The Snow Queen

Hans Christian Andersen

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The First Story: Which Treats of the Mirror and the Broken Pieces

Well, now let us begin! When we have got to the end of the story, we shall know more than we do at present. It is all about a wicked troll, the worst of them all, the Devil. One day he was in a really good humor, for he had made a mirror which had this virtue, that everything good and beautiful which was reflected in it would shrink to almost nothing, but all that was worthless and hideous appeared only too distinctly, and was even magnified. The most beautiful landscapes looked like boiled spinach, and the best of people looked hideous, or were seen standing on their heads with no stomach to their bodies; the faces were so distorted that no one could recognize them, and, if one had a freckle, in the mirror it was sure to spread all over one's nose and mouth. "It is most amusing," said the Devil. If a good, pious thought passed through a person's mind it was reflected so hideously in the mirror that the chief of the trolls had to laugh at his crafty invention. All those who went to the troll-school — for he kept such a one — went about telling everybody that a miracle had happened; now at last one could see what the world and mankind really looked like. They ran about with the mirror till at last there was not a country or a human being that had not been reflected and distorted in it. And now they wanted to fly up to heaven with it and mock at the angels and the Lord. The higher they flew with the mirror the more distorted and ridiculous the reflections became, till they could scarcely hold it for laughter. Higher and higher they flew, nearer to God and the angels; then the mirror trembled so violently in its distortions that it slipped from their hands and fell down to the earth, where it broke into hundreds of millions and billions of pieces. But just on that account it caused greater misfortune than before, for some pieces were hardly as big as a grain of sand and these flew about all over the world, and when they got into people's eyes they stuck there and made everything appear to them topsy-turvy, or made them only see the wrong side of things, for every piece had retained the same power as the whole mirror. Some people even got a small piece into their hearts and this was the most terrible of all; these hearts became like lumps of ice. Some of the pieces were so large that they could be used for window-panes, but it was scarcely worth looking at one's friend's through these panes; other pieces were used for spectacles, and when people put on these spectacles to see aright and be just, then things went all wrong; the Evil One laughed till his sides ached — he felt so awfully tickled. But small pieces of glass were still flying about in the air. Now we shall hear!

The Second Story: A Little Boy and a Little Girl

In the middle of the big town, where there are so many houses and people that there is not room enough for every one to have a little garden, and where most people must therefore be content with growing flowers in pots, there were, however, two poor children who had a garden somewhat bigger than a flower-pot. They were not brother and sister, but they were just as fond of one another as if they had been. Their parents lived close to each other; they lived in two garrets, where the roof of the one house adjoined that of the neighboring one, with the gutter running between them along the eaves. There were two little windows opposite each other in the roofs of the houses; you had only to step across the gutter to get to one window from the other.

Outside each window the parents had placed a large wooden box in which they grew vegetables for their own use, and a little rose-tree, one in each box, which thrived well. The parents had now placed the boxes right across the gutter, so that they almost reached from one window to the other and looked exactly like two flower beds. The creepers of the sweet-pea hung down over the sides of the boxes, and the rose-trees shot long branches which twined themselves around the windows while others clustered together; it was almost like a triumphal arch of flowers and leaves. As the boxes were very high and the children knew that they must not climb up there, they were often allowed to step outside and sit on their small footstools under the rose-trees, and there they could play splendidly.

In the winter-time these pleasant hours came to an end. The windows were often frozen all over, but then they heated copper pennies on the stove and placed the warm coin against the frozen pane, and thus got a splendid peephole, so round, so round; and then from behind would peep a bright gentle eye, one from each window, they were those of the little boy and the little girl. He was called Kay, and she, Gerda. In the summer-time they could get to each other with one jump; in the winter they had first to go down many stairs and then up many stairs, while the snow was falling outside.

"It's the white bees that are swarming!" said the old grandmother.

"Have they also a queen-bee?" asked the little boy, for he knew that there was such a thing among the real bees.

"That they have!" said the grandmother; "she is generally where the swarm is thickest. She is the largest of them all and never settles on the ground, but flies up to the black clouds again. Many a winter night does she fly through the streets of the town looking in through the windows, and the frost on the panes then becomes most wonderful, and looks like flowers."

"Yes, I have seen that!" said both the children, and then they knew it was true.

"Can the Snow Queen come in here?" asked the little girl.

"Let her only come," said the boy, "I'll put her on the warm stove and then she'll melt."

But the grandmother smoothed his hair and told him some other stories.

In the evening when little Kay was at home and half-undressed, he climbed up on the chairs by the window and looked out through the little hole; he could see the snowflakes falling outside, and one of them, the largest of all, settled on the edge of one of the flower-boxes. The snowflake grew larger and larger till at last it became a full-grown woman, dressed in the most delicate white gauze; it looked as if it was composed of millions of star-like flakes. She was very beautiful and graceful, but she was made of ice, dazzling, glittering ice; still, she was alive, her eyes sparkled like two bright stars, but there was no repose or rest in them. She nodded toward the windows and beckoned with her hand. The little boy was frightened and jumped down from the chair, and just then it seemed as if a large bird flew past outside the window.

Next day it was clear frosty weather, and then came the thaw, and at last the spring; the sun shone, the green shoots burst forth, the swallows built their nests, the windows were opened and the two little children were again sitting in their little garden high up in the gutter on the roof.

The roses blossomed most beautifully that summer; the little girl had learned a hymn, in which there was something about roses, and that made her think of her own roses, and so she sang it to the little boy, who also joined in, and together they sang:

"The roses grow in the valley, Where the Christ-Child we shall see."

And the little ones held each other by the hand, kissed the roses, and looked up at God's bright sunshine, and spoke to it as if the Christ-Child were there. What beautiful summer days they were, what a blessing to be near the fresh rose-trees, which seemed never to cease blossoming.

Kay and Gerda sat looking in the picture book of animals and birds, when just at that moment the clock in the great church tower struck five. Kay exclaimed: "Oh dear! I feel as if something had stabbed my heart! And now I've got something into my eye!"

The little girl put her arms round his neck; he blinked his eye, but no — there was nothing to be seen.

"I think it is gone!" he said; but it was not gone. It was one of the glass pieces from the mirror, the troll-mirror, which you no doubt remember, the horrible mirror, in which everything great and good that was reflected in it became small and ugly, while everything bad and wicked

became more distinct and prominent and every fault was at once noticed. Poor Kay had got one of the fragments right into his heart. It would soon become like a lump of ice. It did not cause him any pain, but it was there.

