SNOW QUEEN: Come.

KAI slowly stands, void of emotion. He takes the SNOW QUEEN'S hand and, like a courtier, escorts her to the top of the stage. GERDA runs in.

GERDA: Kai?! Kai, where are you?!

GERDA turns and sees the SNOW QUEEN taking KAI away.

GERDA: No!

GERDA runs up on the bridge and reaches out to KAI. He slips away and is gone. The SNOW QUEEN looks back, grins, and too is gone.

GERDA: Come back! Kai! Come back!

A hand reaches out from below the river and pulls GERDA down. She screams, and finds herself face to face with a river spirit. Except it isn't really. It is TAPIO in a new form.

TAPIO: Come on.

TAPIO pulls GERDA under the rising water. The ripples rumble. The water line lowers. GERDA becomes visible, and she looks around, horrified and confused, to find herself in a rowboat of driftwood. TAPIO pulls her along, a ghoulish gondolier.

GERDA: Where are you taking me?

TAPIO: Be silent, hold tight. We've already lost time!

The boat spins and the water rises. GERDA is tossed in the boat. She holds tightly to the sides, yelling and screaming as she goes. The lights swirl in various colors and the water rises and falls until TAPIO at last halts the boat. All is still.

ACT ONE, SCENE 4

AT START: *GERDA is in a colorful, bright new world. The river laps near the shore of a garden where large FLOWERS sway in the breeze, seemingly with a life of their own. TAPIO stares at GERDA as though trying to read her mind.*

GERDA: Where have you taken me?

TAPIO: What is your name?

GERDA: Gerda...

TAPIO: Gerda... are you pure of spirit?

GERDA: What do you mean?

TAPIO: That boy—would you do anything to save him?

GERDA: What does that have to do with where we are?

TAPIO: Answer my question.

GERDA: Yes.

TAPIO: We are at the beginning of my forest. I am afraid I cannot help you much. I have little power left, but I will guide you.

GERDA: I don't understand.

TAPIO: You will. The Snow Queen has your friend, and if your intentions are true, you will herald all the seasons to conquer her. Just as poor Tapio would.

GERDA: I must herald—what?

TAPIO: Gerda, are you afraid of death?

GERDA doesn't answer. TAPIO sighs.

TAPIO: You'll never succeed.

TAPIO sinks into the water.

GERDA: Wait!

TAPIO: I've taken you as far as I dare for now.

TAPIO is gone.

GERDA: Wait! Come back!

FRU. FORAR—Mrs. Springtime, a woman in bright colors and butterfly wings, waddles in with a picnic basket. She is a cheerful and cozy woman. The woman down your street whom you always see in her garden.

FRU. FORAR: My child! My dear little girl!

GERDA: I'm sorry?

FRU. FORAR: You've come home at last, how I've missed you.

FRU. FORAR takes GERDA by the hands and helps her out of the boat.

FRU. FORAR: My sweet little girl, home at last.

GERDA: I think you've mistaken me.

FRU. FORAR: Always a sorrow when they grow and leave you, but a joy when they return. Sit down! You must be very tired.

FRU. FORAR makes GERDA sit in the garden. The FLOWERS turn to look at her, but when she turns to them, they instantly look away and become still. FRU. FROAR opens the basket and produces a tea set and a hairbrush.

FRU. FORAR: Four lumps of sugar, yes?

GERDA: Yes, how did you—

FRU. FORAR: Know that? How could I forget my little Gerda's sweet tooth? Oh, don't be surprised. I remember all of the names of my children.

GERDA: But who are you?

FRU. FORAR: Who am I? Your mother, silly!

GERDA: No you're not.

FRU. FORAR: What a thing to say—not your mother! Was it not I who watched you play in the puddles? Not I who helped your flowers grow every spring? Ensured you could find your way home when you ran through the forest without a care?! Not your mother?! Ha!

GERDA: I need to go.

FRU. FORAR: Drink! Drink it all up! There's a good girl.

FRU. FORAR tilts a tea cup against GERDA'S lips and makes her drink. GERDA suddenly feels very sleepy. FRU. FORAR picks up the hairbrush.

FRU. FORAR: So messy from her journey. Sleepy little girl needs her hair brushed. (*Brushes GERDA'S hair.*) Oh, it was too much, this growing up business. But little girl is home again. My little girl. Yes, yes.

