The Snow Queen

Hans Christian Andersen

STORY THE FIRST

Which tells of the looking-glass and the bits of it

Attention, please, we're going to begin. When we've got to the end of the story we shall know more than we do now. There was a wicked troll. He was one of the very worst sort—he was the devil. One day he was in a very temper, for he had made a looking-glass which had this property: that everything good and pretty that was reflected in it shrivelled away in it to almost nothing, but everything that was no good and looked ugly came out plain and showed even worse than it was. The most beautiful landscapes looked like boiled spinach in the glass, and the best of men grew hideous, or else stood on their heads and had no stomachs. Their faces were so distorted that they couldn't be recognized, and if anyone had a freckle, you could be sure it would spread all over his nose and mouth. It was extra-ordinarily funny, the devil said. If a kind pious thought passed through a man's mind, there came such a grimace in the glass that the troll-devil couldn't but laugh at his clever invention. Everyone who attended the troll school (for he kept a troll school) spread the news all about that a miracle had come to pass: you could now see, they said, what the world and mankind really looked like. They ran about everywhere with the glass, and at last there wasn't a country or a person left who hadn't been distorted in it. After that they decided to fly up to heaven itself and make fun of the angels and of God. The higher they flew with the glass, the more it grimaced, till they could scarcely keep hold of it. Up and up they flew, nearer to God and His angels, and then the glass quivered so fearfully with grimacing that it fell out of their hands and was dashed on the ground below, where it broke into hundreds of millions, billions, and even more pieces; and that very thing made matters worse than before, for some of the bits were hardly as big as a grain of sand, and these flew all about in the wide world, and when they got into peoples' eyes, they stuck there, and the people either saw everything crooked or else had only eyes for what was wrong in anything; for every little splinter of the glass had kept the same power that the whole glass had. Some people even got a little bit of the glass into their hearts, and that was horrible, for the heart became just like a lump of ice. Some of the pieces were so big that they were used for window glass, but it didn't pay to look at your friends through those window-panes. Other pieces were made into spectacles, and that was a bad business, if people put on those spectacles in order to see correctly and judge rightly. The evil one laughed till he split, it tickled him so. But out in the world little bits of glass were still flying about in the air.

Now we are to hear all about it.

STORY THE SECOND

A Little Boy and a Little Girl

In the big town, where there are so many houses and people that there isn't room enough for everybody to have a little garden, and where in consequence most people have to content themselves with flowers in pots, there were two poor children who had a garden somewhat bigger than a flower-pot. They weren't brother and sister, but they were as fond of each other as if they had been. Their parents were near neighbours, living in two attics, where the roof of the one house touched the other, and the gutter ran along the eaves: a small window in each house faced the other; you had only to step across the gutter and you could get from one window to the other.

The parents had, each of them, a large wooden box outside the window, and in it grew kitchen herbs which they used, and also a little rose tree; there was one in each box, and they flourished wonderfully. Then the parents thought of putting the boxes across the gutter in such a way that they reached almost from the one window to the other and really looked like two bunches of flowers. The pea plants hung down over the boxes, and the rose trees put out long branches and twined about the windows and bent over to meet each other, and made almost a triumphal arch of leaves and blossoms. The boxes were very high up, and the children knew they must not climb up into them, but they were often allowed to get out to meet each other and sit on their little stools beneath the roses, and there they used to play very happily.

In winter, of course, that pleasure was gone. The windows were often quite frozen over; but then they would heat copper pennies on the stove, and then put the hot pennies on the frosty pane, and there came a beautiful peep-hole, as round as round, behind which peeped out a blessed little kind eye, one out of each window; the little boy's and the little girl's. He was called Kay and she Gerda. In summer they could get to each other with a single jump, in winter they had first to go down a lot of stairs and then up a lot of stairs, while the snow came drifting down outside.

"Those are the white bees swarming," said the old grandmother.

"Have they got a queen too?" asked the little boy—for he knew that the real bees have one. "Indeed, they have," said grandmother, "she flies where they swarm thickest; she is the

biggest of them all, and she never stays still on the ground, but flies up again into the black cloud. Many a winter night she flies through the streets of the town and peeps in at the windows, and then they freeze into wonderful patterns like flowers."

"Yes, I've seen that," said both the children; and they knew it was true. "Can the Snow Queen get in here?" asked the little girl.

"Let her come!" said the boy, "and I'll put her on the hot stove and she'll melt." But grandmother stroked his hair and told them stories about other things.

In the evening, when little Kay was at home, and half undressed, he climbed up on the stool by the window and peeped through the little hole. A few snowflakes were falling outside, and one of them, the biggest of them all, remained lying in a corner of one of the flower-boxes. This flake grew larger and larger, and at last turned into the complete shape of a lady, dressed in the finest white gauze, which seemed to be made out of millions of star-shaped flakes. She was very pretty and delicate, but she was of ice, blinding, dazzling ice; yet she was alive. Her eyes gazed out like two bright stars, but there was no rest or quietness in them. She nodded towards the window and beckoned with her hand. The little boy was frightened and jumped down off the stool; and then it seemed as if a large bird flew past the window.

Next day was clear and frosty, and then came a thaw, and after that came spring-time, and the sun shone and the green buds peeped forth; the swallows built their nests, the windows were open, and the children sat once more in their little garden high up in the gutter in the topmost story.

That summer the roses blossomed as never before. The little girl had learnt a hymn in which there was something about roses, and at the mention of them she thought of her own, and she sang the hymn to the little boy and he sang it too.

The roses grow in the valley,

Where we meet the Jesus Child.

The little ones held each other by the hand and kissed the roses and gazed into God's bright sunshine and spoke to it as if the child Jesus were there. What lovely summer days were those, and how blessed it was to be out among the fresh rose bushes, which seemed as if they would never leave off blossoming!

Kay and Gerda were sitting looking at a picture book with beasts and birds in it, and then—just as the clock in the great church tower was striking five—Kay said, “Oh! Something pricked my heart, and I’ve just got something in my eye!”

The little girl put her arm round his neck, and he winked his eye, but no, there was nothing to be seen. “I think it’s gone,” he said, but it wasn’t. It was one of those tiny bits that were broken off the glass, the troll-glass—you remember about that—that horrid glass which made everything great and good that was reflected in it become mean and ugly, while the evil nasty things came out, and every blemish was plain to be seen. Poor Kay! He had got a piece of it right into his heart, which would soon be like a lump of ice. For the moment it wasn’t doing any harm; still, there it was.

