

THE SNOW QUEEN
By Will Ledesma

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AUDITION 1- 2 w, 5 flex

In this scene Gerda is stopped by robbers.

(ROBBER 1, ROBBER 2 and ROBBER WOMAN spring from hiding places and surround the carriage. GERDA shrieks.)

ROBBER WOMAN: Halt!

ROBBER 1: HALT!

ROBBER 2: *(Giggling.)* Halt, halt, halt, halt...

COACHMAN: I'm halting, I'm halting!

ROBBER WOMAN: *(To the others.)* Hush. I already halted 'em. You don't everybody needs to halt 'em.

ROBBER 2: I, I, I was helping halt them. We're halting helpers.

ROBBER 1: HALTING HELPER!

ROBBER WOMAN: All right, enough! Now that they is properly halted, you two get in there and see what kind of loot they be carryin'.

(The two ROBBERS go to obey.)

ROBBER 1: I FOUND A GIRL!

ROBBER WOMAN: And who else?

GERDA: There's nobody else, it's only me. Please, don't hurt me!

ROBBER WOMAN: If you don't wanna be gettin' hurt in a rough woods like these, it ain't especially smart to go around ridin' in such a pretty carriage in them pretty little clothes. Yer a princess, I take it!

COACHMAN: A princess? Her? Absurd! However, she does come in full authority from the princess AND the prince, and in their name I command you rogues to—

ROBBER 1: BOO!

(The COACHMAN yelps and hides behind GERDA.)

GERDA: Very well. You've brought this on yourself!

(SHE draws her sword. A ROBBER GIRL in a scarlet cap appears from offstage.)

ROBBER GIRL: Put that thing down, you silly. I can already tell you have no idea how to use it.

GERDA: *(Courage faltering.)* Yes, I have. A bit.

ROBBER 2: *(From the carriage.)* There's so much food in here! Soooo much food!

ROBBER GIRL: We'll take it all back to camp, then. The food, the carriage, the animal...and the girl.

COACHMAN: *(Outraged.)* Outrageous! In whose name do you think you can—

ROBBER GIRL: In my name, of course.

ROBBER WOMAN: Now just a red hot flamin' whoopsie-doddlin' moment there, missy. I'm the leader a' this here outfit, and I am your mother on top 'a that. We claims it all in my name!

ROBBER GIRL: Do you even know your name?

ROBBER WOMAN: 'Course I do! It's...ah...hold on a sec! *(To ROBBER 1.)* D'you remember my name?

ROBBER 1: *(Whispering VERY LOUDLY.)* ISN'T IT...BOB?

ROBBER WOMAN: Izzat my name or your name?

ROBBER 1: ...BOTH?

ROBBER GIRL: Never mind. I'm hungry. Let's take all of this back home and eat. *(To the COACHMAN.)* You go home. I'm feeling generous today.

GERDA: But you can't expect us to walk the whole way home! We've traveled for miles and miles!

ROBBER GIRL: Not you. Just him. You stay with me. We'll play together.

GERDA: I could never be friends with a common thief.

ROBBER GIRL: First, I'm hardly common. Second, who said anything about friends? *(SHE grabs GERDA by the arm.)* Come on, we'll ride inside. I want a sandwich.

COACHMAN: I will not allow you to—

ROBBER 1: GO AWAY.

COACHMAN: I'm going, I'm going!

(And he does. ROBBER GIRL tosses ROBBER 2 into the driver's seat.)

ROBBER GIRL: You drive. Go!

ROBBER 2: Yah!

ROBBER WOMAN: Hey! What about me!?

ROBBER GIRL: You have legs!

(The carriage pulls away. The ROBBER WOMAN climbs up on ROBBER 1's shoulders.)

ROBBER WOMAN: Carry me!

(ROBBER 1 struggles to carry her offstage.)

STORYTELLER: As the robbers made their way back to their base camp, Gerda and the robber girl talked—well, mostly Gerda talked, telling her captor the entire story of how she had come to be in the woods. The robber maiden went back and forth between listening intently and admiring all the pretty gifts Gerda had been given by the Princess and the Prince. By the time Gerda had finished her story, the robber maiden had eaten three small loaves of bread, two apples, and half a wheel of cheese.

(The carriage re-emerges. GERDA is nearing the end of her story. The ROBBER GIRL is slowly twirling Gerda's sword in her hands.)

GERDA: ...and then I left them in the courtyard—it was so hard to say goodbye, especially to my good friend the crow. Shortly after that, I met your friends.