"Why do you cry?" he asked. "And you look so ugly! There is nothing the matter with me! Fie!" he cried suddenly, "that rose is worm-eaten! And look! why, it is quite crooked! They are ugly roses after all, just like the boxes they are in!" And then he kicked the box with his foot, and knocked off two roses.

"Kay, what are you doing?" cried the girl; and when he saw her fright he knocked off another rose and rushed through his window away from the good little Gerda.

When afterward she brought out the picture book he said it was only fit for babies, and if the grandmother began to tell stories he was always sure to put in an if, and if he saw his opportunity he would go behind her, put on a pair of spectacles, and talk like her; he could mimic her exactly, and make people laugh at him. He could soon talk and walk like all the people in the whole street. Everything that was peculiar and unattractive to them he was sure to imitate, and then people said: "That boy must have a clever head!" But it was the piece of glass he had got in his eye and the piece of glass that had stuck in his heart that caused all this; that was the reason he teased even little Gerda, who loved him with all her heart.

He no longer cared for the old games, he was now only interested in what he considered was more sensible, thus, one winter day, when the snow was falling, he brought a large magnifying glass and held out the tail of his blue coat and let the snowflakes fall upon it. "Just look through the glass, Gerda!" he said; and every snowflake was magnified and looked like a splendid flower or star with many points, and a most beautiful sight it was!

"Do you see how curious it is?" said Kay, "how much more interesting than real flowers? And there is not a single fault in them; they are quite perfect, if only they do not melt away!"

Shortly afterward Kay appeared with thick gloves on, and his sledge on his back, and shouted into Gerda's ears: "I have got leave to go sledging in the great square, where all the boys are playing"; and off he went.

Many of the boldest boys on the playground used to fasten their sledges to the peasants' carts, and in this way they got a good ride. It was a merry time! While the fun was at its height a large sledge came driving past; it was painted all white, and a person was sitting in it wrapped in a white fur coat and with a white fur cap. The sledge drove twice round the square and Kay managed to get his own little sledge fastened to it, and away he went with it. They went faster and faster right through the next street; the driver turned round and nodded in a friendly way to

Kay, as if they were old acquaintances. Every time Kay wanted to set free his sledge, the driver nodded again to him, and so Kay remained on the sledge and soon they drove out of the gate of the town. The snow then began to fall so heavily that the little boy could hardly see a hand before him as they rushed onward; then suddenly he let go the rope, to get loose from the large sledge, but it was of no use, his little sledge stuck fast to the other and they sped on as quickly as the wind. He then cried out aloud, but nobody heard him; the snow fell fast and furious, and the sledge flew onward, while now and then it gave a jump, as if they were rushing over ditches and hurdles. He became quite frightened and wanted to say the Lord's Prayer, but could only remember the multiplication table.

The snowflakes became larger and larger, till at last they looked like big white fowls; suddenly they ran aside and the great sledge stopped and the person who had been driving stood up; the coat and the cap were entirely of snow. It was a lady, very tall and erect and dazzlingly white, it was the Snow Queen.

"We have got on quickly!" she said, "but you are shivering with cold! Creep in under my bearskin!" Then she put him beside her in the sledge and wrapped the skin round him, and he felt as if he were sinking into a snowdrift.

"Do you feel cold still?" she asked, as she kissed him on his forehead. Ugh! it was colder than ice, it went right through his heart, which was already half frozen; he felt as if he were going to die — but only for a moment, and then he was quite well again and did not feel the cold around him any more.

"My sledge! Don't forget my sledge!" This was the first thing he remembered; it was tied to one of the white fowls, which came rushing on behind them with the sledge on its back. The Snow Queen kissed Kay once more, and then little Gerda, and the grandmother, and all at home passed out of his mind altogether.

"I shall give you no more kisses," she said; "or I should kiss you to death!"

Kay looked at her; she was very beautiful; a more intelligent or lovely face he could not imagine; she did not now appear to him to be of ice as when she sat outside the window and beckoned to him. In his eyes she was perfect, and he did not feel the least afraid of her; he told her he knew mental arithmetic even in fractions, and how many square miles and inhabitants there were in all countries, to all of which she smiled. But he felt he did not know enough after all, and he looked up into the great space above, whereupon she flew with him high up on the black cloud, while the storm whistled and roared; it seemed as if it were singing old ballads. They flew over forests and lakes, across the ocean and many countries; below them the cold blast scoured the plains, the wolves howled and the snow sparkled, and over them flew the black, screeching

crows, while the moon shone bright and clear, and by its light he beheld the long, dreary winter's night — by day he slept at the feet of the Snow Queen.

The Third Story: The Witch's Flower Garden

But how did little Gerda fare when Kay did not return? Where could he be? Nobody knew; nobody could give any tidings of him. The boys could only tell that they had seen him tie his little sledge to another large and splendid sledge which drove down the street and out through the town gate. No one knew where he was; many tears flowed and little Gerda cried long and bitterly; then they said that he was dead, that he had been drowned in the river which flowed past close to the town; oh, they were indeed long, dark winter days.

Then came the spring with the warm sunshine

"Kay is dead and gone," said little Gerda.

"I don't believe it!" said the sunshine.

"He is dead and gone," she said to the swallows.

"We don't believe it!" they answered, and at last little Gerda did not believe it either.

"I will put on my new red shoes," she said one morning, "those which Kay has not seen, and then I will go down to the river and ask it about him!"

It was quite early; she kissed her old grandmother, who was asleep, put on the red shoes, and went out quite alone through the town gate toward the river.

"Is it true that you have taken my little playmate? I will make you a present of my red shoes if you will give him back to me."

And she thought the waves nodded to her strangely. She then took her red shoes, the most precious she had, and threw them both out into the river, but they fell close to the bank and the little billows soon carried them ashore to her. It seemed as if the river would not take the dearest treasure she had because it could not give back little Kay to her; but then she thought she had not thrown the shoes out far enough, and so she climbed into a boat which was lying among the rushes, and went right to the farthest end of it and threw the shoes into the water. But the boat was not fastened, and its motion as she got into it sent it adrift from the bank. As soon as she noticed this she hastened to get out, but before she could jump ashore the boat was an arm's length from the bank and now it drifted still faster.

Little Gerda now became quite frightened and began to cry, but no one heard her except the sparrows, and they could not carry her ashore; but they flew along the banks of the river, singing as if to comfort her: "Here we are! Here we are!" The boat drifted with the current, while little

Gerda sat quite still in her stockinged feet; her little red shoes were floating along behind, but they did not overtake the boat, which drifted more quickly ahead.

The banks on both sides of the river were pretty; there were beautiful flowers, old trees, and green slopes with sheep and cows, but not a human being was to be seen.

