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The Snow Queen

A play

Ron Nicol

based on the story by Hans Christian Andersen

Samuel French — London



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PRODUCTION NOTES

The Snow Queen has been written with amateur drama groups and youth organisations in mind. Companies vary in what they have available, and many have limited resources. The play can be staged as simply or as elaborately as you wish, but should be as imaginative as possible.

Size of company is not too important because there are opportunities for doubling or even trebling several roles, and there can be any number of Trolls, Courtiers, Robbers, Attendants, Ice Creatures and Guardian Angels.

The action takes place on an empty stage, or in almost any space. Furniture and properties have been suggested, but certain items can be dispensed with if not considered essential. Furniture should be set and struck as part of the action to help each scene flow into the next, and lengthy scene changes must be avoided.

Lighting can be basic or elaborate depending on resources. Fades to black-out for a few seconds are sufficient for scene drops, and together with the scene changes help to keep the performance moving. A snow projector is very effective for adding that touch of magic, and can be used in several scenes. Music could be added for scene links and for background atmosphere in some scenes.

The story takes place in Denmark, Lapland, and Finland but costumes can be authentic or as simple as necessary—lots of furs and blankets. The Reindeer (one person or two) and the Crows provide a challenge for costume makers.

The final battle between the Ice Creatures and the Guardian Angels could be seen as representing the struggle between Good and Evil and should be imaginatively staged or perhaps choreographed for dancers. The Troll and Robber dances may be omitted if preferred.

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(See also page ii)

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CHARACTERS

(in order of speaking)

First Troll
Second Troll
Third Troll
Fourth Troll
Fifth Troll
Sixth Troll
Old Troll
Gerda
Kai (pronounced Kay)
Grandmother
Snow Queen
First Child
Second Child
Third Child
Fourth Child
Enchantress
Wild Crow
First Soldier
Second Soldier
Sergeant
Tame Crow
Princess
Prince
Twin Ladies-in-Waiting
First Robber
Second Robber
Third Robber
Old Hag
Robber Girl
Reindeer
Lapp Woman
Finn Woman

CHARACTERS

(non-speaking)

Lords, Ladies, Gentlemen, Courtiers, Ladies-in-Waiting, Gentlemen-in-Waiting, Ladies' Maids, Handmaids, Housemaids, Parlour-maids, Chambermaids, Scullery-maids, Lackeys, Flunkeys, Footmen, Servingmen, Servants, Servants' Servants, Servants' Servants' Boy, i.e. as many people as possible; Robber Band, Snow Queen's Ice Attendants, Ice Creatures, Guardian Angels.

The **Penguin** has no real part in the story, and penguins belong in the Southern Hemisphere anyway. However, it provides a very small part for the tiniest/youngest member of the group, although it can be omitted.

ACT I

The Lights go up on an empty stage

Several Little Trolls enter. They are strange childlike creatures with long fingers and pointed ears, dressed in outlandish ragged clothes. They dance wildly, eventually collapsing in exhaustion

First Troll That were great! I 'joyed that.

Second Troll Yeah—good, wannit?

Third Troll There's better fings to do 'n that.

Fourth Troll Yeah—wot mischief c'n we do?

Fifth Troll Find some yoomins and tease 'em.

Sixth Troll Better'n that—find yoomin *chilluns*!

Second Troll Chilluns—that's better!

Third Troll Much better!

Fourth Troll (*rising*) Where'll we find chilluns round 'ere?

Fifth Troll (*rising and sniffing the air*) I wonder...

Sixth Troll (*rising and sniffing, turning towards the audience*) Hey, look!

Fifth Troll Where?

Sixth Troll There! (*He points at the audience*) Out there! Lots of 'em!

Fifth Troll Yeah! (*He calls to other Little Trolls*) Hey, you lot! C'mere!

The Little Trolls advance and peer out at the audience

Sixth Troll Yoomins!

All Yeah!

Second Troll N' chilluns!

All Yeah!

Third Troll Yoomin chilluns!

All Yeahh!

Fourth Troll Lots of 'em.

All Yeahhh!

Fifth Troll Undrids of 'em!