“What are you crying for?” he asked. “It makes you look horrid! There’s nothing the matter with me. Ugh!” he called out suddenly. “That rose there’s worm-eaten! And look at that other, it’s all crooked. Rotten roses they are, after all, like the boxes they’re in.” With that he gave the box a hard kick and pulled off the two roses. “What are you doing, Kay?” cried the little girl; and when he saw she was frightened, he pulled off a third rose, and ran in at his own window, leaving dear little Gerda. Later, when she brought him the picture book, he said, “it was only fit for babies”, and when grandmother told them stories, he was always breaking in with a “But”. And if he could he would follow her about with spectacles on and imitate her talking; it was exactly like, and made people laugh. Very soon he could imitate the walk and talk of everybody in their street. Everything that was odd or not nice about them Kay could mimic, and people said, “That boy’s got an uncommon wit, to be sure”. But it was the bit of glass he had got in his eye and the bit he had in his heart; and so it came about that he would tease even little Gerda, who loved him with all her heart. The games he played were quite different now: they were very clever. One winter day, when the snow-flakes were drifting down, he brought a big magnifying glass and held out the corner of his blue jacket and let the flakes fall on it.

“Now look through the glass, Gerda,” he said; and there was every flake made much bigger, and looking like a beautiful flower or a ten-pointed star: lovely it was to see. “Look how clever it is,” said Kay, “it’s much more interesting than the real flowers are; and there’s not a single thing wrong with them, they’re perfectly accurate—if only they didn’t melt.”

A little later Kay came in with big mittens on, and his sledge hung on his back; he shouted to Gerda, right in her ear, “I’ve got leave to drive in the big square where the others are playing,” and he was off.

Out there in the square the boldest of the boys often used to tie their sledges to a farmer’s cart and drive a good long way with it. It was excellent fun. At the height of their sport a large sledge came by; it was painted white all over, and in it was someone wrapped in a

shaggy white fur and wearing a shaggy white cap. This sledge drove twice round the square, and little Kay made haste and tied his own little sledge to it, and drove off with it. Faster and faster it went, into the next street. The driver turned his head and nodded to Kay in a friendly way; it seemed as if they knew each other. Every time Kay thought of loosing his sledge the driver nodded again, so Kay stayed where he was: and they drove right out through the town gate. Then the snow began to fall so thick that the boy couldn't see his hand before him as he drove on; and he hastily loosed the rope so as to let go of the big sledge. But it made no difference, his little trap held fast to it, and it went like the wind. He called out loudly, but no one heard, and the snow drifted down and the sledge flew onward. Sometimes it made a bound as if it were going over ditches or fences. He was in a dreadful fright; he tried to say the Lord's Prayer, but he could only remember the multiplication table.

The snow-flakes grew bigger and bigger, till at last they looked like large white hens; suddenly they parted, the big sledge pulled up, and the person who was driving in it rose. The fur and the cap were all of snow: it was a lady, tall and slender, shining white—the Snow Queen.

"We have travelled well," said she; "but you mustn't freeze. Creep into my bearskin." She put him beside her in the sledge, and he felt as if he were sinking into a snow-drift. "Are you still cold?" she asked, and kissed him on the forehead. Ugh! it was colder than ice, and struck straight to his heart—which itself was almost a lump of ice. He felt as if he was dying, but only for a moment: then all was right, he didn't notice the cold about him any more.

"My sledge! Don't leave my sledge behind!" that was the first thing he remembered: so it was tied on to one of the white hens, which flew after them with the sledge on its back. Once more the Snow Queen kissed Kay, and he had forgotten little Gerda and grandmother and everyone at home.

"No more kisses now," said she, "or I should kiss you to death." Kay looked at her; very pretty she was; a cleverer, fairer face he could not imagine. She didn't seem now to be of ice, as she was when she sat outside the window and beckoned him. In his eyes she was perfect, and he felt no fear. He told how he knew mental arithmetic, and with fractions, too, and the area of the country, and how many inhabitants, and she smiled all the time, till he thought that what he knew didn't come to much. He gazed up into the immense spaces of the air, and she flew on with him, flew high among the dark clouds, and the storm wind whistled and roared as if it were singing old ballads. Over forest and lake they flew, over sea and land: below them the cold blast whistled, the wolves howled, the snow sparkled; above them flew the black cawing crows, but over all shone the moon, large and bright; and by its light Kay watched through the long long winter night; by day he slumbered at the feet of the Snow Queen.

STORY THE THIRD

The Flower Garden of the Old Woman who knew Magic

But how fared little Gerda when Kay came back no more? Where could he be? Nobody knew, nobody could tell. The boys could only say they had seen him tie his little sledge to another fine large one which had driven down the street and out at the town gate. Nobody knew where he was. Many tears were shed; sore and long did little Gerda weep. Then they said he was dead, drowned in the river that ran past the town. Dark indeed and long were those winter days.

Then came spring with warmer sunshine.

“Kay is dead and gone,” said little Gerda.

“I don’t believe it,” said the Sunshine.

“He’s dead and gone,” said she to the swallows.

“I don’t believe it,” they answered, and at last little Gerda didn’t believe it either.

“I’ll put on my new red shoes,” she said one morning early, “the ones Kay has never seen, and I’ll go down to the river and ask about him.”

It was quite early. She kissed her old grandmother as she slept, put on the red shoes, and went out of the gate to the river, quite alone.

“Is it true that you have taken my little playfellow? I’ll give my red shoes if you’ll give him back to me.”

The waves, she thought, nodded in a queer fashion; so she took her gay red shoes, the most precious thing she had, and threw them both into the river, but they fell close into the bank, and the little waves carried them straight back to her on shore. It seemed that the river would not take the most precious thing she had because it had not got little Kay. But she thought she hadn’t thrown the shoes far enough out, so she climbed into a boat that lay in the rushes, and went out to the further end of it and threw out the shoes. But the boat was not moored fast, and with the movement she made it floated away from the shore. She

noticed this and made haste to get out, but before she could get back the boat was more than a fathom away, and began to drift more quickly along. Little Gerda was very much frightened and began to cry; but nobody heard her except the sparrows, and they couldn't carry her ashore; but they flew along the bank and sang, as if to comfort her: "Here we are, here we are!" The boat was carried downstream; little Gerda sat still, in her stockinged feet; her little red shoes floated behind, but couldn't reach the boat, which was now travelling faster.

Both banks were very pretty, with beautiful flowers, old trees, and sloping fields with sheep and cows; but never a man was to be seen.