"Perhaps the river is carrying me to little Kay," thought Gerda; and then she became more cheerful and stood up in the boat, looking for many hours at the beautiful banks of the river, till she came to a large cherry orchard where there was a little house with strange red and blue windows and a thatched roof, and outside stood two wooden soldiers who presented arms to all who sailed past.

Gerda called out to them; she thought they were living beings, but of course they did not answer. She was drawing near to them; the current was driving the boat right against the shore.

Gerda called out still louder, when an old — very old — woman came out of the house, leaning upon a crook; she wore a big sun-bonnet with a broad brim painted all over with the most lovely flowers.

"You poor little child!" said the old crone; "how did you get into the strong, rapid current, and drift so far out into the wide world?" And the old woman went right out into the water, hooked her crook fast into the boat, pulled it ashore and lifted little Gerda out of it.

Gerda was glad to get on land again, but was a little afraid of the strange old woman.

"Come, tell me who you are and how you came here!" she said.

And Gerda told her everything, the old woman shaking her head all the time and only muttering "Hem! Hem!" When Gerda had told her all and asked her if she had not seen little Kay, the woman said he had not passed by there, but he would, no doubt, be coming that way; she had better be of good cheer and taste her cherries and see her flowers — they were much prettier than any picture book. Each of them had a story to tell. She then took Gerda by the hand and went into the little house, locking the door after her.

The windows were high up near the ceiling and the panes were red, blue, and yellow; the daylight shone through them in such a strange way in all sorts of colors. On the table stood the most delicious cherries, and Gerda ate as many as she liked, for she was not afraid to touch them. And while she was eating, the old woman combed her hair with a golden comb, till the glossy hair hung in beautiful yellow curls round the pleasant little face, which was as round and as fresh as a rose.

"I have really been longing for such a pretty little girl as you!" said the old woman. "You will soon see how well we shall get on together, we two!" And as she went on combing little Gerda's hair, the more Gerda forgot her playmate, little Kay, for the old woman was learned in witchcraft, but she was not one of the wicked witches. She only practised witchcraft for her own amusement, and did so now because she wanted to keep little Gerda. She therefore went out into her garden and stretched out her crook toward all the rose-trees, and, beautifully though they blossomed, she caused them all to sink into the dark ground and no one could see where they had been standing. The old woman was afraid that if Gerda saw the roses she would think of her own and then remember little Kay and run away.

She now led Gerda out into the flower garden. Oh, how fragrant and lovely it was there! Every imaginable flower of every season was here in full bloom; no picture book could be more variegated and beautiful. Gerda ran joyously about and played till the sun went down behind the lofty cherry-trees. Then she was put to sleep in a splendid bed with new silk quilts stuffed with blue violets, and there she slept and dreamed as happily as any queen on her wedding-day.

Next day she again played with the flowers in the warm sunshine, and thus many days passed. Gerda knew every flower, but numerous as they were she seemed to feel there was one missing, but she did not know which it was. Then, one day, as she sat looking at the old woman's sunbonnet with the painted flowers, she noticed that the prettiest of them all was a rose. The old crone had forgotten to take it off her bonnet when she buried the rose-trees in the ground. But that is the way when you don't keep your wits about you!

"What! are there no roses here?" cried Gerda, as she ran among the flower beds, looking and searching, but there were none to be found.

She then sat down and cried, but her hot tears happened to fall just where a rose-tree had sunk into the ground, and when the warm tears moistened the soil the tree shot up suddenly in full bloom, just as when it had disappeared. Gerda embraced it, kissed the roses, and thought of the lovely roses at home, and then of little Kay.

"Oh, how I have been losing my time!" said the little girl. "Why, I was going to find Kay! Do you know where he is?" she asked the roses. "Do you think he is dead, and lost to us?"

"He is not dead," said the roses. "We have been under the ground, where all the dead are, but Kay was not there!"

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

But all the flowers were standing in the sunshine, dreaming the fairy tale of their own lives. Gerda heard many — very many — of these stories, but none of the flowers knew anything about Kay.

And what did the orange-lily say?

"Do you hear the drum? Rat! Tat! There are only two sounds — always Rat! Tat! Listen to the women's funeral dirge! Listen to the priest's cry! The Hindoo woman is standing in her long red robe on the funeral pile, the flames are enveloping her and her husband's dead body; but the Hindoo woman is thinking of the living being in the circle around her, of him whose eyes burn hotter than the flames, and the fire which penetrates sooner to her heart than the flames which will soon burn her body to ashes. Can the flames of the heart die in the flames of the funeral pile?"

"I cannot understand it all!" said little Gerda.

"That is the story of my life," said the orange-lily.

What does the convolvulus say?

"Over the narrow mountain path looms an old castle; the ivy is climbing, leaf by leaf, up along the old red walls and around the balcony, on which stands a beautiful girl; she bends over the balustrade and looks down the road. No rose is fresher than she; no apple-blossom carried away from the tree by the wind could float more gracefully than she. How her magnificent silk robe rustles! She murmurs: "Will he not come?"

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

"I am only thinking about the fairy tale of my life, my dream," answered the convolvulus.

What does the little snowdrop say?

"Between the trees hangs a long board suspended between ropes; it is a swing, and two lovely little girls, in frocks white as snow, and with long green-silk ribbons fluttering from their hats, are sitting in it, swinging to and fro. Their brother, who is bigger than they, stands on the swing with one arm round the rope to steady himself, for in one hand he has a little bowl and in the other a clay pipe; he is blowing soap-bubbles. The swing goes backward and forward and the bubbles fly about, constantly changing their color. The last bubble is still hanging at the end of the pipe, swaying to and fro in the wind. A little black dog, as light as the bubbles, sits up on his hind legs and wants to get on the swing; but it never stops, and the dog falls, barks, and becomes

angry; they tease him, the bubbles burst — a swinging board, the picture of a bursting bubble is my song."

"It may be very pretty, all that you tell me, but you speak in such a sad voice, and do not mention Kay at all! What do the hyacinths say?"

"There were three beautiful sisters, fair and delicate; one was dressed in red, the other in blue, and the third in white; hand in hand they danced near the silent lake in the bright moonshine. They were not elfin-maidens, they were the daughters of mankind. There was a sweet fragrance in the air as the maidens disappeared, into the wood; the fragrance became stronger — three coffins, in which lay the beautiful maidens, glided away from the thicket across the lake; shining glow-worms flew about like little floating lights. Were the dancing maidens asleep or were they dead? The fragrance of the flowers tells us they are corpses; the evening bell is tolling for the dead!"

