

The Snow Queen, production  
poster from Trestle Theatre.

# The Snow Queen



# The Snow Queen

Script by Anupama Chandrasekhar

(Originally commissioned and staged by the Unicorn Theatre in 2011/12.)

## Act 1

### Prelude

*Ice desert. Blizzard. Gowri tangled up in branches of an icy Tree stump.*

### Scene 1

*THE ICE PALACE. A magnificent, icy Snow Queen, two panic-stricken women and the Ice Jinn.*

WOMAN 1: We are innocent.

WOMAN 2: We didn't do anything.

ICE JINN: They lie. They laughed.

WOMAN 1: It wasn't a laugh –

WOMAN 2: It must have been a cough.

*Woman 1 demonstrates.*

Almost a hiccough really.

*Woman 1 demonstrates.*

ICE JINN: Silence! You've violated rule 111.11 of section I, subsection C of the Ice Code. The meter clearly indicates they (*reads from an icy gadget*) tittered, giggled, chortled and guffawed. In other words, your precious majesty, they went from hee hee to ho ho. For 23 minutes.

SQ: Why?

ICE JINN: Knock knock jokes, your highness.

*Ice Jinn snaps his fingers. Sounds of two women clearly tittering, giggling, chortling and guffawing surround them. The women fall at Snow Queen's feet.*

WOMAN 2: Have mercy! It was a moment's madness.

WOMAN 1: We were freezing –

WOMAN 2: My arthritis was acting up.

WOMAN 1: So we just had a little bit of toddy –

WOMAN 2: A cupful –

WOMAN 1: And then another half-cupful.

WOMAN 2: And we felt warm –

WOMAN 1: And light –

WOMAN 2: And happy.

*Beat.*

SQ: Happy?

*Beat.*

WOMAN 2: No no no no. Not happy, no not at all –

WOMAN 1: We've been crying ever since the War of the Tree ended and your majesty introduced the Ice Code –

WOMAN 2: That's a hundred and seventy-two years nonstop.

ICE JINN: May I deep-freeze them, your highness? They show utter disrespect for our dead.

WOMAN 2: That's not true. We mourn every day.

WOMAN 1: We lost family in the war too.

SQ: But not a son. Not your only child.

WOMAN 1: We loved him too.

WOMAN 2: We mourn him too.

WOMAN 1: I'm sure if you study the details of our case, you'd find it in your infinitely compassionate heart –

WOMAN 2: To let us off for past good behaviour.

ICE JINN: Oh. Now they presume to give your highness tips on good governance.

SQ: Thank you, Jinn. Go prepare the snow bees. We are in the mood for a surprise visit.

ICE JINN: So soon, your highness? Where to this time?

SQ: I don't know. That's the surprise. Off now, Jinn.

*The Ice Jinn bows and leaves.*

What oh what do we do with you? The spark in you must be doused before it spreads like wildfire.

*SQ snaps her finger; the walls echo the sound. Snow flurry and a whoosh ... there appears a huge mirror.*

The only person who's ever looked into this mirror is its creator.

Us. Wonder what it'd do to you ... You! Come here! *(Beat.)*

Yes, you. *(Beat.)* Are you going to stand there all winter?

*Woman 1 approaches SQ with trepidation.*

Look into it.

*Pause.*

Are you disobeying us?

WOMAN 1: No, your majesty.

*Woman 1 looks.*

SQ: What do you see?

WOMAN 1: Me.

SQ: What do you feel?

WOMAN 1: Despair. Fear ... Anger. So much anger.

WOMAN 2: Think zen, sister. Think zen. Is this to be our punishment? To look at our reflections?

SQ: Yes.

WOMAN 2: And after I look into the mirror are we free to leave?

SQ: If you wish. If she wishes.

WOMAN 2: Oh thank you, you are very kind. Oh did you hear that, sister? We can go home.

SQ: Your turn.