"Perhaps the river will carry me to little Kay," thought Gerda. This put her in better spirits, and she stood up and for many hours gazed at the pretty green banks. At last she came to a large cherry orchard, in which was a little house with quaint blue and red windows, and for the rest a thatched roof, and outside two wooden soldiers, who were shouldering arms for everyone who came sailing by. Gerda called to them, thinking they were alive: but very naturally they didn't answer. She came quite near them; the river carried the boat straight towards the shore. Gerda called out yet louder, and then there came out of the house an old old woman, supporting herself on a crooked stick. She had a large sun-hat on, painted with the most splendid flowers.

"Poor dear little child," said the old woman, "how ever did you get out here on this great big river, far out into the wide world?" And with that the old woman stepped into the water and hooked her stick fast to the boat and pulled it ashore and lifted little Gerda out. Gerda was glad to be on dry land again, but still she was a little afraid of the strange old woman. "Come now, and tell me who you are, and how you got here," she said. And Gerda told her everything; and the old woman shook her head and said, "Hm, hm!" And when Gerda had told her everything and asked if she had seen little Kay, the woman said he hadn't passed that way, but he would come, sure enough, and she wasn't to be worried, but must taste her cherries, and look at her flowers, that were prettier than any picture book and could each of them tell a whole story. Then she took Gerda by the hand, and they went into the little house, and the old woman locked the door.

The windows were placed very high up, and the glass in them was red and blue and yellow. The daylight shone very oddly through them, with all their colours; but on the table were the most beautiful cherries, and Gerda ate as many as she liked, for she was allowed to; and while she was eating, the old woman combed her hair with a gold comb, and the hair curled and shone lovely and yellow about her kind little face, the round face that looked like a rose.

"I've been longing for a sweet little girl like you," said the old woman, "you'll see how well we two shall get on," and all the time she was combing little Gerda's hair Gerda was

forgetting more and more her foster brother Kay: for the old woman was skilled in witchcraft, but she wasn't a wicked witch, she only used witchcraft a little, for her own pleasure, and just now she wanted very much to keep little Gerda. In order to do so, she went out into the garden and stretched out her hooked stick towards all the rose bushes: and though they were all blooming beautifully, they all sank down into the black earth and you couldn't see where they had been. The old woman was afraid that when Gerda saw the roses she would think of her own roses, and then remember little Kay and run away.

Then she took Gerda out into the flower garden. Dear me! What fragrance and beauty there was there. All the flowers one could think of, flowers belonging to every season, stood there in their full bloom; no picture book could be more gaily coloured and pretty. Gerda jumped for joy and played about till the sun set behind the tall cherry trees. Then she was given a lovely bed with red silk pillows that were stuffed with blue violets, and there she slept and dreamt as beautiful dreams as any queen on her wedding day.

Next day she played among the flowers again in the hot sunshine; and so many days went by. Gerda knew every flower, but, many as there were of them, she thought that one was missing, but she didn't know which. Then, one day she was sitting looking at the old woman's sun-hat with the flowers painted on it, and the prettiest of all that were there was a rose. The old woman had forgotten to take it away from her hat when she got rid of the others in the garden. It only shows what comes of not having your wits about you. "Why!" said Gerda, "aren't there any roses?" And she ran in among the beds and looked and looked, but there were none to be found. Then she sat down and cried; but her hot tears fell exactly on the spot where a rose tree had sunk down, and when the tears wetted the ground the tree rose up all at once, blossoming just as when it sank down, and Gerda threw her arms round it and kissed the roses, and thought of the beautiful ones at home, and with them of little Kay.

"Oh, how I have been dawdling," said the little girl. "I was to find Kay—don't know where he is?" she asked the roses, "do you think he's dead and gone?" "Dead he isn't," said the roses. "We've been down in the ground where all the dead people are, but Kay wasn't there."

"Thanks, thanks," said little Gerda, and went off to the other flowers and looked into their cups and asked: "Do you know where little Kay is?"

But every one of the flowers was standing in the sun and dreaming its own story or life and of these little Gerda heard ever so many; but none of them knew anything about Kay.

What said the tiger lily?

"Do you hear the drum! boom! boom! There are only two notes! Boom! Boom! Hark to the women's dirge! Hark to the cry of the priests! In her long red robe the Indian woman stands

on the pyre, and the flames rise round her and her dead husband; but the woman is thinking of the living one who stands there in the circle, of him whose eyes burn hotter than the flames, the fire of whose eyes pierces nearer her heart than the flames which will quickly burn her body to ashes. Can the heart's flame perish in the flames of the pyre?"

"I don't understand that in the least," said little Gerda.

"That's my story," said the tiger lily.

What says the bindweed?

"High above the narrow field-path hangs an ancient castle. Thick evergreens grow about the old red walls, leaf on leaf, away up to the balcony, and there stands a fair maiden. She bends over the parapet and looks down upon the road. No rose hangs fresher on its spray than she, no apple blossom borne by the breeze from its tree floats more gracefully. How her costly silken kirtle rustles! Cometh he not?"

"Is it Kay you mean?" asked little Gerda.

"I'm only talking of my story, my dream," the bindweed answered.

What says the little snowdrop?

"Between the trees the long board hangs in the ropes. It's a swing: two pretty little girls—their frocks white as snow, and long green silk ribbons fluttering from their hats—are sitting and swinging. Their brother, who is bigger than they, is standing up in the swing, with his arm round the ropes to steady himself, for in one hand he has a little saucer and in the other a clay pipe, and he's blowing soap bubbles. To and fro goes the swing, and the bubbles float with lovely changing colours; the last one is still hanging to the pipe-stem and swaying in the breeze; on goes the swing. The little black dog, as light as the bubbles, stands on his hind legs and wants to get into the swing too; it flies past, he tumbles down, and barks, and is angry. They laugh at him—the bubbles burst. A swinging plank, a waving picture in foam! That is my song."

"I suppose it's very pretty, what you're talking about, but you say it so sadly, and you never mention Kay."

What do the hyacinths say?

"There were three fair sisters, delicate and fine; the robe of one was red, the second's was blue, and the third's all white. Hand in hand they danced by the still lake in the bright moonlight. They were no elfin maidens, but of the children of men. There came a waft of

fragrance, and the maidens vanished in the forest. Stronger grew the perfume. Three coffins, wherein the three fair maidens lay, glided from the depths of the forest, glided over the lake. Fireflies flew round them like tiny evening lamps. The dancing maidens, do they slumber or are they dead? The scent of the flowers tells that they are dead. The evening bell rings out over the dead."

