

DAY ONE

A wicked spirit made a mirror that made good things grow small and bad things grow big. It even changed anyone who looked into the mirror from kind to nasty.

All the spirits flew the mirror into the sky in order to turn the angels bad but they lost hold of it—the mirror fell to earth and shattered. Each of those shards had just as much evil power as the whole mirror. One little piece that got into someone's eye or heart would corrupt them. A bit of mirror could turn a heart to ice.

The wicked spirit was delighted.

DAY THREE

When Kay and Gerda read in the roof garden a few days later, something pricked Kay in the eye. "Ow!" He didn't know it, but it was tiny crystals of glass from the wicked spirit's evil mirror that got into his eye and into his heart.

But Gerda knew something had changed. Kay snapped at her meanly. The boy Gerda had always known was gone.

DAY TWO

A boy named Kay and a girl named Gerda were neighbors. They were best friends and as close as any brother and sister. In the summer, they read together in the roof garden between their houses. In the winter, they played indoors, looking out the frosted window at the snow.

One night, Kay saw a large snowflake outside. It grew and grew until it was a lady dressed in icy snow. The snow lady looked right at Kay and he was afraid.

DAY FOUR

Kay left Gerda to play on his sleigh with the older boys. A big white sleigh rode up to join them. Inside was someone in a white fur coat and hat. The boys tied their sleighs to the grand white one to be pulled along. As the white sleigh went faster and faster, only Kay's sleigh held on.

DAY FIVE

When the sleigh finally stopped, Kay saw that the driver was the snowy woman he'd seen before.

The Snow Queen. Kay was transfixed.

The Snow Queen offered Kay a bearskin blanket and kissed his forehead. That icy kiss made Kay change even more. He forgot everyone else—even Gerda. The Snow Queen offered Kay a bearskin blanket and kissed his forehead. That icy kiss made Kay change even more. He forgot everyone else—even Gerda.

DAY SEVEN

The old woman in the house on the river knew magic. Because she'd always wanted a little girl, she worked magic so Gerda would forget about her own home and live with her instead. But one day, Gerda smelled a rose in the old woman's garden and it jogged her memory about home. And about Kay. The roses told her Kay was still alive so Gerda set out again though now it was autumn.

DAY SIX

Back at home, it was springtime and Gerda thought Kay's disappearance meant he had died. But the sparrows told her he hadn't. So Kay threw her new red shoes into the river in exchange for her friend. But the shoes floated back to her. She got into a boat, which was carried away by the river. Soon, Gerda arrived at the bank of a house. An old woman appeared at the door.

DAY EIGHT

Gerda searched for Kay. A crow told her about a princess looking for a husband. A boy had recently arrived at her palace and that boy could be Kay. Gerda went to the palace, but the new husband was not Kay after all. The prince and princess felt bad for her though and gave her a golden coach and a tray of sweets for her search.

The golden coach attracted robbers, but a robber girl who owned a reindeer rescued Gerda from the rest of them and took her home. There, some pigeons told Gerda about the Snow Queen. They told Gerda the Snow Queen took Kay to the far north where the ice never melts.

Gerda had no idea how she would travel that far—until the robber girl offered her reindeer for the journey.

DAY NINE

Gerda rode the reindeer farther and farther north. She met another old woman who fed her and explained that the splinter of glass must come out of Kay's heart and eye in order for him to be released from the Snow Queen's curse.

The old woman told Gerda and the reindeer that Gerda's power was in her heart. Then she told her to go into the Snow Queen's palace by the berry bush in the garden.

Even though she'd left her boots and mittens at the old woman's house, Gerda pressed on through the snow, all the way to the berry bush in the garden.

DAY ELEVEN

Gerda kept hugging Kay and burst into tears because her friend was so cold, ignoring her. Those tears fell on Kay. Gerda's tears soaked into his heart and washed away the glass splinter in his eye. Kay burst into tears as well and he saw Gerda. He recognized her and remembered her! "Dear Gerda!" he cried. "What am I doing in this cold, bare place?" Gerda kissed his cheeks and color returned to Kay's face.

DAY TEN

Gerda's bare feet were freezing and the snowflakes in front of her got bigger and bigger because they were the Snow Queen's soldiers. But Gerda's warm breaths became armed angels who pushed the snowflakes back so Gerda could pass. Those angels also covered her feet so they wouldn't be so cold.

The Snow Queen wasn't at the palace just then. It was only giant walls of ice. And that's when Gerda saw Kay. He was cold and stiff and unfeeling. Gerda hugged him, but he didn't respond at all.

DAY TWELVE

Gerda and Kay left the Snow Queen's palace without trouble. The sun came out, the snow melted, and they were warm again. The robber girl and her reindeer said goodbye and the friends walked all the way home. Over time, Gerda and Kay almost forgot the Snow Queen as though it had all been a dream. They spent their summers on the roof garden among the roses. Together.