ROBBER GIRL: *(Belches.)* I've decided I'm keeping this. And your muff, it's quite pretty. Actually, all of your clothes, I think. They should fit me just fine.

(GERDA reacts, shocked and scandalized.)

ROBBER GIRL: *(Cont'd.)* Don't worry, you can have some of my old things. Honestly, you should have seen your face just now.

GERDA: You haven't listened to a word I said!

ROBBER GIRL: Of course I have! I liked your story. Well, the parts that weren't boring, anyway. And I think it'll have a happy ending, once you get to the ending that is.

GERDA: You do?

ROBBER GIRL: Certainly. There's something special about you. Haven't you noticed it?

GERDA: I don't feel very special. I'm not especially good at adventuring.

ROBBER GIRL: No, you're terrible at it. But everywhere you go, everybody likes you. People. Even animals. Even I like you, and I don't like very many people. But whenever you need help, sure enough, help arrives.

GERDA: Does this mean that you'll help me?

ROBBER GIRL: Not that I'm aware of. But who knows? Oh, and my mother may want to cook you later.

GERDA: WHAT?

ROBBER GIRL: She may not. But she may. You never can tell with her. She's a peculiar woman. But don't worry. If she tries to cook you, I shall tell her "No," and she'll leave you alone.

GERDA: You certainly aren't very respectful of her.

ROBBER GIRL: No, that's true. Then again, I am a robber, so I'm not much of a role model anyway. Here we are! Come on, Gerda, you'll sleep in my tent. We are going to have some fun, I can tell!

(SHE drags GERDA out of the carriage almost violently. ROBBER 2 exits with carriage. The inside of the tent is set.)

STORYTELLER: It took Gerda a little while to get used to living with the robbers. They never used forks or spoons when they ate, but they always used knives...except for when they used swords or small axes.

STORYTELLER: *(Cont'd.)* They rarely bathed, so they all smelled terrible. And anytime Gerda talked in her sleep or snored—which, to her surprise, turned out to be almost every night—the robber maiden dumped a pitcher of water over her head. Also, they slept in a tent that was also full of wild animals the robber girl had captured and made into pets.

(STORYTELLER exits as GERDA and the ROBBER GIRL enter into the tent. Several animals are present, including the REINDEER. The robber girl yawns loudly.)

ROBBER GIRL: Time for bed.

(SHE flops down upon a pillow. GERDA lies down quietly in her own spot.)

ROBBER GIRL: *(Cont'd.)* I can't sleep. Sing me a song or something.

GERDA: *(Begins singing badly.)* One day a duck fell in love with a frog that thought it was a tuuuuurtle...

ROBBER GIRL: Never mind. Tell me about your adventure again. I like that story.

GERDA: Well, it all began back at my home, with Kay, of course. The greatest friend I've ever had. And I haven't seen him in so long, and some nights I dream that he's nearby, but as soon as I get close enough to call to him he zips away on his sled. And then I wake and I feel I shall never find him.

(ROBBER GIRL snores.)

GERDA: *(Cont'd.)* Well. Never mind the rest then.

(ROBBER GIRL continues to snore.)

GERDA: *(Cont'd.)* And she complains about my snoring. *(SHE sees the pitcher of water and, for a moment, a slightly wicked grin flits across her face. She picks up the pitcher.)*

No. I really shouldn't. It wouldn't be nice. It would be funny, but...then again, I believe she sleeps with a knife under her pillow. I don't understand how that could be comfortable.

REINDEER: Psst!

GERDA: Someone there?

REINDEER: Psssssssst!

GERDA: I can't see you.

REINDEER: I'm right behind you. In the shadow. With the antlers.

GERDA: Oh! It's you!

REINDEER: Shh! You don't want to wake her. She's not a very pleasant person when she's awoken. Awaken? Awoked?

GERDA: I'm not surprised.

REINDEER: I know where Kay is!

GERDA: Oh...I'm sorry, but I just can't believe you. You've never seen Kay. I've had too many false hopes. I can't just run off on another wild goose chase.

REINDEER: Geese? Who said anything about geese? I'm talking about the pigeons.

GERDA: Pigeons?

REINDEER: Yes. They're gray birds, bigger than your fist. Make a soft cooing sound.

GERDA: I know what pigeons are, but why are we talking about them?

