

## The Snow Queen

In a little town, full of factories and sooty chimneys, lived two children whose names were Kay and Gerda.

They were neighbors, and spent their days playing on the balcony between their houses.

They had planted a rose-tree in their window-box, and they loved to water it and watch it grow. They even made up a song about it.

*Roses, sweet roses*

*Hide away your thorns*

*Dance in the summer breezes*

*Laugh at falsehood all day long*

In the springtime, Kay and Gerda went out to play in the field beyond the factories.

When winter came, the roses were buried under the snow, and the streets and squares of the town disappeared under a blanket of fine white powder.

It was so cold that the children no longer played on the balcony. They sat indoors with Kay's grandmother, beside the fire.

Frost lined the windows, but if they heated a coin in the fire and pressed it against the glass, it made a hole through which they could spy on the strange white world outside.

One evening after supper, Kay went to the window and peeped through the spy-hole. A snowflake came fluttering down, growing larger and changing shape, until at last it was a lady, dressed all in snow.

She was beautiful and delicate, but she was made of ice. The coldness of her eyes sent a shiver through Kay, and he leapt away from the window with a start.

A few days later, spring arrived and the fine weather melted away the snow.

Roses, sweet roses

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In the summer the roses bloomed and they were prettier than ever. But Kay felt a sharp pain in his heart. It was a sliver of the Snow Queen's ice.

Kay pulled up all the rose trees in the window box.

"Kay, what are you doing? What's wrong?" cried Gerda.

But Kay wouldn't tell her. He ran back into his house without saying a word.

Gerda was worried about her friend. What had happened to Kay to make him change?

When winter came again, it snowed for days and days.

One morning Kay took out his magnifying glass to look at the snowflakes.

"Look at these snowflakes, Gerda. They're perfect! Much prettier than roses!"

Kay was fascinated by the snow, and went down to the square on his own, pulling his sleigh. Other children were laughing and playing, but there was no trace of a smile on Kay's lips.

Suddenly a great sleigh drew into the square, carrying a beautiful lady all dressed in ice. It was the Snow Queen.

She placed a cloak around Kay's shoulders, kissed him on the forehead and sat him beside her in the sleigh. Wrapped up in the cloak, Kay felt as if he was buried deep in the snow, and he no longer noticed the cold.

The Snow Queen tied Kay's sleigh to one of the hens that flew along in her wake.

She kissed Kay once more, and the boy forgot all about the roses, his friend Gerda and his grandmother.

Kay looked up at the Snow Queen. She was very beautiful. She didn't frighten him as she had when he saw her from the window.

Kay smiled.

The snow began to fall so thickly around them that Kay could see nothing but snow and more snow.

The sleigh set off at great speed, leaving the town square far behind.

It flew up, up into the air, high over the city, over great forests, seas and distant lands. The snowy landscape sparkled far below. Above them, the moon shone clear and white, and Kay gazed up at it as they sped along. When day broke, Kay was huddled beside the Snow Queen, fast asleep.

But what would become of Gerda without her friend?

No-one knew what had happened to Kay.

Spring arrived at last, bringing fine weather and clear skies. Gerda called out to the swallows:

"Is Kay dead and gone?"

"No! That we don't believe!" said the swallows.

Gerda put on her new red shoes and went down to the river.

"River, have you taken away my friend? I'll let you have my new red shoes if you give him back to me."

The river only rippled by. Gerda took off her red shoes and threw them in. But they were washed back up on the bank.

Gerda climbed on board a boat, so she could throw the shoes further out. But the boat was not tied up, and began to float down the river. By the time Gerda noticed, she was too far out to jump ~~onto the~~ land. The boat drifted away from the town.

"Perhaps the river will take me to Kay," thought Gerda.

This made her feel less sad.

Eventually she sailed past a cottage, with a garden full of flowers.

An old woman came out, leaning on a crooked stick. She wore a broad-brimmed hat painted all over with flowers.