"You make me quite wretched!" said little Gerda. "Your scent is so strong, I can't help thinking of the dead maidens. Oh, dear! Is little Kay really dead? The roses have been down in the ground and they say 'No'."

"Ding, dong!" rang out the hyacinth bells. "We're not ringing for little Kay, we don't know him, we're only singing our own song, the only one we know."

So Gerda went to the buttercup, shining out from among its brilliant green leaves. "You're a bright little sun," said Gerda; "tell me if you know where I can find my playfellow." The buttercup shone very prettily and looked back at Gerda. What song, now, could the buttercup sing? Not one about Kay, at any rate.

"In a little yard God's sun was shining warm on the first day of spring; its beams crept down the neighbour's white wall; close by grew the first yellow flowers, shining like gold in the hot sunbeams. The old grandmother was out of doors in her chair; her pretty grand-daughter, the poor servant maid, came home upon a short visit, and gave her grandmother a kiss. There was gold, beautiful gold in that blessed kiss, gold on the lips, gold in the heart, gold up there in the early morn. Look, that's my little story," said the buttercup.

"Oh, my poor old granny!" sighed Gerda. "Yes, she must be longing for me, and unhappy about me, as she was about little Kay. But I'll soon be home again and bring Kay with me. It's no good asking the flowers; they only know their own song and tell me nothing." So she tucked up her little frock to run the quicker. But the narcissus hit against her leg as she jumped over it, and she stopped and looked at the tall flower and asked: "Do you happen to know anything?" And she stooped down to it; and what did it say?

"I can see myself! I can see myself!" said the narcissus. "Oh, how strong my scent is! Up in the little garret stands a little ballet-girl half dressed—standing first on one leg she is, then on both, and kicking out at the whole world—she's only an illusion. She's pouring water out of a teapot on to a bit of stuff that she's holding; it's her stays. Cleanliness is a good thing. The white frock hangs on its peg, it too has been washed in the teapot and dried on the roof. She puts it on, and a saffron yellow kerchief about her neck, which makes the dress shine whiter. Legs up in the air! Look how she stands on a stalk! I can see myself, I can see myself!"

"I don't care about that in the least," said Gerda, "it's no use telling me that." So she ran to

the border of the garden; the door was locked, but she twisted at the rusty staple till it came away, and the door flew open, and then out ran little Gerda barefoot into the wide world. Thrice she looked back, but there was nobody coming after her. At last she could run no further, and sat down on a big stone, and when she looked about her, why, summer was over and it was late autumn. You couldn't see that inside that beautiful garden, where there was always sunshine and flowers of all seasons bloomed.

"Good heavens! How I have dawdled!" said the Gerda. "It's autumn now. I daren't rest a minute!" So she got up and went on.

Oh, how bruised and tired were her little feet, and how cold and raw it was all round! The long leaves of the willow were pale yellow, and the mist dripped off them in waterdrops; one leaf after another fell, and only the sloe bush had kept its fruit—sour fruit that dried up your mouth. Oh, how grey and dismal it was out in the wide world!

STORY THE FOURTH

A Prince and Princess

Gerda had to rest herself again. And there, hopping over the road right in front of where she sat, was a large crow. For a long time it had sat and looked at her with its head on one side, and now it said, "Kra, Kra—Goo'day, Goo'day!"—it couldn't say it any better, but it meant very kindly by the little girl, and asked where she was going all alone in the wide world. The words "all alone" Gerda understood very well, and felt how much they meant; so she told the crow all the story of her life and asked if it had seen Kay. The crow nodded very thoughtfully, and said, "Maybe, maybe." "What? Do you think you have?" the little girl cried, and almost squeezed the crow to death, she kissed it so hard.

"Gently! Gently!" said the crow. "I think it may be little Kay, but if so, he's quite forgotten you for the Princess."

"Does he live with a Princess?" asked Gerda.

"Yes, listen," said the crow, "but I find it so hard to talk your speech. If you can understand crow-talk I can tell you better."

"No, I haven't learnt it," said Gerda, "but Granny knew it, and knew P-talk too. I wish I'd learnt it."

“Doesn’t matter,” said the crow, “I’ll tell you as well as I can, but I shall make a poor business of it.” So it told what it knew.

“In the kingdom where we are now there lives a Princess who is exceedingly clever; besides, she’s read all the newspapers in the world and forgotten ’em again, she’s so clever. The other day she was sitting on her throne, which isn’t much fun after all, people say; and she happened to hum a song which was ‘Heigh-ho for a husband!’ ‘Why, there’s something in that,’ said she, and she made up her mind to marry; only she would have a husband who knew how to answer when you talked to him, one that didn’t merely stand there and look distinguished; that’s very dull. So she had all the court ladies drummed up, and when they heard what she wanted, they were delighted. ‘I do like that,’ they said, ‘we were just thinking something of the sort the other day.’ Now you may be sure every word I’m telling you is true,’ said the crow, ‘for I’ve got a sweetheart who’s tame and goes everywhere about the palace, and she told me the whole thing.’ Of course, the sweetheart was a crow too, for crow seeks his mate, and the mate’s always a crow.

“The newspapers came out immediately with a border of hearts and the Princess’s monogram, and you could read there how it was open to any good-looking young man to come up to the palace and speak with the Princess, and the one that spoke so you could see he was at home there, and talked the best, the Princess would take him for husband. Yes, indeed,” said the crow, “you may take it from me, as sure as I sit here, the people came streaming in: there was a crowd and a commotion, but nothing came of it, either the first day or the second. They could all of them talk well enough while they were out in the street, but when they came in by the palace gate and saw the guards in silver, and footmen in gold, all up the stairs, and the big halls all lighted up, they were flabbergasted, and when they stood in front of the throne where the Princess was sitting, they couldn’t think of anything to say but the last word she had said, and she didn’t care about hearing that over again. It was just as if the people in there had got snuff into their stomachs and were stupefied till they got out into the street again, and they could talk. There was a row of them reaching right away from the town gate to the palace. I went there myself to look at it,” said the crow. “They got hungry and thirsty too, but they got nothing from the palace, not even so much as a glass of luke-warm water. Some of the cleverest, to be sure, had brought a bit of bread and butter with them, but they didn’t give their neighbours any: they thought to themselves: ‘Just let him look hungry and the Princess won’t have him.’”

“But Kay, little Kay,” asked Gerda. “When did he come? Was he among all those people?” “Give me time, give me time! Now we are getting to him. It was the third day, and there came a little fellow without horse or carriage, marching quite cheerfully straight up to the palace. His eyes shone like gems and he had lovely long hair, but his clothes were shabby.”