GERDA nearly sleep walks as FRU. FORAR helps her to stand and nudges her offstage. GERDA yawns as she exits. The FLOWERS gasp and whisper to themselves. FRU. FORAR spots them.

FRU. FORAR: A word out of any of you—and I'll rip your petals off!

The FLOWERS tremble. Lights out.

ACT ONE, SCENE 5

AT START: *The ice palace is a dim place. Frozen faces are carved in the walls, sharp icicles hang threateningly above. KAI sits at the frame of the mirror. There is a pile of shards, like glistening sand, nearby. He stares between them, frustrated. Finally, he stands and starts to exit. The SNOW DEMONS jump in, cutting him off.*

SNOW DEMON 1: You cannot leave.

SNOW DEMON 2: Her majesty would not like it.

KAI: She's made a mistake. I'm not the boy she wants.

SNOW DEMON 3: You can't go!

SNOW DEMON 4: Stay and play with us.

The SNOW DEMONS try to play with KAI, who tries to fend them off. The SNOW QUEEN enters.

SNOW QUEEN: What is this?

SNOW DEMON 1: We want him to play.

SNOW DEMON 2: He wants to leave!

SNOW QUEEN: Leave? Why ever would you?

KAI: I'm not worthy of you.

SNOW QUEEN: So judgemental of yourself. You are better than that, Kai. You are better than anyone in the world. That is why I brought you here.

KAI crosses to the mirror.

KAI: But this, I can never figure it out.

SNOW QUEEN: It is a test, a challenge to make you great. (*Gestures to the pile of shards.*) I have collected these across the years, from people not nearly as wonderful as you. You have the last two pieces, now you must complete this puzzle.

KAI: How do I do it?

SNOW QUEEN: You will have to figure that out.

KAI takes a deep breath and lifts a shard. He places it against the mirror, but it falls. He tries again. It falls. On the third time he drops the shard, crying out in pain.

SNOW QUEEN: What now?

KAI: The shard, it cut me! I am sorry, but I just can't do this.

SNOW QUEEN: Very well. A shame really, I had such hopes for you. Demons, you may play.

The SNOW QUEEN begins to exit. The SNOW DEMONS crowd around KAI as though to kill him.

KAI: Wait! I will do it.

SNOW QUEEN: Good.

The SNOW QUEEN crosses to KAI and kisses him on his forehead. The touch puts KAI under her spell even further.

KAI: Thank you, my queen. Could I have just one more before you go?

SNOW QUEEN: Now, now, too much of a good thing can be deadly. You must begin now.

KAI: Yes, my queen.

SNOW QUEEN: Demons, go and fetch bandages. Master Kai is bleeding.

The SNOW DEMONS rush out as the SNOW QUEEN settles in to watch KAI work. Lights out.

ACT ONE, SCENE 6

AT START: *Lights up on Fru. Forar's Garden. The FLOWERS sway and whisper fervently. GERDA enters with a watering can. Time has passed. Her coat has been discarded nearby and she wears a childish pinafore.*

GERDA: I will water the flowers, Mother!

GERDA tips the can over the FLOWERS and they excitedly lap up the water. When it has emptied she turns to put it away.

FLOWERS: *(Whispering.)* Gerda!

GERDA: Hello? Is someone there? Did someone say something?

FLOWERS: We did!

FLOWER 1: You must leave this place.

FLOWER 2: The longer you stay, the more you will forget.

GERDA: I've always been here, this is my home.

FLOWER 3: She is not your mother!

FLOWER 4: She is the lady of springtime. She oversees your childhood, and she will do anything to keep you a child forever.

GERDA: But I am a child.

FLOWER 1: What do you look like?

GERDA: Like a little girl, I suppose.

FLOWER 2: Look in the river and see your reflection.

GERDA crosses with caution to the riverbank and peers over. She touches her face, stunned. She removes the pinafore and sees her waist. She is not a child anymore—she is a young lady!

GERDA: I—I don't believe it.

FLOWER 3: Do you remember now?

GERDA: I... I've been here so long. Kai... Kai could have died by now.

FLOWER 4: He has not.

FLOWER 1: Us flowers have been beneath the ground where the dead are. Kai is not among them.

FLOWER 2: You must leave this place before you are one of us.

FLOWER 3: We were human once, just like you.

GERDA: How do I—

FRU. FORAR enters. The FLOWERS grow still.

FRU. FORAR: Where are your clothes child?

GERDA: I only took off my pinafore.