The old woman pulled the boat to the bank with her stick, and Gerda climbed out. She was a little afraid, but she told the old woman her story.

“Don’t you worry. While we wait for your friend to pass this way, you must come into my house and taste my cherries. And look at all my flowers. They’re lovely, and each one has a story to tell.”

Gerda ate as many cherries as she could, and they were delicious. As she ate, the old woman combed her hair with golden comb.

“I have always wanted a dear little girl like you,” she said. And Gerda forgot all about Kay and the roses.

For the old lady was a witch.

She went out into the garden with her crooked stick, and made all the roses sink back into the earth, so Gerda would never see them and be reminded of her friend Kay.

The little girl went out into the garden and jumped for joy. She played there all day until it grew dark.

Gerda knew the names of all the flowers, but it seemed to her that one was missing, and she didn’t know which.

One day, she looked at the flowers painted on the old woman’s hat, and the prettiest of them all was a rose. The old woman had forgotten to hide it away.

So Gerda went to look for roses, but there were none to be found.

She began to cry and the rose bushes grew up out of the earth. Gerda pressed the roses to her cheeks and thought of Kay.

Roses, sweet roses

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“Oh, I’ve wasted so much time! Where is my dear Kay? Roses, do you think he is dead and gone?”

“Dead he cannot be,” said the roses, “for we have been underground where all the dead are, and Kay was not there.”

Gerda went to ask the other flowers.

“Snowdrops, have you seen Kay?”

“Between two trees there hang two swings. Two girls as white as snow, with green ribbons in their hair, are swinging to and fro. Beside them a third girl is blowing bubbles.”

“But I want to know about Kay! What about you, Hyacinths?”

“There were three sisters, crystal clear and very lovely. The first wore a red dress, the second blue and the third white. They danced in a circle, beside a still lake in the moonlight.”

“Buttercup, do you know where I can find my friend?”

“The bright sun shone through the bedroom window, kissing the old grandmother on the cheeks and turning everything to gold.”

“Oh, Kay’s poor grandmother, what will she do without him?”

But since the flowers couldn’t tell her, Gerda began to run away.

A little Narcissus tripped her up.

“Do you know something perhaps?”

"All I can see is myself! What a wonderful perfume! There's a little dancer, hanging out the washing!"

"I don't care about that!" cried Gerda and ran out of the garden, leaving the old woman's house behind her forever, to continue her journey and find her friend Kay.

It was autumn. The leaves were falling from the trees and everything was cold and wet. She walked deep into the woods and then she sat down to rest.

A great Raven hopped up and stood beside her.

"Have you seen Kay?"

"Perhaps."

"Where is he?"

"He lives with a very clever Princess who has read all the books in the world. For years she longed to be married, but she wanted a husband as clever as herself. She put advertisements in the newspapers and the news quickly spread all over the realm. Any young man could come and speak to the Princess, and the one who spoke best would become her husband."

"Ravens of young men came, but none of them were successful. They were all lost for words, and repeated the last thing the princess had said. It was as if they fell under a spell in her presence."

"But what about Kay?"

"For two days the suitors arrived at the palace. On the third day, a young man arrived on foot, dressed in shabby clothes."

"That was my Kay!"

"When he walked into the castle, he was not lost for words. He spoke so beautifully to the Princess that she immediately chose him to be her husband."

"Oh, I want to see him so much! Can you take me to the castle where Kay and the princess are?"

"Yes, I know a secret stairway."

The raven led Gerda to the garden. She was longing to see Kay!

As she walked up the secret staircase, she felt as though someone was following her.

Shadowy figures of horsemen rushed past her.

“They are dreams. They have come to carry away the thoughts of the lords and ladies.”

At last they came to the bedchamber. There were two beds, one was white, and in this lay the Princess, and the other was red, which was where she would find Kay. She climbed onto the Prince’s bed, and woke him up but – oh! ...it wasn’t Kay!

