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Opening extract from

The Snow Queen

Written by

Sarah Lowes

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The
Snow
Queen



To Dave, who has loved me through everything — Sarah Lowes
To my dear princes — Miss Clara

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The Snow Queen



Retold by Sarah Lowes
Illustrated by Miss Clara

Barefoot Books
step inside a story

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Chapter One

The Mirror and its Fragments

Listen! The story begins. Perhaps, by the end, we shall know more than we do now. There was once a magician who delighted in the dark side of his magical arts. One day, he invented a remarkable mirror. This mirror made ugly things look huge and shrank beautiful ones almost to nothing. The beauty of this world disappeared altogether in the mirror's glass and plain things appeared ten times drearier than before. Lush green fields looked like boiled spinach, and people who were usually quite attractive and pleasant became so ugly and hateful that even their friends couldn't recognise them. A girl with just one pimple looked as though it had spread all over her face, and if she had a good or a happy thought, a wrinkle immediately appeared in the mirror.

The magician's apprentices revelled in the misery that the mirror created, and they flew around the world with it until there was no one left who had not gazed into it. Everyone turned aside in horror at their hideous reflections, or at the sight of the cruelty and vice that the mirror displayed.

One day, the apprentices brought the mirror to the Snow Queen. She knew at once that the mirror would be her perfect weapon against happiness and contentment, and she formed a plan. She commanded the apprentices to fly up into the sky with the mirror. As they did so, the mirror began to crack until it shattered into millions of tiny pieces, and the Queen laughed with a cruel joy at what would come next.



The splinters of glass scattered themselves all over the world and continued their evil work. Some pieces were large enough to be made into windowpanes, making the view from those houses a sorry sight indeed. Smaller fragments were used to make spectacles, causing their owners endless trouble as they tried to see clearly through them. Little bits of the mirror were set into rings. Tiny pieces slipped into some people's eyes, making everything they looked upon seem ugly and hopeless. Worst by far was the fate of those who received a splinter of glass in their hearts: people who had once been warm and loving became cold and hard.

Fragments of that mirror exist to this very day. Others play a part in my story, as will soon be revealed.



Chapter Two

A Little Boy and a Little Girl

In the poorest part of a large town, a boy and girl called Kay and Gerda lived opposite each other with their families. Outside each house was a wooden trough in which herbs, flowers and a rose tree grew. The two trees grew up and intertwined, forming an arch between the houses. In the summer, Kay and Gerda would sit under its blooms and play or read for hours at a time.