FRU. FORAR: Little girls mustn't run around naked.

GERDA: I'm not naked!

FRU. FORAR: You were looking at your reflection! Oh, you vain, spoiled child.

GERDA: I'm not a child.

FRU. FORAR: You've been talking to the flowers, haven't you? Lies! All of them lie!

FRU. FORAR starts to rip up the screaming FLOWERS.

GERDA: What are you doing?!

FRU. FORAR: I am ripping them from the bed so they can never lie again!

GERDA: Stop it!

FRU. FORAR: On their side? My daughter betrays me!

GERDA: You are not my mother!

FRU. FORAR: How dare you. Get in the bed, go on!

FRU. FORAR forces GERDA into the flower bed.

GERDA: What's happening?

FRU. FORAR: I shall plant you here so you may never leave me. Now where did I put my spade?

FRU. FORAR turns to search for it. GERDA spots it just outside the bed and picks it up, concealing it behind her back.

GERDA: Why not use your hands?

FRU. FORAR: No, I need the spade.

GERDA: Some gardener, can't get your hands dirty.

FRU. FORAR: I'll show you! Stand still.

FRU. FORAR bends over to 'plant' GERDA. GERDA hits FRU. FORAR with the spade and she falls into the bed, where the FLOWERS overtake her. GERDA runs, grabbing her coat.

FLOWER 1: Go!

FLOWER 2: We will take care of her!

FLOWER 3: You must not forget your intentions, or we shall all perish in the end.

GERDA: Thank you!

GERDA runs out. The FLOWERS overtake FRU. FORAR.

FRU. FORAR: Daughter, come back! Come back! Don't leave me here!

Lights out.

SCENE 7

AT START: The Forest. ROBINS 1-3 laugh at some inside joke. A CROW sulks on his own perch.

ROBIN 1: Hey, Crow! Where's your gang?

ROBIN 2: He ain't got no gang!

ROBIN 3: He ain't got no friends!

CROW: Leave me alone, Robins!

ROBIN 1: Tell me, Crow, did your mama scream when she saw your face, or did she just cry a little?

ROBIN 2: Crow gonna cry! Crow gonna cry!

CROW: Stop it!

ROBIN 3: Little Crow baby gonna cry!

GERDA runs in, frantically. She is lost. She looks around, unaware of the birds.

ROBIN 1: Get a look at that dollface!

ROBIN 2: Chirp! Chirp! Does she gotta sandwhich with that shake?

ROBIN 3: I wouldn't take her home to my mother.

ROBIN 1: Why not?

ROBIN 3: Not mama I'm worried about, don't want papa taking her for himself!

ROBINS 1-3 laugh.

CROW: Lay off it, gentlemen.

ROBINS 1-3 jump down and circle GERDA. This is the first time she notices them.

ROBIN 1: Hey sweet cheeks, where you headed?

ROBIN 2: You need a guide?

GERDA: Um, no, thank you. But could you tell me how to get to the Snow Queen's palace?

ROBIN 3: You gotta pay to know, honey.

ROBIN 2: Piece of bread?

ROBIN 1: Maybe a worm?

GERDA: No, I'm sorry.

ROBIN 3: She sure is cheap!

GERDA: Excuse me?

ROBIN 1: Come over and give us a little kiss.

GERDA: I think not.

ROBIN 2: Lay a little sugar!

GERDA: Leave me alone!

ROBIN 3: Slide some sweetness on me!

ROBINS 1-3 move in. CROW jumps down and shoves them.

CROW: She said leave her alone!

ROBIN 1: Crow gettin' in on it?

ROBIN 2: He wants her for himself.

ROBIN 3: I always knew he was a sly bird!

CROW: You all better get!

CROW squawks at ROBINS 1-3 and tries to scare them off. ROBINS 1-3 only laugh and shove CROW around, hooting and hollering. GERDA has enough. She shoves one of the ROBINS and makes loud noises to scare them.

GERDA: BOOM! BOOM! GET OUT OF HERE! GO ON!

ROBINS 1-3 shriek and go up to their branch. CROW sulks on the ground. GERDA crosses to him.

GERDA: Are you alright?

CROW: Fine, fine.

GERDA: You shouldn't let them push you around, you know.

CROW: What can I do? They're twice my size! What?

GERDA: Nothing. You just remind me of someone.

CROW: *(With great interest.)* Tell, tell!

GERDA: My friend, Kai. He had the same problems you do with some of the boys in our village.