All Yeahhhh!

Sixth Troll Wot'll we do to 'em?

Second Troll Pinch 'em...

All Yeahhhhh!

Third Troll Poke 'em...

All Yeahhhhhh!

Fourth Troll Punch 'em...

All Yeahhhhhhhh!

Fifth Troll Pull their hair.

All Yeahhhhhhhh!

Fifth Troll (*pointing*) There's one wiv pigtails—let's pull 'em. Make 'er squeal!

Fourth Troll Heh heh! I loves pullin' pigtails—let me do 'em! (*He pushes Fifth Troll*)

Fifth Troll (*pushing Fourth Troll*) I seen 'er first!

Fourth Troll Do it togevver—one pigtail each!

Fifth Troll Yeah!

The Fourth and Fifth Trolls are about to climb into the audience

First Troll (*anxiously*) You can't. It's time for school.

Second Troll Spoilsport!

Third Troll Goody goody!

Second Troll Teacher's pet!

Third Troll Get 'im!

First Troll No! No! Noooooo!

The Little Trolls turn on the First Troll. They fight, yelling, "Pull his ears off!", "Poke his eye out!", and similar troll-like expressions. The Sixth Troll keeps a lookout. The First Troll is on the ground

Sixth Troll Look out! Here's the Headie!

The fight goes on—the First Troll is underneath the other trolls

(*Panicking*) Stop it, you lot!

The Old Troll, an ancient creature with a long white beard, and carrying a huge book, enters UC

The Sixth Troll stands aside and pretends nothing is happening

Old Troll What's going on here?

Sixth Troll Nuffink.

The Little Trolls get up and try to look innocent, except the First Troll who is still writhing on the ground. The Little Trolls stand in front of the First Troll to hide him from the Old Troll

Old Troll I said—"what's going on?"

All Trolls Nuffink!

As the Old Troll stares them out, they all slowly move aside

Old Troll (*seeing the First Troll*) What are you doing down there?

Second Troll Gettin' up!

The Little Trolls snigger

Old Troll What happened?

First Troll (*getting up and trying to speak*) Them—they wuz...

All Trolls (*drowning out First Troll*) We wizzn't doin' nuffink!

Old Troll (*to First Troll*) I'll speak to you later. (*He turns away*)

The First Troll makes a face at the others. Angry muttering from the other Little Trolls. The Old Troll turns

I'll speak to you *all* later!

The Little Trolls mumble rebelliously

In fact, I think I'll speak to your mothers!

This quietens the Little Trolls

Get to your places!

Grumbling, they sit in a semi-circle round the Old Troll C, facing upstage

Now. Are you all sitting comfortably?

Trolls Yes, Teacher.

Old Troll (*to the Little Trolls and the audience*) Then I'll begin. Now listen!

All of you! Listen! It's time to begin our story—and when we come to the end, you'll know more than you do now. (*He opens the book*) Once upon a time...

The Little Trolls groan

Listen! Once upon a time there was a troll—a very old troll—even older than me. Listen! He was an evil troll—the most evil of them all. Now, he invented a mirror. A magic mirror! It had the power to make everything good and beautiful that was reflected in it look small and ridiculous.

Everything bad and ugly was made bigger and much more horrible. But one day, little trolls—naughty little trolls just like you—took that mirror and broke it! Broke it into hundreds and thousands and millions and billions and trillions of pieces. The pieces were smaller than the smallest grain of sand, and the wind scattered them all over the world. Now, any teeniest weeni-est tiniest littlest piece that got in someone's eye made that someone see only the bad things in other people and none of the nice things at all. Now, listen—most terrible of all—if a splinter pierced someone's heart—that heart would turn into a lump of ice!

As it begins to snow, the Little Trolls scatter. They re-enter and set up a door frame L of C, a rocking chair and a small table to make a basic room setting R, as the Old Troll continues the story

Now, in that long ago time, in a big city, there lived two children. Their names were Gerda and Kai, and they lived with Gerda's Grandmother in this little house...