REINDEER: Since I first heard you tell your story, I've been asking all the animals I see if they know where Kay is. This afternoon, two pigeons told me that just about a year ago, they saw the Snow Queen flying quickly through the night sky.

GERDA: The Snow Queen?

REINDEER: Yes! The pigeons said they have often seen her in the midnight sky, but one night was different because there was a boy in the sleigh with her. A boy with a small sled on his back. A boy who matches the exact description of your Kay!

GERDA: Can it really be?

REINDEER: I have never known a pigeon to be a liar. Ever.

(GERDA squeals and the ROBBER GIRL sits straight up in her bed, wildly swinging her knife through the air, sleep-talking.)

ROBBER GIRL: All of the mushrooms, I say! Every last one! Or else I'll... *(SHE mumbles and then drifts off to sleep, snoring again.)*

GERDA: Do the pigeons know where the Snow Queen has taken him?

REINDEER: They didn't see, but she was traveling north, toward Lapland—my home country! And right on the border of the Snow Queen's domain.

GERDA: Is it terribly far?

REINDEER: It's not as far as you'd think if you have a good strong reindeer to carry you.

GERDA: *(Shrieking with excitement again.)* You! You could take me!

ROBBER GIRL: *(Thrashes awake just a bit.)* Mother, I don't want to pet the snails! They're so...yucky! *(she is out again.)*

REINDEER: Only if we can convince that girl to let both of us free.

GERDA: Tomorrow, then. I'll ask her. I'm sure she'll let us go!

(SFX: A rooster crows as the STORYTELLER enters.)

STORYTELLER: Gerda was so excited she could barely sleep! She felt as if the next morning would never come. When it did, she explained everything to the robber girl.

ROBBER GIRL: So you want me to let you go?

GERDA: If you'd be so kind.

ROBBER GIRL: And the reindeer, too?

GERDA: I'll never make it there without him.

ROBBER GIRL: I like that reindeer!

GERDA: I'm sorry, but there's really no other way.

ROBBER GIRL: *(Sighs.)* It's going to be very cold in the north, obviously. So...I suppose you'll need your snow boots back.

But I am keeping the muff, because I like it!

GERDA: You'll let us go?

ROBBER GIRL: And you'd best take a couple loaves of bread and some meat with you. But not too much! If you didn't help steal it, you shouldn't get to eat too much. You were never any help stealing things.

GERDA: Oh thank you, thank you, thank you so much!

ROBBER GIRL: I'm only letting you go because I get tired of your crying at night waking me up.

GERDA: Of course.

AUDITION 2- 1 m, 2 w, 1 flex

In this scene Gerda finds Kay and rescues him.

(Inside the Snow Queen's throne room, KAY sits on the floor, the SNOW QUEEN sits on her throne.)

KAY: Please. I'm afraid something is very wrong with me. My chest—it hurts almost all the time.

SNOW QUEEN: But you're such a smart boy! Surely you can figure it out for yourself.

KAY: I...I'm afraid I've never heard of anything like this.

SNOW QUEEN: Your heart is turning to ice, boy. And once it is finished, you will stay here with me forever.

KAY: Please, I...forever is such a long time! I think I ought to go. *(He attempts to leave but finds himself magically stopped at the door.)*

SNOW QUEEN: Once you accepted my magic kiss, you sealed your fate! You are bound to remain with me—one with the ice and the snow. What now? Is my brave little boy beginning to cry? Don't fear, small one. Once you have become one with the ice, then you'll be free of all that makes you weak. Fear. Pain. Loneliness. All that will be left is cold.

KAY: Please. Help me.

SNOW QUEEN: I cannot do anything for the magic looking glass in your heart. That magic is beyond even me. However, I will give you an opportunity to earn your freedom. *(She waves at a stack of large ice shards.)* You say you are a clever boy. Show me. Here is a puzzle for you. Take these shards of ice and put them together to form one simple word: "Forever." Spell "Forever," and you will be free to leave.

KAY: I will. Thank you, Snow Queen! I will!

(He sits and hurriedly begins to tinker with the ice as the SNOW QUEEN smiles over him.)

STORYTELLER: This was back in the early spring—not that it makes any difference in the Snow Queen's castle. Each day, Kay would try to solve the puzzle, yet no matter how hard he tried, the only word he could manage to force out of the pieces was "Impossible." Now the Snow Queen had left to spread the winter winds across the land, and Kay's time was growing short indeed.