"You make me quite sad," said little Gerda. "Your perfume is so strong, I cannot help thinking of the dead maidens! Alas! is little Kay really dead after all? The roses have been under the ground, and they say no!"

"Ding, dong!" rang the bells of the hyacinths. "We are not tolling for little Kay; we do not know him. We are only singing our own song, the only one we know!"

And Gerda went to the buttercup which shone forth among the bright-green leaves.

"You are a bright little sun," said Gerda. "Tell me, if you know, where I can find my playmate." And the buttercup shone so brightly and looked up at Gerda. What song would the buttercup sing? It was not to be about Kay either.

"The sun was was shining so warmly, on the first day of spring, into a little courtyard; the rays glided down along the neighbors' white wall, and close by grew the first yellow flowers, sparkling like gold in the warm sunlight. The old grandmother sat outside in her chair, her granddaughter, the poor, good-looking servant-girl, came home from a short visit; she kissed her grandmother. There was gold, the gold of the heart, in that blessed kiss, gold on the lips, gold on the ground, gold high above in the early morning hour! There, that is my little story!" said the buttercup.

"My poor old grandmother!" sighed Gerda. "She must be longing for me, and be anxious about me, just as she was about little Kay. But I shall soon be home again, and then I'll bring Kay with me. It is no use asking the flowers; they only know their own song, they cannot give me any tidings!" And so she fastened up her little frock, so that she might run the faster; but the narcissus caught her by the leg as she sprang over it. She stopped, looked at the long flower and said:

"Perhaps you know something?" And she bent down close to it. What did she say?

"I can see myself! I can see myself!" said the narcissus. "Oh, what a perfume! Up in the little garret stands a little dancer, half dressed; sometimes she stands on one leg, and sometimes on two — she kicks at the whole world; she is only a phantom. She pours water out of the teapot onto a piece of cloth which she holds in her hand; it is her corset. Cleanliness is a virtue! Her white dress hangs on a peg, and that has also been washed in the teapot and dried on the roof! She puts it on and ties a saffron-colored handkerchief round her neck, so that her dress should look all the whiter. How high she kicks! Look how well she poises on one stem! I can see myself! I can see myself!"

"I don't care for that at all!" said Gerda; "it isn't worth telling me!" And then she ran toward the far end of the garden.

The gate was shut, but she fumbled with the rusty latch till it gave way and the gate flew open, and then little Gerda ran out, barefooted, into the wide world. She looked back three times, but no one was pursuing her; at last she could run no longer and sat down on a large stone, and when she looked round she discovered that the summer was over, and that it was late in the autumn; one could not see that in the beautiful garden where there was always sunshine, and flowers of every season of the year were always in full bloom.

"Gracious goodness! how I have been delayed!" said little Gerda; "the autumn has set in, so I dare not rest!" And she rose to proceed on her journey.

Oh! how sore and tired her little feet were; everything looked so bleak and damp round about; the long willow leaves were quite yellow, and the dew dripped like water from them. Leaf after leaf fell; the blackthorn alone bore fruit, but it was so sour and bitter that it set one's teeth on edge. Oh, how gray and gloomy the wide world looked!

The Fourth Story: The Prince and Princess

Gerda was obliged to sit down and rest again, when a large crow came hopping across the snow just opposite to where she was sitting. The crow looked at her for some time, turning his head from one side to the other, and at last he said: "Caw! Caw! Goo' day! Goo' day!" He could not pronounce the words any better, but he was kindly disposed toward the little girl and asked her where she was going all alone out into the wide world. Gerda understood the word "alone" very well and felt how much it meant, and so she told the crow the story of her life and asked him if he had not seen Kay.

The crow nodded quite thoughtfully and said: "Perhaps I have! Perhaps I have!"

"What? You don't say so!" cried the little girl, and she almost hugged the crow to death, so violently did she embrace him.

"Gently, gently!" said the crow. "I dare say it may be little Kay! But he has no doubt forgotten you by this time for the princess!"

"Does he live at a princess's?" asked Gerda.

"Well, yes!" said the crow; "but I find it rather difficult to speak your language. If you understand the crows' language I shall be able to tell it you better."

"No, I have not learned it!" said Gerda; "but grandmother knows it. I only wish I had learned it."

"It does not matter!" said the crow. "I will tell you as well as I can, but I am afraid it will be badly done after all." And so he told what he knew.

"In the kingdom where we are now sitting lives a princess who is very wise, but then she has read all the newspapers in the world and forgotten them again; so wise is she! The other day she was sitting on the throne,—and that is not so very pleasant, people say,—when she happened to hum a song which began with 'Why should I not marry!' 'Yes, there is something in that,' she said, and then she made up her mind to marry; but she wanted a husband who understood how to answer when spoken to, not one, in fact, who could only stand and look grand, for that was so tiresome.

"She then summoned all her maids-of-honor, and when they heard what was her will they were greatly pleased. 'We are so glad to hear that!' they all said. 'We were just thinking about the same thing the other day!' You can believe every word I tell you," said the crow; "I have a tame sweetheart at the palace who goes all over the place, and she has told me all about it!"

His sweetheart was, of course, a crow; for birds of a feather flock together, so a crow wants a crow for his mate.

"The newspapers at once appeared with a border of hearts with the princess's initials; it was there announced that every good-looking young man would be received at the palace and allowed to speak with the princess, and he who by his speech showed himself most at ease there and spoke most fluently would be chosen by the princess for her husband. Well!" said the crow, "you must believe me, it 's as true as I sit here. The people came in crowds to the palace, and there was much crushing and running to and fro; but no one was successful either on the first or the second day. They could all speak well enough when they were out in the street, but when they came through the palace gate and saw the guards in silver and the lackeys in gold, standing on the staircases, and the great illuminated halls, they lost their heads altogether. And when they stood before the throne where the princess was sitting, they did not know what to say except the last word she had uttered, and she did not care to hear that said over again. It seemed as if the people, while in the room, had partaken of some narcotic, and were in a state of stupor till they got out into the street again; then they could talk and no mistake! There was a whole row of them from the town gate to the palace. I went in myself to have a look," said the crow. "The people were both hungry and thirsty, but they did not get as much as a glass of luke-warm water in the palace. Some of the more prudent had taken sandwiches with them, but they did not give any to their neighbors; they thought: 'Let him look hungry, and then the princess will not have him!'"

"But Kay, little Kay!" asked Gerda. "When does he come? Was he in the crowd?"

"Patience! patience! We are just coming to him. It was on the third day that a small person, without horse or carriage, came marching quite cheerfully right up to the palace, his eyes shone like yours, he had beautiful long hair, but was otherwise poorly dressed."