“It was Kay,” Gerda cried out joyfully. “Oh, then I’ve found him!” And she clapped her

hands.

“He had a little bundle on his back,” the crow said.

“Ah, that must have been his sledge,” said Gerda, “for he went off with his sledge.” “It might quite well be that,” said the crow. “I didn’t look very close at it, but I know from my tame sweetheart that when he came in at the palace gate and saw the lifeguards in silver and the footmen in gold all up the stairs, he wasn’t in the least taken aback, but nodded and said to them: ‘It must be dull standing on the stairs. I’d sooner go in.’ The halls were shining with lights, and privy councillors and excellencies were walking barefoot and carrying golden dishes; it was enough to make anybody feel solemn. His boots creaked dreadfully loud, but he wasn’t frightened a bit.” “That’s certainly Kay,” said Gerda. “I know he’d got some new boots, I heard them creak in Granny’s room.”

“Yes, creak they did,” said the crow, “and as bold as could be he walked straight into the Princess, who was sitting on a pearl as big as a spinning-wheel, and all the court ladies with their maids and their maids’ maids, and all the courtiers with their men and their men’s men, who keep a page, were stationed all around, and the nearer they stood to the door the prouder they looked: the men’s men’s page, who always wears slippers, can hardly be looked at, he’s so proud standing there at the door.”

“That must be frightening,” said little Gerda, “and yet Kay won the Princess!”

“If I hadn’t been a crow I’d have taken her myself, though I am engaged. He spoke, it seems, every bit as well as I do when I speak crow-talk, so my tame sweetheart tells me. He was cheerful and nice-looking. He hadn’t come courting at all, but only to hear the Princess’s conversation, and he thought well of it, and she thought well of him.”

“Oh, yes! Certainly it’s Kay,” said Gerda. “He was clever: he knew mental arithmetic with fractions. Oh, won’t you take me into the palace?”

“It’s easy enough to say that,” said the crow, “but how are we to manage it? I must talk to my tame sweetheart about it, she’s sure to be able to advise us; for I must tell you that a little girl like you will never be allowed to come right in.”

“Oh, yes, I shall,” said Gerda. “When Kay hears I’m here, he’ll come out directly and fetch me.” “Well, wait for me here at the stile,” said the crow, and put his head on one side and flew off. Only when it was dark did the crow come back. “Rax! rax!” said he. “She sends you her best compliments, and here’s a small loaf for you which she took from the kitchen: there’s lots of bread there, and I’m sure you’re hungry. It’s not possible for you to get into the palace: why, you’re barefoot, and the guards in silver and the footmen in gold wouldn’t allow it; but don’t cry, you shall get in all the same. My sweetheart knows of a little backstair

that leads to the bedroom, and she knows where she can get the key."

They went into the garden, up the great avenue where one leaf after another was falling; and when the lights in the palace were put out one by one the crow led little Gerda across to a back door which stood ajar.

Oh, how Gerda's heart beat with anxiety and longing! She felt as if she was going to do something wrong, yet all she wanted was to know if it was little Kay; why, it must be he; she imagined so vividly his clever eyes and his long hair; she could actually see how he would smile when they were sitting at home beneath the roses. He would, of course, be overjoyed to see her and to hear what a long way she had come for his sake, and how everyone at home had grieved when he didn't come back. How anxious and how glad she was!

They were now at the stairs: a little lamp was burning in a stand: in the middle of the floor stood the tame crow, turning her head this way and that, and contemplating Gerda, who curtsied as her grandmother had taught her to do.

"My betrothed has spoken most charmingly of you, my little lady," said the tame crow, "and your biography, as we may call it, is also very touching. If you will take the lamp, I will lead the way. We shall go by the shortest way, where we shall meet no one."

"I think someone is coming after us," said Gerda. Something came rushing by, as it were shadows passing along the wall, horses with fluttering manes and slender legs, huntsmen and lords and ladies on horseback.

"They're only dreams," said the crow, "they come and fetch the Quality's thoughts out a-hunting, and it's a good thing; you can look at them in bed all the better. Only let me see, if you come to honour and distinction, that you bear a thankful heart."

"Oh, there's no use talking about that," said the crow from the forest.

They now entered the first chamber, which was of rose-red satin with worked flowers on the walls; here the dreams were already darting past them, but they went so quick that Gerda could not manage to see the Quality. Each chamber was handsomer than the last, it was enough to bewilder anyone; and now they were in the bedchamber. The roof of this was made like a palm tree with leaves of glass—costly glass—and in the middle of the floor there hung from a thick stem of gold two beds, each made to look like a lily; one was white, and in it lay the Princess; the other was red, and there it was that Gerda must look for little Kay. She bent aside one of the red leaves, and there she saw a brown neck—oh, it was Kay. She called his name aloud and held the lamp over him. The dreams dashed back into the room, galloping—he woke, turned his head, and—it wasn't little Kay.

The Prince was only like him in the neck, but he was young and handsome, and out of the white lily bed the Princess peeped and asked what was the matter. Then little Gerda burst into tears and told her whole story and all that the crows had done for her.

“Poor little dear!” said the Prince and the Princess, and they praised the crows and said they were not at all displeased with them, but all the same they mustn’t do it again. Meanwhile they should be rewarded. “Would you like to go free?” the Princess asked, “or would you like a permanent situation as court crows, with everything that is dropped in the kitchen?”

Both crows bowed and asked for permanent situations, for they had their old age in mind, and, said they, “It’s a very good thing to have something in store for the old man”. That was their phrase. The Prince got up out of his bed and let Gerda sleep in it, and he couldn’t do more than that! She clasped her little hands and said: “How kind people and animals are.” And then she shut her eyes and slept deliciously. All the dreams came flying back, and now they looked like angels of God, and they were drawing a little sledge, and in it sat Kay, nodding to her: but it was all only dreams, and so it was gone again as soon as she woke up.

Next day she was dressed out in silk and velvet from top to toe and invited to stay at the palace and enjoy herself; but she begged only to have a little carriage and horse, and a pair of little boots, and she would drive out again into the wide world and find Kay. She was given both boots and a muff, and was dressed out very nicely, and when she was to set off a new carriage of pure gold drew up at the door. The arms of the Prince and Princess shone like a star on it. The coachmen and servants and outriders (there were outriders too) wore gold crowns. The Prince and Princess helped her into the carriage themselves and wished her the best of luck. The forest crow, who was now married, went with her for the first twelve miles, sitting beside her, for he couldn’t stand being driven backwards. The other crow stood in the doorway and flapped her wings; she couldn’t come with them, for she was suffering from a headache since she had obtained a permanent situation and too much to eat. Inside, the coach had a provision of sugar twists, and inside the seat was fruit and gingerbread nuts. “Good-bye, good-bye!” shouted the Prince and Princess. Little Gerda cried, and the crow cried, and so it went for the first few miles. Then the crow said, “Good-bye” and that was the hardest parting. He flew up into a tree and flapped his black wings as long as he could see the carriage, that shone as bright as the sunshine.