WOMAN 2: Me. Oh. Okay. Can you move a little? I can't see –  
*Woman 1 does not budge.*

WOMAN 2: Sister?

WOMAN 1: You've been eating my share of our food. You've been hoarding away my share of our unemployment allowance. You've been stealing away all the heat in our hut. Sucking it all away like sponge.

WOMAN 2: *(To Woman 1)* Get away from the mirror. Look at me. The mirror is evil. It's showing you things that are not.

WOMAN 1: What a beautiful thing ice is. What a beautiful feeling cold is.

WOMAN 2: Please, close your eyes.  
*Woman 2 inches toward the mirror.*

WOMAN 1: Stay away!  
*Woman 2 inches forward discreetly. Woman 1 strikes an aggressive kung fu pose. Woman 2 evades Woman 1. She rushes to the mirror and topples it. The mirror breaks into a million of pieces.*

SQ: Noooo!

WOMAN 1: *(Weeping and gathering the pieces)* It was mine! It was all mine! The queen gave it to me first!

SQ: What have you done?

WOMAN 1: She broke it! You saw her.

WOMAN 2: Forgive me, your majesty. I am the culprit. Punish me.  
*A furious Snow Queen conjures up a whirlwind. The mirror pieces swirl in the air. Woman 2 falls flat to the ground.*

WOMAN 2: Get down!  
*The swirling pieces prevent Woman 2 from reaching her sister.*

Hold my hand. Take my hand, sister!

Woman 2 is flung in the direction opposite to her sister. Woman 1 is trapped in the middle of the snow tornado. By the time the dust settles, and the shards disappear, Woman 1 has turned into an ice statue. Woman 2 is nowhere to be seen.

SQ: (Screams) Jinn! Find the other one.

## Scene 2

KANYAKUMARI. *A cottage by the sea. Patti is Woman 2 from the earlier scene. Gowri listens in rapt attention. Kumar plays with a ball, but he is listening keenly too.*

PATTI: As for the mirror, although it had shattered, the magic remained as strong and as powerful in every little piece. Whenever people were happy for too long, whenever the Snow Queen felt restless, she'd collect her snow bees, get into her crystal chariot and soar through the skies, creating snow storms wherever she went, blowing the teeny tiny fragments into people's eyes and hearts. Joy, kindness, and mercy, things that made humans human, disappeared. Friends turned enemies. People went to wars. People killed people. Stay away from snow. That's the moral of the story.

*Patti gets up arthritically.*

KUMAR: That's it?

PATTI: (Pause.) Yes. Time for dinner.

GOWRI: You can't start a story with "once upon a time" and not have a "happily ever after".

PATTI: Well, it's a work-in-progress.

KUMAR: And the moral is all wonky. It never snows here anyway.

*Kumar begins to lob the ball.*

What happened to the missing woman?

PATTI: She walked South, for thousands and thousands of miles, until she found this forgotten village by the sea where the people were warm and friendly. She became everyone's Patti, taking care of everyone's children.

GOWRI: Like you.

PATTI: Yes. Like me. Now don't you want to know what I've made for dinner?

GOWRI: We know, Patti –

KUMAR: Rice and potatoes.

*Kumar starts to swish a cricket bat.*

GOWRI: If she loved her sister, why didn't she try to rescue her?

PATTI: (Snaps) She'd be no use to her sister dead. The Snow Queen's magic was too powerful and the Jinn never let up searching for her. There was nothing she could do. Nothing.

Pause.

KUMAR: And the Snow Queen chick?

PATTI: She went about the world creating endless winters and glaciers and snow deserts. Enough about winters. (*To Gowri*) Did you tell your parents you're having dinner here?

GOWRI: Yes, Patti.

PATTI: And yours?

KUMAR: I'm not a child, Patti! I don't need their permission –

PATTI: Do they know?

KUMAR: (*Pause. Then, sulkily*) Yes.

*Patti shuffles away. Some aggressive swishing of the bat.*

If I became an ice statue like that woman, would you leave me behind?