"That was Kay!" cried Gerda in great delight. "Oh, now I have found him!" And she clapped her hands.

"He had a little knapsack on his back!" said the crow.

"No, that must have been his sledge," said Gerda; "for he had the sledge with him when he left home!"

"That may be," said the crow. "I did not take particular notice, but I heard from my sweetheart that when he came in through the palace gate and saw the life guards in silver and the lackeys in gold on the staircases he was not in the least abashed; he nodded to them and said, 'It must be very tedious to stand on the staircase; I prefer to go inside.' The halls were all ablaze with lights.

Counselors and excellencies were walking about in their bare feet, carrying golden vessels; it was enough to strike any one with awe. His boots creaked dreadfully, but he was not a bit frightened."

"That must have been Kay!" said Gerda, "I knew he had new boots; I have heard them creak in grandmother's room."

"Yes, they did creak," said the crow; "but he went boldly straight up to the princess, who was seated on a pearl as large as a spinning-wheel, and all the maids-of-honor with their maids and maids' maids, and all the gentlemen-in-waiting with their servants and servants' servants, who again kept page-boys, were standing round about the hall, and the nearer they stood to the door the prouder they looked. One could hardly look at the page-boys of the servants' servants, who always went about in slippers, so proud did they look standing in the doorway."

"It must be terrible!" said little Gerda. "And did Kay get the princess after all?"

"If I had not been a crow, I would have taken her myself, although I am engaged. He is said to have spoken as well as I do, when I speak the crows' language, at least that 's what my sweetheart tells me. He looked a bold and handsome youth as he stood there; but he had not come to woo the princess, only to hear some of her wisdom. He was quite pleased with her and she with him."

"Yes, that must have been Kay!" said Gerda, "he was so clever; he could do mental arithmetic even in fractions! Oh, will you not take me to the palace?"

"Well, that is easily said!" said the crow. "But how shall we manage it? I will speak, with my sweetheart about it; she can give us some advice, no doubt, for I must tell you such a little girl as you will never be permitted to get right inside!"

"Yes, I shall!" said Gerda. "When Kay hears I am there he will come out at once and fetch me!"

"Wait for me at the stile over yonder!" said the crow, with a twist of his head as he flew away.

It was not till late in the evening that the crow returned.

"Caw! Caw!" he croaked. "My sweetheart sends you her kind love, and here is a piece of bread for you; she took it from the kitchen, there is plenty of bread there, and you must be hungry! You cannot possibly get into the palace—for, look, you are barefooted! The guards in silver and the lackeys in gold would not allow it; but don't cry, you shall get in somehow. My sweetheart knows a little back staircase which leads up to the bedroom, and she knows where she can find the key!"

And they went into the garden and along the long avenue where the leaves were falling one after the other; and when the lights in the palace were extinguished, one by one, the crow led little Gerda to a back door, which stood ajar.

Oh, how Gerda's heart was beating with anxiety and longing! She felt as if she were about to do something wrong, while she only wanted to know if little Kay was there. Yes, it must be he; she could see his clever eyes, his long hair, and could even see how he smiled, just as when they used to sit under the roses at home. He would surely be glad to see her when he heard what a long way she had come for his sake, and how grieved they all were at home because he did not come back. Oh, what fear and what joy!

They were now on the stairs, where a small lamp was burning on the top of a cupboard; in the middle of the room stood the tame crow, turning her head in all directions and staring at Gerda, who curtseyed as her grandmother had taught her to do.

"My sweetheart has spoken so nicely about you, my young lady," said the tame crow; "your vita, as they say, is really very touching! If you will carry the lamp, I will go on in front. We will go straight ahead, for we shall meet no one this way."

"I fancy there is somebody coming behind us," said Gerda, as she felt something sweep past her. Shadows of horses with living manes and the thin legs of huntsmen, and ladies and gentlemen on horseback seemed to glide past her on the wall.

"They are only dreams," said the crow; "they come to fetch the thoughts of our royal folks to go a-hunting, which is just as well, for then you can look at them in their beds all the better. But I hope, when you have risen to a post of dignity and honor, that you will show you have a grateful heart! "

"Oh, it is n't worth talking about!" said the crow from the forest.

They now entered the first room, the walls of which were hung with rose-colored satin and artificial flowers; the dreams were already rushing past them, but they swept on at such a great speed that Gerda could not see the royal personages.

Each room was more magnificent than the last; it was enough to bewilder any one. They were now in the bedroom, the ceiling of which was like a large palm-tree with leaves of the most costly glass, and in the middle of the room hung in a silken cord two beds, resembling lilies; the one in which the princess lay was white, the other was red; and it was in this that Gerda was to look for little Kay. She pulled aside one of the red leaves and then saw a brown neck. Oh, that must be Kay! She called his name aloud and held the lamp over him,—the dreams came rushing back into the room on horseback,—he awoke, turned his head, and—it was not little Kay.

They only resembled each other about the neck, but the prince was a young and very handsome man. The princess peeped out from her lily-white bed and asked what was the matter. Little Gerda then began to cry and told them her whole story and all that the crows had done for her.

"Poor little creature!" said the prince; and the princess praised the crows, telling them that they were not at all angry with them, but that they must not do it again. In the meantime they should receive a reward. "Would you like to have your freedom and fly away?" asked the princess, "or would you like an appointment as crows to the court, with all the leavings of the kitchen as your perquisites?"

And both the crows curtseyed and asked for the appointments, for they thought of their old age, and said: "It would be so nice to know that we are provided for," as they put it.

And the prince got out of his bed and let Gerda sleep in it, and more he could not do. She folded her little hands and thought: "How kind men and animals are to me!" And then she closed her eyes and fell into a sweet sleep.

All the dreams came flying back into the room; they now looked like angels, drawing a little sledge in which Kay was sitting nodding to her. But it was only a dream, and therefore it was all gone as soon as she awoke.

The following day she was dressed from top to toe in silk and velvet; she received an invitation to remain in the palace and enjoy herself, but she only asked for a small coach and a horse, and a little pair of shoes, and she would again set out into the wide world to find Kay.

And she not only got the shoes, but a muff, and exquisite clothes, and when she was ready to start a new coach of pure gold was waiting for her at the door. The prince and princess's coat-of-arms on the coach shone like a star; the coachman, the footman, and the postillions, for there were postillions too, wore gold crowns on their heads. The prince and princess helped her into the coach and wished her success. The crow from the forest, who was now married, accompanied her for the first ten miles. He sat by her side, for he could not bear riding backwards; while the other crow stood in the gateway flapping her wings; she did not accompany them, for she had suffered from headache since she had been definitely attached to the court and had too much to eat. The inside of the coach was stocked with fancy cakes, and under the seat were fruits and gingerbread nuts.