STORY THE FIFTH

The Little Robber Girl

They were driving through the dark forest, but the coach shone like a blaze, and dazzled the eyes of the robbers and they couldn't stand it. "It's gold, it's gold!" they shouted, and dashed out and seized the horses, killed the little postilions and the coachman, and the servants, and dragged little Gerda out of the carriage.

"She's fat, she's dainty, she's been fed up with nut kernels," said the old robber woman, who had a long coarse beard and eye-brows that hung down over her eyes; "she's as good as a little house-lamb; aha, how good she'll taste!" With that she drew her bright knife, and it shone frightfully.

"Ow!" said the old hag all at once. She'd been bitten in the ear by her own little daughter, who was hanging on her back, and was so wild and rough as never was. "Nasty brat!" said her mother, and had no time to kill Gerda.

"She shall play with me," said the little robber girl, "she will give me her muff and her nice frock and sleep with me in my bed." She gave her mother another bite, so that the old hag jumped in the air and twisted right round, and all the robbers laughed and said: "Look at her dancing with her young 'un."

"I'm going to go in the coach," said the little robber girl, and she must and would have her way, so spoilt and obstinate she was. She and Gerda sat in it and drove over stumps and thorn-bushes, deep into the forest. The little robber girl was as big as Gerda, but stronger, broader in the shoulders and dark-skinned. Her eyes were quite black and had a rather sorrowful expression. She put her arm about little Gerda and said: "They shan't kill you as long as I don't get cross with you: of course, you're a Princess?"

"No," said little Gerda, and told her everything that had happened to her, and how fond she was of little Kay. The robber girl looked at her very gravely and nodded her head and said: "They shan't kill you even if I do get cross with you; I'll do it myself." And she dried Gerda's eyes and put both her hands into the pretty muff that was so soft and warm.

The coach stopped. They were in the court of a robber's castle. It had split from top to bottom. Ravens and crows flew out of the holes in the wall, and the big bulldogs, each of which looked as if he could swallow a man, leapt high in the air but didn't bark, for they weren't allowed to. In the great old sooty hall a large fire was burning in the middle of the stone floor; the smoke mounted to the vault and had to find its own way out. A large copper was on the boil, with soup, and hares and rabbits were turning on the spit.

"You shall sleep to-night with me and all my pets," said the robber girl. They had something to eat and drink, and then went off into a corner where straw and blankets were lying: up above, about a hundred pigeons were perched on laths and poles. They seemed to be all

asleep, but they stirred a little when the girls came there.

“Those are all mine,” said the little robber girl. She seized one of the nearest and held it by the legs and shook it till it flapped its wings. “Kiss it,” she cried, buffeting Gerda in the face with it. “There sit the wood rubbish,” she went on, pointing behind a number of slats nailed in front of a hole higher up. “Wood rubbish they are, those two. They’d fly off at once if they hadn’t been locked up safe; and there’s my own old sweetheart Bae.” She pulled out a reindeer by the horn: he had a bright ring of copper on his neck and was tethered up. “We have to keep him tight too, else he’d go bounding away from us. Every blessed night I tickle him in the neck with my sharp knife, and it frightens him awfully,” and the little girl pulled a long knife out of a crack in the wall and slid it along the reindeer’s neck. The poor beast kicked out with his legs and the robber girl laughed, and then pulled Gerda into bed with her.

“Do you want the knife with you when you go to sleep?” Gerda asked, looking at it rather nervously.

“I always sleep with my knife by me,” said the little robber girl, “you never know what may happen. But now tell me again what you told me about little Kay, and why you’ve come out into the wide world.” So Gerda told it again from the beginning, and the wood-pigeons cooed up in their cage, and the other pigeons slept. The little robber girl put her arms round Gerda’s neck, holding her knife in her other hand, and slept—you could hear her—but Gerda couldn’t even shut her eyes; she didn’t know whether she was to live or die. The robbers sat round the fire and sang and drank, and the old hag turned head over heels. It was a frightful sight for the little girl to see.

Then the wood-pigeons said: “Coo, Coo! We have seen little Kay. A white hen was carrying his sledge, and he was sitting in the Snow Queen’s carriage which was flying low above the forest where we lay in the nest. She breathed on us young ones and all of them died but us two. Coo! Coo!” “What are you saying up there?” cried Gerda. “Where did the Snow Queen drive to? Do you know anything about it?”

“She drove to Lapland for sure, for there’s always snow and ice there. Just ask the reindeer that’s tied by the rope there.”

“There is ice and snow, it’s lovely and pleasant there,” said the reindeer. “There you can run about free in the great shining valleys. The Snow Queen has her summer pavilion there, but her strong castle is up by the North Pole, on the island that’s called Spitzbergen.”

“Oh, Kay, dear little Kay!” sighed Gerda.

“Now just you lie still,” said the robber girl, “else you’ll get a knife in your belly.” In the

morning Gerda told her everything the wood-pigeons had said, and the little robber girl looked very grave, but nodded and said: “It’s all one, it’s all one. Do you know where Lapland is?” she asked the reindeer.

“Who should know better than I?” said the beast, his eyes dancing in his head. “I was bred and born there, and it’s there I used to bound over the snowfields.”

“Look here,” said the robber girl to Gerda, “all our menfolk are out, you see, but mother’s here still and here she’ll be; but later in the morning she’ll drink out of the big bottle and have a little nap after; and then I’ll do something for you.” She jumped out of bed, ran across to her mother and pulled her by the beard, and said, “Good morning to my own dear nanny goat”. And her mother flipped her under the nose till it turned red and blue, but it was all done out of pure affection.

Well, when her mother had had a drink out of the bottle and was taking a little nap, the robber girl went to the reindeer and said: “I should awfully like to give you a lot more ticklings with my sharp knife, for you’re very funny when I do; but no matter for that, I’m going to loose your tether and help you off, so that you can run to Lapland. But you must put your best foot foremost and take the little girl for me to the Snow Queen’s palace where her playfellow is. You’ve heard what she told me, for she talked quite loud enough, and you were eavesdropping.”