GOWRI: In a heartbeat.

*Kumar abandons solo cricket.*

KUMAR: I'd like to see snow at least once in my life. That'd be so cool.

*Gowri begins to open her school books.*

Aw come on! Not now! Let's finish our Scrabble first –

GOWRI: This. Now.

KUMAR: Ew. Algebra. There must be more to life than this. Travel, backpack, see the world. Just go where you please. Like a gypsy. Or a bird. I'd like to ... I'd like to be an Arctic explorer.

GOWRI: Even an Arctic explorer needs to pass exams.

KUMAR: I'm going to be a travel writer. (*Beat.*) Hey – W,R,I,T,E,R. I got it! That's nine points for me. Your turn.

GOWRI: You've got to write to be a writer.

KUMAR: True. I can be a (*giving his head a little flick*) a superstar.

GOWRI: You have to dance in front of everyone. You have to study your character, get into that person's head and all.

*Gowri pulls out a film magazine from her bag.*

KUMAR: Is that Neelima on the cover?

GOWRI: Uh-huh.

KUMAR: Winter special! Please, please, please give it!

GOWRI: No. Not until you finish your assignment.

KUMAR: Give it and I'll finish the assignment.

GOWRI: No.

KUMAR: I'll – I'll show you my Neelima merchandise. (*Flicks his head*)

GOWRI: (*Laughs*) No.

*Kumar tries to snag the magazine, fails. He chases Gowri. Patti emerges and Kumar chases Gowri around Patti. Laughter.*

Amaka Okafor as Gowri.  
© Alastair Muir.



Nimmi Harasgama  
as the Snow Queen  
and Asif Khan as  
the Ice Jinn.  
© Alastair Muir.



THE ICE PALACE. *The laughter echoes in the The Ice Palace. A grim-faced Ice Jinn and SQ watch a smiling Patti as she brings the floor mats.*

ICE JINN: After all these years. Finally, we have found her.

KANYAKUMARI:

KUMAR: *(Oozing charm, with head flick)* You are my bestest friend forever and ever.

PATTI: *(Smiles)* Come on you two. Dinner is ready.

*Kumar snags the magazine and runs away.*

GOWRI: Hey!

*Gowri is off too. Patti chuckles.*

ICE PALACE. *The Snow Queen is affected by the children's happiness, laughter.*

ICE JINN: Are you alright, your Highness?

SQ: *(snaps)* Prepare the snow bees, Jinn. We've a judgment to deliver.

KANYAKUMARI. *Another day. By the cottage. Roar of the seas.*

GOWRI: The waves look angry. Let's go back inside. We've a test tomorrow.

*Kumar picks up a sea shell.*

Don't go too far into the sea. You'll get wet. You'll stink.

You'll drown. You'll ... catch a cold.

KUMAR: Patti says we are born with the sea in our veins. Come on.

*Kumar tries to drag Gowri into the sea but she resists.*

Don't you want to know what's out there?

GOWRI: No!

KUMAR: Then you stay here forever. I'll take my dad's ferry and sail the seven seas and find out what's what the moment I finish school.

GOWRI: If you finish school. Kumar, honestly, you are such a sloth!

KUMAR: You are such a chicken!

*Kumar picks up a sea shell and places it first against his ear and then against hers.*

KUMAR: Isn't it the most beautiful sound ever?

GOWRI: That's strange.

KUMAR: What is?

GOWRI: I can hear the waves in the shell but the sea ... It's turned silent.

KUMAR: Is it suddenly cold or is it just me?

*It snows. Gowri looks up.*

It's like the cloud's burst into little pieces! Patti! Patti! Come, look!

It's raining snow! It's raining snow!

*Patti emerges, sees the snow and pales.*

GOWRI: It's global warming!

*Kumar dances in glee. Gowri stands smiling.*



PATTI: The snow bees are here.

KUMAR: Patti! There's no such thing as snow bees.

