

SETTING: *Various locations in the kingdom, including the palace, the forest, and the home of the Seven Dwarfs.*

AT RISE: *Lights up on the outer chamber the Royal Bedroom belonging to KING DIEDERICH and QUEEN ELSA. DIEDERICH is pacing back and forth. Suddenly we hear the cry of a newborn infant. DIEDERICH stops pacing and turns expectantly. NURSE enters, holding a baby in her arms, wrapped in a blue blanket.*

NURSE

She's beautiful, your Majesty.

DIEDERICH

She? It's a girl?

NURSE

Yes, sire.

(NURSE places the baby into DIEDERICH's arms.)

DIEDERICH

I have a daughter.

NURSE

You have a princess.

DIEDERICH

And my wife – Queen Elsa – she is well?

(NURSE remains silent.)

Nurse...?

NURSE

It was a difficult birth, your Majesty, and the Queen, she is of a delicate nature...

DIEDERICH

Will she survive? Tell me the truth.

NURSE

I'm afraid...

(ELSA enters, interrupting. She can barely stand.)

ELSA

Diederich?

DIEDERICH

Elsa!

(DIEDERICH hands the baby to NURSE and hurries to ELSA.)

What are you doing out of bed?!

ELSA

I want to see my baby. Oh!

(She grabs her side, gasping in pain. DIEDERICH leads her to a seat.)

DIEDERICH

You should rest, my darling.

ELSA

Not until I see my daughter.

DIEDERICH

But you need to save your strength!

ELSA

It is too late for that.

(Beat. ELSA knows she is dying. She turns to NURSE.)

Let me hold her.

(NURSE and DIEDERICH exchange a look, then NURSE places the baby in ELSA's arms.)

ELSA

Oh, she's beautiful. Look at all that hair, Diederich...

DIEDERICH

As black as ebony...

ELSA

And her cheeks...

DIEDERICH

As red as roses...

ELSA

And her soft, silky skin...

DIEDERICH

As white as snow...

(He tries to take the baby.)

Now then, let's get you back to bed...

(ELSA pulls the baby away from him.)

ELSA

No! Not yet... first, we must name our child.

DIEDERICH

Elsa...

ELSA

(Ignoring him)

What shall we call our little princess?

DIEDERICH

Darling...

NURSE

Your Majesties, why not name the princess Snow White?

ELSA

Snow White?

NURSE

After her beautiful skin, as white as snow.

DIEDERICH

Snow White... I like it.

ELSA

Do you hear that, my beautiful girl? Henceforth, you shall be known as Snow White... oh!

(Again she gasps in pain. DIEDERICH takes the baby and holds her.)

And we shall all live happily-ever-after...

DIEDERICH

Happily-ever-after...

(ELSA stands up.)

ELSA

Happily-ever-after...

(She starts to back away.)

DIEDERICH

Happily-ever-after...

(She is gone.)

Happily...

(He looks around for her.)

Happily...?

(He looks to the NURSE.)

NURSE

The Queen is dead.

DIEDERICH

My wife... gone. What will I do without her?

(The baby cries. He looks down at her.)

Shhh, my little Snow White. Shhh... Papa's here. I will take care of you.

NURSE

Yes, you will do your best, Sire – but every little girl needs a mother.

(The baby cries again.)

DIEDERICH

I will have to marry again.

NURSE

I'm afraid you must – for the sake of the princess.

DIEDERICH

(To the baby)

Shh, darling... hush now. All will be well. I promise.

(He hands the baby to NURSE.)

Announce a year of mourning for the Queen. When that year is up, I shall take for myself a new wife, a woman who will be mother to my Snow White.

(Music under. During the following, the PROSPECT #1 and PROSPECT #2 enter one by one, twirl before DIEDERICH then exit.)

NURSE

No doubt many women will vie for the honor to be your queen...

DIEDERICH

No doubt.

NURSE

You must be selective....

DIEDERICH

Only the right one will do...

NURSE

Snow White must have a loving mother – a kind and good mother...

(GALIENA enters. DIEDERICH points to her.)

DIEDERICH

That one.

(GALIENA twirls around the DIEDERICH.)

NURSE

Lady Galiena. She is known across the kingdom for her beauty.

DIEDERICH

No doubt her outer beauty is a mere reflection of her inner beauty. Yes, she is the one...

(DIEDERICH holds out his hand. GALIENA takes it. They face each other as if getting married)

We shall be married...

(NURSE makes the sign of the cross over them, as if performing the ceremony.)

... and my daughter will have a new mother, to love and cherish her.