"Farewell! farewell!" cried the prince and princess, and little Gerda wept, and the crow wept. Thus the first miles passed, and then the crow also bade her farewell, and this was the saddest parting of all. The crow flew up into a tree and flapped his black wings as long as he could see the coach, which sparkled like bright sunbeams.

The Fifth Story: The Little Robber Girl

They drove through the dark forest, but the coach shone like a bright light, the glare of which hurt the eyes of the robbers in the forest, who could scarcely bear it.

"It's gold! It's gold!" they cried as they rushed out and seized hold of the horses. They killed the little postillions, the coachman, and the footman, and dragged little Gerda out of the coach.

"She is so fat and nice! She has been fed on nuts!" said the old robber woman, who had a long bristly beard and eyebrows, which hung down over her eyes." She is as good as a little fatted lamb! Ah, how nice she'll taste!" And so she pulled out her bright knife, the glitter of which was terrible to behold.

"Oh, dear!" the woman shouted just at that moment; she had been bitten on the ear by her own little daughter, who was hanging on her back and was as wild and ungovernable as could be. "Oh, you wicked brat!" said the mother, who could not find the time just then to kill Gerda.

"She must play with me!" said the little robber girl. "She must give me her muff and her pretty frock, and sleep with me in my bed!" And then she bit her mother again so that she jumped into the air and twirled round and round, while all the robbers laughed and said: "Look how she is dancing with her brat! "

"I want to get into the coach!" said the little robber girl; and she would and must have her own way, for she was such a spoiled and self-willed child. She and Gerda sat up in the coach, and away they went over stock and stone far into the forest. The little robber girl was just as big as Gerda, but much stronger and more broad-shouldered; her skin was dark and her eyes quite black; they looked almost melancholy. She took little Gerda round the waist and said: "They shall not kill you, as long as I do not get angry with you! You are a princess, I suppose?"

"No," said little Gerda, and told her about everything she had gone through, and how fond she was of little Kay.

The robber girl looked earnestly at her, gave a little nod with her head, and said: "They shall not kill you, even if I get angry with you, for then I would rather do it myself" And so she dried Gerda's tears and put both her hands into the beautiful muff, which was so soft and warm.

The coach now stopped; they were in the middle of the courtyard of a robbers' castle, the walls of which were cracked from top to bottom, and where ravens and crows flew in and out of the open holes, and the big bulldogs, which looked as if they could swallow a man, jumped high in the air, but they did not bark, for that was prohibited.

In the large old smoky hall a big fire was burning in the middle of the stone floor; the smoke ascended to the ceiling and had to find a way out for itself; a large caldron of soup was boiling on the fire, and both hares and rabbits were being roasted on spits before it.

"You shall sleep here with me and all my little animals to-night!" said the robber girl. They had something to eat and drink, after which they went over into a corner where there was some straw and blankets. On some laths and poles above their heads were sitting about a hundred pigeons, which all appeared to be asleep, but they turned their heads a little when the little girls came into the room.

"They are all mine," said the little robber girl, and quickly seized hold of one of the nearest, holding it by the feet and shaking it so that it flapped its wings. "Kiss it!" she cried, and dashed it into Gerda's face. "There are the wood-pigeons!" she went on, and pointed to a hole high up on the wall, with a number of laths nailed across it. "Those two are a couple of rascals from the woods. They would fly away directly if they were not properly shut up; and here is my old sweetheart Ba!" she said, as she tugged at the antlers of a reindeer, who had a bright copper ring round his neck and was tied up. "We have to look closely after him, too, else he would also run away from us. Every evening I tickle his neck with that sharp knife of mine, of which he is terribly afraid! "And the little girl pulled out a long knife from a crevice in the wall and drew it across the reindeer's neck; the poor animal kicked out with its legs, and the robber girl laughed and then pulled Gerda into bed with her.

"Do you take the knife to bed with you?" asked Gerda, looking somewhat scared at it.

"I always sleep with a knife," said the little robber girl. "One never knows what may happen. But tell me again what you have already told me about little Kay and why you went out into the wide world." And Gerda told her story over again, while the wood-pigeons were cooing up in their cage and the other birds slept. The little robber girl put her arm round Gerda's neck and held the knife in her other hand, and slept so soundly that one could hear her; but Gerda could not close her eyes at all, for she did not know whether she was to live or die. The robbers sat round the fire, singing and drinking, while the old turned somersaults. Oh, it was a horrible sight for the little girl!

Then the wood-pigeons suddenly cried, "Coo! Coo! we have seen little Kay! A white fowl carried his sledge while he sat in the Snow Queen's sledge as they drove through the forest and we lay in our nests; her icy breath killed all the young ones except us two. Coo! Coo!"

"What are you saying up there?" cried Gerda. "Where was the Snow Queen going? Do you know anything about it?"

"She was going to Lapland, no doubt, for there is always snow and ice. Just ask the reindeer who is fastened to the rope over there."

"Yes, there is ice and snow there," said the reindeer. "It is a glorious place. There you can freely roam about in the great glittering valleys. There the Snow Queen pitches her summer tent, but her stronghold is near the North Pole on the island called Spitzbergen!"

"Oh, Kay! little Kay!" sighed Gerda.

"You must lie quiet," said the robber girl, "else you will feel my knife in your body!"

In the morning Gerda told her everything that the wood-pigeons had said, and the little robber girl looked quite serious, but nodded her head and said, "It does n't matter! it does n't matter! Do you know where Lapland is?" she asked the reindeer.

"Who should know better than I?" the reindeer said, its eyes sparkling with excitement. "I was born and bred there; there I used to scour the snow-fields."

"Just listen," said the robber girl to Gerda. "You see all the men are gone, but mother is still here and will be for some time, but later in the morning she takes a drink out of the big bottle over there, and afterward she takes a little nap; then I'll do something for you!"

She now jumped out of bed, threw her arms round her mother, pulled her mustache, and said, "Good morning, my own sweet nanny-goat!" And the mother snapped her nose till it was both red and blue, but it was all done out of pure love.

When the mother had had her drink out of the bottle and was taking a little nap, the robber girl went across to the reindeer and said, "I should like very much to tickle you a good many times still with my sharp knife, for then you are so funny; but never mind, I will undo your rope and set you free so that you may set out for Lapland; but you must use your legs and carry this little girl for me to the Snow Queen's castle, where her playmate is. You heard, of course, what she said, for she spoke loud enough, and you were listening."