(SNOW QUEEN exits. KAY sits in the same place, almost completely still. One arm moves slowly, absently picking up ice shards and then dropping them again. His face has taken on an ashen quality and his speech is flat and distant. GERDA carefully creeps in, looking around. At first she doesn't notice Kay, but once she sees him she nearly explodes with delight. She runs up to him.)

GERDA: Kay! Kay! Oh, at last, at last I've finally found you! Are you truly here? Or am I imagining it? Kay, have you gone deaf? Kaaaaaay!

(She throws her arms around him, but he doesn't respond. He merely continues dropping the ice shards.)

GERDA: *(Cont'd.)* Kay? Kay, what's the matter?

KAY: Who is it?

GERDA: It's me, your Gerda! I know it's been a year since you've seen me, but I'm sure I can't look that different. Kay. Say that you remember me.

KAY: I think...yes... Gerda. Yes. We were friends once.

GERDA: We are friends, Kay! I've come all this way to find you and bring you home! You'll be so proud when you hear of the adventure I've had.

KAY: This is where I belong. With the ice. With the cold. I shall become one with it, soon. I think...it's what I want.

GERDA: I will drag you out of here if I have to. What is the matter with you?

KAY: I can't leave. You can't take me. It's all right. Don't be afraid. I used to be afraid.

GERDA: What are you talking about?

KAY: These pieces. They are supposed to spell "Forever." If they spell "Forever" I am free.

GERDA: A puzzle! I'll help you! Kay, we can't give up now!

KAY: I've already figured it out. There is no solution. You see? Nothing is forever. We were friends. But now that's gone. We kept flowers. But they die every year. They die to the cold. Sooner or later. Everything does.

GERDA: Kay! Kay, you're frightening me. You can't give up! I won't let you!

KAY: Don't be frightened. I was once. Now there's no fear. There's nothing. Only...

GERDA: Kay. *(No response, as KAY is no longer moving.)* Kay? No...no, it can't be. *(She puts her arms around his shoulders and weeps.)* Have I come all this way only to lose you now? My poor, dear Kay... *(She kisses him gently on the forehead, then weeps.)*

STORYTELLER: And Gerda cried. It was the truest, most anguished cry of her entire life. As she cried, her tears fell on Kay's frozen face. And then...a miracle.

(KAY blinks his eyes.)

STORYTELLER: *(Cont'd.)* Somehow, Gerda's tears melted away the enchanted glass in Kay's eye. And slowly...

(KAY's arm begins to move.)

STORYTELLER: *(Cont'd.)* ...but surely...

(KAY turns his head to the side, sees GERDA hugging him.)

STORYTELLER: *(Cont'd.)* ...Kay's heart began to thaw.

KAY: Gerda?

GERDA: Kay?

KAY: What are you doing here?

GERDA: KAY!

(She bowls him over with an enthusiastic embrace, and they roll onto the shards of ice.)

KAY: Watch out! Everything feels so stiff.

(GERDA yanks him to his feet.)

GERDA: Stand! Stretch! Walk! Oh, Kay, I can't believe you're really you!

(She hugs him and he nearly falls again, but this time he catches himself and they both start to slip on the ice. The following lines come so rapidly they nearly overlap.)

KAY: How did you find me?

GERDA: You're really alive!

KAY: *(Looking at his thawing limbs.)* How did you do this?

GERDA: I don't know!

KAY: What's happened?

GERDA: Kay, it's been horrible, but it doesn't matter now because we're together and you're all right and now we can go home!

(THEY dance around together.)

KAY: Wait. No!

GERDA: What's wrong?

KAY: I can't go home. I can't leave! The Snow Queen's spell!
It can only be broken if I solve this puzzle.

GERDA: We'll do it together then.

KAY: I've been working on it all year. It's impossible, Gerda!

GERDA: After what I've been through? I don't believe in impossible! *(She gets down on her hands and knees over the pieces of ice and prepares to move them.)* What did you say the ice had to spell out?

KAY: "Forever." But Gerda, it doesn't work! The only word I can get it to spell is...

(GERDA holds up a slate of ice with the word "FOREVER" etched firmly across it.)

KAY: *(Cont'd.)* ...impossible! How?

GERDA: I didn't do anything! We fell here when I hugged you, but... Kay! Does this mean...?

(KAY has already headed to the entrance to the point where he was stopped earlier. He cautiously reaches a hand out and it passes through the invisible barrier.)

KAY: Gerda...I'm free. You've freed me! *(He runs up to her and they hug again.)* Let's go home.

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