The Princess woke too, and asked what was the matter. Gerda began to cry, and told them her story.

“Poor little thing!”

They prepared a bed for her so that she could rest.

The next day they dressed her from head to foot in the finest clothes, and begged her to stay at the palace. But she asked for a horse-drawn carriage and some shoes. She wanted to look for Kay, and didn’t want to waste any time.

The Prince, the Princess and the Raven said goodbye with tears in their eyes. They wished her the best of luck in the search for her lost friend.

Gerda drove her carriage into the forest, which was thick and full of shadows.

A band of robbers peeped out from behind the trees.

When they saw Gerda, they thought the little girl would make a tasty dinner. But the robber chief’s daughter cried out:

“I want that little girl to play with me!”

The robbers we should decide if we are calling them robbers or robbers – I think robbers probably fits in better with the tone of the text climbed on board Gerda’s carriage and drove it away.

The little robber girl was as tall as Gerda, but her eyes were sad.

“They won’t hurt you and they won’t eat you for dinner as long as you do what I say.

Are you a princess?”

Gerda said she was not, and told her story.

"If you do not get angry with me, no one will do you any harm."

The carriage came to a halt. They were outside a castle. There was a great fire with cauldrons bubbling.

The little robber girl led her to a corner that was full of wood-pigeons,  
"All these pigeons are mine."

"And this is my favorite pet," she said, pointing to a reindeer. "I keep him tied up, or he'd run away. Now let's go to sleep."

"Will you keep your knife with you?" Gerda asked, feeling afraid.  
"I always sleep with my knife. There's no knowing what might happen!"

The pigeons huddled round Gerda to keep her company.  
The robbers sat in a circle around the fire singing and laughing and drinking.

Gerda was very frightened.

Then the wood-pigeons said:  
"We have seen little Kay. He flew over the forest in the Snow Queen's sleigh!

"Oh! And where was Kay going with the Snow Queen?"  
"No doubt she was going to Lapland, for it's always covered in snow and ice. You should ask the Reindeer who is tied up over there."

"In Lapland there's snow, and it's always cold! It's a wonderful place," said the Reindeer. "The Snow Queen makes her summer camp there, but her home is in a castle, close to the North Pole, on an island called Spitzbergen."

"Oh poor Kay! What will he do there?"

In the morning Gerda told the robber girl everything that the wood-pigeons and the reindeer had said.



"I will help you to escape. You can do it when my mother has her nap after lunch." When the robber-girl's mother was fast asleep, Gerda made her escape.

The robber-girl made her a present of the reindeer, as well as a pair of boots and gloves so she wouldn't feel the cold as she traveled to the lands of snow and ice.

Gerda said goodbye and at once the Reindeer galloped off as quick as a flash. He went as fast as he could. Wolves howled and Crows cawed. The sky looked as though it was bursting into flame.

"Those are the Northern Lights," said the Reindeer, "See how they shine!"

And he sped still quicker until they arrived in Lapland.

The landscape was as white as flour.

They saw an igloo and went inside. A Lapp woman was cutting and cleaning fish.

Gerda was so cold she could not speak.

The Reindeer told the woman the whole of Gerda's story.

They still had a long way to go.

"You must travel on to Finnmark, where the Snow Queen has her country-house and lights two blue lamps every evening. Once you are there, a Finnish woman, who is a witch, will tell you how to enter the Snow Queen's palace.

When Gerda had warmed herself and eaten a bite of food, the Lapp woman gave her a sleigh to continue her journey. The Northern Lights lit up the night sky.

In the morning, they came to the house of the witch of Finnmark, a tiny igloo with a chimney.

The witch was dirty and very odd.

Her house was so hot that Gerda took off her gloves and boots. The

Reindeer said:

"You are so clever, little witch, you can twist all the winds together with a ball of wool. When you untie them, the winds rage so hard that forests are uprooted. Won't you mix up a potion to give Gerda the strength of thirteen men, so she can vanquish the Snow Queen?"