CROW: Did he peck out their eyes?

GERDA: *(Small laugh.)* No. He just let them. And now he's gone from me. So you mustn't let yourself get in the same mindset. *(Stands.)* Well, I have to go now. Don't let them give you anymore trouble. *(Starts to leave.)*

CROW: Where did he go?

GERDA: Very far away.

CROW: What does he look like?

GERDA: He's about this tall. With brown hair and eyes.

CROW: Oh! Him! I know him!

GERDA: What?

CROW: Yes, he's with the Princess!

GERDA: How do you know?

CROW: Oh, he showed up not long ago. Trying to seek his fortune. You see, the Princess Somer wanted to add to her court, and decreed that any boy who could defeat her challenge would be her consort!

GERDA: It does seem like something Kai would do...

CROW: Yes. This boy, Kai, he accepted the challenge. He navigated the Princess Somer's vast labyrinth and battled an array of beasts and serpents, until he at last retrieved a golden apple. And so, he was crowned Prince!

GERDA: If it is him, why, that means his dream came true!

CROW: I swear it his him! Spitting image!

ROBIN 1: I wouldn't listen to him if I were you, sweet cheeks.

ROBIN 2: He's real scatterbrained.

ROBIN 3: You mean bird brained!

ROBINS 1-3 laugh.

CROW: I am not! Why, I know it's him as sure as I know up from down!
(*Gestures the wrong way as he speaks.*)

GERDA: Crow, do you think you could lead me to Princess Somer's palace?

CROW: It would be my pleasure! Come, it's only an hour as the crow flies! He starts to take off.

GERDA: Wait!

CROW: (*Jolted to a stop.*) What?

GERDA: We must fly?

CROW: Why, naturally!

CROW begins to take off again. GERDA grabs him and again he is jolted to a halt.

GERDA: It's just that I can't fly.

CROW: Oh! Oh... oh? Well... it'll take longer, but I suppose we could walk.

GERDA: Yes, please, let's do that.

CROW holds his wing out regally. GERDA takes it and he leads her out.

CROW: Might I interest you in the grand tour? To your left, a tree. To your right, another tree. And now if you will casually glance to your left again, you will see our prized acquisition—a shrub!

GERDA laughs as they exit.

ROBIN 1: Where were they going?

ROBIN 2: Hopefully far, far away.

ROBIN 3: With the crow leading? Death's doorstep!

ROBINS 1-3 laugh hysterically. Lights out.

SCENE 8

AT START: *Lively music plays, lights rise on Princess Somer's Ballroom. Large fans of gold and red decorate the walls. An array of COURTIERS vogue to the music. GERDA and CROW enter.*

GERDA: Do you think we've come at a good time?

CROW: Certainly! This party must be for your friend. Follow me, I'll show you how it's done.

CROW dances to the floor. GERDA follows with hesitation, trying to mimic his moves.

CROW: That's the stuff! Come on, Gerda, let's wing it!

GERDA: I don't have wings! Wait, I'm getting dizzy!

CROW spins GERDA and she bumps into a LADY. ALL gasp and turn to watch.

GERDA: I'm so sorry—

LADY: Where did you get your dress? The scrap heap?

GENTLEMAN: How unattractive.

LADY 2: If I knew just any riffraff could get in, I wouldn't have come.

GENTLEMAN 2: Hideous, just hideous.

LADY 2: You mean ugly.

SFX: a gong sounds and ALL turn to bow, except for GERDA and CROW. A fan turns around to reveal PRINCESS SOMER, holding a golden apple.

PRINCESS SOMER: You there! Yes, you! Who is this stranger who does not bow to the Princess Somer?

CROW: Well, I'm a crow, your majesty, and I'm not well versed in the court particulars—

PRINCESS SOMER: Not you, you pile of bird flu, you!

GERDA: I—

PRINCESS SOMER: You may approach.

GERDA crosses to PRINCESS SOMER.

GERDA: I am Gerda, and I come to seek Kai. He's my friend, and I believe he might be here.

ALL COURTIERS and PRINCESS SOMER laugh.

PRINCESS SOMER: What makes you believe so?

CROW: Me, that would be me, your royal princessness.

PRINCESS SOMER: And how do you know?

CROW takes the golden apple from PRINCESS SOMER and begins to speak with a jumbled fervor.