(DIEDERICH takes the baby from NURSE, and gives her to GALIENA. He kisses the baby, kisses GALIENA on the cheek, then exits. Music out. The baby starts to cry.)

GALIENA

Shut up, you brat.

(The NURSE is stunned. The baby cries harder. GALIENA shakes her.)

I said *shut up!*

NURSE

Your Majesty – please! Perhaps a more gentle approach would work best.

(The baby cries again.)

GALIENA

I have no time for this nonsense. Here! You take her!

(GALIENA shoves the baby at NURSE.)

NURSE

But His Majesty expects you to mother his child...

GALIENA

Don't you dare tell me what is expected of me! I am the Queen! And I shall not play nursemaid to that mewling, motherless brat! Understood?!

NURSE

Yes, Your Majesty.

GALIENA

Good. Now then, where is my mirror?

(She looks around the room.)

NURSE

Mirror?

GALIENA

I told my servant to bring it along – he knows I never go anywhere without it. Where is that idiot?

(GALIENA exits, looking for SERVANT. The baby whimpers.)

NURSE

Oh, what have I done?

(NURSE exits with the baby as GALIENA enters opposite.)

GALIENA

This way! Bring it this way!

(SERVANT enters carrying large, self-standing, mirror frame. He walks with a pronounced limp.)

Put it there – right there.

(She points. SERVANT sets it down.)

Now leave me.

(She turns to the mirror.)

SERVANT

Your Majesty?

GALIENA

What is it now?

SERVANT

You promised that once you became Queen I would be freed from my servitude...

(She wheels on him in rage. He takes a step back.)

SERVANT (cont.)

...and yet I find myself still bound to you, little better than a slave...

GALIENA

How dare you!

SERVANT

When will this end? Haven't I been punished enough?

GALIENA

No!

(She moves to strike him. He covers his face to protect himself. She pulls herself together.)

You are lucky I allow you to serve me. By all rights I should throw you on the street and make you beg for your food like a dog. Now go. Leave!

(She points off. SERVANT limps off. Music under as GALIENA turns to the mirror and summons forth the spirit within it.)

*Magic mirror on the wall...
Who's the fairest of them all?*

(Music continues as MOTHER enters from behind the mirror and crosses to it. It is her reflection that GALIENA sees in the mirror.)

MOTHER

*You, my daughter, are still most fair
Of all the maidens everywhere*

You have done well, Galiena. You have married a King.

GALIENA

Yes, Mother.

MOTHER

He chose you because you are the most beautiful.

GALIENA

Yes, Mother.

MOTHER

From your birth, I have taught you that beauty alone gives women power. Remember that.

GALIENA

I will, Mother.

MOTHER

Without power, without beauty, a woman has nothing. Remember what happened to me. Remember how your father cast me aside when he found someone more beautiful...

GALIENA

I remember, Mother – and I will strive always to keep your lessons, to be the most beautiful...

(MOTHER begins backing up, taking the mirror with her.)

MOTHER

The most beautiful... the most beautiful...

(MOTHER and the mirror are gone.)

GALIENA

I must always be the most beautiful.

(Music continues under as GALIENA exits opposite. Music shifts to something more playful as we transition to 13 years later. NURSE enters and looks around.)

NURSE

(Calling off)

Snow White? Snow White, where are you? Snow White! Oh, where is that girl?

(She turns to exit the way she came on. Just then SNOW WHITE, now 13 years old, enters opposite, carrying a basket, tip-toeing away. NURSE draws up short when she sees her.)

Snow White!

(SNOW WHITE stops and turns, putting the basket behind her back.)

SNOW WHITE

Oh. Hello, Nurse.

NURSE

Where have you been, young lady? And what have you got behind your back?

SNOW WHITE

Nothing.

NURSE

Snow White.

(She holds out her hand. SNOW WHITE hands her the basket)

SNOW WHITE

I was just going to the woods to pick wild apples.

NURSE

Did you ask your father's permission?

SNOW WHITE

I am thirteen years old!

NURSE

Nevertheless, you are not allowed to leave the palace grounds without your father's permission.

SNOW WHITE

But I can't ask him right now!

NURSE

Why not?

SNOW WHITE

He and Step Mother are fighting again.

GALIENA (O.S.)

Diederich! Come back here! I am not done speaking to you yet!

NURSE

Oh dear. Here – go pick your apples.

(She gives the basket back to SNOW WHITE.)

SNOW WHITE

But you said I needed Papa's permission...

NURSE

I am giving you permission – go!