The reindeer jumped for joy. The robber girl lifted little Gerda up and had the forethought to tie her fast, and even give her a little pad to sit on. “It don’t matter,” said she. “Here are your fur boots, for it’ll be cold, but your muff I shall keep, it’s much too pretty. All the same, you shan’t be frozen. Here’s my mother’s big mittens that reach up to your elbow, shove ’em on. Now your hands look just like my ugly old mother’s.”

Gerda cried for joy.

“I hate your whimpering,” said the little robber girl. “Why, you ought to look really happy; and there’s two loaves for you, and a ham, so you shan’t starve.” Both these were tied to the reindeer’s back. The little robber girl opened the door, and called in all the big dogs, and then she cut the rope with her knife and said to the reindeer: “Off you go, but take good care of the little girl.” Gerda stretched out her hands in the big mittens to the robber girl, and said “Good-bye”, and then the reindeer bounded off over bushes and stumps through the great forest, over marsh and moor, as fast as ever he could. The wolves howled and the ravens screamed. In the sky there was a noise, “Fut, fut!” It seemed as if someone were sneezing red. “Those are my dear Northern Lights,” said the reindeer, “look how they shine.” Faster and faster he ran, through day and night alike. The loaves were eaten up and the ham too, and then—they were in Lapland.

STORY THE SIXTH

The Lapp Woman and the Finn Woman

They stopped at a small house, a wretched place it was. The roof reached down to the ground, and the door was so low that the family had to crawl on their stomachs when they wanted to get in or out. There was nobody at home but an old Lapp woman who stood roasting fish at an oil lamp, and the reindeer told her Gerda's story; but first his own story, for he considered that was much more important; and Gerda was so exhausted with the cold that she couldn't speak.

"Dear me, you poor dear creature!" said the Lapp woman. "You've got a long way to run yet! You must travel more than four hundred miles, into Finmark, for there it is that the Snow Queen has her country-house and burns blue lights every blessed night. I'll write a word or two on a dry cod, for I haven't any paper, and give it you to take to the Finn woman up there: she can tell you more than I can." So as soon as Gerda had got warm and had had something to eat and drink, the Lapp woman wrote a few words on a split cod and told Gerda to take great care of it, and then she tied her fast on the reindeer again, and off he bounded. "Fut, fut!" the noise went on in the sky, and all night the loveliest blue Northern Lights burned there. And then they got to Finmark and knocked at the Finn woman's chimney, for she hadn't a door.

There was such a heat inside that the Finn woman herself went almost naked. She was stout and very thick made; she made haste to undo little Gerda's clothes and took off her mittens and boots, otherwise she would have been too hot. She laid a piece of ice on the reindeer's head, and then read what was written on the cod-fish. Three times over she read it, and then knew it backwards, and she put the fish into the cooking pot, for it might just as well be eaten, and she never wasted anything.

Then the reindeer told, first, his own story, and then little Gerda's; and the Finn woman blinked her wise eyes, but said not a word.

"You are so clever," said the reindeer, "I know you can bind all the winds of the world in a single thread, and when the skipper looses the first knot he gets a good wind, and if he looses the second it blows strong, and if he looses the third and the fourth there's a storm that blows the forests down. Won't you give the little girl a drink, so she can get the strength of twelve men and get the better of the Snow Queen?"

“Strength of twelve men!” said the Finn woman. “That would be just the thing, to be sure!” She went over to a shelf and took out a large rolled-up skin which she unrolled; strange letters were written on it, and the Finn woman read in it till the water trickled down her brow. But the reindeer pleaded again so hard for little Gerda, and Gerda gazed at the Finn woman with such beseeching eyes full of tears that she began to blink her own eyes again, and drew the reindeer apart into a corner, where she whispered to him, at the same time laying fresh ice on his head.

“Little Kay is with the Snow Queen, sure enough, and finds everything after his own wish and thought, and believes that it is the best place in the world: but that comes of his having a splinter of glass in his heart and a little grain of glass in his eye. They must come out, or he will never become human again, and the Snow Queen will keep her power over him.”

“But can’t you give little Gerda something to take, so that she can get the better of it all?”

“I can give her no greater power than she has already! Don’t you see how great it is, how men and beasts alike are bound to serve her, and how she has made her way so wonderfully in the world on her bare feet? She must not learn of her power from us; it lies in her heart, it lies in her being a dear innocent child. If she cannot win through to the Snow Queen and rid little Kay of the glass, we cannot be of any help. Ten miles from here begins the Snow Queen’s garden, and you can carry the little girl as far as that. Put her down by the large bush that stands there in the snow with red berries on it. Don’t make a long jabber of it, and make haste back.” Then the Finn woman lifted little Gerda up on to the reindeer, and he ran off as fast as he could.

“Oh, I haven’t got my boots, I haven’t got my mittens!” cried little Gerda. She noticed it at once in the scorching cold. But the reindeer dared not stop, and he ran till he came to the large bush with the red berries, and then he put little Gerda down, kissed her on the mouth, and large limpid tears ran down over the beast’s cheeks. Then he ran off back again as hard as he could. There stood poor Gerda shoeless, without gloves, in the middle of fearful ice-cold Finmark.

She ran on as quick as she could, and then there appeared a whole regiment of snowflakes. They had not fallen from the sky, for that was quite clear and shining with the Northern Lights. These snowflakes ran along the ground, and the nearer they came the larger they grew. Gerda remembered how big and how wonderfully wrought they had looked, that time when she looked at some snowflakes through the magnifying glass; but here they were quite of another sort in size and dreadfulness; they were alive, they were the Snow Queen’s sentinels. They were of the strangest shapes. Some looked like great ugly hedgehogs, others like knots of snakes sticking their heads out and others again like little fat bears with bristling hair. All of them were glittering white, and all were living snowflakes.

Then little Gerda began to say the Lord's Prayer, and so fierce was the cold that she could see her own breath coming out of her mouth like a cloud of smoke. Thicker and thicker it grew, and shaped itself into little bright angels who grew larger and larger when they touched the ground. They all had helmets on their heads and spears and shields in their hands, and more and more of them came. By the time Gerda had finished saying her prayer there was a whole legion of them about her. They struck at the ugly snowflakes with their spears and broke them into hundreds of bits, and little Gerda went safely and boldly onwards. The angels chafed her hands and feet, and she felt the cold less, and on she went quickly towards the Snow Queen's palace.

But now we must see how little Kay's getting on. He certainly wasn't thinking about little Gerda, and least of all that she was just outside the palace.