CROW: You needed a consort, you smarty you, so you put the apple in the apple maze, and you wanted someone to get the golden apple. Being an apple hunter, Kai went in to search apple after apple until he found the golden apple, and now you can eat your apples to apples, how do you like them apples?

CROW tosses the apple back to the perplexed PRINCESS SOMER.

PRINCESS SOMER: Is that a riddle? I do like riddles.

GERDA: Please, Your Majesty, if I could only see your new prince, we would be on our way.

PRINCESS SOMER: Not so fast! Not just anyone can walk in and gaze at our prince. No, first you must complete a challenge.

GERDA: I'm afraid I don't know much about apples.

PRINCESS SOMER: No, no, I would never repeat a challenge. It isn't fashionable. I think for your challenge, you must sing us a song.

GERDA: Sing?

PRINCESS SOMER: A lovely song. And begin!

GERDA does not know how to sing. But she will try for KAI. She raises her voice.

GERDA: *(Trying to sing.)* Sail me up the river, three sheets to the wind, madam on the riverbank, bosom big as sin—

PRINCESS SOMER: *(Disgusted.)* What is that horrible tune?

GERDA: It's the only song I know.

The COURTIERs break into fits of laughter. PRINCESS SOMER claps to silence them.

PRINCESS SOMER: I will give you one more chance. If you do not complete this challenge, then you will be removed from my court immediately. Let me see. *(Considers a moment, then grins with delight.)* The time has come to play... ridicule.

The COURTIERs clap with evil joy.

GERDA: But what is ridicule?

PRINCESS SOMER: The rules of the game are as follows: nothing is too far, nothing is sacred, and if your opponent cries—you win. Understand?

GERDA: No.

PRINCESS SOMER: Let's begin!

The COURTIERs form a half circle around GERDA. LADY approaches.

LADY: Good evening, my dear.

GERDA: Hello.

LADY: I'm so happy you could come out tonight. It must get so cramped in your coffin.

The COURTIERs laugh. LADY switches with the GENTLEMAN.

GENTLEMAN: You have a lovely nose.

GERDA: Thank you?

GENTLEMAN: Which catalogue did you order it from?

GERDA doesn't know how to respond. The GENTLEMAN switches with LADY 2.

LADY 2: Ugly before beauty. Well, go on, then. *(GERDA doesn't respond.)* Come on, we're slaying you! Taunt me, taunt me good.

GERDA: I don't have anything mean to say to you.

LADY 2: Doesn't it bother you, what we're saying?

GERDA: Not really. What other people think of me isn't my business. *(LADY 2 is flustered.)* I like your gown.

LADY 2: What?

GERDA: Your gown. It's very pretty.

LADY 2: Well... thank you. I worked on it for weeks.

GERDA: And it shows. I wish I could wear a gown like that, but I don't have the form you do. You're very beautiful.

LADY 2: *(Teary eyed.)* Thank you.

GERDA: You're welcome.

LADY 2: No, thank you! No one ever tells me that.

LADY 2 sobs. PRINCESS SOMER claps.

PRINCESS SOMER: The game is over!

GENTLEMAN 2: We hardly played!

PRINCESS SOMER: She has made her opponent cry. She has won, and has defeated the challenge.

The COURTIERs clap unenthusiastically. PRINCESS SOMER crosses to GERDA.

PRINCESS SOMER: You are a perfect match for our prince.

GERDA: Match? I'm not looking to be matched, I—

PRINCESS SOMER: Crow, since you brought this clever girl to us, I shall make you my royal bird.

CROW: Royal bird! Oh, if the robins could see me now.

PRINCESS SOMER sticks a medal into the CROW'S vest.

GERDA: Princess, I think there has been a misunderstanding. I'm not looking to match with—

SF: trumpets sound.

PRINCESS SOMER: Here he is!

ALL bow except for PRINCESS SOMER and GERDA. PRINCE LIGGE enters. GERDA is stunned to see he is, indeed, KAI.

PRINCESS SOMER: Ligge, come! I have found you a perfect match.

PRINCE LIGGE approaches GERDA. She takes him in an embrace.

GERDA: I found you.

PRINCESS SOMER: I think she likes him.

PRINCE LIGGE: Pleasured. Would you like to dance?

GERDA, believing him to be KAI, remembers their dance in the snow.

GERDA: Delighted. For all your subjects are here to celebrate you.

PRINCE LIGGE: Er, I suppose.

PRINCE LIGGE takes GERDA'S hand and they dance. It is much like before, but more graceful—grown up. When they finish all applaud.