*Kumar tries to get Patti and Gowri to dance, but they don't.*

PATTI: *(In panic)* Shush! Be quiet. Stop dancing! Stop laughing.

KUMAR: But Patti, this is awesome!

PATTI: Get inside both of you! She's here.

GOWRI: Who?

PATTI: The Snow Queen.

*Pause.*

KUMAR: Come on! She's just a fairy tale!

*Patti herds both children inside and shuts the door. A swirl of the snow... a vague form of the Snow Queen. The door opens; Kumar sneaks out to pick up his shell. He tries to enjoy the snow. He catches sight of the Snow Queen. He is awe-struck. The Snow Queen is as drawn to Kumar as he is to her, for reasons she doesn't quite understand. She blows him a snowy kiss. Kumar jerks as something gets in his eye. He rubs his eye. The moment Gowri pops her head out of the door, the amorphous Snow Queen vanishes.*

GOWRI: Kumar! Patti will freak! Get in already!

*Kumar gathers his wits and shells. Gowri withdraws inside. Kumar turns to look at the spot where the Snow Queen appeared and vanished. Nothing. Kumar reaches for her. Nothing. Then a swirl. The Snow Queen grows in stature. Kumar approaches her. She kisses Kumar's forehead. A moment. Kumar jerks, clutching his chest. He crumbles to the ground. A few seconds later he's alright. Patti emerges from inside and spots the Snow Queen. A moment.*

SQ: The snow has found you, old woman.

PATTI: *(Rushing to Kumar)* Oh god!

*Patti drags Kumar away from the Snow Queen and thrusts him inside the cottage.*

SQ: Drag him inside, lock him up. No matter what you do,  
he now belongs to the snow.

*The Snow Queen vanishes. Patti crumbles to her knees in fear.*

*Two days later. Kumar and Gowri running to the pond.*

GOWRI: Kumar, wait up! *(Trying to catch her breath)* Your parents have found out you've been skipping school the last two days. They're furious. *(No response.)* Patti's distraught and delirious. She says your misbehaviour is all her fault. The snow's addled everyone's brains.

KUMAR: Get lost, you butt-ugly cockroach.

*Gowri is shocked.*

Go back to your dirty hut and your dirty parents. Cockroaches all of you! I wish I could squish you all under my feet. Don't move, stupid girl. You'll break the ice.

*She does. The ice cracks.*

KUMAR: Oh no no no!

*Ice cracks further.*

It was perfect. You've ruined it.

*Kumar turns on Gowri. Kumar makes snow balls and aims them at Gowri, one after another, with military precision.*

GOWRI: What's wrong with you?

*He throws.*

The ice would have cracked, stupid boy.

*A ball hits her. She tries to make a snow ball herself but he throws another one. Which hits her.*

We're on the coast ...

*A ball hits her.*

The currents ...

*She dodges.*

melt the snow ...

*She dodges.*

It stopped snowing anyway.

*Kumar holds out his palm. No more snow.*

KUMAR: No!

*Gowri brushes the snow off herself.*

GOWRI: You've been grounded by the way. That's what I came to tell you.

Don't come running to me for help with your homework and assignments. I'm done with saving your neck.

*Gowri whumps him with a magnificent snow ball of her own.*

You are on your own from now on, loser.

*Gowri stomps off. Kumar slumps in misery. Snow bees, swirling snow ... and the Snow Queen in her chariot.*

SQ: Kumar.

*Kumar looks up. The Snow Queen beckons. Kumar gets up and approaches her, entranced.*

KUMAR: I've not been able to get you out of my mind. You are so... perfect.

SQ: Come with us.

*The Snow Queen holds out her hand. Kumar takes it. Kumar climbs into the chariot and off he goes, flying through the air, with the Snow Queen.*

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**Anupama Chandrasekhar**

Anupama  
Chandrasekhar.



Amaka Okafor as  
Gowri and Ashley  
Kumar as Kumar.  
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