The reindeer jumped for joy. The robber girl lifted little Gerda on its back and took care to tie her fast, and even to give her a little cushion to sit on. "I don't mind giving them back to you," she said, "but here are your fur-lined boots, for you will find it cold up there; I must keep the muff, though, it is so pretty. All the same you shall not feel cold. Here are mother's large woolen gloves, which will reach right up to your elbows. Put your hands in! Now they look just like my ugly mother's!"

And Gerda wept for joy.

"I don't like to see you whimpering," said the little robber girl. "You must look pleased and happy now. Here are two loaves and a ham for you, so that you shall not starve."

The provisions were fastened to the reindeer's back, and the little robber girl opened the door and called all the big dogs into the room, after which she cut the rope with her knife and said to the reindeer, "Be off! But look well after the little girl."

And Gerda stretched out her hands with the large gloves toward the robber girl and said, "Farewell." And the reindeer set off and flew across bushes and logs of trees, through the big forest, over bogs and steppes, as fast as ever he could. The wolves howled and the ravens croaked. "Whizz! Whizz!" was heard in the sky, which was covered with fiery-red streaks.

"They are my old friends the Northern lights!" said the reindeer. "Look how they shine!" And so he ran still faster, by night and by day.

The loaves were eaten, and the ham too, when they came to Lapland.

The Sixth Story: The Lapwoman and the Finwoman

They stopped before a miserable little hut; the roof went right down to the ground, and the door was so low that the family had to creep on all fours when they wanted to go out or in. There was nobody at home except an old Lapwoman, who was cooking fish over a train-oil lamp. The reindeer told her the whole of Gerda's story, but only after having first told his own, which he considered was more important, and Gerda was so benumbed with cold that she was not able to speak.

"Ah, poor creature!" said the Lapwoman, "then you still have far to go! You must travel four hundred miles into Finmark, for that is where the Snow Queen spends her summer and burns blue lights every evening. I will write one or two lines on a dried codfish, as I have no paper, and give it to you for the Finwoman up there; she can give you better information than I."

And when Gerda had become warm and had had something to eat and drink, the Lapwoman wrote a few words on a dried codfish, told Gerda to look, well after it, and tied her fast to the reindeer again, and off he went at tidl speed. "Whizz! whizz!" was heard, while up in the heavens the most beautiful blue Northern lights were blazing the whole night; and then they came to Finmark and knocked at the chimney of the Finwoman's hut, for it had not even a door.

It was so terribly hot inside that the Finwoman herself went about almost naked; she was small and dirty-looking. She loosened little Gerda's clothes at once, took off her big gloves and boots, or else it would have been too hot for her in the hut, put a piece of ice on the reindeer's head, and then began to read what was written on the codfish. She read it three times and then she knew it by heart, after which she put the fish into the pot, which was boiling on the fire, for it could very well be eaten, and she never wasted anything.

The reindeer first told his own story and then little Gerda's, and the Finwoman blinked with her knowing eyes, but did not say anything. "You are so wise," said the reindeer; "I know you can bind all the winds in the world with a piece of thread; when the skipper loosens one knot he gets fair wind, if he loosens the second a stiff gale springs up, and if he loosens the third and the fourth it will raise such a storm that the forests are blown down. Will you not give the little girl a potion so that she will get twelve men's strength and be able to overcome the Snow Queen?"

"Twelve men's strength!" said the Finwoman. "Well, that would n't be of much use!" And then she went to a shelf and took down a large roll of skin, which she unrolled; it was inscribed with strange characters, which the Finwoman began reading, and went on with it till the perspiration fell in drops from her forehead.

But the reindeer begged again so hard for little Gerda, and Gerda, with tears in her eyes, looked so entreatingly at the Finwoman, that the eyes of the latter again began to blink, and, leading the reindeer into a corner, the Finwoman put some fresh ice on his head and whispered:

"Little Kay is with the Snow Queen sure enough, and finds everything there according to his mind and liking, believing it is the finest place in the world; but that comes of his having a glass splinter in his heart and a little speck of glass in his eye. They must be got out or he will never be himself again, and the Snow Queen will retain her power over him!"

"But can't you give little Gerda something to drink so that she may become strong enough to overcome all this?"

"I cannot give her greater power than she already possesses. Do you not see how great it is? Do you not see how men and animals must serve her, how she, barefooted, has got on so safely through the world? She must not be told by us of her power; it is seated in her heart, where it will remain; it consists in her being such a sweet and innocent child. If she cannot obtain access herself to the Snow Queen, and remove the bits of glass from little Kay, we cannot help her. Two miles from here the Snow Queen's garden begins; carry the little girl there and put her down by the great bush which stands full of rich berries in the snow. Don't stop there long gossiping, but make haste back here." And the Finwoman lifted little Gerda up on the reindeer, who set out as fast as he could.

"Oh, I have n't got my boots! I have n't got my gloves!" cried little Gerda as soon as she felt the biting cold; but the reindeer dared not stop; he ran till he came to the great bush with the red berries. There he put Gerda down and kissed her mouth, while big bright tears ran down the animal's cheeks, and then he trotted back as quickly as he could. There stood poor Gerda without shoes and without gloves in the midst of the terrible ice-cold Finmark.

She ran as fast as her legs could carry her, when she encountered a whole regiment of snowflakes; but they did n't hill down from the sky, which was quite bright and full of shining Northern lights. The snowflakes ran along the ground and grew larger the nearer they came; Gerda well remembered how big and weird they had appeared to her when she looked at them through the magnifying glass, but now they were certainly much bigger and more terrible; they were alive and were the outposts of the Snow Queen. They had the most wonderful shapes: some of them looked like great, ugly porcupines, others like coils of snakes putting forth their heads, and others again like small fat bears with bristling hairs; all were dazzlingly white, all were living snowflakes.

Little Gerda then said the Lord's Prayer; the cold was so great that she could see her own breath, it seemed like a jet of steam issuing from her mouth; her breath grew thicker and thicker and

formed itself into little bright angels, who grew larger and larger as soon as they touched the ground. They all had helmets on their heads, and spears and shields in their hands; their numbers increased every moment, and when Gerda had finished her prayer there was a whole legion around her. They struck at the terrible snowflakes with their spears and shattered them into a hundred pieces, and little Gerda could then proceed safely and cheerfully on her way. The angels patted her feet and hands so that she did not feel the cold so much, and she walked on rapidly toward the Snow Queen's castle.