PRINCE LIGGE: Will you join me on the terrace?

PRINCE LIGGE sweeps GERDA away.

PRINCESS SOMER: Let the festivities begin!

Lights fade on the party and rise on GERDA and PRINCE LIGGE.

GERDA: I can't believe it. You're a prince! Your dream, it's come true!

PRINCE LIGGE slicks his hair back.

PRINCE LIGGE: What can I say?

GERDA: I'm so glad I found you.

PRINCE LIGGE: And I you.

PRINCE LIGGE takes GERDA'S hands and looks her in the eyes. After a moment she becomes uncomfortable and steps past him. He brushes himself off and primps.

GERDA: But we must go. Your grandmother must think we're both dead by now.

PRINCE LIGGE: My grandmother?

GERDA: Surely you haven't forgotten.

PRINCE LIGGE: All I know is you are here. *(Puts his arms around GERDA.)* And you are beautiful.

GERDA: What?!

PRINCE LIGGE spins GERDA around and attempts to kiss her. She shoves his face away.

GERDA: What are you doing?

PRINCE LIGGE: *(Kneels.)* I am swearing my eternal love to milady.

GERDA: This isn't funny!

PRINCE LIGGE: Kiss me.

GERDA: No!

PRINCE LIGGE chases GERDA around.

PRINCE LIGGE: Just one little kiss to suppress my appetite!

GERDA: Stop it!

PRINCESS SOMER steps forward and sees the chase. She grins.

PRINCESS SOMER: Ah, true love!

PRINCE LIGGE: Come here!

GERDA: No!

PRINCE LIGGE: I want to kiss you!

GERDA: I want you to stop!

PRINCE LIGGE changes direction and catches GERDA. He moves in to kiss her and she pushes him away.

GERDA: What is wrong with you? I thought we were good friends.

PRINCE LIGGE: What are you talking about?

PRINCESS SOMER claps her hands regally and approaches.

PRINCESS SOMER: There you are! You must come quickly! It is time for the ceremony!

GERDA: What ceremony?

PRINCESS SOMER ushers them back to the ballroom. The GENTLEMAN hands her a bible and she stands on a chair. One of the ladies gives GERDA a bouquet.

GERDA: Thank you... er, what's going on?

PRINCE LIGGE: Don't you know, dear?

GERDA: No, I don't know, dear.

PRINCESS SOMER: Ladies and gentlemen, we are gathered here today for the perfect union! *(The COURTIERS applaud.)* And who was it that made the union? Oh, little ole me!

CROW: I always cry at weddings.

GERDA: Weddings?!

PRINCE LIGGE: You can't be married without a wedding, love!

PRINCESS SOMER: Does anyone here object to this union?

GERDA: I object!

PRINCESS SOMER: No objections? Very well, Prince Ligge, you may kiss the bride.

GERDA: No! Kai, I don't understand. You aren't yourself at all, you're...
you're not Kai.

PRINCE LIGGE: What?

GERDA: You're not Kai.

GERDA throws the bouquet at PRINCE LIGGE and runs back to the terrace.

PRINCESS SOMER: Oh dear, I just abhor cold feet. Please, everyone enjoy the party and she will be right back after she freshens up.

PRINCESS SOMER approaches GERDA.

PRINCESS SOMER: What is wrong?

GERDA: That wasn't who I was looking for.

PRINCESS SOMER: So, what's the problem? You have found a perfect match!

GERDA: So?

PRINCESS SOMER: He loves you so much.

GERDA: I just met him. And I don't want to be married.

PRINCESS SOMER: Ridiculous, you just haven't warmed up to the idea.

GERDA: The Snow Queen has my best friend. I have to find him.

PRINCESS SOMER: The Snow Queen! ...You would risk your life for only a friend?

GERDA: Wouldn't you?

PRINCESS SOMER: I have servants to do that.

GERDA: Well, I have only myself.

PRINCESS SOMER: You must stay. You won the challenge, and the hand of the prince. You simply can't go looking for friends. It is time to grow up and be a young lady.

GERDA: If it means marrying a stranger, I would rather not grow up.
(*PRINCESS SOMER scoffs. GERDA becomes emotional.*) I have to find him. I know he's alive. I don't want to be too late. Please, you have to let me go.

PRINCESS SOMER slowly reaches out and brushes a finger against GERDA'S cheek. She examines her fingertips. A single tear.

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