The Old Troll and the Little Trolls fade into the shadows as Grandmother enters R, sits in the chair, and starts to knit

Gerda enters the room excitedly R and runs "outside" through the door to L

Gerda Kai! Kai! Come and see!

Kai enters R

Kai What is it, Gerda?

Gerda It's snowing! Look—it's snowing! (*She calls through the door to Grandmother*) Grandma, come and see!

Grandmother rises and goes outside

Kai It's snowing, Grandma! It's snowing! Look!

Grandmother Yes, the white bees are swarming.

Gerda What do you mean?

Kai The snowflakes, silly—they look like white bees.

Gerda So they do. Big fat bees!

Kai Do snowflakes have a queen bee—like real bees, Granny?

Grandmother Yes—she's called the Snow Queen. She flies high up in the clouds where no-one can see her. And no-one *wants* to see her because people say she's all made of ice—dazzling, gleaming ice.

The Light dims as the Snow Queen enters UL unseen, and stands in the shadows

(Shivering) Ooooh! It's suddenly got colder! Come on—it's too cold to play outside. You can come out again when the snow stops.

They go through the door. Grandmother sits in the rocking chair. Gerda and Kai sit on the floor at her feet

Gerda Tell us about the Snow Queen, Grandma. Please!

Grandmother Well now, let's see. Ah yes—sometimes on a cold winter night she flies through the city streets. She peers in at the windows and breathes on them with her frosty breath—then the glass freezes over, as if it's covered with icy flowers.

Kai Yes—I've seen that!

Grandmother It's so cold she'll probably be looking in the windows tonight.

Gerda (looking round nervously) She can't come in here, can she?

Grandmother Oh Gerda, of course she can't!

Kai (bravely) Just let her try! I'll put her on the stove and melt her!

The Snow Queen laughs quietly in the shadows L, and moves downstage

Gerda What was that?

Kai What?

Gerda I thought I heard someone laugh.

Grandmother (reassuringly) There's no-one there, child.

Kai goes to the door and looks out

Kai It's still snowing.

The Snow Queen looks sharply at Kai and away again. Kai clutches his chest

Ouch!

Gerda What's wrong?

Kai Something hit me in the chest!

The Snow Queen looks sharply at Kai and away. Kai puts his hand to his eye

Ow!

Grandmother What is it?

Gerda What's happened?

Kai I've got something sharp in my eye now.

Grandmother Let me see. (*She brings Kai back into the room, and looks in his eye*) Look up. Look down. No, I can't see anything.

Kai It's gone. I can't feel anything now.

Gerda Let *me* look!

Kai (*turning away*) There's nothing to see.

Gerda It must hurt. Are you sure you're all right?

Kai (*irritated*) Oh, don't fuss! It's gone now.

Gerda I was only trying to help...

Kai (*pushing her away*) I don't *need* any help!

Grandmother Kai! Don't be so nasty!

Kai (*angrily, imitating her*) "Kai, don't be so nasty!" There's nothing wrong with me! Leave me alone!

Grandmother Goodness me! Sometimes I don't understand you at all!

Grandmother exits UR, annoyed

Gerda takes a picture book from the table and approaches Kai as he stands with his back to her

Gerda (*trying to make friends*) Kai. Look at this picture book—it's full of flowers...

Kai Picture books are for babies!

Gerda I'm *not* a baby!

Kai I'll show you something *much* better! (*He goes through the door, reaches out, and catches a snowflake in his cupped hands. He brings it back inside*) Look at this snowflake. It's marvellous—like a star. It's perfect. Much nicer than stupid old flowers...

Gerda (*triumphantly*) Until it melts!

Kai looks at his now empty palm, and turns away. Gerda pulls him round and thrusts the book at him

These flowers are lovely too, and *they* don't melt. Look at these roses...

Kai grabs the book roughly and points at the pictures

Kai (*nastily*) That one's being eaten by a worm, and this one's got a nasty insect on it, and that one's dying! They're really *ugly*!

Gerda They're not! They're not! (*Plaintively*) You like roses...

Kai I don't now. Flowers're stupid! (*He throws the book away*)

Gerda starts to cry

WAIT, THERE'S MORE!

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