

The Swan Maiden



As the Swan Maiden entourage paraded by the reviewing stand, scores of spectators rose and cheered, dampening Jerome's already gloomy day. "If they only knew what a *shrew* she was!" he muttered, referring to Inge, the Snow Maiden. And as Head Swan, he should know. For years, he had been subject to Inge's bizarre temperament, not to mention the target of her cat o' nine tails. But whenever she performed in public, she transformed into the gentlest of monarchs, consummately disguising her horrid personality. Someday, he swore, he'd find a way to get even. *Ouch!* But first, he had to find a way to dampen the attention of Gretta, the Sous Swan, whose peckings had become both more frequent and more amorous. Jerome was receptive to new and different ideas and was as open-minded as any lobotomy subject, but he drew the line at interspecific relationships, *ouch!*