And the witch replied:

"Little Kay is at the Snow Queen's house. He is perfectly at home and thinks it the best place in the world, but that's because he has a splinter of ice lodged in his heart. It must be taken out. Otherwise, he will never be a child again, and the Snow Queen will always have power over him. Gerda doesn't need the strength of thirteen men. I can give her no power greater than that she has already. Her power lies in her heart because she is a child. She can enter the castle and rid little Kay of the piece of ice all on her own. Four leagues from here the Snow Queen's garden begins. You must leave her by the bush with the red berries."

They set out at once. At the edge of the garden, the Reindeer put the little girl down by the bush with the red berries.

Before her was an army of snowflakes, but they did not fall from the sky, they rose up from the ground and grew larger as she approached them. The snowflakes were the sentinels of the Snow Queen's garden, and they were as spiky as hedgehogs.

Gerda thought of the roses on her balcony. The more clearly she imagined them, the braver she felt, and she strode forward. The snowflakes shrank smaller and smaller as she remembered the roses.

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And what was Kay doing in the castle all this while?

The walls of the castle were made of snow and the doors of raging winds. Inside there were many halls of whirling snow lit up by the Northern Lights, and all of them were huge and empty and terribly cold. Joy had never entered there; there was no dancing and no games. Sadness reigned in the halls of the Snow Queen.

In the middle of the largest hall was a frozen lake. The ice was cracked into a thousand pieces. In the middle of this lake sat the Snow Queen, when she was at home.

Little Kay was blue with cold, but he did not notice, because since the Snow Queen's lips had touched him, the boy's heart was like a lump of ice.

In his hands he held pieces of ice of different shapes, and he moved them around. Kay spent his time making all sorts of complicated figures. He also formed words, but never the one he wanted, which was "Eternity." The Snow Queen had said, "if ever you can form that word, you shall be your own master, and I will make you a present of the whole world."

But he never succeeded in doing it.

That night the Snow Queen bade him farewell.

"I am going to warm lands now, to visit the volcanoes that spit fire, Etna and Vesuvius. I will give them a dusting of white."

When the Snow Queen had departed and left Kay all alone, little Gerda stepped through the great gate of the castle, that was made of winds. But she thought of the roses and the winds became calm, as if they had fallen ~~to~~asleep. She walked through the empty halls and saw Kay.

"Kay! At last I've found you!"

But he was numb and cold. Then Gerda began to cry. Her tears were hot and they fell onto her friend's chest, where they thawed the splinter of ice. Kay looked at Gerda, and she sang.

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Then Kay cried out in happiness:

"Gerda, where have you been? And what am I doing here? How cold it is!"

Gerda laughed for joy. Even the pieces of ice got up and started to dance. When they were tired, they lay down and formed the word "Eternity," which the Snow Queen had

told him to find if he wanted to be his own master, and then she would give him the whole world.

The children took each other by the hand and walked out of the castle. They talked about the roses and Kay's grandmother, and wherever they went, the winds stopped blowing and the sun shone.

Beside the bush with the red berries they found the Reindeer waiting for them. They went first to the Finnish woman's house, where they warmed themselves.

Then they went to the house of the Lapp woman, who had prepared a sleigh for them.

The reindeer and the Lapp woman went with them for a while, until there was no more snow and everything was green.

Passing some woods, they met the little robber girl, who had run away from home to see the world.

"Kay, Gerda went to the ends of the earth to find you! I hope you deserve it!" Gerda asked after the Prince and Princess, and the little robber girl told her they had gone abroad.

And her friend the Raven I think the word Raven works better as all the language is quite old-fashioned and Raven is more fairytale-like than Raven had met a lady Raven, and fallen in love.

As Kay and Gerda continued their journey home, spring arrived bringing the first bright flowers. At last they came to their own town. And on the balcony, the roses were blooming.