



“NORTH” - a 3D animated feature film

“NORTH” is a 3D animated family film inspired by Danish writer Hans Christian Andersen’s world famous fairy tale, “The Snow Queen”, written and directed by Bente Lohne (Norway). The story is set in Copenhagen in the Victorian era of the late 1800’s, and is inspired also by the writings of Selma Lagerlöf (Swedish Nobel Prize winner) and Zacharius Topelius (famous Finnish writer).

STORYLINE

(Longer synopsis)

Young Gerda (8) lives with her Mom and Granny in the attic flat of a Copenhagen adobe house, with neighbour Kai (9) and his dad, Severin the Carpenter, in the opposite penthouse apartment. The two houses are connected by a makeshift bridge way above the street. One day close to Christmas, Kai discovers something interesting on his father’s work bench: The little sledge he has been working on as Kai’s Christmas gift has been finished, and what is more: The green paint is already dry!

Kai cannot resist the idea of a little adventure, doing what most boys his age might do in the 1870’s: Hitch a free hike by tying their own small toboggans to the rear of some large sledge in order to be pulled along at a much greater speed than what would otherwise have been possible on the flats of Copenhagen streets. The trick, passed on among friends, is how to tie the knot of the rope so that in one pull, the knot will become undone, and the pulled toboggan detach and slow down.

Kai knows a spot not far from the northern City Gate where many big sleds and horse carts pass on their way out of town. He stands waiting until a nice, baby blue sledge driven by a beautiful lady in a white fur coat comes by, silver bells tinkling. The strange-looking horse pulling it trots by slowly enough for Kai to attach his rope to the blue sledge, tying the knot the way he has been taught. As they drive out the City Gate at an increasing speed, he is delighted. But soon, strange things start happening: When he tries to end the race, it turns out the knot is stuck, and the baby blue sledge takes off from the ground,

rising into the air, with Kai following on his green toboggan! The falling snow takes on the shape of snowbees, before turning into lots of noisy and aggressive white birds. Defending himself from one of them, Kai loses both hat and mittens. And that one strange, icy-looking horse, has changed into a giant chicken pulling the sled through pure air!

Back home, Gerda goes to bed pretty early that day, as she did not get much sleep during the storm the night before. But she suddenly wakes up, quite certain she heard Kai's voice calling out that he wanted to go home!

Safe and snug with Grandma the night before, Gerda sat watching the whirling snowflakes while Grandma told her about the mysterious Snow Queen: Way up north in Northern Norway is where her castle is, a castle made entirely of snow and ice.

Now trapped in the sledge with the Snow Queen – for she it is indeed – Kai truly does want to go home. Too late he is now regretting his idea of trying out his Christmas gift a bit ahead of time. When his brand new, stolen toboggan finally detaches from the Snow Queen's blue sled all by itself, sailing down from the sky, it is also too late to save it: Crash landing on the river bank, the little green sled breaks into a thousand little pieces.

The Snow Queen kisses Kai's cheek to stop his body shaking and his teeth clattering from mere cold. Soon, they land on a frozen lake in a strange landscape, the center piece of which is the Snow Queen's fascinating palace made of snow and ice. Very angry with her apprentice Louie, a strange-looking grey guy with bat wings, she is – for now – very kind to Kai, and even offers him a pair of new skates as her welcome gift. The countless ice puzzle pieces strewn about the frozen lake seem interesting to Kai, who loves puzzles.

What neither Kai nor Grandma nor Gerda knows is that the beautiful Snow Queen is centuries old and only *appears* to be young and beautiful. To keep her good looks, she regularly consumes little bottles of a special potion that she herself has to make anew every year during the Winter Solstice, that one day in December when day and night are equally long, just before the days start gaining on the nights and gradually become longer, while the nights grow ever shorter toward summer. There is only one single hour during the Winter Solstice when the magic will be powerful enough for the Snow Queen's rejuvenating elixir to be brewed. Because Louie the apprentice has mixed up the dates and failed to prepare in time for the yearly Winter Solstice sacrifice, when the Snow Queen regularly uses ingredients from young boys like Kai, she is now forced to wait till *next* year's Winter Solstice for the magic to work. She still has enough potion-filled vials to last for another year, however, so she does not panic – not yet.

Without Kai, Kai's father, Gerda, and Gerda's family spend a very sad Christmas together. The grown-ups all believe Kai has drowned in the river. Only Gerda, helped by whimsical, mischievous Lily, the little Guardian Angel kindly sent down to her from Heaven, believes that Kai is still alive. And Lily is

right, Kai *is* alive, although blue with frost. But as the Snow Queen has now kissed him twice, he does not feel the cold. If she kisses him a third time, he'll die from it, she threatens. Kai does his best to please her, skating around and solving her puzzles. Among them is a particularly intricate one connected to a prophecy. The Snow Queen firmly believes that once the word of that puzzle is spelled out, she will gain endless power and riches and become world famous – the most beautiful queen on earth.

On Christmas day, Gerda leaves home starting her long journey to look for Kai and bring him back home. Lily makes sure they arrive at an island where a kind witch receives them with cakes and hot chocolate. Because she wants Gerda to stay and take care of her for ever, she puts a forgetting spell on her. Come spring, Lily manages to break the spell. She steals Amanda's magic wand to help them on the journey northward, but by mistake, the wand shrinks Gerda to the size of a doll. Even so, Gerda refuses to give up. Her special friend among Amanda's geese, Hank the gander, flies her across Denmark to the bit of sea dividing Denmark from Sweden. Lily remembers that church bells may break evil spells. Using Amanda's wand, she sets the bells of a nearby church chiming. Gerda's spell is broken in midair. As she starts regaining her normal size, Hank is unable to carry her further, and she falls off his back – landing on a fishing vessel just below. On her journey northward to Finnmark from the Swedish woods, she rides on her friend Gustave the horse. Gerda kind of stole him, although she did pay for him with Grandma's silver coin. A stolen compass shows her how to continue northward.

Quite unaware that the hostile Snow Queen and Louie are keeping track of her every move, Gerda conquers hunger, cold and dangers until the Snow Queen's black magic makes her fall off her horse and hurt herself. Sampo the Lapp boy and his reindeer Svante find her, and Sampo's Granny Finn-Maya cures Gerda in her lavvo. She also gives her a brand new, warm coat decorated with walrus heads. Lily manages to get the printed walrus heads on Gerda's new coat to attack and confuse the Snow Queen when she attacks Gerda, thus preventing the evil Snow Queen from killing Lily's "charge". Kai, however, receives his third kiss and seems to have passed away. But Gerda's love, her courage, resilience and persistence, and a little help from Lily, help Gerda solve the mysterious puzzle and bring Kai back to life. Together, they escape in the Snow Queen's baby blue magic sled and make it home just in time for the happiest Christmas ever.

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