STORY THE SEVENTH

-What happened in the Snow Queen's Palace, and what happened after that

The walls of the palace were of drifted snow, and the windows and doors of cutting wind. More than a hundred halls there were, all just as the snow had drifted. The largest was many miles long; all were lit up with the bright Northern Lights, and they were vast, empty, ice-cold and shining. There was never any merrymaking there, never so much as a little dance for the bears, when the storms could play for them and the polar bears walk about on their hind legs and show their pretty manners: never a nice little party to play slap-in-the-mouth, and rap-your-paws: never the least bit of a coffee party for the white fox misses: empty, vast, cold it was in the halls of the Snow Queen. The Northern Lights sent up their flames with such accuracy that you could mark exactly where they were at their highest point and when at their lowest. In the midst of the endless, empty hall there was a frozen lake: it had cracked into thousands of pieces, but each piece was so exactly similar to the next that it was like a conjuring trick. In the centre of this the Snow Queen would sit when she was at home, and say that she was seated in the mirror of intellect, and that it was the only one and the best in the whole world.

Little Kay was quite blue with the cold, nay, almost black, but he didn't notice it, for the Snow Queen had kissed the shivers out of him, and his heart was practically a lump of ice. He went about dragging a number of sharp-edged flat pieces of ice which he was arranging in every possible pattern and trying to make something out of them: just as you and I have little flat bits of wood and arrange them in patterns—a Chinese puzzle it's called. Kay too,

went on making patterns of the most elaborate kind—the Intellectual Ice Puzzle. To his thinking, these patterns were most remarkable and of the very greatest importance: this was the effect of the grain of glass that was stuck in his eye. He put together patterns to form a written word; but he never could succeed in putting out the exact word that he wanted, which was the word “Eternity”. The Snow Queen had said: “If you can find me that pattern, you shall be your own master, and I’ll make you a present of the whole world, and a new pair of skates.” But he couldn’t manage it. “Now I’m going to whisk off to the hot countries,” said the Snow Queen. “I shall go and peep into the black pots (those were the fiery mountains, Etna and Vesuvius they’re called). I must whiten them a bit: that’s my job, and, besides, it’ll be good for the lemons and vines. So off flew the Snow Queen, and Kay sat there all alone in the mile-long empty hall of ice, and gazed at the bits of ice and thought and thought till he crackled; all stiff and still he sat, you would have thought he was frozen to death.

It was at that moment that little Gerda walked into the palace through the great gate that was made of the cutting wind: but she said her evening prayer, and at that the winds laid themselves down as it were to sleep, and she entered the vast empty cold hall. And there she saw Kay and knew him, and flew and caught him by the neck, and clasped him close and cried: “Kay! Darling little Kay! So I’ve found you at last!”

But there he sat quite still and stiff and cold. Then little Gerda wept hot tears, which fell on his bosom and pierced through to his heart and thawed that lump of ice and consumed the little bit of glass that was there. He looked at her, and she sang the hymn:

The roses grow in the valley,

Where we meet the Jesus Child.

Then Kay burst into weeping: he wept so that the grain of glass ran down out of his eyes, and then he knew her and cried out in joy: “Gerda! Darling little Gerda! Wherever have you been all this time, and where have I been?” He looked about him. “How cold it is here, how empty it is and how big!” And he held fast to Gerda, and she laughed and cried with joy. It was all so happy that the very bits of ice danced about for joy; and when they were tired and lay down again, there they lay exactly in those letters which the Snow Queen had said Kay must make up, and if he did he should be his own master and she would give him the whole world and a new pair of skates.

And Gerda kissed his cheeks and they became rosy; she kissed his eyes and they shone like

hers; she kissed his hands and feet and he was well and sound. The Snow Queen might come back as soon as she liked; his release was there, written in shining bits of ice.

They took each other by the hand and walked out of the great palace. They talked of grandmother and of the roses on the roof, and wherever they went the winds lay still and the sun broke out; and when they reached the bush with the red berries, there stood the reindeer waiting for them, and he had another young doe with him, whose udder was full, and it gave the little ones its warm milk and kissed them on the mouth. Then the two carried Kay and Gerda, first to the Finn woman, where they warmed themselves in the hot room and got directions for their journey home, and then to the Lapp woman, who had made new clothes for them and repaired Kay's sledge.

The reindeer and the doe bounded along beside them, and accompanied them to the boundary of the country. There the first green leaves were peeping out, and there they took leave of the reindeer and the Lapp woman. "Good-bye!" said everybody: and now the first little birds began to twitter, the forest had green buds on it—and out of it came riding on a fine horse (which Gerda recognized, for it had been harnessed to the gold coach) a young girl with a flaming red cap on her head and pistols at her side. It was the little robber girl, who had got tired of staying at home and meant to go, first northwards and then some other way if she didn't like it. She knew Gerda at once and Gerda knew her, and they were delighted. "You're a cheerful sort of chap to trapse about after!" said she to little Kay. "I'd like to know if you're worth anyone's running to the other end of the world on your account!" But Gerda stroked her cheeks and asked after the Prince and Princess.

"They've gone travelling abroad," said the robber girl. "And the crow?" little Gerda asked.

"Oh, the crow's dead," she answered. "The tame sweetheart's a widow, and goes about with a bit of black worsted on her leg. She keeps up a fearful whining about it, but it's all my eye. But now, tell me how you got on, and how you managed to get hold of him." So Gerda and Kay both told her all the story. "And Snip-Snap-snurre-basselurre!" said the robber girl, shook hands with them both, and promised that if ever she passed through their town she'd come up and pay them a visit; and then she rode off, out into the wide world.

But Kay and Gerda went on, hand in hand: and as they went, beautiful spring was all about them with blossom and greenery. The church bells rang out, and they saw the tall towers and the big town—the very one where they lived—and into it they came and away to their grandmother's door, and up the stairs and into the room, where everything stood where it did before, and the clock was saying "Tick, tick", and the hands turning round. But, just as they passed through the door they were aware that they were grown people. The roses in the gutter were flowering in at the open windows, and there were the little stools, and Kay and Gerda sat down each on their own, and held each other by the hand. They had forgotten the cold empty splendour of the Snow Queen's palace as if it were a dismal dream.

Grandmother was sitting there in God's bright sunshine and reading aloud from the Bible. "Except ye become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter the Kingdom of Heaven."

And Kay and Gerda looked into each other's eyes, and all at once they understood the old hymn:

The roses grow in the valley

Where we meet the Jesus Child.

There they both sat, grown up and yet children, children at heart; and it was summer, warm delightful summer.

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