But we will now first see how Kay is faring. He certainly was not thinking of little Gerda, and least of all that she might be standing outside the castle.

The Seventh Story: What Had Happened in the Snow Queen's Castle and What Happened Later on

The walls of the castle were made of the drifting snow, and the windows and doors of the cutting winds; there were over a hundred halls, according to how the snow had been drifting, the largest of which extended for many miles. All were lighted by the bright Northern lights; but how vast and empty, how icy cold and dazzling white they all were! There were never any amusements here, not even a little bears' ball, for which the storm could have supplied the music, and at which the ice bears could have danced on their hind legs and shown their elegant manners; there were never any little card parties, with slaps on the snout and pattings of paws; never any cozy little coffee parties and gossiping at Miss White-Fox's. The vast halls of the Snow Queen's castle were cold and deserted. The Northern lights shone so brightly, and the rays could be seen so distinctly, that they might be counted both when they were highest in the heavens and when they were at their lowest. In the middle of the empty and endless snow-hall was a frozen lake, which had cracked into a thousand pieces, but every piece was so exactly like the other that it formed a complete work of art. In the center of the lake sat the Snow Queen when she was at home; she used to say that she sat in the "mirror of reason," and that it was the only one and the best in this world.

Little Kay was quite blue, almost black with cold, but he did not feel it, for had she not kissed away his susceptibility to cold, and was not his heart almost a lump of ice? He was dragging some flat pieces of ice which he placed in all manner of ways, as he wanted to form something out of them; just like when we arrange small pieces of wood into figures, which we call a Chinese puzzle. Kay was forming some very intricate figures: it was the ice game of reason. In his eyes the figures were very remarkable and of the highest importance; the cause of this was the piece of glass which stuck in his eye! He formed complete figures which represented a written word, but he was never able to form the word he most wanted. It was the word "Eternity," and the Snow Queen had said: "If you can solve that figure, you shall be your own master, and I will make you a present of the whole world and a pair of new skates." But he could not.

"I will now fly away to the hot countries!" said the Snow Queen. "I want to peep down into the black caldrons!" They were the volcanoes, Etna and Vesuvius, as they are called. "I want to whiten them a little! It 's quite necessary; it will do good on the top of lemons and grapes!" And away flew the Snow Queen, and Kay sat quite alone in the large empty hall, which was many miles long, and looked at the pieces of ice and pondered and pondered till he groaned; he sat quite stiff and motionless, one would have thought he was frozen.

Just then little Gerda entered the castle through the great gate where a biting wind was raging, but she said her evening prayers, and the wind went down, as if it wanted to go to sleep. She stepped into the great, empty, cold rooms,—when suddenly she saw Kay; she knew him, flew to him, threw her arms round his neck and held him fast as she cried: "Kay! dear little Kay! So I have found you at last!"

But he sat quite motionless, stiff and cold. Then little Gerda began to cry and wept hot tears which fell upon his breast; they penetrated to his heart, and thawed the lump of ice and consumed the little piece of glass in there. He looked at her, and she sang:

The roses grow in the valley. Where the Christ-Child we shall see!

Then Kay burst into tears; he cried so that the splinter of glass rolled out of his eye; he recognized her and shouted joyfully: "Gerda! dear, little Gerda! Where have you been so long? And where have I been?" And he looked all around him. "How cold it is here! How great and empty it all seems here!" And he clung to Gerda, while she laughed and cried for joy. Their delight was so great that even the blocks of ice began to dance about for joy, and when they were tired and settled down they formed themselves into the very word which the Snow Queen had said that he must find out if he were to become his own master, and that she would then make him a present of the whole world and a pair of new skates.

And Gerda kissed his cheeks and their bloom came back again; she kissed his eyes and they shone like her own; she kissed his hands and feet and he became hale and hearty. The Snow Queen might return when she chose; his warrant of release stood written there in sparkling blocks of ice.

And they took each other by the hand and wandered out of the great castle; they talked of grandmother and of the roses on the roof, and wherever they went the winds lay down to rest, and the sun shone forth. When they came to the bush with the red berries they found the reindeer waiting for them; he had a young reindeer cow with him, whose udders were full of milk; she gave the young folks a warm drink, and kissed them on the mouth. They then carried Kay and Gerda, first to the Finwoman, where they warmed themselves in her hot room and where they got to know everything about the journey home; then to the Lapwoman, who had made new clothes for them and got her sledge ready for them.

And the two reindeer ran side by side and accompanied them to the border of the district; here the first green shoots were to be seen, and here they took leave of the reindeer and the Lapwoman, and they all said, "Farewell." And then the first little bird began to twitter, and the forest was full of green shoots. Out of the forest came a young girl with a bright red cap on her head and pistols in front of her, riding on a beautiful horse, which Gerda knew at once; it was

one of the team which had been harnessed to the golden coach. It was the little robber girl, who had got tired of staying at home, and was now going first to the North, and afterward in some other direction if it was not to her liking; she knew Gerda at once and Gerda knew her, and they were both delighted.

"You are a nice fellow to be running after!" she said to little Kay; "I should like to know whether you deserve that anybody should run to the end of the world for your sake!"

But Gerda patted her cheeks and asked about the prince and princess.

"They have gone to foreign lands," said the robber girl.

"And where is the crow?" asked little Gerda.

"The crow is dead," she answered. "The tame sweetheart is now a widow and goes about with a bit of black worsted round her leg, complaining and wailing most pitifully, but it is all humbug! But tell me now how you fared and how you got hold of him!"

And Gerda and Kay both told her all that had happened.

"And snipp-snapp-snurr-bassellurr!" said the robber girl, taking them both by the hand and promising them that should she ever pass through their town, she would be sure to pay them a visit, and then she rode off into the wide world. But Kay and Gerda walked on hand in hand, and as they proceeded the spring became more and more lovely with flowers and green foliage; the church bells were ringing and they recognized the lofty steeple and the big town—it was the one in which they lived. They entered the town and found their way to their grandmother's door; they went up the stairs, and into the parlor, where everything was in the same place as before. The clock said, "Tick! tick!" and the hands moved on as usual; but as they passed in at the door they discovered that they had become grown-up people. The roses on the roof could be seen in full bloom through the open windows, and there were the little footstools; Kay and Gerda sat down, holding each other by the hand; they had forgotten the cold, empty splendor of the Snow Queen's castle as if it were a distressing dream of the past.

Grandmother was sitting in the bright sunshine, reading aloud from the Bible: "Except ye become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the Kingdom of God."

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 the Christ-Child we shall see!

There they both sat, grown up, yet children in heart, and it was summer—the warm, blessed summer.