

# The Snow Queen

By Frank Galuszka



Frank Galuszka The Snow Queen 2005  
oil on canvas, 108 x 78 inches

With sympathy for light, I defended myself under its swirling crown, and pinkly descended through aurora into arctic air. But I diffract where the photons continue. They go through faceted glaciers, while forlorn, lifted by wind, I fly to where the Snow Queen holds slaves in grey caverns, chained; children from Europe kidnapped at night by dark devils in sleighs, working in secret; made to work manacled in wind-eaten caves of ice; myself in this sorry league until the cold took me, freezing me to the floor of a grey cave, useless headless handless legless boy, with Katie coming too late, limbs in a basket and bitter tears freezing like knives on her cheeks, while the Snow Queen, rocking, knits frost nets to haul the life out of southern crops. And, her quarry is everywhere, for, from where she sits, everywhere is south. And she sits on a rocker made of frigidity so cold it is only a gas on a porch put up by imp masons out of the tiny

platelets of the dead, stacked like ruby cushions and blown cold to harder gems, to red ice. And her dress is white and crystalline. And it is she, and not some black queen, who looks in the ice mirror, and sees Snow White's greater beauty, Snow White who abides only a season and is gone, uncorrupted by immortality. For immortality, and the lust for immortality, corrupts. The tears falling from the knives beneath Katie's eyes touched only a frozen carapace, the torso of a poor boy worked to death, made to roam the permafrost by night in winter on the black tundra, sent to gather firewood where the the grey edge of day can be seen to the south, and where leafless brambles grow, as traps for the souls of bad mothers, who come looking for their children too late, having looked, too long, in mirrors themselves, and it is the very tresses they vainly admired there that entraps them, and tangles them in the brambles. And the fathers with guns and hounds will come too late, even for their wives, for they will only be bags of sorrow when they are found. And their husbands will be discouraged, and weep at the border til they are blind with ice. Only faithful sisters, travelling light and recklessly, may elude the nettles

and brave the cold, and head straight into the dark, from the day's grey edge, there to be set on, almost always by her dark aides, and to be enslaved themselves, living out their days in misery, except for the tender comfort of being bound beside their brothers again.

The Snow Queen, rocking, watches. The Snow Queen, tating frost coverlets for Europe, knitting ice into glaciers that grow over Alaska, breathing the colored cold air of the northern lights, rocks on stinging furniture, on her bleak porch, and watches.

Once a year we can raise a fire to polish the walls inside her palace. I follow the others, its all I know. Depending on what blows in of Russian birches and snapped nettles, we must expend our breath to free them, so trapped in ice they are! Twirled around a nettle branch sometimes is knotted a strand or two of golden hair. How these treasures gleam with beauty and pain in this bleak retreat! A mother! we think, and hide the strand in a pocket so that later, under even darker colder hours we can pass such treasured relics around the grey caverns, and touching them retrieve lines of feeling on our fingertips. Such recall warmth, and love, and home among us, and we use them even, when we are brave, to saw through our chains of ice...for so powerful is the glimmer in every relic of a mother's love.

Excerpt from Age of Infirmary, Chapter 15

- F G 1993